



Environment & Society Portal



The White Horse Press

Full citation:

Sainteny, Guillaume. "Francois Mitterrand and Nature."
Environment and History 9, no. 1 (February 2003): 77–100.
<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3149>.

Rights:

All rights reserved. © The White Horse Press 2003. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this article may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, including photocopying or recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission from the publishers. For further information please see <http://www.whpress.co.uk>.

François Mitterrand and Nature

GUILLAUME SAINTENY

Maitre de conférence at Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris

211, Rue St. Honoré

75001 Paris, France

Email: Guillaume.Sainteny@sciences-po.org

ABSTRACT

With the help of extensive quotations, this paper shows that the writings of François Mitterrand contain many professions of his love for nature, and reflections on the bond between man and nature. In contrast to these aesthetic and mystical, almost religious outpourings, his references to environmental issues, to ecology and to the environmental movement are few, and they are counterposed by exaltations of materialism and material progress. This dichotomy, and Mitterrand's failure when in office to really engage politically with the conservation of nature and the environment, can partly be explained by the anthropocentric and conservative spiritual values engendered by his rural catholic upbringing

KEY WORDS

François Mitterrand, nature, nature writing, nature mysticism, anthropocentrism, environmental politics

François Mitterrand makes frequent references to nature in his writings, from his earliest work onward.¹ He enjoys recounting his observations as an amateur naturalist, describing his rural walks, or reminiscing about his country childhood.

Such a 'predisposition' might lead one to infer a precocious and enduring interest in environmental issues and sustained support for environmentalism; even, since 1981, the development of an environmental public policy. However, after two seven-year terms, the balance is mixed, to say the least.

Environment does not appear among the main political priorities chosen by the President. Between 1981 and 1986, during the first legislature, environment was the only ministry continuously occupied by a non-socialist.² It was only from

1989 that environment became a political priority. And this evolution happened under constraint: that of electoral pressure from the ecological movements.

How can we account for such a disparity? It seems that Mitterrand's vision of nature did not lead him to consider that nature can engender political problems.

NATURE IN MITTERRAND'S EARLY WORKS

A country childhood

Mitterrand enjoys recalling in vivid detail his rustic childhood at Jarnac or Touvent.³

'At Jarnac [...] I used to join my father when he was fishing on the Charente, from his punt hidden in the reeds three hundred metres from the house [...] I learned to know the noise of teal seeking shelter and the alarm call of tits. An otter was a miracle.'⁴

'I grew up under the moist sky of Aquitaine [...] These were my nearest and dearest: limes, elms, walnut trees, maize, bees, teal, eels.'⁵

The most finished description of this type is probably in *Here and Now (Ici et maintenant)*:

'As a child in Charente I lived in a house three kilometres from the nearest hamlet, on the side of a valley. The roofs of the barns touched the ground, and down below a river flowed. The vineyard, the cornfield, the wood, the meadow and the river supplied our needs. We fished for eels. We pressed nuts for oil. We drank the milk of our cows. At the end of July, the smell of hay was replaced by the smell of harvest. We inhaled the sweat and the dust of the threshing. In the evenings, we brought down the lamp and lit the gas mantle. From October the wood stove roared. We went our daily way on sodden November roads, on February's hard earth, on the soft limbs of spring. From the window of the attic, I could take in the world at a glance: the north hoary with oak and elm, the rocky east, the Tuscan west, the southern view lost in depths of green and blue. A quarry stained the whiteness of the limestone with ochre. No chimney higher than necessary, no sticky vortices of black smoke.

[...] I read, later, in advice on hygiene intended for farmers, that they should keep well away from the dung heap. We were used to it. I even thought it smelt good. We grew up in the open air.

It is true that a horrible stench arose from the rotting corpses of animals. That appealed only to the crows, to whose raucous concert I would listen. Living flesh feels an uneasy relationship with carrion. In the perfect enmity of like for like, life and death went about their business.

We joined, without thinking of it, in the dance of the days and the rhythm of the seasons. Animals, trees, fields all had names. I learned to tell the stars. I knew the life cycles of whatever belonged to the land, horses, bees and roses. I learned too that there existed fish called rainbow perch, birds called moorhens and owls called grand dukes.⁶

Nature study and nature rambles

The author also enjoys recounting his natural history observations and his nature rambles.⁷ He evokes the forests of Landes, Morvan, Tronçais, Bellême, Margerid Rambouillet, Chantilly, Fontainebleau, Sologne, Double, Chaource, Dombe, Brocéliande, Chaise-Dieu. He likes to cite by name, as precisely as possible, animal and plant species encountered at random on his walks: wild irises, ‘Russian swans arriving on migration’⁸ and moorhens in Ireland; roe deer, holly, arbutus, quickthorn, oak, primrose, jonquil, magnolia, apple trees, blackbird, bullfinch at Latché (he counted more than twenty nests in the roof of his house there); nightingale, warblers and song thrush in Burgundy; oak, beech, ash, witch hazel, aspen and birch in the Morvan; sessile oak and Limousin pine in the Charente and in the Dordogne;⁹ rainbow perch, eagle owl, teal and tits in the Charente.¹⁰ He even dedicates half a page to the habits of woodcock in Landes.¹¹

Through such memoirs and descriptions Mitterrand tries to convince us of two things. On the one hand, he considers himself personally in sympathy with nature and the attacks that she suffers:

‘The death of the elms is for me like a family bereavement. The acid in the river and the fishes belly up, the helicopter and its load of herbicide [...] I feel them like a war. Road building makes my stomach turn. What do you think I feel, when the supersonic boom breaks my windows and chases away the birds? When the bulldozer beats down in a week the forest of light where I rediscovered lost harmonies? My nose tells me where the wind comes from. I have ecological lungs.’¹²

‘This summer, drought has burnt the tender leaves (how they wrench the heart, these suddenly brown and withered plumes) and since the first rain fell I have been watching anxiously for the new buds that will tell me life has won through.’¹³

‘Like you, I have a great love of trees and forests.’¹⁴

On the other hand, and above all, Mitterrand asserts that he knows nature well, and takes pride in it. He describes caring for young oaks damaged by roe deer.¹⁵ He recalls that he has known about nature since his earliest youth¹⁶ and that he continues to live partly in the country.¹⁷ He often tells of his intimate knowledge of the forest, with frequent reminders: ‘having represented a forested region for thirty-five years’ in Parliament; ‘living in another forest’; ‘having always lived in forests’ ...¹⁸

In particular, he asserts quite bluntly his knowledge and experience of the subject:

‘Winter was prolonged this year by a good month. From the unusual silence, I had anticipated this during a visit here at the beginning of March. I seldom make a mistake about such things.’¹⁹

‘It is better to plant before winter. When the sap first quickens, the living soil has already done its work, binding the clod, and feeding the grain. At the end of February one risks being either too early or too late. It is not like the boulevard Saint Germain: something in the sky, a softness of the skin, a certain kind of silence will warn you that nature is going to make an about-turn.’²⁰

‘I take pride in calling trees by their name, trees, stones and birds.’²¹

‘I know all about looking after my trees, I am always planting them and I watch over their health [...] When I arrive, [...] I don’t need many minutes to know exactly which tree is ill. Then I take care of it.’²²

‘I am such a friend of trees [...] Here I am, busy planting oaks, and I know they will take 95 years to become mature.’²³

Against this background, the author lectures Valéry Giscard d’Estaing about the ‘Day of the Tree’, established in 1976:

‘Planting in April! What a misplaced idea! Turning the seasons on their heads, the fruit cannot fulfil the flower’s promise. [...] [Saint Catherine] whispering in the ear of the Head of State that it’s harder dealing with trees than with indices would have counselled him better than his experts did. Who would be surprised if nature takes her revenge?’²⁴

Here we find an aside, ‘The Earth does not lie.’

