

PARISIAN GREEN SPACES IN THE WORK  
OF GUY DE MAUPASSANT  
FROM 1880-1886

by

MARTIN COLE LEWTER

CARMEN K. MAYER COMMITTEE CHAIR  
BRUCE T. EDMUNDS  
HOLLY L. GROUT  
GINA M. STAMM

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## ABSTRACT

France in the nineteenth century was a chaotic period of social, cultural, and political revolution. Yet out of this tumultuous climate arose numerous symbols and images associated with modern France, not the least of which is Paris, one of the most celebrated cities in the world. Paris has lived at the center of literary works throughout time, but it is in the nineteenth century that French authors begin to sketch the capital city in stark contrast to the countryside. Some, such as Stendhal, focused on Paris as the locus for success, but also of corruption, in contrast to the countryside, which came to represent family, origins, tradition, but also stagnancy.

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) positioned himself on this literary continuum by characterizing Paris as a modern metropolis not against the countryside, but rather, aware of itself as an urban setting that required natural green spaces for its very integrity. While Maupassant certainly delivered depictions of corruption in Paris, his representation of the city was more complex and served to drive character and plot development in the narrative. His characters often ventured into Parisian green spaces, and by circulating in and out of their urban settings, Maupassant allowed them to grow both as individuals and in partnerships with others.

It is my aim to illustrate the narrative function and socio-cultural necessity of Parisian green spaces in selected works by Maupassant, from the short stories “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris”, “Menuet”, “Deux amis”, and “Mademoiselle Perle”, to the novel, *Bel-Ami*. Although these works and, indeed, Maupassant, have never before been considered as early examples of what we now call nature writing, they can arguably be considered as

relevant precursors to this movement in more contemporary French literature. Ultimately, these works show that Maupassant broke with the traditional image of *Paris contre province* and offered us instead a *Paris qui a besoin de la province*.

## DEDICATION

To my beloved friend and first French language partner, Louise Makowski.

None of this would have been possible without you.

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## INTRODUCTION

A number of publications have appeared on the subject of nature in the work of nineteenth-century French author, Guy de Maupassant. Those familiar with the novelist and prolific storyteller instantly think of “Boule de suif” (1880), *Bel-Ami* (1885), *Le Horla* (1887), *Pierre et Jean* (1888), or a number of short stories set around the Norman coast for which the author’s prose flows like an Impressionist painting onto the page, creating a beautiful landscape. However, little is written on the subject of the public, green spaces in the author’s work, particularly in the gardens and parks of Paris. The green space remains an important issue in our current society, as advocates for our Earth’s conservation gains daily support. These spaces were nevertheless vital in the life of Maupassant and other nineteenth-century Parisians. It is in Paris, in the early years of Maupassant’s life, that these natural, green spaces began to be modernized into the popular settings we continue to know and appreciate today.

Focusing solely on a selection of Maupassant’s works, particularly those reflecting the beauty of public Parisian green spaces, I will limit my scope to several works from the period between 1880 and 1886, by which time Maupassant had already become an *auteur à succès*: the short stories “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris” (1880), “Menuet” (1882), “Deux amis” (1883), and “Mademoiselle Perle” (1886), as well as one novel, *Bel-Ami* (1885). While the reach of green space in his work is far in France, from the Norman coast to the Côte-d’Azur and even into Africa, these selected works allow me to narrow my focus on the role of the green space in a specific social context in the Île-de-France region.

The setting of green spaces in Maupassant's *Contes et nouvelles* differs from those in the novel, and that is my focus for the second half of the thesis. Christopher Pendergast claims, "Nineteenth-century Paris could be said to neither begin nor to end in the nineteenth-century" (75). This claim certainly has to be explained by the fact of the French social climate in the nineteenth-century. Following the first French Revolution of 1789, France entertained countless political ideologies and supported no fewer than five forms of government, underwent rapid urbanization, industrialization, commercialization, engaged in foreign warfare, and economic and labor unrest—all of which changed the social fabric of the country.

One could propose that neither green spaces nor gardens began in nineteenth-century Paris nor in nineteenth-century French literature. If the characterization and narrative function of green spaces differ slightly from the stories to the novel, it is due in part to the manner in which they are accessed. In the *Contes et nouvelles*, for starters, access is intentional, and the natural, green spaces frequented by the stories' characters are located in the environs of Paris. While in the novel *Bel-Ami*, green spaces have a similar effect on the protagonists and characters, they seem to frequent these natural spaces less deliberately, due to the availability of the gardens, parks, and green spaces in Paris.

Gardens in literature are not a modern motif, appearing, for some cultures, as early as their origins. However, in French literature, it is perhaps Jean-Jacques Rousseau who best exemplifies the theme in his philosophical essays and novels, from *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* and the *Confessions* to *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*. Nineteenth-century French authors such as George Sand, Stendhal, Victor Hugo, and Émile Zola, similarly glorify green space in their work, as Bloch-Dano suggests (113). Although she does not include Maupassant in her study of literary gardens in *Jardins de papier*, I believe Maupassant deserves a place in the history of green spaces in French literature. He uses them

in the works selected here, as well as in the rest of his oeuvre, and is arguably what E.O. Wilson calls a *biophile*, derived from the word *biophilia*, namely “l’affinité innée pour le monde naturel” (Sampon-Nicolas 3).

Maupassant’s affinity for the natural world, that is to say landscapes, flora and fauna, and green spaces, perhaps is due to his childhood, having lived close to the Norman coast. The author was born on 5 August 1850 in the château de Miromesnil, where he learned a profound appreciation for nature and the sea, as Nadine Satiat tells us in her biography (26-28). The green spaces in these chosen works not only serve as a decorative backdrop, but also play an important role in Maupassant’s artistry and poetics by giving us the privilege of *stopping to smell the roses*, of taking a seat, or of strolling among the gardens and green spaces that he paints for us.

The Paris that Maupassant came to know after his youth was a modernized capital city rebuilt and renovated during the *Second Empire* (1852-1870) under the command of Napoléon III and his city-planner Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann. David H. Pinkney’s account of *Napoléon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* states that “in 1850 there were no municipal parks except the neglected Champs-Élysées and the Place des Vosges, not fifty acres in all. The gardens of the Tuileries, the Palais-Royal, the Luxembourg, and the Jardin des Plantes were national property open to Parisians only on sufferance” (93). The destruction and renovations should not be understated, due to many understandably and disappointed Parisians; however, out of the chaos did come a new, greener, revived French capital.

While many nineteenth-century French authors present the reader with a dichotomous *Paris contre province*, addressing the theme of urbanization and industrial sprawl, Maupassant seems to critique the capital differently in relation to the province than his contemporaries. The word *province* in the context of this project suggests all that is not Paris,

meaning countryside, landscapes and essentially any space outside of the capital “city”. In his article, “Réflexions sur la ville chez Maupassant”, Louis Forestier writes that “la ville maupassantienne offre toujours l’espoir d’une échappée extérieure qui permette de se ressourcer et de retrouver ses origines” (386). This notion of escape surely alludes to the pastoral, for which Roger Sales represents as “the five Rs: refuge, reflection, rescue, requiem, and reconstruction” (17). Each of these “five Rs” can be seen in each of the selected works by Maupassant in this project which will serve as a social history of public green spaces in nineteenth-century Paris and will seek to show that Maupassant does not present us a typical, dichotomous *Paris contre province*, but rather, a Paris which *a besoin de la province*.

## CONTES ET NOUVELLES

The claim of Paris's need of the province, is not universal to all of Guy de Maupassant's work, because not all of his work takes place in the environs of Paris. However, the idea that Paris needs the province is evident in each of the following selected works which take place in the Parisian region, or Île-de-France. In following this thought, one needs to begin with the short stories of the prolific, French storyteller; to speak of Maupassant is to speak of the short story, having written over three hundred in his life. For the scope of this project, the mention of the Île-de-France region or Parisian region refers roughly to the current perimeters of the French region, given that the characters of the chosen works of Maupassant remain within the confines of this region, unless otherwise noted.

Escape carries a psychological significance in Maupassant's stories because "la connexion avec le monde naturel est fondamentale à la santé humaine, le bien-être, l'esprit et la survie" (Sampon-Nicolas 3). In *The Nature Principle* Louv underscores the importance to human health of connection with the natural world. It is clear that each of the characters benefits from being connected with nature. Bailbé similarly claims that Maupassant's protagonists "a besoin de l'espace du paysage pour mieux se connaître, pour définir et mieux comprendre ses motivations" (Bailbé 58).

"Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris"

"Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris", published in *Le Gaulois* from 31 May to 16 August 1880, is a short story composed of ten chapters. The title aptly conveys the

content, as the story tells of the Sunday discoveries of Paris's environs by Monsieur Patissot, fifty-year-old Parisian, bourgeois employee. Often led by a newfound love of immersion in nature, Monsieur Patissot serves as a model for other nineteenth-century Parisians. "Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris" is a story that speaks to the benefits of a capital city which is never too elojned from natural spaces.

The historical context behind "Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris" is rather important, given the election the previous year of Jules Grévy on 30 January 1879. In several of the story's chapters, Monsieur Patissot discusses the French Republic with the other characters. Grévy, also described as a *président bourgeois* by Pierre Jeambrun, may be seen to reference the bourgeois, Parisian protagonist, Monsieur Patissot (Jeambrun). In any case, each chapter retells a different Sunday discovery of Paris's environs by Monsieur Patissot. Whether one can dispute whether or not the significance of Sunday has a spiritual significance, it is likely that it is autobiographical. Georges Poisson tells us in the foreword of an edition of *Les Soirées de Médan*, "le dimanche, en été, Émile Zola recevait ses amis dans sa maison de Médan" (4). Maupassant was indeed a member of the Médan group, which met every Sunday in the summer at Zola's home at Médan, in the Yvelines department next to Paris. Émile Zola, another celebrated Naturalist French author, was the leader of the Médan group, which was composed of Guy de Maupassant, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Henry Céard, Léon Hennique, and Paul Alexis. Six naturalist short stories, entitled *Les Soirées de Médan*, were published from the group in 1880 centered around the Franco-German War of 1870. Maupassant's short story in this collection, "Boule de suif", or known to anglophones as "Dumpling", "Butterball", or "Ball of Fat", gained him readership.

