

**George Sand: A Most Moderate Radical**

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## Abstract

George Sand was known for her progressive stance on social issues of her day including feminism and socialism. This thesis demonstrates that although Sand was more liberal and leftist than the average French person, she was represented a moderate version of these beliefs. My work uses Sand's novels, correspondences, and journal entries to create a more complex understanding of her beliefs. With further examination of these works, it becomes clear that both pragmatism and optimism were fundamental pillars of her political and social convictions. Sand may not always appear to fit in the mold of a conventional socialist or feminist, but this is due to her opinions being grounded in her sense of practicality. At the same time, while Sand was firm in her pragmatic beliefs she also proved that she remained optimistic for the possibility of a more progressive future despite any adversity. By finding a harmony in these seemingly contradictory beliefs, Sand left behind a most unexpected legacy.

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## Introduction: An Unexpected Moderate

When one brings up the name George Sand, many often imagine her as a radical of her time. Some think back to the many anecdotes of Sand dressed in men's clothing and smoking a cigar while speaking with other intellectuals. After this initial conceptualization of Sand, she may be remembered for her numerous love affairs with the likes of Frédéric Chopin, Alfred de Musset, Jules Sandeau, and many others. What is interesting about these two notions of Sand is that they capture the two seemingly opposing elements of her character. There is a popular conceptualization of Sand that epitomizes her femininity and sexuality, while there is also a caricature of Sand that emphasizes her masculinity and intellect. Yet somehow, while being remembered for both aspects of her life, it is not as common to see depictions that marry these two halves of Sand together; she is either fully man or fully woman. Yet In both Sand's personal life and in her writing and politics, she demonstrated that she could be more than one thing or another. While Sand appeared to embrace extremes, she often actually struck a balance between moderate and radical.

Before Sand even began to write, she represented the equilibrium between two opposing groups. While Sand enjoyed the perks of being a member of the upper echelons of French society throughout her adult life, she also had direct ties to the lower classes of society as well. In her memoir Sand recalled the fact that many of her biographers over-emphasized her aristocratic background, "For one is not only Papa's child, one is Mama's too...Now though my father was indeed a great grandson of Fredrick Augustus II, King of Poland...it is just as true that the People's blood runs in my veins; and besides there is no bastardy on that side."<sup>1</sup> Sand's mother, Sophie-Victoire-Antoinette Delaborde was the daughter of a billiard parlor owner and "master

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<sup>1</sup> George Sand, trans. Dan Hofstadler, *My Life*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 2.

fowler.”<sup>2</sup> Sophie ultimately worked as prostitute before meeting and falling in love with Sand’s father, Maurice. The tension between her parent’s opposing social classes would be a common topic Sand addressed in both her novels and her political views. Although Sand often socialized in high society groups, she always felt connected to *le peuple*, or the people, of France. If Sand’s elevated status allowed her the freedom to engage in activities that most women did not have access to, she then made sure to use her platform to advocate for France’s lower classes. Throughout her prolific career consisting of over seventy novels and plays, Sand would often return to these themes of class, gender, and socialism.

Born Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, Sand’s pen name is a marker of her ability to identify the space that exists between man and woman. In the spelling of her pen name she was able to create an identity for herself that was neither male nor female,

“... she also defamiliarized the traditional French spelling of the masculine name Georges with an *s*... With its excised *s*, the name George Sand looks odd in French; it is not readily associated with the masculine, yet does not strike the reader as feminine in the least. It is a truly androgynous nom de plume...”<sup>3</sup>

While English-speakers may miss out on this nuanced aspect of Sand’s name, it helped Sand create a gender neutral identity for herself. With the removal of a single letter Sand found the equilibrium between the two elements of her identity. While this may be one of the most obvious examples of Sand doing so, it captures her ability to occupy the uncharted middle ground that exists between seemingly opposing ideas.

When one enters into the world of George Sand, terms like “either” and “or” are inadequate. Instead Sand’s universe is defined by words like “both” and “and.” Sand was not either a man or a woman, she was somehow both. Sand captures this experience, writing that

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<sup>2</sup> George Sand, *My Life*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Isabelle Hoog Naginski, *George Sand: writing for her life*. (New Brunswick: 1991): 3.

when she dressed in men's clothing she was, "neither dame, nor monsieur, neither woman nor man... walking through the desert of men."<sup>4</sup> In a time when labels had a lot of meaning, Sand discovered a way to skirt around these defined terms. Sand was called both "this great man"<sup>5</sup> and "the most womanly woman I have ever known,"<sup>6</sup> by friends of hers such as Gustave Flaubert and Alfred de Musset.<sup>7</sup> Accepted as both man and woman, Sand illustrates her ability to find the spaces that exist between terms often set in opposition. Assuming the name George Sand in the 1830's, this marked an early step into her exploration of seemingly contradicting ideas. From that point on in her life, she would continue to represent the coupling of often opposed concepts.

As a person and as a writer, Sand was a master at balancing multiple seemingly contradictory convictions. What is particularly interesting about this balancing act is that Sand did not just hold opposing beliefs, she found a way to marry her beliefs together. Sand found a way to be a conservative feminist, a pragmatic socialist, and a pacifist radical. Some of these terms may appear to be oxymorons, but Sand made found an equilibrium between them. Due to the fact that Sand stood apart from so many of her contemporaries, both men and women, it is easy to consider her an extremist. While Sand was a socialist and she can be considered a feminist, she was never truly considered an extreme feminist or socialist. In fact, Sand's views often offered a middle path between many of the more extreme beliefs that existed in the 1800s.

It is an undeniable fact that Sand differentiated herself from many of the other intellectuals of her time, but what made her so unique was not the fact that she had particularly radical beliefs. Many social advocates before and during Sand's time had more extreme views

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<sup>4</sup> George Sand, ed. Georges Lubin *Œuvres autobiographiques*, (Paris, 1970) II, 138.

<sup>5</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes* (Conard, 1910-1936), Correspondance, XV, 174.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred de Musset, *Correspondance* (Paris, 1907), p. 120

<sup>7</sup> These quotes were brought into comparison by Joseph Barry in his work, "The Wholeness of George Sand".

than Sand's own beliefs on women's rights and socialism. Her friend Pierre Leroux's circulus theory, the belief that the government should collect human excrement as a form of tax, in particular shows the extent of some socialist beliefs. Although Sand herself was not a very radical figure, she did have the unique ability to draw attention to issues that might have been considered more extreme at the time. By writing novels focusing on issues such as women's rights and socialism, Sand helped a larger audience consider these "radical" concepts. Many of Sand's works were best sellers in the 1800s, spreading her political and social beliefs throughout much of France. While Sand herself often supported moderate strands of socialism or feminism, her ability to draw so much attention to these topics caused her to, perhaps unfairly, be associated with extremism.

In many ways Sand represents an enigma. When assigned to one group or definition, she defied expectations. The difficulty in trying to assign Sand to a particular political or social group is that she did not truly belong to any group. Sand only ever truly belonged to herself. To try to pin her down to a specific definition would be to misunderstand her. Sand can be considered a feminist because her views often aligned with feminists, but she was never actually a member of any feminist organization. Similarly, although Sand did consider herself a socialist, she also managed to create her own unique understanding of socialism. Alongside her friend Pierre Leroux, Sand can be considered a democratic socialist. While she did believe in the fundamental concepts of democratic socialism, she truly grounded her faith in socialism in a sense of pragmatism. This pragmatism was not an inherent characteristic of democratic socialism itself, instead this sense of practicality was an innate part of Sand. Just as it is easy to consider her an extreme figure due to her close contact with progressive movements, it is easy to try to force Sand to fit into a specific mold of what it means to be a socialist or feminist. Similar to



how Sand did not fit neatly into conceptions of man or woman, Sand did not conform to understandings of these political or social groups.

To understand Sand, one has to divorce her from preconceived notions of who she was as a socialist or feminist and instead understand her through her ability to find middle grounds and marry together opposing ideas. In one of Sand's letters she stated "Let us accept truth, even when it surprises us and alters our views."<sup>8</sup> Readers and scholars should attempt to use this same mentality when analyzing Sand's life and works. Although it is easy to try to make sense of Sand based on her clothing choices and the groups she was connected to, it is important to understand her through her own words and writing. As someone who refused to fit into conventional definitions, only Sand herself can help readers see exactly what she was and what she was not.

After focusing on the plight of women and the oppressed in her debut novel, *Indiana*, Sand seemed to identify herself as a feminist. Sand would focus on equality for married women over the course of her life. While Sand was, and still is, considered a feminist in her times, she did not always welcome this label. For example, Sand did not always agree with the means and methods of French feminists working to achieve universal suffrage in the mid nineteenth century. While many progressive thinkers are often labeled too utopian or idealistic, Sand had a unique sense of practicality and pragmatism entwined with her social beliefs. When considering how to achieve rights for women, Sand considered only the methods she considered the mostly likely to succeed and endure over time. She was not looking for a quick fix that would only last a decade. Sand wanted married women, and eventually all women, to gain and maintain equal rights indefinitely. It is evident that Sand's feminist beliefs remained fundamental to who she was throughout her life. After becoming famous for *Indiana*, Sand continued to consider how

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<sup>8</sup> George Sand, *Letters Of George Sand* (Cosimo Classics, 2013).

equality for women could be best be achieved through democratic socialism. Although the social revolution Sand hoped for failed to occur, her focus on women remained unwavering until her death. In one of last novels, *Nanon*, Sand demonstrated just how powerful women could be if allowed to reach their full potential. Although Sand may not have wanted the title of feminist, from the beginning to the end of her career Sand's words and actions proved her role as a pragmatic feminist.

As Sand became involved in politics in the 1840s her stance as a democratic socialist was as complex as her relationship to feminism. Originally considering herself a republican, when Sand entered into a friendship with prominent socialist thinker, Pierre Leroux, she became one of his most devout followers. Sand would use Leroux's concept of democratic socialism to shape her political and social opinions for the rest of her life. Yet despite her reverence for Leroux and his political philosophies, Sand's beliefs were still heavily influenced by a sense of pragmatism. Leroux was, at times, more of a philosopher than a man of action. This was directly in opposition to Sand's view that there needed to be a practical outcome to their political ideology. She eventually distanced herself from Leroux's belief in abstaining from politics, and rebuffed some of his more impractical theories. As the political situation in France seemed to be approaching another revolution in early 1848, Sand considered how to turn her socialist beliefs into a reality. Soon the political tides turned again and the country was swept into another empire, but Sand held onto her belief in democratic socialist society. When the government finally became a republic once again in the 1870's, Sand's hopes for a practical version of a democratic socialist France did not fade.

Towards the end of Sand's life, her reaction to the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune demonstrated her ability to combine her sense of practicality with an enduring sense

of optimism. After the crushing of the Paris Commune, it would be easy to assume the practical point of view would be to disavow socialism. Surprisingly, Sand remained optimistic for a socialist future due to her sense of practicality. She believed that a progressive government was still possible if it was achieved through practical means. According to Sand, the Paris Commune was completely impractical because the country was not ready for such a far-left government. She also thought that the use of violent means to achieve their goals made it impossible for the Communards to maintain their control in the long run. In her view, however, it was still possible to attain a socialist government if it was implemented over time and enacted peacefully. This sense of pacifism was an essential element of Sand's view towards socialism at this point in her life. Sand's opinions regarding the Commune reflect this pragmatic and pacifist view. The Commune was not practical because it is too extreme and too violent. According to Sand, the practical and peaceful approach would be to try to gradually achieve similar social rights through the recently established Third Republic. While many do not lump terms like "practicality," "socialism," and "pacifism" together, Sand was able to combine all of these elements into her ideology in a way that was notably logical. As Sand's life and career came to an end towards the late 1870's, she harbored an undying faithfulness towards a socialist future that was obtained through practical yet peaceful means.

To fully analyze Sand's opinions towards these monumental moments in French history, this thesis examines two of Sand's novels alongside her personal correspondence, allowing for a more complex understanding of the author and her work. Just as Sand often looked to find middle ground between opposing ideologies or ideas, this work aims to find the overlap between history and literature. By placing Sand's literature in their historical context, a fuller more nuanced understanding of Sand's beliefs becomes accessible. Her novels often offer a direct line

of insight into what Sand believed and was willing to argue publicly. Her letters hint at themes and opinions that Sand may have been more reticent to share publicly. There are some literary scholars who believe it is necessary to separate an author from their work. Once the writing is complete, the author is sometimes considered superfluous. When considering the work of George Sand it is nearly impossible to divorce Sand from her work. If read carefully, her novels act as additional windows on Sand's true thoughts about political and social concerns. Her writing not only exposes her convictions, but they can act as calls to action or warning tales. Using these in conversation with Sand's letters, autobiography, and personal diary entries grants the ability to see the intricacy of Sand's ideas.

