René Literary Lexicon

Words Images and Religious Meaning in Chateaubriand

October 2026

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Introduction and narrative map

René is a book about desire that cannot find its object, and about the difficulty of distinguishing a religious longing beyond the world from a refusal of the obligations within it. Its Christian language is fundamental. Yet a reading in which every earthly image simply conceals divine love loses important differences: René's self-description, Amélie's letters, the two elders' judgments and Chateaubriand's authorial defenses do not speak with one undivided voice.

This lexicon follows those differences through words, images, characters, narrative procedures and allusions. It is a reading companion to the supplied bilingual edition of François-René de Chateaubriand's René, including its Preface of 1805, reported readings of 1802 and two contemporary reviews. The discussion is in English; exact French attestations retain the source's historical spelling. French is already written in the Latin alphabet, so no transliteration column is needed. The short definitions establish local meanings, and the longer articles explain how those meanings develop or conflict.

How the references work

A reference such as "p. 160" means the original printed page of the 1826 volume, not the page of this lexicon and not the modern PDF viewer's count. "Preface p. 9" and "Review p. 353" identify the same original pagination with the textual layer made explicit. "Appendix I no. 1" refers to the supplied edition's numbered recovery of a longer 1802 passage; that item also gives the original 1802 pages. A reference marked "1802 variant" quotes an earlier reading reported in the supplied apparatus, not the 1826 main text.

These distinctions let a reader find a passage in any of the supplied formats.[1]

Printed locators beside links in this lexicon refer instead to the matching lexicon PDF. Electronic links remain useful independently of pagination. The three indexes organize the material by English and French vocabulary, source passage, and theme. The passage index is an access route to discussion, not a concordance of every occurrence of every word.

The word defines the French term, named figure or interpretive topic. **In René** gives the sustained reading. **The places annotated** records exact source wording with an explanation of its local significance. **In this edition** discusses translation, variants or an editorial decision that changes how the passage should be read. **See also** links genuine related discussions. A cross-reference is never counted as a new definition.

Some headings name a critical category, such as apostrophe, rather than a word that Chateaubriand explicitly uses. The French line then identifies the source language through which that category operates. A lemma is a dictionary-style identification; the quoted attestation is the actual printed form. Quotations can span a printed page boundary, in which case both pages are specified and a split word is joined for reading.

[1] The supplied edition identifies its base as Œuvres complètes, tome XVI (Paris: Ladvocat, 1826), Preface pp. 1–16, René pp. 137–192, and reviews pp. 351–358. Page 137 is the title; p. 138 is blank; the narrative begins at p. 139. The lexicon's source guide separates this declared base from its own verification work.

The story in sequence

The listening scene at pages 139 to 142

René lives among the Natchez, apart from the wife he has taken and increasingly withdrawn into the woods. Chactas, his blind adoptive father, and Father Souël, a missionary, press him to explain his sadness after a letter arrives from Europe. At dawn beside the Meschacebé, under a sassafras, he begins to tell the secret feelings of his soul. The scene visibly juxtaposes Indigenous settlement and French colonial construction. It is neither an empty wilderness nor a politically innocent background.

Origin and loss at pages 142 to 148

René describes his mother's death at his birth, his father's preference for the elder son, and his intimacy with Amélie. The shared landscape of childhood mingles delight and autumnal sadness. His father's death raises the hope of immortality while the grave also reveals how rapidly others forget. The inherited house passes to the elder brother. Amélie speaks of religious life, René visits a monastery, and then he chooses travel instead.

The unsuccessful education of travel at pages 148 to 155

Ruins, a royal statue, poets, the Scottish bardic landscape, Italian churches and Etna provide successive occasions for reflection. They offer beauty and thought, but no durable satisfaction. René explicitly makes the volcano an image of his own existence. His narration breaks down, first into silence and then into an envious address to apparently happy Indigenous people. Chactas's voice and touch restore the conversation.

Society and absolute solitude at pages 155 to 164

Return to France brings disappointment in the age and Amélie's avoidance. Urban company, a secluded neighborhood, church visits and finally a country cottage each fail to settle him. Desire has no known object. Autumn, wind, birds and night intensify his imagination. He wishes for an Eve fitted to his longing, then passes from a superabundance of life to profound ennui and the resolve to die.

Rescue and unread signs at pages 164 to 174

Amélie detects his intention from a letter, comes to him and makes him swear to live. His joy returns while her health begins to fail. Her departure letter offers advice about occupation and marriage, explains her movement toward a convent, recalls childhood and anticipates eternal reunion. René interprets the signs incompletely. He suspects an unavowed attachment to another man but does not yet know the secret.

House and profession at pages 175 to 183

On the way to the convent he revisits the deserted paternal estate. At Amélie's profession he is asked to serve as a father, witnesses the cutting of her hair and the rite of death to the world, and hears her prayer beneath the pall. It asks God's blessings for a brother who has not shared her criminal passion. The revelation reorganizes his reading of their past. His grief becomes a real and absorbing occupation; the desire to die recedes, but this change is not yet a cure of self-absorption.

Departure and the language of transformed love at pages 183 to 187

René prepares to sail for Louisiana. He watches a nun at a barred window without the narrative naming her, listens to the convent's prayers and receives Amélie's account of increasing peace. Her description of religious transformation retains heat, disturbance and pleasure even while calling the flame incorruptible. On the final stormy night, shipwreck danger and the convent's stillness form a powerful contrast that René immediately complicates by recalling the storm within Amélie's soul.

Evidence and correction at pages 188 to 192

The letter from the superior reports Amélie's death while nursing companions with a contagious illness, her even temper and her contentment in religious life. Chactas responds with tears. Souël rebukes René's withdrawal and demands service to others. Chactas agrees, then tells the parable of a brook that ruins its surroundings by seeking excessive power. René is said to return to his wife without finding happiness. His death with Chactas and Souël is reported briefly, and a rock remains as the local trace of his solitary evenings.

Is the book about divine love

There is a substantial case for taking divine love seriously. René prays for renewal, remembers loving God even while reasoning against his religion, and repeatedly finds sacred forms capable of moving him. Amélie's letter describes the purification of love into an incorruptible flame. Souël's distinction between solitude with God and self-sufficient isolation makes the direction of desire morally decisive.

Her eventual service to the sick provides a concrete outcome that cannot be reduced to beautiful language.

But the case must remain discriminating. The unknown good that René seeks is not explicitly named as God at every occurrence. His longing can also seek an ideal beloved, extraordinary experience, confirmation of superiority or an occupation for feeling. Amélie's "burning chastity" retains a remainder of disturbance and pleasure; religion "gently deceives" the sensitive soul in her own account. These phrases make transformation more complex than the simple disappearance of erotic feeling. The bodily beloved, the religious object and the narrator's desire for intensity are related without becoming interchangeable.

The older chapter recovered in Appendix I goes further: Christianity is said to be the principal source of the modern vague because it contrasts earthly sorrows with heavenly joys and generates distant hopes and inexhaustible reveries. Other causes, including civilization, books and gendered social influence, are also proposed. The later Preface excerpt omits those paragraphs and places the defense of cloisters beside the indictment of excessive solitude. This is a shift of framing, but not a story in which an entirely innocent account was suddenly moralized in 1805: punishment is already present in the 1802 ending of the chapter, and the 1802 review already reads the tale against Rousseau and Werther.[2]

A strong reading therefore asks what becomes of desire: whether it remains a self-feeding spectacle, finds

[2] Compare Preface pp. 9–15, Appendix I nos. 1–2, and Review pp. 351–354. The supplied apparatus compares 1802 and 1826 but does not collate the separate 1805 edition, so an individual change cannot be assigned confidently to 1805 rather than a later revision.

reciprocal relation, accepts a limit, or becomes charitable action. It need not claim that every landscape secretly stands for divine love, or import a systematic Platonic ascent that the supplied text does not establish. Religious imagery is evidence to interpret, not a key that automatically unlocks every image in the same way.

Whose claim is it

René is a retrospective first-person narrator inside an outer third-person frame. He can describe a feeling exactly while misunderstanding its cause, make a sweeping judgment from limited evidence, or discover later what he failed to read earlier. “He says” is sometimes more accurate than “the book proves”. His explicit self-interpretation of Etna is secure evidence for his chosen image of himself, not a guarantee that the image is impartial.

Amélie’s letters give another voice, but René selects and presents them. The superior’s report supplies evidence about a later life that he did not witness. Chactas and Souël differ in manner, yet the outer narrator does not make the gentle elder wholly wise and the severe priest unfeeling: Souël’s hidden compassion is stated, and Chactas agrees with the rebuke. Their counsel matters even though the ending does not stage its successful fulfillment.

Chateaubriand’s Preface speaks authorially about purpose, revision and moral effect. That purpose should neither be ignored nor treated as a transcript of every reader’s experience. The reviews are contemporary arguments reprinted by the author, not an independent modern scholarly consensus. The 1805 reviewer admits that the descriptions may intoxicate young readers even while defending the final moral impression. The tension between

attraction and correction belongs to the reception printed in the supplied edition itself.

The lexicon likewise distinguishes an editorial identification from a named primary allusion. The “ancient” on p. 165 remains unnamed, though the editor proposes Julius Canus; the observed nun on p. 184 remains unidentified; the geographical abbreviation B…. remains an abbreviation. Interpretation becomes more precise when it preserves such limits.[3]

Scope of the vocabulary

The register includes useful local vocabulary of objects, movement, sensation, religious practice, social life and critical argument. It is broader than a list of famous Romantic keywords, because the concrete nouns and ordinary constructions often explain how the more celebrated motifs work. The contextual glosses give fuller attention to selected phrases whose grammar, idiom or metaphor can be missed by an English reader.

The counts below describe separate records, not a claim that every word in the source has been defined. An article may discuss several related French words; a shorter register record may revisit a lexical family from another angle; a phrase gloss may combine several already discussed words. Those overlapping linguistic relationships are not summed into an invented count of unique lemmas. Index entries and cross-references add navigation, not definitions.

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[3] Examples of layered identification include p. 150, where the author’s note and the supplied editor identify the royal statue differently; p. 165, where Julius Canus is proposed only as probable; and pp. 184–187, where an unnamed nun and a question addressed to Amélie must not be fused into a certain identification.

This volume contains 80 full articles, 227 separately defined register records and 48 contextual phrase glosses. These are different kinds of record, not a nonoverlapping count of unique French words. Index entries, aliases and repeated cross-references are not additional definitions.

Lexicon

Abyss and volcano

abîme; volcan; Etna

The word. An abîme is a gulf or profound opening, both a physical depth and a figure for an existence that cannot be filled. Etna gives this inner metaphor a visible setting: elevated vision and a dangerous cavity occupy the same scene. The volcano is not simply a conventional emblem of anger. Its spatial arrangement matters as much as its heat.

In René. René explicitly identifies the scene on Etna as an image of his character and life. The world appears simultaneously immense and almost invisible; the speaker sits above other mortals while an abyss opens beside him. This is an unusually secure symbolic reading because René himself supplies it. It is still his chosen self-portrait, addressed to listeners whom he expects to pity him, rather than an unqualified description certified by the outer narrator.

The image later moves inside the body. In absolute solitude, lava seems to flow through his heart, and an ideal beloved is summoned to fill the abyss of existence. The volcanic landscape has become a model for surplus energy without an adequate object. Yet the attempted remedies repeat the structure: solitude, imagined as the last plank of a shipwreck, sinks into the abyss too. The problem cannot be solved merely by changing scenery.

Altitude also diminishes other people's dwellings. René weeps over humanity, but occupies a spectacular position apart from it. Souël's later demand for service therefore questions what such compassion accomplishes. Seeing the

human world from above need not mean understanding or assisting its inhabitants.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 153.** un abîme ouvert à mes côtés — René makes the volcanic scene an explicit personal emblem.
- **p. 160.** l'abîme de mon existence — The exterior gulf becomes an unfilled interior.
- **p. 165.** s'enfoncer dans l'abîme — The image recurs when his last imagined refuge fails.

In this edition. The supplied English preserves "abyss", making the recurrence audible. Its note at p. 152 warns against treating René's Etna ascent as a documented journey by Chateaubriand. The lexicon reads a fictional scene; it does not infer autobiography from the shared first name.

See also. Infinity, Limits, and Absolute Yearning (p. 87) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Solitude (p. 151) · The sublime and scale (p. 169)

Adam and Eve

premier père; Ève; tirée de moi-même

The word. The first father is Adam, and Eve is the woman made from him in Genesis. René invokes this biblical origin as an image of a companion perfectly fitted to his desire. The desired woman is imagined as given by God and as drawn from his own being.

In René. The invocation occurs at the height of solitary storm-exaltation. René feels capable of creating worlds, then wishes that God had led to him an Eve taken from himself. His imagined response combines prostration,

embrace and prayer to transfer the rest of his life to her. Erotic, devotional and sacrificial gestures are compressed into one fantasy.

The biblical model does not automatically sanctify everything in the wish. The companion is “according to my desires”, and the fantasy is generated before an actual other person can answer or differ. It can be read as longing for divinely instituted relation, but also as the desire for an other who perfectly repeats the self. The subsequent appearance of Amélie’s forbidden passion makes the language of inwardly derived companionship especially troubling without proving that René consciously intended his sister at this moment.

The distinction between anticipation and recognition must remain intact. At p. 180 Amélie’s prayer explicitly states that he did not share her passion. A retrospective reader may notice resonances, but cannot convert those resonances into an earlier mutual affair or a single decoded allegorical identity.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 163.** une femme selon mes désirs — The companion is defined through the desiring subject.
- **p. 163.** une Ève tirée de moi-même — The Genesis pattern is personalized.
- **p. 163.** je me serois prosterné devant toi — Devotional posture enters the imagined erotic relation.
- **p. 180.** un frère qui n’a point partagé ma criminelle passion — The later prayer limits claims about reciprocity.

In this edition. The edition points to Genesis 2:21–22. Its apparatus records masculine “another” in 1802 and feminine “another” in 1826 at p. 163; the later form makes the wished-for companion explicitly female. This local clarification should not be inflated into proof of a total change in the story’s sexual meanings.

See also. Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148)

Amélie

Amélie; sœur Amélie de la Miséricorde

The word. Amélie is René’s slightly older sister, the sole companion with whom his childhood constraint gives way to ease. Her religious name, Amélie de la Miséricorde, appears in the superior’s final letter. The movement between sister, almost-mother, desired partner in her own imagination, nun, and nurse is a structure of competing relations, not a set of interchangeable identities.

Her character reaches the reader chiefly through René’s memories, her quoted letters, an overheard prayer, and the superior’s report. These channels have different evidentiary weights. René’s praise and complaints expose his needs as well as her conduct; the letters give her an idiom of her own without becoming unmediated access to every motive.

In René. At first, shared tastes and autumn walks make her the centre of remembered happiness. The earlier departure for travel, her avoidance after René’s return, and her later physical deterioration remain puzzles to him. When she detects his suicidal intention, she acts immediately, obtains his promise to live, and briefly

restores everyday companionship. That intervention endangers her own stability. Her retreat is therefore neither simple abandonment nor an effortless victory over feeling.

The first long letter both counsels and betrays her. Its sensible recommendations of occupation and marriage turn into an imagined wife's ardent embrace, with a switch from vous to tu and the revealing comparison to a sister (p. 171). The prayer under the pall finally names her 'criminal passion' and declares that René has not shared it. The interpretation of earlier scenes must respect that explicit limit. Souël's later fear that the confession has disturbed René 'in his turn' is a suspicion about an aftermath, not proof that the original love was reciprocal.

Amélie asserts agency at the ceremony: her look checks René's impending disruption, and she offers her head for the cutting of her hair. Her final letter reports partial, growing peace; the language of divine love still carries sensual heat. The superior, by contrast, attests evenness of temper and death while nursing others. This final action prevents her from remaining merely the sacrificial instrument of René's drama. Although the Défense calls her the 'too weak victim' and him the true culprit, the story also records her courage, practical insight, and service.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** Une douce conformité d'humeur et de goûts — René's first account locates their intimacy in shared temperament and pleasures.
- **p. 171.** tu croirois retrouver une sœur — Her imagined marriage counsel turns back toward the sibling relation it ostensibly seeks to replace.

- **p. 180.** un frère qui n’a point partagé ma criminelle passion — The confession names the prohibited love and expressly marks it as unshared.
- **p. 188.** la sœur Amélie de la Miséricorde — The new name belongs to the community’s account of her last, charitable work.

In this edition. Appendix I nos. 3–4 prints more explicit 1802 disclosures: her exclusive love and René’s reconstruction of her struggle beside his innocent affection. The 1826 text suppresses those elaborations but retains the decisive prayer. The edition’s biographical introduction suggests Lucile as a possible model; that resemblance must not turn a fictional confession into evidence about the author’s sister.

See also. Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Childhood and Its Afterlives (p. 38) · Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Sensibility (p. 143) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122)

Antiquity and the modern world

anciens; modernes; Grèce; Rome; fatalité

The word. Antiquity is not one undifferentiated authority. It supplies physical remains, civic activity, poetic models, philosophical examples and narratives of inherited catastrophe. The modern world likewise appears both as deficient society and as the site of new forms of inward life.

In René. The Preface’s account of the vague contrasts ancient public occupations with modern enclosed

faculties. Civic affairs and bodily exercise supposedly left little room for restless feeling without an object. This is an explanatory contrast advanced by the authorial argument, not a comprehensive history of ancient emotional life.

René's travels encounter a more troubling antiquity. Its greatness lies in ruins, and its remains may be criminal dust. The past is a mutilated statue rather than a complete model for imitation. Classical materials can awaken thought and admiration without providing the lost whole he seeks.

The authorial defense turns to ancient tragic families when explaining the story's catastrophe, then proposes a Christian sanctification of the inherited material. Borrowing is therefore accompanied by moral recoding. Likewise a Vestal figure can describe a Christian nun, or a pagan example of composed dying can enter René's dangerous reasoning. Such transfers are selective and sometimes uneasy; none warrants reading the entire narrative as a disguised Platonic system.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 10.** Les anciens ont peu — The historical comparison is qualified rather than absolute.
- **Preface p. 14.** les anciens attribuoient à la fatalité — Ancient catastrophe supplies a model later recast in Christian terms.
- **p. 148.** Rome et de la Grèce — The travel sequence encounters antiquity as remains.
- **p. 152.** deux statues incomplètes — Past and present fail in different ways to form a whole.
- **p. 187.** la vestale — A classical religious figure is transferred to a Christian setting.

In this edition. The supplied variants show that earlier uses of “philosophy” give way to religion, disgust for earth or wisdom in several places in the 1826 text. Those local changes matter, but they do not expunge classical material from the narrative. The supplied variants allow comparison of wording, not a complete genealogy of the author’s intellectual development.

See also. The unnamed ancient and composed dying (p. 174) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136) · Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117) · Ruins and monuments (p. 135)

Apostrophe and changes of tense

ô; hélas; je vois; je lis

The word. Apostrophe addresses someone or something beyond the immediate course of narration: a listener, an absent person, God, a remembered landscape or an abstraction. Changes from past to present can make a remembered event occur again in the telling. These are rhetorical procedures, not proof that chronology has literally changed.

In René. René’s confession repeatedly turns outward to the elders and inward toward recalled scenes. The address to childhood and homeland treats them as powers capable of retaining sweetness; the command to desired storms gives weather an agency he wishes to summon. Such moments reveal how narration itself recreates the attachments and excitations it describes.

At the discovery of Amélie’s letter, past narration shifts to “I go up”, “I knock”, “I seize it”, “I open it”, “I read”. The profession likewise moves through present-tense actions and sudden feelings. The effect is immediacy, but the

speaker's later knowledge still shapes the scene. Reenactment and retrospective explanation coexist.

Apostrophe also bridges narrative locations. Near the end René addresses the sun of the new sky and the American shore's echo while recalling departure from Europe. The listener hears a remembered past uttered in a specified present place. This double situation is one reason the frame cannot be discarded as a mere container for the confession.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** O illusions de l'enfance et de la patrie — Abstract attachments become addressees.
- **p. 163.** Levez-vous vite — An imperative attempts to mobilize the storm.
- **p. 169.** je monte — Present-tense reenactment begins a tightly sequenced discovery.
- **p. 169.** je lis cette lettre — The surviving document anchors the reenacted moment.
- **p. 187.** Soleil de ce ciel nouveau — The American present enters the remembered departure.

In this edition. The supplied translation deliberately retains changes of tense and apostrophe. Its explanation of that policy is editorial testimony about translation practice, not an additional authorial theory. Quotation marks and the old printed paragraph-opening signs require care when separating the outer narrator from René's speech.

See also. Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Silence and voice (p. 147) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89) · The sublime and scale (p. 169)

Architecture and embodied poetry

colonne; arche; voûte; dôme; architecte

The word. Architecture is the art of built space. Its columns, arches, vaults and domes give scale and rhythm to movement and sound. René's Italian churches are important because they make poetic ideas perceptible to the senses, not merely because their ornament impresses him.

In René. René wanders through vast buildings consecrated by art to religion and experiences a holy, poetic awe. Repeated exclamations reproduce the succession of columns and vaults. The sounds around the domes resemble ocean waves, forest winds and God's voice in his temple. Built space gathers natural acoustics into a sacred environment.

The claim that the architect builds the poet's ideas provides a concise account of artistic translation between media. An inward conception acquires a bodily setting one can enter, hear and touch. This answers, at least locally, the frustration of an imagination whose riches have no adequate outward object.

Yet the next movement declares that he has found nothing certain among the ancients and nothing beautiful among the moderns. The general dismissal sits uneasily beside the beauty just described. Rather than repairing that contradiction on his behalf, a reader can notice the difference between intense momentary appreciation and a durable capacity for satisfaction. Architecture works aesthetically without curing the disposition that consumes its effects.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 152.** Quel labyrinthe de colonnes — The syntax imitates a successive encounter with built forms.
- **p. 152.** les idées du poëte — Architecture gives another art an embodied form.
- **p. 152.** Rien de certain parmi les anciens — The ensuing generalization destabilizes the prior admiration.

In this edition. The p. 152 apparatus records an 1802 continuation, “comme l’autre à l’ame”, after the shared phrase about making ideas perceptible to the senses. The earlier wording explicitly contrasts the architect’s appeal to the senses with the poet’s appeal to the soul; the later text leaves that second half unstated. The passage names Italy but no particular church; specific identifications would go beyond it.

See also. Church, temple, and the architecture of feeling (p. 43) · The sublime and scale (p. 169) · Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103) · Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20)

Autumn and the seasons

automne; saison; hiver

The word. Autumn is a calendar season and an emotional arrangement of sounds, weather and declining vegetation. A saison is also an appointed time: the season for a soul’s migration cannot simply be chosen by the impatient subject. Seasonal language thus mediates between felt intensity and temporal limits.

In René. René returns to the paternal château each autumn. His happiest companionship with Amélie is consequently already inseparable from falling leaves, muted sounds and the pleasure of sadness. The later autumn of solitary wandering does not introduce a wholly new mood; it enlarges a pattern learned in childhood, now without the sister whose presence once made it bearable.

At p. 161 autumn surprises him amid uncertainties, and he welcomes the storm months with rapture. Decline becomes a stimulus to renewed life: the barren landscape feeds creative power rather than merely expressing exhaustion. The migratory birds then suggest a passage out of earthly existence, but the apparent heavenly voice delays departure. Natural recurrence offers an image of transition without authorizing self-destruction.

The narrative moves from this solitary autumn to Amélie's intervention and then to the end of winter, when she begins losing the health she has restored to him. The seasonal sequence is not an automatic progress toward springtime healing. Restoration is unequal: one person's recovery coincides with another's decline. Likewise the outer scene begins at dawn in the "moon of flowers" and ends under a forecast storm. Different temporal scales resist a single seasonal allegory.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** Chaque automne, je revenois au château paternel — Annual return makes autumn the season of attachment before it becomes solitary yearning.
- **p. 161.** L'automne me surprit au milieu de ces incertitudes — Weather gives unsettled feeling a rhythm.

- **p. 163.** la saison de ta migration n’est pas encore venue — The season becomes an ethical limit on departure.
- **p. 168.** L’hiver finissoit — Amélie begins to decline as winter ends.

In this edition. At p. 143 the supplied apparatus reports an 1802 “silence of autumn” where 1826 has its dull roaring. At p. 161 “dark months” becomes “months” of tempests. These changes alter acoustic and tonal colouring; they do not remove the underlying seasonal structure.

See also. Birds and migration (p. 32) · Storms and tempests (p. 155) · Childhood and Its Afterlives (p. 38) · Time and historical change (p. 178)

Bells, liturgy, and shared time

cloche; glas; Office des morts; cantiques

The word. Bells transmit religious and communal time across space; liturgy gives prayer an ordered, repeatable form. Glas is the solemn tolling associated with death or alarm, while the Office des morts is the ritual prayer for the dead. The sounds gather memory and feeling, but their meanings change with the moment and the hearer.

In René. The childhood bell calls rural people to worship and carries family, homeland, religion, birth, and burial into René’s imagination (pp. 144–145). Its power is not simply musical beauty. It binds an individual life to recurrent communal rites and to generations beyond it. The 1802 reading printed beneath p. 144 lists philosophy, piety, and tenderness where the 1826 text emphasizes religion, family, and homeland. The change alters the associations without making the earlier passage nonreligious.

At his father's funeral Amélie hears priests' chant and the death bell from a tower (p. 146). Hearing marks separation even within shared mourning. In the city, the cathedral clock passes the hour from church to church while René imagines grief under surrounding roofs (pp. 158–159). Bells then connect him acoustically to a society in which he feels friendless. Shared time can sharpen isolation as well as relieve it.

The profession begins with morning bells and culminates in the Office of the Dead over the living Amélie. This is a ritual death to the world, not a funeral for a corpse. Her private prayer emerges beneath the public office, and René's disruptive cry breaks the ceremony's coordinated voices. The scene stages the tension between common form and singular experience at the level of sound itself.

Afterwards the nocturnal bell summons nuns to vigils and prayers while René listens outside. Their chants mingle with the subdued sea (p. 184), giving him an indirect participation that seems to soften grief. On the final night the monastic tolling joins alarm guns and the storm rather than replacing danger with perfect calm (p. 186). Liturgical order persists amid worldly disorder, but René's hearing remains emotionally charged. Across the story, sound crosses walls and distances that bodies cannot cross. It carries relation without eliminating separation, making bells an especially apt medium for a book about the desire to belong and the difficulty of inhabiting a common life.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 144.** les sons de la cloche lointaine — Sound joins the woodland listener to rural worship.

- **p. 145.** famille, patrie, et le berceau et la tombe, et le passé et l’avenir — The bell’s associations extend across communal and personal time.
- **p. 180.** commence l’Office des morts — The rite signifies Amélie’s death to the world while she is alive.
- **p. 184.** aux veilles et aux prières — The nocturnal bell calls the community to ordered practice.
- **p. 186.** mêlés au glas de la cloche monastique — The final storm makes sacred and maritime warnings audible together.

In this edition. The 1802 alternative at p. 144, variant d, gives “philosophie, piété, tendresse.” The edition establishes a difference between witnesses; the exact stage at which the revised enumeration entered the text is not determined by this comparison alone.

See also. Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Church, temple, and the architecture of feeling (p. 43) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117) · Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103) · Time and historical change (p. 178)

Biblical figures and scriptural echoes

Amnon; Thamar; David; Ève

The word. Biblical names serve different purposes in the edition: some belong to the author’s explanation of his chosen plot, some to René’s poetic comparisons, and others to editorial identifications of unnamed allusions. They should be read according to their local speaker and

function rather than assembled into one continuous hidden allegory.

In René. The Preface's Défense excerpt places Amnon and Tamar among possible ancient models for catastrophic familial desire (p. 14). Chateaubriand's note cites the books of Kings in an older numbering; the edition explains the relation to the account now commonly cited as 2 Samuel 13. This is an authorial account of literary resources, not a claim that the episode simply reproduces that biblical story. The difference matters: the biblical analogy invoked by the Preface concerns a family catastrophe, while Amélie's prayer explicitly denies her brother's participation in her passion. A reader cannot import a sexual assault into René from the cited model.

David appears in René's Caledonian meditation, where Christianity touches his harp beside the torrent associated with Ossian (p. 151). The paired instruments picture a succession and transformation of sacred poetry. David there signifies the biblical singer, not automatically the dynastic father implicated in the Amnon narrative. A shared name does not remove a difference of function.

Eve provides another example. In his storm-excited reverie René asks for a woman drawn from himself, as the first father received Eve (p. 163). The biblical figure gives imagined companionship a language of origin, likeness, and total affinity. Because the sentence expressly desires a woman, it should not be redescribed without argument as a direct prayer for mystical union with God. Its suggestion of a companion issuing from the self also creates a troubling relation to the later discovery of excessive familial closeness, without proving prior conscious incestuous desire.

The editor identifies other echoes: the dove of the Spirit and Jacob's ascending and descending angels in the profession, and a psalmic image of tending the sick in the Preface. These annotations open scriptural resonances but remain editorial explanations. The biblical texture supplies a rich vocabulary for consolation, poetry, temptation, and sacrifice. Its interpretive discipline lies in distinguishing explicit citation, probable echo, and thematic comparison, and in letting differences between the scriptural source and the episode remain visible.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 14.** d'Amnon et de Thamar chez les Hébreux — The author names one possible ancient family catastrophe behind his choice.
- **p. 151.** la harpe de David — René uses David as a figure of biblical song beside Ossian.
- **p. 163.** une Ève tirée de moi-même — The first-couple figure organizes a wish for perfectly kindred companionship.
- **p. 179.** les ailes de la colombe mystique — The editor identifies an allusion to the Holy Spirit.
- **Preface p. 15.** celui qui retourne le malade sur sa couche — The edition links this consolatory image to a psalm.

In this edition. The scriptural identifications here come from Chateaubriand's notes and the anonymous editorial annotations to Preface pp. 14–15 and narrative p. 179. They are not presented as newly verified biblical quotations or as evidence for a single systematic allegory.

See also. Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Adam and Eve (p. 16) · Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20)

Birds and migration

oiseaux de passage; colombe; Flammant

The word. Migratory birds move between climates; the dove belongs to a religious language of innocence and refuge; the flamingo predicts weather within the frame. Their distinct narrative situations matter more than treating every bird as a free soul.

In René. René watches passing birds and imagines the unknown shores toward which they fly. He wishes for their wings. The fantasy begins geographically and becomes eschatological when a seeming voice from heaven calls him a traveler whose own season has not arrived. The boundary between travel and death is exposed, then regulated: desire for another region does not make departure timely.

The dove at Amélie's profession shelters the congregation under mystical wings. In her later letter she calls herself a poor dove of heaven grateful for shelter, while an actual seabird beats against her window. These birds create a deliberate contrast between exposure and enclosure, yet the storm remains audible inside her account. Religious protection is a way of inhabiting danger, not proof that the language of agitation has vanished.

The final flamingo announces a midday storm after Chactas's parable. Nature does not simply endorse the

promise of common happiness by becoming serene. The coming weather carries the unresolved pattern onward. The last emblem is a sound heard by the group, not another private fantasy produced by René.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 162.** les oiseaux de passage — Migration offers the wish for elsewhere a visible vehicle.
- **p. 163.** attends que le vent de la mort se lève — A heavenly-seeming injunction delays the imagined flight.
- **p. 179.** la colombe mystique — The dove's wings frame a communal religious experience.
- **p. 185.** pauvre colombe du ciel — Amélie applies the sheltered bird image to herself.
- **p. 191.** annonçoit un orage pour le milieu du jour — The closing bird forecasts continuing disturbance.

In this edition. The edition identifies the pilgrim resonance at pp. 162–163 with Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11. This is a contextual biblical comparison, not a verbatim citation in René. It retains the unusual printed capitalization and italicization of Flammant; the word names a flamingo, not a human speaker.

See also. Autumn and the seasons (p. 25) · Shore and window (p. 145) · Storms and tempests (p. 155) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136)

Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways

Chactas; Sachem; père adoptif

The word. Chactas is René's adoptive father and one of the two internal hearers of his life story. Blind, elderly, and already associated with the earlier narrative of Atala, he embodies a sympathetic form of authority grounded in experience, remembered love, and attachment. His movement from consolation to correction prevents sympathy and moral judgement from becoming simple opposites.

In René. At the outset Chactas's indulgence contrasts with Souël's severity. Yet this is not a contest between a wholly permissive Indigenous listener and an exclusively Christian moralist. Chactas asks René to moderate a character that has injured him (p. 155), while Souël's compassion is expressly affirmed by the narrator. The two elders offer different means of reaching the same difficult hearer.

Chactas first interrupts after René has idealized the supposedly effortless peace of Indigenous life. His repeated address, "Mon fils," restores the distressed young man to an actual relationship rather than confirming that idealization. His subsequent claim that a great soul contains more sorrows offers recognition that may console René, but it also risks giving exceptional suffering the status of distinction. The later concession that the priest corrects the old man as well as the young acknowledges this risk. Sympathy itself requires education.

Memory gives Chactas a history that exceeds René's generalized picture of happy "savages." He recalls France and the great chief identified in Chateaubriand's note as

Louis XIV. His metaphor of the old oak living through other plants makes recollection a relation to others' lives, unlike René's tendency to make every scene repeat his own disquiet. His blindness also organizes the narration: he cannot view the opening landscape and does not immediately understand René's visual distraction, but he can hear, touch, remember, and respond.

At the conclusion Chactas tells of a stream that abandons its natural bed, acquires immense power, and devastates its companions. Its regret translates Souël's abstract obligation into an image of relational loss. The "common ways" are valuable because life is shared with others, not simply because conformity is an unquestionable good. Chactas's own need for guidance on the return walk prevents the elder from appearing self-sufficient. Finally, his death beside René and Souël in colonial violence places all three under a historical catastrophe larger than the young man's particular fault. His fable interprets René's life but does not explain away the frame's collective ending.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 139.** Chactas, son père adoptif — Adoption makes the relationship practical and familial.
- **p. 155.** une grande âme doit contenir plus de douleurs qu'une petite — Consolation associates suffering with amplitude of soul.
- **p. 190.** il corrige et le vieillard et le jeune — The sentence continues on p. 191: Chactas includes himself in the correction.
- **p. 191.** il n'y a de bonheur que dans les voies communes — The fable explains this

recommendation through the losses caused by pride.

In this edition. “Sachem” remains a title in the translation. The editorial note on p. 155 identifies the French courtly setting; the narrative’s main text refers to a “great Chief” and a “superb cabin,” giving the recollection Chactas’s idiom.

See also. Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164) · Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life (p. 181) · Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50) · River and the parable of excess (p. 131) · Light and the moon (p. 91)

Charity and the outward use of feeling

charité; zèle; service de ses semblables

The word. Charité is active love of others in a Christian moral vocabulary, not merely almsgiving or a warm feeling. Service names the outward exercise of powers that would otherwise feed solitary distress. These terms provide the narrative’s most concrete criterion for distinguishing a fertile religious withdrawal from self-absorbed retreat.

In René. The report of Amélie’s death appears only when René has finished his own story (p. 188). The letter he has carried from Europe was written by the superior and is summarized by the outer narrator. It describes Amélie nursing companions during a contagious illness and dying as a result of her zeal and charity. This evidence concerns an activity René did not witness at the seashore. Its arrival changes the scale of the account: the sister whose suffering

he has narrated has also possessed a life of work and relationships beyond him.

The community's grief and the superior's testimony to her gentle, even temper join action to character. Neither report proves that she never again experienced painful memories; the evidence is that she served others and was notably content in her adopted life. The claim that she was a saint is attributed to the community, not presented as a formal institutional canonization. The name Amélie de la Miséricorde further connects her religious identity with mercy without replacing the details of what she actually did.

Souël's subsequent insistence that strength must be devoted to fellow human beings converts this narrated example into a general rule (p. 190). His accusation of useless powers belongs to the same ethical contrast. René's wealth of sensation is not condemned simply for being intense. It becomes blameworthy when intensity excuses neglect of obligations or continually returns to its own image. The same energies might have had other uses.

This movement also qualifies the language of sacrifice. Amélie does not seek death as an escape from all relation; she incurs danger in caring for people. Her earlier demand that René promise to live similarly makes love responsible for preserving another life. The book's religious remedy thus cannot be reduced to aesthetic consolation, erotic sublimation, or withdrawal behind a wall. Charity is the point where transformation becomes an observable act involving someone else's need. It supplies a practical counterweight to the story's spectacular landscapes and suffering, while its fatal cost prevents useful action from being equated with immunity to misfortune.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 188.** morte victime de son zèle et de sa charité — The superior's reported letter identifies the cause and meaning of Amélie's death.
- **p. 188.** en soignant ses compagnes attaquées d'une maladie contagieuse — Charity is specified as nursing within the convent community.
- **p. 188.** on y regardoit Amélie comme une sainte — The sainthood judgement is attributed to the community.
- **p. 190.** Quiconque a reçu des forces doit les consacrer au service de ses semblables — Souël states the general ethical principle that the report exemplifies.

In this edition. The anonymous translation's "charity" should be read in the broad theological and ethical sense. The French does not specify the disease or provide grounds to identify an epidemic, and this lexicon does not supply one.

See also. Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life (p. 181) · Sacrifice and holocaust (p. 139) · God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering (p. 75)

Childhood and Its Afterlives

enfance; première enfance; jeunes années

The word. Enfance is both an early period of life and a recurrent figure for innocence, dependence, receptivity, and immaturity. René can admire childhood's poetic

freshness, ask to be consoled like a child, and accuse the never-aging human heart of childishness. These uses do not form a uniformly idealized cult of childhood.

Memory gives childhood a privileged sweetness while selecting and rearranging it from a later vantage. The narrative's early life includes a mother's death at his birth, separation from the paternal home, fear before the father, and the elder brother's privileged position. The remembered refuge with Amélie emerges against those losses and inequalities.

In René. René's uneven temperament appears before adult travel: he gathers companions and suddenly abandons them to watch clouds or listen to rain (pp. 142–143). Solitude is not merely the result of a later catastrophe. Amélie shares tastes and autumn walks, and their youthful verses attach poetic capacity to a 'heart of sixteen years' (p. 144). The morning-of-life analogy celebrates freshness, but both siblings already carry sadness.

The native bells extend private childhood into a generalized scene of familial welcome, parental joy, and religious belonging. That conventional tableau exceeds René's own birth-story, in which his mother died. Its difference should not be silently corrected: the imagined communal pattern is part of what the sound offers beyond personal history. The pleasures of remembrance combine actual companionship with an ideal scene of origin.

The willow-leaf episode turns childhood into criticism (p. 161). René attaches ideas to floating leaves and feels anguish at their danger, then compares his game with a king's fear for his crown. Calling this the childhood of the human heart both acknowledges his puerility and extends it to supposedly serious adult pursuits. The comparison

can humble proud reason, but it can also shelter his own conduct under a general indictment of humanity.

Amélie's rescue briefly makes him a child seeking comfort (p. 167), while her letter recalls rocking his cradle and sleeping beside him (p. 172). The same history that grounds care has become charged by her forbidden desire. Their return visits to the empty château show that childhood cannot be restored simply by returning to its place. Her subsequent work among companions supplies a relation to others not confined to the lost family scene.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** O illusions de l'enfance et de la patrie — The apostrophe acknowledges illusion while insisting on remembered sweetness.
- **p. 144.** un cœur de seize années — René links poetic receptivity to youthful freshness rather than to accomplished adult authorship.
- **p. 161.** O enfance du cœur humain qui ne vieillit jamais — Childhood becomes a reproach to enduring emotional puerility.
- **p. 167.** comme un enfant, je ne demandois qu'à être consolé — The return of Amélie reactivates dependence as well as joy.
- **p. 176.** La famille de l'homme n'est que d'un jour — The abandoned home turns an individual childhood into a meditation on familial transience.

In this edition. The 1802 variant on p. 142 adds a gifted memory, rapid learning, and disruptive behaviour among companions. The cloud and rain on p. 143, as well as some shared childhood games, are absent from that earlier witness. These changes give the 1826 childhood more

sensory elaboration without proving a biographical chronology.

See also. Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Amélie (p. 18) · Heart (p. 80) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78) · Solitude (p. 151) · The paternal house (p. 166) · Parents and the elder brother (p. 106)

Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction

Apologie; religion; romans pieux

The word. Apologetics is a reasoned or persuasive defence of religion, not an admission of fault. In the Preface, Chateaubriand explains why an argument for Christianity includes emotionally powerful fiction. René is offered both as an example of the religion's literary beauty and as evidence of its practical value for suffering human beings.

In René. The excerpt from the Défense explicitly proposes opposing irreligious poems and novels with religious ones (Preface p. 11). Its argument is strategic: imaginative works can reach readers who would not open a theological book for doctrine alone. The metaphors of bait and an innocent trap acknowledge that aesthetic attraction precedes, and is meant to prepare, assent. Passion is therefore not an accidental impurity in the defence. It is one of its chosen instruments.

The stated claim is that religion corrects passions without extinguishing them and mingles its teaching and worship with emotions and natural scenes (pp. 11–12). Amélie's final letter gives this principle an intimate formulation: a perishable flame becomes an imperishable one. Her later charity supplies a less figurative test. The apologetic movement does not stop at the beauty of a convent, but

reaches its strongest practical evidence in care for sick companions.