In the story's first chapter entitled "Préparatifs de voyage", Monsieur Patissot's age and his motive for traveling are revealed: "il a aujourd'hui cinquante et deux ans, et c'est à cet âge qu'il commence à parcourir, en touriste, toute cette partie de la France qui s'étend

entre les fortifications et la province” (Maupassant 122). It is important that this be said at the beginning of the tale, in order that the reader becomes aware of the importance of the remaining experiences on the protagonist and the nineteenth-century Parisian. The information here might appear ironic because to Patissot, fifty-two years old, the outskirts of his city, Paris, seem foreign. However, the Parisian suburbs in 1880, at the time in which Maupassant is writing his tale, differ substantially from today’s *banlieues* or suburbs. Louis Forestier teaches us that, “les fortifications désignent l’enceinte construite par Thiers de 1842 à 1845 et qui délimite la ville de Paris à partir de 1860. Au-delà de ces « fortifs » qui subsistèrent jusqu’au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale, c’était déjà la campagne : Boulogne, Asnières, Clichy, Gentilly, Montrouge, etc.” (1311).

While these Parisian suburbs seem close in our times due to public transportation, they were certainly less easily reached by Parisians in the latter decades of the nineteenth-century. What is the purpose then for an elderly man to begin a new adventure as a tourist in the suburbs of his own city? The narrator in “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris” tells us that Monsieur Patissot’s endeavor “peut être utile à beaucoup d’employés, comme le récit de ses promenades servira sans doute à beaucoup de Parisiens qui les prendront pour itinéraires de leurs propres excursions, et sauront, par son exemple, éviter certaines mésaventures qui lui sont advenues” (122). The narrator draws attention to the purpose of the voyage of Monsieur Patissot, which is to teach other nineteenth-century Parisians by experience. Monsieur Patissot’s voyage is useful because other Parisians emulate his story and learn from him. Therefore, Monsieur Patissot becomes both a protagonist giving a glimpse into nineteenth-century Paris and a device for instruction of which other Parisians should note.

Maupassant will prove that a man advanced in age is capable of learning. In the first chapter, M. Patissot’s newfound passion for the *campagne* is revealed when he, “rêvait à

l'excursion projetée pour le dimanche suivant, et un grand désir de campagne lui était venu tout à coup, un besoin de s'attendrir devant des arbres, cette soif d'idéal champêtre qui hante au printemps les Parisiens" (127). This statement from the narrator gives us several clues as to the importance of the green space in the lives of nineteenth-century Parisians.

The first clue is that of dreaming. The word *rêvait* does not explicitly signify dreaming in the sense of daydreaming or idealization; however, it suggests a dreamy preoccupation. After having been exposed to the *campagne* that Monsieur Patissot is preoccupied with the thought of returning there. The word preoccupation can often carry a negative connotation in its relation to anxiety or worry, but this is not the case for Monsieur Patissot. He is preoccupied in the sense of having the countryside on his mind in a pleasant manner, because to him it is a 'grand désir' (127). Maupassant has chosen carefully here his word choice. He reveals that his character not only is thinking about the countryside, but he in fact desires it, perhaps for reasons none other than to escape the ills of city life.

Another common theme in nineteenth-century French literature, especially the works centered around war and revolution, is *la soif*, or thirst. Only two symbols come to mind that thirst here can represent: literal thirst and figurative thirst. The first example is self-explanatory, but the second denotes a thirst for something better, given the tumultuous political climate of nineteenth-century France. *La soif* in this latter sense, evokes a basic human need for survival, and one which Maupassant has intentionally chosen. If one does not quench one's thirst, one will not survive. Thirst here is evoked figuratively as Monsieur Patissot and the Parisians *can* quench their thirst in by adventuring into the *campagne* to satisfy their "besoin de s'attendrir devant des arbres" (Maupassant 127). The verb *s'attendrir* employed here by Maupassant is important because it shows that this space is able to emotionally move the character within the story, as translated into English as *to be moved* or *to be touched* by something. The importance of this verb choice likewise embodies a

psychological element, as this natural space is able to affect and leave an impression upon humankind. It is not only a space to fill the setting or background. This sentence gives us a full-circle image: first, a preoccupation to travel to the *campagne*; second, a thirst to go there; and third, a need to go there, only quenchable by actually leaving Paris for the province. Therefore, what is the remedy? *La campagne*.

In the second chapter of “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris” entitled “Première sortie”, Monsieur Patissot continues his adventure in the Île-de-France region, where he embarks on a journey to Versailles. There are two important points to retain in this chapter. First, an anecdote about Monsieur Patissot and a frog, given to us by the narrator; second, the backpack that Monsieur Patissot’s carries. The anecdote of Monsieur Patissot and the frog is important in understanding the Parisian bourgeoisie. The narrator tells us that Monsieur Patissot, “se baissa pour la prendre [la grenouille], mais elle lui glissa dans les mains. Alors, avec des précautions infinies, il se traîna vers elle, sur les genoux, avançant tout doucement, tandis que son sac, sur son dos, semblait une carapace énorme et lui donnait l’air d’une grosse tortue en marche” (Maupassant 130).

The frog described here is a part of nature, because it is literally a living, natural being. The image given to us by the narrator is one to which I conclude the majority of us can relate: a young child, or in the context of this story an adult, trying to catch a frog. However, the story is more profound, because the remainder of the sentence suggests that Monsieur Patissot is unlucky in catching the frog. The reader needs now to divert his or her attention to the bag which Monsieur Patissot is carrying on his back, represented figuratively as a heavy tortoise shell and the culprit of his inability to catch the frog. The author chooses to represent an image of a materialistic, man-made object (his backpack) in animal form. The author wishes to contrast Parisian, bourgeois materiality with the natural world, and the backpack demonstrates here that Monsieur Patissot, although returning to nature, is not able to leave all

his materiality behind. He is not able to detach completely from city, bourgeois life in order to appreciate and profit from all that *la campagne* has to offer. Maupassant provides the backpack as a social symbol of materiality, representing his instability to the natural world. This is a stylistic choice to be appreciated in Maupassant, because unlike many other French authors, he does not provide a dichotomous *Paris contre province*. Maupassant actually gives us the missing link, which is unity between the two. That is to say, Monsieur Patissot must not be dominated by the Parisian bourgeoisie if he wants to truly sense the benefits from the natural world and be true to his natural self.

Later in the second chapter, in route to Versailles, Monsieur Patissot encounters a young Parisian couple who have decided to profit from the *campagne* but have lost themselves along the way. Initially headed for Rueil, a Parisian suburb, they instead have taken a wrong turn and have ended up in the direction of Versailles. The young, married lady claims that it is all her husband's fault for taking a wrong turn. However, frightened and displaced, they decide to follow Monsieur Patissot. Once the couple joins the protagonist, Monsieur Patissot notices that the young man continues to cry, "tiiiit" (Maupassant 132). The narrator leaves the reader to believe that the husband is mocking or harassing his young wife after their dispute over taking the wrong direction. However, a few paragraphs later, Monsieur Patissot asks the young man why he is crying in such a manner, and the reader learns rather comically that the husband is in fact calling his dog. The young man replies, "C'est mon pauvre chien que j'ai perdu," (Maupassant 132). M. Patissot, astonished, next hears the young husband explain: "oui, nous l'avions élevé à Paris ; il n'était jamais venu à la campagne, et, quand il a vu des feuilles, il fut tellement content, qu'il s'est mis à courir comme un fou" (Maupassant 132).

The reader never learns whether the dog returns to its owners, but Maupassant seems to suggest that this detail is beside the point. The reader must not forget that the young man

deliberately states that his dog was raised in Paris. The dog has lived the same lifestyle and seen the same landscapes as the Parisian couple until this point in its life. The moral of the story here is that the dog, a domesticated but originally wild animal, is able to return to the natural instincts and desires of his origins. The animal is extremely happy! Thus the animal is not lost but his “owners” are, as the dog is no longer a possession. The young Parisian couple, however, is not able to identify with the natural world in such a manner as their beloved dog, because they are too far removed from their individual nature and natural spaces. Indeed, they lack the desire to give up their bourgeois, material milieu.

In the third chapter, “Chez un ami”, Maupassant paints a picture of an ideal friendship between two men, symbolizing the city and the countryside, represented by Monsieur Patissot, and his colleague, Monsieur Boivin, nicknamed Boileau. The two men meet at the protagonist’s workplace and appear to be kindred spirits when it comes to an appreciation for Paris’s natural, green spaces: “... Patissot raconta son aventure, et il dépeignait poétiquement les lieux qu’il avait traversés, s’indignant de rencontrer si peu d’enthousiasme autour de lui. Seul, un vieil expéditionnaire toujours taciturne, M. Boivin, surnommé Boileau, lui prêtait une attention soutenue” (133). Indeed, this unlikely friendship between Monsieur Patissot and Boileau results from their shared love of the *campagne*. While other colleagues of M. Patissot seem uninterested in the descriptions of the countryside, Boileau in fact lives in the country and the narrator tells us that “la concordance de leurs aspirations les rendit tout de suite amis” (133). In this chapter the reader learns that it is possible for a friendship to be made between a Parisian bourgeois and a *campagnard*, or a person from the countryside.