The author also mocks at the misunderstanding of nature by the French, and sets against it his own precocious knowledge.

‘How many Frenchmen would be capable of reciting ten or twenty names of birds or plants? It’s the same for trees, too. They are our neighbours [...] I repeat, how many could recite twenty bird or plant names? I remember that, some kilometres from Jarnac in the Charente, where I was born, there was already a natural bird reserve [...] and I spent nights there, my eyes wide in amazement, in the company of a great ornithologist. I have kept much of his teaching in my memory.’²⁵

But, beyond this display of references to nature study and the repeated assertions of his competence in this domain, the essence of Mitterrand’s discourse on nature is not its scientific, pseudo-scientific, or even natural-historic tone. Far from this type of approach, the way François Mitterrand approaches nature and speaks about it seems to partake of aestheticism and mysticism. Three subjects in particular dominate his reflections on nature:

- Nature's aesthetic (beauty, landscape, light)
- Nature's rhythms (seasons, sensations, harmonies)
- The relationship between man and nature (the countryside, rural life, agriculture), which sometimes includes, for the author, a real mysticism.

Nature as aestheticism

This is a recurring aspect of Mitterrand's writing in descriptions of aesthetic feelings arising from landscapes, their composition, their harmony, their colours. These relate to built landscapes – villages, cities, Paris, the traditional architecture of Château-Chinon, Vézelay, Cluny²⁶ – but still more to the rural landscapes to which Mitterrand seems particularly responsive and which engender beautiful and fine descriptions:

'Connected as it was to the station by a road punctuated with apple and plum trees, the city could scarcely be seen, veiled by the trees in their August foliage; one could only guess at its presence, hidden, trembling in the heat. The surrounding countryside looked like my Angoumois, but less contoured, less high, less fine drawn. Scattered clumps of trees stood out in the haze which the sheer intensity of the light threw over things. Everything was quiet and slumbrous.'²⁷

In these descriptions, the subject of light recurs almost continually, sometimes with a mystic tone.²⁸ Thus nature is assimilated as an object of art, and the aesthetic feelings and pleasures attending its contemplation move closer to those evoked by art:

'What stranger than the wavering of the senses in front of a work of art or the shiver of happiness in front of a spectacle of nature? What more inexplicable than the pleasure arising from contemplation of architecture, or of a river bank?'²⁹

Rhythm and harmony in nature

To Mitterrand, nature is perceived as a rhythm of life and as representing the alternation of life and death, particularly through the passing of the seasons.³⁰

'Autumn, winter, spring, summer see the wheat, rye and oats ripe again; and like them everything is subject to the law of seasons and passing time. One year passes, and the loved beings grow and grow old, far away from us',

he writes in 1941, to commemorate his first year in captivity.³¹

'From now on, alive to scents and colours, to changes in the sky, to the behaviour of animals, to the seasonal cycles, to human customs, obedient to the rhythm of life fit for this corner of earth [...] There cannot be spring without buds, nor summer without fires, autumn without dead leaves, or winter without snow and

pain; yet to be fair, that winter's day was clear and serene, filled with murmurs and revelry.³²

'At the end of July, the smell of hay was replaced by the smell of harvest. [...] From October the wood stove roared. We went our daily way on sodden November roads, on February's hard earth, on the soft limbs of spring. We joined, without thinking of it, in the cycle of the days and the rhythm of the seasons.'³³

So is outlined a cyclic conception of the existence of the life, of eternal recurrence. Nature and the seasons evoke a perpetual struggle between life and death.

'In the untrammelled desire to exploit nature, we have forgotten her rhythms and laws. Whoever knows this, as I do, having lived all my youth in direct contact with nature [...] is able to suffer inconveniences, as I did, but also to reap the enormous benefits, which consisted simply in experiencing, in living the rhythm of seasons, days, nights and hours – the rhythm of the great movements of nature, which eventually becomes part of one's being'.³⁴

'The rhythm of trees is that of centuries.'³⁵

This conception, these long rhythms, are also represented for Mitterrand by rural culture. The church that appeared on the posters of the 1981 election campaign is explained in this way:

'I saw many advantages in symbolising a France that could be thought of as rooted in the earth, rural France. There are many city-dwellers who still think of it, and who would like to rediscover it, and to rediscover especially its kind of civilisation, reflectiveness, consideration and gentle pace of life, which today have been terribly pushed aside by an urban society that has lost the norms of its civilisation'.³⁶

When Mitterrand speaks of 'the forest of light where I rediscovered lost harmonies',³⁷ nature is for him refreshing and sustaining, its rhythms are sources of balance and of sensitive, almost sensual, feelings.

'I accept nature just as it is. I have lived in this relationship with nature since my childhood. I find there a kind of balance, interest, curiosity, perpetual surprise, and also friendship with things and with beings [...] This small world which enraptures me gives me at once what I want – delight, balance, the taste for work, the urge to imagine, or simply to enjoy myself watching living things. It brings a kind of wealth.'³⁸

'Separated from the knowledge of nature and the daily work of man, [politics] is like a cut twig, quickly withered. [...] I know hollies in the forest of Landes which give to time its density, and nothing speaks to me better about spirit and matter than the summer light at six o'clock in the afternoon, falling through an oak wood.

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

[...] The slow fall of Ventoux on the plain of Carpentras, the round head of Beuvray, the lacquered Loire of Saint-Benoit, the cliff of Solutré, the solitude of Aigoual are for me more important landmarks than the dates of elections.³⁹

Nature, the countryside and the contemplation of them are the source of harmony:

'I remained for a long time leaning on the little wall that skirted the road, contemplating the landscape. Beyond it was the daily miracle of familiar things. The sun heightened the light reds, dark reds and purples of roofs and stones. The slightly browned greens of the fields blended in the tranquil light. Without thought, conscious only of this unfolding of harmonies [...]'⁴⁰

'The harmony of forms always instils harmony of the soul and senses.'⁴¹

Writing about Mont-Saint-Michel, he evokes 'the harmony of a place of legend where the works of nature and man meet'.⁴²

The bond between man and nature

Time after time, the most striking of Mitterrand's passages on these themes are not those where he refers to nature in the strict sense, but where he evokes the countryside, rural life, rural France, landscapes shaped by humanity, the Soil of France, probably because these connect with a central aspect of his vision of nature: the bond between man and nature.