From 1832 on, Sand was a writer, and a prolific one at that. She wrote over seventy plays, twenty-four plays, 40,000 letters, ten volumes of her autobiography, and numerous pamphlets, essays, and reviews<sup>9</sup>. She was also one of the most popular authors of her time, rivalling Victor Hugo. When considering how important her literary career was in shaping who Sand was as a person, it seems impractical to not consider her literary works when analyzing her opinions. To consider Sand's politics without evaluating her novels would be to ignore half of her life. This thesis attempts to gain a complete and nuanced understanding of Sand's beliefs at three defining moments in French history and in Sand's career. At each of these moments in history, Sand's novels work to illustrate her public beliefs, while Sand's correspondences provide an understanding of what Sand argued in private. When analyzing either resource alone, it is easier to miss the complexity of Sand's beliefs. One can see her in extremes without understanding the subtlety and nuance of her character and her convictions. In using both Sand's

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<sup>9</sup> The exact number of Sand's works varies depending on the source, but most scholars agree that she wrote over seventy novels and combined she has published over 100 works. This does not include her personal correspondences, pamphlets, and essays. Edward Shaw of University of California-Berkeley provided some of these figures.

written correspondences and journals along with her novels, it is possible to elucidate Sand's personal beliefs along with how and why she shared them with the public.

Many notable scholars have dedicated time and research to the subject of George Sand. Typically they tend to approach Sand either as a historian or as a literary scholar. Some of the literary-focused research concentrates on specific elements in Sand's fiction, such as in the work of Biliانا Kassabova and Patrick M. Bray, which helped inform my reading of *Nanon*. Other scholars such as Isabelle Hoog Naginski<sup>10</sup> have created collections of works that analyze Sand's various texts. There are also historians who have written detailed biographies of Sand's life helping my comprehension of Sand as a historical figure.<sup>11</sup> While many of these scholars do make reference either to their historical elements of Sand's life and works or to her literary success, they typically focus primarily on either a specific literary work or the historical events of Sand's life. Reading them in conversation with each other has helped develop an understanding of the complexity of the historical moment in which Sand lived along with the elaborate literary techniques Sand used to express herself in her novels. These works have been instrumental in shaping this thesis, but this work aspires to stand apart from them by combining a focus of the literature with the historical moment.

Due to Sand's focus on women in her writing, there has been much debate among scholars concerning whether or not Sand can be considered a feminist. This thesis argues that Sand did have authentic and valid feminist beliefs, despite her rebuff of the feminists of her day.

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<sup>10</sup> Biliانا Kassabova "Frenchmen Into Peasants Into Frenchmen: Revolutionary Past and Future in George Sand's *Nanon*" *Dix-Neuf*, 24:1; Patrick M. Bray "Carte Blanche: Charting Utopia in Sand's *Nanon*." *The Novel Map: Space and Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Northwestern University Press, 2013); I found Naginski's *George Sand: writing for her life* particularly helpful along with her essay in *Approaches to Teaching Sand's Indiana*.

<sup>11</sup> Martine Reid wrote a comprehensive biography of Sand in her work *George Sand*. Elizabeth Harlan focused on the relationship between Sand her daughter, Solange, Sand's mother, and Sand's grandmother in her work *George Sand*. Elme Marie Caro's 1888 biography, *George Sand* is helpful for an older historical perspective.

This belief pushes back against some of the ideas raised by Margaret Cohen in her piece, “A Woman’s Place: La Petite Fadette v. La Voix des Femmes.” Cohen is not convinced that Sand’s stance can truly be seen as feminist, and she uses Sand’s novel *La Petite Fadette* to illustrate her views. This thesis aligns more closely with the views of Françoise Massardier-Kennedy in her work, *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand* and Donna Dickenson in her book *George Sand: A Brave Man – the Most Womanly Woman*. Both Massardier-Kennedy and Dickenson believe Sand to be a feminist although they differ in regards to the extent of Sand’s feminism. Dickenson argues against some of the myths that accompany the legacy of Sand, but she does question if Sand’s non-fiction writing supports the idea that Sand was truly a feminist. While Dickenson’s arguments may differ from some of the stances taken in this thesis, she does use a similar methodology to reach her conclusions. Dickenson looks to Sand’s correspondences along with her novels, although she does not subject her novels to a particularly detailed literary analysis. The argument made in this thesis diverges from many of these scholars as it demonstrates how Sand’s pragmatism and her feminist beliefs go hand in hand. Unlike other scholars, this thesis highlights the fact that although Sand’s rejection of feminist groups appears to mark her as anti-feminist, it is truly her practicality that is the cause for this disavowal.

Sand’s stance as a socialist has also drawn attention from multiple scholars over the years. Some historians such as Jonathan Beecher primarily focus on the course of Sand’s socialist leanings and how she developed her opinions.<sup>12</sup> Jack Bakunin also discusses Sand’s political beliefs and her friendship with Pierre Leroux.<sup>13</sup> While these scholars analyze Sand’s opinions and provide ample historical context, they also do not detail how Sand’s practicality

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Beecher. “George Sand: ‘The People’ Lost and Found,” *Writers and Revolution: Intellectuals and the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge University Press: 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux and the Birth of Democratic Socialism*. (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976)

played a role in her beliefs. Many journalists and authors have attributed practicality to Sand, but it is rarely considered a vital element to her belief system.<sup>14</sup> This thesis attempts to prove that pragmatism and practicality are more than character traits for Sand. They are essential components of her political beliefs. This sense of practicality is the reason Sand is democratic socialist and any of the many other subcategories of socialism that emerged in the 1840's. My argument also uses some of Sand's works such as *Spiridion* and *La Petite Fadette* to understand Sand's unique socialist convictions. Scholars such as Beecher tend to focus on the historical events that affected Sand's political views in the 1840's, but it is also important to consider the message Sand relayed through her novels in this period as well. While other scholars want to attribute pragmatism to Sand without fully analyzing its impact on her beliefs, this thesis aims to demonstrate that pragmatism is fundamental to Sand's political opinions.

This piece will show that despite the commotion made about Sand and her beliefs, her true convictions are often surprising. While often seen as an extremist progressive figure, Sand is much more moderate than anyone might expect. In the first chapter of this thesis, Sand's stance on the inequality of women and oppressed groups becomes clear. Although not exactly under the banner of feminism, Sand argued for equal rights for married women and rejected France's colonial endeavors in her novel *Indiana*. Chapter two will demonstrate how Sand's feminist views evolved in the 1840's along her newfound socialist beliefs. As revolution approached, Sand considered how to best seize the moment to enact permanent change. Chapter three will focus on the end of Sand's life after she experienced the horror of both the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. Despite seeming endless opposition, Sand managed to remain optimistic in her socialist beliefs and incorporate pacifism as an essential element to her

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Bray in his piece, "Carte Blanche: Charting Utopia in Sand's *Nanon*" draws attention to Sand's desire for a pragmatic utopia in *Nanon*.

convictions. These three very different moments in both history and in Sand's life and career reveal that Sand remained progressive yet moderate throughout her life. Surprisingly, due to her lack of radicalism, Sand patiently and logically expanded upon her beliefs with each passing decade. Learning from every historical event, Sand's optimism and belief in a more equal France did not dim. Instead she used her experiences as learning opportunities to deduce the best possible manner to enact her beliefs in a way that would be sustainable and have a lasting impact.



## Chapter One: The Emergence of a Social Activist

If one could step back in time to France in the early to mid 1800's, one might expect to see women in long flowing dresses that were extravagant, but not nearly as excessive as the pre-Revolutionary aristocratic wardrobe<sup>1</sup>. If one was at the right place at the right time though, one might be shocked to see a woman in men's attire. This woman would clearly not be impoverished and wearing whatever rags she can find, instead she would have an air that distinguished her as a member of the upper classes of French society. What would come as even more of a surprise would be finding this woman in the company of figures such as Victor Hugo, Jules Sandeau, Charles Didier, Alfred de Muset, or even Frédéric Chopin. This cross-dressing woman was none other than George Sand, almost as famous for her personal life and attire as she was for her writing. Sand clearly made an impression on nearly everyone she met. In a poem dedicated to Sand, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, declared "Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man/Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid lions/ Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance."<sup>2</sup> In particular, it was this defiance that was integral to Sand's character and caught the attention of those around her. Although Sand rejected most feminist groups of her time, her writing on gender, marriage, politics, colonialism, and identity marked her as a person who would defy the standards and norms that she found to be unjust.

Born in 1804 under the name Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, Sand came into the world when France was in a state of flux. In 1799 General Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Directory of the French First Republic, and by 1804 Napoleon had crowned himself emperor<sup>3</sup>. In

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<sup>1</sup> Susan L. Siegfried discusses some of the changes in art and fashion after the Revolution in her work, "The Visual Culture of Fashion and the Classical Ideal in Post-Revolutionary France."

<sup>2</sup> Browning, Elizabeth Barret. *To George Sand: A Desire*. <https://poets.org/poem/george-sand-desire>

<sup>3</sup> The First French Republic had only existed since September 1792 after King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were imprisoned and eventually executed during the French Revolution.

this short span the French, and particularly French women, had seen considerable change in their rights and societal norms. When looking back at women's place in society during the Revolution, one can see that they did not gain many new rights. Importantly, it was the ideology created during the Revolution that raised ideas that would be essential to the dominant discourse of women's place in the post-Revolutionary social order.<sup>4</sup> Although the Revolution may not have sparked any major advancements in women's rights, it did contribute new vocabulary and language that would allow French women and men to discuss issues of citizenship and inherent human rights in ways that they had not before. In a time when men were questioning their place in French society, women began to question their roles as well, ultimately beginning the debate of women's rights.

Although women were not given the same or even similar rights as men during or following the Revolution, there were implications in these new ideas that began to conceptualize women's relationship to the nation as an individual. It became clear,

“while the Bureau des Lois's equation of marriage and naturalization suggested that naturalization had a different relevance for men than for women, its formulation also continued to imply that women, even married women, had some kind of independent contractual relationship with the French nation.”<sup>5</sup>

The Bureau des Lois was an advisory committee for the minister of police. During the French Revolution there were laws against French men and women emigrating and leaving France. This eventually raised issues of how men and women were connected to France and who was

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<sup>4</sup> James F. McMillan, *France and Women: 1789-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 31. Fully expanding on this idea James F. McMillan states, “The French Revolution was not a turning point in the history of French women in any positive sense but rather a defining moment where, in an attempt to delineate the boundaries of both public and private life, the revolutionaries embarked upon a project in which women's contribution to society could be made only through the private sphere of the home. Far from making women into citizens, the Revolution gave a powerful boost to the ideology of domesticity which was soon to become the dominant discourse on women's place in the post-Revolutionary social order”

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Ngaire Heuer. *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 119.

considered French. This debate also raised this idea of whether men and women were equally French. Advancements in women's rights during the Revolution and the First Republic did not grant women full and equal citizenship to men, but they did include recognition of a woman as a separate entity from her husband, with her own rights and expectations, even if they differed from those of her husband. This was a big victory for early French proto-Feminists, yet the Napoleonic Code would challenge these assumptions made during and following the French Revolution."<sup>6</sup> These advancements for women were short lived as Napoleon took power and instituted some of the most strict regulations on marriage and women's rights in marriage.