This friendship between the two men is rather important in considering the moral of the second chapter, where the reader learns of the difference between Monsieur Patissot and his relation to the natural world and that of the young, bourgeois couple and their relationship with it. This chapter serves as a transition between the reality of the second chapter and the

potential of the third chapter. Which is to say that a bond can exist between Paris and countryside, where Monsieur Patissot represents Paris and Boileau, the countryside.

The narrator tells us that the two men “étaient faits pour s’entendre” (Maupassant 141). The story not only teaches the nineteenth century Parisian that friendship with a country dweller is possible, but also that the figurative friendship between Paris and *campagne* is also possible. This lesson is essential to French identity and collective understanding, as the French nation needs to regroup despite the latter tumultuous decades, and essential in understanding the symbiotic relationship between Paris and the countryside.

The fifth chapter, “Deux hommes célèbres”, presents a new adventure and acquaintance. Monsieur Patissot runs into a cousin in the street, and this gentleman, an avid journalist, proposes that Monsieur Patissot travel with him the following Sunday into the countryside to visit two men. One a painter, and the other, a writer are no doubt none other than Meissonier and Zola. And it is through their adventure to Poissy, Meissonier’s home, and Médan, where Zola lives, that the two men discover many peculiarities of the lives of artists. According to Monsieur Patissot’s young journalist cousin: “Tout général a son Waterloo, disait-il ; tout Balzac a ses Jardies, et tout artiste habitant la campagne a son cœur de propriétaire” (148). The cousin alludes to legible references for any contemporary reader: first, the French Emperor, Napoléon 1<sup>er</sup>, and the Battle of Waterloo where the French army was defeated, ultimately ending the Napoleonic Wars; and another French Realist author, Honoré de Balzac, and the home where he lived, *la Maison des Jardies*, located in Sèvres outside of Paris. Both examples call up historical markers in nineteenth-century France. The second is pertinent, moreover, because it reminds us of an author, Honoré de Balzac, who has a special place in his heart for the countryside (Maupassant 148). The reader has a picture of the artist and the *campagne* as if the two are or are able to be synonymous.

In another example from the seventh chapter entitled “Une triste histoire”, one reads, “pour se reposer des fatigues de la fête, M. Patissot conçut le projet de passer tranquillement le dimanche suivant assis quelque part en face de la nature” (153). In this scene Monsieur Patissot is profiting from the countryside in Paris’s environs as an outlet for self-restoration, no doubt relating to reflection and reconstruction, two of Roger Sales’ “five Rs” of the pastoral (17). The green spaces here in the city allow Monsieur Patissot to be able to flee the hustle-and-bustle of Paris for a more tranquil, reflective afternoon. This is a common theme among the green spaces in the works of Maupassant, in that he allows his characters to escape their everyday city life in order to be in touch with French soil where they are organically French. This meeting with the soil helps Maupassant’s characters to be natural and true to themselves because it is often here that the characters are most pensive. In the following sentences, the narrator tells us that Monsieur Patissot, “resta frappé d’admiration devant cette promenade démesurée d’où l’on découvre au loin Paris, les villages, des bois, des étangs, des villes même, et ce grand serpent bleuâtre aux ondulations sans nombre, ce fleuve adorable et doux qui passe au cœur de la France : la Seine” (Maupassant 153). This final scene is important for two reasons. The first reason, in talking about the manner in which Maupassant presents us Paris from a distance and perceived from the countryside; the second reason, to show the nineteenth-century Parisian again, and again, that there is restoration to be found in this natural, green space.

One does not have the stark contrast of *Paris contre province* in reading “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris”. It is true that one can argue that Maupassant compares Paris with the province, but I believe that this is to only show that one has need of the other, and vice-versa. There is a symbiotic relationship between Paris and the countryside. In other words, there is no one-way, parasitic relationship. It is certain that Monsieur Patissot finds restoration in this scene, but it is also from this perspective that he is perhaps able to

appreciate the city, in discovering it from afar in green spaces. This is specifically seen in Maupassant's work as he paints scenes of harmony between natural green spaces and his characters, a prominent theme in this story and the other selected works in this study. Finally, Maupassant paints this scene which appears like an out-of-body experience for the protagonist. This interesting picture allows the reader to perceive the mind of the protagonist, while the protagonist himself is able to see his own mind. "Les Dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris" highlights the importance of green spaces in the lives of Parisians as the pastoral described here by Maupassant represents regeneration in the life of Monsieur Patissot.

### Green Spaces as Refuge

"Menuet" was published 20 November 1882 in *Le Gaulois*, a daily French newspaper active from 1882 until 1929. In it, Maupassant offers us a glimpse into the life of another elderly protagonist, Jean Bridelle, who recounts a tale from his own past about the *pépinière du Luxembourg*, a nursery which existed in Paris's Luxembourg gardens<sup>1</sup>. "Menuet" is a story of an elderly couple who dance the minuet, a traditional dance described as "la reine des danses, et la danse des reines" for the protagonist (Maupassant 639). The story both celebrates a love for the past and epitomizes green, public spaces as a place to preserve the past. Thus the past and pastoral in this story represents preservation.

Although the history of the titular minuet is not relevant to this study, Cordova gives us insight into the history of dance in literature: "Throughout the nineteenth-century, dance serves literature as a privileged metaphor for the inexpressible" (40). What is the inexpressible in "Menuet"?

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<sup>1</sup> "en 1865, le projet de décret qui supprimait entièrement la pépinière" (Mangin 316).

When Jean Bridelle is introduced in the incipit as “un vieux garçon qui passait pour sceptique,” we meet a protagonist whose retelling of his gruesome war experiences recalls Maupassant himself (Maupassant 636). Soon we notice that one of the protagonist’s favorite pastimes was “de me promener seul, vers huit heures du matin, dans la pépinière du Luxembourg” (637). Louis Forestier notes that the *pépinière du Luxembourg* really existed, taking the place of the current lycée Montaigne, la Faculté de pharmacie, and l’Institut d’art et d’archéologie and located within the perimeters of rue d’Assas, rue d’Auguste-Comte, and l’avenue de l’Observatoire (1486).

The word “existed” is essential here in understanding the meaning of the motif of green spaces in this short story as well as the historical context of this place. Since ‘existed’ means no longer exists, one learns in reading that, “un décret impérial de 1865, exécuté en 1867 fit disparaître cette portion du jardin”. The portion of the garden here which has disappeared refers to the now obsolete *pépinière du Luxembourg* (Forestier 1486). From historical research, one learns that the *pépinière du Luxembourg* was destroyed in the rebuilding of Paris under the Second Empire in order to construct a new street, which was deemed more important; however, modernization was the force majeure at the time. Why then is all of the historical context of the *pépinière du Luxembourg* important? I believe the history of the *pépinière* is important because the origins are traceable to a real historical time and place and realize that it is not only the imagination of the author. The key here is that the *pépinière* is historical, which translates to memory. This is paramount in the short story “Menuet”.

Jean tells us that “c’était comme un jardin oublié de l’autre siècle, un jardin joli comme un doux sourire de vieille” (Maupassant 637). One learns that the *pépinière* resembles a garden of another century, probably the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, during which time many Parisians enjoyed strolling at the *pépinière*. However,

numerous spiritual connotations of ancient gardens are also evoked, not the least the Garden of Eden. According to Judeo-Christian belief, the Garden of Eden is the cradle of humankind, where man and woman trace their roots. This allegory then serves as a reminder from the author that humankind originates from and is tied to the Earth. Perhaps the Hanging Gardens of Babylon come to mind as well, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, according to the Greeks. Whether or not these hanging gardens indeed existed, they similarly symbolize a primordial place of origin and return, as they were rumored to have been a gift to the homesick wife of king Nebuchadnezzar, serving thus as a refuge and remedy for sadness (Cartwright). According to a Chinese proverb, “la vie débute le jour où l’on commence un jardin” (Bloch-Dano 25). In the context of Maupassant’s “Menuet,” the symbols of green spaces as our roots and origins, as refuge and remedy are paramount.

“C’était comme un jardin oublié de l’autre siècle, un jardin joli comme un doux sourire de vieille,” is the simile that Maupassant, whether purposefully or not, makes between a garden and an elderly woman (637). The simile is provocative because the author compares a masculine substantive, *un jardin*, to a feminine substantive, *une vieille*, or elderly woman. The word is without doubt used as a noun but can likewise evoke the adjective *vieille* (old) in the feminine form given its homonymity. If the reader makes this connection, then this strengthens the allegory of the historical references previously made to gardens, such as the Garden of Eden and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which refer to *la vieille Histoire*. It is important that Maupassant compares a masculine object, *un jardin*, to a feminine being, *une vieille*, because he femininizes and humanizes the green space in the communion between the *jardin* and *vieille*, which becomes a space accessible to all. This complementarity is important again in understanding the symbiotic relationship between Paris and the countryside, because it is necessary that both coexist harmoniously and not slighting one over the other.

The short story “Menuet” is abundant in references to green spaces as social spaces. Jean Bridelle’s walks in the *pépinière* “presque tous les matins” leads him to realize that “je n’étais pas seul” and to meet an elderly man (Maupassant 637). No doubt like other Parisian flâneurs, Bridelle indulges in other pastimes at the *pépinière*: “parfois je laissais retomber le livre sur mes genoux pour rêver, pour écouter autour de moi vivre Paris, et jouir du repos infini de ces charmilles à la mode ancienne” (Maupassant 637). This undoubtedly resembles the image of flâneurs who choose to abandon themselves “to the artificial world of high capitalist civilization,” as Bridelle goes there to read, to dream, to escape city life, and to surround himself with charming plants (Lauster 140). The green space serves as a refuge for Jean Bridelle and for other nineteenth-century Parisians who frequented it, thus again alluding to the pastoral as refuge (Sales 17). It also preserves history, as we learn from the conversation between Jean Bridelle and the elderly Monsieur at the *pépinière du Luxembourg*.