Again and again, in his evocations of landscape, there recurs the theme of nature worked by the peasant farmer, forged by man, shaped by country people:

'I could make out [...] woods, lined up in rows with a slight air of calm docility, [...] with walks so rectangular and proper as to humble rectitude and propriety themselves; [...] and in the fields, sheaves stacked five by five, the signs of human labour. [...] the sun continued on its accustomed path, and with it fields, woods and villages took up again the rhythm of yesterday and always. The harvest was made, the ears bound, the sheaves stacked together.'⁴³

But it is in the evocation of rural France, of 'French Soil', that these descriptions achieve their greatest intensity, as if the bond that ties the author to it is one of flesh itself.

'I love France in my way, the way of the farmer who looks at his land in the springtime, who works out the price and calculates how much the wheat he loves will cost in sacrifice and patience.'⁴⁴

The author likes to recall that his ancestors were 'sons of the French Soil' and that in French Mitterrand means a measurer of seeds or 'middle of the earth'. Moreover, a field situated in the geographic centre of France is called 'Mitterrand's field'.⁴⁵

It is nature forged by humanity that Mitterrand admires and respects, whereas wild, primeval nature is rejected.

‘These forests are the work of humanity. You know that a forest which is wild, which has not been worked, exploited, licked into shape, looked after, is a forest wasting away. Only the forests which man has created are beautiful, tall and strong.’⁴⁶

On the subject of the Poitevin Fen, he talks of ‘establishing a balance between the work of man and nature itself’, of a ‘monument of nature, but at the same time loaded with history’ and rhapsodises before this ‘land won from the waters through unceasing labour in the eleventh century’.⁴⁷ He judges that after the ‘initial retreat of the sea, [...] there would have been chaos,⁴⁸ if people had not been involved, shaping the landscape to their liking with patience and application’.⁴⁹

Likewise, while he declares himself ‘personally conscious of the imperative that exists to protect landscapes, forests, places redolent with culture and history’,⁵⁰ it seems clear that this is just as much – maybe even more – because these places are redolent of culture and history than for their ultimate ecological, biological or aesthetic richness.

But it is in a long youthful text of astonishing lyricism that we find expressed with most force and intensity Mitterrand’s attachment and love for ‘French Soil’, his quasi-fusion with it.

‘France was clear, this morning. The sun had chased away the mists. The valley was not yet struck blind by the light of noon [...] Birds fluttered, took off low to the ground and settled with cocked heads; a dog with panting jowls raced from side to side, on the trail of faint scent. The fields stretched away smooth and empty, nurturing secret new life under the breath of winter. Tracks divided up white and grey villages, where people were sawing firewood nonchalantly in front of their doors, or calling to each other in search of last night’s news, or tranquilly pedalling their bicycles.

My almost forgotten France – I was not sorry to find her so again. I don’t know what I had imagined – unspeakable storms, and everything changed, like the tints of the clouds. But the house smoke, roofs, crossroads, the chequered fields, oblong hedges and clean horizons, the incurious, stolid people, these were indeed the same that I had left. Return to my native soil! [...]

And there, now, after two years of absence, I was straining to reawaken anticipated emotions, sketchy imaginings. It really was something of an effort to dwell on every detail: the road, the trees, the villages, the valley neatly cut between parallel hillsides, the rushes signalling hidden watercourses showed for this solemn encounter only magnificent indifference.[...]

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

Too easy, too easy! The moist air of morning is soon drunk by succeeding hours, the sky wisped over with light cloud, the colours faded by the harshness of winter. Granted admission to this difficult intimacy with things, what had I to do to with my mundane human history? I had called neither relatives nor friends; later on, when they would be only markers in the resumption of my way of life, I would see them. First, I was going to breathe the air of my country, to hear the language of the people of my country; and, simply through ears and eyes, I was going to know again the presence of my country. The rest would follow, the rest always follows these revelations, these immediacies.[...]

I had needed a long apprenticeship to eliminate the shadowy face of my native land – dreams, hopes, deceptions, a whole exotic import of foreign illusions. The error followed in my history books, which had taught me to place native land in the realm of the Ideal, had led me bit by bit to wander among abstractions[...]. *Our generation will take a hundred wrong turnings before we understand that France is a living being [...].*

Here I was, coming back to my narrow yard, my house of white stone, among rough simple people. But there were no longer barriers where I had imagined them. The undulating hills of my native country no longer straitened my universe. Far from them, I had learnt to discover the riches hidden in their precise lines. *From now on, alive to scents and colours, to changes in the sky, to the behaviour of animals, to the seasonal cycles, to human customs obedient to the rhythm of life fit for this corner of earth and this race of people, I could mingle my breath in a cadence tuned to the all-powerful original breath. This ability, acquired after so much wandering, provided me with the final proof: I would become a free man only if my freedom was rooted in the physical reality of my own soil [...] .*

And so the hour had come when, for me, the defining rite was accomplished. At the end of my long march, a pilgrim hastening ahead of the stalled procession, precursor of a thousand men in khaki uniforms, I knew that I had discovered in the valleys of exile the spaces and the boundaries of my ancestral homeland.[...]

Suddenly I understood, my love for my country was not the love of a moment that feeds a long succession of days, but a blind attachment, all powerful, free from fear and loss, that needed nothing except the fact of renewed encounters to reveal itself. When you come back to your own country, you do not shout with joy. The joy is of the sort that fills the breast, that runs through the muscles of your limbs, that focuses your gaze. There is no need to proclaim this joy: it is a way of walking, of breathing, of sensing a swift and harmonious accommodation with the things around you. So, on this main road, on this blue road across the green plain, I understood that my joy was made of certainty and ease. And I had longed for space, for I know not what infinite horizons!

[...] As soon as I was left to myself, I had decided on this journey, this direct contact with the things of home. Great joy keeps silent, to feed memories: like a swimmer in water or a bird in the air, I felt light and fresh; no need for intermediaries to help me remember; the sound of my voice, the bounding of my heart would have been pointless.

Besides, I was kindly spared the conventional [...] The sun revealed clear colours, defining and multiplying their nuances. My country could amuse itself by showing me an unfamiliar face, which a stranger would have called picturesque; I discerned in it only a familiar game.

[...] If my country was appearing less lively than my anticipation, less vast than my ambition, less rich than my desires, less rigorous than my demands, less great than my hope, what a laughable liberation that was! But these hills, this light, these horizons bedizened with misleading qualifications affirmed something more than 'middling', 'subdued half-tones', 'refinement without energy' [...].