It was in a world greatly shaped by this Napoleonic Code, also called the Code Civil, that George Sand lived. By the time Sand wrote her debut novel, *Indiana*, the Orleans Monarchy was in power after Napoleon was deposed in favor of the restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy, which was later replaced by the Orleans Monarchy following the July Revolution in 1830. Unfortunately for Sand, and all French women, the Napoleonic Code remained amid the constant regime changes the Napoleonic Code. Although some changes were made, overall the Code remained faithful to its original iteration instated under Napoleon. The Napoleonic Code, "did not completely abolish revolutionary innovations in family law, but it limited them substantially. In probably the most infamous example, it preserved divorce, allowing men to divorce their wives for adultery, but permitting women to divorce their husbands on the same grounds only if the infidelity had taken place in the conjugal home."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore this legal device, "attempted to establish the unity and internal hierarchy of the family over the citizenship status of the

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<sup>6</sup> Heuer, Jennifer Ngaire. *The Family and the Nation*. 30. Heuer fully explains the impact of the Napoleonic Code, "The Napoleonic Code would institute more dramatic change that would fundamentally challenge these assumptions, as legislators would soon attempt to move beyond limited solutions...to a more systematic and wide-ranging assessment of familial and citizenship relations."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 123.

dependents in the home, subordinating a woman's legal identity to her husband's."<sup>8</sup> What little had been gained during the Revolution had been lost in the decades following. As Sand reached adulthood, the restrictions women's independence bothered her more and more.

As Sand contemplated her lack of rights within her own marriage, her attention was also drawn to the oppression of slaves and colonies subjects in France's colonies. Following the Napoleonic Wars France was restored the majority of its colonies. While slavery was originally abolished in the colonies in 1794, Napoleon reinstated slavery in 1802. Based off of a decree proclaimed by Louis X in 1315, many of the French living in the metropole believed there were no enslaved people within the borders of France.<sup>9</sup> While this may have not been entirely accurate, there were few slaves within the metropole itself, causing many of the French to not engage with issues of slavery. Despite this, perhaps deliberate, ignorance, slavery remained an essential part of the French economy, with slaves being used in many France's colonies. These colonial exploits captured Sand's attention, as it was the plight of slavery that she most often compared to the condition of married women. Although the treatment of the slaves was irrefutably worse than the condition of women, Sand noted that both groups were considered unworthy of rights or unequal to the French man. With this comparison in mind, Sand aimed to rebuke this disparity in her work.

Sand did not fit easily into the category of "feminist." She fought against the law codes that denied married women freedom, yet did not join the groups that formed to contest this same system. Although critics have often highlighted the fact that Sand rejected early feminist groups,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel L. Chatman "There are no Slaves in France': A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France" *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 85, No. 3 (Summer, 2000) (The University of Chicago Press, 2000, 144-145); "Supposedly this ordinance suggested that any slave who touched foot on French soil would automatically become free, but this is a misinterpretation of the decree."

this rejection can also demonstrate that Sand fully pushed back against the concept of gender that was accepted during the 1830's through the 1850's. Francoise Massardier-Kennedy tackles this issue stating,

“In her life a number of critics have pointed out, Sand did not value the company of women as women and she refused to be a part of early feminist militant groups. But her lack of solidarity if action with other women should not surprise us since her status as ‘femme exceptionnelle’ meant she has no need to remain boxed in the category of woman. As Christine Planté has reminded us, why should Sand feel the obligation to express herself as woman (and thus to associate with women’s group) and to claim femininity that only reflects the construction of the gaze of the Other, of Man?”<sup>10</sup>

When critiquing Sand’s role as a feminist many readers and critics try to see her through the lens of feminism. Although feminism pushes back against patriarchal ideas, it still has its own constraints. Since feminism was created in opposition to a patriarchal system, this means that it is still part of a binary that only includes feminism and patriarchy. Therefore this type of feminism was created using similar verbiage and concepts of masculinity and femininity that exist in patriarchal understandings. Sand’s refusal to partake in these early feminist groups was not a rejection of feminism, it was a rejection of the early feminism that was born as a reaction to an inherently patriarchal sociopolitical structure. Sand’s form of feminism breaks the binary and allows her to be a part of a feminism that is not irreversibly tied to patriarchy.

When historians or literary scholars analyze Sand and her work, their attention is often focused on how Sand fits into existing molds of “feminist” or “socialist”. While these distinctions can be revealing about who Sand was and her convictions, they can sometimes confuse a reader’s understanding of who Sand was. Sand’s understanding of both feminism and socialism included a sense of practicality that was not typically associated with either socialism or feminism. Sand herself was a complex and sometimes contradictory figure who somehow

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<sup>10</sup> Francoise Massardier-Kennedy. *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand*. (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 10.

managed to combine these contradictions in order to create her own version of feminism and socialism. To help understand this complexity it is important to read Sand's novels in concert with her critics' reviews along with Sand's own reaction to these reviews. In using these resources it is possible to not only identify Sand's thoughts and opinions, but also find how her ideas fit in the world she lived. Together, all of these pieces help demonstrate Sand's beliefs, society's assumptions, and Sand's true intentions in publishing these works.

In Sand's 1832 novel *Indiana* it is possible to see the overlap of these themes of gender, colonialism, and, by extension, national identity. In this work Sand made a striking commentary on the predicament of married women and their limitations under French law. Sand also tackled the concept of the French identity. She raised the idea of an individual's "Frenchness" and the inability of those born outside of metropolitan France, such as creole women born in the colonies, to be considered fully "French". Yet despite her defiant stance on issues such as the rights of women and the often plagued existence of women and creoles alike, many readers and critics overlooked this commentary. Instead, some readers were transfixed by Sand's male characters and whether or not they aptly represented the male population of France. Despite apparently obvious misinterpretations of her work, Sand typically took these misconceptions in stride. Reading her novel in concert with the commentary of her reviewers, along with her own reaction to these comments, reveals the complex ideology of George Sand. In the critiques and commentary employed in *Indiana*, Sand demonstrated the lingering feeling of frustration and discontent among many French women after losing the little independence they had gained in the Revolutionary era. At the same time, the reactions to this work demonstrated that the male-dominated society was still in a place where readers could not even fully comprehend the observations made by Sand. Sand's muted reaction to these misinterpretations did not indicate

her acceptance of the patriarchal social order, instead it signified Sand's quintessential confidence and optimism that change would one day occur. Sand was so confident in her own thoughts and conceptions of what should be that she did not waste her time debating with those who could not even comprehend her arguments. Ultimately Sand conveyed a sense of certainty; she knew the truth of her writing and one day the world would too. Sand thus offered a different approach to feminism than typically expected at this time in history. Sand exposed the possibility of a type of feminism that produced strong arguments and was so positive of its merits that it did not feel the need to get down into the mud with its critics.

### In the Text

One of the consequences of French colonialism was the emergence of creoles in France, a new category of people located within the bounds of the empire yet at the fringes of the national imagination. A creole person could be white, black, or of mixed race; what marked them as creole was the fact that they were born away from their ancestral nation. For those whose families originated in France, they found themselves in a sort of liminal space when they went back to France, as they no longer fit neatly into the category of "French." In particular, creole women often "straddled the line between feminine ideal and female deviance."<sup>11</sup> Sand was not the first French writer to include creole characters in their work, but Sand was unique in the fact that she chose to make her titular character, Indiana, a creole woman. Indiana originated from the Île de Bourbon, but she eventually travelled to France after marrying a French colonel. In France, Indiana was afflicted by melancholia and malaise that did not seem to have an apparent cause.

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<sup>11</sup> Carolyn Berman. *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 89.

Her only sources of comfort were her soeur au lait, Noun, and her cousin Ralph, who were both raised with Indiana in the Île de Bourbon.<sup>12</sup> After the death of her husband and a dalliance with a young French man who ultimately rebuffed her, Indiana returned home to her native island determined to commit suicide. Since this idea of French nationality and creole identity was an often underrepresented topic, some may wonder what drew George Sand to this particular issue. In the introduction to the 1852 version of *Indiana*, Sand claims she had, "...no fixed plan, having no theory of art or philosophy on [her] mind."<sup>13</sup> Whether or not this claim is true can be debated, but it is undoubtable that once Sand began to write, she used her work to challenge both prominent ideas of gender and marriage, alongside underrepresented ideas of race and identity in during the Second French Empire.

Because one of the major focuses of the novel was on gender, one of the most common contemporary critiques of the novel was that Sand must have written *Indiana* based on herself and her own life events. This was a claim that Sand vehemently rejected, and she made clear in no uncertain terms that she did not write *Indiana* as a reflection of her own life. Instead, she doubled down on her assertion that when she began to write *Indiana* she had no specific plans or intentions. She later maintained this in her autobiography asserting, "I finally began *Indiana* without a purpose, without a hope, and without any outline, resolutely putting out of my mind all that had been proposed to me as precept or example, foraging neither in the ways of others nor in my own preconceptions for the subject and the characters."<sup>14</sup> This declaration of her intentions

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<sup>12</sup> This often translates to "foster sister" in English. In the novel it is explained that Noun's mother was Indiana's wet-nurse. Although not explicitly stated it is often implied that Noun was a different race than Indiana.

<sup>13</sup> George Sand, *Indiana*. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1983), 3; "je l'ai fait sans aucun plan, sans aucune théorie d'art ou de philosophie dans l'esprit"

<sup>14</sup> George Sand. Edited by Thelma Jugrau. *Story of My Life; The Autobiography of George Sand* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 921; "Enfin je commençai *Indiana*, sans projet et sans espoir, sans aucun plan, mettant résolument à la porte de mon souvenir tout ce qui m'avait été posé en précepte ou en exemple et ne fouillant ni dans la manière des autres ni dans ma propre individualité pour le sujet et les types."



often seems at odds with the novel, as the novel makes clear commentaries on important topics such as gender and identity. Yet, her writing makes more sense as Sand herself raises a theory regarding the inspiration of the novel. She reasoned,

“I did not have the slightest theory when I began to write, nor, I believe, when the urge to write a novel put a pen in my hand. That does not prevent my instinct from having, albeit unaware, given rise to the theory that I am about to set forth, that I have generally followed without realizing it, and that is still being discussed in literary circles as I now write about it. According to this theory, the novel should be poetic, as well as an analytical work. It must have characters and situations that are true to life – even based on real life – that form a grouping around a type whose function is to embody sentiment or main idea of the book...Is this theory valid? I think so, but it is not, and should not be, considered absolute.”<sup>15</sup>

While perhaps not based on exact events of the Sand’s life, she acknowledged the fact that her novel was inspired by reality. The events may not be specific to Sand, but they reflect the reality of married women living under the restrictions of French law. It appears that although Sand did not set out to write a novel based on gender by writing about her reality and experiences, her novel ultimately became a commentary on gender.

Sand’s inspiration for writing based on the collective experience of those around her seems to likely be inspired by her mentor, Henri Delatouche. Sand considered mimicking the writing style of some of her contemporaries, such as Victor Hugo, when Delatouche recommended that she should, “‘Avoid Pastiche,’ ... ‘Use your own fund of knowledge; read in your own life, your own feelings; render your impressions.’”<sup>16</sup> This was often the encouragement

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 922; “Je n’avais pas la moindre théorie quand je commençai à écrire, et je ne crois pas en avoir jamais eu quand une envie de roman m’a mis la plume à la main. Cela n’empêche pas que mes instincts ne m’aient fait, à mon insu, la théorie que je vais établir, que j’ai généralement suivie sans m’en rendre compte, et qui, à l’heure où j’écris, est encore en discussion. Selon cette théorie, le roman sera une œuvre de poésie autant que d’analyse. Il y faudrait des situations variées et des caractères vrais, réels même, se groupant autour d’un type destiné à résumer le sentiment ou l’idée principale du livre... Cette théorie est-elle vraie? Je crois que oui; mais elle n’est pas, elle ne doit pas être absolue.”

<sup>16</sup> Sand, George. *Histoire de ma vie*. 921; “Fuyez le pastiche... Servez-vous de votre propre fonds; lisez dans votre vie, dans votre cœur; rendez vos impressions.”

of Delatouche. When Sand first approached to him to read her work and give his opinion, he offered similar advice,

““But you must live in order to know life...The novel is life, told with art. You have an artist’s nature, but you don’t know reality. You’re too much of a dreamer. Wait patiently for time and experience; rest assured, those two sad counselors will come soon enough. Let life be your teacher, and try to remain a poet. You need do nothing else.””<sup>17</sup>

With this advice in mind it is no surprise that Sand’s work would reflect such powerful subjects as gender and identity. These were topics that Sand experienced or witnessed daily. When considering influence on Sand’s writing, her adamant denial of the fact that she represented her own life in *Indiana* appears true. *Indiana* represented more than just Sand’s experiences alone. *Indiana* represented the feeling of enslavement and repression experienced by women and other oppressed groups living in France.