Yet the textual apparatus prevents an uncomplicated account of Christianity as the external cure for a purely secular illness. Appendix I, no. 1 preserves two paragraphs from 1802 that attribute modern indefinite longing partly to Christian contrasts between earthly sorrow and heavenly joy. Monastic life itself produces melancholy there. These passages do not mean that religion is simply condemned; they show that its promise can intensify the very desire it orders. The shortened prefatory extract and the Défense's explanation emphasize other causes, especially modern solitary reverie.

The author's Preface further says that Amélie dies happy and healed, while René ends wretchedly. Readers can identify supporting narrative evidence without collapsing all voices into this program: the superior attests Amélie's contentment, but the last paragraph gives all three men a shared violent end. Apologetic intention is indispensable evidence about the work's design; it is not a licence to erase difficulty from its enacted story. Nor does the use of religious language make every earthly longing secretly a desire for God. The text sometimes redirects love toward religious life and sometimes shows erotic imagination appropriating sacred language; the difference must be argued passage by passage.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 11.** des poëmes et des romans pieux — The author names the imaginative means of religious defence.

- **Preface p. 11.** corrige les passions sans les éteindre — The principle permits transformed intensity rather than emotional extinction.
- **Preface p. 12.** ce piége innocent aux incrédules — The prefatory argument acknowledges strategic attraction.
- **Appendix I no. 1.** Une prodigieuse mélancolie fut le fruit de cette vie monastique — The fuller 1802 chapter complicates an exclusively curative model of religion.

In this edition. The supplied edition prints the 1805 Preface as reproduced in 1826 and restores the longer 1802 chapter in Appendix I. This comparison establishes what the witnesses contain, not the precise date or motive of every intervening revision.

See also. The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · The two reviews and the management of admiration (p. 171) · Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65)

Church, temple, and the architecture of feeling

église; temple; sanctuaire; autel

The word. Église names a Christian church; temple often gives sacred space a more elevated or generalized designation; sanctuaire identifies its especially consecrated interior; autel is the altar. In this episode such buildings organize perception and conduct. Their acoustics, thresholds, and ceremonial arrangements matter as much as their role as symbols of refuge.

In René. The distant village bell first makes a temple present through sound rather than sight (p. 144). In Italy, architectural space seems to embody the poet's ideas, while the noises around the domes resemble sea, forest, and the voice of God (p. 152). Sacred architecture becomes the meeting place of artistic invention, natural analogy, and religious feeling. René admires these effects intensely, but admiration is not yet a lasting rule of life.

In Paris the little-frequented church contrasts with the crowd outside. René sees worshippers leave with more serene faces, while exterior clamour seems to expire at the temple's foot (p. 157). The comparison resembles a shore resisting the world's storms. Yet the scene remains focalized through a man who is also finding the whole city uninhabitable. Its consoling potential does not prevent his subsequent departure into a more absolute isolation.

The profession makes architectural arrangements dramatically active. An immense crowd fills the church; the priest waits at the altar; René is placed in the sanctuary; a grille opens to reveal Amélie and later closes when his outburst disrupts the rite. The boundary is neither simply decorative nor merely a metaphor for frustrated desire. It regulates access between the public church and the enclosed community. René's assigned location also defines the limited role in which he may participate.

Later he listens from outside the monastery walls as chants mingle with the sea. Physical exclusion can now enable a kind of mediated communion, although the barred window also invites uncertain projection onto an unnamed nun. Architecture gives feeling a form without guaranteeing truthful interpretation of another person's mind. The final contrast between the infinite sea and a cell

wall likewise belongs to René's tableau. Sacred space in the story works most fully when it is joined to disciplined practices and companions. A beautiful or protective building alone does not account for Amélie's development; the superior's letter locates its decisive evidence in conduct within that space.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 152.** L'architecte bâtit, pour ainsi dire, les idées du poëte — René gives sacred architecture a poetic and sensory function.
- **p. 157.** une église peu fréquentée — The city church offers a distinct kind of retreat within society.
- **p. 178.** la grille mystérieuse s'ouvre — The spatial boundary structures Amélie's appearance.
- **p. 181.** ferment la grille — The community ends access when the ceremony is disturbed.
- **p. 184.** au pied des murs — René later listens from outside rather than occupying the sanctuary.

In this edition. The anonymous note to p. 178 explains the grille's separation of the enclosed nuns' choir from the public church. Temple in these passages should not automatically suggest a non-Christian building; context determines its reference.

See also. The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Bells, liturgy, and shared time (p. 27) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Architecture and embodied poetry (p. 24) · Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103)

Confession and the story of the self

récit; histoire de son cœur; aveu; secret

The word. Confession names both a disclosure of hidden experience and the religious forms of acknowledging fault. René's oral autobiography resembles confession but is not explicitly presented as a sacramental rite: it is told to an adoptive father and a missionary beneath a tree. Within it, Amélie's private prayer discloses a different secret, and documentary letters complicate the speaker's authority.

In René. The outer narrator first describes René as refusing to speak. He minimizes his life as thoughts and feelings without adventures, while declaring one event unmentionable (p. 140). This refusal is already a way of producing narrative interest: the claim that there is nothing to tell coexists with a secret that organizes the entire telling. The arrival of a letter finally makes continued concealment impossible. Its contents remain withheld until the oral account ends, so the occasion of narration becomes the last piece of evidence the listeners receive.

René's opening asks for pity before offering facts. His self-accusation admits that he has made his own troubles, but his assertion that he has already been punished also seeks to limit further judgement. Throughout, retrospective insight and renewed self-dramatization coexist. He can name his contradictions while still displaying the scenes, metaphors, and emotional grandeur that make them attractive.

The decisive revelation at the profession is not an intentional confession to René. Amélie addresses God, and he alone overhears the prayer. His subsequent reconstruction of her conduct remains his reconstruction,

signalled by explanatory conjectures on p. 182. The clear declaration of her nonreciprocated passion must be distinguished from the brother's later pleasure in possessing a substantial grief. Souël's concern about what this knowledge may have done to René adds another interpretation without supplying direct access to his mind.

The superior's letter on p. 188 introduces a witness from Amélie's later community. Although the frame narrator summarizes rather than reproduces it in full, its report of nursing, even temper, and contentment gives evidence not confined to René's impressions at the seashore. Then the elders interpret the story, and the outer narrator supplies a brief, partly hearsay ending. No single speaker controls all these layers. The literary power of confession lies precisely in the gap between speaking honestly about oneself and understanding what one's life means; the book makes its readers negotiate that gap rather than accepting the longest voice as the final authority.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 140.** les sentiments secrets de son âme — The frame defines the subject of René's promised account.
- **p. 142.** il a été trop puni — Self-accusation is joined to a request against further condemnation.
- **p. 168.** elle n'a été racontée que sous l'arbre du désert — René requests secrecy from the internal hearers.
- **p. 180.** que je fus seul à entendre — The prayer's decisive words are disclosed through one privileged hearer.

- **p. 191.** On dit que — The final report of his return to married life is marked as hearsay.

In this edition. The source's editorial introduction distinguishes the outer frame, René's narration, embedded letters, and prefatory interpretation. "Confession" is an analytical headword here; the main text also supplies the more specific terms récit, secret, and aveu.

See also. Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Apostrophe and changes of tense (p. 22) · Silence and voice (p. 147) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

Céluta and the unfulfilled marriage

épouse; mariage; Céluta

The word. Céluta is the wife whom the supplied edition's annotation identifies from the prologue to Atala. René's own episode calls her his wife without naming her. She is crucial as an absent relationship: her existence makes his withdrawal a neglect of an already established bond, rather than a purely private experiment in solitude.

In René. The first sentence states that René had to take a wife to conform to Indigenous customs and immediately adds that he did not live with her (p. 139). This compressed introduction neither gives the woman a speaking part nor explains her view of the marriage. It establishes René's relation to a host community while showing how little he allows that relation to alter his habits. A responsible reading should preserve the inequality of attention: the

European protagonist's desires occupy nearly the whole story, whereas his wife appears chiefly at its margins.

Marriage returns inside Amélie's letter as a proposed remedy. A wife and children might occupy René's days and relieve his troubles (p. 171). Her account of the imagined wife is compromised by the feelings she is attempting to overcome: the future bride becomes wholly devoted to René and would seem to him another sister. The recommendation therefore combines a socially intelligible possibility with a revealing projection. It should not be treated as an objective guarantee that any woman could or should cure him.

At the end the elders press him to return to his wife. The outer narrator marks the report as hearsay and states that the return does not bring happiness (pp. 191–192). The episode consequently offers marriage as an obligation René has avoided, but does not demonstrate that entering ordinary domestic life automatically resolves his condition. It also does not say that Céluta herself was happy, that reconciliation was mutual, or that the marriage became affectionate. Those would be additions to a deliberately abbreviated conclusion.

Reading the unnamed wife alongside the more fully represented Amélie exposes the limits of René's claim to be alone on earth. Such declarations describe his felt condition; they do not inventory all existing relationships or responsibilities. Céluta's near-silence is thus interpretively consequential. It reveals the distance between the self's experience of isolation and the claims other people may have upon it. The closing massacre then ends the possibility of a developed account of the couple, leaving marital return a partial action rather than a completed cure.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 139.** mais il ne vivoit point avec elle — The opening records non-cohabitation without supplying the wife's perspective.
- **p. 171.** Une femme, des enfants occuperoient vos jours — Amélie proposes domestic duties as an occupation.
- **p. 171.** tu croirois retrouver une sœur — Her imagined marriage carries the pressure of sibling attachment.
- **p. 192.** son épouse, mais sans y trouver le bonheur — The final return is explicitly not narrated as happy.

In this edition. The name Céluta occurs in the anonymous editor's note to p. 139, which refers to Atala's prologue, p. 25 of the larger volume. That referenced passage is not reproduced as part of René here. The article therefore distinguishes the contextual identification from the episode's own unnamed "épouse."

See also. Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life (p. 181) · Women, gender, and the distribution of agency (p. 184) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34)

Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life

mort; tombeau; immortalité; se régénérer

The word. Death is at once a bodily event, an anticipated passage beyond earthly life, a figure for withdrawal, and a ritual sign of renunciation. Resurrection and regeneration belong to the horizon of renewed life, but the episode does

not narrate a literal bodily resurrection. Its different deaths must remain distinct: bereavement, suicidal intention, monastic symbolism, charitable dying, and collective massacre.

In René. René first knows death on his father's lips and takes the experience as an intimation of the soul's immortality (pp. 145–146). His hope of reunion grows beside the recognition that others very quickly forget the dead. The tomb thus promises eternity and exposes worldly oblivion at once. The monks' graves likewise attract him toward a life withdrawn from ordinary affairs, before he rejects actual entry into the monastery.

The vocabulary later becomes perilously mobile. René repeatedly wants to bury himself in a place of retreat. His imagined migration beyond this world and desire for storms to carry him into another life can make death appear as a form of expansion. In the city church, however, the request to change the old self offers a different possibility: renewal within continued existence. Amélie's demand for a promise not to kill himself gives that possibility a binding interpersonal form.

Her profession stages dying to the world beneath a pall and to the sound of the Office of the Dead. She is alive throughout, and the completion of her vows must not be confused with actual death. Even the subsequent fever does not kill her. René says she descends a second time into life's painful course (p. 183), a figurative return that allows trial, transformation, and charity to continue. Her later death while nursing companions gives the sequence its ethical difference from his planned escape.

The outer frame then places several actual deaths beyond the completed oral account: Amélie's is reported in a letter, while René's and the elders' are compressed into the final

paragraph. None becomes a narrated vision of the afterlife. A rock remains as a material place of memory after the voices disappear. The religious promise of immortality is therefore mediated by hopes, rites, and testimony, rather than presented as a spectacle verified by an omniscient narrator. The work continually asks what relation to life a thought of death produces: abandonment, self-dramatization, endurance, care, or remembrance.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 145.** l'immortalité de l'âme — René names the intuition prompted by his father's death.
- **p. 158.** le besoin de se régénérer — Religious renewal is imagined before the crisis of suicidal intention.
- **p. 180.** pour mourir au monde — The profession uses symbolic death, not a literal fatal act.
- **p. 183.** Descendue une seconde fois dans la pénible carrière de la vie — Amélie survives fever and resumes embodied life.
- **p. 192.** On montre encore un rocher — The coda leaves a site of memory rather than a narrated afterlife.

In this edition. The editor explains the funeral-pall rite on p. 180 and identifies the purgatorial image on p. 181. "Resurrection" is a thematic connection, not a claim that this exact noun or a literal resurrection occurs in these passages.

See also. Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering (p. 75) · Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Bells, liturgy, and shared time (p. 27) · Parents and the elder brother (p. 106) · Purgatory and hope (p. 127)

Desire and the Unknown Good

désir; bien inconnu; objet

The word. Désir is directed energy before it has secured a durable object. René's 'unknown good' is something felt to be lacking but not positively identified: its instinct pursues him before he can say what he wants. Objet may mean a person, an end, or something upon which feeling can fasten. It does not automatically name an otherworldly Idea.

The grammar is double: René seeks, yet is pursued by instinct; he makes abrupt decisions, yet experiences himself as the victim of an imagination faster than enjoyment. Desire is both an activity and an affliction. Its repeated overflow makes it difficult to separate authentic aspiration from self-defeating demands.

In René. Travel and homecoming fail to calm an ardour that follows him everywhere (p. 156). Social life offers objects, but he thinks he gives more than he receives and must diminish himself to participate. When he asks what he desires, he admits that he does not know; the immediate conviction that the woods will delight him substitutes a new setting for an answer (p. 159). His change of circumstances repeats the same structure rather than solving it.

At the cottage, desire occupies all nature with a projected beloved: winds, river, stars, and life's principle become an imaginary phantom (p. 160). The language is cosmic, but the wished-for companion remains affectively and erotically charged. The wish for infinity stands beside a surprising concession that happiness, if possible, would be found in habit. A patient, recurrent life is thus imagined as valuable even by the speaker who declares the finite worthless.

After Amélie's revelation, indeterminate passions rush upon a 'first prey' (p. 182). The object is no longer imagined, but the predatory metaphor and pleasure in full grief show that finding an object does not by itself constitute recovery. Amélie's recommendation of occupation, and Souël's demand to employ strength for others, introduce a different test: whether desire can become sustained action responsive to another's good. The narrative asks more than whether the inward void can be filled.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 156.** cette ardeur de désir qui me suit partout — The present tense extends restless desire from remembered travel into the act of telling.
- **p. 159.** Je ne le savois pas — René answers his own question about what he desired with admitted ignorance.
- **p. 159.** je cherche seulement un bien inconnu — His defence recasts inconstancy as pursuit of something not yet named or found.
- **p. 160.** l'idéal objet d'une flamme future — The imagined object is attached to a future love; the phrase does not establish a Platonic doctrine.

- **p. 182.** cette première proie avec fureur — A real misfortune supplies direction while exposing the violence of previously undetermined feeling.

In this edition. The 1802 reading at p. 159 includes ‘le vague instinct’; 1826 omits vague. The editorial introduction usefully notices this withdrawal of the programmatic word, but the continuing indeterminacy must be demonstrated from the surviving language, not assumed to vanish with an adjective.

See also. The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Infinity, Limits, and Absolute Yearning (p. 87) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Abyss and volcano (p. 15) · Adam and Eve (p. 16)

Disgust and Loss of Taste

dégoût; dégoûts; dégoûté

The word. Dégoût is an aversion figured as loss of taste: the rejection of something that no longer promises nourishment or enjoyment. Its objects vary, from worldly things and other people to earthly existence itself. The plural can denote recurring disaffections or intolerances; Amélie can therefore name René’s dégoûts among traits that injure his relations.

The word is ethically unstable. Aversion to the world can sound like Christian detachment, yet in René it may also express wounded expectation, impatience, or refusal of ordinary obligations. Its object and consequences must be considered before assigning it either spiritual merit or simple culpability.

In René. At the monks’ graves René exclaims at the disgust for earth their tombs inspire (p. 148). He nevertheless

abandons the monastic possibility for travel. The sentence describes a strong feeling without demonstrating a settled vocation. After returning to society he becomes increasingly disgusted with things and men because he believes he must diminish himself to fit them (p. 157). His judgement may record real alienation while also protecting a high estimate of his own inward worth.

At the cottage the ‘disgust with life’ felt since childhood returns with fresh strength (p. 164). Its scope is now existential; bodily languor and ennui accompany it, and the resolve to die follows. Amélie’s intervention refuses to treat this state as only a private matter: ‘your disgusts, your injustices’ binds distress to his suspicions of her and to the harm his projected death would inflict (p. 166). Her rebuke and care arrive together.

The omitted 1802 account says early Christian persecutions increased disgust for the things of life (Appendix I no. 1). Thus the religious history that helps explain René’s temperament partly shares its language with the moral diagnosis that condemns him. Souël’s closing argument supplies a practical distinction: withdrawal that wastes powers and abandons others differs from religious discipline and service. The text does not solve the problem by reserving dégoût exclusively for one side.

René’s changing aversions also expose a temporal paradox. The Preface calls perpetual inconstancy a constant disgust: objects change while rejection persists. The stability lies in the refusal itself, which outlasts each attempted remedy and makes novelty unable to deliver its promised renewal.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 148.** dégoût de la terre — Monastic tombs prompt aversion to earthly life, though René does not stay in the monastery.
- **p. 157.** dégoûté de plus en plus des choses et des hommes — The aversion expands across the social world in René's own account.
- **p. 164.** Ce dégoût de la vie — The return of an early disposition precedes the suicidal crisis.
- **p. 166.** tes dégoûts, tes injustices — Amélie connects inward aversion to the treatment of other people.
- **Preface p. 10.** la perpétuelle inconstance, qui n'est qu'un dégoût constant — The theoretical extract finds a recurring structure beneath apparent changefulness.

In this edition. The translation consistently chooses 'disgust', not the weaker 'distaste'. At p. 148, 1802 has 'de quelle philosophie mélancolique' where 1826 has 'de quel dégoût de la terre'. The supplied witnesses establish a lexical replacement; its exact revision date remains undetermined.

See also. Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Melancholy (p. 95) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Solitude (p. 151)

Disquiet and Restlessness

inquiétude; inquiétudes

The word. Inquiétude is inability to rest: unsettled motion of desire or feeling, rather than merely worry about a specified danger. The plural can gather repeated

movements of that condition. ‘Disquiet’, the supplied translation’s choice, preserves inward unrest without importing a clinical category of anxiety.

The word belongs to a larger vocabulary of agitation, ardeur, trouble, and instability. It identifies the movement that remains when changes of place have failed. This is why the calm landscape at the opening does not explain or cure René’s disturbance; the mismatch between outer peace and inner motion is precisely what embarrasses him.

In René. At the beginning of his confession René calls his disquiets ‘eternal’ and imagines the old men finding them miserable (p. 142). The phrase magnifies duration while recognizing how disproportionate his torments may appear beside lives of actual bereavement. It is both self-indictment and an appeal not to condemn someone already punished. His listener is being asked to respond to a confession whose moral vocabulary is not necessarily its final judgement.

On returning to France, René discovers that home cannot quiet the desire travel failed to satisfy (p. 156). The 1826 sentence moves into the present, ‘qui me suit partout’, bringing the condition into the telling. His diagnosis of cultural decline after Louis XIV supplies a historical grievance, but cannot exhaust the cause of a restlessness he has already described from childhood. External corruption and internal inconstancy remain distinct explanatory claims.

The Preface’s quoted account of modern passions gives disquiet a collective history. Public business and bodily activity supposedly filled ancient life; modern feeling turns back upon itself. The passage’s generalization about women is part of that historically situated polemic, not a

neutral account of gender. The omitted 1802 paragraphs add Christianity's orientation toward distant heavenly hope. Across these frames, restlessness can be understood as culturally produced, religiously intensified, and morally misdirected; reducing it to a single personal defect obscures the competing causes the edition preserves.

Amélie's growing agitation resembles René's without having the same known object. Her 'everything alarmed her' (p. 168) is retrospectively explained by a definite forbidden attachment. The resemblance warns that a common outward form of distress does not prove an identical inward structure.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 142.** mes éternelles inquiétudes — René anticipates the listeners' judgement while declaring the persistent scale of his unrest.
- **p. 156.** cette inquiétude, cette ardeur de désir — The apposition defines disquiet through desire rather than through a named fear.
- **Preface p. 10.** cette inquiétude secrète — The theoretical extract makes hidden restlessness a feature of modern affective life.
- **p. 168.** tout l'alarmoit — Amélie's analogous agitation has a particular concealed cause, revealed later.

In this edition. At p. 156 the supplied 1802 variant a reads 'cette vague inquiétude' and 'qui m'avoit suivi par-tout'. The 1826 wording removes vague and uses the present. Those observable differences support a claim about wording and temporal reach, not a securely dated sequence of revisions.

See also. The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Amélie (p. 18) · Solitude (p. 151) · Ennui and Troubles (p. 60)

Ennui and Troubles

ennui; ennuis

The word. Singular ennui is an invasive weariness or emptiness of existence, heavier than ordinary boredom. Plural ennuis can retain the less totalizing sense of troubles or griefs. The distinction is semantic rather than absolute: context matters more than number alone. In the account of modernity, the plural also gathers the ‘troubles of the heart’ excluded by ancient public activity.

Ennui is not simply the absence of feeling. At its extreme it becomes the feeling through which René knows that he exists. Nor is it safely separable from intense desire: expenditure without a lasting object can lead from superabundance to exhaustion. The narrative makes those apparent opposites successive phases of one inward economy.

In René. René first attributes increased ennui to Amélie’s unexplained avoidance on his return (p. 156). This causal attribution is provisional and self-centred: he does not yet know the suffering behind her conduct. Withdrawal promises relief, but country solitude eventually leaves his heart unable to feed thought. Bodily languor, disgust with life, and the singular awareness of ennui converge just before his resolve to die (p. 164). The text presents a crisis, not an occasion for treating the character with a modern diagnosis.

Amélie’s recommendation of marriage offers relief for his ennuis (p. 171) through a wife, children, and occupied

days. Her advice also names a profession or settled calling. These are concrete forms of continuity against the cycle of ecstatic projection and depletion, although her emotionally implicated letter cannot be treated as wholly disinterested counsel. The frame's report that René later returns to his wife without happiness prevents that advice from becoming an automatically successful cure.

The most troubling transformation comes when real grief becomes an occupation (p. 183). He no longer wants to die, yet calls his heart naturally kneaded of ennui and misery. The suffering that interrupts emptiness is valuable to him partly because it fills time. This outcome avoids a simple ascent from false distress to authentic healing: the newly real cause of pain may also preserve the self's demand for inexhaustible affect. Souël's service to others offers a criterion that being occupied by one's sorrow does not meet.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 156.** augmenter mon ennui — René initially describes his sister's distance in terms of its effect on him.
- **p. 164.** un profond sentiment d'ennui — Ennui becomes the remaining sign of existence after the heart no longer feeds thought.
- **p. 171.** un soulagement à vos ennuis — Marriage is proposed as relief for troubles, a plural sense the translation distinguishes.
- **p. 183.** pétri d'ennui et de misère — Even grief's power to fill his days is interpreted as evidence of deep inward poverty.

In this edition. The English preserves singular ennui but uses ‘troubles’ for the plural on pp. 171 and 179. The supplied Key Terms relates ennui to acedia; that is an editorial comparison, not a word or diagnosis stated by René. At p. 164 the 1802 reading adds ‘mal-aise’, which 1826 removes.

See also. Disgust and Loss of Taste (p. 55) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78)

Father Souël: severity and responsibility

père Souël; missionnaire

The word. Souël is the missionary who hears René’s account alongside Chactas and delivers its sharpest ethical judgement. His authority combines religious office, a sustained relationship with René, and the opposition between inward compassion and outward severity. He is a character whose speech has exceptional interpretive weight, not an impersonal narrator whose every suspicion becomes an established fact.

In René. The opening distributes influence between Chactas’s indulgence and Souël’s severity (pp. 139–140). This distribution determines the storytelling scene: René seeks sympathetic understanding, but must speak before a hearer capable of disputing his account of himself. Souël’s long silence gives the concluding rebuke the force of an interruption of the reader’s accumulated sympathy. The frame narrator nevertheless specifies his secretly compassionate heart (p. 189); austerity is a mode of pastoral action rather than proof that he feels nothing.

His diagnosis shifts attention from exceptional suffering to neglected obligations. The problem is not merely that René is sad, but that he treats displeasure with the world as evidence of superiority and withdraws his powers from social use. The celebrated distinction between solitude with God and solitude without God becomes concrete in the demand to serve others (p. 190). Amélie's nursing, reported immediately before the rebuke, supplies a practical comparison: she has used suffering and withdrawal as occasions for charity, whereas René still consumes his days in isolation.

Souël's argument also contains a carefully qualified fear. He suspects that the confession heard beneath the pall may in turn have troubled René's soul. The phrase "je crains" must remain a suspicion about subsequent disturbance; it cannot cancel Amélie's explicit statement that her brother had not shared her passion (p. 180). Nor does the priest's warning of chastisement authorize the reader to treat every later calamity as a transparent divine verdict.

Chactas ultimately accepts the rebuke and recasts it as a river fable. Yet the narrative does not dramatize René's successful moral restoration. He walks silently between the praying priest and the blind elder, reportedly returns unhappily to his wife, and dies in the same collective violence as both advisers. Souël therefore supplies the book's strongest normative statement without closing every question its ending raises. The Preface's claim that his speech settles the moral is itself an authorial interpretation to place beside this more resistant narrative sequence.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 189.** Il portoit en secret un cœur compatissant — The frame narrator qualifies Souël's severity before giving him the floor.
- **p. 190.** je crains que, par une épouvantable justice — The priest marks an apprehension, not certain knowledge of René's inner response.
- **p. 190.** au service de ses semblables — His corrective directs power toward other people.
- **p. 191.** le missionnaire qui prioit Dieu — Prayer accompanies the final walk rather than a narrated conversion.

In this edition. The anonymous translation preserves the contrast between a "compassionate heart" and an "inflexible character" on p. 189. Its historical note on p. 192 discusses a Jesuit named Souel; that annotation should not be used to turn the fictional speech into a historical transcript. At p. 190, variant b, the 1802 witness has "le temps que vous perdiez à allumer les vôtres," where the 1826 text has "le temps que vous perdez peut-être à allumer les vôtres": the latter adds a qualification to the accusation.

See also. Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Friendship and imperfect understanding (p. 67) · Solitude (p. 151)

Fiction, truth, and the poetic example

vérité; poëte; tableau; imagination

The word. Truth in the edition can mean accuracy of observed detail, insight into a state of mind, doctrinal validity, or the moral effect of an invented narrative. Poetry names an imaginative power that gives such meanings sensory and affective form. These kinds of truth need not coincide, and the speakers' claims should be tested according to the kind they make.

In René. In the Preface's defence of Atala, the author argues that apparently unusual natural details may be drawn from travel testimony rather than invented. He claims scrupulous accuracy for American nature there (pp. 7–8). That assertion explains a polemical position, not a blanket guarantee of every scene in René. The editor's note to p. 141 identifies the visible Appalachians in the Louisiana prospect as geographically impossible. A composed tableau may be artistically effective while failing as literal topography.

René himself understands poetry as privileged insight. His praise of poets gives them divine origin, childlike simplicity, and grand knowledge alongside incapacity for ordinary business (pp. 150–151). The description can illuminate his own aspiration to inward grandeur, but it also makes practical incompetence look attractive. Elsewhere sacred architecture builds the poet's ideas into sensible forms (p. 152), showing poetry as a principle that crosses media rather than merely verse.

The inner life is likewise rendered through tableaux. The young man on the volcano offers an explicit image of his character; the final sea and convent scene becomes a picture engraved in memory. These images tell readers

how René understands himself, not just what externally occurred. Their power depends upon composition, selection, and analogy. His occasional claim that sensations cannot be painted also dramatizes an expressive limit even while the prose supplies a remarkably elaborate painting.

The author's apologetic argument adds another test: a fiction is to be judged by the governing impression it leaves, rather than by detached maxims. The reviews partly accept this criterion while admitting the danger that seductive description may exceed the intended moral. Thus poetic truth is neither simple factual correspondence nor unrestricted subjective sincerity. The book asks art to depict desire convincingly, move readers, and direct them toward judgement, but those purposes can pull in different directions. Recognizing the tension lets one admire the prose without confusing emotional persuasiveness, documentary accuracy, and ethical authority.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 8.** la nature américaine y est peinte avec la plus scrupuleuse exactitude — The author's claim here explicitly concerns Atala.
- **p. 150.** Ces chantres sont de race divine — René idealizes the poet's special origin and power.
- **p. 152.** les idées du poëte, et les fait toucher aux sens — Architecture translates poetic conception into sensory form.
- **p. 153.** l'image de son caractère et de son existence — René explains the volcano tableau as an image of himself.

- **Preface p. 15.** par l’impression que cet ouvrage laisse au fond de l’âme — The defence proposes a criterion of overall moral effect.

In this edition. The anonymous introduction’s interpretations are editorial arguments, not additional primary narration. Claims about historical, geographic, or scriptural referents are attributed to the supplied annotations when this lexicon has not independently verified them.

See also. Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · The two reviews and the management of admiration (p. 171) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164) · Biblical figures and scriptural echoes (p. 29) · Ossian and the bards (p. 104) · Architecture and embodied poetry (p. 24)

Friendship and imperfect understanding

amitié; ami; père adoptif

The word. Amitié includes personal attachment, confidence and the duties a bond imposes. In René it is also the acceptable name through which an attachment may conceal meanings not yet recognized. Friendship therefore needs attention to speaker, context and unequal knowledge.

In René. René treats Amélie’s apparent joy at his departure and avoidance of his return as proofs that human friendship is inconstant. The later revelation alters the evidence: conduct he read as indifference can be understood as an effort to resist forbidden desire. His generalizations are built on incomplete knowledge of the person closest to him.

The two elders offer another kind of relation. Their approaches differ, but both persist in trying to hear him. Chactas supplies indulgence and touch; Souël supplies an austere demand that feeling become duty. Their disagreement is not a choice between friendship and its absence. The outer narrator explicitly attributes compassion to the severe priest, and Chactas accepts the substance of the rebuke.

The closing return toward their cabins restores the image of three companions, while René's unhappy reunion with his wife remains only a report. Friendship can secure a hearing and exert pressure without guaranteeing transformation. The narrative thereby resists making either sympathetic reception or moral advice a sufficient cure by itself.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 148.** l'inconséquence des amitiés humaines — René generalizes before he understands Amélie's motives.
- **p. 156.** l'amitié, que la présence attiédit — The accusation emerges from another misread separation.
- **p. 140.** de douceur et d'autorité — The listeners combine affection with pressure to disclose.
- **p. 189.** un cœur compatissant — The narrator qualifies Souël's outward severity.
- **p. 191.** Les trois amis — The group remains a relation after the correction.

In this edition. The French term amitié must not be silently translated as erotic love whenever it describes René and Amélie. Their asymmetrical knowledge matters.

Equally, the word's acceptable surface can be part of how her letter expresses more than René initially understands. The lexicon preserves both possibilities without collapsing them.

See also. Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Amélie (p. 18)

Genius and Presiding Spirit

génie; Génie

The word. Génie has more than one sense in the edition. It can mean exceptional creative or intellectual power, the distinctive spirit of a religion or age, or a personified presence such as the Genius of memories. The title Génie du Christianisme uses the second range, not the claim that Christianity is an unusually gifted individual.

Claims to genius require attribution. René admires artists, Amélie praises her brother's genius, the Defence warns against mistaking misanthropy for elevated genius, and reviewers identify genius in the author. Those judgements arise from different positions and cannot be combined into a single narrator-certified description of René.

In René. Among ruins, René believes he sees the 'Génie des souvenirs' beside him (p. 149). This presiding figure makes remembrance visible through personification. It is not evidence that he has encountered a supernatural being, since the sentence explicitly says he thought he saw it. His praise of poets as divine men then associates extraordinary thought with childlike simplicity and practical incomprehension (pp. 150–151). It is a portrait of creative otherness, but he does not name it madness.

On returning to France he contrasts the earlier ‘height of genius’ with the later suppleness of wit (p. 156). The distinction is part of his morally charged historical account of decline after Louis XIV. Amélie’s ‘beauty of your genius’ appears in a letter imagining the wife who would love René (p. 171). That praise belongs to a speaker whose own passion compromises the distance of her judgement. It is significant evidence of how she sees him, not independent proof of realized artistic achievement.

The authorial Defence attacks people who mistake hatred of others for elevation of genius (Preface p. 13), and the 1802 reviewer mocks those who begin with eccentricity while waiting for genius (p. 354). The 1805 reviewer offers the positive counterpart: the author’s bold invention combined with deference to artistic rules. Exceptional inward claims are measured against made works and disciplined form. René’s adolescent verses and imagined power to create worlds never become a comparable public achievement within the story.

These distinctions sharpen rather than cancel the novel’s attraction to extraordinary capacity. Chactas grants René a great soul while asking for moderation; Souël requires its forces to serve others. Genius, if present, would intensify responsibility rather than excuse withdrawal.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 149.** le Génie des souvenirs — A personified presence arises within a qualified act of imaginative seeing.
- **p. 156.** De la hauteur du génie — René’s cultural comparison uses genius as a quality of an admired historical age.

- **p. 171.** la beauté de votre génie — Amélie's praise is inseparable from the emotionally revealing marriage passage.
- **Preface p. 13.** prendront la haine des hommes pour l'élévation du génie — The Defence condemns a false inference from estrangement to superiority.
- **p. 354.** qui ont commencé par la bizarrerie en attendant le génie — The 1802 reviewer attacks imitation of the outward posture of exceptionality.

In this edition. The English keeps 'Genius' for the personification and 'genius' for exceptional power, while retaining the French book title. Capitals alone do not establish metaphysical categories. The supplied edition's gloss on démon at p. 163 also permits 'genius' or attendant spirit, so the heart's demon need not mean a Christian devil in every nuance.

See also. Genius, Delirium, and Unreason (p. 71) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Soul (p. 153)

Genius, Delirium, and Unreason

génie; folie; délire; raison

The word. The book places exceptional capacity near forms of unreason without declaring them identical. Folie can mean folly or madness; délire may denote an extravagant state; reason can fail, divide against feeling, or become an instrument of an irrational plan. Context must decide how strongly each term is used. None permits a retrospective clinical diagnosis of the character.

The connection is especially charged because literary genius and eccentric behaviour can imitate one another

from the outside. The authorial and critical apparatus repeatedly refuses the inference that suffering, misanthropy, or oddness proves genius. The novel nevertheless renders such states with an imaginative force that makes them attractive to readers.

In René. René's praise of poets portrays divine understanding joined to practical helplessness and childlike simplicity (pp. 150–151). This does not establish madness; it sets extraordinary ability beside worldly incapacity. In his own country solitude, he imagines the power to create worlds (p. 163), yet produces no corresponding work within the narrated action. The discrepancy invites a distinction between experienced potency and accomplished creation.

At the suicidal crisis René asks pardon as someone nearly deprived of reason, then describes putting all his reason into a senseless act (pp. 164–165). Rational organization and a self-destructive end are deliberately held together. The narration refuses the easy assurance that articulate reflection necessarily means sound judgement. His later wish for a real misfortune is called délire, and Amélie's revelation momentarily makes his reason wander (pp. 167, 180). These are different scenes, not a single stable mental label.

The Defence forecasts proud misanthropy leading to madness or death after people mistake hatred of humanity for elevated genius (Preface pp. 13–14). The sequence condemns a cultural posture and its consequences. The 1802 reviewer's joke about beginning with eccentricity while waiting for genius performs the same discrimination. Meanwhile the 1805 reviewer praises the author's invention precisely because it respects rules and can submit to mature judgement. The apparatus seeks to

preserve a legitimate exceptional art while refusing a licence for exceptional irresponsibility.

Souël's charge of presumption and demand for service gives this distinction an ethical form: power must be employed beyond the self. The framework does not require the reader to deny the reality of René's distress or the brilliance of the prose that expresses it. It requires separating the character's experience, the author's artistry, and the moral claims made about both.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 163.** la puissance de créer des mondes — René experiences enormous creative possibility at the height of his storm-driven excitement.
- **p. 164.** presque privé de la raison — The appeal to Souël qualifies culpability through impaired judgement, in René's own retrospective words.
- **p. 165.** mettre toute ma raison dans cet acte insensé — Reason can organize a purpose that the narrator himself now calls senseless.
- **p. 180.** ma raison s'égare — The revelation produces a particular crisis rather than establishing a lifelong diagnosis.
- **Preface p. 14.** qui les conduira à la folie, ou à la mort — The Defence's prediction belongs to its polemic against proud, detached misanthropy.

In this edition. English 'madness', 'folly', and 'delirium' should remain sensitive to rhetorical register. The supplied note on démon at p. 163 explains that it could mean an attendant genius or spirit as well as a devil; 'possessed' imagery alone does not settle either a medical or a theological explanation.

See also. Genius and Presiding Spirit (p. 69) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Sensibility (p. 143) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108)

Gesture and the speaking body

bras; genoux; regard; fer

The word. Bodies communicate through posture, touch, color, tears and interrupted movement. A gesture can disclose what speech conceals, but it can also be misread. The bodily register prevents René's history of thoughts and feelings from becoming an entirely disembodied interior drama.

In René. René gives his arm to blind Chactas on the way to the meeting. Later Chactas reaches out in darkness and takes his adopted son's arm when speech fails. Assistance moves in both directions. The elder's blindness does not make him simply dependent; his touch restores the conversation.

Amélie's decline is narrated through emaciation, hollowing eyes, variable energy and unfinished tasks. René sees the signs but initially cannot interpret their cause. At the profession her look of reproach stops his renewed fury, while his knees, hands and collapsing body enact the struggle between resistance and submission. Present-tense narration makes the sequence unfold before the reader.

The instrument at René's birth and the sacred scissors at Amélie's profession form a sharp verbal recurrence of fer. One separates the newborn from his dying mother; the other cuts the sister's hair as she leaves the world. The analogy is suggestive rather than a stated symbolic

equation. Both make a change of life bodily and irreversible, and both involve a family bond under strain.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 141.** Il donna le bras au Sachem — René first supplies physical guidance.
- **p. 154.** prenant le bras de son fils — The elder answers with a sustaining touch.
- **p. 168.** Elle maigrissoit — Visible bodily change precedes explanatory knowledge.
- **p. 179.** le fer sacré — The hair-cutting rite makes renunciation corporeal.
- **p. 142.** tiré de son sein avec le fer — Birth is also associated with cutting and separation.

In this edition. The edition's source spelling and abrupt shifts of tense preserve the body's immediacy. Medical labels not present in the story should not replace its descriptive signs. Neither Amélie's symptoms nor René's emotional intensity establishes a retrospective diagnosis.

See also. Parents and the elder brother (p. 106) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering

Dieu; ciel; Tout-Puissant; Éternel

The word. God is invoked under several names: Dieu, the Almighty, the Eternal, and often ciel as a metonym for divine agency. Providence is the interpretive idea that events belong to divine ordering. The story repeatedly

presents this idea through a character's prayer, judgement, or uncertainty, rather than through unrestricted knowledge of divine intentions.

In René. René's earliest religious intuition comes at his father's death, when he imagines thought as deriving from a source beyond the body and hopes for reunion (p. 145). Later, in the city church, he asks either to be relieved of existence or to have the old self changed (p. 158). The alternatives expose a tension within belief: he wants regeneration, yet the same prayer carries exhaustion with life. His admission that his heart loved God while his reasoning denied him makes contradiction explicit (p. 164).

The narrative's providential explanations intensify after Amélie's intervention. René interprets her arrival as a double act of rescue and punishment (p. 182), and he describes her survival of fever as an extended trial before a heavenly crown (p. 183). These are statements made by René inside his retrospective account. They show how he organizes suffering into a moral history; they do not exempt that history from comparison with other testimony or with his continuing attraction to exceptional grief.

Amélie's invocations have their own emphases. She speaks of warnings and punishment in her first letter, but the decisive prayer calls upon a God of mercy and asks blessings for the brother who has not shared her passion (p. 180). Her later letter stresses gradual peace and a transformed use of feeling. Souël in turn makes divine judgement bear on neglected duties, while warning rather than diagnosing with omniscience.

Two limits are particularly important. René says he does not know what heaven reserves for him before interpreting the final European storm (p. 186); a supposed

omen is therefore framed by uncertainty. And the end makes priest, elder, and protagonist perish together. That collective catastrophe complicates any mechanically distributive picture in which every suffering person has received an exactly legible personal sentence. Religious language supplies the work's moral and imaginative horizon, but its speakers differ in what they know, fear, hope, or claim. Reading providence carefully means keeping those grammatical and narrative differences visible.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 158.** ou de changer en moi le vieil homme — René asks for inward transformation beside his wish for relief.
- **p. 164.** mon cœur aimoit Dieu, et mon esprit le méconnoissoit — His self-description makes divided belief explicit.
- **p. 180.** Dieu de miséricorde — Amélie's revelation is addressed to mercy.
- **p. 182.** Dieu m'avoit envoyé Amélie à la fois pour me sauver et pour me punir — René gives a retrospective providential explanation.
- **p. 186.** Je ne sais ce que le ciel me réserve — The account of the storm begins with acknowledged uncertainty.