The sun was God on this December day: and he had chosen each object so to manifest himself. Every nuance held his truth, showing itself in the secret pleasure of real pride: accepting an appearance of uncertainty, confusion, intransigence, only for his chosen. That was why the leafless poplars went from light to dark, picked out against the changing greens and greys of the hills; why roads ran in the colour of dirty sand; why roofs sloped their brown tiles over the pale villages; why the sky tangled golden sweetness among the blue. The measure of this morning was that you could walk on uneven country paths as if on wide avenues, and yet feel at ease, light with the certainty of being accepted. [...] There was even some complicity in this attitude of the sun: just enough to make one forget exertion, frustration, tiredness, and especially to distract the mind from the merciless game that compels the giving of life for death and death for life. And that was where I could ask to be excused for hurrying to breathe in forgetfulness of mortality. By natural extension, I was even beginning to dream the impossible, to imagine already a life equal to this splendour, where without effort or metamorphosis, the human condition reached level with the god hidden in these things. No: the plain and the hills, the hamlets and the road in its solitary straightness, the bells ringing in the church towers, the hum of birds and insects, the gruff shout of the man to his stumbling horse – none of these seemed to announce anything. And yet, who among them could guess that my vagabond figure had just overcome ephemerality?⁵¹

In this description, as in others, one can actually see an evocation of nature and its relations with humanity which is elevated almost to pantheistic mysticism.

'Then everyone felt drawn to those who knew the same names for villages and where the turning for the homestead was, who knew the same signs of storm in the blaze of a sunset, who prolonged or shortened the same syllables.

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

Thus a mystical bond was re-established between human groups and the land they occupy, as in primitive times, when it extended to both the dead and the living; the fruits of the earth were manifestations of the souls of the departed, and everyone was conscious of participating in a shadowy world of which the individual was merely a fugitive expression. Who could ever have disentangled all this? Man was integrated with animal, vegetable, mineral, and recognized himself in them: he was not yet this false god who dances on the world and, deluded by his own madness, no longer knows where he is putting his feet.⁵²

For the author, nature is the work of Creation and takes us back to it. It surpasses and surrounds humanity. It is full of mysteries and perhaps holds the key

'I launch myself on the infinite waves of encompassing space'⁵³

Describing his childhood in 'the depths of the country' at Touvent, he remarks:

'I learnt there what the hours are, the cycle of days, seasons. Time and things spoke of God as of something obvious.'⁵⁴

This concept seems to come from his family:

'[The idea of France that I had from my family], treated France at the same moment as a person and as a myth, as a living being [...] This France, bearer of a chosen people, an assemblage of races and languages welded together for eternity by the power of the soil, rose to God himself. Her chief personages were landscapes, horizons, streams, her monuments like the mountains of Zion [...] In truth, this was half of France, the half that is rural, devout, spiritual, and believes itself to be the whole of France. Of the other half, foggy with cities, revolutions, strikes and factory smoke, it knew nothing, while at the same time fearing it.'⁵⁵

Describing in one of his essays the unity of the sight of the sea and of 'the obscure urge to thank someone' the author explains:

'I sometimes have this impression of the sublime that seems to come out of a setting where man is not master... It is always the same phenomenon: a sort of sudden communication with what one might call the sidereal spaces, which is perhaps nothing more than the retying of the thread between the insignificant transient individual that I am and the great explanation, of which I do not have the key.'⁵⁶

'[...]One feels here as if inspired by the power of the soil, of the land, of history. And that allows us to have a language to overcome obstacles [...] This language is that of protecting our country in what is best, healthiest, strongest and most enduring, the earth that supports it.'⁵⁷

[...] Mont Beuvray too is a witness of continuity [...] There is also a religious continuity[...] one cannot help thinking of Barres' 'Colline Inspirée': 'There are places where the spirit blows'. We are on one of them. The solitary walker, who has time to think and see, who has climbed these slopes and stops before this horizon, crystal clear today, sometimes veiled in mist, has the feeling of drawing near some mystery wherein the forces of earth lay man's destiny upon him.'⁵⁸

Man is nature herself [...] We are an integral part of the nature. We live her: she is us, we are her... For me, wisdom is learning to perceive the reality of the forces which traverse space, creation if you like, a reality I glimpse and lose sight of, infinite and finite.'⁵⁹

This theme of man as a part of nature recurs very frequently in Mitterrand's writing.

'[...] man forgetting that nature it is himself and he is nature'.⁶⁰

'[...] until man of the industrial era, urban man, forgot that nature was himself, and he nature'⁶¹

'Man is nature itself, and of nature.'⁶²

'After all we are an integral part of nature.'⁶³

'Nature is around us and we are nature herself.'⁶⁴

'Man is himself an integral part of nature. He is nature.'⁶⁵

'[...] Archaeology [...] teaches us about the perpetually difficult relation between man and his natural environment, on which he depends entirely.'⁶⁶

'People are always talking about man and nature. But, really, man is nature! To destroy one is to destroy the other. As if one could separate them [...]'⁶⁷

'The finest harmony I know between work and people is the work of nature.'⁶⁸

'One cannot separate man from nature because he is nature, in the same way as water, a tree, the wind, the bottom of the sea.'⁶⁹

'Insufficient regard has been paid as yet [...] to the necessity of harmony between man and nature. [...] When we talk about the environment, there is always a tendency to think of it as outside man, even though man is nature itself, and his development is strictly tied to what is around him. He is in it, he is part of it, he is his own environment. He will be well or ill, hopeful or miserable, at ease or fretting away according to what is before his eyes: beauty or ugliness, pure or polluted air, running water or what comes from a spring, or even what has picked up all the pollution of the industrial and chemical world.'⁷⁰

Near the end of his life, the author finished with a very explicit avowal of the existence of his almost-physical bond with French Soil:

'I feel a mystical relationship between the countryside of France and myself. There are places where I feel in perfect accord with nature, with the trees, the forms of the landscape and the colour of the earth.'⁷¹

Certain places in France were thus the focus of rituals and pilgrimages for Mitterrand. These were always places where the nature-culture interpretation and the man-nature link were very marked: Solutré, Mont-Beuvray, Vézelay...

One can clearly observe a sort of fascination in Mitterrand for nature, for 'French Soil' and for the bond between man and nature. More, nature is almost explicitly perceived by him as the work of Creation, and contemplated, admired, studied and questioned as such.

FROM NATURE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

In comparison with this important presence of themes of nature, rural life and landscape in Mitterrand's writings, one notices the surprising rarity of the environment as a theme, right up to 1981.

The rarity of the theme of the environment

There is no trace of any major speech on this subject. The index to *Politique I* (1938–1977) does not contain the words 'environment', 'ecology' or 'environmentalism'. 'Ecologists' alone figures, with only one reference.⁷² More amazing still, the index to *Politique II* (1977–1981) does not contain the words 'ecology', 'environmentalism' or 'ecologists' and includes only a single reference for 'environment' and 'soft growth' [*croissance douce*]. Even these references do not relate to whole passages but to two sentences for the first and a single one for each of the two others, used incidentally, relating to expositions on other subjects (law against vandalism, role of the Parliament, the achievement of Giscard d'Estaing's seven-year term).