Taking the advice of her mentor, Sand recounted the inequalities and oppression she experienced and witnessed in her life. Sand detailed how she ended up focusing on these specific groups of people,

“When I began writing *Indiana*, I felt a very vivid and distinct emotion that resembled nothing I had experienced in my previous attempts. But that emotion was more painful than pleasurable. I wrote the book all in one spurt, without any outline, as I have already said, and literally without knowing where I was going, without even realizing the social problem I was approaching. I was not a Saint-Simonian<sup>18</sup> and had never been...The only thing I had in me was a very clear and ardent feeling of horror at brutal and beastly enslavement.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 916; “Mais il faut vivre pour connaître la vie...Le roman c’est la vie racontée avec art. Vous êtes une nature d’artiste, mais vous ignorez la réalité, vous êtes trop dans le rêve. Patientez avec le temps et l’expérience, et soyez tranquille: ces deux tristes conseillers viendront assez vite. Laissez-vous enseigner par la destinée, et tâchez de rester poète. Vous n’avez pas autre chose à faire.”

<sup>18</sup> Saint-Simonianism is a political, social, and religious movement in the first half of the 1800s. Followers were inspired by the thoughts and writings of Claude Henri de Saint-Simon. Saint-Simonianism was often considered to be a type of socialism; Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux and the Birth of Democratic Socialism*. (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 924; “Je sentis en commençant à écrire *Indiana* une émotion très-vive et très-particulière, ne ressemblant à rien de ce que j’avais éprouvé dans mes précédents essais. Mais cette émotion fut plus pénible qu’agréable. J’écrivis tout d’un jet, sans plan, je l’ai dit, et littéralement sans savoir où j’allais, sans m’être même rendu compte du problème social que j’abordais. Je n’étais pas saint-simonienne, je ne l’ai jamais été...J’avais en moi seulement, comme un sentiment bien net et bien ardent, l’horreur de l’esclavage brutal et bête.”

This horror at enslavement manifested in her clear portrayal of marriage and the effects of colonialism as types of enslavement. It was this revulsion that dictated Sand's writing more so than any coherent anti-marriage or anti-colonial argument. Instead of being premeditated, Sand wrote based on the feelings and reactions she had to life in France. Although not calculated, this type of "free writing" may in fact more demonstrative of Sand's true feelings towards institutions such as marriage or colonialism. The sentiments she expressed in her novel were her innate reactions to the injustices she saw in life without even being fully pondered and analyzed. Sand may not have anticipated a work that effectively critiques existing social structures and their inherent inequalities, but in the end, led by her life experiences, her novel demonstrates many of the injustices that could be found both in marriage and colonialism at the time.

As she opens her novel, Sand draws attention to both the status of women and creoles. In the opening lines, Indiana, her husband, and her cousin are in the sitting room of her manor house. Sand describes the scene, "Two of these silent individuals seemed submissively resigned to the vague boredom that oppressed them."<sup>20</sup> These two individuals are Indiana and her cousin, Ralph. Both Indiana and Ralph are creoles, having been born and raised on the Île de Bourbon and later moving to France after Indiana's marriage to the Colonel Delmare. The language used to describe them reveals Sand's own thoughts on gender and creole identity, as they are portrayed using the words "submissive" and "oppressed". This description might not be as noteworthy if Sand did not immediately contrast the two to Indiana's husband noting, "But the third showed signs of open rebellion; he moved about restlessly in his chair...obviously trying to fight against

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<sup>20</sup> George Sand, *Indiana*, 23; "Deux de ces hôtes silencieux semblaient s'abandonner en toute soumission au vague ennui qui pesait sur eux"

the common enemy.”<sup>21</sup> Starting the novel with showing a woman and a creole in a more submissive position compared to that the native Frenchman, identifies to the reader the two of the main issues that Sand will focus on for the rest of the novel. Although Sand may not have originally planned to write a novel regarding the treatment of women and creoles, the injustice both faced under French law and society stirred such powerful emotions in Sand that she was ended up tackling the issue head on throughout the novel.

In particular, Sand often made direct comparisons between marriage and slavery throughout. In one notable scene Sand depicts Indiana speaking to her husband stating, “I know I’m the slave and you’re the lord. The law of the land has made you my master. You can tie up my body, bind my hands control my actions. You have the right of the stronger, and society confirms you in it.”<sup>22</sup> In this bleak description of what husbands can do to their wives, Sand highlights the helplessness of married women under French law. In her wording there is an implied frustration at France as a nation and society that would allow women to be treated this way. Sand calls the law, “la loi de ce pays” meaning “the law of this country,” by emphasizing that it is the law specifically of the France, there is the implication that this is not the law in every country. Due to the Napoleonic Code, French women faced more harsh restrictions than most other European countries with the Napoleonic Code known for being, “rigid and misogynist.”<sup>23</sup> For women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the knowledge of their inequality would be part of their everyday existence. A day would not go by where they were not inherently aware of the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid; “mais le troisième donnait des marques de rébellion ouverte: il s’agitait sur son siège...avec l’intention marquée de lutter contre l’ennemi commun.”

<sup>22</sup> Sand, George. *Indiana*. 225; “Je sais que je suis l’esclave et vous le seigneur. La loi de ce pays vous a fait mon maître. Vous pouvez lier mon corps, garroter mes mains, gouverner mes actions. Vous avez le droit du plus fort, et la société vous le confirme...”

<sup>23</sup> Gerhard, Ute, Valentine Meunier, and Ethan Rundell. “Civil Law and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Europe.” *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, no. 43 (2016): 250–251. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26242553>.

fact that in the eyes of the law they had fewer rights than their husbands. Sand takes this quotidian experience that she and all French women share and exposes it for all of French society to see.

In this work Sand often entwined the experiences of French women and creoles. Sand continues to raise the question of who is French and who is not by always distinguishing her creole characters from the rest of French society. The creole women in the text are often portrayed as too naïve or simple to fully understand the complexities of French society. Sand draws specific attention to the disparity between creoles and a truly “French” person in her depiction of the relationship between Indiana and the antagonist Raymon de Ramière. From the start of the novel Ramon demonstrates his interest in the “exotic” creoles. He first takes advantage of Indiana’s childhood friend, Noun, by seducing and impregnating her, while refusing to marry her due to her low station, probable mixed racial background, and inability to fully integrate into French society.<sup>24</sup> After Noun’s suicide, Raymon has the opportunity to pursue Indiana. Although it is clear to the reader that Raymon is taking advantage of Indiana’s naïveté in order to seduce her, Indiana herself often remains ignorant to her lover’s less than pure intentions. Throughout the novel Sand remarks on Indiana’s innocence and trustworthiness, often showing this as a marker of her creole identity. In one such scene where Raymon woos Indiana, the narrator comments,

“Raymon was eloquent; Indiana had so great a need to believe him that half his eloquence would have been enough. Women of France, you do not know what a Creole is like. No doubt you would have been convinced less easily, for you are not the one who is being deceived and betrayed!”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Whole not explicitly stated in the novel, there is the implication that Noun is not white.

<sup>25</sup> George Sand, *Indiana*. 138-139; “Raymon fut éloquent; Indiana avait tant besoin de croire, que la moitié de son éloquence fut de trop. Femmes de France, vous ne savez pas ce que c’est qu’une créole; vous eussiez, sans doute, cédé moins aisément à la conviction, car ce n’est pas vous qu’on dupe et qu’on trahit!”

This brief appeal to the women of France themselves is telling about the understanding of what it meant to be French and what it meant to be creole. In appealing to the women of France, Sand is marking them as separate from someone such as Indiana. Although this scene seems to differentiate creole women and French women there is the underlying understanding that the creole woman is as much at the mercy of the Frenchman as is the Frenchwoman. The main difference between the two is that the Frenchwoman is aware of the fact that the man has total control.

This difference between French woman and creole women repeats throughout the novel. Engaged in conversation with Raymon, Indiana finds herself unsure how to respond to him. Commenting on this uncertainty the narrator comments, “A Frenchwoman, someone used to society life, would not have lost her head in such a delicate situation. But Indiana did not know how to behave. She had neither the skill nor the deceitfulness required to retain the advantage of her position.”<sup>26</sup> Immediately the statement again makes it clear that Indiana is not a French woman, and she lacks the skills that French women of society inherently have. A French woman might be able to engage with Raymon and deflect some of his comments or advances. Due to the fact that Indiana is not fully French, she does not have the knowledge or skills to keep Raymon at bay. Instead she is at an even more pronounced disadvantage than an French woman. While Indiana and Noun might present a form of entertainment for Raymon, their innate differences due to their status as creoles marks them as separate from French women and less eligible for marriage to a Frenchman. The implicit racial difference between creoles and French women marks them as ineligible for marriage with a French man. Since Indiana some French men may

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<sup>26</sup> Sand, George. *Indiana*. 132; “Une Française, une personne du monde n’eût pas perdue la tête dans une situation si délicate; mais Indiana n’avait pas d’usage; elle ne possédait ni l’habileté ni la dissimulation nécessaires pour conserver l’avantage de sa position.”

accept her as “French enough,” but higher class men such as Raymon are likely only see her as an “exotic” distraction worthy of a dalliance. In comparison Noun, due to the fact she is visibly a person of color, is deemed completely “non-French” and thus unsuitable for anything beyond an affair. While both French women and creole women share a similar plight, the inability to be seen as fully French makes creole women even more vulnerable to subjugation.

In this comparison between the traditional French woman and the creole woman, Sand also uses creole women as a way to critique French society and French men in particular. In stark contrast to Indiana, Sand presents Laure de Nangy, the Frenchwoman who would eventually become Raymon de Ramière’s wife. Raymon shows interest in Laure after he learns of the large sum of money she is set to inherit from her adopted father, M. Hubert. Laure’s father allowed her the choice of suitor, so it was her decision whether or not to accept Raymon’s advances. In deciding,

“She kept him perfectly balanced between fear and hope...she was the woman to get the better of Raymon, for her skill outdid Raymon’s as much as his did Indiana’s. She soon realized that her admirer was in pursuit of her fortune as much as of herself. Her rational imagination had hoped for nothing better from suitors. She had too much good sense, too much knowledge of the real world, to have dreamed of love side by side with two million. Calmly and Philosophically, she had accepted her situation and did not blame Raymon. She did not dislike him for being calculating and materialistic like the age he lived in, only she knew him too well to love him...In a word she made her heroism consist in avoiding love as [Indiana] placed hers in yielding to it.”<sup>27</sup>

In comparing Laure with Indiana, Sand demonstrates the traits and mentality that is necessary for a French woman to have in order to survive in French society. Laure is cold and analytical when

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<sup>27</sup> Sand, George. *Indiana*. 293; “elle le tenait dans un équilibre parfait entre la crainte et l’espérance...c’était la femme qui devait subjuguier Raymon; car elle lui était aussi supérieure en habileté qu’il l’avait été lui-même à Indiana. Elle eut bientôt compris que les convoitises de son admirateur étaient bien autant pour sa fortune que pour elle. Sa raisonnable imagination n’avait rien espéré de mieux en fait d’hommages; elle avait trop de bon sens, trop de connaissance du monde actuel pour avoir rêvé l’amour à cote de deux millions. Calme et philosophe, elle avait en pris son parti, et ne trouvait point Raymon coupable; elle ne le haïssait point d’être calculateur et positif comme son siècle; seulement elle le connaissait trop pour l’aimer...elle faisait, en un mot, consister son héroïsme à échapper à l’amour, comme madame Delmare mettait le sien à s’y livrer”

choosing Raymon as her husband. She leaves no room or possibility for love. Their relationship is contractual and transactional. In this way Sand seems to be using Indiana as almost a representation of Rousseau-esque “noble savage.”<sup>28</sup> Indiana and her creole background represent human emotions and needs, while Sand uses Laure to demonstrate what French society has turned women into. Due to the risk that marriage and husbands present women, they have to be analytical when considering the man who will ultimately become their master under French law. While Sand often uses Indiana’s heritage to mirror the sufferings of women, here Sand uses her creole as an inverse to show the unnatural reaction to marriage and relationship that French women have had to adopt.