In this edition. The English distinguishes "God," "heaven," "the Almighty," and "the Eternal." Ciel may also mean the visible sky elsewhere, so each occurrence requires its immediate context rather than an automatic theological substitution.

See also. Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50) · Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36)

Happiness and Habit

bonheur; heureux; habitude

The word. Bonheur names happiness, well-being, or a desirable condition of life; heureux can also express an admiring wish about another's situation. In René it is often imagined at a distance, remembered after loss, or placed under conditions the speaker has difficulty accepting. Its objects include childhood companionship, religious peace, marriage, and the 'common ways' of life.

Habit is a particularly important counterterm to ecstatic novelty. René says that, were he still foolish enough to believe in happiness, he would seek it in habit. The qualification defends his disenchantment while conceding that continuity may matter more than ever-renewed intensity.

In René. Childhood with Amélie supplies memories of contentment, but the recollection is not free of melancholy, paternal constraint, or bereavement. His later description of those woods as the site of his only happy moments (p. 175) is a retrospective selection shaped by imminent loss. When he addresses the passing Indigenous people as happy (p. 154), he similarly constructs their peace from an observer's longing; the narrative does not enter their minds to verify his claim.

The brief renewed life with Amélie offers an everyday happiness organized by her morning voice and the fact of

no longer waking alone (p. 167). Its dependence on a single person makes it fragile, and her own suffering remains hidden beneath his recovery. Her advice to marry and take up a calling then points toward ordinary, distributed attachments. But the imagined wife in her letter is entangled with the sister's desire, so the practical suggestion arrives through an emotionally compromised channel.

Amélie's later 'I do not despair of my happiness' is a cautious report, not a declaration that every pain has vanished (p. 185). Regular life with companions helps; the superior later confirms sustained evenness and contentment. René, by contrast, derives an unexpected satisfaction from fullness of grief and from the unusual nature of his misfortune. Enjoyment and happiness have become distinguishable: pleasure in exceptional suffering does not establish a good life.

Chactas finally says happiness exists only in common paths (p. 191). The closing report nonetheless says that René returns to his wife without finding it. The precept remains advice, while the narrated outcome withholds a consoling success story. That gap is essential to the work's moral and emotional force.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 160.** je le chercherois dans l'habitude — René locates a hypothetical happiness in repetition, despite his habitual flight from it.
- **p. 167.** un tressaillement de joie et de bonheur — A familiar morning voice briefly supplies the companionship his solitude lacks.

- **p. 185.** Je ne désespère pas de mon bonheur — Amélie's cautiously hopeful wording marks a process of recovery.
- **p. 191.** il n'y a de bonheur que dans les voies communes — Chactas gives ordinary life the force of a moral recommendation.
- **p. 192.** mais sans y trouver le bonheur — The frame explicitly refuses to report happiness as the result of René's return.

In this edition. The supplied English uses 'happiness' for bonheur while preserving joy and pleasure as distinct terms where possible. The Defence's statement that Amélie dies 'heureuse et guérie' (Preface p. 15) is an authorial interpretive claim; her own letter is temporally earlier and more qualified.

See also. Childhood and Its Afterlives (p. 38) · Amélie (p. 18) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Solitude (p. 151) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Pastoral happiness and imagined simplicity (p. 110) · River and the parable of excess (p. 131)

Heart

cœur

The word. Cœur is the centre of feeling, attachment, desire, and moral disposition. It can also be the bodily site of a beat, blush, or warmth. Chateaubriand repeatedly makes these ranges touch: an inward need is figured through burning lava, nourishment, wounds, fullness, or an incomplete musical instrument.

The word does not designate an infallible inner truth opposed to a merely false intellect. René explicitly distinguishes a heart that loves God from a mind that

disowns him, and the heart itself may be self-consuming, unjust, or unable to sustain feeling. Its openness to another person is as important as its intensity.

In René. The frame presents Chactas and Souël as gaining ascendancy over René's heart through indulgence and severity (p. 140). The invitation to open it makes confession a relational action. Yet the heart he describes repeatedly closes upon its own movement. The Preface's 'full heart' in an 'empty world' establishes the mismatch, and the solitary heart becomes an echo chamber for passion on p. 161.

The incomplete lyre (p. 162) gives the heart a structural incapacity: joy can only be expressed in the key of sighs. This universal claim belongs to René's interpretation of a shepherd's song. It is not a neutral verdict delivered independently by the narrator. The Preface's discussion of Aubry makes a different limitation explicit: the finite heart cannot even remain unhappy indefinitely (pp. 6–7). René's later discovery that grief cannot be exhausted like pleasure thus meets a proposition elsewhere in the volume that questions its permanence.

Amélie's arrival opens his heart to joy, and her own heart, thought, and voice seem to sigh in concert (pp. 166–167). He idealizes that harmony while failing to understand its concealed disturbance. When her secret emerges, his heart makes grief into occupation rather than escaping its need to feed upon feeling. 'Kneaded of ennui and misery' converts the language of plenitude into a confession of poverty (p. 183).

The last pages distribute moral qualities across several hearts. Chactas remembers Aubry's peace, which understood storms; Souël's compassion exists beneath severity; Amélie's inward struggle has issued in charity. A

heart's worth is consequently tested by relation and action, not merely by how much it can contain or express.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 9.** On habite, avec un cœur plein, un monde vide — The full/empty antithesis formulates the disproportion between inner capacity and experienced world.
- **p. 162.** Notre cœur est un instrument incomplet — René generalizes emotional mixture through the figure of a lyre lacking strings.
- **p. 164.** mon cœur aimoit — The complete sentence distinguishes love of God in the heart from an impious reasoning mind.
- **p. 183.** mon cœur est naturellement pétri d'ennui et de misère — The language of constitution makes his satisfaction in occupied grief itself disquieting.
- **p. 189.** un cœur compatissant — The frame's description prevents equating Souël's severe words with absence of concern.

In this edition. The English generally retains 'heart', preserving the cross-connections between bodily metaphor and moral psychology. At p. 140 the 1826 text adds sentiments to the earlier account of René's pensées; at p. 155, 1802 names the 'histoire secrète de son cœur', where 1826 omits secrète. These changes alter explicit emphasis without removing the inner-life design.

See also. Soul (p. 153) · Sensibility (p. 143) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103) · River and the parable of excess (p. 131)

Homeland and exile

patrie; exil; terre natale

The word. Patrie is the homeland as an object of attachment, distinct from any merely geographical pays. Exile can be displacement abroad or a self-chosen withdrawal within one's own country. In René, remoteness measures failed belonging more reliably than distance does.

In René. Childhood and homeland first occur together as sources of lingering sweetness. The bells of the native place gather family, religion, cradle, grave, past and future into one imaginative whole. This is a remembered pattern of belonging, not a reliable description of a perfectly harmonious family: René has already told us of maternal death, paternal constraint and the elder brother's privileged inheritance.

Returning from abroad, he feels more isolated in his own country than he did in a foreign land. The expected cure of homecoming fails because neither society nor Amélie's unexplained absence offers the relation he needs. The cottage retreat is then called a rural exile. Displacement has become an inward practice conducted near home.

The final crossing to America literalizes that exile and makes return impossible within the narrated life. Yet the story refuses to oppose corrupt Europe to a wholly healing America. René initially admires the apparently contented Indigenous people, while neglecting his own adopted ties and wife among them. Exile offers a new site on which old habits can be repeated. The homeland receding below the horizon is therefore a genuine loss without being a lost paradise whose recovery would necessarily restore him.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** O illusions de l'enfance et de la patrie — Nostalgic sweetness is explicitly called illusion.
- **p. 156.** plus isolé dans ma patrie — Homecoming intensifies rather than cures isolation.
- **p. 159.** un exil champêtre — Exile becomes a voluntary condition within the countryside.
- **p. 187.** des arbres de la patrie — The departing view reduces home to its last visible traces.

In this edition. At pp. 144–145, 1826 "religion, family, homeland" replaces the 1802 "philosophy, piety, tenderness". This supplied variant makes collective attachments more explicit. It cannot by itself tell us in which intervening revision the alteration was made.

See also. The paternal house (p. 166) · Sea and voyage (p. 141) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164)

Imagination and Chimeras

imagination; chimère; chimères; fantôme imaginaire

The word. Imagination is the faculty that supplies images and possibilities beyond immediate perception. A chimère is an ungrounded or illusory object fashioned or sustained by that faculty. The words are related but not interchangeable: imagination also enables art, memory, sympathetic conjecture, and religious representation. The novel's problem is not simply that imagining is false.

A phantom of desire may be intense without corresponding to an existing person. René's 'imaginary phantom' names that status rather than making a claim about a supernatural apparition. His language often moves

between perceiving, believing he perceives, and producing by thought; attention to those distinctions keeps description from becoming an inventory of objective events.

In René. The Preface's theory places an abundant imagination beside poor, dry existence (p. 9). Extensive reading lets modern people anticipate experience and lose illusions before enjoyment. René reproduces this mismatch when he imagines scenes inside lighted houses but has no friend under their roofs (p. 158). The faculty can enter other lives in thought while failing to establish an actual relation with them.

His defence against charges of inconstancy admits an imagination that races to the bottom of pleasures (p. 159). It does not merely invent impossible goods; it accelerates consumption, making the duration of even possible pleasures intolerable. At the cottage, the absent beloved becomes everything around him. The declaration that he could create worlds (p. 163) culminates this apparent fertility, immediately before bodily languor and ennui expose its limits.

Imagining also helps René discover Amélie's pain after the revelation. Yet his earlier conjecture that she loves an unidentified man is wrong precisely because it makes a plausible narrative fit incomplete evidence. Imagination thus alternates between projection and belated understanding. Souël's 'infatuated with chimeras' condemns a mode of living, not every act of making images.

The authorial Defence itself promises 'pictures for the imagination' as part of religious apology (Preface p. 13), and the 1805 reviewer praises imaginative power while admitting its intoxicating danger (p. 356). The medium

used to criticize René's self-enchantment resembles the faculty being criticized. This productive tension explains why the book can both attract the reader into an experience and warn against making that experience one's whole life.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 9.** L'imagination est riche, abondante et merveilleuse — The programmatic account values the faculty's richness even while describing its imbalance with lived existence.
- **p. 159.** de ne pouvoir jouir long-temps de la même chimère — The accusation concerns rapid exhaustion and replacement of imagined satisfactions.
- **p. 160.** tout étoit ce fantôme imaginaire — Nature becomes the projected embodiment of a not-yet-realized love.
- **p. 189.** un jeune homme entêté de chimères — Souël gives the imaginative attachment a severe practical and moral diagnosis.

In this edition. The supplied 1802 reading at p. 159 calls the imagination 'avide'; 1826 omits the adjective. At p. 158 'en imagination' becomes 'par la pensée'. These shifts reduce explicit naming without eliminating the operations involved. 'Esprit romanesque' on p. 157 means a mind shaped by romance-like fancies, not a fully defined later literary movement.

See also. Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Reverie (p. 128) · Genius and Presiding Spirit (p. 69) · Genius, Delirium, and Unreason (p. 71) · The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Apostrophe and changes of tense (p. 22) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

Infinity, Limits, and Absolute Yearning

infini; fini; bornes; éternité

The word. Infini and fini name the unbounded and the bounded; éternité names a temporal horizon beyond ordinary life. René's longing repeatedly crosses from dissatisfaction with particular things to rejection of limits as such. 'Absolute yearning' is a useful interpretive description of that movement, not a phrase supplied by the French text or evidence of a fully developed philosophical system.

The novel's imagery of height, space, abyss, and another life gives this yearning sensible form. These figures may carry Christian hope, erotic projection, imaginative expansion, or self-endangering escape. No single ascent necessarily represents spiritual progress, and the text supplies no basis for forcing every scene into a Platonic allegory.

In René. At the father's death René first imagines immortality clearly and asks whether the face in the coffin bears a vision of eternity (pp. 145–146). The movement begins in bereavement and hoped reunion, not in contempt for all finite attachment. Later, defending his inconstancy, he asks whether he is to blame if finite things have no value for him (p. 160). The rhetorical question presents his demand as a condition suffered rather than a

choice judged; the sentence that follows unexpectedly locates possible happiness in habit.

The imagined beloved then expands through winds, waters, stars, and the very principle of life (p. 160). This is an unlimited projection, yet the wished-for object remains tied to a future love and an Eve shaped from the self. Infinity does not remove the specificity of his emotional need. The autumn voice tells him to wait until death's appointed season, while he answers by summoning desired storms (pp. 162–163). Christian migration imagery is thus divided between patience and impatience.

At departure, the infinite lies just beyond the convent cell's wall (p. 187). The narrow room and limitless beyond coexist, challenging René's earlier assumption that enlarging geographical experience would satisfy him. But he immediately describes Amélie's soul as stormy and evokes a shipwreck worse than a sailor's. The image offers a religious contrast without securing a wholly serene view from his position outside the wall.

The Preface's finite heart complicates the desire for unlimited affect. A heart unable to sustain even grief cannot simply certify its own infinite capacity. Souël's remedy is not to promise an endless sequence of stronger experiences; it is to direct given strengths toward others. The book stages both the grandeur of the demand and the damage done by refusing every workable limit.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 146.** quelque grande vision de l'éternité — René questions the father's dead face as a possible sign of survival beyond life.

- **p. 160.** si ce qui est fini n’a pour moi aucune valeur — The rejection of finite value is René’s self-defensive claim, not an uncontested proposition.
- **p. 163.** dans les espaces d’une autre vie — His invocation of storms turns otherworldly yearning toward impatient escape.
- **p. 187.** l’infini de l’autre côté du mur d’une cellule — A limited religious space is juxtaposed with an unbounded horizon.
- **Preface p. 6.** le cœur de l’homme est fini — The author’s defence of Aubry supplies a counterweight to limitless self-conceptions.

In this edition. The 1802 variant at p. 187 explicitly compares the cell wall with the tombstone separating eternity and life. Its omission in 1826 leaves the contrast more compressed. ‘Ideal object’ on p. 160 should not be converted into a technical Platonic Form; the phrase belongs immediately to the language of a future flame of love.

See also. Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Soul (p. 153) · Heart (p. 80) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Abyss and volcano (p. 15) · Shore and window (p. 145)

Letters and interpretation

lettre; papier; correspondance; lire

The word. Letters transmit information across absence, but they also require reading between lines. A correspondence can have practical purposes that an anxious reader misunderstands. The story makes

interpretation an action with consequences, not merely a neutral extraction of facts.

In René. A letter from Europe intensifies René's sadness and leads the elders to obtain his confession. Its contents are withheld until the close, when the superior's account of Amélie's death is physically handed to Souël. The delayed document changes the relation between the opening mystery and the completed story.

Within the confession, Amélie reads René's concealed suicidal intention from his unusual questions about property and the constrained tone of his letter. Her interpretation prompts a life-saving journey. René is less successful: he treats her secret correspondence as a cause of grief, then suspects love for another man. After the revelation he reconstructs its practical business of vows, dispensation and property, but marks the explanation as probable.

Amélie's long letter moves between advice, religious aspiration, recollection and intense personal address. The change from formal vous to intimate tu during the imagined marriage exposes emotional pressure without itself constituting a complete confession. The reader receives signs before René understands them. His preservation and repeated rereading of the document make written language an enduring object of attachment, distinct from the fleeting voices and sights it evokes.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 140.** Une lettre qu'il reçut d'Europe — The frame opens with a document whose full content is delayed.

- **p. 165.** accoutumée à lire dans les replis de mon âme — Amélie detects a concealed intention from indirect signs.
- **p. 171.** tes moindres peines — The intimate pronoun enters the imagined wife's devotion.
- **p. 182.** avoient apparemment produit — René qualifies his retrospective explanation.
- **p. 188.** le donna au père Souël — A letter becomes shared evidence rather than only private interpretation.

In this edition. The supplied French retains the vous/tu shifts that English "you" cannot directly reproduce. Those shifts should be annotated rather than silently supplemented with invented English familiarity. The source also distinguishes the author's notes, editorial notes and 1802 variants: they are further interpretive layers, not additional letters within the fiction.

See also. Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Tears and the pleasure of grief (p. 160) · Amélie (p. 18) · Gesture and the speaking body (p. 74)

Light and the moon

lune; soleil; lumière; phare

The word. Light makes things visible while also organizing emotional and spiritual contrasts. The sun marks collective and cosmic time; moonlight favors memory and reverie; a lamp can invite conjecture about an inaccessible life. These images do not all signify revelation in the same sense.

In René. The frame's sunrise composes a magnificent landscape whose apparent harmony contrasts with René's

disturbed confession. Chactas cannot see it, which immediately limits any equation of visual access with understanding. His later counsel depends on experience and hearing rather than the beautiful prospect available to the younger man.

Moonlight animates tombs and the imagined Genius of memories; later the moon becomes a pale ship plowing cloud-waves. Its mobility participates in René's restless analogies. By contrast Chactas's image of Father Aubry makes the moon steady above drifting clouds. The same celestial body can figure reverie's susceptibility or spiritual constancy, depending on the comparison.

The convent's light is similarly double. It becomes a stable beacon against the ships' shaken lanterns, but René cannot know from that small light exactly who is inside or what she is doing. The question "Was it you?" guards the difference between an image of security and verified knowledge. Illumination can guide the gaze while leaving the other person's interior undisclosed.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 141.** L'aurore se levoit — The confession opens within a collectively viewed sunrise.
- **p. 149.** cet astre qui alimente les rêveries — Moonlight feeds, rather than corrects, imaginative activity.
- **p. 163.** comme un pâle vaisseau — The moon participates in the book's maritime transformations.
- **p. 187.** le phare immobile du couvent — Stationary light contrasts with endangered navigation.

- **p. 188.** la lune dans une nuit orageuse — Chactas gives the image a different ethical role.

In this edition. The translation's elevated "orb" for astre follows the register of the French. A reader should distinguish the literal light at the barred window from the metaphorical beacon in René's subsequent arrangement of the scene. Both belong to his narrated viewpoint.

See also. Storms and tempests (p. 155) · Shore and window (p. 145) · Time and historical change (p. 178) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34)

Love and Divine Love

amour; aimer; chasteté brûlante

The word. Amour and aimer cover several attachments: family affection, imagined erotic love, Amélie's prohibited desire, and devotion to God. Their shared vocabulary is essential. The narrative does not allocate a separate, uncontaminated language to each kind of love; instead it makes readers ask what an attachment seeks, how it treats another person, and what transformation it undergoes.

Divine love is not an abstract solution mechanically substituted for human love. Amélie speaks of a 'burning chastity', a phrase that retains ardour while changing its moral orientation. The theological distinction between a perishable and an incorruptible flame coexists with the language of deception, turmoil, and voluptuousness.

In René. René says in solitude that he has not yet loved (p. 160), yet later calls Amélie the only person he has loved (p. 166). The apparent contradiction is instructive: the first passage envisages a future erotic object; the second gathers familial intimacy, recognition, and childhood memory into a single person. Neither warrants inferring

that he knowingly shared her incestuous desire. Her own decisive prayer calls him a brother who has not shared it (p. 180).

His wished-for Eve is a woman ‘drawn from myself’ (p. 163). The explicitly biblical image gives cosmic scale to companionship, but also makes the imagined other unusually close to the self that desires her. Amélie’s advice to marry has its own disturbing recoil: the ideal wife would seem a recovered sister (p. 171). These verbal crossings make substitution and projection legible without proving a concealed reciprocal affair.

In Amélie’s final letter, religion ‘gently deceives’ the sensitive soul and unites the lover and virgin (p. 186). The letter describes an affective conversion, not instant erasure of feeling. Its modest assurances on p. 185, where peace is qualified and suffering diminishes over time, resist an overly tidy account. The superior’s later testimony that Amélie dies nursing her companions (p. 188) provides a distinct, outward manifestation of love: charity directed beyond the privileged bond with René. The authorial Défense’s assertion that she dies happy and healed is stronger and more categorical than every stage of her own account.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 160.** n’ayant point encore aimé — René describes the lack of a realized love-object during his rural isolation.
- **p. 180.** un frère qui n’a point partagé ma criminelle passion — Amélie’s words explicitly exclude reciprocity at the revelation.

- **p. 186.** une sorte de chasteté brûlante — The oxymoron preserves intensity within a changed religious commitment.
- **p. 186.** ce reste de trouble — The surviving remainder matters: conversion is narrated through mixed affect, not simple emotional extinction.
- **p. 188.** morte victime de son zèle et de sa charité — The superior's account makes care for the community a final measure of transformed love.

In this edition. At p. 163 the supplied 1802 reading has masculine 'à un autre', where 1826 has feminine 'à une autre'; the later witness specifies a woman. At p. 186 the change from kindling a flame where another burned to changing one flame into another emphasizes continuity of language. Neither change can be dated more precisely from this edition's two witnesses alone.

See also. Amélie (p. 18) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Heart (p. 80) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Solitude (p. 151) · Adam and Eve (p. 16) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36)

Melancholy

mélancolie; mélancolique

The word. Mélancolie is an affective colouring in which sadness may mingle with sweetness, reflection, pleasure, and a sense of loss. It need not mean overwhelming misery: René calls recollective melancholy delectable, and imagines a passing melancholy generated by excess happiness. Its range forbids treating every occurrence as a medical diagnosis or as a single invariant emotion.

Melancholy can characterize a person, a song, or a mode of recollection. It often mediates between sensation and time: a sound or landscape makes something absent present as feeling. The pleasure is not an accidental ornament added to pain; in several scenes their mixture is the experience itself.

In René. The opening frame gives René a melancholy inclination that leads him away from his wife and into the woods (p. 139). Childhood memory then offers a different valuation: bells bring religion, communal belonging, and 'delectable melancholy' (p. 144). The family history is not simply idyllic, since both siblings carry sadness 'from God or from our mother' (p. 145). That deliberately unresolved attribution places melancholy between spiritual condition and inherited temperament without settling a cause.

René's apostrophe to the supposedly happy Indigenous people makes melancholy a temporary surplus of happiness (p. 154). This is his projection upon those passing before him, not the frame's ethnographic knowledge of their interior lives. The shepherd's song likewise leads him to universalize: human song is sad even when it expresses happiness, because the heart is an incomplete lyre (p. 162). Both passages expand a private disposition into an anthropology, and both must remain attributed to their speaker.

Amélie's melancholy later acquires a specific explanation in her hidden passion. The shift matters: melancholy can conceal an object as well as accompany desire that has not found one. In the 1802 theoretical paragraphs, meanwhile, monastic life produces prodigious melancholy, which makes feelings uncertain and is regenerated by their objectless expenditure. This circular account is richer than a simple causal sequence in which vague desire

mechanically produces sadness. The Preface's omission of it limits the later extract's explanatory range without erasing its availability in the edition.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 139.** Un penchant mélancolique — The frame associates the disposition with withdrawal before René interprets it himself.
- **p. 144.** la délectable mélancolie des souvenirs de ma première enfance — The adjective makes remembered sadness a positive, sensuous sweetness.
- **p. 154.** mélancolie qui s'engendre de l'excès du bonheur — René attributes passing melancholy to lives he idealizes as happy and simple.
- **p. 162.** le chant naturel de l'homme est triste — His response to one shepherd's song becomes a claim about human expression generally.
- **Appendix I no. 1.** Une prodigieuse mélancolie fut le fruit de cette vie monastique — The earlier theoretical account locates melancholy within Christian cultural history.

In this edition. At p. 148 the supplied 1802 reading 'philosophie mélancolique' is replaced by 'dégoût de la terre'. The change sharpens the wording toward aversion, but does not make every other melancholy passage wholly negative. 'Melancholy' in the English retains a historical emotional register rather than specifying a present-day diagnosis.

See also. Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Childhood and Its Afterlives (p. 38) · The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Heart (p. 80) · Disgust and Loss of Taste (p. 55) · Amélie (p. 18) · Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103) · Autumn and the seasons (p. 25)

Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion

mémoire; souvenir; souvenirs; oubli

The word. Mémoire can name the faculty of remembering or the continuing remembrance of someone; souvenir can name a particular recollection or a person's remembered presence. Oubli is not merely their accidental opposite. The work repeatedly measures attachment against the speed with which lives, histories, and griefs disappear from others' attention.

Memory is productive and selective, not a neutral store. Bells, ruins, portraits of landscapes, and letters give recollection material forms, while figures such as the Genius of memories personify its activity. Different characters use memory to preserve relation, reopen pain, or explain the world's indifference.

In René. René insists that his father's death left an impression that still lasts, yet observes that the indifferent passer-by crosses the grave that same evening (pp. 145–146). Private persistence and public oblivion coincide. At the royal monument in London, workers barely know or do not know the catastrophe represented (p. 150). From their ignorance René derives a measure of human smallness. His interpretation does not recover every historical person's motives; it uses the scene to think about disappearance.

Chactas supplies an alternative to recollection as exclusive self-enclosure. Saying he now lives only by memory, he asks René to tell him about France (p. 155). His decrepit oak is clothed by plants that have grown on its old branches: another person's story can supplement what age no longer produces. Memory here participates in listening and adoption rather than merely maintaining a lost private world.

Amélie's letter dwells on uneven mourning across distance: one group learns of a death after another has begun to be consoled (pp. 172–173). Her anxious question whether her own memory will vanish joins the Preface's debate about the finite heart. René, however, keeps her letter specifically to remove future impulses of joy (p. 169). The document can become a chosen instrument of recurrent suffering, not simply an aid against involuntary forgetting.

At the abandoned château, memory encounters places that remain while their social life has dispersed. The final sunset rock likewise survives René, but without preserving an account of reform or happiness. The frame's closing 'one still shows' makes his solitude a local trace available to strangers. The novel itself preserves what the protagonist once asked to bury in eternal silence, making remembrance an unresolved formal and ethical question.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 145.** Cette impression fut grande ; elle dure encore — René places enduring personal memory beside the subsequent account of public indifference.

- **p. 155.** je ne vis plus que par la mémoire — Chactas's request for another person's narrative makes memory relational.
- **p. 169.** que je conserve pour m'ôter à l'avenir tout mouvement de joie — René deliberately uses Amélie's letter to govern future feeling.
- **p. 173.** mon souvenir s'effacera-t-il — Amélie fears that her remembered presence may fail to outlast separation.
- **p. 192.** On montre encore un rocher — The ending replaces the vanished person with a surviving place associated with his habits.

In this edition. At p. 144 the 1802 'réminiscences enchantées' becomes 'rêveries enchantées' in 1826. At p. 169 the earlier 'que j'ai conservée' becomes the present-purpose statement quoted here. The supplied collation reports these differences; they do not establish when each revision occurred.

See also. Childhood and Its Afterlives (p. 38) · Reverie (p. 128) · Melancholy (p. 95) · Heart (p. 80) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Amélie (p. 18) · Time and historical change (p. 178) · Ruins and monuments (p. 135)

Misery and Misfortune

misère; infortune; malheur

The word. Misère names wretchedness or impoverishment of the human condition, not simply an unfortunate event. Infortune is a misfortune that befalls someone. The Preface explicitly insists on this distinction while defending Father Aubry's statement, quoted from Atala, that people cannot remain unhappy for long. A limit

can be fortunate in its immediate effect and still reveal the heart's poverty.

Malheur has a wider range: an unhappy condition, a particular blow, or the suffering it causes. The terms overlap in ordinary expression but must not be flattened where Chateaubriand makes an argument from their difference. 'Misery' in the English carries more than economic deprivation.

In René. The Preface answers Morellet's objection that finite grief is one of life's benefits. Chateaubriand accepts that it would be false to call this limitation a great infortune, yet calls it evidence of sterility and indigence (pp. 6–7). The debate is not whether relief ever helps, but what the need and inability to sustain feeling disclose about human being. The supplied editor compares this vocabulary with Pascal; that comparison is commentary, while the distinction itself is expressly authorial.

René begins by anticipating that his apparently self-made torments will seem miserable to men who have endured real sorrows (p. 142). Later he perversely wishes for a real misfortune to give his suffering an object (p. 167). The wish is followed by Amélie's revelation, which he interprets as both rescue and punishment. Real pain now supplies satisfaction because it fills his days, yet he concludes that his heart is kneaded of ennui and misery (p. 183). An infortune does not abolish misère; his use of it may reveal that deeper condition.

The distinctions also expose a tension about duration. The Preface defends the claim that the finite heart cannot sustain grief indefinitely. René believes he has found a sorrow that cannot be exhausted like pleasure (p. 182). The latter is the character's discovery at a particular moment, not a doctrine that supersedes the former. His investment

in lasting grief can be read as another attempt to defeat inward limits.

Souël finally describes ‘secret misery’ as the initial punishment for leaving powers unused (p. 190). This makes wretchedness inseparable from a failure of service. Amélie’s care for others offers the narrative’s concrete counterexample, though her charity does not spare her illness and death: moral activity and exemption from misfortune are not the same thing.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 6.** le cœur de l’homme est fini — Aubry’s quoted proposition grounds the controversy over grief and human limitation.
- **Preface p. 7.** sa stérilité, de son indigence — The author’s explanation treats inability to sustain feeling as spiritual poverty.
- **p. 167.** un objet réel de souffrance — René wishes that an event would supply the object his diffuse suffering lacks.
- **p. 183.** pétri d’ennui et de misère — He recognizes inward poverty even when genuine grief keeps him occupied.
- **p. 190.** une secrète misère — Souël locates a first penalty within the unused inward powers themselves.

In this edition. The supplied translation distinguishes ‘misery’ from ‘misfortune’, following the author’s explicit argument. The Key Terms’ reference to Pascal is an editorial orientation, not an identified quotation or a demonstrated exclusive source. The Preface discusses

Atala here; applying its distinction to René is a supported cross-reading within the shared volume.

See also. Heart (p. 80) · Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108)

Music and the incomplete lyre

chant; lyre; harpe; accents; harmonie

The word. Chant includes song and sacred chant; accents are expressive tones or utterances, not merely pronunciation marks. A lyre is a stringed instrument, but the incomplete lyre becomes a model of the human heart's restricted expressive range.

In René. The young René cultivates the Muses, and morning life is full of images and harmonies. Poets later appear as divinely gifted singers who join religion, laws and the dead in communal memory. Their gift offers an outward use of heightened feeling, although their practical childlikeness also limits the ideal.

The shepherd's melancholy song produces the claim that human song is sad even when it expresses happiness. René explains this through the heart as an instrument missing strings: joy must be sounded on the tones assigned to sighs. This is his generalization from an encounter, not a scientific account of all music. It captures the narrative's own mixing of delight and sorrow.

Sacred chant then participates in real communal practices. Amélie's profession and the convent's night prayers turn voices toward an altar and a common rhythm. René listens outside, mixing the fading canticles with the sea. His experience is both devotion and aesthetic transport.

Hearing beautiful religion is consequential, but it does not yet establish the steadier life of service Souël demands.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 144.** plein de pureté, d'images et d'harmonies — Youth is defined through receptive and creative plenitude.
- **p. 150.** qui chantent les dieux sur la lyre — Poetic song connects divinity to civic and memorial order.
- **p. 162.** une lyre où il manque des cordes — The incomplete instrument explains mixed affect.
- **p. 184.** les derniers sons des cantiques — René hears communal religious practice from outside its walls.

In this edition. The source renders lyre and harp separately. David's harp, Ossian's harp and the heart's incomplete lyre should not be treated as the same literal instrument. Their comparisons work through shared music while preserving different traditions and functions.

See also. Ossian and the bards (p. 104) · Bells, liturgy, and shared time (p. 27) · Melancholy (p. 95) · Architecture and embodied poetry (p. 24)

Ossian and the bards

barde; Ossian; Fingal; Calédonie; harpe

The word. A barde is a poet-singer associated here with the Scottish Highlands and the Ossianic world of heroic memory. Caledonia names Scotland; Cona, Morven and Selma belong to the named landscape of those songs. The harps of Ossian and David connect different poetic and religious traditions.

In René. René seeks singers whose gift appears divinely bestowed and whose worldly conduct is childlike. The scene of the last bard places poetry amid moss-covered stones, a torrent, a ruined tower, a grazing animal and sea wind. Human art and landscape are presented as mutually resonant, so the song seems to survive within the region it celebrates.

The paragraph then narrates a Christian transformation. Crosses stand on heroic monuments; David's harp sounds beside the torrent where Ossian's once lamented. Shepherds and peaceful angels occupy places previously associated with combat and murderous ghosts. The transition changes the moral population of the landscape without eliminating its elevated sound, mountains or clouds.

Later René wishes to resemble warriors wandering amid winds, clouds and phantoms. The edition identifies the Ossianic echo, and the context supports it. His imagination returns to the exciting martial specters whose replacement by Christian peace he had celebrated. That recurrence complicates the assumption that admiring Christian art is the same as having accepted its discipline.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 151.** le dernier barde — The scene emphasizes a threatened survival of song.
- **p. 151.** la harpe de David — Biblical song is placed beside an earlier poetic tradition.
- **p. 151.** des fantômes homicides — Christian peace is defined against violent spectral inhabitants.

- **p. 161.** des vents, des nuages et des fantômes — René later desires the atmosphere the earlier passage morally displaced.

In this edition. The supplied p. 151 note identifies James Macpherson's eighteenth-century publications as the source-context of the Ossianic poems. The lexicon does not repeat their asserted ancient authorship as established fact. René's encounter is part of the fiction, not evidence for a historically documented last bard.

See also. Music and the incomplete lyre (p. 103) · Pastoral happiness and imagined simplicity (p. 110) · Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65)

Parents and the elder brother

mère; père; frère aîné; famille

The word. Kinship terms establish unequal positions as well as affection. The mother is absent through death at René's birth; the father is both authority and object of bereavement; the elder brother receives blessing and property. Amélie occupies a place that combines sibling closeness with a maternal function without becoming literally René's mother.

In René. René introduces his origin through the cost of his mother's life and a surgical instrument. His first family story is already a history of debt and rupture. The father's blessing of the firstborn contrasts with the younger son's early upbringing in other hands. These details explain the narrative's emotional distribution but do not amount to a modern clinical diagnosis.

The father's death reverses birth: the son learns death on the lips of the man who gave him life. His hope for reunion

opens onto the immortality of the soul, but the indifferent passer-by at the grave immediately places that hope beside human forgetting. The elder brother's inheritance then makes succession concrete; later he sells the estate and receives the remaining property René disposes of before America.

At the profession René must serve as Amélie's father. The role attempts to reorganize an intolerable emotional relation through a public duty. He nearly fails, then presents the scissors and witnesses the separation. Family language thus supplies both the attachment that becomes dangerous and a ritual means of redirecting it. No single designation captures the shifting place Amélie holds in his account.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 142.** J'ai coûté la vie à ma mère — Birth is narrated through maternal loss.
- **p. 142.** son fils aîné — The paternal blessing is linked to seniority.
- **p. 145.** celui qui m'avoit donné la vie — The deathbed joins filial origin to the question of immortality.
- **pp. 166–167.** c'étoit presqu'une mère — René marks an analogy rather than a literal identity.
- **p. 177.** daignez m'y servir de père — Amélie asks him to occupy a defined ritual role.

In this edition. The source's 1802 variant at p. 142 has "abandoned" where 1826 has "handed over" to strangers. The distinction affects the tone of parental neglect; it does not authorize an invented account of motives. Neither the

mother nor the elder brother is given a personal name in the narrative.

See also. Amélie (p. 18) · The paternal house (p. 166) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50)

Passions and Their Objects

passion; passions; passions indéterminées

The word. Passion is a powerful affective motion or attachment; the plural can gather energies not yet separated into determinate loves, fears, or ambitions. The 'vague of the passions' therefore does not mean an absence of intensity. It is the condition of active powers without an adequate or stable object.

Passion is not intrinsically erotic in every occurrence, nor is every occurrence a declaration of sin. The Preface's apologetic proposition is that religion corrects passions without extinguishing them. Their direction, measure, and effects distinguish cultivated energy from inward consumption or forbidden attachment.

In René. René remembers the freshness of adolescent passions as poetic (p. 144), and imagines himself above the world on Etna as a young man full of passions (p. 153). The childhood lyric and the volcanic self-portrait already differ: one locates feeling in shared verses and sensory harmony; the other places an isolated self beside an abyss. His urban life later seeks an object that can bind an as-yet-unworn soul (p. 157). These passages make the problem one of attachment and employment rather than simple depletion through worldly excess.

In country solitude, passion's 'sounds' resemble winds and waters in a wilderness (p. 161). Their indeterminate

movements are heard before they are conceptually mastered. Amélie's passion, by contrast, has a specific forbidden object, and her prayer explicitly names its criminality while denying that her brother shared it (p. 180). The common vocabulary must not blur the difference between his diffuse longing and her concealed attachment.

After the revelation René's passions seize a first prey: the real suffering of a beloved other becomes something his inward energies can consume (p. 182). This is a turning point, but the violent wording prevents calling it uncomplicated maturation. His satisfaction in inexhaustible grief resembles the earlier search for an inexhaustible pleasure.

Amélie's religious letter describes a redirected flame, with vestiges of pleasure rather than an affective blank. Souël proposes a sterner language of quenching passions and serving one's fellows (p. 190). Those emphases differ, but both resist the claim that intensity alone is its own justification. The superior's report of charity supplies the most concrete example of energy given an outward task.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 11.** corrige les passions sans les éteindre — The authorial Defence describes religious discipline as correction rather than total extinction.
- **p. 144.** dans la fraîcheur de ses passions — Youthful affect is initially linked to poetry and freshness.
- **p. 161.** Les sons que rendent les passions — The sonic analogy conveys elusive movements without reducing them to a named object.

- **p. 182.** Mes passions, si long-temps indéterminées — René marks a retrospective shift from undefined feeling to furious attachment to actual grief.
- **p. 190.** au service de ses semblables — Souël's positive requirement gives inward strength a destination beyond the self.

In this edition. The 1802 theoretical ending in Appendix I no. 2 already makes one misfortune both intensify melancholy and punish René. The later apologetic framing sharpens culpability but does not invent the punitive possibility. The 1805 review's 'La passion de René' (p. 356) is ambiguous reception language and cannot override the prayer's explicit nonreciprocity.

See also. The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Solitude (p. 151)

Pastoral happiness and imagined simplicity

pâtre; troupeaux; champêtre; sauvages

The word. Pastoral represents life through shepherds, flocks and rural surroundings. Simplicity may describe practical habits or become an outsider's idealization. René repeatedly imagines that other lives possess a contentment his own has lost, but the story does not grant him direct knowledge of their inner experience.

In René. He envies the shepherd warming his hands at a small brushwood fire. The material modesty of the scene contrasts with the fantasies of heroic wandering just before it. Yet the shepherd's song is melancholy, giving René grounds for a universal claim about sorrow within

happiness rather than an uncomplicated picture of rural bliss.

His address to the passing Indigenous group works similarly. He imagines their reason limited to needs, their days uncounted, their sadness brief. The speech expresses desire for a less divided life, but also projects a simplified psychology onto people observed from a distance. Chactas's complex memory, grief and judgment exceed that projection.

The Christianized Scottish landscape places flocks where Fingal fought. There pastoral peace forms part of an explicitly religious transformation of violent space. These versions of simplicity are related but not identical: a shepherd's livelihood, René's colonial fantasy of contentment, and an apologetic image of peace each occupy a different narrative level.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 162.** sort du pâtre — An ordinary rural life becomes an object of envy.
- **p. 162.** lors même qu'il exprime le bonheur — The song preserves sadness inside the desired happiness.
- **p. 154.** Votre raison n'étoit que vos besoins — René attributes a simplified relation between reason and need to others.
- **p. 151.** elle garde des troupeaux — Christian peace transforms the heroic landscape.

In this edition. The period designation sauvage is retained in the supplied translation. Its local use may be admiring, but admiration does not cancel colonial categorization or the reduction of diverse people to a single imagined

condition. The lexicon attributes these claims to René and the text's representational framework.

See also. Ossian and the bards (p. 104) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78)

Pity and Compassion

pitié; compassion; compatissant; miséricorde

The word. Pitié can be compassion for suffering, an appeal for mercy, or an act of regard that the sufferer experiences as insufficient. Compassion and compatissant stress fellow-feeling; miséricorde adds a strong religious register of mercy. The work's question is not simply whether one feels for René, but what kind of response his pain demands.

The same vocabulary can be spoken by the distressed person, used to describe a carer, or challenged by a moral judge. These positions must remain distinct. A character's denial that someone deserves pity does not erase the narrator's independent statement that the speaker's own heart is compassionate.

In René. René opens by predicting the listeners' pity and begging them not to condemn him (p. 142). On Etna he weeps over mortals barely visible below, then presents his own posture as an object of the elders' pity (p. 153). This movement from compassion outward to a request for compassion inward exposes the self-reflexive structure of his telling. It need not make the emotion false, but it shows how quickly other people become elements of his self-portrait.

Amélie's intervention joins compassion to demanding action. She comes to him, names his injustices, embraces him, and requires a promise to live (p. 166). When she departs, René supposes that a passing movement of pity brought her back and that she has tired of duty (p. 173). His interpretation is wrong because he does not yet know what remaining beside him costs her. The scene demonstrates how a recipient's dissatisfaction may misread the depth of another's care.