If one ignores the index and checks, one certainly finds other passages touching on this theme but very few and almost always incidentally. Six references in *Politique I*: one aside on the use of defoliants by the Americans in Vietnam in relation to the international situation (p. 317), two lines about 'gridlocked cities' (p. 424), an aside about the limits to growth in relation to an analysis of publicity (p. 346), an ambiguous paragraph on machines and natural balance (p. 552), the isolated expression 'quality of life', in an inquiry on welfare (p. 592).

In *Politique II*, although it brings together texts from 1977 to 1981, one finds only three passages: ten lines on renewable energy (p. 114), three lines on natural balance and urban society (p. 221) and three lines on dehumanised society (p. 223), incidental to reflections of a more political kind.

Even during the presidential election campaign of 1974, in the vocabulary used by Mitterrand in his televised addresses, the word 'environment' crops up only once and then in the sense of country or rural environment, not in the sense of natural environment.⁷³ The word 'landscape' does not appear at all.

The harvest from Mitterrand's other works is equally meagre. Four lines at the end of *My Share of Truth (Ma part de vérité)*,⁷⁴ nothing in *A Socialism of the Possible (Un Socialisme du possible)*,⁷⁵ a single page in *The Chaff and the Grain (La Paille et le grain)*⁷⁶ on the occasion of lunch with Sicco Mansholt, a sentence on growth for growth's sake and three pages, only relevant to forestry policy, in *The Bee and the Architect (L'Abeille et l'architecte)*.⁷⁷

Only *Here and Now (Ici et maintenant)*, published in 1980, at a very particular political and electoral juncture, devotes nine pages to environmental and ecological matters, following questions from an interviewer on this subject.⁷⁸

In other words, before 1981 Mitterrand very seldom evokes questions of the environment of his own accord. He does not seem to take the initiative in major speeches on this theme. It is raised only rarely, as an aside, incidental to other matters that are more fully developed.

Besides, 'trendy' evocation of this subject is done under electoral constraint. It takes place essentially after 1973, the year when the first 'ecologist' candidates stood for election in France, and, more particularly, between 1977 and 1980, the time of their first electoral breakthroughs (notably in the municipal elections of 1977: more than 10% of valid votes in Paris, and in the European elections of 1979: 4.5%), and in the run up to the presidential elections of 1981, when an ecologist candidate was standing. During this period, Mitterrand's interventions on these themes seem prompted by electoral consultations and the good results, actual or expected, of the ecologists.⁷⁹

The theme of the environment is moreover absent in Mitterrand's declarations of principles of as candidate for deputy in the third district of Nièvre, in 1958, 1962, 1967, 1968 and 1973.⁸⁰ It is only in the declaration of principles for the polls of March 12 and 19, 1978, after the electoral raid of the ecologists between 1974 and 1978, that anything can be found on environmental protection.

The exaltation of modernism and material progress

On the other hand, in Mitterrand's writings one finds a number of passages antithetical to the new sensibility of the moment. This is sometimes to do with exalting modernism, urbanism, cities, modern means of transport.

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

'I confess I love the towers of La Défense, and do not hate that of Montparnasse.'⁸¹

'The first time I saw New York [...] what a revelation! Manhattan, grey and gilded in its geometric relief, had a rounded sweetness. I thought of Botticelli [...] I have always experienced the same shock, the same impression of entering the future through a window.'⁸²

'If the expression 'pure poetry' has any meaning, it is [New York]. The geometry of this city has the dimensions and rhythm of a poem'.⁸³

The dominant theme of his declarations of principles for the legislative polls of 1958, 1962, 1967, 1973 and even 1978 is very much 'services and facilities'. They linger again and again on the necessary development of community facilities, roads, electricity, housing, construction projects, water supplies, on 'factories and workshops in our cantons'. It is a matter of 'opening Morvan to economic currents and exchanges', of 'opening up the region'.

Mitterrand also displays hostility to criticisms of the consumer society, and notably in May 1968 to Malthusianism, the revolt against material progress.⁸⁴

'It is not my way to lament either past happiness or the misfortunes of the past. I even think this shows an inability to live life as it should be lived, with appetite and love for whatever will be. Alfred de Vigny's terror of the railway does not impress me [...] Nor does it prevent me from loving trains, planes and all sorts of fast transport, up to the rockets we'll go up in [...] when the earth has grown too small and man has conquered new worlds. I have no time for that sort of repining.'⁸⁵

In 1993, he celebrates highways as a way to discover landscape:

'The highway will allow travellers a new view of one of the most inspiring heritage landscapes in the country [...] To see Saint-Flour, to leave the Col de Fageole, to follow these great roads, so much enlarged in our time, and to cross a difficult and beautiful region so easily – that is a good thing [...].'⁸⁶

Purely anthropocentric concepts

Mitterrand's position on the relationship between people and nature is very sharply revealed. For him, people and nature are certainly linked. He even sometimes includes man in nature. Always, as we have seen, it is less nature in itself that interests him than nature 'worked' by people, that is, the rural countryside. There appears in his writings a clear vision of nature subjected to man, and of humanity there to dominate nature. In this sense, for him, if man is part of nature, he has extracted himself in order to possess it.

This concept is to the fore from his youth:

‘Every plot brown with the track of the plough, every field, every house snugly defended against the wind, told of a victory. A subtle balance had been established between man, the victorious lastcomer, and the earth, delimited century by century. Strength came from this equilibrium. Not by half-measures, the false wisdom of the happy medium, but by bitter violence, brutal conquest, forced surrender. The earth loves this rape and gives to man more than he hopes for. But while recognising her master, she holds him fast. This history was unfolding under my gaze. Not a square metre that had not received the peasant’s visit, not a cubic metre that had not been probed with his tools; the work of man even dictated the colours, obliging the sun to sanction there the red of the split furrow, there the grey of resting fallows, there the blue of the road, there the green of evergreen foliage. [...] The glory of my people, the one, the eternal thing; exalted by the earth in the pride of her surrender. This people who master the soil where they live and receive, in exchange, the gift of hidden power contained within its flanks, I could rejoin them without fear. Far from them, I had learned to desire greatness; it came to me, almost disconcerted, that amongst them I would achieve it.’⁸⁷

This theme crops up often in Mitterrand’s texts:

‘The history of man is the history of a successful attempt: the domination of nature which was originally hostile to him.’⁸⁸

‘Man can and should make himself master over nature by his knowledge of the subject.’⁸⁹

‘Man’s ambition is to become master of his destiny, to be able to understand the secrets of nature and not to be dominated by her.’⁹⁰

‘We must no longer forget in speaking of nature that everything depends on human mastery. People must be worthy of civilisation, and must keep mastery over nature to protect both it and themselves.’⁹¹

There is also sometimes a tendency to contrast useful and useless nature, domesticated and wild nature, fruitful and barren nature, and to privilege a vision of nature in the service of man, as the provider of human goods.