Indiana’s vulnerability eventually comes to a head when she abandons her life to be with Raymon, unaware of his marriage to Laure. At this point in her life Indiana had already left France with her husband to return to the Île de Bourbon. Once in the Île de Bourbon, Indiana’s husband dies. Harboring resentment ever since Indiana refused one of Raymon’s attempts to seduce her, Raymon encourages Indiana to return to him in France, so that he can then reject her and get his revenge. Upon returning to her former estate in France, she finds that Raymon has not only married a respectable French woman, but he has bought and moved into the house Indiana used to share with her husband. In this instance, “she is denied the place of mistress or even of a ‘slave’.”<sup>29</sup> Upon reuniting with Raymon she cries, “It’s me; it’s your Indiana; it’s your slave, whom you called from exile and who has come a thousand miles to love and serve you.”<sup>30</sup> Once again Indiana refers to herself as a slave, and in this context she appears to be referencing

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<sup>28</sup> The noble savage is a trope used to highlight someone who has not been influenced or corrupted by civilized society. Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Berman, Carolyn. *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery*. 113.

<sup>30</sup> George Sand. *Indiana*. 300; “c’est moi, c’est ton Indiana, c’est ton esclave que tu as rappelée de l’exil et qui est venue de trois mille lieues pour t’aimer et te servir.”



both her gender and status as a creole woman. As a woman with few resources, she can do nothing to hold Raymon accountable for the promises he made her. As a creole woman, she sees herself passed over in favor of a respectable French woman. While Raymon was willing to pursue Indiana and engage with her romantically outside of wedlock, she, like Noun, was unsuitable for marriage. This pitiful display shows the full consequences when one is not only a woman but a creole woman living in France.

While highlighting the disadvantages faced by French women and creole women, Sand also writes in a way that makes all readers feel as if they can relate to this experience. Sand's writing can almost induce the feeling that the reader is a part of the story, watching as Raymon de Ramière seduces both creole characters. By creating this illusion, Sand demonstrates how easy it is to be beguiled by Raymon's charms. Carolyn Berman makes note of this occurrence, "Nor are the Creole women the only credulous victims of Raymon's manipulations. On the contrary, the presumed readers of the nose – those very 'women of France' and their male counterpart – have also succumbed to his charms,"<sup>31</sup> Berman expands upon this point noting,

"As an eloquent voice of the status quo in the final years of the Restoration and a persuasive defender of the constitutional monarchy, Raymon de Ramière has in fact temporized not only with a couple of foolish Creole women but with the French public as well. Trapped between her hegemonic seducer Raymon de Ramière, her residual Napoleonic husband Colonel Delmare, and her dreamy Republican cousin and protector Sir Ralph Brown – that is to say, between three political factions 'who shut themselves up together every day to quarrel from morning to night' – Indiana stands in not only for Creole women in this novel but also, rather surprisingly, for Restoration France itself."<sup>32</sup>

By having Indiana represent Restoration France as well as creole women, Sand has the reader relate to the experience of Indiana and therefore creoles as well. After experiencing Raymon's deception, the reader can sympathize with Indiana's predicament, which helps them to relate to

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<sup>31</sup> Berman, Carolyn. *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery*. 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 102.

the experience of creoles as well. Sand's skill is by putting her reader in a position where they can relate to her characters even when characters are experiencing something the reader may have never actually experienced for themselves. Sand's writing might subvert traditional understandings of gender and personhood in France, but her writing finds a way to make her reader feel as if they can relate to the realities of Indiana's life.

The unusual ending of *Indiana* also indicates Sand's departure from contemporary ideas of colonialism and slavery that were common in the 1830's through 1850's. It was often easy for the French to ignore the realities of slavery and racial injustice, as the French liked to refer to the fact that slavery was outlawed in metropolitan France.<sup>33</sup> While slavery in mainland France was limited, this was not the case in the colonies. Despite this propensity for the French to use this as an excuse to ignore racial issues of the time, Sand engaged with these racial struggles by setting part of the novel in the Île de Bourbon and including creole characters of indeterminate race. At the end of the novel, Indiana and her cousin, Ralph return to the Île de Bourbon where they profess their love for each other. They then make a pact to commit suicide together by jumping off the top of a waterfall. The novel then completely shifts as the epilogue reveals that Indiana and Ralph did not commit suicide. In fact, they are living together on the island, buying slaves in order to free them. Reflecting on this, it can be seen,

“that Indiana's ‘dream of being freed from patriarchal bondage is inseparable from a dream of emancipating the victims of colonialism,’ and her reading celebrates the way in which this ‘double fantasy is translated into reality, as the devoted couple devote their resources to buying the freedom of...infirm black slaves.’”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Following the Haitian Revolution, slavery was outlawed in France. Napoleon repealed this law in 1802. In 1848 slavery was officially abolished in both mainland France and the colonies. Some scholars who have addressed the French belief that there were no slaves in the metropole are Samuel L. Chatman in his piece “There are no Slaves in France”: A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France” *The Journal of Negro History* and Sue Peabody in her work, *There Are no Slaves in France*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 104.

In analyzing this it is easy to, “conclude that ‘Indiana and Ralph can be seen as joining the ranks of a non-white community at the end of the novel and thus symbolically becoming honorary full members of the slave community’ in this ‘emancipatory text of resistance.’”<sup>35</sup> In *Indiana* Sand expertly weaves together the issues of gender disparity and the effects of slavery on national identity. Sand continuously draws a comparison between Indiana in her marriage and the plight of an enslaved person. Identifying Indiana as creole, and therefore outside of French societal parameters, she also connects Indiana to the concept of the “other.” Nancy Miller further points out, “‘The novel moves backwards from France to its colonies...and at that distance points to the limits of the dominant narrative.’”<sup>36</sup> In her writing Sand simultaneously repudiates the dominant narrative of both gender and identity that existed in the French social structure of the mid 1800’s.

### Reactions to Sand’s Text

Since Sand firmly rejected accepted concepts of regarding gender and creole identity, one might expect that Sand’s work to be unanimously panned by critics. Although Sand did not expect many people to enjoy the work, overall she received acclaim for her debut novel. In particular Jules Janin<sup>37</sup>, a well-known French writer and critic, wrote highly of the work in a review in *Le Monde* published in 1835. In praising her writing he claimed, “In fact, never since novels have been written in France, never since *Gil-Bas* and *Manon-Les-caut*, has society been looked at in a deeper, clearer and reliable way.”<sup>38</sup> Sand’s writing seemed to strike a chord with

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid 104.

<sup>36</sup> Nancy Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 89.

<sup>37</sup> Jules Janin worked on newspapers such as the *Figaro* and the *Quotidienne*. He was also asked by many French publishers to write prefaces for works.

<sup>38</sup> Janin, Jules. “George Sand” *La Mode : revue des modes, galerie de moeurs, album des salons*. 29. 180. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9610242k>; “En effet jamais depuis qu'on écrit des romans en France, jamais, depuis *Gil-Bas* et *Manon-Les-caut*, on n'avait jeté sur la société un regard plus profond, plus net et plus sûr”

many critics with *L'Artiste* writing, “You have never seen a more careful analysis, a more exquisite dissection, a deeper anatomy of human heart...”<sup>39</sup> Most critics agreed that Sand was successful in her venture; her novel accurately depicted life in France. While it can be argued whether or not Sand’s work reflected all echelons of France society, Sand’s work did seem to relate to those who were of the same social class as Sand. The critics even applauded Sand’s ability to fully analyze and dissect issues of the time. Somehow issues that could appear niche or to specific to certain groups captured the interest of the literary world.

Perhaps what made Sand’s work so universally appealing was the time in which she published it. From 1789 to 1832, the year in which *Indiana* was released, France had shifted government systems multiple times. With this turmoil came battles, revolutions, and general unrest in France. Having been born in 1804 George Sand lived through many of these regime changes. Jules Janin described Sand as, “the literary and political child of the July cobblestones.”<sup>40</sup> He continued to speculate,

“Perhaps without the revolution of 1830, this anti-social pamphleteer, George Sand, would still know that he is the most powerful of destroyers. 1830 revealed to him his power and strength. At the sight of these ruins and these disorders, George Sand finally felt, as they say that Lafontaine suddenly woke up, a great poet, reading an ode by Malherbe.”<sup>41</sup>

Janin infers that these events might have been essential in shaping Sand and ultimately influenced her topics of choice as well. While Sand was somewhat politically active at this time and even considered herself a republican, her own writing seems to reject that

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<sup>39</sup> Félix Pyat, Edited by Georges Lubin. *Correspondance: Tome 2 (1832-juin 1835)*. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1966) 115; “Vous n'avez jamais vu une analyse plus minutieuse, une dissection plus exquise, une anatomie plus profonde de cœur humain...”

<sup>40</sup> Jules Janin, *La Mode : revue des modes, galerie de moeurs, album des salons*. 178; “l'enfant littéraire et politique des pavés de juillet.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid; “Peut-être que sans la révolution de 1830, ce pamphlétaire anti-social, George Sand, serait encore à savoir qu'il est le plus puissant de destructeurs. 1830 lui a révélé sa puissance et sa force. A la vue de ces ruines et de ces désordres, George Sand s'est senti enfin, comme on dit que Lafontaine s'est réveillé tout-a-coup un grand poète, à la lecture de d'un ode de Malherbe”

these events were her main inspiration. Despite Sand's claim, these historical events are still useful to fully understand the context of Sand's work, and they may shed light into her readers' reception of her writing. With a constantly changing political and social structure, Sand's writing was able to reflect these changes while also able to perfectly capture the feeling of the moment that French readers were living through.

This excitement for Sand and her new take on social issues can be seen in many of the novel's reviews. Most of the critics and readers of *Indiana* praised Sand for highlighting the central issues of their time. From *Le Temps* there emerged, "an article which extols 'a very distinguished talent for observation and moral analysis' after emphasizing the particular merit of this novel which 'lies above all in a profoundly true feeling of the pains and moral turpitudes of our time.'"<sup>42</sup> Intriguing perhaps is that fact that this writer feels that Sand is able to successfully tackle issues relating to their "époque". The use of this word indicates the relevance of Sand's writing specifically to that moment in time. Sand is able to address issues of the time that it appears that other authors were not able to explore in such an authentic manner that most readers were able to relate to the subject. The *Journal des Débats* uses very similar wording when they printed their review stating, "warm and interesting story, which is imbued with all the faults and also all the qualities of the modern era."<sup>43</sup> Using the exact same word when referring to the time they were all residing in demonstrates the belief that these critics felt Sand was able to particularly capture the complex feelings of that time. Just as Janin's

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<sup>42</sup> Alfred de Musset. *Correspondance: Tome 2*. 116; "article qui vante 'un talent d'observation et d'analyse morale très distingué' après avoir mis l'accent sur le mérite particulier de ce roman qui 'réside surtout dans un sentiment profondément vrai des douleurs et des turpitudes morales de notre époque'"

<sup>43</sup> *Journal des Débats. Correspondance: Tome 2*. 115; "récit chaleureux et plein d'intérêt, qui est empreint de tous les défauts et aussi toutes les qualités de l'époque moderne"

assumption about what inspired Sand seems to be erroneous, it is also possible that most, if not all, of these critics were not fully understanding all the subtlety and nuance of Sand's writing. While praising Sand for her tackling the important issues of the time, none of the critics specifically comment on her treatment of women or creoles.

Having such universal acclaim might appear to be beneficial, and in many ways it certainly was, but this acclamation also demonstrated a clear gender bias against women. Although many critiques lavished praise upon Sand and her writing, many failed to recognize the important critiques that *Indiana* made on French society. Instead of identifying the overt themes of gender and inequality in *Indiana*, male literary critiques turned their attention to the male characters of the novel. Jules Janin even notably seemed fixated on Sand's appearance instead of her writing.<sup>44</sup> In a letter to a friend Sand wrote,

“That, my dear child, is what literary life is... Jules Janin says in the series of debates that I am young and beautiful. He meets me and asks me who I am because he is myopic. As a woman, he doesn't like dogs and doesn't know how to distinguish a Negress from a Lapland. Solange said to him: There you are, scoundrel? You are a famous old man. This child has a horror of literature. The same Jules Janin says in the same serial that *Indiana* is the most beautiful book of morals of our time.”<sup>45</sup>

Jules Janin's comment that Sand is “young and beautiful” is particularly noteworthy.

Sand's identity was built by separating herself from feminine descriptions such as this.

Not only had she adopted a male pseudonym, she was also known to dress in men's clothes. Including this gendered depiction of George Sand puts into question whether or

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<sup>44</sup> While not all readers knew of Sand's true identity as a woman, those who were in the same social and literary circles were aware that Sand was a woman. It eventually became an open secret and ultimately everyone knew her identity as a woman.