“Ce jardin, voyez-vous, c’est notre plaisir et notre vie. C’est tout ce qui nous reste d’autrefois. Il nous semble que nous ne pourrions plus exister si nous ne l’avions point” (639). The green space preserves memories of yesterday as well as memories of long ago. The elderly Monsieur et *la Castris*, his wife, are not able to survive without their green space which serves them as a refuge, a place of meeting, and a nursery of memories.

It is significant that Maupassant has two characters from different generations meet. Sampon-Nicolas claims in her article that “les échanges entre les générations sont importants pour la transmission des histoires de famille, de culture et de sagesse” (16). This bears out in Maupassant’s “Menuet” because Jean Bridelle indeed learns from the elderly Monsieur who dances *le menuet*. The exchange of culture, traditions, and affinity for the natural world between Jean and the elderly Monsieur helps Jean understand the older man’s passion for and dependence on green spaces. The broader significance of this generational transfer of

memory is important again as an example of pedagogical literature, similar to Monsieur Patissot's Sunday adventures being useful to other nineteenth-century Parisians.

As mentioned in the summary, the story takes place in different periods: first in Jean Bridelle's present, and second as flashback. In both periods of time, Maupassant chooses to pose questions indirectly to the nineteenth-century Parisian. Just before the flashback, Jean Bridelle says, "Vous ne comprendriez peut-être pas l'émotion qui m'est restée de ces rapides impressions" (Maupassant 636). Here, Maupassant leads the reader to question him or herself: Why would I not understand Jean Bridelle's emotional state? In adding the word *peut-être* (maybe), does Maupassant wish to suggest that readers, perhaps his bourgeois readership in particular, are too shallow for insight? Jean then directly asks: "Vous ne l'avez pas connue, vous autres, cette pépinière ?" seems also to be a critique of his fellow Parisians who have not taken the time to place themselves in the abundant green spaces in Paris (Maupassant 637).

At the end of "Menuet," the flashback ends and the narrative returns to the present. Jean leaves Paris for the countryside for two years, and upon his return to Paris the *pépinière du Luxembourg* has been destroyed (Maupassant 640). In the denouement, Maupassant leaves his readers wondering about the elderly couple, for whom the destruction of this place represents their end (Maupassant 639). The couple's relationship and profound connection with the *pépinière du Luxembourg* coalesces with Krell's essay, inspired by Michel Serres, that, "humans – who could not exist without the earth – are peripheral, and the earth – which could get along just fine without humans – is central" (Krell 5). This certainly is the case in point in "Menuet," where the *pépinière du Luxembourg* plays the central role, while Maupassant's characters are just in the periphery.

Six of the eleven sentences that make up the denouement of the story are questions. Perhaps the most remarkable among them is this: "Errent-ils par les rues modernes comme

des exilés sans espoir ?” (Maupassant 640). This question is essential in understanding again the meaning of green spaces in the works of Maupassant, because the reader sees a Parisian milieu without hope, now that its beloved *pépinière du Luxembourg* is a distant memory.

## Retreat and Return

“Deux amis” was published in *Gil Blas*, a Parisian literary periodical, on 5 February 1883 in *Le Gaulois*. The story centers on two friends, Monsieur Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage, who find peace in their relationship through their shared love for fishing and natural green spaces outside of Paris. “Deux amis” takes place during the Franco-German war of 1870, so it is not long before a band of armed German soldiers arrive to disrupt the serenity of the bucolic setting. “Deux amis” therefore celebrates friendship amidst a corrupt, violent world. “Paris était bloqué, affamé et râlant,” (Maupassant 732). This first sentence of “Deux amis” alerts us to the threatening context. The fact that the two men have their outings on Sundays is very similar to Monsieur Patissot in “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris”; a point in which I will discuss later in this project.

In the flashback at the beginning of the story, the two men share a love of fishing. The mutual feelings of the two men towards fishing and nature remain static throughout the story. The narrator tells us that the two men “...ne parlaient pas. Quelquefois ils causaient ; mais ils s’entendaient admirablement sans rien dire, ayant des goûts semblables et des sensations identiques” (Maupassant 732). Maupassant further embellishes their appreciation for the natural world with the description of the springtime environment of Paris: “au printemps, le matin, vers dix heures, quand le soleil rajeuni faisant flotter sur le fleuve tranquille cette petite buée qui coule avec l’eau, et versait dans le dos des deux enragés pêcheurs une bonne chaleur de saison nouvelle, Morissot parfois disait à son voisin, ‘Hein ! quelle douceur !’”,

and Monsieur Sauvage replies, “Je ne connais rien de meilleur” (Maupassant 732-733). Like the previous two stories, “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris” and “Menuet”, where natural, green spaces can be a meeting place for Parisians and form the foundation for friendship, here it generates a form of implicit understanding that requires no words: “Et cela leur suffisait pour se comprendre et s’estimer” (Maupassant 733).

Another image painted by the author is the autumnal landscape, “À l’automne, vers la fin du jour, quand le ciel, ensanglanté par le soleil couchant, jetait dans l’eau des figures de nuages écarlates, empourrait le fleuve entier, enflammait l’horizon, faisait rouge comme du feu les deux amis” (Maupassant 733), and Monsieur Sauvage comments the autumnal landscape in calling it a “spectacle” (Maupassant 733). It is as much the sense of natural theater, compared to the brutal theater of war, as a beautiful sight to see. His friend Morissot replies rhetorically: “Cela vaut mieux que le boulevard, hein ?” (Maupassant 733). The reader already knows Monsieur Sauvage’s answer, given his profound affection for natural spaces expressed in the beginning of the story. However, Maupassant chooses not to give us Monsieur Sauvage’s answer in writing. This question is carefully chosen by the author, because it is not Monsieur Sauvage who is left to answer Morissot’s question but the nineteenth-century Parisian.

From these framed recollections of the two friends, Maupassant returns to his framing tale, and describes the two men walking side-by-side in Paris. In the city, and in the present historical context, they are “rêveurs et tristes” (Maupassant 733). After a few drinks, Morissot and Sauvage decide to go fishing again, but with the Prussian army approaching Paris, the two men fear they will not be able to cross to their desired island on the Seine to fish. A colonel allows them access, and upon reaching their fishing hole, they perceive Prussian soldiers atop a hill. Having felt the presence of Prussians, the two Frenchmen had never seen any Prussians, “mais ils les sentaient là depuis des mois, autour de Paris, ruinant la

France, pillant, massacrant, affamant, invisibles et tout-puissants. Et une sorte de terreur superstitieuse s'ajoutait à la haine qu'ils avaient pour ce peuple inconnu et victorieux" (Maupassant 734). These "others" are invaders of France, and thus a literary device challenging Morissot and Sauvage's concept of *Frenchness* and French soil. Maupassant's two protagonists, as seen at the end of the story, serve as a patriotic example for the French nation. In any case, the two men seem to escape unscathed from these barbarian "others" and continue their beloved pastime.

Having narrowly avoided a direct confrontation with Prussian soldiers, the two men "ne pensaient plus à rien ; ils ignoraient le reste du monde ; ils pêchaient" (Maupassant 735). Importantly, amidst fear, uncertainty, and hatred, the two men are able quickly to return to nature, solitude, and solace, which seem never to be far from reach. However, Maupassant uses this brief moment of harmony to contrast with the recommencement of explosions from the approaching Prussian army.

The Prussian soldiers appear all of a sudden taking both Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage by surprise. The dénouement of "Deux amis" is despoiled by destruction of war: "Morissot, plus grand, oscilla, pivota et s'abattit en travers sur son camarade, le visage au ciel, tandis que des bouillons de sang s'échappaient de sa tunique crevée à la poitrine" (Maupassant 738). The story ends in grotesque detail, but the message that the two men give is important. Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage have chosen not to speak to the German officers by choice. Perhaps the two men believed that they would never be able to convince the German officers that they were actually fishing for leisure, or perhaps the two men had no motive to explain themselves and wanted to be a patriotic example to their country. The second interpretation is more realistic, not just because the German officers spoke to the two Frenchmen in French, eliminating any prospect of their silence stemming from incomprehension. More importantly, Maupassant uses the two men as examples of

patriotism. Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage, while losing their lives, have died symbolically for nature and in nature. Terry Gifford states in his work *Pastoral* that “retreat and return” are fundamental in the pastoral movement (1). This is the case in point for Monsieur Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage, given that they remain faithful to French soil, which is essentially only Earth and soil, and return to the natural world from which they came.

### Pastoral as Authenticity

“Mademoiselle Perle”, published 16 January 1886 in the literary section of *Le Figaro*, is a short story about the Chantal family in Paris, city dwellers who live as if they were in the French countryside, rather than conceding to the hustle and bustle of the capital city. Invited to celebrate Epiphany with the Chantal family, Gaston, the protagonist, is chosen as king of the party and has to choose a queen. With hesitation, he chooses Mademoiselle Perle, who lives with the Chantal family and is embarrassed to have been chosen. The rest of the story takes place around a billiard table as Monsieur Chantal retells of his first encounter with Mademoiselle Perle. The story is a reminder to be honest with yourself and with others, drawing this moral from an honest and gentle family who have a particular connection with the natural world, to which the pastoral serves as source of authenticity.

This story differs from the others in this study. It takes place exclusively in Paris, with the exception of the flashback to Monsieur Chantal and Mademoiselle Perle’s meeting. However, Maupassant informs us that the Chantals “vivent à Paris comme s’ils habitaient Grasse, Yvetot ou Pont-à-Mousson” (Maupassant 669). Grasse, located in the southeast near the Côte-d’Azur, Yvetot, a coastal town in Normandy, and Pont-à-Mousson, located in the northeast between the cities of Nancy and Metz: Maupassant’s choice of French towns is equally important. These differing *terroirs* represent three very different regions, all of which

comprise French culture. There is no doubt that a Grassois, an Yvetotais, or a Mussipontain lived different lives culturally speaking in nineteenth-century France. The diversity of French identity, Maupassant seems to say, does not prevent the French people from collective identification. The Chantal family exemplifies an ideal family composed of three different “countrysides” functioning together. Their example is that of “une existence singulière”, that is to say, a unique existence (Maupassant 669).