This concept is particularly apparent in his vision of the forest. He contrasts noble ‘essences’ with others, oak and beech with hornbeam and birch, essences of light with others, useful trees with less useful trees:

‘Trees are like money [...]. Bad money chases out good, bad trees chase out good trees [...].’⁹²

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

'But virgin forest, wild forest is its own destruction; only domesticated forest improves. Nothing is possible without the presence of the man, his intelligence, his hands [...]'.⁹³

This demonstrates a stark hostility to the wild nature of 'scrub', 'inextricable tangles'.⁹⁴ This is a peasant conception, utilitarian and enculturated, not a naturalist's. In fact, scrub is a very rich ecosystem. In scientific ecology, notions of 'noble' species or essences or of 'bad forest' are nonsense.

The author goes so far as to assert: 'the forest requires a strong social life'.⁹⁵ This is to transpose to an ecosystem the organisational forms of human society.⁹⁶

Yet again, he seems to swallow whole the Judaeo-Christian concept of man's dominion over nature and his clear superiority to her; of nature in the service of the man, there to be used by him; in a word, the conception is anthropocentric.⁹⁷

Actually, in Christianity, man's place in nature is not as one element in its make-up; he does not have his place there as other creatures do; he is the work not of nature but of grace, which is supernatural.⁹⁸ From this vision there comes the idea that God has placed man here as a steward, to rule over nature in his name. This concept, clearly seen in Genesis,⁹⁹ is in strong contrast to the visions of other religions such as Shintoism or Buddhism which reject the separation of individual subjects from their environment. For these religions, humanity is only one element in the order of things. But Christianity even creates an absolute difference between animals and humans, which could not be the case with one element in the order of things. Man is made in the image of God and cannot therefore be a superior animal.¹⁰⁰

Taking this further, one can posit an opposition between catholic rurality and protestant nature. The rural, which includes and valorises the work of man, corresponds to the vision of nature in catholic countries and particularly in France. Protestantism leads more to love of wild nature which excludes the work of man, but is seen as the creation of God, and thence to the protection of this virgin nature,¹⁰¹ notably through policy for national parks, which is much more advanced in protestant countries.

Moreover, one could propose a distinction between countries which protect nature because love of it is fundamental to their value systems and those which protect it following struggles between different social forces with conflicting interests. In France, love of nature is an imported value, imposed bit by bit. Protection of nature here is conceived as a struggle against property rights.¹⁰² Far from being due to purely aesthetic reasons, or to nature for its own sake, it is conceived along nationalistic lines (which is different from the notion of a common human heritage), or as a continuation of the preservation of built monuments, or as a protection against human actions (revolutions, wars) and

their consequences. This is a far cry from the pristine work of the Creator. The advanced conservation measures in Anglo-Saxon countries spring from quite different roots.

In this regard, a short comparison of English and French ideas and their consequences is interesting. In Great Britain, the development of a taste for wild nature at the end of the eighteenth century corresponded closely to a desire to protect the freedom of open spaces as symbols of human freedom.¹⁰³ In France, on the other hand, there develops at this time a whole discourse on 'the horror of wasteland', which was considered as a wound that one should try to get rid of. Thus at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, unlike the English authors, the French landscape aesthetic promoted the ideal of nature as a garden, not the wild nature of weeds and thorns.¹⁰⁴ Faithful to geometry, France treated the landscape virtually as an extension of architecture, whereas British painters privileged naturalism and romanticism in their representations of nature.¹⁰⁵ It is very clearly to the French concept that Mitterrand subscribes. His vision and his descriptions owe more to catholic rurality than to protestant nature.

This way of perceiving nature perhaps prepared Mitterrand badly for considering it as a potential stake in politics. Nature is perceived by him as an object for contemplation, a locus for harmony, musings and idle moments. The vision is rustic, poetic and lyrical, not political. Mitterrand seems hardly to have considered that nature could engender a political cleavage. He seemed to have some difficulty in moving from the concept of nature to that of the environment, and scarcely less difficulty in passing from the environment to ecologism.

This is evident, for example, when he was questioned in 1980 in these terms: 'What exactly does ecology mean for you?' Mitterrand answered, throughout two pages, exclusively in terms of nature, countryside, the seasons, recollections of his rural childhood.¹⁰⁶ The interviewer pointed out to him that 'ecology is not poetry'. Mitterrand nevertheless carried on in the same vein:

'Ecology without poetry would be like the iron palm tree of Djibouti in the oasis. This recollection of images and sensations of my childhood is no accident in our conversation.'¹⁰⁷

This way of conceptualising nature and the human-nature relationship helps to explain some of his choices of position:

'We refuse to declare that we should turn our backs on the atom. We think that would be demagoguery and a tremendous lack of confidence in the human capacity to dominate and control our own creation.'¹⁰⁸

'I wish we could get beyond the outdated conception of ecology which is preoccupied only with protection of nature, or that of a political ecology which is merely a pawn in struggles between interest groups, and together achieve an

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

ecology which realises a synthesis between the conservation of our environment and the development of our economy.¹⁰⁹

'Ecology is neither an abstract and distant philosophy, nor an electoral or party slogan. It is the establishment of a harmonious relation between man and the environment and contributes to our own serenity and to the quality of our relations with others.'¹¹⁰

Mitterrand experienced an early interest in nature and often refers to it in his literary work. From this interest and its expressed manifestations, there might have flowed during the 1960s and 1970s a preoccupation or even an engagement with the conservation of nature and the environment, then some fuller action in this area after 1981. But the translation into politics of this interest in nature is simply not there.

How can we account for this betrayal? Was there for the author a radical gulf between nature on the one hand and the concerns of the environmentalists and ecologists on the other? This does not seem to be totally the case. Certain texts cited here show that Mitterrand made the link between the three concepts, at least sufficiently to meet the requirements of political expression.

In reality the political attitude of Mitterrand in this area is probably not as contradictory to his interest in nature as it seems.

The Mitterrandian vision of nature is a Barresian vision, spiritual, conservative, anthropocentric, mystical (the land of the dead, natural rhythms, the man-nature bond, man's dominion over nature, rurality, the enspirited hill...). This is different from the ecological vision, and most of all from that of the devotees of Deep Ecology. Mitterrand's vision prepared him ill for considering nature in itself, aside from humanity, as an entity to be protected as such. For him, nature relates most to a way of life, as a locus for the exercise of man's creative genius. This vision doubtless did not make him ready to accept that humanity can harm nature, that it merits protection for its own sake. Equally, his vision, more conservative and mystical than political, did not predispose him to allow environmental concerns a central place, with a stake in the political order; and still less, as capable of forming the thematic substrate of a new political force striving for autonomy.