<sup>45</sup> George Sand. *Correspondance: Tome 2*. 119; “Voilà ma chère enfant, ce que c'est que la vie littéraire... Jules Janin dit dans le feuilleton des débats que je suis jeune et belle. Il me rencontre et me demande que je suis car il est myope. En fait de femme, il n'aime les chiens et ne sait pas distinguer une négresse d'une laponne. Solange lui dit: Te voilà, gredin? t'es un fameux cochon. Cet enfant-là a horreur de la littérature. Le même Jules Janin dit dans le même feuilleton qu'*Indiana* est le plus beau livre de mœurs de notre époque.”

not critics such as Janin understood the criticism that Sand was making in regards to the unequal treatment of men and women. Perhaps in reaction to the fact that Janin stripped Sand of gender ambiguity she strove for her in her role as an author, Sand appeared to have a somewhat unfavorable opinion of him. She not only states that he cannot tell the difference between a “negress and a Laplander,” she also relays her daughter, Solange’s negative reaction towards Janin. Ultimately Janin would be just one of many who seemed to misunderstand Sand’s complex commentary in *Indiana*.

Janin was not the only one who tried to appropriate *Indiana* and distort Sand’s critiques in order to fit his own societal views. Sand also recounted a visitor identifying himself as the main male figure of the text, Ralph. Writing about the incident Sand recalled the conversation,

“– I come to thank you for having made Indiana. – ‘Sir, that concerns my editor’. – ‘Not at all, ma’am. This book gave me immense pleasure’ – ‘Why sir?’ – ‘I’m the hero.’ – ‘I’m very glad’ – ‘That’s my story, Madame. It’s my whole heart.’ – ‘Then it is to Sir Ralph Brown that I have the honor to speak?’ – ‘Ma’am, it’s absolutely me.’ – ‘Your modesty enchants me, sir...’”<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly enough here this fan of *Indiana* identified himself with the character of Ralph, whom this fan referred to as the “hero” of the novel. While arguably the novel revolves mostly around women, specifically Indiana whose name is emblazoned on the cover of the book, this male reader determined that the main character is actually Ralph. This particular speaker does not just claim to be the hero he also stated, “it’s my story.” Not only was he claiming to be the hero but he claimed the story as his own. The novel which focuses on the plight of women, particularly women born outside of France, has somehow been taken to represent this man’s own life. While it is impossible to determine exactly what the circumstances of this man’s life were

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<sup>46</sup> George Sand, *Correspondance: Tome 2*. 118; “– Je viens vous remercier d’avoir fait *Indiana*. – Mr, cela regarde mon éditeur. – Du tout, Madame. Ce livre m’a fait un immense Plaisir. - Pourquoi, Monsieur? – C’est que j’en suis le héros. – J’en suis bien aise – C’est mon histoire, Madame. C’est mon cœur tout entier. – Alors c’est à Sir Ralph Brown que j’ai l’honneur de parler? – Madame, c’est absolument moi. – Votre modestie m’enchante, Monsieur”

and how much he could relate to the events of the novel, this incident leads one to believe that, while a popular novel, the main criticisms raised in *Indiana* were still missed by many readers.

It is not just fans of the novel that seem to relate to the male characters in *Indiana*. Even professional literary reviewers seem more intrigued by the male characters than their female counterparts. A writer for *Le Figaro* commented,

“Raymon de Ramière rich, elegant, learned and idle... playing with the love of a woman like a child with a firearm, without understanding anything about it. Raymon the perfectly civilized man, the representative of our tastes of our morals our spirit, our intrigues and our salon ambition.”<sup>47</sup>

For this reviewer Raymon represents the problems of society and everything that was wrong with men at that time. In comparison, “Ralph Brown in this book is representative of the passion lost in France, the representative of the love that we have forgotten.”<sup>48</sup> The takeaway for this writer seems to be that this book is about men, specifically what they lack and what they should be. Beside a description of the character of Indiana, the writer does not ponder what Indiana represents in French society. She is merely a measuring stick in which to use to determine the value of men.

A review published by H. Boussuge in *Cabinet de lecture*, appeared to notice Sand’s critique on the treatment of women. He noted, “*Indiana* is woman, it’s passion, natural law, in open war with the Civil Code, a contract signed at the notary’s, in opposition with the oaths recorded in heaven.”<sup>49</sup> The Code Civil was one Sand’s primary targets of criticism in *Indiana* as this law made it so,

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<sup>47</sup> *Le Figaro No 14*, “Indiana,” 24 May 1832, 1 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k2673525/f1.item>; “Raymon de Ramière riche, élégant, savant et oisif... jouant avec l’amour d’une femme comme l’enfant avec une arme à feu, sans y rien comprendre Raymon l’homme civilisé parfaitement, le représentant de nos goûts de nos mœurs de notre esprit, de nos intrigues et de notre ambition de salon.”

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*; “Ralph Brown il est dans ce livre le représentant de la passion perdue en France, le représentant de l’amour que nous avons oublié”

<sup>49</sup> H. Boussuge, “Indiana par Jules Sand,” *Cabinet de lecture No 196*. 24 June 1832. 13 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k20454591/f13.item>; “*Indiana*, c’est la femme, c’est la passion, la loi naturelle,



“The wife was consequently placed under marital authority in all respects; she was not an independent legal person. She had to obtain her husband’s authorization for each legal action in every matter, whether it be for the purpose of running her household or conducting independent commercial activity.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet despite Boussuge’s realization that Sand’s writing was a commentary on the lack of women’s rights under the Code Civil, he also still seems to believe that the male characters are the focus of the text. When he introduces the character of Ralph he states, “It remains for me to speak of the last character of the novel; because there are only four...”<sup>51</sup> At this point in his review, Boussuge had mentioned Indiana, her husband, Monsieur Delmar, and Raymon de Ramière. With Ralph being the fourth and final character, Boussuge has stripped the character of Noun of all of her importance. Despite her being one of the most influential characters in the text, she almost fails to exist as Boussuge claims that there are only four characters. His commentary transforms this text from being a work centered around two creole women, to one about one woman and the three men in her life. Due to the fact that Ralph is included in this list, it is likely due to Noun’s gender and not her creole status that she was disregarded; although the implication that she might be mixed raced and not a white creole certainly could have impacted Boussuge’s decision to exclude Noun. On some level Boussuge is aware that this is a novel about women, but he, like many of his contemporaries, struggled to see beyond the male characters presented in the book.

Yet there do appear to be the few reviewers who could see past the charm of Ralph and instead focus on Sand’s arguments and the merit of the text itself. A review published in *Le*

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en guerre ouverte avec le Code civil, un contrat passé chez le notaire, en opposition avec des sermens enregistrés dans le ciel.”

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard, Ute, and Valentine Meunier. “Civil Law and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Europe.” 257.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid; “Il me reste à parler du dernier personnage du roman; car il n’y en a que quatre...”

*National*, takes a more critical approach to Sand's use of Ralph's character, particularly towards the end of the novel, remarking,

“Sir Ralph plays the part of a veritable Deus ex machina, disguised until then as some boor, and having remained an insignificant witness to the drama, suddenly reveals himself, resumes his lofty beauty and snatches the Ariadne to him: the real story ends like a mythological poem.”<sup>52</sup>

Unlike other reviewers who find Ralph to be realistic, this writer demonstrates that Sand's portrayal of him at the end of the novel is completely outlandish. Beyond this criticism, this reviewer also commented that Ralph was insignificant up until the end of the novel. This idea stands in stark contrast to the comments of Boussuge who claimed that Ralph was one of main characters of the text. Somehow this reader was to see beyond the supposed greatness of Ralph's character. With the author of this review's identity unknown it is difficult to ascertain why this reviewer was able to see what other reviewers missed.

In addition to dismissing the importance of Ralph's role in the story, the reviewer for *Le National* also commented specifically on Noun. As previously mentioned, Noun was ignored by Boussuge, but this writer found Noun's character to be worthy of notice. In a brief introduction to the character, the writer mentioned, “One will know that Indiana brought with her from Bourbon a chambermaid, or rather a childhood friend who never left her, a real Creole, a lively and piquant Indian, Noun.”<sup>53</sup> Although brief Noun is recognized as important enough to be included in a review of the work. This writer also found the fact that Noun and Indiana were creoles worthy of note. Indiana is introduced as, “a Creole from the island of Bourbon, a sad and

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<sup>52</sup> “Indiana par George Sand” *Le National* No 279. 5 October 1832.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1516759j/f3.item> ; “sir Ralph joue le rôle d'un véritable Deus ex machina, qui déguise jusqu'alors en quelque rustre, et demeuré témoin insignifiant du drame, se révèle soudain, reprend sa haute beauté et ravit à lui l'Ariane: l'histoire réelle finit comme une poème mythologique.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid; “On saura qu'Indiana a amené de Bourbon avec elle une femme de chambre, ou plutôt une amie d'enfance qui ne l'a jamais quitté, une vraie créole une vive et piquante Indienne, Noun.”

pale Creole, who has Spanish blood in her veins; an Indian woman sick with European sickness, petite, frail and slender (*gracilis*); suffering soul, withered, greedy for a love she waits for and no longer hopes for...”<sup>54</sup> While this author did not expand any further on what their identity as creole women could signify, it clearly is of some importance for this fact to be included in the review. It is also intriguing that within this brief depiction of the two women, their creole identity is further divided with Noun being the “true” creole. Once again this implies that in terms of their identity and status they are the same yet different. What marks this difference is unfortunately not specified. The review in *Le National* demonstrates that, while perhaps rare, there were readers who examined Sand’s work critically and identified some of her more subtle or nuanced commentaries.

### Sand’s Reaction to Her Critics

While so many appeared to miss Sand’s main arguments and commentaries, Sand appeared unbothered. Other than her apparent distaste for Jules Janin, Sand did not come forward and condemn her reviewers for twisting her work into something that pleased their patriarchal sympathies. This may stem from that fact that Sand did not originally intend to write this book as a social commentary, but it also appears that Sand was never one to waste her time fighting with those who clearly did not share her opinion. Before Sand wrote *Indiana*, and even before she began her mentorship with Delatouche, Sand approached M. Auguste de Kératy to read her work and give his objective opinion<sup>55</sup>. When she arrived at his home for their meeting, M. de Kératy

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid; “une créole de l’île de Bourbon, une créole triste et pâle, qui a du sang espagnol dans les veines; une Indienne malade du mal d’Europe, menue, frêle et fluette (*gracilis*); âme souffrante, étiolée, avide d’un amour qu’elle attend et qu’elle n’espère plus...”

<sup>55</sup> Auguste Hilarion, comte de Kératy was a French politician following the Revolution recognized as a liberal leader. He was a member of the Chamber of Deputies and a colleague of François Duris-Dufresne, a friend of Sand.

told her, “Monsieur Duris-Dufresne told me that you want to write, and I promised him to talk to you about this plan of yours. I shall be very brief, and I shall tell you frankly – a woman shouldn’t write.”<sup>56</sup> While some writers might have been discouraged by this denunciation of their career and aspirations, Sand took the comment in stride stating,

“If that’s what you think, we have nothing to talk about... There was no point in waking Madame de Kératy and me so early just to hear that cliché.’ I got up and left without a fuss, prone more to laughter than anger. M. de Kératy followed me to the foyer and kept me there a few minutes as he developed, for my benefit, his theory on the inferiority of women, on the impossibility of the most intelligent among them to write a good book... And since I continued on my way out without arguing and without a cutting retort, he ended his harangue with a Napoleonic stroke that was intended to crush me: ‘Take my word for it... don’t make books, make babies!’ ‘Honestly, sir,’ I answered, trying to control my laughter and shutting the door in his face, ‘take your own advice, if you think it so good.’”<sup>57</sup>

Some might engage in a debate or argument when presented with such a rejection of one’s abilities, but Sand simply ignored this kind of criticism. This type of reaction would be reflected in the way Sand responded to readers of *Indiana* who interpreted the novel as being about men. Sand would most commonly receive them obligingly and chuckle to herself at their perception of her work. While there were some critiques that Sand would defend herself from, such as the accusation that she wrote *Indiana* to be an attack on marriage, overall Sand did not engage with those who held views that were in direction opposition to her own. The same way Sand was confident that she would become a writer, she was confident that her work represented the truth.