That the existence of the Chantals be unique is likely an exaggeration, but it is an important statement to be made by the author due to its relevancy concerning French values and traditions. While the values and traditions may be similar or different between province and Paris, it is certain that the way of life in the capital city differed much from the province. The Chantal family owned a home, “auprès de l’Observatoire, une maison dans un petit jardin”, where, “ils sont chez eux, là, comme en province” (Maupassant 669). So, the family lives on the Left Bank in Paris in the 14<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* near the Observatory, suggesting science and *natural* phenomena in relation to l’Observatoire de Paris.

While the family lives in Paris, the narrator tells us that, “De Paris, du vrai Paris, ils ne connaissent rien, ils ne soupçonnent rien ; ils sont si loin ! si loin !” (Maupassant 669). The author here does not literally mean that the family is far from Paris, because he has given us an approximative location of the family’s home located within the city limits. Nor does the author mean that the family is a stranger to Paris; they obviously know how to navigate Paris in order to obtain provisions from the other side of the city. One could argue here that what the author wishes to convey is that the family is figuratively far from Paris, that is to say, in their upbringing, lifestyle, and mentality. Could it be due to the family’s identification with the province that allows them to live so peaceably in the capital city?

A few paragraphs later, the narrator reveals the Chantals’s feelings concerning the Parisians of the “other” side of the Seine, “Pour les Chantal, toute la partie de Paris située de

l'autre côté de la Seine constitue les quartiers neufs, quartiers habités par une population singulière, bruyante, peu honorable, qui passe les jours en dissipations, les nuits en fêtes, et qui jette l'argent par les fenêtres" (Maupassant 670). There is a sense of dissociation between the Chantal family inhabiting the Left Bank of the Seine with the inhabitants of the Right Bank of the Seine, due to differing lifestyles and values such as: new/old neighborhoods, unique/traditional peoples, loud/calm character, dishonorable/honorable character, frivolity/conservativeness, sociable/reserved, extravagance/provincial. The Chantals, of course, are the latter qualities in these comparisons. In addition, the Right Bank of the Seine is the more "modernized" side of Paris by Haussmann, thus underlining perhaps the Chantal's identification with the Left Bank. While these comparisons likely inserted by the author create a dissonance between different Parisians, it also helps the reader in better defining the qualities of the natural world through a family proposed as a symbol.

In the third chapter of "Mademoiselle Perle", there is an important anecdote told by Monsieur Chantal to Gaston, the protagonist, concerning the history of Mademoiselle Perle and her relation to the Chantals. She in fact is considered to be part of the family, but she is not a biological relative. The reader also learns that mademoiselle Perle is treated "amicalement, mieux qu'une femme de charge, moins bien qu'une parente" (Maupassant 673). She lives therefore as an adopted member of the family, which she joined the family forty-one years earlier, also on the day of l'Épiphanie (Epiphany or Three Kings Day<sup>2</sup>). The setting of the flashback is Roüy-le-Tors, fictional French village surrounded by prairies and snow, during Monsieur Chantal's childhood in a home with "un beau jardin suspendu" (possibly another covert reference to the Babylonian hanging gardens discussed above) (Maupassant 675). This story is also a familial origin story which highlights the importance of one's origins to which one can trace his or her roots. On this day, the Chantal family had

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<sup>2</sup> The Catholic celebration of the Magi to the Christ Child, see *Wikipedia* 'Epiphany (holiday)'.

gathered to celebrate, but their feasting was interrupted by crying outside that they took to be that of a dog. After their servant returns from the fields without locating the source, the men of the family decide to investigate. Here Maupassant sketches the character of each man. There is the uncle, who seems ready to fire a shot, and the generous, thoughtful Monsieur Chantal, the father who “était bon,” and who reveals his sympathetic nature when he says: “il vaut mieux l’aller chercher, ce pauvre animal qui crie la faim. Il aboie au secours, ce misérable ; il appelle comme un homme en détresse” (Maupassant 677).

Ultimately, the group of men find the dog, but Monsieur Chantal’s brother, Jacques, also perceives something just behind the animal, “un petit enfant qui dormait” in a carriage, “une fille, âgée de six semaines environ” who is left with “dix mille francs en or” (Maupassant 679). Thanks to the good nature of Monsieur Chantal’s father, the young girl was able to be saved. The origins of the young girl in the story are blurred, in fact, Monsieur Chantal, “n’a jamais rien su... mais là, jamais rien... jamais rien...” concerning her origins (Maupassant 679). Since there are no clear origins of the young girl, later named mademoiselle Perle, one can assume she is a product of nature, being born of the land and therefore authentically French. In adopting an orphaned, young girl on Epiphany, the Chantals equally adopt nature into their family, for whom mademoiselle Perle is a symbol, having literally been adopted and rescued from nature. Although the presence of nature and green spaces is only apparent in the story’s flashback, everything about this family suggests the residual purity of their provincial origins. Monsieur Chantal’s mother nicknames the young girl mademoiselle Perle because she “avait fait quelque chose de bon, de délicat” and is a symbol of the purity of nature itself (Maupassant 680). This story, as similar to the others in this project, evokes the pastoral “that is a selective ‘reflection’ on past country life in which old settled values are ‘rescued’ by the text” (Gifford 8). In the story, the characters reflect on the countryside, or at least, the narrator describes the family in a way that is

representative of the countryside, given their values and ability to live in Paris as if it were the countryside. These old settled values are ‘rescued’ by the adoption of Mademoiselle Perle into the Chantal family, which suggests their ability to coexist harmoniously amidst the “city”.

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These tales allow us to consider the role of the green space *en région parisienne*: green spaces as refuge, as memory, as the fuel for friendship, artistry, places for solitude and dreaming. In addition to these themes, the pastoral plays an important role in Maupassant’s *Contes et nouvelles*, in which it is represented as regeneration in “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris,” as preservation in “Menuet,” as escape in “Deux amis,” and as source of authenticity in “Mademoiselle Perle”. Together these green spaces are essential to Parisian existence. Louis Forestier writes that “la ville se cache – en somme cesse d’être ville – pour n’être que *jardins*... ou campagne. Maupassant nourrit donc le rêve – irrationnel, absurde ou ambivalent – d’une espèce de “cité-campagne” qui arracherait l’homme à sa schizophrénie et lui permettrait de se sentir vraiment chez lui.” (389). Of all of these different themes, the green spaces in the Parisian region in the short stories of Maupassant can be summed into one major theme: green spaces are a necessity in the lives of Parisians. In fact, Maupassant does not propose the strong dichotomy *Paris contre province*, but instead proposes his own unification, *Paris a besoin de la province*.

## BEL-AMI

This newly renovated Second Empire Paris is the setting of Maupassant's novel, *Bel-Ami*, in which his characters, *flâneurs*, stroll about wide boulevards and partake of the "natural" landscapes of the Bois de Boulogne and the Parc Monceau. *Bel-Ami*, published in 1885 and Maupassant's second novel, follows the life of Georges Duroy, in his social climb in the newly renovated Paris. "Under the Second Empire the exceptional development of western Paris, encouraged by the street building, the parks (especially the Bois de Boulogne and the Parc Monceau), and heavy government investment, went rapidly forward," David P. Jordan writes in his article on Paris and Baron Haussmann (101). This is the part of Paris that Maupassant's *héros*, Georges Duroy, knows and indeed "masters", and it is the same area of Paris that Maupassant himself came to know and frequent.

In the beginning of the novel Georges Duroy, "avait envie maintenant de gagner les Champs-Élysées et l'avenue du bois de Boulogne pour trouver un peu d'air frais sous les arbres ; mais un désir aussi le travaillait, celui d'une rencontre amoureuse" (Maupassant 31). While Parisian green spaces serve primarily as meeting places in the short stories we have already considered, in *Bel-Ami* they are also the locus of romantic encounters. These encounters in these green spaces within the capital represent again the pastoral in Maupassant, where it represents procreation and (re)birth in the context of this novel. This applies as much to other couples in the novel as it does to Duroy and his mistresses. In addition, the parks represent refuge and restoration from the stress of an overly active city, because Duroy desires the Bois de Boulogne for its fresh air beneath the trees.

Later in the novel, Georges and Madeline Forestier (Duroy's muse, turned wife, later ex-wife), "prirent un fiacre découvert, gagnèrent les Champs-Élysées, puis l'avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne. C'était une nuit sans vent, une de ces nuits d'été où l'air de Paris surchauffé entre dans la poitrine comme une vapeur de four. Une armée de fiacres menait sous les arbres tout un peuple d'amoureux. Ils allaient, ces fiacres, l'un derrière l'autre, sans cesse" (Maupassant 266). The image here of an army of carriages is cleverly chosen as it presents a strong image—a sort of military force *en masse*. This is a community image and a cultural image due to the number of Parisians going one after the other to the Bois de Boulogne, thus underscoring its importance in Parisian life. Richard Louv says, "the natural world helps us perceive connections; it also helps us fine tune knowledge" (25). The carriages do not represent the natural world, but the place to where the carriages are taking the Parisians does. Maupassant chooses these natural green spaces, to perhaps suggest that his characters better understand themselves interpersonally (and intrapersonal) in these green spaces, given their willingness to congregate with others.