NOTES

¹ See, especially, François Mitterrand, speech at marriage, December 1937, cited in Pierre Péan, *Une Jeunesse française, François Mitterrand 1945–1947*, Paris, Fayard, 1994, pp. 79–80; editorial, *L'Ephémère*, 15 August 1941, reprinted in François Mitterrand, *Politique I*, Paris, Fayard, 1977, pp. 9–10; 'Le charpentier de l'Orlathal' (1941), reprinted in *Politique I*, op. cit., pp. 14–17; 'Pèlerinage en Thuringe', *France, revue de l'Etat nouveau*,

no. 5, December 1942, reprinted in *Politique I*, op. cit., pp. 11–14; *Métier de chef*, no. 23, April 1943, cited in P. Péan, op. cit., pp. 160–8.

² With the exception of Alain Bombard, who was Secretary of State with Michel Crépeau only between May and June 1981.

³ See, especially, speech at marriage, op. cit.; François Mitterrand, *Ma part de vérité*, Paris, Fayard, 1969, p. 14; *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978, pp. 179, 295; François Mitterrand et al., *Le Bonheur, la vie, la mort, Dieu*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 1981, p. 18; François Mitterrand, address at Saint-Brisson, 26 June 1991; speech at Paris, 17 December 1991; interview on *France 3*, 19 February 1993; address at Poitiers, 3 November 1983; address at Rochefort, 4 November 1983; address at Paris, 15 February 1986.

⁴ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 51–2.

⁵ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶ François Mitterrand, *Ici et maintenant*, Paris, Fayard, 1980, pp. 183–5. The eagle owl is known in French as 'hibou grand duc'.

⁷ See, especially, 'Le charpentier de l'Orlathal', op. cit., pp. 14, 16; *Métier de chef*, no. 23, April 1943, op. cit.

⁸ These zoological observations are often less precise than they appear. For example, the species 'Russian swan' does not exist. There are three species of swan in Europe : Whooper swan, Bewick's swan and Mute swan. Furthermore, if migration 'takes [the swans] to Ireland' that would be in winter. Yet Mitterrand's observation is dated 3 June, by which date Whooper and Bewick's swans have already departed for their breeding grounds. The observation made by Mitterrand on the River Shannon presumably refers to Mute swans, a largely sedentary species, introduced and semi-domesticated, which does not come from Russia and is hardly migratory at all.

⁹ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 51–2, 183–5.

¹¹ See *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 50, 70–1, 178–9, 230, 293, 295.

¹² *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., p. 185.

¹³ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., p. 170, see also pp. 295–7.

¹⁴ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 17 September 1991.

¹⁵ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁶ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 184–5.

¹⁷ François Mitterrand, interview on *Europe 1*, 26 April 1978.

¹⁸ See, for example, François Mitterrand, speech at Metz, 13 October 1981; speech at Naves, 4 May 1982; address at Rodez, 28 September 1982; address at Niort, 3 November 1983; address at Angoulême, 26 January 1985.

¹⁹ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., p. 293.

²⁰ François Mitterrand, *La Paille et le grain*, Paris, Flammarion, 1981.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²² François Mitterrand, interview on *ARD*, 1 January 1993.

²³ François Mitterrand, address at Cabrières d'Avignon, 1 June 1990; see also *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., p. 70.

²⁴ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., p. 294.

²⁵ Address at Rochefort, 4 November 1993.

²⁶ See 'Le charpentier de l'Orlathal', op. cit.; *La Paille et le grain*, op. cit., pp. 138–9; *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 94–5; *Le Bonheur, la vie, la mort, Dieu*, op. cit., p. 15.

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND NATURE

- ²⁷ 'Pèlerinage en Thuringe', op. cit.
- ²⁸ See, especially, *Métier de chef*, op. cit.; *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., 14–17; *Politique II*, op. cit., p. 112; 'Le charpentier de l'Orlathal', op. cit.; *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 70–1, 94–5, 178; *La Paille et le grain*, op. cit., p. 139; *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., p. 85; address at Saint-Brisson, 26 June 1991.
- ²⁹ François Mitterrand, interview in *Nouvelles littéraires*, 7 May 1981.
- ³⁰ This theme is also evident in the works of Charles de Gaulle, see especially *Mémoires de guerre, Vol. 3*, Paris, Plon, 1959, pp. 344–5.
- ³¹ *L'Éphémère*, 15 August 1941, reprinted in *Politique I*, op. cit., p. 9.
- ³² *Métier de chef*, op. cit.; see also, *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 293, 298; *Politique I*, op. cit., p. 862.
- ³³ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 183–4; see also, address at Saint-Brisson, 25 June 1991; address at Paris, 17 September 1991; François Mitterrand, address at Arçais, 4 February 1992.
- ³⁴ Speech at Paris, 17 December 1991.
- ³⁵ Address at Paris, 15 February 1986.
- ³⁶ *Politique II*, op. cit., p. 268.
- ³⁷ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 183–4; see also, address at Saint-Brisson, 25 June 1991; address at Paris, 17 September 1991; address at Arçais, 4 February 1992.
- ³⁸ *Le Bonheur, la vie, la mort, Dieu*, op. cit., pp. 18–19, see also p. 14.
- ³⁹ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 46.
- ⁴⁰ 'Le charpentier de l'Orlathal', op. cit.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² François Mitterrand, address at l'abbaye du Mont Saint-Michel, 24 June 1983.
- ⁴³ *L'Éphémère*, 15 August 1941, reprinted in *Politique I*, op. cit., pp. 9–10; see also 'Pèlerinage en Thuringe', op. cit.; *L'Abeille et l'architecte* op. cit., p. 208.
- ⁴⁴ *Politique I*, op. cit., p. 562; see also *Libre Charente* September 1994, cited by Edith Boccara, *Mitterrand en toutes lettres*, Paris Belfond, 1995, pp. 64–5.
- ⁴⁵ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 13.
- ⁴⁶ Address at Cabrières d'Avignon, 4 June 1990.
- ⁴⁷ François Mitterrand, address at Poitiers, 28 September 1990.
- ⁴⁸ Here one sees a theme current in eighteenth century Europe. Sea and ocean are symbols of chaos, treated as abandoned or unfinished by Creation. See Alain Corbin, *Le Territoire du vide*, Paris, Aubier, 1988.
- ⁴⁹ Address at Arçais, 4 February 1992.
- ⁵⁰ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 29 November 1990.
- ⁵¹ *Métier de chef*, op. cit. The passages in italic were underlined by the author.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 16.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.
- ⁵⁶ *Le Bonheur, la vie, la mort, Dieu*, op. cit., pp. 18–19.
- ⁵⁷ Address at Saint-Brisson, 26 June 1991. See also address at l'abbaye du Mont Saint-Michel, 24 June 1983.
- ⁵⁸ Address at Bibracte, 17 September 1985.
- ⁵⁹ *Le Bonheur, la vie, la mort, Dieu*, op. cit., p. 552.
- ⁶⁰ François Mitterrand, reply to manifesto of FFSPN, published in *Combat-nature*, election special, no 42, June 1981, p.7.