The closing listeners divide the outward forms of compassion. Chactas weeps and embraces; Souël rebukes. Before quoting the rebuke, the frame explicitly attributes a compassionate heart to the priest (p. 189). His declaration that nothing merits the pity being shown therefore functions as corrective rhetoric within a narrated concern, not as proof that he is devoid of sympathy. Chactas accepts that correction, though his own memory of Aubry preserves an ideal of peace that understands storms rather than merely suppressing them.

Amélie's religious name, 'of Mercy', finally acquires practical force through nursing companions during a contagious illness (p. 188). This is a distinct enlargement of care beyond René. The narrative's strongest answer to self-absorbed suffering is not emotional numbness but compassion that does sustained work for others. Its cost remains real: she dies through that service.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 142.** Combien vous aurez pitié de moi — René frames the confession as an appeal to responsive listeners.

- **p. 166.** avec compassion et tendresse — Amélie's compassionate response accompanies a rebuke and a demand for a promise.
- **p. 173.** mouvement de pitié l'avoit rappelée auprès de moi — René attributes her return to pity, then wrongly supposes she has grown tired of caring for him.
- **p. 189.** Il portoit en secret un cœur compatissant — The frame attests Souël's concern before his apparent refusal of pity.
- **p. 188.** en soignant ses compagnes — The superior's letter gives mercy an outward, communal practice.

In this edition. The 1802 variant on p. 173 calls the supposed motive 'un froid mouvement de pitié'; 1826 omits froid. Both versions record René's inadequate interpretation, but the later wording lessens his explicit accusation of coldness. The 1802 reading at p. 153 likewise calls the mortals he weeps over infortunés, an adjective omitted in 1826.

See also. Sensibility (p. 143) · Amélie (p. 18) · Heart (p. 80) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Friendship and imperfect understanding (p. 67) · Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34)

Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation

prière; prier; adorations

The word. Prayer is speech or inward address directed toward God. In René it may be petition, adoration, communal worship, or an act imagined by an observer. Its narrative function depends on who speaks, who hears, and

what is actually known: a prayer can reveal a secret without being intended as a communication to another human being.

In René. The Paris church first presents prayer through others: poor women prostrate themselves and sinners kneel at the tribunal of penance, emerging with more serene faces (p. 157). René observes these effects before addressing God himself. His petition asks both release from the weight of existence and a change of the old self. The juxtaposition keeps prayer close to need and contradiction, rather than making every religious emotion evidence of settled faith.

Amélie's prayer is initially seen but not understood. René surprises her in tears at a crucifix, and her recurrent withdrawal to pray becomes one sign among many of a hidden conflict (p. 168). At profession he alone hears words emerging from under the funeral pall. She asks not to rise from the symbolic deathbed and prays for blessings upon the brother who has not shared her criminal passion. The revelation is decisive because it names both her feeling and his nonparticipation. The scene is not a mutually declared love, nor an intentional invitation to him.

René's response transforms overhearing into spectacle: he embraces her, cries out, and disrupts the ceremony. His own interpretation then dominates the account, but the words remain hers and must not be silently replaced by his emotion. Later, at the coast, he imagines that a light behind a grille might mark Amélie praying for his safety (p. 187). The interrogative "Étoit-ce toi" means this is conjecture. The pensive nun of p. 184 likewise remains unnamed.

The work finally returns prayer to quiet action. Souël walks beside René praying while Chactas searches for his way (p. 191). There is no reported miraculous reply or sudden conversion. Prayer joins practical companionship and acknowledges dependence without resolving every event. Its arc runs from an observer's hope of relief, through the peril of an overheard private address, to intercession carried on in the presence of another person. These shifting uses make it one of the story's most important forms of mediated knowledge as well as of religious practice.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 168.** se retiroit pour prier — A repeated action is visible to René before its cause becomes clear.
- **p. 180.** un frère qui n'a point partagé ma criminelle passion — Amélie explicitly excludes her brother from participation in the passion.
- **p. 187.** Étoit-ce toi, ô mon Amélie — The possible prayer at the window is a question within René's account.
- **p. 191.** le missionnaire qui prioit Dieu — The final prayer is narrated as ongoing accompaniment.

In this edition. The edition's English "a brother who has not shared my criminal passion" preserves the crucial negation on p. 180. A paraphrase suggesting shared or consummated incest would contradict this attestation.

See also. Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering (p. 75) · Bells, liturgy, and shared time (p. 27) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Shore and window (p. 145) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93)

Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision

préface; critique; revu; éditions

The word. The Preface is an authorial intervention that explains publication, answers criticism, and instructs readers how to interpret Atala and René. Revision is the observable difference between textual witnesses. An edition may document such differences securely while leaving the precise date, sequence, and motives of particular changes unresolved.

In René. The opening distinguishes several publics: readers wanting an abridged religious defence suitable for instruction and readers wanting the two fictional episodes separately (Preface p. 1). The work's form therefore responds to uses and audiences as well as to an abstract ideal text. The author also distinguishes his reluctance to alter an expensive substantial book from his extensive corrections to Atala, for which he claims close attention to words and epithets. His final paragraph says René has received comparable care (p. 16).

This rhetoric is both modest and authoritative. Chateaubriand professes willingness to learn from superior judgement, yet also decides where critics have misunderstood a word, misread a purpose, or challenged accurate description. The dispute over misère and

infortune exemplifies correction through semantic distinction. The claims of fidelity to American nature, meanwhile, belong principally to the defence of Atala and should not be transferred without examination to every geographical tableau in René.

The Preface then provides two interpretive documents for René: the shortened chapter on indefinite passions and the excerpt from the Défense. Appendix I restores material present in the 1802 chapter but omitted from the prefatory quotation, including the role of Christianity in producing modern longing. The novel's own variants also matter: fuller explanation of Amélie's exclusive attachment and René's innocent tenderness survives in the 1802 witness, while the 1826 reading relies more on implication. These are substantive changes in the available interpretive evidence, not merely surface polishing.

Chronological precision requires restraint. The supplied French base is the 1826 volume, the Preface identifies itself with the separate 1805 edition, and its p. 3 note belongs to the later collected edition. The apparatus compares 1802 and 1826. From that comparison alone one cannot assign every altered phrase specifically to 1805 or 1826, infer that all changes had one motive, or claim a new collation has been performed. Revision should be described at the level the evidence supports: what each witness says, what that difference permits a reader to notice, and where the editorial account remains an interpretation.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 1.** obéir au goût du public, et de céder au conseil de la critique — The Preface introduces revision as response to readers and critics.

- **Preface p. 4.** j’ai pesé chaque phrase, examiné chaque mot — The close-revision claim concerns Atala in this paragraph.
- **Preface p. 8.** n’avoit point encore été imprimé à part — The author locates the separate presentation of René.
- **Preface p. 16.** René a été revu avec autant de soin qu’Atala — The final paragraph extends the claim of care to René.
- **Appendix I no. 2.** qu’une pensée — The fuller 1802 conclusion supplies a phrase absent from the abbreviated prefatory extract.

In this edition. Page references in this lexicon follow original printed pagination. “Preface p.” and “Review p.” distinguish paratexts; Appendix I numbers identify restored longer 1802 passages. The translation is anonymous; its introduction and annotations form a distinct modern editorial layer.

See also. Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · The two reviews and the management of admiration (p. 171) · Rousseau, Werther, and the argument about reading (p. 132) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148)

Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism

orgueil; orgueilleux; amour-propre; présomptueux

The word. Orgueil and orgueilleux name pride that magnifies the self and resists due limits; amour-propre names concern for one’s own worth or reputation and need not carry exactly the same intensity in every context. Présomptueux marks an overconfident claim to power or

sufficiency. The story's central issue is less overt boasting than the assumption that unusual inwardness exempts someone from ordinary obligations.

The Preface's authorial discussion of amour-propre concerns criticism, revision, and regard for readers who bought previous editions. Those self-presentations belong to the author's public posture, not to René's fictional voice. They can illuminate the volume's valuation of self-restraint without being treated as the character's confession.

In René. René says social participation requires him to make his life smaller and that he gives more than he receives (p. 157). These may articulate a real mismatch, but they also organize experience around a high estimate of his own emotional value. Amélie's assurance that earth offers nothing worthy of him (p. 170) intensifies that logic even while her next page recommends ordinary work and marriage. Her admiration and practical advice pull in different directions.

His enjoyment of exceptional suffering reveals pride's less obvious form. He admits that an unusual misfortune can itself yield pleasure (p. 185). It is not merely that he demands happiness; he can prefer a uniquely marked grief to common contentment. Souël therefore denies that seeing the world in an odious light establishes superiority (p. 189). The rebuke targets an inference from negative perception to exceptional worth.

The strongest charge is self-sufficiency: Souël calls him presumptuous for believing a person can be enough for himself (p. 190). Since the whole story depicts longing for companionship, the claim is not that René consciously wants no one. Rather, his chosen solitude and

concentration on inward experience attempt to sustain life without the reciprocal duties that actual relations impose.

Chactas's river fable makes pride visible through consequences. The enlarged stream first applauds its power, then discovers that the desolation it has caused leaves it without companions (p. 191). The fable does not ask for the extinction of all strength; it asks for a channel that preserves the life around it. René's powers would be judged by what they sustain, not by their flood-like amplitude.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 2.** L'amour-propre et l'intérêt — The author distinguishes personal advantage from consideration owed to purchasers of his book.
- **p. 157.** rapetisser ma vie — René describes social accommodation as a diminution of himself.
- **p. 185.** on jouit de ce qui n'est pas commun — His admission extends the attraction of exceptionality even to misfortune.
- **p. 190.** l'homme se peut suffire à lui-même — Souël identifies self-sufficiency as the underlying presumption.
- **p. 191.** L'orgueilleux ruisseau s'applaudit d'abord de sa puissance — The river initially mistakes uncontrolled expansion for a successful use of strength.

In this edition. The 1802 variant at p. 174 imagines Amélie unable to confess love for a lower-ranking man because of 'l'orgueil de notre famille'; 1826 removes the rank-based explanation. That deleted hypothesis concerns social pride,

distinct from the self-isolating pride condemned at the end.

See also. Genius and Presiding Spirit (p. 69) · Genius, Delirium, and Unreason (p. 71) · Solitude (p. 151) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78) · Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · River and the parable of excess (p. 131) · The sublime and scale (p. 169)

Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold

profession; vœux; noviciat; voile

The word. Profession is the act of entering a vowed religious state; it is not professional employment in the modern restricted sense. Vœux are solemn commitments, and noviciat denotes the preparatory period from which Amélie receives a dispensation. The episode stages profession as a sequence of material and verbal thresholds rather than one instantaneous symbolic gesture.

In René. Amélie's correspondence first announces her resolve and the dispensation (p. 174). The story gives no institutional dossier identifying the order, the convent's full name, or the precise rules by which the dispensation is granted. Readers should not fill those absences with confident historical reconstructions. The ceremony is represented for its narrative, emotional, and religious force, while the editor cautiously explains that the funeral-pall practice occurred in some orders.

Amélie asks René to serve as her father at the altar (p. 177). The invitation imposes a permitted familial role upon an attachment threatened by confusion. Instead of preventing her decision, he must assist it. His presentation of the

scissors makes separation something he physically participates in, and her courageous exposure of her hair counters the idea that she is merely a passive victim of enclosure.

The sequence matters. She appears in worldly splendour; the sermon and Mass continue; her hair is cut; she receives the religious garment and veil. The narrator then explicitly says she has not yet pronounced her vows. The Office of the Dead and the pall dramatize dying to the world. It is beneath this covering that René overhears her prayer, after which his cry disrupts the ceremony. He is taken away and later learns that the sacrifice has been completed (pp. 180–181). The text therefore does not transcribe the final vow formula or give him continuous knowledge of every step.

The profession creates a new form of life rather than ending all experience. Amélie survives the subsequent fever, writes of gradual consolation, and later serves sick companions. Her religious name, Amélie de la Miséricorde, appears in the superior's report and connects identity with mercy. The symbolically dead woman becomes socially active in another community. Meanwhile René's earlier promise never to kill himself shows a different vow binding him to continued life. Across the two commitments, solemn speech is meant to make transient feeling answerable to an enduring course of action, although the story insists that keeping such a course remains difficult.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 174.** les dispenses du noviciat — The main text supplies the fact but not an administrative history.

- **p. 177.** daignez m’y servir de père — Amélie specifies the role in which René can accompany her.
- **p. 179.** elle avance hardiment la tête — The bodily act gives Amélie agency in the ceremony.
- **p. 180.** Amélie n’avoit point encore prononcé ses vœux — The text distinguishes receiving the habit from completed profession.
- **p. 188.** la sœur Amélie de la Miséricorde — The concluding letter uses her name in religion.

In this edition. The edition’s note to p. 180 says the pall ritual belonged to some orders, not all convents. Appendix I, no. 3 preserves a fuller 1802 reply announcing immediate vows and exclusive love; the shorter 1826 reading reduces explicit explanation.

See also. Sacrifice and holocaust (p. 139) · The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Gesture and the speaking body (p. 74) · Silence and voice (p. 147)

Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations

punition; châtiment; expier; expiation

The word. Punishment is suffering interpreted as a consequence of fault; expiation is the process by which fault is atoned for or purified. René gives these ideas several voices and objects. Their presence does not mean that the narrator supplies an unambiguous divine explanation for every loss, illness, or death.

In René. Before telling his story, René says he has been punished too much (p. 142). The statement combines admission and self-defence: it recognizes culpability while asking listeners to temper their judgement. Later he announces that the moment has arrived to expiate his inconsistencies and presents his wish for real misfortune as terribly answered (p. 167). These anticipations shape the audience's understanding before the hidden event is revealed.

After the profession he describes the monastery through an image of purgatory, where hope survives amid painful purification (p. 181). He then explicitly interprets Amélie as sent both to rescue and punish him for his intended suicide (p. 182). This explanation is psychologically consequential: genuine grief fills his time and ends his immediate wish to die. Yet he also admits satisfaction in possessing a substantial sorrow. A narrative of punishment may itself become an object of the appetite it is meant to correct.

Souël says Amélie has expiated her fault, fears a subsequent disturbance in René, and warns that unused powers bring secret misery followed by fearful chastisement (p. 190). The Preface goes further in asserting that the punishment arises from the fault and in identifying René as the true culprit. These are related but not identical claims: René narrates a personal providence, the priest makes a moral diagnosis with a stated uncertainty, and the author defends the construction and effect of the work.

The ending demands particular restraint. It reports René's unhappy return to his wife and his death alongside Chactas and Souël in collective colonial violence. His misery is consistent with the Preface's declared design, but

shared death cannot simply isolate him as the uniquely punished person. Nor does Amélie's death prove divine rejection: the superior's letter represents it through charity and contentment. The text separates ethical transformation from survival. Expiation may issue in service without immunity from illness; failure to reform may coexist with suffering inflicted by historical forces. The lexicon therefore treats punishment as a powerful interpretive category inside the work, while preserving the evidence that makes any single mechanical application inadequate.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 142.** il a été trop puni — René seeks pity by asserting that punishment already exceeds measure.
- **p. 167.** j'allois expier toutes mes inconséquences — The storyteller anticipates the hidden calamity.
- **p. 181.** ce lieu d'expiation — A purgatorial simile describes René's departure from the monastery.
- **p. 190.** Votre sœur a expié sa faute — Souël evaluates Amélie after the superior's report.
- **p. 192.** avec Chactas et le père Souël — Collective death complicates a singular punitive explanation.

In this edition. The editorial note to p. 181 identifies purgatory. The historical note to p. 192 distinguishes the uprising and reprisals compressed by the ending; the narrative itself does not provide a detailed allocation of historical responsibility.

See also. God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering (p. 75) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164) · Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41)

Purgatory and hope

lieu d'expiation; flammes; espérance

The word. Purgatory is the Christian state of purification before heavenly life. René does not use the noun here, but describes a place where fire prepares souls for heaven and hope remains. The contrast with hell is the crucial distinguishing feature of his comparison.

In René. After the disrupted profession, René leaves the monastery as if leaving a place of expiation in which everything is lost except hope. The simile interprets a living scene through an afterlife geography. The monastery is not literally declared to be purgatory; René uses its doctrine to express the coexistence of severance, pain and an unextinguished future.

The comparison follows his cry to Amélie as the chaste spouse of Christ and precedes his reconstruction of her suffering. It thus mediates between a rite experienced as death and the continuing life that must follow it. Her later letter gives a more inward account of purified desire, and the superior's report gives practical evidence of charitable action. These stages cannot be replaced by the single claim that suffering has automatically saved her.

The image also limits an easy reading of the convent as a place of instant peace. Fire and hope coexist there. This helps explain why the narrative can celebrate religious

refuge while allowing residual disturbance, physical illness and grief to remain visible.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 181.** ce lieu d'expiation — A circumlocution identifies the purifying setting.
- **p. 181.** des flammes nous préparent pour la vie céleste — The fire is preparatory rather than final condemnation.
- **p. 181.** hors l'espérance — Hope is the decisive difference from the infernal comparison.

In this edition. The supplied p. 181 editorial note identifies purgatory and compares Dante's Inferno III.9, the gate's renunciation of hope. That is an explanatory literary comparison, not a named Dante quotation in René. The supplied source gives enough to establish the doctrinal contrast without asserting a direct, exclusive allusion.

See also. Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50) · The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161)

Reverie

rêverie; rêveries; rêver

The word. Rêverie is a waking surrender to images, sensations, associations, and inward feeling. It differs from an organized plan and need not be a dream during sleep. In this edition 'reverie' preserves a word that can be enchanted, melancholy, contemplative, or culpably idle according to its setting and speaker.

Reverie is also a literary operation. A bell, leaf, light, or fragment of stone expands into memories and imagined worlds. The prose makes that expansion available to readers even when the frame questions the life built around it. Its moral danger cannot therefore be separated neatly from the book's descriptive achievement.

In René. The childhood bells plunge René into 'enchanted reveries' that gather religion, family, homeland, birth, and death (pp. 144–145). Among classical ruins the moon feeds reverie and conjures a personified Genius of memories (p. 149). These scenes disclose a capacity to bind a small perception to extensive temporal and emotional relations. They are not described only as wasted thought.

When the confession reaches the volcano, reverie becomes an event in the framing present: René stops speaking and falls into it (p. 153). The two listeners must respond to an interruption rather than merely hear a report of past experience. At the cottage, slight objects suffice to sustain it (p. 162), but the abundance of associations progressively separates him from ordinary employment and durable attachment. 'One enjoys them, but one cannot paint them' simultaneously claims expressive difficulty and solicits admiration for the attempted painting.

Souël calls René's reveries useless (p. 189). The adjective matters: the rebuke concerns the withdrawal from social burdens as well as the visions themselves. The authorial Défense takes a more polemical tone, calling Rousseau's reveries disastrous and culpable, and René's criminal or mad. The 1802 theoretical account, however, makes inexhaustible reverie a product of Christianity's pairing of earthly sorrow with heavenly hope. These voices cannot be flattened into a dictionary definition that makes all reverie either holy or sinful.

Even the convent scene includes an unnamed nun who ‘rêvoit’ as she looked at the ocean (p. 184). René does not establish that she is Amélie. The detail makes contemplative imagery pass across the convent wall while leaving the observer’s knowledge limited. The difference between religious and isolating reverie must finally be sought in practice, relation, and orientation.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 144.** les rêveries enchantées — The reveries of the native bell are capacious, communal in their associations, and positively qualified.
- **p. 153.** tomba subitement dans la rêverie — The frame registers an actual break in René’s storytelling.
- **p. 162.** Qu’il falloit peu de choses à ma rêverie — Minimal sensory prompts sustain expansive inward life.
- **p. 189.** d’inutiles rêveries — Souël condemns their unproductive use in a life withdrawn from obligation.

In this edition. At p. 144, 1802 has ‘réminiscences enchantées’ rather than ‘rêveries enchantées’. The omitted 1802 sentence on p. 161 says René loved reveries even while they wore out the springs of life. The revision thus both introduces the term in a childhood passage and removes it from an explicit account of self-exhaustion.

See also. Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Solitude (p. 151) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Light and the moon (p. 91) · Trees and plants (p. 179)

River and the parable of excess

Meschacebé; ruisseau; torrent; lit

The word. The river has a literal bed, lit, and a figurative measure of life appropriate to it. A ruisseau is a brook or small stream; a torrent supplies force and overflow. Chactas's final story is a parable because this sequence of desire, expansion, destruction and regret directly answers René's conduct.

In René. The outer scene begins beside the immense Meschacebé, whose magnificent silence frames the landscape. At the end the same river is imagined near its source, dissatisfied with being a clear brook. It requests mountain snow, torrents and storm rain, then floods its banks. Grandeur has been redescribed from within its history of excess.

The stream initially congratulates itself on power but discovers that it has made its surroundings deserted and its own waters troubled. Its former companions were modest birds, trees, flowers and brooks. What it loses is a shared environment, not simply a smaller volume of water. The parable translates Souël's demand for social duty into an ecology of proportion and companionship.

This is not a blanket denunciation of large souls or energetic feeling. Chactas earlier granted that a great soul contains greater sorrow. He now opposes extraordinary self-expansion that destroys the relations needed for happiness. The story does not report a restored riverbed, and René's return to his wife does not yield happiness. Advice, assent and achieved transformation remain separate narrative events.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 141.** un silence magnifique — The great river first serves as the landscape's stately border.
- **p. 191.** se lassa de n'être qu'un limpide ruisseau — Dissatisfaction initiates the parable.
- **p. 191.** il franchit ses rives, et désole ses bords charmants — Expansion has consequences for the inhabited surroundings.
- **p. 191.** l'humble lit que lui avoit creusé la nature — The lost bed figures proportion and a fitting course.

In this edition. Meschacebé is Chateaubriand's Mississippi name, retained by the translation. It is a proper name within a literary geography, not evidence that the final parable records Indigenous oral tradition. The narrative gives Chactas this speech; no independent traditional source is established by the supplied edition.

See also. Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Trees and plants (p. 179) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36)

Rousseau, Werther, and the argument about reading

J.-J. Rousseau; Werther; rêveries

The word. Rousseau and Werther enter the supplied material as names in a polemic about solitary reverie, literary influence, and self-destructive conduct. They are not characters in René's spoken life story. Their presence belongs principally to the author's retrospective defence

and to an early review, making them evidence about the work's framing and reception.

In René. The Défense excerpt in the Preface names Rousseau as the first to introduce disastrous reveries among French readers and says Werther developed this poisonous germ (p. 13). The rhetoric constructs a genealogy of a modern vice: withdrawal from others, surrender to dreams, and the belief that living indefinitely can itself be beautiful. These are accusations advanced by Chateaubriand's apologetic argument. A lexicon should not restate them as a neutral history of Rousseau's thought or as an empirically established causal account of readers' actions.

The charge also creates a difficulty for René's own fiction. Its sensuous landscapes, moving self-disclosures, and beautiful language make the criticized mode of feeling exceptionally attractive. The author's answer is to distinguish the final impression of a work from isolated seductive passages and to direct the story toward correction and punishment. The 1805 reviewer takes up precisely this issue, acknowledging that the descriptions may be dangerously intoxicating while defending their governing moral effect.

The earlier Mercure article, dated in the edition to May 1802, already names Werther and Rousseau and identifies the missionary's rebuke as the work's corrective (Review p. 353). This matters for the chronology of interpretation: a moralizing reading was available close to initial publication, not only after the separate 1805 edition. At the same time, the fuller 1802 chapter also traced indefinite longing partly to Christianity and monastic life. The two explanatory directions coexist in the documentary record.

Neither comparison establishes that René is a simple copy of Werther or a transparent fictional portrait of Rousseau. The shared issue is what readers do with literary representations of exceptional inwardness. Do they imitate withdrawal, recognize its danger, or experience both attraction and resistance? The supplied reviews show contemporaries negotiating that question rather than eliminating it. Reading the names as polemical coordinates preserves their importance without making unsupported claims about direct borrowing, authorial psychology, or a single uncontested origin of modern melancholy.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 13.** C'est J.-J. Rousseau qui introduisit le premier parmi nous ces rêveries — An accusatory genealogy stated by the author's Défense.
- **Preface p. 13.** Le roman de Werther a développé depuis ce germe de poison — The metaphor makes alleged influence a moral danger.
- **Review p. 353.** ces nombreuses victimes de l'exemple du jeune Werther, de Rousseau — The early review already shares the anti-imitation argument.
- **Review p. 356.** trop enivrant pour l'âge des illusions — The later reviewer acknowledges the possible seductiveness of the remedy itself.

In this edition. The edition identifies the first review's Republican-calendar date as 5 May 1802 and the second as 20 July 1805. These dates locate the printed responses; they do not establish detailed influence histories beyond the supplied evidence.

See also. Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · The two reviews and the management of admiration (p. 171) · Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Confession and the story of the self (p. 46)

Ruins and monuments

ruines; débris; monument; tombeau

The word. Ruines and débris designate what remains after destruction. A monument is made to preserve memory, but the story repeatedly tests whether material persistence can secure recognition. Tombs can protect a name, shelter an absence or demonstrate how little the living remember.

In René. René begins his travels with peoples who no longer exist. Palaces lie in dust, royal mausoleums beneath brambles, and grass penetrates marble that the powerful dead cannot lift. The contrast of nature's force and human weakness reverses the values monumental construction ordinarily asserts. A solitary column becomes the surviving thought in a devastated soul: ruin is also a psychological grammar.

The royal statue adds a different problem. It still stands, but workers nearby barely know or do not know the catastrophe it commemorates. Erasure can take place without physical destruction. Their indifferent labor challenges René's investment in historical suffering, just as the stranger passing his father's grave unsettled his hope that bereavement could command lasting attention.

At the paternal château the language of remote historical remains becomes intimate: broken windows, moss, weeds and emptied rooms are no longer other people's ruins. The building survives while its family has dispersed. The

sequence moves from public history to private inheritance, making the loss of home continuous with the decay of civilizations without proving that every decline has the same cause.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 148.** les débris de Rome et de la Grèce — Travel begins among historical remains.
- **p. 149.** une haute colonne — A fragment becomes a figure for surviving thought.
- **p. 150.** Le temps a fait un pas — A tiny personified movement of time eclipses once-famous actors.
- **p. 175.** les fenêtres fermées ou demi-brisées — The remote ruin-pattern returns at home.

In this edition. The source keeps 1826 “criminal dust” at p. 149, where the apparatus’s earlier wording names monuments differently. Archaeological fascination is therefore morally qualified. “Ruins” should not be glossed as simple nostalgia for a wholly innocent past.

See also. Time and historical change (p. 178) · The paternal house (p. 166) · Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20) · The royal statue and execution (p. 168)

Sacred marriage and transformed desire

épouse de Jésus-Christ; chasteté brûlante; amante; vierge

The word. Sacred bridal language describes the consecrated woman as a bride of Christ. In René it makes religious commitment intelligible through the vocabulary of love while also exposing the difficulty of separating spiritual, familial, and erotic feeling. It is a local, explicit

metaphor, not a key that converts every unnamed object of desire into God.

In René. René addresses Amélie as the chaste bride of Jesus Christ immediately after hearing her forbidden passion disclosed (p. 181). The address both acknowledges the religious relation intended to supersede that passion and accompanies his own last embrace. Its force comes from the simultaneous assertion of separation and physical attempt to cross it. Because the words are René's exclamation, they do not by themselves describe the completed inner state of the sister.

Her later letter speaks more directly from within the new life. Religion substitutes a burning chastity in which lover and virgin are united, purifies sighs, and changes a perishable flame into an imperishable one (pp. 185–186). The transformation preserves intensity rather than merely subtracting feeling. At the same time, she acknowledges a remainder of disturbance and sensuality in a heart seeking rest. The idiom is gradual and mixed; it is not the vocabulary of instant emotional extinction.

The letter also calls this action a gentle deception of the sensitive soul. That expression links religious consolation to the work's wider interest in how images, habits, and rituals redirect desire. It need not mean that Amélie declares faith false. Rather, the phrasing stresses the indirect and accommodating means by which consolation works upon someone who cannot simply command her feelings to vanish.

The first letter supplies a less settled counterpart. Amélie imagines a wife devoted wholly to René, then tells him he would think he had found another sister (p. 171). That fantasy confuses relations at the very point where she proposes a socially permitted marriage. The later sacred

marriage seeks a different organization of love, but the text does not ask readers to forget the cost or the traces of earlier feeling. Finally, the superior's report adds service to the imagery. Amélie's relation to God is represented through charity toward companions as well as through bridal and fiery figures. Any account that dwells only on erotic sublimation would miss the narrative's movement from intense language to sustained action.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 181.** Chaste épouse de Jésus-Christ — René's exclamation identifies the sacred bridal relation at the moment of his embrace.
- **p. 186.** une sorte de chasteté brûlante — Amélie's own later letter describes transformed intensity.
- **p. 186.** où l'amante et la vierge sont unies — The metaphor brings together roles that ordinary categories separate.
- **p. 186.** une flamme incorruptible une flamme périssable — The transfer changes the flame's condition rather than eliminating it.
- **p. 186.** ce reste de trouble — The letter acknowledges an affective remainder.

In this edition. The anonymous English preserves "burning chastity," "lover," and "virgin." Its choice "bride" for épouse in p. 181 captures the consecration metaphor, whereas the same French noun in the outer frame denotes René's human wife.

See also. Sacrifice and holocaust (p. 139) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Céluta and the unfulfilled marriage (p. 48) · Adam and Eve (p. 16) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93)

Sacrifice and holocaust

sacrifice; holocauste; victime

The word. Sacrifice ranges from a violent death retrospectively invested with public significance to liturgical offering and personal renunciation. Holocauste has its older sacrificial meaning, an offering wholly consumed by fire. At Amélie's profession these senses gather around the Mass and her self-dedication; the term does not mean that she is literally burned.

In René. The earliest striking occurrence belongs to René's travels: a monument indicates a place made famous by a sacrifice (p. 150). Chateaubriand's note places it near Whitehall. The anonymous editor identifies the intended event as Charles I's execution and corrects the statue's identification. Within the story, what matters is the contrast between a catastrophe and labourers' indifference to its memorial. Sacrifice here exposes the vulnerability of public memory, rather than describing an act of monastic devotion.

At the profession, René first wants to disrupt the sacrifice and even imagines killing himself in the church (p. 177). That imagined intrusion would turn another person's consecration into the spectacle of his own anguish. The ceremony defeats this intention through beauty, sacred authority, and Amélie's reproachful courage. Flowers,

torches, perfumes, and the comparison with burning incense give her offering a richly sensuous form (pp. 178–179). The scene does not simply oppose religion to sensation; it recruits sensation in the redirection of feeling.

The word continues to name both the Mass and the costly act by which Amélie separates herself from worldly attachment. René learns that it is consummated only after he is carried out unconscious. He is thus not an uninterrupted eyewitness of its completion. In her later letter Amélie herself says the very excess of the completed sacrifice helps restore peace (p. 185). The change of speaker is decisive: an event he experiences as deprivation becomes, in her account, a difficult act with consoling effects.

The final description of her as a victim of zeal and charity renews sacrificial language through practical care. She dies while nursing companions with a contagious illness, not at the profession and not by a narrated act of self-destruction. That distinction prevents a flattening equation between vows, symbolic death, and actual death. The work joins renunciation to the preservation of other lives. Its sacrifice is compelling precisely because devotion remains costly and embodied, while the narrative allows different participants to understand that cost differently.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 150.** un lieu fameux par un sacrifice — The word first carries a political and commemorative force.
- **p. 178.** qui devoient rendre l’holocauste agréable — Perfumes and flowers frame the offering in liturgical imagery.
- **p. 181.** le sacrifice étoit consommé — René learns of completion after recovering consciousness.

- **p. 185.** L’excès même du sacrifice — Amélie interprets the cost from within her new life.
- **p. 188.** morte victime de son zèle et de sa charité — Sacrificial vocabulary culminates in nursing the sick.

In this edition. The translation keeps “sacrifice” across its different applications and glosses holocauste in the old sense. The historical correction concerning Whitehall is the edition’s editorial note, not a correction made by René or by the lexicon through new research.

See also. Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136) · The royal statue and execution (p. 168) · Gesture and the speaking body (p. 74)

Sea and voyage

mer; océan; voyage; port; naufrage

The word. A voyage is literal travel and a figure for the course of life. Port can be a real embarkation point or the sheltered beginning one should never have left. Shipwreck names both physical disaster and the failure of an inward life to find support.

In René. Before traveling René praises those who finish their voyage without leaving port. The paradox makes monastic stability a completed journey, not mere immobility. He nevertheless launches himself onto the stormy ocean of the world without knowing its harbors or reefs. Experience is sought as a cure for inexperience, but its acquisition does not produce contentment.

His later country retreat repeats the structure of departure: he rushes toward a cottage as he once rushed to travel around the world. The difference between far-ranging movement and local seclusion hides a continuity of impatience. When solitude fails, a plank sinks beneath him. Maritime language diagnoses the failure of successive self-chosen rescues.

The last European night gathers these metaphors around actual ships. Departure requires negotiations with a captain, property arrangements, a convoy and favorable winds. These ordinary constraints prevent the crossing from becoming a purely spiritual transition. From the ship René watches the homeland recede, yet America proves another setting for withdrawal rather than a promised land of recovery. His passage changes continents without resolving the disposition that made him leave.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 147.** leur voyage sans avoir quitté le port — The contemplative refuge is a paradoxically completed voyage.
- **p. 148.** cet orageux océan du monde — Worldly experience becomes uncharted navigation.
- **p. 165.** la dernière planche — Solitude is imagined as a failed shipwreck remedy.
- **p. 183.** une flotte pour la Louisiane — A concrete transport arrangement underlies the symbolic crossing.
- **p. 187.** ma terre natale — The last European sight marks irreversible separation, not certified renewal.

In this edition. The supplied edition preserves the recurring harbor and storm images. Its p. 172 note should not turn the anonymous young M.'s death into a fully identified biographical episode: the letter offers a distant shipwreck as an example of uneven mourning, and the name remains concealed.

See also. Homeland and exile (p. 83) · Solitude (p. 151) · Storms and tempests (p. 155) · Time and historical change (p. 178)

Sensibility

sensibilité; sensible; attendrissement

The word. Sensibilité is responsiveness to feeling, especially the ability to be moved by another's situation or by an affecting scene. It can designate sympathetic receptiveness, but also a conspicuous cultivation of emotion. 'Sensitivity' may be too general and a clinical or sensory sense too narrow for its ethical and literary work here.

The adjective sensible in Amélie's religious letter means a feeling or emotionally susceptible soul. It does not mean 'sensible' in the English sense of prudent. Attendrissement names a softening into tenderness, often manifested through voice, tears, or touch. These related terms connect inward receptivity to the signs others can observe.

In René. The word appears in strikingly opposed settings. In the Preface, the author interrupts his account of objections to Aubry's severe teaching with a sarcastic parenthesis about how much sensibility 'we' possess nowadays (p. 5). The target is the reader who rejects a painful proposition merely because it hurts. The debate

concerns human attachment and forgetfulness; a claim to tender feeling does not settle what is true.

At the end of René, the frame calls Chactas's response sensibility and says it draws Souël into speech (p. 189). Tears and embraces make the old man's sympathy visible. The same narrator immediately states that Souël has a compassionate heart in secret despite his inflexible exterior. Accordingly, displayed emotion is neither the sole proof of concern nor automatically its opposite. The two listeners embody contrasting ways of responding to suffering, and the text does not reduce their difference to feeling versus feelinglessness.

Amélie's account of religion gently deceiving an âme sensible (p. 186) makes receptiveness the medium of transformation. Calm and innocence mingle with remaining turmoil and pleasure. That susceptibility can be turned toward religious life rather than simply suppressed. Her nursing of sick companions later shows feeling extended into action, which is a firmer ethical criterion than the beauty of an emotion alone.

René's own tears sometimes disclose sympathy and sometimes direct attention back toward his exceptional pain. On Etna he weeps over barely visible mortals; before the happy Indigenous passers-by he envies a life he projects onto them. To read sensibility carefully is to ask who is actually perceived, who is imagined, and what follows the feeling.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 5.** nous avons aujourd'hui tant de sensibilité — The author's parenthetical irony challenges sentiment as an automatic judge of truth.

- **p. 186.** une âme sensible — Amélie describes a soul whose susceptibility allows a gradual religious redirection.
- **p. 189.** la sensibilité du Sachem — The frame names Chactas's openly emotional response.
- **p. 189.** un cœur compatissant — The narrator independently attests Souël's hidden compassion before recording his severe rebuke.

In this edition. The supplied English renders sensibilité as 'sensibility' and âme sensible as 'a feeling soul'. The difference is justified by ordinary English usage and should not be mistaken for two unrelated French concepts. The Preface's sarcasm is authorial; Souël's claim that René deserves no pity is character speech within a frame that has already qualified it.

See also. Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Heart (p. 80) · Love and Divine Love (p. 93) · Amélie (p. 18) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119)

Shore and window

rivage; fenêtre grillée; mur; cellule

The word. A shore is an edge between land and sea. The barred window, wall and cell are boundaries between religious enclosure and the moving world. Their literary function is not only separation: sound, sight and imagined attention cross them even when bodies cannot.

In René. Amélie chooses a seaside convent because its setting suits her soul. The sound of the sea will recall their childhood walks beneath pines, where wind already sounded like waves. Enclosure therefore carries memory inside it; geographical retreat cannot simply erase the shared past.

René repeatedly sees a pensive nun at a barred window. The narration does not name her. His observation is saturated with his concern for Amélie, but this does not establish the woman's identity. The later question to Amélie at the lighted window remains a question. Preserving that uncertainty is central to the reading: René fills an inaccessible interior with imagined prayer just as he once imagined domestic lives behind the city's lights.

The night of departure places infinity beyond a cell wall and contrasts moving ship-lights with the convent's still beacon. The tightest enclosure appears to give access to the greatest horizon. Yet René adds the inward shipwreck of an ocean-like soul. The boundary organizes a powerful Christian image without settling what every person behind the wall actually feels.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 172.** le murmure des flots — Amélie anticipates an acoustic link with childhood.
- **p. 184.** une religieuse assise dans une attitude pensive — The indefinite article leaves the observed nun unidentified.
- **p. 187.** Étoit-ce toi — René's imagined identification is grammatically interrogative.
- **p. 187.** l'infini de l'autre côté du mur d'une cellule — Confinement and immeasurable space are deliberately juxtaposed.

In this edition. The supplied English keeps the question at p. 187. An explanatory gloss should do the same. The convent's name and the port's name remain suppressed in the primary text; an editor's proposed geographical identification must not replace their narrative anonymity.

See also. Letters and interpretation (p. 89) · Light and the moon (p. 91) · Infinity, Limits, and Absolute Yearning (p. 87) · Sea and voyage (p. 141)

Silence and voice

silence; voix; murmure; cri

The word. Silence can be a chosen withdrawal, a listener's restraint, a failure of speech or a desired protection of a secret. Voice reaches others, but it can also be imagined as heaven's answer or reduced to a barely audible disclosure. The story repeatedly tests what hearing does and does not reveal.

In René. René initially withholds his history for years. The two elders secure a telling through combined gentleness and authority, while he asks that the secret remain buried beneath the wilderness tree. The narrative we read thus arises from a tension between necessary disclosure and requested concealment.

He falls silent after the Etna portrait, then again when the sight of happy Indigenous people overwhelms him. Chactas's call and touch restore the relation needed for speech. Souël's long silence has a different purpose: the outer narrator identifies a compassionate heart beneath an inflexible exterior, and his eventual speech contests the pity already circulating.

Amélie's decisive prayer is a murmur that René alone hears. A public ritual contains a private revelation, and the distinction determines the distribution of knowledge. Later the remembered sea, bell, chants and echo make his departure a complex soundscape. The book gives no general rule that quiet is truth and loudness is error. Its

meanings depend on who can speak, who listens and what remains conjectural.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 140.** les sentiments secrets de son âme — The promised story is an interior disclosure.
- **p. 153.** ne savoit que penser de ce silence — Chactas cannot infer the cause of a sudden pause.
- **p. 168.** ensevelie dans le silence — René asks that disclosure remain bounded.
- **p. 180.** que je fus seul à entendre — The prayer creates unequal knowledge within a public scene.
- **p. 189.** sans proférer une parole — Souël's reserved listening precedes correction.

In this edition. The edition preserves changes of tense around speech and interruption. It also prints the 1802 addition "recollection and silence" at p. 142. Neither the earlier wording nor the later silence permits treating René's confession as a sacramental confession to Souël: Chactas is equally a listener, and the scene lacks that specified institutional form.

See also. Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Apostrophe and changes of tense (p. 22) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure

faute; crime; criminelle passion; inceste

The word. Sin and crime belong here to a religious-moral vocabulary that covers forbidden desire, destructive

intentions, and failures of duty. Incest names the prohibited familial direction of Amélie's passion as disclosed in her prayer. The narrative does not establish a consummated sexual relation or an initially reciprocal desire between the siblings.