This image coincides with anthropologist Victor Turner's idea of experiential *communitas*, defined as "unification through a shared experience with strangers or acquaintances" (Turner qtd. in Hopkins 7). The *communitas* concept can be applied throughout the novel *Bel-Ami* because the characters seem to gravitate towards these newly developed (or newly renovated) Parisian green spaces. *Communitas* is not unique only to Georges Duroy and his fellow Parisians but is common in other of Maupassant's works. It can best be identified in "Menuet" where the protagonist of the story, Jean Bridelle, forms a bond with the elderly Monsieur in the *pépinière du Luxembourg*. The acquaintanceship is gradual, however, as Jean observes the Monsieur from a distance before deciding to approach him. The two characters form a rather interesting relationship as the elderly Monsieur

transfers past traditions to Jean. It is here that green spaces, or in this example, the *pépinière du Luxembourg*, come to symbolize *communitas*.

The throngs of carriages going towards the Bois de Boulogne in *Bel-Ami* coincides equally with Hopkins's claim that "For them [Parisians], greenspace came to be an extension of their living space—the home, and a locus of community activity" (93). While Hopkins refers specifically to Parisian neighborhood's parks, gardens, and green spaces, the concept applies to *Bel-Ami* on both the narrative and the character's levels. These public green spaces in the novel *do* become an extension of the home with its characters no longer being limited to *only* welcoming people into their homes.

*Communitas* does Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* justice because it reinforces the image of communal Parisian green spaces. The novel, published in 1885, coincides with Georges Seurat's painting dating from 1884-1886 entitled, *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte* (*A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*). In his book *Planning the Greenspaces of Nineteenth-Century Paris*, Hopkins tells us that Seurat's painting, "stands as a testament of the appeal of greenspaces in and around the metropolis, and the entertainments they offered. The island was located just outside city limits and the Parisian park system, yet it is emblematic of the relationship between these kinds of public spaces and city residents" (130-31). In Seurat's painting, the spectator sees Parisian couples and families congregated around the Seine on the Island of the Grande Jatte in the outskirts of Paris, partaking in the meeting of new acquaintances and profiting from Parisian green spaces. Both the painting and the novel can be said to contain similar ideas about community in the lives of nineteenth-century Parisians in the 1880s. Arguably, Seurat's Pointillist painting only represents individual points on a canvas, perhaps suggesting the dissonance between the Parisians, but these points make up a larger image in which each point is necessary in collectively understanding the painting.

A poetic conversation between Duroy and Madame Walter (wife of Duroy's boss), gives a sense of a similar affinity for the natural world and green spaces, much like that of Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage in "Deux amis", Jean Bridelle in "Menuet", or Monsieur Patissot in several passages from "Les dimanches d'un bourgeois de Paris". The narrator reveals the subject of the two characters' conversation: "ils parlèrent de Paris, des environs, des bords de la Seine, des villes d'eaux, des plaisirs de l'été, de toutes les choses courantes sur lesquelles on peut discourir indéfiniment sans se fatiguer l'esprit" (Maupassant 60). This narrative insight has several purposes.

First the two characters have chosen Parisian green spaces and nature as the topic of their conversation, suggesting how commonplace it has become in the capital to consider parks essential to Parisians' way of life. Second, the author chooses the word *choses courantes* (common things) to summarize the topic of the conversation. Paris, its environs, the banks of the Seine, spa towns, and summer pleasures have indeed become *choses courantes* in the nineteenth century, so that green spaces have practically come to be synonymous with city life. Maupassant shows that Paris has integrated the province. Third, the author writes that the topic of their conversation is not one in which the interlocutors are apt to *se fatiguer l'esprit* (tire the mind) (Maupassant 60). The environment need only be discussed, and Duroy is able to achieve the same serenity in conversation about parks that he might expect to experience if he were physically in the park itself. Thus the enduring benefits of natural, Parisian green spaces go beyond their natural, organic, life-giving physicality and carry over into the collective unconscious of the society. Maupassant's writings are inseparable from the overarching theme of nature and the affinity and love for natural spaces. While it is not my goal to argue that Maupassant is the only French writer who has chosen to depict green spaces in his writings, it is possible that his work has critical implications worth further research concerning the question if *Frenchness* is constructed or organic?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and George Sand certainly contributed to the representation of green spaces and gardens in French literature. These two celebrated French authors were avid literary botanists linked to “sociétés savantes de province” (Matagne 99). In Rousseau, the reader can easily see and appreciate botany and all things vegetal throughout his work, notably *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, *Confessions*, and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. However, the gardens mentioned by Rousseau and his predecessors—and some successors—holds a particular place in the minds of its visitors. That is to say, gardens and green spaces have not always been a public place with which we associate them today<sup>3</sup>.

In returning to nineteenth-century French literature, Stendhal portrays a similar rapport between gardens and green spaces and his characters in his novel *Le Rouge et Le Noir*<sup>4</sup>. The emotions and feelings that the young hero feels in the woods of Verrières or gardens of Vergy are similar to those evoked by Maupassant’s protagonists in “Deux amis”, “Les dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris”, and “Menuet”, but Maupassant’s characters never would have been able to profit from gardens and green spaces like Maupassant’s characters, because they are both privileged characters with elite access to French nature.

In many instances, Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is an antithesis for Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami* and the short stories chosen in this project, because Stendhal’s protagonist, Julien Sorel, defies the natural world in order to manipulate others and climb in society. In comparing the ending of Stendhal’s novel to that of Maupassant’s work, the reader can deduce that Julien’s struggle and failure is due to his lack of identification to the natural world: “le véritable Julien, ce n’est pas dans les salons des Rênal ou des Valnod que nous le découvrirons, mais bien dans les bois de Verrières, dans les jardins de Vergy ou dans la grotte des montagnes du Doubs” (Denecherre-Audefray 28).

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<sup>3</sup> Julie’s private garden “soigneusement fermé à clef” in Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (Rousseau 534-535)

<sup>4</sup> “Les jardins de M. de Rênal, remplis de murs...” (Stendhal 17)

Maupassant proposes a different outlet for his characters in comparison to Stendhal who, “ avait donné un rôle important au milieu parisien, surtout dans son dessein de l’opposer au monde provincial. Chez Stendhal, beaucoup de romans commencent en province et s’achèvent à Paris”, claims Cancellieri (51). In Maupassant, “La ville [...] offre toujours l’espoir d’une échappée extérieure qui permette de se ressourcer et de retrouver ses origines” (Forestier 386). Each of Maupassant’s characters, in fact, has the opportunity to leave the city. In “Menuet,” Jean Bridelle literally leaves the city to live for two years in the countryside, and he also figuratively leaves the city through flashback to the elderly Monsieur’s dance. In “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris,” Monsieur Patissot leaves the city each Sunday to explore Parisian surroundings. Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage in “Deux amis” fish in the green spaces around Paris. Les Chantals come from the countryside and are arguably permitted to escape Paris through their connection with mademoiselle Perle, who represents a living, breathing symbol of nature in their midst. Finally, in *Bel-Ami*, Duroy and his fellow Parisians are able to detach from the city through their *flâneries* in the Parisian green spaces of the capital, in the Bois de Boulogne, for example, and along the Champs-Élysées, among others.

## ECOLOGY AND NATURE WRITING

Nineteenth-century French literature and art are readily associated with Romanticism, Realism, and Naturalism. None of these neat categories can necessarily apply to all of Maupassant's works. Some seem to be part of Realism while others place him more squarely within Naturalism. Maupassant preferred, like Zola and other French writers, not to be part of any particular movement, which seemed to restrict the scope of his writing. For this project, however, Maupassant can be called a sort of Naturalist to the extent that he is fascinated by the 'natural' world, that is to say, by the endless accounts of the natural world present in his work as well as the effect of green spaces upon his characters. Rather than focus on elements of realism and naturalism in these works, perhaps it is as accurate to call his style, in hindsight, emblematic of nineteenth-century nature writing.

French nature writing in the context of its American counterpart, however, was slowly adopted as a literary movement. For Americans, nature writing is associated with Henry-David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, in taking classical examples, along with the more modern Native American-Indian writer, Leslie Marmon Silko. While Maupassant's works do not explicitly focus on nature, they do contain elements similar to those found in nature writing, although as Monette points out, the nature writing movement in France comes along later: "Aux États-Unis, le *nature writing*, est pratiquement un genre littéraire en soi, à l'instar du roman ou de la poésie. À la frontière du récit et de l'essai, ces écrits tiennent à la fois de la méditation sur la place de l'humain dans la nature, et du cri d'alarme écologiste" (26). Maupassant perhaps falls on the meditation side of the scale, and less on that of the "cri

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<sup>5</sup> Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* are arguably both in this lineage.

d’alarme écologiste”—no doubt for reasons tied to the historical development of ecological science.

The first scientific *écologistes* were known in France as the *botanistes* who formed the “sociétés savantes de province” (Matagne 99). It was not until 1866 that a German Darwinian naturalist defined the word ecology as “Oecologie und Geographie des Organismus oder Physiologie der Beziehungen des Organismus zur Aussenwelt” (Ecology and geography of the organism or physiology of the relations of the organism to the external world) (Haeckel 237). This broad definition of ecology certainly applies to the works by Maupassant examined here, as they all show a relation with the organism (the character) to his or her external world. It is not until the beginning of the twentieth-century that the word *écologie* would make its way into the French language, because as Matagne explains, the French were apt to use Latin with science and much less inclined to exposure with scientific developments presented in German<sup>6</sup> or English (102). The French used, rather, the expression *géographie botanique* to denote *ecology*, partly in resistance to Darwinism (Matagne 102): “Jusqu’à la première guerre mondiale, seule une poignée de botanistes appartenant à la sphère montpelliéraine publient les travaux de géographie botanique dans lesquels le terme “écologie” est utilisé” (Matagne 103).