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<sup>56</sup> George Sand. *Histoire de ma vie*, 915 “M. Duris-Dufresne m’a dit que vous vouliez écrire, et j’ai promis de causer avec vous de ce projet; mais tenez, en deux mots, je serai franc, une femme ne doit pas écrire.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 914; “‘Si c’est votre opinion, nous n’avons point à causer... Ce n’était pas la peine de nous éveiller si matin, madame de Kératy et moi, pour entendre ce précepte.’ Je me levai et sortis sans humeur, car j’avais plus envie de rire que de me fâcher. M. de Kératy me suivit dans l’antichambre et m’y retint quelques instants pour me développer sa théorie sur l’infériorité des femmes, sur l’impossibilité où était la plus intelligente d’entre elles d’écrire un bon ouvrage... et, comme je m’en allais toujours sans discuter et sans lui rien dire de piquant, il termina sa harangue par un trait napoléonien qui devait m’écraser. ‘Croyez-moi... ne faites pas de livres, faites des enfants.’ ‘Ma foi, monsieur’ lui répondis-je en pouffant de rire et en lui fermant sa porte sur le nez ‘gardez le précepte pour vous-même, si bon vous semble.’”

With this certainty in herself and her writing, she did not feel the need to convince anyone about the merit of writing.

Sand's explained her refusal to engage with many of her critics and readers as due to the fact that she understood that she too was liable to make mistakes. Therefore she was not bitter or resentful towards her adversaries. She described her feelings towards those who could even be considered her "enemies,"

"Besides, I am inclined to forgive, and if some souls who have been culpable with respect to me can be rehabilitated by others, I am ready to give them my blessing. The public does not act thus; it condemns and throws stones. Therefore, I do not want to turn over my enemies – if I may use a word that does not have much meaning to me – to judges without heart or wisdom, or to the decrees of a public opinion that is not guided by the least notion of religion, or enlightened by the slightest principle of charity."<sup>58</sup>

Even those who Sand did not agree with or who she was opposed to, she tried not defame in her writing. She continues,

"I was not born for the job of executioner, and I have steadfastly refused to take part in this act of social warfare, through scruples of conscience, generosity, or an easy-going character, all the more reason not to contradict myself when it is a question of my own isolated cause."<sup>59</sup>

Sand was not one to openly attack others especially in her writing. This may help explain why Sand did not have any noteworthy reactions when critics or readers either attacked her writing or misinterpreted it. There were very few instances in which Sand felt the need to defend herself. There is also the idea in her work that in defending herself she may turn her adversaries further against her. When she states that, "if some souls who have been culpable with respect to me can

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid 890; "D'ailleurs, moi, je pardonne, et si des âmes très-coupables devant moi se réhabilitent sous d'autres influences je suis prête à bénir. Le public n'agit pas ainsi, il condamne et lapide. Je ne veux donc pas livrer mes ennemis (si je peux me servir d'un mot qui n'a pas beaucoup de sens pour moi) à des juges sans entrailles ou sans lumières, et aux arrêts d'une opinion que ne dirige pas la moindre pensée religieuse, que n'éclaire pas le moindre principe de charité."

<sup>59</sup> Ibid 890; "Je ne suis pas née pour ce métier d'exécuteur, et si j'ai refusé obstinément d'entrer dans ce fait de guerre générale, par scrupule de conscience, par générosité ou débonnaireté de caractère, à plus forte raison ne me démentirai-je pas quand il s'agira de ma cause isolée."

be rehabilitated by others, I am ready to give them my blessing,” this also suggests that Sand recognizes that these critics may be more likely to come around to her way of thinking if she does not attack them. While Sand’s refusal to criticize those who misunderstand her work can be seen as a practical decision, it also demonstrates her optimism that more people would eventually join her cause.

While Sand’s work reflected the ideas and concerns raised during a time of frequent political change, her commentary on women highlighted a basic fact raised during the French Revolution. Once exposed to basic freedoms, it is difficult for a person to forget that feeling of liberation. The Napoleonic code may have reinstated restrictions on women and once again relegated them to the control of their husband, yet French society, specifically French women could not return to their previous ignorance. At the same time the colonies and France’s colonial endeavor offered a mirror for subjugated women in French society to compare their condition to. Sand saw her own condition reflected in the slavery inflicted on those in France’s colonies. Using this similarity to emphasize the frustration of French women, Sand used her writing to critique France and its treatment of any who was considered “other” when compared to the French man. Perhaps due to her experiences as an aspiring author, Sand was already aware of the reception her book would receive once in the hands of the male dominated society. Sand was then able to use her reaction to these critics to further her cause. As would be seen in her political beliefs in the coming decades, Sand’s reaction to adversity was often a mix of pragmatism and optimism. She understood that it was not practical to argue with those who did not support her, yet she remained confident that positive change was possible. In rejecting all conventions, Sand also continues to reject modern expectations what an advocate for social change should do to achieve these goals. Ultimately, Sand’s course of action may have paid off. While she may have

not convinced all her detractors of her writing's merit, she remained one of the most popular authors of her time, and her work resonated with subsequent generations of readers.

## Ch. Two: The Pragmatic Socialist

Readers of George Sand's novel *Indiana* could easily conclude that she was undoubtedly a feminist<sup>1</sup>. Those with even basic knowledge of Sand and her life probably feel assured in this assumption as well. It may appear impossible that the trouser wearing, divorced mother of two could write a novel like *Indiana* and be anything other than a progressive feminist. Yet despite her women-focused novels, in 1837 Sand would also go on to write,

“Too proud of their recently acquired education, certain women have shown signs of personal ambition... In vain do they gather into clubs, in vain do they engage in polemics, if the expression of their content proves that they are incapable of properly managing their affairs and of governing their affections.”<sup>2</sup>

For a woman who so often depicted the plight of women in her novels, this quote appears to be completely out of character. Sand herself was an educated woman who actively shared her opinion on political and social issues, yet in this letter she appears to argue against this very action. To comprehend these seemingly dissonant views, it is necessary to understand practicality and pragmatism as the basis of nearly all of Sand's beliefs. Sand may have held lofty ideals, but she believed in practical means to attain them. This was ultimately seen in 1848 in Sand's position as a democratic socialist who tempered her progressive beliefs with the reality that a true utopian society was unlikely to succeed in France at that moment in time.

When attempting to comprehend and analyze Sand's stances on political and social issues during the 1830's and 1840's, it is necessary to view them through the lens of practicality. Sand often did not fit into the expected mold of feminist or socialist. This is due to the fact that above

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of feminism has changed over the years but the, “Invention of the word *féminisme* has long been attributed to Charles Fourier (1772-1837), the audacious thinker who coined so many French neologisms and who understood so well that the essence of women's emancipation lay in eradicating their legal and economic subordination to men.” In this thesis feminism relates to believing in and advocating for women's rights and equality under the law. Karen Offen. “On the French origin of the words feminism and feminist.” *Gender Issues*. 8. (1988) 45-51. 10.1007/BF02685596.

<sup>2</sup> Donna Dickenson. “Third Letter to Maurice, March 1837” *George Sand: A Brave Man – The Most Womanly Woman* (New York: Berg Publishers Limited, 1988): 45.



all else Sand was a pragmatist. Sand's often confusing or seemingly dissonant remarks on women are a marker of this pragmatism. Although Sand's end goals may have mirrored those of the active feminists of her time, Sand believed that their methods of achieving equality were likely to fail<sup>3</sup>. This can be said for Sand's socialist views as well. Sand wanted a socialist society that promised equality for all men, and women eventually), but she knew that there needed to be a practical means of implementing this society as well. She would even distance herself from the man who could be considered her mentor in socialism when his ideas no longer appeared to be applicable in reality. It is tempting to try to fit Sand in preexisting categories of "socialist" or "feminist," but in order to understand the root of Sand's convictions one must first consider Sand's position as a pragmatist.

This sense of practicality would determine many of Sand's social and political stances throughout the 1830's and 1840's. As a known socialist and women-focused writer, it is easy to imagine Sand as an idealist. Her goals and ambitions may have appeared idealistic for the time, but Sand was also deeply invested in finding the most practical means to achieve her objective of a society based on equality. This often meant that Sand had to prioritize some of her goals over others. Ultimately she wished to achieve full equality for women, but before she sought to achieve this she focused on her democratic socialist belief of attaining equality for all French men. She believed that by achieving her socialist objectives, the path would be paved for the ultimate fight for women's rights. Instead of blindly fighting for a cause without assessing the chance of success, Sand shifted her attention to the groundwork that was required in order to

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the influential feminists of the late 1840's were Eugénie Niboyet (editor of *La Voix des Femmes*), Jeanne Deroin (editor of *L'Opinion des Femmes*), and Désirée Gay (editor of *La Politique des Femmes*). Some works that discuss French feminists of the 1840s are Bonnie S. Anderson's *The Lid Comes off: International Radical Feminism and the Revolutions of 1848* and Whitney Walton's *Writing the 1848 Revolution: Politics, Gender, and Feminism in the Works of French Women of Letters*.

obtain and preserve equality for women in the long run. This level-headed approach fighting for equality led Sand to focus first on fighting for a socialist government before turning her attention back to women's rights.

While it might seem contradictory for a someone focused on women and women's rights to fight for men's rights, Sand knew that a national transformation needed to occur before women could gain the right to vote. Under the current legal structure women were still subjected to the Code Civil and therefore "marital authority extended as much to the wife's person as to her property, and it was impossible to modify this situation by contract (Art. 1388)." Even if women were given the right to vote, they were still completely subject to their husbands' wishes. This meant that husbands could potentially forbid their wives to vote or attempt to control their wives' votes. In order for women's votes to truly matter and make a difference, Sand believed it was first necessary to liberate women from their husbands by overturning the Code Civil. She argued that if all men were given the right to vote, it was likely that the common people would rally together and vote in favor of socialism, thus beginning a radical transformation of France. Once this metamorphosis was complete, women would no longer be beholden to their husbands. Separated from their husbands, French women could gain the right to vote and their votes would finally be fully their own. While Sand may not have aligned herself with the feminists of her day, she still shared the same goals. Her dedication to women's rights meant that she was willing to take the longer path to equality if it meant that women would finally achieve equality and autonomy from their husbands. This meant for Sand the more practical and pressing goal was to achieve a socialist government.

There may be many today who are surprised by the claim that socialism was a more practical goal than feminism in France the 1840's. To understand how socialism seemed to be a

very real possibility in 1848, it is necessary to understand the historical moment. By the 1840's the great Revolution of 1789 was almost half a century in the past, yet its ripple effects still played a key role in French politics. The war cry of "liberté, égalité, fraternité" was ever present in the mind of the time's most prominent socialist thinkers such as the followers of Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Pierre Leroux. With the added effect of the industrialization of France and the implementation *laissez-faire* doctrines by the constitutional monarchy in 1830-1845, prominent French thinkers began to look towards socialism to fix the inequalities that resulted from these conditions.<sup>4</sup> As France moved towards another revolution in the 1840's, French socialists began to feel that the moment had finally arrived for their ideas to become a reality. When the February Revolution of 1848 succeeded in removing King Louis-Philippe d'Orléans from the throne and establishing a new republic, these hopes appeared to be actualized. It seemed that France was on the verge of a new progressive era. This feeling and anticipation of change even led those who were hesitant to partake in politics, such as George Sand and her friend and mentor, Pierre Leroux, to become politically active. With the a potential socialist government appearing closer than ever, Sand fully entered the political arena.