In René. The decisive words appear on p. 180, when Amélie asks mercy for herself and blessings for a brother who has not shared her criminal passion. This is the strongest direct attestation and should govern retrospective reading. Earlier tenderness, embraces, shared childhood memories, and the striking hypothetical wife of her first letter become newly intelligible, but they do not erase the prayer's denial of reciprocity. Nor does René's intense dependence upon his sister by itself prove sexual desire.

The text gives René a different set of admissions. He confesses his intended suicide as a great crime and interprets Amélie's intervention as both salvation and punishment (p. 182). Souël condemns neglected social obligations and vain self-sufficiency. The Preface's Défense excerpt even calls René the true culprit and casts Amélie as his weak victim. Such claims construct a causal and moral responsibility wider than participation in her particular passion. A careful account distinguishes those kinds of culpability rather than treating all "crime" language as reference to the same act.

Souël fears that knowledge of the passion may subsequently have troubled René's soul (p. 190). His apprehension creates an unsettling possibility, but the phrasing does not supply a later confession of reciprocal incest. Likewise, René's pleasure in the fullness of real grief reveals a problematic investment in suffering without specifying the object of a new sexual attachment.

The variants sharpen this distinction. Appendix I, no. 3 retains Amélie's declaration of exclusive love in the fuller 1802 letter. No. 4 makes René reflect on the purity of his tenderness and on his innocent caresses, while describing her divided response. The 1826 text removes much of this explicit retrospective explanation and leaves more to implication. Reduced explicitness is not evidence that a different sexual event has taken place. The episode's force depends on the disruptive knowledge of a prohibited passion, the obligations it creates, and the difficulty of interpreting its aftermath, not on an unsupported claim of consummation.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 180.** un frère qui n'a point partagé ma criminelle passion — The prayer names forbidden desire and denies sharing.
- **p. 182.** c'étoit un grand crime — René applies crime to his intended departure from life before divine permission.
- **Preface p. 15.** Ainsi le vrai coupable est puni — The author's defence allocates responsibility more broadly than sexual participation.
- **Appendix I no. 4.** la pureté de ma tendresse — The fuller 1802 retrospective passage explicitly distinguishes his affection from hers.
- **p. 190.** n'ait troublé votre âme à son tour — Souël's preceding "je crains" makes this a suspicion about the aftermath.

In this edition. Inceste is an explanatory headword; the main narrative's central phrase is criminelle passion. The apparatus compares 1802 and 1826 readings, but cannot

by itself date the deletion of particular explanatory phrases to a specific intervening edition.

See also. Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Confession and the story of the self (p. 46) · Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Women, gender, and the distribution of agency (p. 184) · Biblical figures and scriptural echoes (p. 29)

Solitude

solitude; solitudes; solitaire

The word. Solitude denotes withdrawal or being alone, but also the felt absence of relation among other people. The book distinguishes places of solitude, a solitary disposition, and a life made around isolation. None is intrinsically identical to geographical wilderness. A crowded city can be a desert for the heart, while an enclosed religious community may sustain shared service.

Its decisive qualification comes from Souël: solitude is bad for the person who does not live in it with God. The statement does not condemn every retreat. It asks what occupies withdrawal, what it intensifies, and whether it exempts a person from responsibility.

In René. The opening frame makes René's isolation socially consequential: he does not live with the wife he has taken among the Natchez, and avoids almost everyone but two old men (p. 139). The confession then supplies successive versions of retreat. Childhood listening and monastic reverie offer calm; anonymous life in a faubourg offers independence; the cottage promises a last refuge. 'Absolute solitude' instead amplifies his vitality until an imagined object saturates the universe (p. 160). When

isolation itself fails, it is the last plank sinking beneath him (p. 165).

Amélie's letter tells him to leave solitude and seek occupation (p. 171), even as she enters a convent. That is not a simple contradiction. Her projected retreat contains vows, regularity, companions, and eventually nursing work; his lacks a sustaining use for its forces. Yet the comparison remains complicated because the 1802 theoretical chapter also calls monastic melancholy a source of objectless passions. Religious enclosure is represented as a resource, not an affect-free space.

Souël's final speech translates the narrative into an account of unused power: solitude doubles capacities and removes their objects of exercise (p. 190). Chactas's river fable adds the cost to surroundings; the swelling stream destroys the life beside it and then finds itself abandoned. The final report that René returns to his wife without happiness makes the ending a limited result, not proof that simple reintegration cures him. The solitary rock still shown after his death preserves the very posture the moral counsel sought to change.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 160.** La solitude absolue — René's desired refuge initiates excess rather than durable rest.
- **p. 165.** C'étoit la dernière planche — The nautical figure measures the collapse of retreat as a strategy of self-rescue.
- **p. 171.** sortez au plus vite de la solitude, qui ne vous est pas bonne — Amélie offers practical advice addressed to René's particular condition.

- **p. 190.** La solitude est mauvaise à celui qui n'y vit pas avec Dieu — Souël's qualification differentiates kinds of solitude rather than prohibiting withdrawal universally.

In this edition. The longer 1802 reading at p. 157 specifies that urban deserts are sadder than forests because their solitude is wholly for the heart. In 1826 the compressed 'vaste désert d'hommes' preserves the paradox. The supplied Key Terms' distinction between destructive and religious solitude is useful, but the omitted monastic history prevents making it entirely frictionless.

See also. Reverie (p. 128) · The Vague of the Passions (p. 175) · Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Amélie (p. 18) · Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119) · Happiness and Habit (p. 78) · The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Sea and voyage (p. 141)

Soul

âme

The word. Âme names the inward person: the seat of thought, desire, feeling, and moral responsibility, but also the spiritual principle whose survival René believes death discloses. The word therefore cannot everywhere be replaced by 'mind' or 'psychology'. Its religious force is explicit at the father's death, while elsewhere it designates a recognizable temperament, as in Chactas's 'great soul'. These senses overlap without becoming a systematic philosophical definition.

The soul is repeatedly imagined spatially: it has depths, folds, powers, and room for suffering. A large inward capacity may promise greatness, yet capacity alone

supplies neither its object nor its right use. What matters is how powers become attached to other people, to God, or merely to their own exercise.

In René. The frame announces ‘the secret feelings of his soul’ rather than adventures (p. 140). This gives inward events the weight of a life-history, but does not make René the final authority on their meaning. His first words confess agitation before the listeners’ peaceful hearts. At his father’s death he reasons from the lifeless body to another source of thought; the sublime face in the coffin becomes further evidence, for him, of immortality. These are a bereaved son’s convictions and questions, not a detached demonstration supplied by the frame.

Chactas’s claim that a great soul contains greater sorrows (p. 155) recognizes René’s exceptional intensity while asking him to moderate it. Souël later alters the criterion: solitude doubles the soul’s powers while depriving them of employment, and strength must serve others (p. 190). Read together, the speeches distinguish amplitude from achievement. The text allows the reader to value inward richness without treating suffering as proof of virtue.

Amélie’s soul likewise cannot be reduced to either criminal passion or disembodied purity. Her profession puts it figuratively in heaven while her eyes face earthly dust (p. 180); her later letter describes a sensitive soul gradually redirected, retaining turmoil and pleasure (p. 186). The superior’s report of nursing the sick gives that redirection a practical measure (p. 188). Religious language acquires its strongest ethical support through conduct rather than through elevation alone.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 140.** les sentiments secrets de son âme — The frame's description establishes inward feeling as the announced subject of the confession.
- **p. 145.** l'immortalité de l'âme — René makes his father's death the first clear disclosure of spiritual survival to himself.
- **p. 155.** une grande âme doit contenir plus de douleurs qu'une petite — Chactas joins recognition of capacity to an injunction to moderation.
- **p. 190.** elle redouble les puissances de l'âme — Souël turns the language of inner power into an account of unused energies and responsibility.

In this edition. The supplied translation consistently uses 'soul'. The 1802 wording at p. 152 extends the architect–poet analogy with 'comme l'autre à l'ame': architecture touches the senses, poetry the soul. Its omission in the 1826 text reduces an explicit formulation, not the many remaining links between inward experience and sensory form.

See also. Heart (p. 80) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Infinity, Limits, and Absolute Yearning (p. 87) · Solitude (p. 151) · Amélie (p. 18)

Storms and tempests

orage; tempête; aquilon

The word. Orage and tempête name violent weather, while aquilon is the north wind in elevated diction. Storms can be desired stimuli, dangers encountered at sea, analogies for passion, or conditions through which a

steadier form of spiritual life persists. Their moral value changes with speaker and setting.

In René. René calls for desired storms to carry him into another life. The command intensifies his bodily movement and accompanies an almost godlike wish to create worlds. Weather is not a passive mirror here: it helps produce the heightened feeling it is said to express. The destructive and creative possibilities remain entangled.

At the departure port a tempest is materially dangerous. Alarm cannons and the monastery bell sound together, exposing sailors to shipwreck while enclosed religious life appears secure. René immediately complicates his own contrast by calling Amélie's soul stormy as the ocean and imagining a worse shipwreck within. One cannot read the walls as a simple line dividing all suffering from all peace.

Chactas supplies another correction when he remembers Father Aubry: the priest's peace was not alien to tempests. Like a moon above moving clouds, it remained steady without denying their presence. The closing forecast of another storm therefore need not mean the moral counsel has been disproved. It prevents the narrative from staging a falsely placid resolution. The capacity to live through agitation differs from the fantasy of abolishing it.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 163.** Levez-vous vite, orages désirés — René actively summons what others would seek to escape.
- **p. 186.** au milieu de la tempête — Storm becomes a material threat to ships.

- **p. 187.** orageuse comme l'océan — Amélie is not exempted from the inward storm.
- **p. 188.** point étrangère aux tempêtes — Aubry embodies peace compatible with knowledge of suffering.
- **p. 191.** annonçoit un orage — The final weather does not supply uncomplicated closure.

In this edition. The supplied translation consistently distinguishes "storm" for orage and "tempest" for tempête. That policy is useful for tracing the French but does not establish an absolute conceptual opposition between the two nouns. Their precise force comes from each scene.

See also. Sea and voyage (p. 141) · Birds and migration (p. 32) · Light and the moon (p. 91)

Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live

suicide; quitter la vie; attenter à ses jours

The word. Suicide appears by name in the authorial Defence; René's confession uses expressions such as leaving life and attempting his own days. The lexical difference matters: the apparatus identifies a cultural and moral problem, while the narrative renders a particular person's self-division, isolation, and changing intention.

The story concerns suicidal wishes and resolutions that are interrupted; it does not narrate René's death as suicide. The frame says he dies in the massacre in Louisiana. Moral descriptions such as crime, folly, or impiety belong to the text's religious and historical vocabulary and should be analyzed as such, not presented as contemporary judgement of distressed people.

In René. The cottage episode leads from abundant desire to bodily languor, ennui, and a wound described as both nowhere and everywhere (p. 164). René admits that he struggles only indifferently against it. At the same time, he confesses divided religious conviction: the heart loves God while the mind reasons impiously. His retrospective appeal to Souël combines culpability with impaired judgement rather than offering one consistent explanation.

Amélie detects the intention in his unusual letter concerning his affairs and comes in person (p. 165). Her intervention insists that his life matters to another person: he cannot treat it as an exclusively private possession. She obtains a solemn promise, restores companionship, and later writes that living is harder than dying. Her counsel of occupation and ordinary relations gives the appeal practical content, even though her presence exposes her to her own concealed conflict.

At the prospect of her profession the wish returns as an imagined act of disruption (p. 177). The ceremony and her firm look disarm him; her revelation then changes the structure of his suffering. Because grief now occupies his time and because she needs him to live, he says he no longer wants to die (pp. 182–183). This is not complete moral recovery: satisfaction in the fullness of grief remains part of the account.

The Defence treats solitary reverie associated with Rousseau and Werther as leading to suicide, and construes the family catastrophe as punishment arising from René's fault. That explanation should be distinguished from the longer narrative's mixed motives and accidental disclosures. A literary warning against a cultural posture is

not a clinical account of causation, and the work's tragedy does not license romanticizing self-destruction.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 13.** le travers qui mène directement au suicide — The authorial Defence states the intended moral target explicitly.
- **p. 164.** je résolus de quitter la vie — René names his resolution at the crisis of ennui and unlocated suffering.
- **p. 166.** fais le serment de ne jamais attenter à tes jours — Amélie makes continued life the object of an explicit promise.
- **p. 170.** il est plus difficile de vivre — Her letter reframes courage as endurance and participation in life.
- **p. 183.** je n'avois plus envie de mourir depuis que j'étois réellement malheureux — René explains a change of intention through definite grief, without claiming a complete cure.

In this edition. The editorial note at p. 165 tentatively identifies René's reference to an ancient with Julius Canus; 'probably' must remain attached to that identification. The story's final death and the authorial language of punishment should not be collapsed into a claim that he carries out his earlier suicidal plan.

See also. Ennui and Troubles (p. 60) · Amélie (p. 18) · Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Solitude (p. 151) · Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · The unnamed ancient and composed dying (p. 174) · Parents and the elder brother (p. 106)

Tears and the pleasure of grief

larmes; pleurs; chagrin; douleur

The word. Tears are bodily signs of feeling, but their meaning is not transparent or constant. Grief may answer another person's suffering, recall lost happiness, expose wounded pride or become an absorbing satisfaction. The text examines these differences without making every tear either sincere virtue or theatrical fraud.

In René. René weeps over mortals from Etna, over the apparently happy people of the plain, at the paternal estate, during the profession and at departure. These tears have different objects. Chactas also weeps and embraces him, whereas Souël refuses to let visible suffering alone establish a claim to moral distinction.

After Amélie's secret is revealed, René acknowledges an unexpected satisfaction in the fullness of grief. Previously indeterminate passions seize their first real prey. Suffering now occupies his time and removes his wish to die. This is an unsettling self-observation: the event matters profoundly, yet his relation to it partly repeats the need for an object that had governed his earlier fantasies.

The Preface's discussion of fading grief offers another complication. The inability to remain unhappy is called human misery, though a critic calls it a benefit. Duration is not a simple measure of affection. Amélie's letters, partly erased by tears, demand remembrance while anticipating separation; René preserves one specifically to prevent future joy. The material trace of tears can sustain memory, but also become an instrument of deliberate self-maintenance in sorrow.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 154.** des larmes coulent de ses yeux — The shift into present tense makes an emotional interruption immediate.
- **p. 169.** pour m'ôter à l'avenir tout mouvement de joie — René gives the preserved letter a future disciplinary purpose.
- **p. 182.** la plénitude de mon chagrin — Real grief provides an absorbing fullness.
- **p. 183.** une occupation qui remplissoit tous mes moments — Sorrow supplies the occupation that other pursuits failed to give.
- **p. 188.** le vieillard pleuroit — Compassion belongs to a listener as well as the self-narrator.

In this edition. The edition distinguishes douleur, peine and chagrin through context rather than implying a rigid psychological taxonomy. References to the Preface's debate over misery concern Chateaubriand's defense of an Atala speech; they illuminate René but are not words spoken by René in the main story.

See also. Misery and Misfortune (p. 100) · Pity and Compassion (p. 112) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

The cloister as refuge and demanding community

cloître; couvent; monastère; asile; retraite

The word. Cloître can designate the enclosed space or, more broadly, religious life; couvent and monastère name its institution, while asile stresses shelter. These words

overlap without being interchangeable with René's private solitude. The refuge has rules, companions, worship, and obligations, and its promise of peace can coexist with continued struggle.

In René. René first considers entering a monastery after his father's death (pp. 146–148). The projected retreat is attractive as a place to hide his life from fortune. Its waters, trees, moonlit arcades, and graves furnish a beautiful imaginative scene, but he abandons the plan. His appreciation of religious architecture has not become a stable vocation. The later withdrawal to a cottage repeats some language of burial and shelter without the institution's common discipline.

Amélie's first letter argues that some misfortunes separate people from ordinary society and make such refuges necessary (p. 170). She also tells René to leave solitude and seek occupation. These recommendations are not inherently contradictory: withdrawal from the world can mean entry into a structured community rather than abandonment of every relation. The force of the distinction becomes unmistakable in the superior's report that Amélie dies caring for fellow nuns.

The maritime convent is nevertheless no simple emblem of achieved serenity. Amélie initially chooses a place whose sea sounds recall childhood walks with René (pp. 171–172), bringing memory into the refuge. Her later letter reports diminishing pain, not a miraculous erasure of all feeling. On the stormy night, René imagines calm behind the wall but also describes his sister's soul as oceanically troubled (p. 187). Those opposing images belong to his retrospective tableau. The pensive nun at the barred window on p. 184 is not explicitly identified as Amélie, so she cannot safely

serve as direct proof of the sister's continued despair or of her complete peace.

The Preface treats cloisters as necessary remedies, whereas the fuller 1802 chapter associates monastic existence with the growth of melancholy. A comprehensive entry preserves both uses. The distinction proposed by Souël is not merely inside versus outside a wall, but how one lives and employs one's powers there. A refuge is successful when shelter permits reordered desire and service; it is not guaranteed to work by picturesque isolation alone. The cloister's deepest alternative to René's solitude is a form of life, not a more beautiful landscape.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 147.** ouverts aux malheureux et aux foibles — René describes institutions of shelter before deciding against entry.
- **p. 170.** la nécessité de ces asiles — Amélie argues from a predicament she does not yet disclose.
- **p. 185.** La simplicité de mes compagnes — Her later comfort depends partly on a community.
- **p. 187.** l'asile que rien ne peut troubler — A claim within René's contrasting storm tableau, not an omniscient report of Amélie's mind.
- **p. 188.** en soignant ses compagnes — The cloister culminates in active care, not mere enclosure.

In this edition. The translation's "refuge" keeps the protective force of asile. Its introductory glossary is helpful for vocabulary, but formulations such as an "always" curative convent should be tested against Appendix I, no. 1 and the different speakers' claims.

See also. Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life (p. 181) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114) · Church, temple, and the architecture of feeling (p. 43)

The Natchez and the colonial frame

Natchez; colonie françoise; fort Rosalie; Nègres

The word. The Louisiana frame is a represented colonial contact zone, not an empty natural backdrop. Natchez habitation, French settlement, a military post, enslaved African labour, and missionary networks surround the scene of narration. Its vocabulary organizes peoples through historical European categories, while its ending brings collective violence into contact with the apparently private history of melancholy.

In René. At dawn the frame narrator composes a panorama around the storytelling tree (p. 141). Natchez cabins, mulberries, French buildings, fortifications, and clearings occupy a common visual field. The opposition between social and “savage” manners belongs to that narrator’s cultural classification; it should not be reproduced as a neutral hierarchy of human development. Equally, the racial term applied to workers in the clearings is the source’s historical language. The supplied annotation identifies these figures as enslaved Africans. Their labour is visible but they are not given individual names, speech, or feelings, a striking limit to a book devoted so intensely to one man’s interior life.

René’s later exclamation about happy Indigenous people is more specifically his own idealization (p. 154). He imagines uncomplicated needs, peace, and effortless wisdom.

Chactas's remembered suffering and cross-Atlantic history prevent that speech from functioning as a sufficient account of Indigenous experience. The opening marriage likewise locates René within local social obligations even as he repeatedly declares himself isolated.

The colonial frame also carries the European story materially. Letters arrive through the Missions étrangères, and a fleet makes René's passage possible. Neither the supposedly self-contained inner life nor the apparent solitude of the wilderness is independent of institutions, transport, conversion, and settlement. Attending to these connections does not require turning every landscape into a coded political thesis; it requires noticing the infrastructure the text names.

The ending compresses the deaths of René, Chactas, and Souël into a massacre of French and Natchez. The supplied historical note distinguishes an uprising and subsequent reprisals, but the narrative itself gives no developed history of those events. Its compression should not be mistaken for a transparent documentary sequence. Most importantly, the sharing of death across protagonist and advisers complicates a reading in which René's violent end alone proves personal punishment. The frame opens on a picturesque contrast and closes on collective catastrophe: historical relations that seemed marginal to his confession become the conditions under which every voice is silenced.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 141.** des défrichements couverts de Nègres — Historical racial language in the frame narrator's panorama; the edition identifies enslaved labour.

- **p. 141.** le contraste des mœurs sociales et des mœurs sauvages — A culturally situated classification, not a neutral description.
- **p. 140.** par le bureau des Missions étrangères — The transatlantic communication network brings the letter.
- **p. 154.** Heureux sauvages — René's idealizing address must be distinguished from the frame narrator.
- **p. 192.** avec Chactas et le père Souël — The ending includes both counsellors in René's fatal historical circumstances.

In this edition. The editorial notes to pp. 139, 141, and 192 supply historical context. The note to p. 141 also identifies the geographically impossible view of the Appalachians as a composed prospect. These are editorial claims, distinct from the French story's picturesque assertions; no new archival verification is claimed here.

See also. Chactas: sympathy, memory, and the common ways (p. 34) · Céluta and the unfulfilled marriage (p. 48) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124) · Fiction, truth, and the poetic example (p. 65) · Pastoral happiness and imagined simplicity (p. 110) · Homeland and exile (p. 83)

The paternal house

château paternel; toit; seuil; berceau

The word. The paternal château is a family building, inherited property and a remembered arrangement of relationships. Toit, roof, names shelter metonymically; seuil, threshold, makes entry a physical and emotional

decision. The house is not identical with a recoverable home.

In René. In childhood the château contains both constraint before the father and ease beside Amélie. The landscape around it is the shared field of their pleasures. After the father's death it passes to the elder brother, forcing the younger pair to leave. Their displacement is therefore a material consequence of inheritance as well as an existential loss.

On the way to the convent René finds the estate sold and uninhabited by its new owner. An unknown custodian controls access. Amélie has recently come too, but is first described merely as a stranger who fainted at the threshold. The former children of the house are strangers to its present social order.

The room-by-room movement follows maternal death, paternal retreat, René's cradle and the sister's first pledges of friendship. Biography becomes an architectural sequence. The house's emptiness makes each absent relationship present in thought. His hasty departure then produces the larger reflection that human families last only a day. The abstraction grows from a specific dispossession, and should not efface it.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 143.** château paternel — The house first belongs to recurrent childhood return.
- **p. 146.** l'héritage de mon frère — Property succession displaces René and Amélie.
- **p. 175.** Un gardien inconnu m'ouvrit brusquement les portes — A stranger now mediates entry.

- **p. 176.** les couches abandonnées — Empty beds mark domestic life withdrawn from its objects.

In this edition. The source leaves the province unnamed. Although autobiographical comparisons are possible, the text does not name Combourg, and the lexicon does not replace its fictional château with an asserted real address. The edition translates the paternal formulas consistently, which helps trace their recurrence.

See also. Parents and the elder brother (p. 106) · Ruins and monuments (p. 135) · Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Homeland and exile (p. 83)

The royal statue and execution

statue; marbre tragique; sacrifice

The word. The statue is a public object that points toward the site of a royal death. “Tragic marble” transfers the emotional quality of the event to its material memorial. Sacrifice is a morally charged description of execution, not a neutral administrative term.

In René. René encounters the monument in a secluded courtyard behind a palace. Wind moans around it, while workers rest indifferently or whistle as they cut stone. The acoustic contrast separates his solemn interpretation from their ordinary activity. Some can scarcely identify the event and others do not know it at all.

He treats this forgetfulness as a measure of human insignificance: people once made a great noise, but time changes the earth’s face. The monument’s pointed gesture cannot ensure that later viewers know what it means. Memory needs interpretation as well as surviving stone.

The scene prepares the later use of sacrifice for Amélie’s profession without making the two events identical. Here a

violent historical death is remembered; there a living woman undergoes a rite of renunciation. René's tragic vocabulary can heighten both, but the lexical recurrence should not erase their different agents, purposes and outcomes.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 150.** un lieu fameux par un sacrifice — The place is defined through a charged interpretation of royal execution.
- **p. 150.** du marbre tragique — Feeling is transferred to the commemorative material.
- **p. 150.** en sifflant — Ordinary labor sounds against René's tragic attention.

In this edition. Three royal names must be kept separate. Chateaubriand's own note on p. 150 identifies the location as London behind Whitehall and the statue as Charles II. The supplied editor identifies the execution as Charles I's and corrects the historical statue to James II. Thus "Charles II" is the author's reported identification, not the lexicon's independent historical conclusion. The passage itself leaves the city unnamed.

See also. Ruins and monuments (p. 135) · Time and historical change (p. 178) · Sacrifice and holocaust (p. 139)

The sublime and scale

sublime; grandeur; immensité; horreur

The word. Sublime names elevation or greatness that can exceed ordinary comprehension and mix attraction with fear. In René, vast scale, sacred awe, the dignity of death and intense moral action all claim this register. "Horror" in

such passages may mean awed trembling rather than simple disgust.

In René. The father's face takes on something sublime in death, prompting René to ask whether it bears the signs of immortality. The reasoning is affective and interrogative: visible dignity becomes a possible sign, not a demonstrated proof. Likewise Italian churches produce holy and poetic awe through scale, sound and artistic embodiment.

At Etna, sublimity is organized around disproportion. The world is immense yet appears as a point beneath the observer; the crater exposes a terrifying depth beside him. René makes the image a representation of his existence, and thus risks converting a response to grandeur into a claim about his own exceptional nature.

The religious frame offers a practical alternative. The Preface describes opportunities for rare and sublime virtues in cloisters, and the superior's letter records Amélie's care for the sick. Here greatness need not depend on commanding a vast view or possessing extraordinary sensations. The book's elevated aesthetic and its moral correction therefore share a vocabulary whose applications can diverge.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 145.** quelque chose de sublime — The dead father's face prompts a question about immortality.
- **pp. 151–152.** sainte et poétique horreur — The phrase spans a printed page boundary and joins religious with aesthetic awe.
- **p. 153.** immense et imperceptible — Scale is paradoxical rather than merely large.

- **Preface p. 13.** de rares et sublimes vertus — The authorial defense locates sublimity in possible conduct.

In this edition. The word horreur crosses the source's pp. 151–152 as "poé- / tique horreur". For a continuous exact citation, consult both page segments; the isolated page-end is not a complete lexical attestation. The lexicon's discussion uses the completed phrase while keeping its textual boundary explicit.

See also. Abyss and volcano (p. 15) · Architecture and embodied poetry (p. 24) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Genius and Presiding Spirit (p. 69)

The two reviews and the management of admiration

Mercure; critique; moralité; génie

The word. The reviews reprinted with the work are reception documents: they show how particular contemporary readers publicly explained and valued René. Their later inclusion by the author also makes them part of an authorized presentation of the book. They are neither the narrative's own voice nor a comprehensive record of everything contemporaries thought.

In René. The first extract, from the Mercure of 15 Floréal Year X and signed P. M., begins by treating René both as part of the larger defence and as a small work capable of standing alone (Review p. 351). Its language of inner storm and muffled fermentation closely articulates the problem of passions without an object. It praises the precision with which such hard-to-name experience has been rendered and anticipates readers recognizing their own confused youth in the description.

That recognition is ethically double. The review admires the first Amélie letter as chaste and passionate, with love perceptible beneath religion's veil (p. 353), while also locating the novel's moral in the missionary's abrupt rebuke. Its final joke about young people beginning with eccentricity while waiting for genius targets the conversion of a literary attitude into a claim of superiority. Aesthetic identification and moral distancing are therefore joined inside the same favourable response.

The second review, dated 20 July 1805, presents innovation as an extension of established artistic principles rather than their destruction (pp. 354–355). It accepts the author's account of fiction as bait for readers unlikely to approach doctrine directly. Yet it explicitly concedes that the tenderness and melancholy may be too intoxicating for the young. Its defence depends on the predominance of the ending's moral emotion, and it even imagines a future in which the episodes could be removed from the doctrinal work while remaining masterpieces for connoisseurs.

The reviewer's phrase about "René's passion" exceeding legitimate bounds must not be treated as better evidence of reciprocal incest than Amélie's explicit negation in the story. Critical shorthand may name the work's transgressive matter without precisely distinguishing whose passion it is. The two reviews are most valuable when read as active interpretations: both celebrate imaginative achievement, both work to secure moral legitimacy, and neither entirely suppresses the disturbing attractiveness that makes that work necessary. Their reprinting records and promotes a way of reading; it does not dissolve the tensions they themselves register.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Review p. 351.** un petit ouvrage à part — The first reviewer recognizes potential independence from the Génie.
- **Review p. 353.** à la fois si chaste et si passionnée — Admiration centres on the mixed language of Amélie's letter.
- **Review p. 354.** en attendant le génie — The first review mocks eccentricity adopted as a substitute for achievement.
- **Review p. 356.** La passion de René sort, il est vrai, des bornes légitimes — A reviewer's broad characterization, not an overriding narrative fact.
- **Review p. 358.** son petit discours vaut lui seul un long traité de morale — The second reviewer gives Souël's rebuke exceptional didactic authority.

In this edition. The first extract ends with the initials P. M.; this entry does not expand them without additional evidence. The reproduced second extract omits a signature, but the supplied p. 358 editorial note reports that the complete review was signed Ch. D. These initials are likewise not expanded here. The extracts are reproduced in the 1826 volume but retain their distinct original dates.

See also. Rousseau, Werther, and the argument about reading (p. 132) · Christian apologetics and the uses of fiction (p. 41) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148)

The unnamed ancient and composed dying

un ancien; raison; âme s'échapper

The word. The unnamed ancient is a classical example invoked by René when he plans to watch his own departure from life with deliberate attention. The appeal to reason gives an orderly form to what he simultaneously calls an insane act. The example's precise identity remains uncertain in the text.

In René. René decides to put all his reason into the irrational act he has contemplated. He does not set an immediate date, but imagines savoring his remaining moments and gathering his strength to feel the soul escape. This is part of his narrated self-contradiction, not advice offered by the work to its reader.

The surrounding admission is crucial: he says his heart loved God while his reasoning was impious. The classical posture therefore enters a conflict between belief, thought and conduct. It is not a straightforward philosophical conversion, nor does its composure cancel the misery from which it arises.

Amélie's intervention redirects the narrative from imagined solitary control to an obligation created by another person's continued existence. Her demand that he live and swear not to harm himself interrupts the pose of detached observation. The contrast is between a fantasy of self-contained mastery and the claim of relationship, rather than a simple opposition in which all ancient thought is condemned.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 165.** toute ma raison dans cet acte insensé — The sentence names its own contradiction.
- **p. 165.** à l'exemple d'un ancien — The model is left unnamed.
- **p. 165.** sentir mon âme s'échapper — René imagines observing the final transition.
- **p. 166.** et ta sœur existe — Amélie answers self-isolation with another life's claim.

In this edition. The edition identifies the figure only as probably Julius Canus, on the basis of Seneca, De tranquillitate animi 14. Retain "probably". Canus's execution and René's contemplated act are not the same circumstance; the comparison concerns the proposed observation of the soul's departure. The lexicon does not supply a certainty the source lacks.

See also. Suicidal Intention and the Duty to Live (p. 157) · Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20) · Parents and the elder brother (p. 106)

The Vague of the Passions

vague; vague des passions

The word. As an adjective vague means undefined or indistinct; as a substantive, le vague names the unbounded, unassigned condition of faculties not yet fixed upon an object. The Preface's formulation is precise about this indeterminacy: the powers are young, active, and intact, but enclosed and exercised only upon themselves. Vagueness here is compatible with force, abundance, and acute suffering.

The term is a conceptual frame rather than a word René endlessly repeats. In the 1826 story its surviving adjectival occurrence belongs to the valleys around religious refuges, where the heart feels the ‘vague feeling of misfortune’ (p. 147). The title-like expression is concentrated in the authorial apparatus and earlier readings.

In René. The extract from the Génie opposes rich imagination to impoverished existence and a full heart to an empty world (Preface p. 9). Books and examples have made people experienced in advance: disillusion comes before enjoyment. This is not a simple account of innocence awaiting experience, since reflection already anticipates and consumes possible experience. The state precedes developed passions but has its own complicated cultural formation.

The 1802 paragraphs preserved in Appendix I no. 1 make Christianity especially important. Earthly grief and heavenly hope produce inexhaustible reverie, while monastic melancholy and indeterminate passion regenerate one another. The Preface omits those paragraphs and follows the shortened extract with a Defence that condemns solitary reverie under the names of Rousseau and Werther. The contrast is consequential, but punishment was already in the 1802 ending of the chapter (Appendix I no. 2). One should not manufacture a wholly innocent early version followed by a wholly punitive later one.

Within the narrative, the country episode realizes the condition without relying on its label. The beloved has no existing identity; sensations are innumerable and difficult to paint; the heart’s power alternates between fullness and void. Amélie’s revelation then gives feeling a definite misfortune, which René’s passions seize with disturbing

satisfaction. Determination ends one form of vagueness without necessarily ending the self-consuming pattern. Souël finally repeats the underlying mechanism: isolation intensifies faculties while withholding employment for them.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 9.** sans but et sans objet — The programmatic definition concerns direction and employment, not low emotional intensity.
- **p. 147.** le vague sentiment de l'infortune — The adjective survives in the description of monastic landscapes and the hope of shelter.
- **p. 161, 1802 variant e.** dans le vague d'un cœur solitaire — The 1802 wording names the theoretical state where 1826 instead names a void.
- **Appendix I no. 1.** une source de maux présens et d'espérances lointaines — The omitted account makes Christian temporal orientation productive of modern reverie.

In this edition. The supplied English retains the French substantive, usually italicized, because 'vagueness' loses its charged intensity. The 1802 variants at pp. 156 and 159 include vague; p. 161 substitutes vide in 1826. These are comparisons reported by the supplied edition, not results of an independent collation, and cannot all be assigned to 1805.

See also. Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53) · Disquiet and Restlessness (p. 57) · Melancholy (p. 95) · Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84) · Passions and Their Objects (p. 108) · Solitude (p. 151)

Time and historical change

temps; passé; avenir; siècle; heure

The word. Temps is duration and the medium of change; siècle may mean an age as well as a hundred years. The clock hour measures common time, whereas René's inward time expands, contracts and anticipates its own exhaustion. Passé and avenir name positions that neither memory nor imagination can fully occupy.

In René. The past and present appear as two incomplete statues: one mutilated by the ages, the other not yet perfected by the future. The image rejects the notion that either antiquity or modernity supplies a finished object of knowledge. René nevertheless repeatedly turns such incompleteness into a reason for dissatisfaction.

The sunset resembles the pendulum of the clock of centuries; cathedral hours travel from church to church, and each hour opens a grave somewhere in society. Cosmic, civic and personal measures are superimposed. René's own career has barely begun, yet he believes he has devoured centuries. Anticipatory imagination consumes the possibility of experience before experience can unfold.

Amélie's account of the dead young traveler reveals temporal inequality. One group begins mourning when another has already finished. The same death occupies different emotional presents. Her question about how quickly René might forget her changes an abstract moral reflection into a personal appeal. The final "one still shows" similarly places René himself in the position of a remembered trace after death. The telling outlives the life it records, but leaves only a rock and a reported story.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 152.** Le passé et le présent sont deux statues incomplètes — Neither historical period offers a complete model.
- **p. 158.** le pendule de l'horloge — The sunset becomes a measure of immense duration.
- **p. 159.** j'avois déjà dévoré des siècles — Inward anticipation exceeds the speaker's short life.
- **p. 172.** dont la mémoire périt — Unequal mourning reveals the vulnerability of remembrance.
- **p. 192.** On montre encore un rocher — A present act of showing preserves a minimal trace.

In this edition. The edition's printed page boundaries divide several sentences about time. Passage locators therefore distinguish the p. 158 clock from the p. 159 grave-opening hour. The historical setting belongs to the fiction; later publication and revision dates belong to the book's history, not René's personal chronology.

See also. Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · Ruins and monuments (p. 135) · Homeland and exile (p. 83) · Letters and interpretation (p. 89)

Trees and plants

arbre; chêne; saule; herbe; fleurs

The word. Vegetation in René is rarely decorative only. Trees provide shelter, genealogical analogies and images of aging; grass and flowers expose the fragility of monuments; leaves receive projections of thought. These functions must be distinguished rather than collapsed into a universal botanical code.

In René. The confession takes place beneath a sassafras. Its shelter makes possible the encounter that René's solitary woods usually prevent: one tree supports a small community of listeners. Chactas's aged oak is similarly relational. It can no longer produce its own foliage, but borrowed growth covers its old branches, just as memories sustain the old man. Dependency here is neither shameful nor pathological.

The human family fares worse than the oak whose acorns germinate nearby. At the abandoned château René observes that human children are scattered, so the natural analogy first proposes continuity and then reveals its failure. The grass piercing hard marble makes a different reversal: minute life defeats the apparently powerful dead. Vegetal endurance does not guarantee human belonging.

The willow episode is deliberately disproportionate. René attaches an idea to each leaf and experiences a ruler's political anxiety over their passage down a brook. He knows the game is childish, yet converts it into an indictment of other people's equally fragile investments. The leaf does not possess a fixed meaning independently of him; he assigns one. This is a miniature account of how his whole landscape becomes psychological.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 141.** sous un sassafras — The outer narrative supplies a shared place beneath a named tree.
- **p. 148.** un brin d'herbe perce souvent le marbre — Small organic force defeats monumental permanence.
- **p. 155.** au chêne décrépit de nos bois — Chactas uses the old oak to define memory and dependence.

- **p. 161.** à attacher une idée à chaque feuille — The act of assigning meaning is explicit.
- **p. 176.** Le chêne voit germer ses glands autour de lui — A natural continuity is withheld from human families.

In this edition. Keep named plants distinct: the sassafras is the meeting tree, the willow furnishes the leaf-game, and the oak carries several analogies. The edition's p. 175 note identifies the yellow wallflower among the ruined château's stones; no hidden emblematic tradition is required to explain its local force.

See also. The paternal house (p. 166) · Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98) · River and the parable of excess (p. 131) · Ruins and monuments (p. 135)

Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life

prendre un état; occupation; devoirs; voies communes

The word. Prendre un état means adopting a profession or settled condition of life, rather than taking possession of a political state. In René it connects practical occupation with the broader question of accepting duties and a durable place among others. Vocation may be religious, domestic, or social; no single career is prescribed as a universal cure.

In René. Amélie's letter gives the phrase its concentrated force (p. 171). She knows René laughs bitterly at the French expectation that a person should take up a calling. Her answer appeals to inherited experience and asks him to exchange a little exceptionalism for a little less unhappiness. This does not require the reader to believe that all ordinary institutions are benign. It identifies his

tendency to reject any finite form that cannot match the expansiveness of his wishes.

The proposed marriage immediately following the advice gives occupation a domestic meaning: a wife and children would fill his days. Yet Amélie's language idealizes a wife who exists wholly for his happiness and resembles a sister. Her recommendation is both practical counsel and emotionally compromised projection. Moreover, René already has a wife in the American frame and lives apart from her. The reader therefore encounters his neglected concrete obligation before hearing his sister's imagined remedy.

Souël gives the vocabulary a firmer ethical basis. Powers received must be used for others, rather than accumulated as proofs of inward richness (p. 190). Amélie's nursing demonstrates a realized form of this principle. Her vocation is not exhausted by vows or by separation from forbidden affection: it matures in a sustained practice involving companions who need her. In contrast, René can turn even genuine grief into an "occupation" that absorbs all his moments (p. 183). Being occupied is therefore not sufficient. The object and social direction of that occupation matter.

Chactas's common ways then offer a modest alternative to the self-destructive enlargement of his river fable. Their worth lies in preserving neighbours, companions, and a habitable course. The conclusion limits the promise: René reportedly returns to his wife without finding happiness. Fulfilling an obligation is not represented as the immediate production of pleasurable feeling. A vocation offers form and responsibility to life, but the narrative refuses to certify an uncomplicated recovery. This distinction

between duty and the demand for happiness is essential to the term's ethical force.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **p. 171.** prendre un état — The original italicizes the settled phrase.
- **p. 171.** cherchez quelque occupation — Amélie asks for practical engagement outside isolating reverie.
- **p. 183.** Mon chagrin étoit devenu une occupation — René shows that an occupation can still enclose the self.
- **p. 190.** négligeant tous vos devoirs — Souël names the cost of withdrawal.
- **p. 192.** mais sans y trouver le bonheur — The return to marriage does not receive a happy conclusion.

In this edition. The anonymous translation renders prendre un état as "take up a calling," and its note explains a profession or settled condition. "Occupation" should retain its breadth; "job" would be too narrowly economic for the interconnected religious and domestic uses.

See also. Céluta and the unfulfilled marriage (p. 48) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Father Souël: severity and responsibility (p. 62) · The cloister as refuge and demanding community (p. 161) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122)

Women, gender, and the distribution of agency

femmes; foible femme; vierge; sœur

The word. The text and its Preface attach gendered expectations to sensitivity, strength, love, and social duty. These are historically situated generalizations made by particular voices, not neutral facts about women or men. Their importance lies both in what they claim and in the ways the represented women exceed, complicate, or remain silenced by those categories.

In René. The prefatory chapter says that intimacy with women makes modern male character less decided and contributes uncertainty and tenderness to passions (Preface p. 10). Its causal account assigns women a broad formative influence while judging the effects through an ideal of firmer masculinity. The Défense later speaks of the imagination of a weak woman led astray by René's reveries (p. 14). Both passages belong to an authorial argument about modern disorder; a scholarly lexicon should attribute rather than endorse them.