Many “European writers and painters who came to the United States were awestruck by the country’s wild and, to them, pristine nature,” but this admiration for natural spaces between the United States and Europe has cultural differences, specifically in France (Pinectl 84). A certain celebrated French philosopher, René Descartes, would make his appearance in seventeenth-century France, leaving impacts and rebounding beliefs for several centuries to follow. Highly centered on scientific reasoning, Descartes proposed a separation of man and

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<sup>6</sup> Mme. De Staël “révèle aux Français la littérature allemande. En parlant des œuvres et les thèmes les plus en vogue outre-Rhin, l’auteur ne s’attarde pas sur l’intérêt pour la nature qui dominait pourtant la littérature allemande de la deuxième moitié du XVIIIème siècle” (Moretto 49).

nature in which “Cartesian tradition [...] regards humankind as *maîtres et possesseurs* of nature” (Krell 1). This Cartesian image of separation of humankind and nature differs significantly, however, from the image which Maupassant describes. This differentiation is largely due to another separation of philosophical thought in France, after the prominence of Enlightenment and Romantic thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Pincetl reminds us that Rousseau, “saw the savage life as virtuous and wild nature as an oasis free of the ills of civilization” in contradiction with Descartes who, “introduced the concept that mind and matter were distinct and that the natural world, far from being an oasis, was a machine to be dissected, discovered, and dominated by humans who were separate from insensate nature” (80). It is clear now with which philosopher Maupassant’s depiction of nature and natural spaces coincides, as each of his characters in these chosen works, in one way or another, profit from green spaces in the Parisian region to escape from the “ills of civilization” imposed by Parisian city life.

In continuing the thought of the word *ecology* being imported from German, Moretto suggests that nature found its way into French literature through Mme. De Staël by introducing the French to German literature, “Dans la deuxième partie du livre *De l’Allemagne*, Mme. De Staël révèle aux Français la littérature allemande. En parlant des œuvres et les thèmes les plus en vogue outre-Rhin, l’auteur ne s’attarde pas sur l’intérêt pour la nature qui dominait pourtant la littérature allemande de la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle” (Moretto 49). Moretto also proposes another interesting point on French literature of the nineteenth-century: “... après 1830, l’écrivain, intéressé aux problèmes politiques, mêlé au mouvement social qui s’accélère, délaisse en partie l’inspiration individuelle” (53). She suggests that nature becomes absent from nineteenth-century French literature as the political regimes of the century ensue, except in the works of a few authors: “Toutefois, il [le thème de la nature] ne cesse pas d’être traité par des auteurs issus du premier Romantisme, comme G.

Sand, Michelet et même Hugo, ou par d'autre qui, comme Fromentin, appartient à la génération suivante" (53). None of this is to say, of course, that nature is not present in Maupassant.

While the word *ecology* had a tardive adoption into the French language, the presence of nature and humankind's impact upon nature is neither a new nineteenth-century phenomenon, nor a new-fangled issue in society today. Stephanie Pincetl reveals that, "forests and forest preservation became a question of state concern as early as the twelfth century," the cause being the deforestation of French forests for the construction of cathedrals (Pincetl 80). The deforestation recorded during this time was quite monumental as, "7.5 million acres of forests were cut per century between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, leaving roughly 35.6 million remaining in the fourteenth century," leading several centuries later to the declaration of forests as a state of importance by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, one of Louis XIV's ministers (Pincetl 81). The early mention of forests in French culture and society, even before the formation of modern France, shows the deep relationship, and sometimes troubled relationship, between the French and their landscapes.

What is nature writing and which authors are part of the movement? David Landis Barnhill, Director of Environmental Studies and Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, states that there are "different *ways* of answering [this question], different approaches we can take" (275). He elaborates on the different thoughts (he calls them "taxonomies") on what constitutes nature writing and proposes new approaches to this literary movement. In his view, there are ten elements which constitute (or can constitute) nature writing, in which I will define very briefly. Barnhill remarks that "some or all of these elements will be present in a single work of nature writing" (283). The first element of nature writing is that the work need contain "accounts of nature (natural history or descriptions of particular scenes)"; the second element refers to accounts of "personal experiences in nature"

(albeit “solitary” or with other beings); the third element is “the social experience of nature (present communities, history, cultural ecology, or imaginary communities)”; the fourth element is a “philosophy of nature (metaphysical view of nature, ontological status, or ethical relation to nature)”; the fifth element is “an ecological psychology or natural psychology of the mind”; the sixth element is “language, knowledge and their relation to the natural world”; the seventh element being the “philosophy of the human”; the eighth element is “ecosocial philosophy”; the ninth consists in being “praxis (or actions taken in response to the experience, ideas, and values outlined in the previous elements)”; and finally, the tenth element pertains to “spirituality” (Barnhill 279-283).

With these elements in mind, we can consider “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris”, “Menuet”, “Deux amis”, “Mademoiselle Perle”, and *Bel-Ami* to embody the qualities of nature writing proposed by Barnhill. To begin with, Barnhill’s scientific and descriptive “accounts of nature” are present in the *Contes et nouvelles* and in *Bel-Ami*, in the description of particular scenes of green spaces, and “Menuet” housed many plants and served a historical and conservationist purpose. The many historical parks, gardens, green spaces, suburbs, and monuments, from the Bois de Boulogne in *Bel-Ami* to l’Observatoire in “Mademoiselle Perle” also fall within this first category.

Barnhill proposes two subcategories for “accounts of personal experience in nature.” These are “solitary” and “with other individuals: lovers, family, friends, fellow activists, etc.” (280). We have seen in the *Contes et nouvelles* and *Bel-Ami* that the latter subcategory is demonstrable through the characters’ personal experiences in nature and their communing in nature with other individuals (Duroy and other Parisians, Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage, etc.) While the argument could likewise be made for solitary personal experience—in the case of Monsieur Patissot venturing alone (until meeting someone) or Jean Bridelle’s solitary dreaming at the beginning of the short story before meeting the elderly Monsieur—these are

minor examples. These rare solitary situations are certainly minor compared with the shared personal experience of nature in these works.

As to “the social experience of nature,” two of the subcategories proposed by Barnhill seem relevant to the extent that they embody “present communities” and “history” (280). Barnhill states that “present communities” are depictions of a community contemporary to the author’s own, personal community, or to a community different from the author’s. Maupassant, as an inhabitant of Paris during the 1880s, serves certainly as contemporary to his characters, given his living in the city at the same time as the characters about which he is writing, thus highlighting “present communities”. Similarly, because the history subcategory relates to a return to the past or an impact on the present in relation to the land, Maupassant’s narrative records the destruction of the *pépinière du Luxembourg* and the displacement of the elderly Madame la Castris and Monsieur, all symbols of the past. At the end of “Menuet,” the couple’s destiny is unresolved, but it is clear that the land has been impacted by historical forces (Hausmann et al.) which affects their relationship to the land, described as indispensable to life.

The author’s “ethical relation to nature” is also evident through his focus on nature having intrinsic value, for example on the countless occasions where his characters are as if resuscitated and restored by their experiences in Parisian green spaces. Along the lines, Barnhill’s fifth element “ecological psychology” becomes apparent through the awareness or knowledge of the natural world that the characters exhibit. Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage are awe-struck by the *paysage* before their eyes, by way of example.

Evidence of Barnhill’s sixth element, pertaining to language or knowledge in rapport with the natural world, can be found in descriptions and vocabulary that Maupassant uses “naturalistically” along the lines of Zola: with detailed and clinical accuracy. Often the words are chosen to represent a certain familiarity with nature, but they are also poetic, natural

representations of natural places. For example, in “Mademoiselle Perle,” Maupassant represents Monsieur Chantal’s inner thoughts and memories as a flowery garden:

“il parlait pour lui maintenant, parti dans ses souvenirs, allant doucement, à travers les choses anciennes et les vieux événements qui se réveillaient dans sa pensée, comme on va, en se promenant, dans les vieux jardins de famille où l’on fut élevé, et où chaque arbre, chaque chemin, chaque plante, les houx pointus, les lauriers qui sentent bon, les ifs dont la graine rouge et grasse s’écrase entre les doigts, font surgir, à chaque pas, un petit fait de notre vie passée, un de ces petits faits insignifiants et délicieux qui forment le fond même, la trame de l’existence” (Maupassant 680).

Maupassant’s language here is a brilliant example of the author’s individual style of naturalism as it pertains to the literary movement, bringing to life the natural world.

According to Barnhill’s seventh element, nature writing reflects on “descriptive” and “normative” (281). The descriptive is evident in *Bel-Ami*, where the protagonist is a journalist living in a capitalist society but relating to the natural environment. “Menuet” supplies another example through the elderly couple’s union with the *pépinière du Luxembourg*. As to human philosophy, the narrative is attuned to the human-to-human relationship. Barnhill speaks to the “normative” subcategory to human philosophy as the “degree of value [...] other humans have, including those in the future”; and in “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris,” we learn that Monsieur Patissot’s adventures are useful to other contemporary Parisians who could learn from his experiences (Barnhill 281). These adventures demonstrate a certain value that nature has on future generations, as it seems the narrator (or author) wanted to transfer these experiences to others.

In approaching the eighth element of nature writing, we arrive at “ecosocial philosophy”, described by Barnhill as the author’s critique of the impact society has on the natural landscape. The destruction of the *pépinière* and the Franco-German War of 1870 in

“Deux amis” both serve as examples. The latter portrays the destruction of war against the natural world as Morissot and Monsieur Sauvage are murdered by Prussian soldiers.

For the ninth category, Barnhill mentions intentional communities. In Maupassant, intentional communities are indeed located in the family (Mademoiselle Perle as embodiment of nature) and in Parisian green spaces to the degree that they are an extension of the home, given Parisian families’ ability to welcome and converse with others in newly-renovated or newly-created green spaces (Hopkins). Praxis, in the larger sense of the word, is described by David Landis Barnhill as humankind’s “actions, particular behaviors” in relation to nature, which is undoubtedly seen in each of these selected works, given each character’s personal relationship formed with Parisian green spaces (282).