- ⁶¹ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., p. 185.
- ⁶² François Mitterrand, conversation on *ARD*, 18 October 1987.
- ⁶³ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 6 October 1988.
- ⁶⁴ François Mitterrand, interview in *L'Express*, 14 July 1989.
- ⁶⁵ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 19 October 1989.
- ⁶⁶ François Mitterrand, address at Lascaux, 11 September 1990.
- ⁶⁷ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 17 December 1991.
- ⁶⁸ François Mitterrand, address at Venice, 27 April 1992.
- ⁶⁹ François Mitterrand, speech at Rio, 13 June 1992.
- ⁷⁰ François Mitterrand, proclamation at Carmaux, 19 November 1992.
- ⁷¹ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 6 January 1995.
- ⁷² Wrongly, moreover, since it refers to protectors of the environment and not to ecologists.
- ⁷³ François Mitterrand, televised conversation with Maurice Séveno, reproduced in Jean-Marie Cotteret et al., *Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand, 54,774 mots pour convaincre*, Paris, PUF, 1976, pp. 213–15.
- ⁷⁴ *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., pp. 202–3.
- ⁷⁵ François Mitterrand, *Un Socialisme du possible*, Paris, Seuil, 1971.
- ⁷⁶ *La Paille et le grain*, op. cit., pp. 106–7.
- ⁷⁷ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 215, 294–7.
- ⁷⁸ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 185–94.
- ⁷⁹ For this connection, see above.
- ⁸⁰ The statement of principles for the poll of 5 March 1967 nevertheless contains a passage on the dangers of nuclear armaments and atomic warfare. But this is in the context of opposition to General de Gaulle's foreign policy, rather than to do with the environment.
- ⁸¹ *La Paille et le grain*, op. cit., pp. 138–9.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, p.139.
- ⁸³ François Mitterrand, *L'Unité*, 12 December 1975.
- ⁸⁴ See for example, *Politique II*, op. cit., p 128; *Ma part de vérité*, op. cit., p. 89; *Le Sauvage*, May 1974, pp. 9–12; address of 5 February 1974, cited by E. Boccara, op. cit., p 30; *Ici et Maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 186–7.
- ⁸⁵ *L'Abeille et l'architecte*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.
- ⁸⁶ François Mitterrand, address at Pont de la Truyère, 2 July 1993.
- ⁸⁷ *Métier de chef*, op. cit.
- ⁸⁸ *Politique I*, op. cit., p. 552.
- ⁸⁹ Address at Paris, 19 October 1989.
- ⁹⁰ François Mitterrand, address at Paris, 28 November 1989.
- ⁹¹ Conversation on *ARD*, 18 October 1987. See also, François Mitterrand, interview in *Courrier de l'Unesco*, 20 May 1989; speech at Rio, 13 June 1992; television interview, *TF1 – France 2*, 9 November 1992.
- ⁹² Speech at Navés, 4 May 1982; see also speech at Metz, 13 October 1981; address at Rodez, 28 September 1982.
- ⁹³ François Mitterrand, interview granted to *l'Autre* journal, 19 March 1986.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ This is exactly the reverse of the concept used by those ecologists who deduce the principles of social organisation from those of ecological science. 'We refuse [to believe in the whole hierarchy of social structures] because we know that these are artificial ways of functioning, and that the systems of living creatures do not behave like that in order to live and prosper'. See, for example, Pierre Samuel, *Les Ecologistes présentés par eux mêmes*, Marabout, 1977, p. 25. See also, Roland de Miller, *Nature mon amour*, Paris, Desbord, 1980, p. 112; Brice Lalonde, 'Court traité imagé sur les écologies', *Le Sauvage*, 43, summer 1977, pp. 50–4. It is worth noticing that this idea has no scientific basis. We know in fact that certain social animals, such as wolves, ants and deer, function within equally strict hierarchies. See, for example, Karl von Frisch, *Vie et moeurs des abeilles*, Paris, A. Michel, 1955, and Konrad Lorenz, *Il parlait avec les mammifères, les oiseaux et les poissons*, Paris, Flammarion, 1968, pp. 39–108. They have found, for bees and jackdaws respectively, ample evidence for such hierarchisation among individuals of the same species.

⁹⁷ For discussion on these points, among an extensive literature, see especially Genesis, I, 28; Robert Lenoble, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'idée de la nature*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1969; Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 455, 1967, pp. 1203–87; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World : Changing attitudes in England 1500–1800*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1983, particularly Chap. 1; Augustin Berque, *Le Sauvage et l'artifice. Les Japonais devant la nature*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986; Jean Viard, *Le Tiers-espace*, SRETIE, Ministère de l'environnement, n.d.; Luc Ferry, Paris, Grasset, 1992; Dominique Boug, *La Nature en politique ou l'enjeu philosophique de l'écologie*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1993, *Les Sentiments de la nature*, Paris, La Découverte, 1993; Antoine Wachter, *Dessine-moi une planète, L'écologie maintenant ou jamais*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1990; Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Layton, Utah, Gills M. Smith Inc., 1985; Arne Naess, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement. A Summary', *Inquiry*, 1973, 16, pp. 95–100; Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel*, Paris, François Bourin, 1990; James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989; Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, New York, Anchor Books, 1990; Donald Worster, *Les Pionniers de l'écologie*, Paris, Sang de la Terre, 1992; Aldo Leopold, *A Sand Country Almanac*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1966; Eugène Drewermann, *Le Progrès meurtrier*, Paris, Stock, 1993.

⁹⁸ R. Lenoble, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

⁹⁹ Genesis, I, 28. 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'

¹⁰⁰ K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Jean Viard, 'Espace naturel, milieu rural: aux origines d'une distinction', contribution to colloquium 'La nature et le rural', organised by l'Association des ruralistes, français, in 1986; *Le Tiers-espace*, *op. cit.*, 'Protestante la nature?' in Anne Cadoret (ed.), *Protection de la nature, histoire et idéologie, de la nature à l'environnement*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985, pp. 161–73.

¹⁰² J. Viard, *Le Tiers-espace*, *op. cit.*, p. 197ff.

¹⁰³ K. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 347ff.

¹⁰⁴ Yves Luginbuhl, 'Paysage sauvage, paysage cultivé: L'ordre social et l'harmonie des paysages', contribution to colloquium 'La nature et le rural', op.cit.

¹⁰⁵ Max Nicholson, *The Environmental Revolution. A Guide for the New Masters of the World*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1971.

¹⁰⁶ *Ici et maintenant*, op. cit., pp. 183–85.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁸ François Mitterrand, address at Grenoble, 11 October 1977.

¹⁰⁹ François Mitterrand, interview in *Courrier de l'Ouest*, 4 February 1992.

¹¹⁰ François Mitterrand, interview in *La Nouvelle République du Centre Ouest*, 4 February 1992.