René's own portrait of Amélie divides her attributes between woman and angel: timidity and love on one side, purity and melody on the other (p. 167). This idealization helps explain why her forbidden passion shocks him so completely. Yet her actions are not simply timid. She recognizes his suicidal intention, confronts him, exacts a promise, decides to leave, manages her property, asks him to accept a limited ceremonial role, and courageously submits her head to the scissors. The narrative gives her will and practical discernment even while filtering much of her life through his account.

Her first letter also participates in gendered expectation. The imagined wife would devote every thought to preventing René's pain and would seem another sister. That fantasy is not an impartial account of marriage: it reveals both an expectation of feminine care and Amélie's own difficulty separating legitimate future attachment from her bond with him. The actual wife in the American frame, contextually identified as Céluta, receives almost no interior representation. Her silence exposes the narrative's asymmetrical allocation of attention.

Finally, Amélie's nursing relocates feminine virtue from exquisite feeling to useful action. The convent is a women's community with its own witness, the superior, whose report revises the brother's incomplete knowledge. This does not cancel the work's gendered assumptions; it gives readers evidence with which to examine them. The strongest account holds together restrictive idealization, real agency, and unequal narrative visibility, avoiding both uncritical celebration of self-sacrifice and a flattening view that leaves the women with no decisions of their own.

The places annotated. Exact source wording with local interpretation.

- **Preface p. 10.** elles rendent notre caractère d'homme moins décidé — The prefatory chapter generalizes about women's effect on modern male feeling.
- **Preface p. 14.** l'imagination d'une foible femme — The Défense assigns weakness in its account of Amélie's vulnerability.
- **p. 167.** elle tenoit de la femme la timidité et l'amour — René distributes qualities between womanhood and angelic idealization.

- **p. 179.** elle avance hardiment la tête — A concrete act counters an exclusively passive portrait.
- **p. 188.** La supérieure ajoutoit — A woman outside the sibling pair supplies testimony about Amélie's later life.

In this edition. Foible is the historical spelling of faible. Its translated "weak" reports the source's judgement; it should not become the lexicon's unqualified characterization. The editor's note to p. 171 also records Amélie's shift from vous to tu, an intimacy that English cannot reproduce directly.

See also. Céluta and the unfulfilled marriage (p. 48) · Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148) · Charity and the outward use of feeling (p. 36) · Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122) · Sacred marriage and transformed desire (p. 136)

Defined vocabulary register

These shorter records explain secondary vocabulary and constructions in their local setting. The French heading identifies a lemma or phrase; the attestation gives exact source wording. A record is a substantive explanation, not an alias to a full article. Different contextual senses can receive separate records, so the record count is not a count of unique lemmas.

Acridity

aigreur

A sour or acrid emotional sharpness. The word brings suppressed passions into the imagery of fermentation, where blocked energies alter in quality rather than disappear. It is close to bitterness but stresses irritation and souring. Chateaubriand presents the modern condition as inwardly active and corrosive, not simply quiet, empty, or without the power to feel.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: cette aigreur des passions étouffées.

Advent into life

avénement

An arrival or coming into a new condition, here birth. The elevated word can carry ceremonial resonance, making an ordinary human entrance into life seem an event publicly proclaimed by bells. The printed spelling is retained in the attestation. The phrase looks forward to the same bells' association with death, enclosing a life between communal announcements.

Attestation. p. 144: son avénement à la vie.

Aerope and Thyestes

Érope et Thyeste

The affair of Aerope, wife of Atreus, with Atreus's brother Thyestes. The supplied note identifies the connection with Seneca's Thyestes. It is adultery involving a brother's wife, not a brother and sister loving one another. The distinction matters because Chateaubriand groups several different familial transgressions under a broad tragic category rather than asserting they are identical to Amélie's situation.

Attestation. Preface p. 14: d'Érope et de Thyeste.

Agony

agonie

Extreme distress imagined as the struggle at the approach of death. René says he drags himself to the monastery in such a state. Une sorte de signals a comparison, not the assertion that he is medically dying. The word prepares the ceremony's mingling of living profession and symbolic funeral, which turns separation into an experience of deathlike intensity.

Attestation. p. 177: dans une sorte d'agonie.

Apology as defence

apologie

A reasoned defence of a cause, here Christianity, rather than an expression of regret. Calling the larger work an Apologie places the stories inside an argument: their beauty and emotional force are supposed to demonstrate the value of religion. The Preface also distinguishes audiences, since the portion intended for worldly readers can be removed from an educational abridgement.

Attestation. Preface p. 1: cette partie de l'Apologie.

Apparition of desire

fantôme

A form projected by imagination and treated as if it were present. René's not-yet-found beloved becomes perceptible everywhere, in wind, river, stars, and life's animating principle. The adjective imaginaire explicitly identifies its source. Unlike a defined supernatural apparition, this phantom has no stable body or location; its very diffusion expresses a desire unable to settle upon one person.

Attestation. p. 160: ce fantôme imaginaire.

Arcaded passage

arcade

An arch, or a succession of arches supported by pillars. The moonlight picks out these supports and casts their shadows on the opposing wall of the cloister. Attention to built detail makes the religious retreat a walkable, visible space. The shifting light also turns stable architecture into a changing scene for René's contemplation.

Attestation. p. 147: les piliers des arcades.

Ardour

ardeur

An eager, heated intensity directed toward an undertaking or an attachment. René sets out to travel full of ardour, later embraces seclusion with the same force, and experiences desire as ardent. The word therefore does not guarantee a stable purpose. It names the energy of a commitment, which can survive the rapid replacement of one project by its opposite.

Attestation. p. 148: plein d’ardeur.

Ascendancy

empire

Power or influence over a person’s feelings and conduct. The two elders gain empire over René by opposite means, kind indulgence and severity; Amélie later exercises it through affection. No political territory is meant. The metaphor treats the heart as governable, though the story repeatedly shows how difficult it is for such influence to become lasting self-command.

Attestation. p. 139: beaucoup d’empire.

Attraction to a doctrine

attrait

A power to attract or draw interest. The reviewer says a severe religious doctrine would go unheard if imaginative writing gave it no appeal. Attrait is therefore part of an argument about persuasion rather than mere decoration. The passage acknowledges an audience moved by pleasure and seeks to redirect that motive toward a supposedly beneficial intellectual and moral end.

Attestation. Review p. 355: laisser la vérité sans attrait.

Austere

austère

Stern and restrained in outward manner. Souël listens without speaking before delivering his rebuke. The narrator immediately distinguishes that exterior from his inward compassion, preventing severity from being read simply as absence of feeling. Austère describes the discipline of expression through which he responds, in deliberate contrast with Chactas's tears and embrace.

Attestation. p. 189: d'un air austère.

Azure

azur

A deep or luminous blue, a literary colour word. The mountain summits appear like blue written characters against golden heights of sky. Azur consequently does more than specify hue: it belongs to a scene interpreted as an inscription. The striking analogy turns distant landforms into visible signs without supplying a single determinate message for them to spell.

Attestation. p. 141: des caractères d’azur.

Balm

baume

A healing and soothing substance used metaphorically for consolation. The Preface claims that religion can close wounds beyond the power of earthly balms. Amélie later says the regular life of her companions spreads balm over her days. The image gives consolation a gradual, restorative action and treats suffering as something that may require care rather than mere argument.

Attestation. Preface p. 12: tous les baumes de la terre.

Bard

barde

A poet-singer associated here with the Scottish landscape and the poems of Ossian. Calling him the last heard in those wilds presents the performance as a surviving voice of a fading heroic world. The scene joins oral song, ruined stone, grazing animals, and wind. Its melancholy authority is literary; the phrase alone does not establish a documented historical encounter.

Attestation. p. 151: le dernier barde qu'on ait ouï.

Bartram as travel authority

Bartram

William Bartram, whose Travels of 1791 is identified in the supplied note among Chateaubriand's American sources. In the Preface he appears in a cluster of witnesses defending apparently extravagant natural details. The entry distinguishes documentary appeal from invented fancy. The extract does not quote Bartram's evidence directly, so it cannot alone establish precisely which observation Chateaubriand borrowed from him.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: Bartram.

Beds and resting places

couche

Beds or places for reclining, here deserted within the emptied family house. Later couche funèbre names Amélie's symbolic funeral bed. The broad sense lets intimacy, sleep, birth, and death touch one another across the narrative. In this occurrence the beds are household objects whose abandonment makes the absence of the former inhabitants physically legible.

Attestation. p. 176: dans les couches abandonnées.

Bell metal

airain

Bronze or bell metal, used metonymically for the bell whose vibrations René hears. The sentence turns material vibration into the transmission of memories and feelings. Airain lends dignity and sonority beyond a neutral mention of metal. The precise object still matters: this is a church bell that gathers religious observance, birthplace, and family history into one audible sign.

Attestation. p. 144: Chaque frémissement de l'airain.

Bitterness

amertume

A bitter quality spread through experience, modeled on taste. In the Preface it is the affective consequence of enclosed powers; elsewhere it colours René's reflections and grief. It differs from a single misfortune: amertume is how circumstances are felt. The verb répandre makes the feeling diffuse, capable of staining life beyond the particular occasion that provokes it.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: L'amertume que cet état de l'âme répand.

Bodily perception

sens

The senses through which a person perceives the material world. The architect makes the poet's ideas available to such perception, as if thoughts could be touched. Sens here is plural and does not mean a proposition's meaning. The phrase gives built form an explanatory role: architecture translates imaginative conceptions into spaces, masses, light, and sound.

Attestation. p. 152: les fait toucher aux sens.

Boileau's censoring friends

amis prompts à me censurer

The italicized phrase adapts Boileau's advice to seek friends ready to criticize one's verse, identified in the supplied note with the Art poétique. Censurer means to judge faults candidly, not to suppress publication. Invoking a familiar poetic precept lets Chateaubriand frame revision as a traditional discipline of authorship rather than an embarrassing concession extracted by enemies.

Attestation. Preface p. 4: amis prompts à me censurer.

Bramble

ronce

A thorny, spreading plant that overruns the royal tombs. Its function is concrete before it is symbolic: the monuments have become hard to see because vegetation covers them. With the blade of grass piercing marble, the bramble reverses apparent strengths. Small living growth outlasts the powerful dead and dismantles the visibility their monuments were meant to secure.

Attestation. p. 148: cachés sous les ronces.

Brushwood

broussailles

Scrubby growth or small woody branches gathered for a fire. The material keeps the herdsman's warmth humble and practical, distinct from René's expansive volcanic and cosmic fires. It is not a great blaze or a cultivated domestic hearth. The contrast gives modest sufficiency a concrete shape that René can envy but does not successfully adopt.

Attestation. p. 162: l'humble feu de broussailles.

Burden

fardeau

A load heavy enough to weigh down its bearer. René makes his own corruption such a burden, so the source of oppression is internal as well as external. The related poids de l'existence turns living itself into a weight. These images give apparently abstract moral or emotional distress a bodily form that can be felt as exhaustion.

Attestation. p. 158: du fardeau de sa propre corruption.

Burning lava

lave

Molten volcanic matter, imagined flowing within René's heart. The description recalls the earlier Etna scene and translates its external heat into an inward bodily sensation. Ruisseaux makes the energy move like small streams, joining fire and water imagery. The comparison belongs to lyrical self-description; it should not be taken as a literal account of physiology.

Attestation. p. 160: des ruisseaux d'une lave ardente.

Burnt offering

holocauste

A sacrifice conceived as wholly offered and consumed, the older religious sense of the word. Here it figuratively characterizes Amélie's self-offering amid lights, flowers, and perfume. There is no literal burning of the woman. The later historical proper name for the Nazi genocide is unrelated to the passage's usage and should not be imported into this early nineteenth-century scene.

Attestation. p. 178: rendre l'holocauste agréable.

Canace and Macareus

Canacé et Macareus

A sister and brother named in the author's note among ancient parallels for forbidden family desire. The supplied explanatory note locates Canace's story in Ovid's Heroides 11. This is a sibling pairing, unlike Phaedra's relation to her stepson or Aerope's adultery with her husband's brother. The catalogue helps explain the author's selection of material without identifying Amélie as a simple copy of one precedent.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author's note 1: Canacé et Macareus.

Carver as travel authority

Carver

Jonathan Carver, named among the witnesses Chateaubriand invokes for details of American nature. The supplied note identifies his Travels through the Interior Parts of North America of 1778. His presence matters locally as an appeal beyond personal invention. The list establishes a claimed documentary basis for description; it does not, in this excerpt, assign each disputed detail to a specific passage in each traveler.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: Carver.

Catastrophe

catastrophe

The tragic event represented or recalled by the monument. The surrounding passage associates it with an execution, so catastrophe is not a natural disaster here. It also carries theatrical resonance as a decisive tragic outcome. René's discovery that people scarcely remember it weakens the assumed permanence of events that once dominated public attention.

Attestation. p. 150: la catastrophe qu'il retraçoit.

Caunus and Byblis

Caune et Byblis

The brother and sister named in the author's note; the supplied explanatory note identifies Byblis's desire for her brother in Ovid's Metamorphoses 9. The printed French forms are kept so the reader can locate them directly. Their inclusion places Amélie's forbidden attachment within a literary repertoire, while the narrative's Christian profession and charitable aftermath distinguish its treatment.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author's note 1: Caune et Byblis.

Ceremonial canopy

dais

A canopy placed over a person or a ceremonial position. It singles Amélie out within the crowded church and lends visible dignity to the rite. The elevated setting accompanies her passage from worldly adornment to renunciation. Recognizing the object keeps the scene materially clear: the dais is above or around her ceremonial place, not an ordinary raised stage.

Attestation. p. 178: Amélie se place sous un dais.

Changing conditions

accident

A changing circumstance or variation, here the different appearances of monuments across conditions of light and time. The word need not mean an unfortunate collision or mishap. René contemplates the same remains under sun and moon. The plural emphasizes that an object of meditation alters with its surroundings, generating successive emotional and visual effects.

Attestation. p. 149: dans tous les accidents.

Charlevoix as New France authority

Charlevoix

Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, the Jesuit writer identified by the supplied note with the Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle-France of 1744. The Preface invokes his testimony among authorities on America. His role joins religious authorship to geographical reporting, but the local citation functions as evidential support for description, not as another speaker inside René's fictional frame.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: Charlevoix.

Chastity

chasteté

Sexual purity or continence, here given the paradoxical modifier burning. Amélie's letter represents religious life as transforming the direction and quality of desire while preserving its intensity. The expression does not simply say she feels nothing. Its union of lover and virgin explains why the text's devotional vocabulary can remain passionately sensuous even while praising renunciation.

Attestation. p. 186: une sorte de chasteté brûlante.

Childishness

puérilité

A lapse into childish occupation or disproportionate concern. René himself applies it to the intensity invested in drifting willow leaves. The judgment interrupts his enchanted game with self-criticism and then extends the comparison to other people's supposedly weightier interests. The word thus both diminishes his own behavior and questions how securely adult seriousness distinguishes itself from it.

Attestation. p. 161: à quel degré de puérilité.

Chimera

chimère

An imagined good or fantasy without adequate grounding in life. The Preface calls such chimeras empty nourishment for proud solitaries; Souël later finds René obstinately attached to them. René's own account treats his changing chimera as something he cannot enjoy for long. The word brings invention under moral suspicion without claiming that imagination itself has no legitimate use.

Attestation. Preface p. 14: vaines chimères.

Cinerary urn

urne cinéraire

A vessel associated with the ashes of the dead. The partly broken urns frame the rising moon and the pale tombs, concentrating both burial and the damage of time within the view. Cinéraire derives its local significance from cremation remains, but the passage is a visual meditation, not a technical description of a particular excavated funerary site.

Attestation. p. 149: deux urnes cinéraires à moitié brisées.

Circumspection

circonspection

Careful hesitation before accepting a bold innovation. The 1805 reviewer defends such caution as a safeguard of principles and laws, while also praising genuine creative daring. It is not cowardice by definition. The argument tries to reconcile artistic novelty with disciplined judgment, asking whether innovation changes underlying principles or legitimately extends their consequences.

Attestation. Review p. 355: cette sage circonspection.

Cleared land

défrichement

Land cleared for cultivation or settlement. The plural makes the colonial scene visibly unfinished and laboring. The quoted racial designation is the historical wording of the source; the edition identifies the people as enslaved Africans. Their presence should remain visible in interpretation, since the picturesque panorama contains coercive colonial labor as well as an apparently harmonious arrangement of trees, buildings, and river.

Attestation. p. 141: des défrichements couverts de Nègres.

Cloud

nue

A literary noun for a cloud. The adjective fugitive makes it a transient object for René's withdrawn attention. It is not the adjective nue, naked, despite the identical spelling. Paired with the sound of rain on leaves, the cloud shows how small, passing natural phenomena can absorb him after he abruptly abandons his companions.

Attestation. p. 143: la nue fugitive.

Coarse religious cloth

étamine

A relatively plain, loosely woven cloth used here for Amélie's new robe. It replaces the ornaments of worldly life after her hair is cut. The change of fabric gives renunciation a tactile and visible form. The narration immediately says she is no less affecting, allowing simplicity to intensify rather than extinguish her beauty in René's eyes.

Attestation. p. 179: une longue robe d'étamine.

Congeniality

conformité

A pleasing agreement of temperament and tastes. The phrase grounds René and Amélie's closeness in shared ways of feeling and responding, especially to landscapes and walks. Conformité is more than compliance with a rule here: neither sibling is said to submit to the other's preferences. The language stresses likeness, which later makes their separation and unequal knowledge especially painful.

Attestation. p. 143: Une douce conformité d'humeur et de goûts.

Consummated

consommé

Completed or brought fully to its end. The profession has taken place while René is unconscious, so the phrase tells him that the decisive renunciation can no longer be prevented. It does not mean that something has been eaten. Amélie's later letter repeats the completion as a source of peace: irrevocable decision can end the torment of hesitation.

Attestation. p. 181: le sacrifice étoit consommé.

Convent superior

supérieure

The woman who heads the religious community. She arranges René's place for the ceremony and later writes the account of Amélie's death and charitable service. The noun denotes an office rather than a claim of personal superiority. Her final letter supplies communal testimony about Amélie, supplementing and partly correcting the brother's intensely private account of her life.

Attestation. p. 177: La supérieure du couvent.

Countenance

physionomie

The face as it expresses character or an immediate state of feeling. When René looks at the passing Indigenous people, his countenance softens before tears and speech follow. The narrator records emotion through visible changes while the blind Chactas must rely on silence and voice. Physionomie therefore helps distinguish the different modes by which the two listeners perceive him.

Attestation. p. 154: sa physionomie s'attendrit.

Course of life

carrière

A course, race, or span of activity, here life itself. It does not primarily mean professional advancement. René wishes to finish a course scarcely begun and claims already to have devoured centuries within it. The contrast makes subjective exhaustion disproportionate to elapsed years. Amélie's later return to life's painful carrière gives the image a more purposeful, courageous direction.

Attestation. p. 159: une carrière à peine commencée.

Critical judgment

censure

Censure here is adverse criticism, not necessarily a public authority's suppression of a book. The author distinguishes criticism of the complete Génie from objections to its detachable episodes. His willingness to correct Atala shows how a writer may accept particular judgments while postponing a comprehensive revision. Censeurs are correspondingly literary judges, sometimes invoked with an edge of irritation.

Attestation. Preface p. 3: la censure dirigée contre l'ouvrage entier.

Dawn

aurore

The first light of day, given a slightly elevated poetic name. Dawn fixes the opening conversation within a precisely arranged visual scene: the emerging sun, settlement, mountains, and river become visible together. Its calm differs from René's agitation. The movement from dawn to the approaching midday storm also helps frame the duration of his confession.

Attestation. p. 141: L'aurore se levoit.

Death in elevated diction

trépas

Death, expressed in a poetic and solemn register. René invokes its icy barriers while embracing Amélie through the funeral covering. Trépas heightens separation into an almost cosmic interval, but she has not literally died. The elevated word belongs to his response to the rite, helping readers distinguish his emotional language from the event's immediate physical facts.

Attestation. p. 181: les glaces du trépas.

Decrepit

décrépit

Worn down by age. Chactas compares an old person's dependence on memories to a declining oak whose own leaves no longer clothe it. Other plants grow on its ancient branches, giving borrowed adornment. Décrépit emphasizes loss of native vigor, while the living growth around the tree makes age a condition of altered dependence rather than sheer emptiness.

Attestation. p. 155: au chêne décrépit de nos bois.

Deed of gift

donation

A formal transfer of property by gift. Amélie encloses the deed with her letter, presenting it as a token of affection while preparing for religious profession. The practical document gives material effect to a separation otherwise expressed through intimate and spiritual language. It is a gift to René, not a request that he donate her possessions elsewhere.

Attestation. p. 173: la donation de mes biens.

Deep muted sound

sourd

Muffled, low, or indistinct to the ear. Although sourd can mean deaf, the adjective here characterizes the sound rather than a listener's ability. The phrase makes autumn audible as a deep roar heard beneath other noises. Similar uses describe murmurs and clamor elsewhere, allowing sounds to remain powerful without becoming sharply articulated or fully intelligible.

Attestation. p. 143: au sourd mugissement de l'automne.

Denouement

dénoûment

The resolution or concluding turn of a narrative, in the printed spelling. The reviewer argues that its moral and emotional force outweighs the potentially seductive pleasures of earlier description. Dénoûment thus becomes central to judging a work’s overall effect. The claim belongs to this reception document; a reader may test it against the lasting power of the narrative’s earlier scenes.

Attestation. Review p. 356: le profond pathétique du dénoûment.

Descriptive epithet

épithète

A qualifying descriptive word or expression. The Preface says that removing epithets has freed the style to move with greater naturalness and simplicity. Embarrasser means to obstruct or encumber here, so the image is of prose released from impediments. This is a local account of revision, not a claim that all imagery or all adjectives have been eliminated.

Attestation. Preface p. 4: des épithètes qui l’embarrassoient.

Development

développement

The unfolding or emergence of definite passions. In the Preface's account, the vague is a condition before those passions fully develop, although the relevant powers already exist. Development thus concerns the passage from active but unassigned capacities to formed attachments. It should not be read as a modern clinical developmental diagnosis or a guarantee of steady progress.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: le développement des grandes passions.

Distant hopes

espérance lointaine

Hopes whose fulfillment lies beyond immediate earthly experience. In the longer 1802 passage, Christianity continually juxtaposes earthly sorrows with heavenly joys, producing present pain and remote hope together. The distance is temporal and spiritual as well as figuratively spatial. This reading belongs to material omitted from the Preface's extract and must not be silently attributed to that abridged passage.

Attestation. Appendix I no. 1: d'espérances lointaines.

Ducis's Abufar

Abufar; M. Ducis

The stage work named in Chateaubriand's note after his remark that a related familial subject has already been brought to the French theater. The supplied note identifies Abufar, ou la Famille arabe as Jean-François Ducis's tragedy of 1795. The reference belongs to the author's negotiation with existing dramatic treatments, not to the chronological world inhabited by René himself.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author's note 3: Dans l'Abufar de M. Ducis.

Dust

poudre

Dust, in this elevated description of ruined palaces. It does not mean gunpowder or a manufactured cosmetic powder. The burial image makes once-imposing human constructions resemble mortal bodies. Against stone and royal monuments, plants appear unexpectedly strong; the humble powder is thus part of the passage's reduction of historical power to fragile material remains.

Attestation. p. 148: ensevelis dans la poudre.

Eccentricity

bizarrerie

Oddness or eccentricity of conduct. The first reviewer mocks young people who imitate it in expectation that genius will follow. The sentence reverses their assumed cause and effect: appearing unusual is easier than possessing creative power. The term helps distinguish the work's admiration for exceptional gifts from an endorsement of every socially conspicuous form of self-exception.

Attestation. Review p. 354: la bizarrerie étoit inséparable du génie.

Emotional faculties

faculté

The powers or capacities of the person, including capacities to imagine, desire, and feel. They are described as whole and active but enclosed, exercising themselves upon themselves. Their problem is therefore frustrated direction rather than simple weakness. This vocabulary supplies a model of inward energy that needs an object and a purpose if it is to become fruitful.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: toutes les facultés, jeunes, actives, entières.

Emotional mobility

mobilité

Readiness to shift from one idea or feeling to another. This is mental and affective changeability, not geographical movement. In the Preface's historically gendered argument, modern men's intimate society with women contributes to such instability. A glossary should report that attribution as the author's claim, without treating it as an established truth about either sex.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: la mobilité des idées et des sentiments.

Emotional transport

transport

A surge of feeling strong enough to carry someone beyond ordinary composure. René's transports at Amélie's arrival are joyful; later the same noun marks violent agitation during her profession. The word is therefore not inherently positive or negative. Its central feature is intensity and loss of measure, so the occasion must determine whether rapture, excitement, or fury is the best rendering.

Attestation. p. 166: mes premiers transports.

Enclosure grille

grille

A metal screen or barrier separating the enclosed religious space from the public area. It opens for Amélie's appearance and closes after René disrupts the ceremony. The adjective mystérieuse marks his experience of what lies beyond. The object makes separation visible and controllable, giving an institutional boundary to feelings he repeatedly tries to express through bodily closeness.

Attestation. p. 178: la grille mystérieuse.

Entrance steps

perron

An exterior flight or landing of steps at a building's entrance. René remembers his father and servants there, but now finds the place solitary and moss-covered. The specific threshold gathers former household welcome and present abandonment into one object. It also slows his approach, letting remembered social life appear before the interior confirms its disappearance.

Attestation. p. 175: ce perron solitaire.

Excessive

outré

Carried beyond proper measure. The adjective condemns the degree of the attachment to solitude, rather than automatically condemning every withdrawal from society. The same Preface approves religious retreats, so the modifier does important discriminating work. Its sense is excessive or exaggerated, not necessarily the modern English outré, which chiefly suggests bizarre or unconventional style.

Attestation. Preface p. 13: l'amour outré de la solitude.

Exultant joy

allégresse

A lively, expansive gladness, here sanctified by the birth of a child. The bell publicly announces joy that belongs within the family, connecting private feeling with communal sound. Allégresse has greater outward movement than calm contentment. Its pairing with the mother's pains and joys also gives the celebration a complexity that uncomplicated cheerfulness would miss.

Attestation. p. 144: la sainte allégresse de son père.

Fate

fatalité

An impersonal necessity to which the ancient world is said to have attributed dreadful familial disasters. Chateaubriand invokes this vocabulary while explaining the tragic material chosen for René. It prepares a contrast in interpretation: the Christian framing makes punishment arise from a fault. The passage is an author's account of narrative design, not proof that every speaker shares his causal explanation.

Attestation. Preface p. 14: les anciens attribuoient à la fatalité.

Fellow human beings

semblable

Other human beings regarded as sharing one's condition. Souël's phrase gives social service a broad scope beyond family, intimate friends, or people with identical tastes. The word answers René's investment in exceptional individuality by naming a common humanity. His powers are treated as gifts that acquire their proper use through contribution, not merely through private possession or expression.

Attestation. p. 190: au service de ses semblables.

Fermentation

fermenter

To work and seethe inwardly like a fermenting substance. The passions are imagined as active within confinement, their combination producing agitation without an external outcome. The metaphor is resumed by the first review's fermentation sourde. It describes a process hidden beneath the surface, making apparently uneventful life capable of considerable emotional pressure and change.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: qui fermentent toutes ensemble.

Finite capacity

fini

Limited in its capacity or duration. The argument says grief must eventually end because the human heart cannot sustain any feeling indefinitely. Fini does not mean that the heart has already finished or died. This limit can be considered a practical benefit, yet Chateaubriand calls it evidence of the poverty of our emotional powers.

Attestation. Preface p. 6: le cœur de l'homme est fini.

Fit for teaching

classique

Suitable for educational or established classroom use in this context. The reviewer imagines the episodes eventually being detached from the Génie once they no longer serve their apologetic purpose. Classique therefore should not be reduced to membership in a historical Classical literary movement. The surrounding concern with instructors, youthful readers, and danger determines the educational force of the adjective.

Attestation. Review p. 356: parfaitement classique.

Flamingo

Flammant

The bird named in the printed spelling as Flammant, corresponding to the modern flamant. Its call from the river reeds announces a coming storm as the three listeners return home. The brief natural sign closes the long confession within the landscape that opened it. Its ominous quality invites attention, but the text does not explicitly decode it into a single allegorical prediction.

Attestation. p. 191: la voix du Flammant.

Flowing waters

onde

A poetic word for water or moving waves. Applied to the Meschacebé, the plural evokes the river's broad rolling movement while the whole scene remains magnificently silent. Onde is more elevated than the ordinary eau. Its sound and register help make the river a majestic boundary of the opening picture, not merely a geographical coordinate.

Attestation. p. 141: rouloit ses ondes.

Fontanes's supporting judgment

M. de Fontanes

Louis de Fontanes, identified by the supplied edition as Chateaubriand's friend, patron, poet, and critic. The author's note attributes to him the praise of the Génie as a memorable monument. His role here is that of favorable witness in a deliberately divided critical record. The author sets this judgment against Ginguené's hostile verdict rather than presenting reception as unanimous.

Attestation. Preface p. 2, author's note 1: M. de Fontanes.

Forbearing kindness

indulgence

A forgiving, accommodating kindness toward another's faults or distress. Chactas's indulgence explains one source of his influence over René, in contrast to Souël's extreme severity. The word does not here mean a formally granted religious indulgence. Its emotional warmth is real, but the ending questions whether sympathetic acceptance alone can correct the conduct that sustains René's misery.

Attestation. p. 140: une indulgence aimable.

Funeral apparatus

appareil

The arranged equipment, trappings, and display of the ceremony. Lugubre refers to the pall, lights, and performance of a funeral rite around a living woman. Appareil is broader than one device. The word briefly gathers multiple sensory objects into an oppressive whole, viewed from René's constrained position kneeling beside his sister's symbolic grave.

Attestation. p. 180: ce lugubre appareil.

Funeral pall

drap mortuaire

A cloth laid over a dead body or coffin, here spread over Amélie while she lies alive on the marble. The action figures death to worldly life before she pronounces her vows. Because René hears her confession from beneath this covering, the rite becomes a revelation as well as a concealment. The cloth should not be mistaken for proof of actual death.

Attestation. p. 180: un drap mortuaire.

Funeral procession

convoi

A funeral procession or the company accompanying a burial. In this first occurrence the priests' chant sounds through the château as the father is carried to his grave. Later convoi denotes the assembled shipping whose preparations delay René. The immediate companions and actions determine the sense; the word should not be translated mechanically as a military road convoy.

Attestation. p. 146: le chant des prêtres du convoi.

Fénelon, Telemachus, and Calypso

Fénélon; Télémaque; Calypso

The 1805 reviewer invokes Fénelon's Télémaque as a precedent for defending vivid sensuous description through a work's dominant moral effect. The supplied note identifies the young hero's stay on Calypso's island in the opening books. The allusion supplies a comparison about reading and education, not another episode in René's travels. Its force depends on conceding the attraction that severe moralists criticized.

Attestation. Review p. 356: les voluptés de l'île de Calypso.

Getting under sail

appareiller

To prepare for departure or get under sail; in this context several ships have already begun the fleet's departure. The verb concerns nautical readiness and movement, not matching or pairing objects. Its completed tense contrasts with René's decision to spend one last night ashore. The sailing schedule gives practical urgency to his farewell letter and the subsequent storm.

Attestation. p. 186: plusieurs vaisseaux avoient appareillé.

Ginguené's hostile judgment

M. Ginguené

Pierre-Louis Ginguené, the critic named in the author's note as writing in the Décade philosophique. His claim that the Génie was already forgotten appears opposite Fontanes's prediction of lasting fame. The contrast makes critical authority look divided and historically premature. These are attributed positions within Chateaubriand's defense, and the supplied passage does not reproduce the critics' complete original arguments.

Attestation. Preface p. 2, author's note 2: M. Ginguené.

God tending the sickbed

celui qui retourne le malade sur sa couche

A scriptural designation of God, identified in the supplied note with Psalm 41:3, Vulgate 40:4. The image is intimate and bodily: divine care tends a suffering person on a bed. The Preface uses it to explain Amélie's recovery of joy amid grief. It presents consolation as care given to vulnerability, while the surrounding argument makes claims about guilt and punishment.

Attestation. Preface p. 15: celui qui retourne le malade sur sa couche.

Gravity of conduct

gravité

Seriousness, dignity, and weight in habitual conduct. René contrasts the former age's gravity with the corruption he sees after his return. The word is moral and social, not the physical force of gravity. Because the judgment comes from his retrospective account, the lexicon should retain its status as his evaluation of historical change, not an independently established description of an entire society.

Attestation. p. 156: de la gravité des mœurs.

Grove

bocage

A small wooded tract or leafy grove, here of mulberry trees around the Natchez village. It is part of the opening's concrete landscape and should not be expanded automatically into the later technical sense of a hedged agricultural region. The grove helps present habitation as integrated with vegetation, in contrast to the unfinished constructions and clearings of the colonial settlement.

Attestation. p. 141: son bocage de mûriers.

Gust of vapour

bouffée

A puff, gust, or intermittent emission. The black vapor from Etna partly interrupts René's view into the crater, so his knowledge comes between moving obstructions. The noun suggests pulses rather than a uniform screen. It contributes to the volcano's bodily animation while keeping the description specific to what the observer can actually glimpse.

Attestation. p. 153: les bouffées d'une noire vapeur.

Habit

habitude

The settled repetition of familiar feelings and activities. René says he would look for happiness in habit if he could still believe in happiness, even while others accuse him of incessant change. The conditional is important: this is a hypothetical admission, not a successful practice. Habit suggests a value in steadiness that his narrative temperament repeatedly fails to realize.

Attestation. p. 160: je le chercherois dans l'habitude.

Handwork

ouvrage

Work in hand, probably sewing or similar domestic needlework in this scene. Amélie repeatedly takes it up and puts it down, as she opens books without reading and begins sentences without finishing them. The precise craft is not named. The interrupted activity makes her inward disturbance observable through an inability to sustain ordinary purposeful actions.

Attestation. p. 168: elle prenoit et laissoit son ouvrage.

Heather

bruyère

Heather, or by extension land covered with heather. Here the coastal wind whistles over Cona's heather, contributing a spare, open texture to the Scottish scene. Later grandes bruyères names broad heathlands where René wanders. The same word can therefore designate plant and terrain; each use links exposed ground with wind, wandering, and a mood of remoteness.

Attestation. p. 151: la bruyère de Cona.

Herdsman

pâtre

A herdsman or shepherd, named in a poetic register. René envies his simple condition as he warms his hands at a modest brushwood fire. The figure offers an image of sufficient occupation and direct bodily need, contrasting with the narrator's diffuse longings. His melancholy song nevertheless prevents the scene from becoming a simple picture of untroubled happiness.

Attestation. p. 162: au sort du pâtre.

Hillside

coteau

A hill, slope, or rising hillside, generally gentler in scale than a mountain. The plural belongs to the siblings' remembered outdoor pleasures alongside the lake and woods. Gravir adds the action of climbing. Keeping that modest physical scale preserves the intimacy of the childhood scene before the narrative expands into ruins, volcanoes, oceans, and remote countries.

Attestation. p. 143: à gravir les coteaux ensemble.

Homicidal phantoms

homicide

Death-dealing or murderous. The adjective characterizes the martial phantoms displaced in René's account by Christian angels of peace. Homicide does not here name a judicial category or a person under legal accusation. The paired images make the conversion of a landscape legible as a transformation of its imagined inhabitants from violence toward peace.

Attestation. p. 151: des fantômes homicides.

Human intercourse

commerce

Communication and association with other people, not trade. René has renounced almost all human intercourse except with Chactas and Souël. Commerce therefore names the everyday reciprocal relations from which his life has withdrawn. The word's social breadth matters: his separation concerns conversation, friendship, and participation in a human world, rather than simply the absence of a particular beloved.

Attestation. p. 139: au commerce des hommes.

Humility

humilité

An acknowledgment of dependence and a yielding of proud self-assertion. René's planned violence gives way to adoration when he confronts Amélie's religious courage. Humility is felt and voiced as groaning, not simply stated as a maxim. The subsequent return of his transports shows that this momentary submission does not establish an enduring transformation of his conduct.

Attestation. p. 178: les gémissements de l'humilité.

Hymn

cantique

A religious song or hymn. René hears the fading sounds of the nuns' singing from outside the monastery, where they mingle with the faint rustle of waves. The plural points to devotional performance rather than secular song. Because the words themselves are not quoted, their effect reaches him chiefly through sound, distance, timing, and the sacred place from which they come.

Attestation. p. 184: les derniers sons des cantiques.

Ill at ease

contraint

Constrained, inhibited, or unable to behave freely. René feels this restraint before his father, whereas with Amélie he finds ease and contentment. The adjective does not necessarily report a particular act of compulsion by the father. It describes the child's felt relation to authority and helps explain why the sibling bond becomes his privileged place of emotional release.

Attestation. p. 143: Timide et contraint devant mon père.

Imlay in the printed form Imley

Imley

The printed name Imley refers, according to the supplied edition's note, to Gilbert Imlay, author of A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America of 1792. Keeping the attested spelling makes the index usable against the page. Chateaubriand cites him with other travel writers to defend factual particulars within a work whose imaginative style had provoked disbelief.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: Imley.

Impetuous

impétueux

Driven by sudden, forceful impulses. René begins his childhood portrait with this account of temperament, then exemplifies it through rapid shifts from sociability to solitary contemplation. The adjective concerns the manner and force of his responses, not their moral worth by itself. Later abrupt departures and reversals make the early description a pattern throughout his life.

Attestation. p. 142: Mon humeur étoit impétueuse.

Incense

encens

A fragrant substance burned in worship. The priest likens Amélie to incense consumed by fire, connecting loss of material substance with the ascent of perfume. The simile gives renunciation a sensuous, attractive form. It joins the literal fragrances of the ceremony to a figurative account of spiritual offering, without making the woman's suffering disappear.

Attestation. p. 178: comme l'encens qui se consume.

Inclination

penchant

A leaning or habitual disposition toward something. The opening attributes René's withdrawal into the woods to a melancholy penchant, a pull rather than a reasoned programme. Amélie later speaks of her inclination toward religious life. The shared vocabulary allows apparently natural tendencies to lead toward very different forms of retreat, and leaves their subsequent interpretation open.

Attestation. p. 139: Un penchant mélancolique.

Inconstancy

inconstance

Inability to maintain attachments or feelings unchanged. In the passage defended from Atala, new relationships and habits quickly displace grief for the dead. The point is painful because it diminishes our importance even to friends. Inconstancy later describes René's changing projects, but here it first appears as a general frailty of human affection, not his exclusive defect.

Attestation. Preface p. 5: l'inconstance est naturelle à l'homme.

Incorruptible

incorruptible

Not subject to decay or destruction. The religious flame replaces a perishable one in Amélie's account, promising a lasting form for love's energy. The immediate contrast concerns endurance and purity, not resistance to financial bribery. Because both sides are called flame, the change preserves continuity of intensity while claiming a decisive difference in the attachment's destination and permanence.

Attestation. p. 186: une flamme incorruptible.

Indigence

indigence

Poverty understood as want of inward resources. In the Preface, the inability to preserve grief exposes the heart's indigence; in René's account, indigence and richness coexist in the same emotional state. The apparent contradiction matters: lavish imagination can accompany a lack of sustaining relations or objects. Material poverty is the underlying comparison, not the specific condition asserted.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: de son indigence, de sa misère.

Ineffable

ineffable

Beyond adequate expression in words. Applied to the joy said to rise from Amélie's sadness, the adjective marks spiritual experience as exceeding ordinary description. Similar language surrounds maternal feeling in the bell passage. It need not mean literally incommunicable: the prose continues to evoke such experience through rhythm, contrast, and imagery while declaring direct statement insufficient.

Attestation. Preface p. 15: une joie ineffable.

Ingratitude

ingrat

Failing to acknowledge or respond to another's love or benefit. Amélie calls René ungrateful because his wish to die disregards her living attachment to him. The rebuke makes survival a relational obligation rather than merely a private choice. René later reverses the accusation against her, revealing how easily each departure can be interpreted through the abandoned person's wounded claim.

Attestation. p. 166: Ingrat, tu veux mourir.

Inner sterility

stérilité

An inability to generate or sustain emotional life. The surrounding argument takes even our failure to remain unhappy as proof of limited inward resources. Agricultural sterility becomes a moral metaphor: the heart cannot keep nourishing a feeling. The term belongs to Chateaubriand's account of human misère, rather than to a literal claim about fertility or illness.

Attestation. Preface p. 7: de sa stérilité, de son indigence.

Innocent caresses

caresse

Bodily gestures of affection that René insists had no forbidden intention on his part. The longer 1802 aftermath shows him reproaching himself for them once he understands Amélie's conflict. The phrase separates intention from effect: a gesture can be innocent for its giver and painfully charged for its recipient. This explicit retrospective exploration is shortened in the later text.

Attestation. Appendix I no. 4: mes plus innocentes caresses.

Irreligion

impiété

A lack of reverence toward religion or sacred obligations. René names it as part of his indictment of the society to which he returns. Later he describes himself as reasoning en impie while loving God. The term can therefore mark a conflict within one person, not only a stable group of outsiders opposed to belief.