Finally, the tenth element of nature writing is spirituality. In “Les Dimanches d’un bourgeois de Paris,” the significance of Sundays cannot be understated, not the least because Sunday carries a certain spiritual significance in Christian observance. Ritchie claims that Maupassant was “ni agnostique, ni croyant” (49). Because Barnhill states, “This [spiritual] element includes both traditional religious beliefs...and more general difficult-to-define “nature spirituality,” we might consider Maupassant along conceptual lines akin to Transcendentalism (Barnhill 282). Maupassant’s personal affinity for canoeing, fishing, and other activities *en plein air* in the Paris’s environs on Sundays would seem to suggest it.

Maupassant fulfills all ten of Barnhill’s conditions for nature writing. This is not to say that he is the purest nature writer, or that he is influential in its development, but that he certainly possesses the qualities needed to be reconsidered through the nature writing lens. Forestier claims that “La ville paraît ne tenir, autour des personnages, qu’un rôle purement décoratif” (390). On the contrary, we have seen that cities in Maupassant’s work are not purely decorative; rather they supply the necessary backdrop for nature to live and breathe as the city’s counterpart and complement. The natural world provides a contrast and an

opportunity to return to one's roots and be true to oneself. Paris and nature exist coequally in Maupassant.

## CONCLUSION

While the focus of this study has been on Maupassant's narrative use of green space in Île-de-France, nature is everywhere in Maupassant, including in his native Normandy, the setting for his novels, *Pierre et Jean* (1887) and *Une vie* (1883). This study could be expanded to include these works, as well as countless short stories set in Normandy and in other corners of France. Another area for further consideration is to place Maupassant alongside other later French writers, notably Colette, Jean Giono, J.M.G. Le Clézio, and Marie Darrieussecq, all of whom have written about the natural world.

Colette, for example, celebrated and controversial writer, published numerous works where the natural world plays a substantial narrative role, particularly the gardens which, according to Tama Lea Engelking and Robert Cottrell represented "an enclosure that approximated a room of her own" (Cottrell quoted in Engelking, 53). Thus, the concept of green spaces serving as an extension of the home in nineteenth-century France is continued with Colette in the twentieth century. Engelking references Cottrell in her article suggesting that he believes Colette's gardens provided a safe-haven "from Parisian society and from the hypocrisy of men" and considers Colette to be one of the "two most high-profile nature writers" among other early twentieth-century writers (53). The second nature writer, according to Engelking, was Anna de Noailles. Colette writes: "Quand, je revenais d'un été de campagne, hâlée, ayant travaillé au jardin, bêché, écaillé, ma peau au soleil, à la mer et même au fourneau, je m'amusais à prendre dans ma main une des mains d'Anna de Noailles" (Colette 1091).

Jean Giono (1895-1970), who published his short story *L'homme qui plantait des arbres* in 1953, can be situated between Colette's work and that of J.M.G. Le Clézio—Giono's story reads like a historical event, but is actually (to the surprise of many) a fictional tale of a shepherd, Elzéard Bouffier, who is passionate about the land surrounding him. The story takes place in the beginning of the twentieth century. The First and Second World Wars and the destruction of the French landscape contrast with Elzéard Bouffier's conservation efforts. At the beginning of the story, the narrator meets the shepherd in a small, deserted, Provençal village in the high Alps. The narrator revisits Elzéard Bouffier yearly and finds each time that his village becomes increasingly verdant at the same time that it repopulates. It would be a stretch to compare Giono's shepherd with the characters in Maupassant's work above, none of whom are conservationists, but both authors' characters have an abiding appreciation for their natural surroundings, and Giono's story demonstrates the importance of ecology and the affect one can have (positive or negative) on green spaces if one is driven to maintain them.

In a completely different style, J.M.G. Le Clézio has his place among early twentieth-century nature writers. His plots are unique and have a heightened imaginary aspect to them. Often the landscapes he describes are recognizable by his descriptions, occasionally he mentions a country's name, but it is not always clear where characters are located in relation to a geographical point. With both Maupassant and Le Clézio, however, the actual geographic location matters little. A case in point is *Désert* (1980), the story of a young Moroccan girl named Lalla and a young shepherd boy, *le Hartani*. In the novel, the two young characters epitomize the previously mentioned idea of *biophilia*, claimed by E.O. Wilson as, "l'affinité innée pour le monde naturel" (quoted in Sampon-Nicolas 3). While race dynamics differs in Le Clézio's *Désert* from Maupassant's work in this project where each character is of White, European descent, both Lalla and le Hartani connect through and

display their love for nature, similar to Maupassant's characters. Timothy Beatley reminds us in *Biophilic Cities* that innate connotes a hereditary meaning, which means that it is part of human nature; therefore, it is the innate affinity of nature which belongs to all men and women (Beatley 6). Little Lalla and le Hartani's relationship to nature is important to their survival. It also teaches them lessons about their lives and the world around them, much like Maupassant's characters, who need the green spaces of Paris and its environs. Finally, the reader sees that "ces jeunes personnages [in *Désert*] arrivent à trouver un certain bonheur dans la nature et dans leurs rapports avec le monde multi-espèces" (Sampon-Nicolas 7-8). Happiness in natural spaces is a common denominator in all of these works from Maupassant to Le Clézio, and merit further consideration.

Another significant French author in the realm of French ecological writing is Marie Darrieussecq. In her novel *Le Pays*, she writes about a fictional author, Marie Rivière, who moves from Paris to the French countryside with her husband and son. Her motive for moving is to use the close proximity of the countryside in order to strengthen familial ties and reconnect with her childhood memories, and raises "important questions about identity, nationality, landscape and belonging" (Posthumus 104-05). Darrieussecq's Marie Rivière resembles in numerous ways each character Maupassant creates in the chosen works in this project, such as: Monsieur Patissot using the natural spaces of Paris's environs as a learning playground, or the Parisian countryside and pond frequented by Morissot and Sauvage in "Deux amis," to only name a couple of examples. While none of Maupassant's characters make the bold decision to uproot their lives to return to the countryside, they each use either the natural green spaces in Paris's environs or the green spaces of the capital city for their own well-being. However, Posthumus proposes that, "Parisian parks and squares do not offer her son [Rivière's son in Darrieussecq's *Le Pays*], Tiot, a true experience of landscape" (Posthumus 105). There seems to be a stark change, then, in Paris's parks and squares in

Darrieussecq's *Le Pays* (2005), and Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* (1885), only approximately one century later. Where Paris's parks and squares in *Bel-Ami* and Maupassant's stories in this project proved satisfactory, even vital in the characters' lives, there seems to be a significant shift worth later exploration between the nineteenth-century Parisians of 1885 and the twenty-first-century Parisians of 2005.

In concluding with the extreme contemporary French author, Marie Darrieussecq and her novel *Le Pays*, I would like to draw attention to the similarities between the chosen work by Maupassant in this project and Darrieussecq's novel, which comes only a short, hundred years later. Likened to my supposition early on in this project that Maupassant is under-represented in the realm of French nature writing, it seems that Darrieussecq shares a similar critique. "While critics have astutely examined questions of identity, mind, narrative voice and the feminine body in Darrieussecq's work, the role of landscape has yet to be given much attention," states Posthumus on writing about this celebrated contemporary French author (105). Similarly, the two French authors, Maupassant and Darrieussecq, use landscape and green spaces as more than only a backdrop to the story. Landscapes "represent more than a framing device in the novel and that they are described and experienced as a process rather than a given," comments Posthumus (110). Additionally, Posthumus critiques Darrieussecq's *Le Pays* as creating a landscape which actually does not represent a geographic place, although there are similarities with European geography, particularly in the Basque country (105). Similar to Forestier's commentary on *la ville chez Maupassant*, both authors represent their plot settings as secondary to their characters and more importantly the green spaces and landscapes. The act of identifying similarities with real geographic places by both authors, while not realistically representing them like Realist or Naturalist writers, keeps the reader from losing him or herself completely in the work. Finally, Posthumus proposes that Darrieussecq is, "more interested in exploring the (often ambivalent) connections that a

writer might feel towards the land and landscapes of her birthplace” (105). I propose likewise that Maupassant is more interested in the connections with natural spaces in the chosen works of this project, as well as the vital connections that his characters share with green spaces.

I conclude with Maupassant and Darrieussecq by the latter’s statement in an interview, “Je cherche à inventer de nouvelles formes, à écrire de nouvelles phrases parce que c’est le seul moyen de rendre compte du monde moderne” (Darrieussecq). Both authors use natural green spaces and landscapes to come to terms with their natural selves, as well as cope with the gripping effects of modernity.

The theme of green spaces, the natural world, and human’s relation to the former does not stop with Maupassant, Colette, Giono, Le Clézio, or Darrieussecq. It is a subject that continues to gain popularity and readership. The literary genres of ecocriticism, ecopsychology, ecophilosophy, among others are gaining popularity. Posthumus tells us that “Lévi-Strauss was a key figure in drawing attention to the West’s destruction of the natural world” (12). Indeed, the late Claude Lévi-Strass, French anthropologist, was a key figure in ecological awareness in France and throughout the world. Richard Louv reminds us in his work *The Nature Principle* of “the restorative power of nature – its impact on our senses and intelligence; on our psychological, and spiritual health; on the bonds of family, friendship, and the multispecies community” (Louv qtd. in Sampon-Nicolas 3). These are the exact things which Maupassant defends and celebrates in the works we have considered.

Chinese anthropologist, Tuan Yu-Fu, states that “Literary art draws attention to areas of experience that we may otherwise fail to notice” (162). This has indeed been seen in Maupassant’s literature, and in which gently unveils a modern appreciation for the natural world. As George Sand put it in her novella “La Rêverie de Paris,” “La pensée de notre époque vise à nous faire aimer la nature” (316). This statement transcends all generations, of course, but it most certainly applies to Maupassant.

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