Attestation. p. 156: à l'impiété, à la corruption.

Kinfolk

parents

Relatives or members of the family, rather than necessarily one's father and mother. René's mother and father are already dead, so the siblings withdraw to older kin. The false-friend distinction prevents a basic narrative error. Elsewhere the same word can designate parents more directly; the local family situation, not the modern English resemblance, establishes the reference.

Attestation. p. 146: chez de vieux parents.

La Harpe and correction

M. de la Harpe

Jean-François de La Harpe, identified in the edition's note as the critic who wrote the Lycée, ou Cours de littérature. Chateaubriand quotes his offer to correct Atala's blemishes in a few hours. The author then contrasts that estimate with four years of revision. The anecdote supports a picture of painstaking craft while acknowledging criticism as potentially useful assistance.

Attestation. Preface p. 4: M. de la Harpe.

Labourers

manœuvre

Manual laborers, rather than military maneuvers or schemes. Their indifference beside the tragic monument shocks René because the event that moves him scarcely occupies them. Some can barely explain the monument; others do not know its story. The passage uses their ordinary work and rest to measure the gulf between monumental commemoration and the continuing everyday life around it.

Attestation. p. 150: Des manœuvres étoient couchés avec indifférence.

Languor

langueur

A draining slackness or lack of bodily vigor. It follows the nights of extraordinary emotional energy, marking a shift from burning abundance toward depletion. Secrète suggests an inward condition not immediately visible or explained. The word belongs to the narrative's bodily vocabulary of suffering; it should not by itself be converted into a retrospective medical diagnosis.

Attestation. p. 164: Une langueur secrète.

Lasting cares

souci

Cares, anxieties, or troubling preoccupations. Chactas characterizes René's extraordinary way of life as full of them and directs him toward ordinary paths. The plural is less grand than René's language of abyss and vastness, giving the counsel an intentionally practical scale. It names what his cultivated exceptionality produces in daily experience, rather than an enviable distinction.

Attestation. p. 191: pleine que de soucis.

Linen band

bandeau

A band or strip of linen worn around or over part of the head. It conceals the troubles visible on Amélie's brow as her new clothing and veil mark religious profession. The object is neither the later theatrical blindfold nor a political emblem here. Its covering action contributes to the ceremony's transformation of expressive bodily detail into regulated sacred appearance.

Attestation. p. 179: un bandeau de lin.

Lot and his daughters

Loth et ses filles

The biblical story in which Lot's daughters lie with their father, identified by the supplied note with Genesis 19:30–38. Chateaubriand places it beside the rejected Myrrha subject as another parent-child case. The catalogue crosses pagan and scriptural traditions but does not erase their differences. Loth is the printed form retained in the French note, corresponding to English Lot.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author's note 1: celui de Loth et de ses filles.

Low roaring

mugissement

A bellowing or deep roaring sound, transferred from an animal voice to the season. The surrounding leaves and wind make autumn seem to possess a mournful agency of its own. The word contributes to the text's habit of giving landscape a voice. It is a figure for natural sound, not a statement that autumn literally speaks a message.

Attestation. p. 143: mugissement de l'automne.

Lure

amorce

Bait or an attractive lure. The stories are meant to draw readers who might otherwise avoid religious apologetics into the Génie. The nearby piége innocent admits a strategy of attraction while asserting its harmless intention. The 1805 review repeats the justification, recognizing that an appealing narrative may secure a hearing for a doctrine its audience initially resists.

Attestation. Preface p. 12: une amorce préparée.

Lyre

lyre

The ancient stringed instrument that stands for lyric poetry and inspired song. Poets are imagined singing with it, and later the heart becomes an incomplete lyre whose missing strings prevent pure joy. The instrument links artistic expression to the structure of feeling: what can be sounded depends upon the powers available within the singer or the soul.

Attestation. p. 150: qui chantent les dieux sur la lyre.

Manners and customs

mœurs

The established habits, conduct, and moral character of a people or group. When the Preface distinguishes Atala and René by their mœurs, it means their human and social worlds rather than etiquette alone. The opening landscape likewise contrasts French colonial and Indigenous ways of life. The word often links collective arrangements with the possibilities of individual feeling.

Attestation. Preface p. 8: d’autres mœurs.

Mental flexibility

souplesse

Flexibility, pliancy, or adroitness of mind. In a different setting this might be a virtue, but René places it in a downward movement from genius and religious seriousness toward irreligion and corruption. Its local force is therefore suspicious: facility has replaced depth or principle. The negative value comes from the contrast, not from the noun’s meaning in every context.

Attestation. p. 156: à la souplesse de l’esprit.

Migratory birds

oiseaux de passage

Birds traveling seasonally between regions. René follows them with his eyes and imagines the unknown shores and climates they will reach. Passage therefore means more than a brief visit nearby: their movement supplies a model for his own sense of being a traveler. The subsequent heavenly voice transforms migration into a figure for the death he must await.

Attestation. p. 162: les oiseaux de passage.

Moral effect

moralité

The ethical tendency or effect of a work on its reader. The Preface locates it in the impression left deep in the soul, rather than merely in scattered maxims. The word may also mean the lesson formulated by a story, but here reception is decisive. This permits the author to defend emotionally dangerous material by appealing to its final, chastening effect.

Attestation. Preface p. 15: juger de sa moralité.

Morellet and the disputed word

M. l’abbé Morellet

The critic whose objections prompt the Preface’s distinction between infortune and misère. He regards the inability to remain unhappy as a benefit, while Chateaubriand treats emotional incapacity as evidence of the heart’s poverty. The disagreement is partly lexical and partly moral. Morellet’s title abbé should not obscure the fact that the local controversy concerns interpretation, naturalness, and the account of human feeling.

Attestation. Preface p. 6: M. l’abbé Morellet.

Mortal remains

dépouille

The body left after death, viewed as what remains of a person or what the soul has laid aside. It is not plunder in this setting, despite that other sense of the noun. The burial sentence follows René’s hope of immortality, so the word helps distinguish the bodily remainder from the father’s continuing spiritual identity.

Attestation. p. 146: la terre se referma sur sa dépouille.

Moving force

pathétique

The quality that deeply moves an audience, especially through suffering. It does not mean feeble or contemptibly inadequate, as pathetic often does in modern English. Applied to the ending, it explains how feeling is supposed to help moral instruction prevail. The priest's sermon is also pathétique: simple language can carry strong emotional force without elaborate ornament.

Attestation. Review p. 356: le profond pathétique.

Murmuring sound

rumeur

A low or diffuse collective sound. In the comparison of church noises with ocean waves, rumeur is not an unverified report circulating among people. Its sound is broad and partly indistinct, comparable to winds in forests. Such aural analogies make sacred architecture continuous with the impressive scales of nature, while allowing the noises to suggest a divine voice.

Attestation. p. 152: aux rumeurs des flots.

Muted internal working

sourd

Hidden, low, or beneath clear outward perception. The review's fermentation sourde describes the young person's passions before they settle upon an object. Here the adjective extends beyond acoustics to characterize a process working unnoticed or without full articulation. It should not be rendered as deaf fermentation: the force lies in concealed activity, comparable to an underground or muffled disturbance.

Attestation. Review p. 351: cette espèce de fermentation sourde.

Mutilated

mutilé

Damaged by having parts cut away or lost. The past is compared to a statue recovered incomplete from time's wreckage, while the present awaits a completion the future has not yet supplied. Mutilée thus figures the incompleteness of historical knowledge. It does not require a literal act of deliberate vandalism against one identified statue.

Attestation. p. 152: toute mutilée du débris des âges.

Myrrha as a rejected subject

Myrra

The story of a daughter's forbidden desire for her father, associated in the supplied note with Ovid's Metamorphoses 10. Chateaubriand explicitly says he rejected it as too abominable. The case is parent-child incest, not a sibling relationship. Its exclusion is part of his rhetorical account of artistic and moral choice, showing limits within the tragic material he considered.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author's note 1: le sujet de Myrra.

Narrative spring

ressort

A mechanism that sets dramatic or narrative action in motion, like a spring transmitting force. The reviewer uses it for the extraordinary passion chosen to make the lesson more striking. Later passions themselves furnish energetic ressorts. The word concerns artistic motivation and dramatic power, not a holiday resort or a mechanical object actually present in the story.

Attestation. Review p. 356: le choix d'un tel ressort.

Naturalness

naturel

Ease and apparent lack of strain in expression. The noun describes an achieved stylistic quality, not untouched nature: it follows years of weighing phrases and examining words. Its partnership with simplicité makes economy and order central to the claim. The Preface therefore allows painstaking artistic correction to produce the effect of an unforced, freely moving voice.

Attestation. Preface p. 4: plus de naturel et de simplicité.

Newspapers

papiers publics

Printed public news publications: newspapers, rather than official personal papers or documents exposed to view. Chateaubriand cites their report of an American translation as evidence for his work's reception. The local argument moves from publication and readership to the claimed accuracy of the American landscapes, a rhetorical inference readers should distinguish from independent verification of every detail.

Attestation. Preface p. 8: les papiers publics ont annoncé.

Night waking

veille

A period of being awake, especially at night, contrasted here with dreams. Both sleep and wakefulness are disturbed by René's heightened condition. Later the same plural refers to religious night watches and prayers. The repeated word makes the difference between involuntary agitation and communal devotional practice available without treating all wakefulness as an identical state.

Attestation. p. 160: de mes songes et de mes veilles.

North wind

aquilon

A forceful north wind, named in elevated poetic diction. It shakes René's cottage while torrential rain and moving cloud surround him. The classical-sounding noun enlarges a local gust into a power of the scene. Its effect is physical as well as emotional: the dwelling shakes, and René feels life intensify within the vulnerable enclosure.

Attestation. p. 163: l'aquilon ébranloit.

Novel-fed mind

esprit romanesque

A mind regarded as extravagant, idealizing, or shaped by the expectations of novels. It should not automatically be turned into membership of the later historical Romantic movement. The phrase is a judgment René says others impose upon him. It places his imaginative self-understanding against the standards of ordinary society, without requiring readers simply to accept either side's verdict.

Attestation. p. 157: Traité partout d'esprit romanesque.

Novitiate

noviciat

The period of testing and preparation before a person is fully admitted through religious vows. The narrative says Amélie has obtained dispensations, allowing rapid movement toward profession. Noviciat names this institutional interval, not religious life as a whole. Its mention matters to the pacing: René has little opportunity to intervene before the impending ceremony.

Attestation. p. 174: les dispenses du noviciat.

Novitiate exemption

dispense

Permission to dispense with some requirement of the probationary period before religious profession. Amélie's notice explains how she can proceed promptly to vows. It is not a rejection of those vows or an annulment after taking them. René initially hears only obstinacy and secrecy, then later recognizes the arrangements as part of a coherent effort to leave.

Attestation. p. 174: les dispenses du noviciat.

Nuance

nuance

A fine shade or slight distinction within an experience. The review praises René for making obscure emotional life recognizable in eloquent pictures. Nuance stresses discrimination where the person living the feeling may have no clear account of it. The word links painting and inward analysis, suggesting that literary precision can consist in rendering gradations rather than imposing a single definition.

Attestation. Review p. 353: jusqu'aux nuances de leur existence confuse.

Object of attachment

objet

The person, thing, or end toward which feeling is directed. The pairing with but distinguishes an aim from something upon which the faculties can act. An objet can later be an imagined beloved or a real source of suffering. It need not be a physical object: its importance is its capacity to give inward energy a definite relation.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: sans but et sans objet.

Offertory

offertoire

The part of the Mass associated with the offering of the bread and wine. The narration places the priest's change of garments and sermon at this point. Its mention confirms that sacrifice refers to the Mass as well as to Amélie's renunciation. The term locates the depicted action within liturgical sequence rather than treating the rite as an undifferentiated spectacle.

Attestation. p. 178: A l'offertoire.

Outlying quarter

faubourg

A district beyond or toward the edge of a town's older center. René's move there allows a life obscure and independent while he remains among crowds, churches, bridges, and streets. The word does not yet imply every feature of a modern commuter suburb. The setting makes his urban solitude social proximity without recognized companionship.

Attestation. p. 157: dans un faubourg.

Ovid’s paired collections

Métamorphóses; Héroïdes; Ovide

The two Ovidian works cited in the author’s note supply further examples of forbidden family desire. The Metamorphoses is a poem of transformations; the Heroides gives mythic women letters addressed to absent men. Here the practical point is the range of precedents: the named cases include sibling and parent-child relations. Their occurrence in the same note does not make their plots interchangeable.

Attestation. Preface p. 14, author’s note 1: dans les Métamorphóses et dans les Héroïdes d’Ovide.

Pagan priest

pontife

A high priest or religious dignitary, here belonging to pagan antiquity. The reviewer compares ancient figures with the Christian fathers Aubry and Souël and claims the latter’s superiority. Pontife is therefore not restricted in this sentence to the pope. It is one component of a polemical comparison between ancient and Christian sources of moral authority.

Attestation. Review p. 358: parmi ses pontifes et ses vieillards.

Palm of victory

palme

A palm branch understood as an emblem of victory or spiritual distinction. René says God has reserved it for Amélie, whose ordeal continues beyond the ceremony. The martial language of combat and triumph makes suffering a field for courage. The term is figurative honor, not a literal claim that she receives a botanical prize or an earthly title.

Attestation. p. 183: la première palme des vierges.

Pendulum

pendule

The swinging part of a clock. The setting sun seems to oscillate in golden vapor like the pendulum of the clock of the ages. This is a grand analogy rather than a description of the sun's actual movement. It places a single evening inside an immense timekeeping mechanism, before human bells mark hours of death and tears.

Attestation. p. 158: le pendule de l'horloge.

Pensive

pensif

Absorbed in thought, usually with a quiet or melancholy air. The personified spirit of memories sits beside René as if it were a companion in contemplation. Pensif indicates an observable posture or mood more readily than a defined argument. The image turns inward recollection into a figure sharing physical space with the solitary traveler.

Attestation. p. 149: assis tout pensif.

Phaedra and the already treated subject

Phèdre

The subject of Phaedra's forbidden love for her stepson, treated by Racine and therefore said to be unavailable to Chateaubriand. This is a step-parent and stepchild relation, not sibling incest. Its place in the Preface is comparative: the author lists dreadful violations within families while explaining his selection of a tragic subject and the need to Christianize its outcome.

Attestation. Preface p. 14: le sujet de Phèdre.

Poet-singer

chantre

A singer or celebrant, used here for poets who praise gods, laws, and the happiness of peoples. It does not identify a church cantor in this passage. The elevated term emphasizes poetry's voiced, musical character and sacred authority. René seeks these figures as possible sources of a truth and simplicity he has not found in ruins.

Attestation. p. 150: Ces chantres sont de race divine.

Poetics

poétique

A theory of how literary art works and achieves its effects. The reviewer contrasts principles that genuinely generate successful works with a theory constructed afterward to prop up weak inventions. The feminine noun differs from poétique as an adjective meaning poetic. Its local role is to claim consistency between Chateaubriand's stated literary doctrine and the imaginative examples offered by the stories.

Attestation. Review p. 357: une poétique.

Precept

précepte

An explicit teaching or rule. Chateaubriand pairs precept with example to justify including moving stories in a work of Christian argument. The theory states what religion can do; narrative is meant to make its effects visible and felt. The distinction also reminds readers that an episode's meaning cannot be reduced to the maxims spoken within it.

Attestation. Preface p. 11: l'exemple avec le précepte.

Preferential love

préférence

An exclusive preference that sets one beloved relation above others. Amélie's longer 1802 letter says she has neglected her family and loved René alone, then reads her suffering as punishment. The word is stronger in this context than a harmless taste. These explanatory sentences are absent from the later main text, where her motive remains more veiled until the ceremony.

Attestation. Appendix I no. 3: Dieu n'approuve point ces préférences.

Presumption

présomptueux

Overconfident in one's own sufficiency or powers. Souël's address identifies the specific presumption immediately: René has believed a human being can suffice to himself. It is not mere youthful boldness. The charge turns an ideal of independence into a refusal of dependence upon God and obligations to others, both of which the concluding counsel seeks to restore.

Attestation. p. 190: Jeune présomptueux.

Priestly stole

étole

A long liturgical band worn by a priest, described here as around the neck. Together with the book in his hand, it marks his role in beginning the Office of the Dead over Amélie. The concrete detail helps the reader follow the rite's funeral aspect. It does not refer to a woman's fashionable wrap in this context.

Attestation. p. 180: l'étole au cou.

Profession ceremony

profession

The formal declaration of religious vows and the ceremony admitting Amélie to her committed religious state. It has nothing to do with paid employment here. Her request that René act as father gives him a recognized ceremonial role precisely when she refuses the private interview he desires. Public ritual regulates a relationship that private intimacy has made dangerous.

Attestation. p. 177: le jour de ma profession.

Property and means

fortune

René's assets or financial affairs. His wish to arrange them causes the letter that alerts Amélie to his danger. Fortune can elsewhere mean fate or success, but the legal and practical context here identifies property. The unusually businesslike questions become evidence because she knows such affairs have not normally occupied him, making ordinary administration a clue to hidden intent.

Attestation. p. 165: des arrangements concernant ma fortune.

Prostration

se prosterner

To bow or cast oneself low in a posture of reverence or supplication. The women in the church visibly enact dependence before God. The gesture later appears in René's imagined worship of an ideal beloved, where devotional language crosses into desire. Its religious setting should therefore be identified at each occurrence rather than assumed from the verb alone.

Attestation. p. 157: venir se prosterner devant le Très-Haut.

Proud misanthropy

misanthropie

A hostile withdrawal from human society, presented here as fed by pride. The phrase diagnoses a way of mistaking hatred of humanity for superiority of genius. It differs from loneliness or a temporary need for quiet. The Preface's condemnation anticipates Souël's insistence that powers must serve other people, although René's narrative makes withdrawal emotionally more attractive than this label suggests.

Attestation. Preface p. 14: une misanthropie orgueilleuse.

Pulpit

chaire

The elevated place from which the priest delivers his sermon. The verb monter makes the architectural action explicit. Chaire is not the flesh, chair in French, nor merely an ordinary seat. Moving into the pulpit distinguishes the spoken explanation of Amélie's offering from the ritual acts around the altar, although narration gathers both into one emotional scene.

Attestation. p. 178: monta en chaire.

Raised deck

gaillard

A raised deck or elevated part of a ship. René leans there to watch his homeland recede. The nautical noun is distinct from the adjective gaillard, hearty or robust. Naming his vantage point makes the farewell a bodily and spatial event: he is carried outward while the trees and monastery roofline sink toward the horizon behind him.

Attestation. p. 187: le gaillard de mon vaisseau.

Rapt absorption

extase

An absorbed state of overwhelming feeling, here caused by reunion with the one person René believes understands him. De cœur specifies emotional rather than detached intellectual experience. Elsewhere sacred song produces sainte extase. The vocabulary can move between human attachment and devotion, showing affinities of intensity without establishing that their objects or moral consequences are the same.

Attestation. p. 166: une sorte d’extase de cœur.

Rapture

ravissement

A state of delighted transport, as if ordinary self-possession were carried away. René welcomes the stormy months with ravissement rather than merely tolerating them. The noun intensifies pleasure and helps show why disturbing weather attracts him. It does not itself settle whether the experience is spiritually elevating or dangerously self-indulgent; the surrounding narrative supplies that tension.

Attestation. p. 161: j'entrai avec ravissement.

Regeneration

se régénérer

To be made new again at the level of moral or spiritual life. René connects it with rejuvenating waters and tempering the soul anew. The language of bodily freshness supports an inward transformation, not a specified medical treatment. The question generalizes his distress into a human need, making the reader momentarily share his longing for a less corrupted self.

Attestation. p. 158: le besoin de se régénérer.

Regulated life

régularité

The orderly recurrence of communal practices. Amélie lists it beside her companions' simplicity and purity as a source of consolation. Regularity is thus an inhabited rhythm rather than merely punctuality. It gives a practical content to religious refuge: peace arises through shared routines as well as through sublime images or the intensity of a single act of sacrifice.

Attestation. p. 185: la régularité de leur vie.

Religious refuge

hospice

A house providing shelter, associated here with religious life and with welcome for the unhappy and weak. The modern dominant sense of end-of-life medical care would be too narrow. René imagines such buildings as constructed solitudes within European society. Their wooded valleys and high sites make architecture, landscape, and the promise of protection support one another.

Attestation. p. 147: Ces hospices de mon pays.

Religious trial

épreuve

An ordeal through which a person is tested. Amélie's survival means her earthly trial continues, but the narration now calls her a heroine advancing courageously toward pain. The noun gives duration a purpose in the religious interpretation of her life. It should be distinguished from an experiment or a proof in the technical sense, though successful endurance may demonstrate virtue.

Attestation. p. 183: son épreuve ici-bas fut prolongée.

Restraining religion

réprimant

Most powerfully restraining or checking the passions. The reviewer argues paradoxically that stringent duties make dramatic conflict more energetic and feeling more elevated. Réprimante does not imply that all feeling is simply erased. Its significance lies in opposition: the stronger the demand for resistance and sacrifice, the greater the represented struggle can become.

Attestation. Review p. 358: la religion la plus réprimante.

Restraint of tone

contrainte

An unnatural restraint or forced quality in expression. Amélie hears it in René's letter despite his attempt to conceal what he intends. The noun describes the effort of holding something back, not necessarily pressure imposed by another person. Her familiarity with his habitual voice lets her read a disturbance beneath the literal subject of his financial questions.

Attestation. p. 165: du ton de contrainte.

Riverbed

lit

The channel in which a river ordinarily flows. Chactas's stream regrets the modest bed nature had made for it after seeking destructive grandeur. The noun also names a place of rest in other contexts, and that undertone suits the fable's value of repose. Its immediate reference, however, is a natural watercourse with limits rather than a piece of furniture.

Attestation. p. 191: l'humble lit.

Royal tomb

mausolée

A monumental tomb, especially one intended to preserve the distinction of an important person. Here royal mausoleums are hidden under brambles. Their grandeur makes the contrast with living vegetation sharper: costly materials and political power cannot keep the dead present or prevent nature's return. The noun names a specific commemorative structure rather than any grave.

Attestation. p. 148: les mausolées des rois.

Rush

jonc

A slender wetland plant, here withered beside an empty pond. Its faint rustling becomes a murmur, one of the very small sounds sufficient to prompt René's reverie. The image combines seasonal decline with minimal movement. Recognizing the plant's watery habitat helps preserve the scene's specificity instead of turning every item into a generic emblem of sadness.

Attestation. p. 162: le jonc flétri murmuroit.

Sacred awe

horreur

A shuddering awe before something vast, sacred, or overwhelming. The adjectives sainte and poétique qualify it as an admiring response to Italian churches, rather than simple disgust or moral condemnation. The sound of domes and vaults enlarges this effect. The passage lets fearlike bodily feeling participate in religious and artistic elevation without making the building an object of rejection.

Attestation. p. 152: horreur j'errois dans ces vastes édifices.

Sanctuary

sanctuaire

The sacred area around the altar, distinct here from the body of the crowded church. René has a place there because he will perform the paternal function in the ceremony. The physical arrangement matters: it brings him close enough to hear the prayer hidden from the rest of the congregation. Sanctuaire can be broader elsewhere, but this occurrence is spatially precise.

Attestation. p. 178: au banc du sanctuaire.

Scrupulous consideration

délicatesse

A fine sense of what is considerate and honourable toward others. Chateaubriand applies it to purchasers of earlier editions, who should not be disadvantaged by rapid substantial changes to an expensive work. The word describes ethical tact and scruple rather than physical fragility. His claim to literary independence is qualified by an obligation toward readers who have already paid.

Attestation. Preface p. 2: manquer à la délicatesse.

Self-love

amour-propre

The author's concern for his own standing, reputation, or satisfaction. Beside intérêt, self-interest, it names motives he refuses to treat as sufficient grounds for revising an expensive book already bought by readers. Later in the paragraph it also means the confidence needed to resist hostile criticism. The passage gives the term a social and moral setting, beyond ordinary personal affection.

Attestation. Preface p. 2: L'amour-propre et l'intérêt.

Sensuous delight

volupté

An intensely pleasurable, sensuous feeling. Amélie's letter allows a remainder of it to mingle with religious calm and innocence. The word complicates any account of her transformation as simple emotional extinction. It need not imply an acted sexual relation: the passage concerns the felt texture of a heart withdrawing from earthly love while retaining something of its affective force.

Attestation. p. 186: ce reste de trouble et de volupté.

Sheer nullities

néant

Things of no real substance or worth. Souël dismisses most of René's complaints as pure nullities, reserving a different status for the family's real misfortune. The plural is forcefully evaluative; it does not describe philosophical nothingness neutrally. Its sharpness exposes the distance between the emotional magnitude of René's narrative and the missionary's moral measure of its causes.

Attestation. p. 189: de purs néants.

Shipwreck hazard

écueil

A rock or reef dangerous to navigation. In the metaphor of the world's stormy ocean, ports promise safety and écueils threaten disaster, but René knows neither. On the final night by the convent, ships actually encounter such dangers. The repeated word joins the figurative risks of entering life with a vividly material maritime threat.

Attestation. p. 148: ni les ports, ni les écueils.

Shore strand

grève

A flat shore or stretch of beach washed by the sea. Waves break there below the convent. The word does not mean a labor strike in this passage. Its low, exposed setting helps place René outside and below the religious enclosure, listening as sea sounds mingle with the voices that come through the building's protected interior.

Attestation. p. 184: des grèves solitaires.

Shroud

linceul

The cloth enveloping or covering the dead. Here it names the covering over the living Amélie as René collapses upon it. His phrase intensifies the enacted funeral into something emotionally absolute. Keeping the distinction between material cloth, symbolic death, and actual life is essential: the revelation occurs precisely because a living voice comes from beneath the supposed shroud.

Attestation. p. 180: le linceul de la mort.

Sigh

soupir

A sigh, a breath that gives outward sign to feeling without fully articulating it. Amélie's involuntary sighs accompany her concealed distress and unfinished speech. The same word elsewhere belongs to desire, grief, and religious purification. It is a small bodily event whose indistinct meaning makes it especially apt for emotions the observer notices before he understands their source.

Attestation. p. 168: D'involontaires soupirs.

Signal lights

fanal

A lantern or light used for guidance or signaling. The ships' lights are tossed by the storm, while the convent's light serves in the comparison as a steady beacon. The contrast depends on visible instability and fixity. It is not necessary to assume the convent literally operates an official lighthouse; René turns its light into a sign of refuge.

Attestation. p. 187: les fanaux agités des vaisseaux.

Social obligations

charge

The responsibilities and burdens involved in living with others. Souël accuses René of withdrawing from them to indulge useless reveries. Charges does not mean criminal accusations or fees here. The phrase shifts attention from how society fails to satisfy René toward what he owes it, preparing the injunction to dedicate one's powers to the service of fellow human beings.

Attestation. p. 189: aux charges de la société.

Softened passions

amollir

To soften or make less firm. The passive participle describes men's passions mixed with women's, acquiring something uncertain and tender. The verb is evaluative within the Preface's gendered historical explanation; it combines potential gentleness with diminished decision. Its physical image is useful: what was firm loses its sharply resistant shape, rather than simply becoming less intense.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: nos passions, amollies par le mélange des leurs.

Sophist

sophiste

An opponent accused of using misleading or specious reasoning. The reviewer positions the story against such adversaries while defending religious retreat. The term is polemical, not a neutral identification of the ancient Greek teachers commonly called Sophists. Since no specific argument is quoted here, readers should recognize the reviewer's labeling without supplying a detailed philosophical controversy not present in the passage.

Attestation. Review p. 351: contre les sophistes.

Stifled

étouffé

Smothered or prevented from finding free expression. The participle does not say the passions are extinguished: they continue fermenting together. That distinction helps explain why enforced inactivity can be turbulent. Elsewhere René stifles sobs, a bodily example of withholding outward expression. In both uses the suppressed force remains present beneath the apparent restraint.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: des passions étouffées.

Sting of grief

aiguillon

A sharp point or goad, metaphorically the piercing force of suffering. Sea, rocks, and winds unexpectedly blunt it when René weeps among them. The pain is modified rather than abolished. Émousser continues the material image by making the point less sharp, so consolation is rendered as a change in how grief acts upon the sufferer.

Attestation. p. 185: en émoussoient au contraire l'aiguillon.

Stripped of hangings

détendu

Describing rooms whose wall hangings or furnishings of that kind have been removed. It does not mean the rooms were relaxed. The bare surfaces help explain their hollow sound and scant comfort. Combined with closed shutters, abandoned beds, and spider webs, the participle records the practical dismantling of the home that René still approaches through childhood memory.

Attestation. p. 176: les salles étoient détendues.

Stubbornly possessed

entêté

Obstinately attached to, or with one's head filled by, something. Souël says René is entêté de chimères, making fantasy an object of willful persistence as well as imaginative invention. The preposition de identifies what absorbs him. The expression belongs to the missionary's severe diagnosis, whose force should remain distinguishable from René's own explanation of involuntary suffering.

Attestation. p. 189: entêté de chimères.

Superior understanding

lumières

Intellectual illumination: better knowledge, judgment, or understanding than the author's own. The plural belongs to the language of reasoned criticism; it does not name literal lights or automatically refer to the Enlightenment as a historical movement. Claiming readiness to yield to such lumières presents revision as rational teachability rather than surrender to an enemy's authority.

Attestation. Preface p. 4: des lumières supérieures aux miennes.

Surplus of life

surabondance

An excess beyond ordinary abundance. René is overwhelmed by vitality while lacking friends and a definite beloved; the trouble is not initially a shortage of emotional energy. The noun makes an apparent strength oppressive because it has no adequate outlet. It prepares the movement from burning intensity toward the later languor in which feeling seems to supply thought with nothing.

Attestation. p. 160: une surabondance de vie.

Sweetly gentle

suave

Softly pleasing, gentle, and harmonious. It describes Amélie's mind in a portrait that joins bodily grace, sweetness of feeling, and musical voice. The English suave can suggest practiced social smoothness or calculated charm, which would distort this insistence on innocence. The French adjective here belongs to the sensuous and devotional language of a seemingly unforced gentleness.

Attestation. p. 167: de suave et d'un peu rêveur.

Symbolic dove

colombe

A dove with a sacred symbolic force, spreading imagined protective wings over the congregation. The text does not pause to define the symbolism, so the local effect is shelter, purity, and spiritual reassurance. Amélie later calls herself a poor dove of heaven. The repeated bird image turns weakness and exposure into a claim upon a protecting religious refuge.

Attestation. p. 179: la colombe mystique.

Tactful reserve

discrétion

Careful tact in approaching a painful secret. The elders combine it with gentleness and authority when persuading René to speak. Discrétion is not simply secrecy after information is received, nor freedom to decide as in at one's discretion. It describes a manner of inquiry that acknowledges the reluctance and vulnerability of the person being questioned.

Attestation. p. 140: tant de discrétion, de douceur.

Tasso's truth and printed verse

vero / verso (Italian quotation)

An Italian quotation, not a French lemma. The supplied edition identifies Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata I.3 and notes that the printed verso, verse, stands where Tasso has vero, truth. Its English translation follows truth while its transcription preserves verso. The distinction is essential to the argument: pleasing verse is supposed to season and convey sacred truth, rather than merely sweeten more verse.

Attestation. Preface p. 12, quoted Italian: E che'l verso, condito in molli versi.

Tender emotion

attendrissement

A softening of feeling, often accompanied by sympathy or tears. It can be elicited by vulnerability, affection, or a sense of higher protection. The related verb describes René's face as he watches the passing people. The term names neither sentimentality by definition nor a specific doctrine; its ethical value depends on what the softened feeling enables or fails to change.

Attestation. p. 154: avec attendrissement.

Thatched cottage

chaumière

A humble dwelling with a thatched roof. René chooses it as the site of rural withdrawal, but the verb s'ensevelir already gives the refuge a burial-like aspect. Later wind shakes it and rain strikes its roof. The house offers enclosure without full insulation: the surrounding weather continues to enter his experience through sound, vibration, and the window.

Attestation. p. 159: m'ensevelir dans une chaumière.

The fountain of life

fontaine de vie

A life-giving source, identified by the supplied note with Psalm 36:9, Vulgate 35:10. René imagines the soul renewed by immersion there, joining biblical promise to the fresh waters of a natural torrent. The image answers weariness and corruption with replenishment. Its devotional resonance does not mean his prayer has already achieved the lasting transformation for which he asks.

Attestation. p. 158: à la fontaine de vie.

The holy mountain

sainte montagne

The convent figured as an elevated place of divine dwelling and peace. The supplied note connects the phrase with Isaiah and the Psalms' holy mountain or hill of Zion. Amélie hears the last sounds of earth and the first heavenly harmonies from this imagined height. The figure is spiritual topography, not a factual assertion that the seaside convent stands on a mountain.

Attestation. p. 185: C'est ici la sainte montagne.

The Knight of the Landes ballad

chevalier des Landes

The ballad named through its opening words in Chateaubriand's note: an unhappy knight associated with an old pilgrim's song. The Preface claims that this vernacular material had already made the tragic subject almost Christian. Only a brief incipit is supplied; the edition does not establish the ballad's full plot or documentary transmission here, so neither should be reconstructed from the title alone.

Attestation. Preface p. 15, author's note 1: C'est le chevalier des Landes.

The old self

vieil homme

The morally corrupted or unrenewed self that must be transformed. The supplied note identifies Paul's language in Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9. Homme does not mean an elderly man here, and René is not asking merely to become younger. The surrounding images of regeneration and the fountain of life give the prayer a Christian sense of inward renewal. His plea seeks a changed way of being, alongside his darker wish to be released from existence.

Attestation. p. 158: de changer en moi le vieil homme.

The saints' tears

larmes

Souël's description of holy solitaries emphasizes penitential tears and the labor of quieting passions. He distinguishes what withdrawal is used for, rather than treating wilderness residence itself as sanctity. The tears mark repentance and religious discipline, unlike suffering displayed as evidence of personal superiority.

Attestation. p. 190: Ils y étoient avec leurs larmes.

The world outside religion

siècle

The secular world, especially its outward attachments and display as contrasted with religious life. Amélie's new robe replaces these worldly ornaments. Siècle does not mean a hundred-year chronological unit here, nor merely the current historical age. The term belongs to the Church's distinction between life in the world and consecrated withdrawal, made visible in the exchange of clothing.

Attestation. p. 179: les ornements du siècle.

Thoroughly disillusioned

désabusé

No longer trusting in the attractions or promises of something. The Preface's emphatic tout makes the disillusion general, while the preceding phrase insists that nothing has yet been used or enjoyed. Désabusé is not abuse in the modern English sense. It names a loss of illusion so extensive that experience appears exhausted before it has properly begun.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: on est désabusé de tout.

To diminish life

rapetisser

To make smaller or petty. René says he must shrink his life to the level of society, implying that ordinary company cannot receive the depth he offers. The verb records his own scale of values, which Souël later challenges. It helps readers hear how wounded social disappointment can become a flattering account of the disappointed person's superiority.

Attestation. p. 157: rapetisser ma vie.

To lay waste

désoler

To devastate or ruin. In Chactas's fable the swollen river lays waste to its once-delightful banks. It does not simply make them feel sad. The older concrete sense keeps the ecological damage visible: the stream's pursuit of greatness destroys the neighboring life that made its ordinary course companionable, leaving power accompanied by abandonment.

Attestation. p. 191: désole ses bords charmants.

To sail onward

cingler

To sail or make a course over the sea. The ship seen from the convent window seems headed toward the world's farthest reaches. In other contexts cingler can mean to lash, but no whipping is meant here. The vessel's outward movement contrasts with the nun's fixed enclosure and gives her contemplation a visible object of distance.

Attestation. p. 184: cinglant aux extrémités de la terre.

To sound inward depths

sonder

To examine deeply, as one sounds water to discover its depth. René begins an inquiry into what he desires but cannot name it. The image gives introspection the form of a probing operation, with no assurance that the bottom will be reached. His sudden rural project follows the failed inquiry, suggesting movement can replace rather than resolve self-understanding.

Attestation. p. 159: Je me mis à sonder mon cœur.

To strip leaves

effeuiller

To remove the leaves from a branch or plant. René attaches an idea to each willow leaf and watches the stream carry it away. The small manual act becomes a game of imagined stakes and anxiety. Its scale matters: slight material events can absorb powers of feeling comparable, in his account, to those of a threatened king.

Attestation. p. 161: à effeuiller une branche de saule.

To temper anew

retremper

To restore strength or quality by a fresh immersion, recalling the tempering of metal. Applied to the soul at the fountain of life, it joins material craft with spiritual renewal. It is stronger than merely refreshing a passing mood. The image implies that the damaged or enfeebled person might recover a capacity for great, noble, and just action.

Attestation. p. 158: de retremper son âme.

Tolling bell

glas

A slow, solemn toll, often associated with death or alarm. During the storm it is heard with the ships' distress cannon. The word gives the monastery bell a darker force than the childhood bell's festive associations. The sound does not by itself prove that Amélie has died that night; the narrative later reports her death separately through the superior's letter.

Attestation. p. 186: au glas de la cloche monastique.

Tribulations

tribulation

Afflictions and hardships endured in worldly life. The superior says Amélie was especially content to have left them. The elevated, religious coloring presents suffering as an ordeal one may pass through. Yet the convent does not eliminate physical danger: she dies while caring for the ill, so escape from worldly tribulation is not the same as immunity from all pain.

Attestation. p. 188: les tribulations du monde.

Unbeliever

incrédule

A person who does not believe the religious claims defended by the work. In this polemical setting, incrédule is more specific than someone momentarily doubtful of a report. The author envisages such readers as reachable through imaginative pleasure. It is a category within his persuasive strategy; the text does not identify every skeptical reader with a single organized school.

Attestation. Preface p. 12: ce piége innocent aux incrédules.

Undeceived before experience

détrompé

Freed from an illusion or mistaken belief, here prematurely. Reading and the abundance of examples supposedly teach the young the disappointment of experience before they enjoy experience themselves. The word carries a cost rather than a simple gain in truth. Knowledge borrowed from books can remove the expectations that would otherwise make direct participation in life possible.

Attestation. Preface p. 9: On est détrompé sans avoir joui.

Underlying store

fonds

A reserve, stock, or rich underlying resource. The reviewer says Christianity contains such a store of poetry and dramatic beauty, which Chateaubriand both discovers and puts to use. The final s distinguishes the printed noun from fond, a bottom or depth, though the senses overlap metaphorically. The image presents doctrine as a productive resource for artistic creation.

Attestation. Review p. 357: ce fonds de poésie.

Uneven temper

inégal

Changeable or inconsistent in disposition. René alternates between noisy joy and silent sadness, company and separation. Inégal does not here mean unequal in social rank or unfair in judgment. Its opposite becomes important at the end, when Amélie's superior praises her humeur égale: the sister reaches a steadiness the opening specifically denies to René.

Attestation. p. 142: mon caractère inégal.

Unreserve

abandon

An ease or lack of firm self-restraint that can pass from one person to another through intimacy. Here it does not primarily mean desertion. The Preface associates it with women and the softening of masculine decisiveness. Elsewhere s'abandonner means giving oneself over to dreams, so the recurring idea is a surrender of directed control, though its value changes with context.

Attestation. Preface p. 10: un certain abandon.

Unstudied innocence

naïf

Innocent, uncorrupted, or free from studied artifice. René applies it to his youthful soul as it receives the bell's associations. Modern English naive can suggest culpable stupidity, which is too harsh here. The text also calls poets naïve: simplicity may coexist with sublimity and imaginative power, making the term a positive quality vulnerable to later worldly disenchantment.

Attestation. p. 144: mon âme naïve.

Vanity of vanities

vanité des vanités

A biblical formula of radical emptiness or futility, identified in the supplied note with Ecclesiastes 1:2. Aubry invokes it while questioning the permanence of earthly friendships. Vanité here is not primarily conceit about one's appearance or abilities. The repeated noun intensifies the judgment, preparing the claim that even the people who mourn us most deeply will form other ties.

Attestation. Preface p. 5: ô vanité des vanités.

Vault

voûte

An arched ceiling or roof, especially in substantial religious or monumental architecture. The sequence of vaults stretches the church's space and gives sound a resonant enclosure. Elsewhere chants pass beneath vaults in château and convent. The recurring structure links different buildings through their acoustic capacity, making architecture something the reader hears as well as sees.

Attestation. p. 152: Quelle succession d'arches et de voûtes.

Vestal

vestale

A term recalling the virgin priestesses of ancient Rome, transferred poetically to the nun. The immediate contrast is between the mariner's uncertain fate and a religious woman's regulated future. The classical designation does not make Amélie literally a pagan priestess. It allows the prose to borrow an image of consecrated virginity while remaining within its Christian setting.

Attestation. p. 187: la vestale.

Volcanic entrails

entrailles

The inner parts or depths of a body, transferred to the volcano's burning interior. The bodily metaphor makes the mountain seem alive and dangerous, not simply an object on a map. René's eye moves between distant, flattened geography and this exposed depth. Later molten streams inside his heart bring the volcanic vocabulary back into his own emotional life.

Attestation. p. 153: les entrailles brûlantes.

Wallflower

violier

The yellow wallflower growing between loose stones of the entrance steps. The plant is a precise sign of neglect rather than a flower deliberately cultivated to adorn the house. Its small life occupies gaps in the failing masonry. This repeats, on the intimate scale of René's family home, the vegetation encountered among the monuments of great civilizations.

Attestation. p. 175: le violier jaune.

Warped tendency

travers

A characteristic failing or misguided tendency, here the young generation's cultivated withdrawal into dreams. It is not a physical crossing or a neutral eccentricity. The Preface gives the word a serious moral trajectory by saying the failing leads directly toward suicide. Translating it as a mere quirk would weaken the accusatory force of the author's retrospective interpretation.

Attestation. Preface p. 13: le travers particulier des jeunes gens du siècle.

Well-born

bien né

Of a socially distinguished or noble birth. Chactas and Souël regard René's background as making his decision to bury himself in Louisiana especially striking. The expression records the social assumptions of the narration; it does not establish moral excellence. His advantages intensify the question of why he has rejected the relationships and responsibilities expected of him.

Attestation. p. 140: un Européen bien né.

Wintry frost

frimas

Cold mist, frost, or wintry deposits associated with raw weather. René claims not to feel either rain or frimas while striding through the storm in emotional transport. The exact meteorological form is less important than his bodily exposure. The paired terms make his excitement seem strong enough to suspend ordinary discomfort, rather than making the weather merely decorative.

Attestation. p. 163: ni pluie ni frimas.

Withered

flétri

Wilted, faded, or deprived of freshness. Applied to the rush, it gives the landscape an autumnal or spent appearance. The participle can carry moral meanings elsewhere in French, but no such accusation is needed here. The plant's physical decline becomes emotionally resonant because René attends to slight signs of fading life, not because the adjective by itself names an allegory.

Attestation. p. 162: le jonc flétri.

Without an object

sans objet

Lacking a definite person, aim, or attachment upon which to act. In the 1802 account, passions consume themselves in a solitary heart and regenerate melancholy. The phrase describes directionless intensity rather than indifference. It also explains why an abundant inner life can be exhausting: its energies circulate without reaching a durable relation beyond themselves.

Attestation. Appendix I no. 1: ces passions, sans objet.

Worldly finery

pompe

Splendid display and ceremonial adornment. Amélie initially appears dressed in worldly finery before exchanging it for the plain religious habit. The plural suggests the whole apparatus of magnificence, not a mechanical pump. The beauty of the display is acknowledged, so renunciation gains force through the visible attractiveness of what is being relinquished.

Attestation. p. 178: toutes les pompes du monde.

Zeal

zèle

Active, devoted eagerness in performing a duty or service. The superior attributes Amélie's death to her zeal and charity in caring for infected companions. The word makes her final religious life energetic and outwardly useful, rather than merely secluded. That completed service supplies a concrete contrast to René's unspent powers, which Souël says should be devoted to other people.

Attestation. p. 188: victime de son zèle et de sa charité.

Contextual phrase glosses

The glosses explain selected constructions, images and idioms in source order. They complement the articles and register; their reuse of familiar words does not create additional unique lexical families.

At the expense of

Preface p. 2. *aux dépens de mon style*

Translation: ‘at the expense of my style.’ Aux dépens de names the thing diminished or sacrificed when something else is praised or advantaged. Here one critic praises the subject by disparaging its treatment; another reverses that assessment.

The phrase sharpens Chateaubriand’s account of incompatible judgments. He is not claiming that subject matter literally cost money, although the preceding discussion does concern purchasers and price. The critical disagreement supports his decision to postpone a final comprehensive revision.

God forbid

Preface p. 3. *Mais à Dieu ne plaise que je prétende persuader*

Translation: ‘But God forbid that I should claim to convince.’ À Dieu ne plaise is a fixed optative formula expressing a strong wish that something not be the case. The following verb appears in the subjunctive.

The author’s protest of modesty interrupts a paragraph noting his book’s commercial and reputational success. It combines devotional idiom with rhetorical self-presentation: he can mention favorable evidence while

formally disclaiming the ambition to force his estimate of his own merit upon hostile readers.

Disillusion without enjoyment

Preface p. 9. *On est détrompé sans avoir joui*

Translation: ‘One is undeceived without having enjoyed.’ The perfect infinitive avoir joui places the missing enjoyment before the present condition of disillusionment. Jouir is left without a specified object, broadening it to the enjoyment of life rather than requiring an exclusively sexual sense.

The anonymous on makes the sentence a diagnosis of modern experience. Books and examples give the conclusions of experience in advance of the experience itself. The paradox concerns premature exhaustion: supposed knowledge deprives desire of its sustaining illusions before life has supplied its pleasures.

A full heart in an empty world

Preface p. 9. *On habite, avec un cœur plein, un monde vide*

Translation: ‘With a full heart, one inhabits an empty world.’ The inserted avec phrase makes the inward condition interrupt the movement toward the external object. Plein and vide answer one another in a compressed antithesis.

The world is not asserted to contain no people or things. It is empty in relation to the person’s abundant inward expectations. This is a statement of mismatch, whose emotional plausibility the narrative will develop and whose moral implications the concluding rebuke will challenge.

Taking offended exception

Preface p. 11. *qu'ils se formaliseroient des deux épisodes*

Translation: 'that they would take exception to the two episodes.' Se formaliser de means to take offense or scrupulous objection to something; it does not mean to make a document formal. The conditional form, with the printed -oi- spelling, expresses what could be expected from the critics' stated concern.

The surrounding phrase about their tender solicitude has an ironic edge. Chateaubriand implies that supposedly vigilant concern for religious purity may function as an adversary's maneuver, then answers by arguing that Christian stories must compete with irreligious imaginative works using comparable means.

Could not possibly heal

Preface p. 12. *que tous les baumes de la terre ne sauroient guérir*

Translation: 'which all the balms of earth could not heal.' In this use ne sauroient expresses inability or impossibility, rather than a literal lack of knowledge about how to heal. No pas is required in this literary construction.

The absolute tous heightens the claim that earthly consolation has reached its limit. The relative clause modifies the wounds that religion alone can close. This gives the defense of convents a therapeutic image, but it remains the Preface's religious argument rather than a practical medical statement.

Except for the two elders

p. 139. *Hors Chactas, son père adoptif, et le père Souël*

Translation: ‘Apart from Chactas, his adoptive father, and Father Souël.’ Hors functions as an exceptive preposition. It does not place René physically outside the two people; it identifies the exceptions to his renunciation of human society.

The syntax first declares withdrawal and then preserves two relationships essential to the narrative. They are not interchangeable companions. The next page distinguishes the kindly indulgence by which one gains influence from the severity of the other, making the exceptions the source of two different responses to the confession.

Wild among those called savages

p. 139. *sembloit sauvage parmi des sauvages*

Translation: ‘seemed wild among savages.’ The first sauvage is an adjective describing René’s unsociability; the second is a plural noun naming Indigenous people in the period’s European vocabulary. Repeating the form while changing its function makes the sentence a pointed comparison.

The effect depends upon René appearing more withdrawn than the people his own culture labels savage. This complicates the narrator’s categories without removing their colonial assumptions. It should not be paraphrased as a neutral anthropological claim about Indigenous societies in general.

All the more eager

p. 140. *Ils n'en furent que plus ardents*

Translation: 'They were only the more eager because of it.' Ne…que is restrictive, equivalent to 'only,' and plus supplies the comparison. En refers back to René's deepening sadness and flight from even his old friends.

The construction reverses the result his withdrawal might ordinarily produce: his avoidance does not make the elders abandon him, but increases their desire to approach. The following combination of tact, gentleness, and authority explains how concern becomes an effective request for speech rather than simply renewed pressure.

Setting a day

p. 140. *Il prit donc jour avec eux*

Translation: 'He therefore arranged a day with them.' Prendre jour avec quelqu'un means fixing a time or date for a meeting. It is an idiomatic use of prendre, not the act of taking daylight.

The ordinary scheduling expression is deliberately followed by an extraordinary limitation: he will recount feelings rather than adventures. It establishes that the confession is an agreed event with listeners and a setting, not an unmediated transcript of thoughts occurring privately in René's mind.

Delivered with the iron

p. 142. *j'ai été tiré de son sein avec le fer*

Translation: 'I was drawn from her womb with the iron.' Sein means the mother's womb in this birth context, and le fer names a cutting instrument through its material. The

phrase evokes a violent surgical delivery without specifying a detailed procedure.

It follows René's statement that his birth cost his mother her life. The brevity and hardness of the wording make the beginning of life inseparable from death and guilt-like retrospective burden. A gloss should preserve that narrative force without treating the sentence as an adequate medical record.

The tenderness of a rhetorical question

p. 143. *ne perdez-vous jamais vos douceurs*

Translation: 'Do you never lose your sweetness?' René addresses the illusions of childhood and homeland directly. The negative question expresses wonder at their persistence more than a request for information; douceur becomes a felt sweetness retained in memory.

Calling them illusions does not make the remembered pleasures worthless. Their possible unreality coexists with their enduring power. The apostrophe briefly suspends chronological narration so that the older speaker relives his own attachment while questioning why those early images still move him.

Finishing the voyage without leaving port

p. 147. *Heureux ceux qui ont fini leur voyage sans avoir quitté le port*

Translation: 'Happy those who have finished their voyage without leaving the harbor.' The perfect forms present the whole life as completed, while the negative infinitive denies exposure to the open sea. The apparently impossible movement is a governing metaphor, not a literal itinerary.

The monastery supplies the protected harbor; worldly life supplies the dangerous voyage. René momentarily praises those who can complete their earthly course within religious shelter. His subsequent decision to travel makes the compliment retrospective and self-accusing, rather than proof that he actually embraced this protected life.

Coming close to entering the abbey

p. 147. *où je pensai dérober ma vie aux caprices du sort*

Translation: ‘where I came near to stealing my life away from the whims of fate.’ Penser followed directly by an infinitive can have the older sense ‘come close to doing,’ explicitly identified in this edition’s note. It is not merely je pensai à, ‘I thought about.’

The phrase records an unrealized approach to monastic retreat. Dérober adds the image of removing one’s life from exposure to unpredictable worldly circumstances. René still recalls the abbey vividly, but his subsequent departure shows that the possibility never became the settled form of his life.

Either fickleness or prejudice

p. 148. *Soit inconstance naturelle, soit préjugé contre la vie monastique*

Translation: ‘Whether from natural inconstancy or prejudice against monastic life.’ Repeated soit introduces alternative explanations without deciding between them. The causes are compressed noun phrases, with the relation ‘because of’ understood.

René explains a decisive change of plan by admitting uncertainty about his own motive. That hesitation matters in a life narrated as a history of feelings: introspection

supplies possibilities, not uninterrupted self-knowledge. The two alternatives also distinguish an unstable temperament from an objection to a particular institution.

Going from ruin to ruin

p. 148. *je m'en allai m'asseyant sur les débris*

Translation: 'I went about sitting among the remains.' The combination of aller with a present participle stretches an action into a continuing or repeated movement. René does not describe one efficient journey to a single seat; he evokes a succession of pauses among ancient ruins.

The syntax makes travel oddly stationary. Physical movement yields repeated scenes of sitting and contemplating vanished civilizations. This rhythm helps explain why the journey does not simply cure the inward condition: new places can reproduce the same posture and the same disappointed search.

As though she had been glad

p. 148. *comme si elle eût été heureuse de me quitter*

Translation: 'as though she had been glad to leave me.' The form eût été after comme si gives a hypothetical appearance in elevated narrative diction. It records René's interpretation of Amélie's embrace at the time, not an established account of her motives.

The later revelation will make the mixture of joy and grief intelligible differently. A reader should keep the apparent gladness attached to the young René's limited knowledge. His immediate generalization about human friendships therefore rests on an inference the story itself subsequently revises.

Peoples who are no more

p. 148. *Je visitai d'abord les peuples qui ne sont plus*

Translation: 'I first visited the peoples who are no more.' Ne…plus marks cessation: those ancient civilizations no longer exist in their former form. Visiter normally takes living people or existing places, so the phrasing makes travel toward ruins sound like an impossible social visit.

The contradiction exposes the aim of the excursion. René seeks what historical remains might still tell him about human greatness, virtue, and mortality. His later turn to living peoples repeats the same search in another temporal direction rather than inaugurating a wholly new question.

Only geographical lines

p. 153. *ne me sembloient plus que des lignes géographiques*

Translation: 'seemed to me no more than geographical lines.' Ne…plus que combines a reduction with a change of viewpoint: from the height of Etna, rivers lose their ordinary scale and appear flattened like markings on a map.

The perception is explicitly his, signaled by me. The volcano's exposed depths remain dangerously close on the other side. These competing views place immense distant creation and the immediate abyss together, preparing René's interpretation of the scene as an image of his own life.

Whatever you may think

p. 153. *quoi que vous puissiez penser de René*

Translation: 'whatever you may think of René.' Quoi que, in two words, introduces an indefinite object: whatever

judgment the listeners might form. It differs from quoique, ‘although.’ The subjunctive puissiez marks the open range of possible responses.

René momentarily refers to himself by name while asserting that the volcanic tableau nonetheless offers an image of his character. He grants the listeners freedom to judge, yet also supplies a powerful image intended to organize their judgment. Self-exposure and self-dramatization remain intertwined.

If only I could

p. 154. *que ne puis-je jouir de la paix*

Translation: ‘If only I could enjoy the peace!’ The interrogative shape, literally ‘why can I not,’ functions as a wish or lament. Ne belongs to the negative question, and puis-je is the inverted form of pouvoir.

The wish interrupts the travel narrative when René sees people passing cheerfully across the plain. He attributes enduring peace to them from his own position of unrest. The emotional immediacy of the exclamation should not be mistaken for reliable access to the inner lives of the people he observes.

Friendship cooled and erased

p. 156. *l’amitié, que la présence attiédit, que l’absence efface*

Translation: ‘friendship, which presence cools and absence erases.’ Two parallel relative clauses make opposite circumstances produce the same loss. Attiédir first weakens warmth; effacer then removes the remaining trace.

The neat antithesis turns René’s distress about Amélie’s avoidance into an apparently universal maxim. Its

completeness is suspiciously convenient: whether friends remain or leave, disappointment can be predicted. Later knowledge of her motive prevents the reader from simply accepting this maxim as the narrative's final truth about affection.

The ideal object of a future flame

p. 160. *l'idéal objet d'une flamme future*

Translation: 'the ideal object of a future flame.' Flamme is a conventional figure for love, while future makes the attachment anticipated rather than actual. The adjective idéal precedes objet in an elevated order and defines a beloved first composed by desire.

René calls for this object across valley and mountain, then seems to perceive it everywhere in nature. The sentence dramatizes an unusual sequence: intense love-like energy precedes a definite person to love. The landscape can amplify that energy without supplying a stable reciprocal relationship.

And it is also true

p. 161. *Et encore est-il vrai*

Translation: 'And it is also true.' Encore adds a further consideration, while inversion of est-il after the initial adverb belongs to formal literary syntax. Despite its shape, the phrase is an assertion, not a question.

René has just condemned the childish anxiety he attaches to drifting leaves. He now adds that many people entrust their destinies to things of equally little value. The turn qualifies his self-reproach by making it a wider accusation, so apparent humility can also become a critique of ordinary adult seriousness.

Even when expressing happiness

p. 162. *lors même qu'il exprime le bonheur*

Translation: 'even when it expresses happiness.' Lors même que is concessive in effect: the fact in the subordinate clause might lead one to expect a different result, yet the main claim still holds. The pronoun refers to human song.

The herdsman's melancholy song prompts René's generalization that human music remains sad even when its subject is joy. The subsequent incomplete-lyre image supplies an explanation in terms of deficient expressive powers. Pleasure and sadness are therefore represented as mingled, rather than as mutually exclusive moods.

Had you brought me an Eve

p. 163. *si, comme à notre premier père, tu m'eusses amené par la main une Ève tirée de moi-même*

Translation: 'if, as to our first father, you had led by the hand to me an Eve drawn from myself.' The elevated pluperfect subjunctive m'eusses amené presents an unreal condition addressed to God. Its answer is the imagined response beginning je me serois prosterné.

The allusion to Adam and Eve combines a desire for intimate likeness with a divine origin for the ideal companion. It should not be reduced to a named real woman. The grammar marks an unfulfilled fantasy, however powerfully the imagined acts of worship and embrace make it present.

All reason in an unreasonable act

p. 165. *mettre toute ma raison dans cet acte insensé*

Translation: ‘to put all my reason into this senseless act.’ Toute and insensé create an explicit contradiction between methodical deliberation and the narrator’s retrospective judgment of his intended suicide. He describes arrangements and delay as rational procedures serving an irrational conclusion.

The sentence should not be paraphrased as the author’s approval of that conclusion. René tells it after abandoning his plan and calls the act senseless himself. Its purpose is to show how the powers of reasoning can be mobilized without resolving the disordered premise that guides them.

Words escaping the writer

p. 165. *Il m’échappa quelques plaintes*

Translation: ‘A few complaints escaped me.’ The impersonal opening places what slips out after the verb, while m’ names the person who fails fully to control the expression. The construction emphasizes leakage rather than a deliberate decision to disclose.

Amélie interprets the complaints, the forced tone, and the unusual practical questions together. The letter therefore communicates more than its writer intends. This prepares the later scenes in which gestures, unfinished speech, and a whispered prayer reveal a concealed life that direct requests for explanation cannot reach.

A question that forbids deception

p. 166. *Est-ce moi que l'on trompe*

Translation: 'Is it me that you would deceive?' The emphatic c'est…que construction singles out moi, while the question challenges the possibility that someone so intimate with René could be fooled. On is indefinite in form but points locally toward his attempted concealment.

Amélie bases her claim upon witnessing the emergence of his earliest feelings. The rhetorical question both comforts and rebukes: she presents herself as uniquely capable of understanding him, yet uses that knowledge to demand a binding promise that he will live.

Nothing but consolation

p. 167. *je ne demandois qu'à être consolé*

Translation: 'I asked only to be comforted.' Ne…que means 'only,' and demander à introduces the infinitive specifying what is sought. The imperfect demandois belongs to René's characterization of himself at the reunion, not to a general future vow.

The preceding comparison with a child makes his need appear simple and dependent. Yet Amélie's comfort takes the form of an exacting promise, not mere soothing. The passage shows why affection can briefly restore him while leaving the deeper questions about sustained purpose unresolved.

One would have said

p. 167. *on eût dit que son cœur, sa pensée et sa voix soupiroient comme de concert*

Translation: 'one would have said that her heart, thought, and voice sighed in concert.' On eût dit is an elevated

hypothetical formula, comparable to ‘it was as though.’ It frames an impression rather than asserting that thought literally produces audible sighs.

The three-part sequence gives Amélie an apparent inward harmony expressed through music. De concert suggests both togetherness and coordinated action. The portrait’s beauty is retrospective: the reader later learns that this harmonious appearance coexists with a conflict the brother has not yet understood.

There are misfortunes

p. 170. *Il est des malheurs qui nous séparent pour toujours des hommes*

Translation: ‘There are misfortunes that separate us forever from other people.’ Il est is an elevated existential construction equivalent here to il y a; des introduces an unspecified class rather than one fully named case.

Amélie states a general truth while withholding the particular misfortune that makes it urgent for her. The plural nous invites her brother to understand a shared human predicament, but it also protects her secret. Its discretion is central to the letter’s simultaneous explanatory and concealing functions.

Take your sister’s word

p. 170. *Croyez-en votre sœur*

Translation: ‘Take your sister’s word for it.’ Croire quelqu’un means believing what that person says; en reinforces the reference to the matter under discussion. The instruction is followed by the claim that living is more difficult than dying.

Amélie speaks from an ordeal she does not disclose. The authority of her counsel is therefore fuller than René can yet recognize. The familiar relationship supports a practical injunction to endure, even as her own next step removes the companionship on which he has relied.

Taking up a calling

p. 171. *prendre un état*

Translation: ‘take up a calling’ or ‘enter a settled occupation.’ État means a recognized condition or role in life, not a political state or a passing emotional state. The original italicization marks the social formula that René reportedly mocks.

Amélie recommends occupation immediately after urging him to leave harmful solitude. Marriage and children follow as another possible structure for his days. The advice supplies ordinary forms of durable commitment, anticipating Chactas’s conclusion that happiness lies along common paths rather than in cultivated exceptionality.

Anticipating the slightest pain

p. 171. *pour prévenir tes moindres peines*

Translation: ‘to anticipate and spare you your slightest pains.’ Prévenir here means going ahead of a difficulty in order to avert or relieve it; it is not simply warning someone that pain is coming. Moindres intensifies the imagined wife’s attentiveness down to the smallest trouble.

Amélie speaks of this wife in a suddenly intimate second-person singular address. The tenderness of the hypothetical portrait lets the reader hear feelings exceeding neutral marital advice. Her final promise that

René would seem to find a sister in the wife makes that displacement especially charged.

One grief begins after another ends

p. 173. *Une partie de ses amis ne peut apprendre sa mort, que l'autre n'en soit déjà consolée*

Translation: 'Some of his friends cannot learn of his death before the others are already consoled for it.' The correlated negative construction means that one event cannot occur without the other state already holding. The second ne should not be read as denying consolation.

The observation follows the delayed arrival of a dead traveler's letter from the Indies. Distance divides the timing of grief: one group begins mourning when another has finished. Amélie then turns the general fact toward her own fear that her brother will forget her.

Separating in time to meet in eternity

p. 173. *si je m'arrache à vous dans le temps, c'est pour n'être pas séparée de vous dans l'éternité*

Translation: 'If I tear myself away from you in time, it is so as not to be separated from you in eternity.' The si-clause gives the painful fact to be explained, and c'est pour supplies its purpose. Arracher makes departure forceful and bodily.

The parallel phrases oppose earthly duration and eternal life while preserving the same relation between the siblings. Amélie's religious motive does not erase attachment; she represents present renunciation as the condition of its final preservation. The later disclosure reveals why continuation on its existing terms would threaten that hope.

How little thanks I gave

p. 181. *Que je sus peu de gré*

Translation: ‘How little gratitude I felt!’ Savoir gré à quelqu’un means to be grateful to someone; sus is the past historic of savoir. Que introduces an exclamation, and peu limits the gratitude rather than the knowledge.

René has been brought back to consciousness after collapsing at the ceremony. The phrase expresses resentment at being restored to a world in which the profession is now complete. It resumes the vocabulary of return to daylight, placing his immediate pain against the life-preserving actions of those who help him.

Exclamatory infinitives of estrangement

p. 181. *une sœur craindre de parler à un frère, et un frère craindre de faire entendre sa voix à une sœur*

Translation: ‘A sister afraid to speak to a brother, and a brother afraid to let his voice reach a sister!’ The infinitive craindre forms an exclamatory construction rather than a normal finite clause. Repetition reverses the family roles while preserving the same fear.

The syntax presents the mutual estrangement as almost unthinkable. Neither sibling ceases to care, but the knowledge now attached to voice and presence makes ordinary communication dangerous. The balanced phrasing gives formal symmetry to an experience that remains emotionally intolerable to René.

Except for hope

p. 181. *où l'on a tout perdu comme aux enfers, hors l'espérance*

Translation: 'where everything has been lost, as in hell, except hope.' Hors means 'except,' qualifying the otherwise total tout. The preceding reference to purifying flames and preparation for heavenly life identifies a purgatorial comparison rather than a simple claim that the monastery is hell.

René describes his departure from the ceremony through this theological image. The difference preserved by hope is decisive: suffering need not entail final exclusion from heaven. At the same time, the extremity of the comparison records how deathlike and punitive the separation feels to him.

Hoping against evidence for a cure

p. 182. *s'étoit flattée de guérir*

Translation: 'had indulged the hope of recovering.' Se flatter de followed by an infinitive means reassuring oneself with a pleasing expectation, often one that may be mistaken. It does not mean physically caressing oneself or simply boasting.

After the revelation René reconstructs why Amélie delayed entering a monastery. His sans doute makes the explanation confident, but it remains his retrospective inference. Guérir belongs to the narrative's language of passionate suffering as a wound or illness, without providing a clinical account of its nature.

Kneaded of ennui

p. 183. *tant mon cœur est naturellement pétri d'ennui et de misère*

Translation: 'so thoroughly is my heart naturally kneaded of ennui and misery.' Pétri evokes dough worked into a mixture, making the two conditions seem constituents of the heart itself. Tant gives the observation explanatory force after René admits that real grief has become an occupation.

The metaphor sounds like a claim about an inborn nature, but it comes from René's self-interpretation. It may express recognition of a recurring pattern without settling that he cannot change. Souël's subsequent demand for service addresses him as capable of a different use of his powers.

Infinity beyond a cell wall

p. 187. *l'infini de l'autre côté du mur d'une cellule*

Translation: 'infinity on the other side of a cell wall.' The phrase belongs to a sequence of verbless contrasts: storm and shelter, moving ship lights and a fixed convent light, the sailor's uncertainty and the nun's regulated days.

The tiny wall becomes the material boundary between two immense kinds of existence. The sentence also complicates the contrast by calling Amélie's soul stormy as the ocean. Enclosure may provide safety and spiritual scope without implying that the person within has always possessed effortless inward calm.

Happiness in common paths

p. 191. *il n'y a de bonheur que dans les voies communes*

Translation: 'there is happiness only in the common paths.' The existential il y a combines with restrictive ne…que to

locate happiness exclusively within ordinary ways of living. Voies is metaphorical: it refers to sustained forms of conduct rather than literal roads.

Chactas places this counsel after accepting Souël's correction and before telling the stream's fable. The final report that René returns to his wife without finding happiness prevents the counsel from functioning as a neatly demonstrated cure. The text states the norm while leaving his fulfillment of it unresolved.

The vale of tears

Appendix I no. 1. *un voyageur qui passe ici bas dans une vallée de larmes*

Translation: 'a traveler passing here below through a vale of tears.' Ici bas means earthly life, contrasted with heavenly fulfillment. The valley is a Christian image for mortal suffering, and the traveler rests only in the tomb according to the following clause.

This longer 1802 reading makes Christianity itself contribute to restless longing by directing hopes beyond the world. It is absent at the corresponding point of the Preface extract. The gloss must therefore preserve the textual distinction rather than treating the passage as a continuous part of the later prefatory argument.

At once hateful and dear

Appendix I no. 4. *à-la-fois odieuse et chère*

Translation: 'at once hateful and dear.' The opposed adjectives describe how the purity of René's tenderness must have affected Amélie, not how he consciously intended to treat her. The same innocent affection draws her close and makes the disparity in their feelings painful.

This explicit explanation belongs to the longer 1802 aftermath. The later text shortens René's reconstruction considerably. The paired adjectives clarify the conflict without establishing reciprocated forbidden desire: in this passage René emphasizes his tenderness's innocence while discovering that its effect on her was profoundly divided.

Saved by the ending's moral force

Review p. 356. *la séduction de ces peintures est sauvée par la morale*

Translation: 'the seductive power of these pictures is redeemed by the moral effect.' Sauvée is evaluative: the reviewer argues that potentially dangerous attractiveness becomes defensible because the conclusion directs feeling toward virtue. It does not describe a person being physically rescued.

The argument admits the risk it answers. The writing may be too intoxicating for youthful readers, yet its dominant final impression supposedly outweighs that attraction. This reception document therefore offers a claim to test, not a reason to ignore the sensuous power of the scenes it seeks to justify.

Passion undergoing inner combat

Review p. 358. *toute passion qui souffre des combats*

Translation: 'every passion that undergoes struggles.' Souffrir here means to endure or experience, and combats names conflicts imposed by duty. The phrase does not personify a passion as casually tolerating someone else's battles.

The reviewer connects artistic interest to the magnitude of required sacrifices. Strong restraint can, by creating

resistance, supply stronger dramatic energy. This formulation helps explain why Christian renunciation and intensely represented desire are not simply opposites in the book's poetics: each can increase the other's narrative force.

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French words and phrases

Headwords and source phrases are sorted without accents for ease of lookup. A heading may group related forms; its article distinguishes their actual uses.

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- Abufar; M. Ducis — Ducis's Abufar (p. 213)
- accident — Changing conditions (p. 200)
- agonie — Agony (p. 188)
- aigreur — Acridity (p. 187)
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- airain — Bell metal (p. 194)
- allégresse — Exultant joy (p. 217)
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- Amélie; sœur Amélie de la Miséricorde — Amélie (p. 18)
- amertume — Bitterness (p. 195)
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- amollir — Softened passions (p. 273)
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- anciens; modernes; Grèce; Rome; fatalité — Antiquity and the modern world (p. 20)
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- appareil — Funeral apparatus (p. 222)
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- celui qui retourne le malade sur sa couche — God tending the sickbed (p. 225)
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- dais — Ceremonial canopy (p. 200)
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- dégoût; dégoûts; dégoûté — Disgust and Loss of Taste (p. 55)
- délicatesse — Scrupulous consideration (p. 269)
- dénoûment — Denouement (p. 211)
- dépouille — Mortal remains (p. 245)
- désabusé — Thoroughly disillusioned (p. 282)
- désir; bien inconnu; objet — Desire and the Unknown Good (p. 53)
- désoler — To lay waste (p. 283)
- détendu — Stripped of hangings (p. 275)
- détrompé — Undeceived before experience (p. 286)
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- Dieu; ciel; Tout-Puissant; Éternel — God, providence, and the interpretation of suffering (p. 75)
- discrétion — Tactful reserve (p. 278)
- dispense — Novitiate exemption (p. 252)
- donation — Deed of gift (p. 210)
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- église; temple; sanctuaire; autel — Church, temple, and the architecture of feeling (p. 43)
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- entrailles — Volcanic entrails (p. 290)
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- esprit romanesque — Novel-fed mind (p. 251)
- étamine — Coarse religious cloth (p. 205)

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- étouffé — Stifled (p. 274)
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- faculté — Emotional faculties (p. 214)
- fanal — Signal lights (p. 272)
- fantôme — Apparition of desire (p. 189)
- fardeau — Burden (p. 197)
- fatalité — Fate (p. 218)
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- faute; crime; criminelle passion; inceste — Sin, criminal passion, and the limits of disclosure (p. 148)
- femmes; foible femme; vierge; sœur — Women, gender, and the distribution of agency (p. 184)
- Fénélon; Télémaque; Calypso — Fénelon, Telemachus, and Calypso (p. 224)
- fermenter — Fermentation (p. 219)
- fini — Finite capacity (p. 219)
- Flammant — Flamingo (p. 220)
- flétri — Withered (p. 293)
- fonds — Underlying store (p. 287)
- fontaine de vie — The fountain of life (p. 280)
- fortune — Property and means (p. 260)
- frimas — Wintry frost (p. 292)
- gaillard — Raised deck (p. 262)
- génie; folie; délire; raison — Genius, Delirium, and Unreason (p. 71)
- génie; Génie — Genius and Presiding Spirit (p. 69)
- glas — Tolling bell (p. 285)

- gravité — Gravity of conduct (p. 226)
- grève — Shore strand (p. 271)
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- habitude — Habit (p. 227)
- holocauste — Burnt offering (p. 197)
- homicide — Homicidal phantoms (p. 230)
- horreur — Sacred awe (p. 268)
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- humilité — Humility (p. 231)
- imagination; chimère; chimères; fantôme imaginaire — Imagination and Chimeras (p. 84)
- Imley — Imlay in the printed form Imley (p. 232)
- impétueux — Impetuous (p. 233)
- impiété — Irreligion (p. 238)
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- incorruptible — Incorruptible (p. 235)
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- langueur — Languor (p. 239)
- larmes — The saints' tears (p. 282)
- larmes; pleurs; chagrin; douleur — Tears and the pleasure of grief (p. 160)
- lave — Burning lava (p. 197)
- lettre; papier; correspondance; lire — Letters and interpretation (p. 89)
- lieu d'expiation; flammes; espérance — Purgatory and hope (p. 127)
- linceul — Shroud (p. 271)
- lit — Riverbed (p. 266)
- Loth et ses filles — Lot and his daughters (p. 241)
- lumières — Superior understanding (p. 276)
- lune; soleil; lumière; phare — Light and the moon (p. 91)
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- M. l'abbé Morellet — Morellet and the disputed word (p. 245)
- manœuvre — Labourers (p. 239)
- mausolée — Royal tomb (p. 267)
- mélancolie; mélancolique — Melancholy (p. 95)
- mémoire; souvenir; souvenirs; oubli — Memory, Remembrance, and Oblivion (p. 98)

- mer; océan; voyage; port; naufrage — Sea and voyage (p. 141)
- Mercure; critique; moralité; génie — The two reviews and the management of admiration (p. 171)
- mère; père; frère aîné; famille — Parents and the elder brother (p. 106)
- Meschacebé; ruisseau; torrent; lit — River and the parable of excess (p. 131)
- Métamorphóses; Héroïdes; Ovide — Ovid's paired collections (p. 254)
- misanthropie — Proud misanthropy (p. 261)
- misère; infortune; malheur — Misery and Misfortune (p. 100)
- mobilité — Emotional mobility (p. 215)
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- mort; tombeau; immortalité; se régénérer — Death, symbolic burial, and renewed life (p. 50)
- mugissement — Low roaring (p. 241)
- mœurs — Manners and customs (p. 243)
- mutilé — Mutilated (p. 247)
- Myrra — Myrrha as a rejected subject (p. 248)
- naïf — Unstudied innocence (p. 288)
- Natchez; colonie françoise; fort Rosalie; Nègres — The Natchez and the colonial frame (p. 164)
- naturel — Naturalness (p. 249)
- néant — Sheer nullities (p. 270)
- noviciat — Novitiate (p. 251)
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- ô; hélas; je vois; je lis — Apostrophe and changes of tense (p. 22)
- objet — Object of attachment (p. 253)
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- oiseaux de passage; colombe; Flammant — Birds and migration (p. 32)
- onde — Flowing waters (p. 221)
- orage; tempête; aquilon — Storms and tempests (p. 155)
- orgueil; orgueilleux; amour-propre; présomptueux — Pride, Self-Love, and Exceptionalism (p. 119)
- outré — Excessive (p. 217)
- ouvrage — Handwork (p. 228)
- palme — Palm of victory (p. 255)
- papiers publics — Newspapers (p. 249)
- parents — Kinfolk (p. 238)
- passion; passions; passions indéterminées — Passions and Their Objects (p. 108)
- pathétique — Moving force (p. 246)
- pâtre — Herdsman (p. 229)
- pâtre; troupeaux; champêtre; sauvages — Pastoral happiness and imagined simplicity (p. 110)
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- perron — Entrance steps (p. 216)
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- physionomie — Countenance (p. 207)
- pitié; compassion; compatissant; miséricorde — Pity and Compassion (p. 112)
- poétique — Poetics (p. 257)
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- pontife — Pagan priest (p. 254)
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- préface; critique; revu; éditions — Preface, criticism, and the evidence of revision (p. 117)
- préférence — Preferential love (p. 258)
- premier père; Ève; tirée de moi-même — Adam and Eve (p. 16)
- prendre un état; occupation; devoirs; voies communes — Vocation, occupation, and taking a place in life (p. 181)
- présomptueux — Presumption (p. 258)
- prière; prier; adorations — Prayer: address, overhearing, and mediation (p. 114)
- profession — Profession ceremony (p. 259)
- profession; vœux; noviciat; voile — Profession, vows, and the ceremonial threshold (p. 122)
- puérilité — Childishness (p. 202)

- punition; châtiment; expier; expiation — Punishment, expiation, and unequal explanations (p. 124)
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- ravissement — Rapture (p. 263)
- récit; histoire de son cœur; aveu; secret — Confession and the story of the self (p. 46)
- régularité — Regulated life (p. 264)
- réprimant — Restraining religion (p. 265)
- ressort — Narrative spring (p. 248)
- retremper — To temper anew (p. 284)
- rêverie; rêveries; rêver — Reverie (p. 128)
- rivage; fenêtre grillée; mur; cellule — Shore and window (p. 145)
- ronce — Bramble (p. 196)
- ruines; débris; monument; tombeau — Ruins and monuments (p. 135)
- rumeur — Murmuring sound (p. 246)
- sacrifice; holocauste; victime — Sacrifice and holocaust (p. 139)
- sainte montagne — The holy mountain (p. 280)
- sanctuaire — Sanctuary (p. 268)
- sans objet — Without an object (p. 293)
- se prosterner — Prostration (p. 260)
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- sensibilité; sensible; attendrissement — Sensibility (p. 143)

- siècle — The world outside religion (p. 282)
- silence; voix; murmure; cri — Silence and voice (p. 147)
- solitude; solitudes; solitaire — Solitude (p. 151)
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Source guide

The supplied reading text

François-René de Chateaubriand, René, with the Preface of 1805 and two reviews reprinted by the author, supplied under the filename Rene_Chateaubriand_edition2 in Markdown, PDF, EPUB and DOCX. The title material describes a new English translation with introduction, notes and glossary; it does not name a translator. The lexicon therefore refers to “the supplied translation” rather than assigning an author or publication imprint that the files do not establish.

The edition states that its French is the text of the Œuvres complètes, tome XVI (Paris: Ladvocat, 1826), in the University of Toronto copy. It prints Preface pp. 1–16, René pp. 137–192, and two reviews at pp. 351–358. It compares the main narrative and the chapter “Du vague des passions” with the first edition of the Génie du Christianisme, tome II (Paris: Migneret, 1802). These are the edition’s declared textual sources. The supplied title-page reference to pp. 158–216 encompasses the chapter and story; the editorial note gives the narrative itself as pp. 163–216.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France catalogue independently confirms the Ladvocat collected edition, published in 28 volumes across 1826–1831, and identifies tome XVI as containing Atala, René and the Abencérages. This corroborates the bibliographical setting. It does not by itself verify each transcription, the copy-specific page images, or the edition’s claim about the last text prepared by the author.

A University of Wuppertal presentation of the 1802 chapter identifies the first-edition context as Génie du christianisme, Paris, Migneret, 1802, pp. 158–162. It is a useful external route to the chapter's argument. The lexicon's exact quotations and reported variants remain anchored to the supplied edition, rather than silently conflating separately transcribed versions.

Layers that should remain distinct

- The French main text is the supplied transcription of the 1826 printing
- Chateaubriand's own notes belong to the historical text and may themselves contain a mistaken identification
- The readings marked 1802 are reports in the supplied apparatus, with four longer passages gathered in Appendix I
- The English is the supplied modern translation, whose consistent lexical choices are useful but do not replace the French
- The introduction, key terms, glossary and explanatory footnotes belong to the supplied modern editorial layer
- The contemporary reviews are historical readings reprinted by Chateaubriand; their claims about intention and effect remain claims by those reviewers
- The lexicon's definitions and interpretations are a new reading of this material

The supplied editorial account says that 1805 was not collated and that the complete 1803 Défense was not compared with the extract. This lexicon does not extend

those claims into a new collation. It also does not adopt the supplied edition's account of its earlier review process as a claim that this lexicon underwent human scholarly peer review.

Printed ornaments and their descriptions

The supplied edition describes ornaments in modern English rather than reproducing them as French prose. At the end of the Preface, p. 16, its description includes a winged hourglass, a closed book and a scythe; the narrative's final ornament, p. 192, is described as a veiled urn with wheat-ears. These objects may echo the book's concerns with time and mortality, but the descriptions are editorial paratext, not René's voice. Their presence does not by itself establish a deliberate symbolic program chosen by Chateaubriand. They are explained here rather than given invented French attestations or counted as additional lexical records.

Biblical and classical routes

These references identify comparisons used in the articles or by the supplied editorial notes. They are selective explanatory routes, not a claim that every passage is a demonstrable direct quotation.

- Genesis 2:21–22: the creation of Eve and her presentation to Adam, explicitly invoked in René's fantasy at p. 163
- 2 Samuel 13: Amnon and Tamar, named in the Preface's explanation of the catastrophe at p. 14; the biblical action should not be equated point for point with the asymmetrical passion in René

- Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11: the pilgrim or stranger on earth, compared by the supplied note with the migration language at pp. 162–163
- Wisdom 5:14: passing smoke and fragile memory, proposed by the supplied note as a comparison for the scattered family at p. 176
- Seneca, De tranquillitate animi 14: Julius Canus and observation of the soul's departure, proposed only probably for the unnamed ancient at p. 165
- Dante, Inferno III.9: the absence of hope at the infernal threshold, compared by the supplied note with the purgatorial image at p. 181
- The Roman Vestal virgins: a transferred classical designation for the nun at p. 187, not an identification of Christian and Roman religious institutions
- The Ossianic poems published by James Macpherson: the source-context named by the edition for the bard, Fingal, Cona, Morven and Selma at p. 151 and the cloud-borne warriors at p. 161

Reading limits

Exact quotations were checked against the supplied French with allowances for typography, whitespace and words divided across source-page boundaries. Main-text evidence, earlier variants and editorial notes are labelled separately. The lexicon is not a new manuscript or printed-edition collation. No claim of exhaustive historical verification, definitive authorial intention or human scholarly review is made.

The four deliverables share the same article, register, gloss and note content. The PDF supplies stable print locators; DOCX can repaginate when edited or opened with other fonts; EPUB reflows according to the reading application. Internal links give a second route that does not depend on page dimensions.