At the time there were many different conceptions of socialism. Sand herself had her own understanding of socialism that set her apart from other socialists. The key to George Sand's socialist thoughts was her most basic and ardent belief in the equality of all men. For her, this meant the destruction of the various social classes and castes. In an article published in *La Cause du Peuple* in April of 1848, following the start of the revolution, Sand pushed back against those,

"qui se sont récriés contre cet abus de pouvoir n'ont donc pas admis le principe fondamental de la souveraineté du peuple. Ils l'ont nié tacitement, et pourtant ils

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<sup>4</sup> Paul E. Corcoran. *Before Marx: Socialism and Communism in France, 1830-48* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1983).

se disaient républicains. Il y a donc des esprits qui conçoivent l'établissement d'une république sans reconnaître le principe qui lui sert de base."<sup>5</sup>

For Sand, the basis of the republic was popular sovereignty. She felt all men had the right to popular sovereignty. She claimed that, "La source de ce droit est en Dieu, qui a créé les hommes parfaitement égaux, et qui les conserve tels, en dépit des erreurs des sociétés et de la longue consécration d'un abominable système d'inégalité."<sup>6</sup> While not overly religious, Sand was steadfast in her belief that God created all men equal.<sup>7</sup> This did not mean that all men had equal skills, but it meant that no man had the right to oppress another man. Sand explained this point,

"Mais ces diversités infinies consacrent l'égalité au lieu de la détruire...il n'y a aucun homme qui, par le fait de sa supériorité naturelle, soit créé pour détruire la liberté d'un autre homme et pour renier le lien de fraternité qui unit le plus faible au plus fort, le plus infirme au plus sain, le plus borné au plus intelligent."<sup>8</sup>

In the existing class system in France there was often the underlying assumption that those in the upper classes, whether that be nobility, aristocracy, or the bourgeoisie, were superior to those in the working class. Due to their social superiority, members of these classes believed they had the right to create laws and regulations that ultimately affected the workers and those who lived in poverty. Sand's conception of socialism rejects this distinction of both class and social and financial superiority, and instead advocates for equality among all men in France.

While these sentiments form the basis of Sand's conception of socialism, in order to fully understand how Sand developed these beliefs, it is important to analyze both the sociopolitical state of France and the man who inspired Sand to become a socialist. After the July Revolution<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> George Sand, "La Souveraineté, C'est L'Égalité" in *Politique et polémiques* (1843–1850), (Paris, 2004), Présentation Michelle Perrot (Paris, 1997): 310.

<sup>6</sup> George Sand. "La Souveraineté, C'est L'Égalité," 311.

<sup>7</sup> In her autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand claimed "Since no one was instructing me in religion, it occurred to me I needed one, and I made one for myself." As an adult Sand was a practicing Catholic, but in the 1840's her ideas began to parallel those such as Félicité Lamennais and Pierre Leroux who believed that a new social religion based on moral principles would replace Catholicism.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 311.

<sup>9</sup> The July Revolution removed the Bourbon royal family who had been in power since the fall of Napoleon in 1814.

of 1830, France's government became a constitutional monarchy with Louis-Philippe as king. Under the reign of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, the population grew substantially, and it soon became clear that there was not enough work in the countryside to support everyone. Due to a rise in industrialization, there were more job opportunities to be found in factories which encouraged many to move to the cities.<sup>10</sup> The introduction of the railway additionally made it easier for those living in the countryside to move to the cities. This shift in industry ultimately led to changes in the structure of the social classes as well. This change in living and working environment led to frustration and resentment among the social classes. These tensions grew along with growing support for political groups such as the socialists and the communists who felt the middle and upper classes held too much power and control over the majority of the population. Many intellectuals found their way into these political groups including George Sand. While there were many forms and sects of socialism and communism proliferated at the time, it was Pierre Leroux who caught the attention of Sand in the late 1830's, and eventually convinced Sand to call herself a socialist.

While somewhat forgotten by history, Leroux popularized the idea of democratic socialism, and even is credited with creating the term "socialism." Although he would never be as famous as some of his contemporaries, "his major contribution to socialist thought [was] his popularizing of the notion that an egalitarian order should possess institutions of representative democracy in which individual liberties are respected."<sup>11</sup> Leroux originated as a Saint-Simonian, a branch of socialism originally founded by Henri de Saint-Simon who had lived through the 1789 French Revolution and believed,

"in the inauguration of a new society dominated by a scientific elite and later by an industrial elite...the world's scientific geniuses organized into a new 'Religion

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<sup>10</sup> David H. Pinkney. "Centralization Made Real," *Decisive Years in France, 1840-1847* (1986): 56.

<sup>11</sup> Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux and the Birth of Democratic Socialism*. (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976), I.

of Newton.’ The supreme council of this new religion would organize the world into a scientific and progressive manner.”<sup>12</sup>

After Saint-Simon died in 1825, his followers continued to expand upon his ideas. These ideas turned into the belief in a society ruled by a group of men who were to be universally recognized as superior and rule according to their judgement.<sup>13</sup> Eventually Leroux moved away from this group as he, “rejected the hierarchical theories of that movement and argued that man need not give up his freedom in the pursuit of social reform.”<sup>14</sup> After leaving the Saint-Simonians, Leroux began to develop his own ideas and conceptions of socialism. For Leroux, his, “social optimism was based on the twin pillars of history and religion. Viewing religion as the gradual unfolding of moral ideas, he saw a direct line from Jesus to the French Revolution to a new socialist order.”<sup>15</sup> As he began to develop his own beliefs, he was the first to explore the concept of “democratic socialism.” As that idea gained popularity Leroux became one of the most well-known socialists of his time.

While there were many socialists who came before Leroux, there were none who combined both democratic and socialist beliefs. Leroux ended up being the first to complete the idea of democratic socialism. A concept which espoused the belief in a society which was determined by majority rule and in which the workers controlled the workplace and would be financially compensated according to their needs.<sup>16</sup> Leroux began to develop these ideas prior to the July Revolution of 1830. During this time, although their ideas did not completely align, he

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<sup>12</sup> Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux*. 50 “...ruled by powerful leaders the scope of whose power would be limited by none of the constitutional restraints that were necessary in the critical epoch when men could place no trust in their rulers...society will be led by universally recognized superior men devoted to its moral, intellectual, and material betterment.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 61

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 1. “the first thinker to combine the strands of democratic socialist ideology: an economy in which men are paid according to their needs and in which the workers control the workplace, a political order in which civil liberties are respected under representative institutions of majority rule”

often found himself allied with the republicans. At the end of the July Revolution Leroux retreated from politics as he found all of his, “experiences with active liberal or republican politics seem[ed] to have been all negative.”<sup>17</sup> Although not active in politics, Leroux continued to develop his political and economic philosophy. His writings eventually gained the attention of George Sand, leading to a close friendship and ultimately shaping Sand’s own view of socialism.

Sand and Leroux’s bond can be seen through the many letters sent between the two, and in Sand’s own work. Sand even dedicated her 1839 novel *Spiridion* to Leroux. This novel focuses on monastery founded by a converted Jew named Spiridion who eventually moved away from Catholicism and dedicated himself to a religion of justice and peace. Both the plot of this novel and Sand’s warm dedication to Leroux show Sand’s total acceptance and adoption of Leroux’s beliefs and ideals. The plot itself seems to be a testament to Leroux’s conviction that, “socialism was the new religion bound to replace a Christianity that had outlived its usefulness.”<sup>18</sup> Sand’s novel appears to mirror this belief that Christianity would be replaced by a new form of social doctrine.<sup>19</sup> Sand’s dedication also indicates a devoted friendship between the two as she writes, “Friend and brother through the years, father and master through virtue and science, accept one of my tales, not as a work dignified to be dedicated to you, but as a testimony of friendship and veneration.”<sup>20</sup> While this brief dedication cannot fully encompass the relationship between the two, it does indicate the high esteem to which Sand held Leroux. It also shows the degree to which Sand supported Leroux’s teachings. Sand fully adopted Leroux’s teachings, and where she had once considered herself a republican, she now fully embraced

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 102.

<sup>18</sup> Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux*. I

<sup>19</sup> Having no strong conviction to Catholicism or a specific sect of Christianity, Sand is open to finding God in places other than the Christian church.

<sup>20</sup> George Sand. *Spiridion*; “Ami et frère par les années, père et maître par la vertu et la science, agréez l'envoi d'un de mes contes, non comme un travail digne de vous être dédié, mais comme un témoignage d'amitié et de vénération”

socialism.<sup>21</sup> In a letter written in January of 1834 to a friend, Sand even went as far as to say, “...I accept every leap of our sublime Bohemian. I will follow him into every sphere that he springs into. Life lies within him, and his life is in sympathy with my own.”<sup>22</sup> Although this letter appears to indicate almost blind devotion, towards 1848 Sand’s own pragmatism eventually led her to question Leroux and his means of achieving his vision of socialism.

Sand’s relationship to Leroux and his theory of socialism can also be seen in her correspondence. In a letter from Sand to a friend she makes reference to one of Leroux’s beliefs regarding “circulus.” This idea is further explained,

“This is the theory dear to Leroux ‘Man is the reproducer of his own subsistence.’ According to the theories of Malthus affirming that man’s means of subsistence would always increase less quickly than the progression of the population of the globe, Leroux opposed his law of the circulus, according to which animate beings return to the earth, through their excrement, the organic matter which they have borrowed from it to feed themselves. He further deduced that every man had the right to live, even without working.”<sup>23</sup>

As this was one of Leroux’s more outrageous ideas, it was Sand who attempted to redirect him from this theory. The footnote of Sand’s correspondence even notes, “The common sense of George Sand showed him the limits of this famous law.”<sup>24</sup> Although this proposal in some ways appears ridiculous, it highlights the relationship between Leroux, Sand, and their shared beliefs. Leroux provided the basis of their understanding of socialism, but Sand’s common sense reigned

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<sup>21</sup> While the republicans and the socialists did share some opinions and at times found themselves allied, there were also differences between the two parties. Leroux criticized the republicans for their “blind preoccupation with daily political conflicts that prevented them from developing a social program expressive of their ideals.” Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux*. 96

<sup>22</sup> Jack Bakunin. *Pierre Leroux*. 199

<sup>23</sup> Georges Lubin. *Correspondance: Textes réunis, classes et annotés par Georges Lubin Tome Huitième*. (Paris: Garnier Frères 1971) 165; “C’est la théorie chère à Leroux ‘L’homme est reproducteur de sa propre subsistance.’ Aux théories de Malthus affirmant que les moyens de subsistance de l’homme augmenteraient toujours moins vite que la progression de la population du globe, Leroux opposait sa loi du circulus, suivant laquelle les êtres animés rendent à la terre, par leurs excréments, la matière organique qu’ils lui ont empruntée pour se nourrir. Il en déduisait en outre que tout homme avait le droit de vivre, même sans travailler.”

<sup>24</sup> Georges Lubin, *Correspondances* 165; “Le bon sens de George Sand lui à montrer les limites de cette fameuse loi”



in the more extreme of Leroux's ideas. This same pragmatism would eventually continue to drive Sand's understanding of social issues such as feminism and abolition. Although Sand's writings mark her as one of the leading progressive minds of the nineteenth century, her practical mindset always looked to the most sensible means achieve her goals.

As the Revolution of 1848 approached and tensions between classes and factions increased, Leroux continued to stay out of politics. This political abstentionism created a division between Leroux and many of his contemporaries and followers. Although Sand originally supported Leroux's decision to abstain from politics, once a revolution appeared to be imminent, she became more and more disillusioned with his decision. Writing to George Poncey, Sand lamented,

“that Leroux's theories were ‘good in themselves but inapplicable in my opinion to this emergency.’ Leroux, she complained, simply did not deal with the facts of real life. The next month she wrote to [Giuseppe] Mazzini that Leroux was absorbed in presenting overly detailed and utopian religious doctrines. She maintained that she did not believe in ‘systems that could be applied a priori.’ Social change required ‘le concours de l’humanité et l’inspiration de l’action général.’<sup>25</sup> Leroux, she reported, was in a state of ‘metaphysical drunkenness’ and could not see the inevitable conflict facing the nation.”<sup>26</sup>

By 1848 Sand felt that it was finally time for their socialist beliefs to be put into place. Leroux still believed it was too soon for this, causing Sand to distance herself from some of his ideas. Although Sand still held Leroux and his opinions in high regard, Sand felt his ideas needed to have a practical use. While Leroux was satisfied with the philosophy of socialism, Sand focused on creating actual change by implanting new policies. As is true with most of Sand's beliefs, even her most aspirational ideas must have some sort practical implementation.

### Sand's Socialist Views

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<sup>25</sup> The help of humanity and inspiration of general action.

<sup>26</sup> Jack Bakunin, *Pierre Leroux*, 211-212.

Building on the concepts of “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” Sand’s understanding of socialism was based in her belief in the importance of popular sovereignty and the public sphere. Sand believed, “This sovereignty implies duties, in the first place social reform.”<sup>27</sup> With popular sovereignty came the need to implement new reforms, one of which being the destruction of the social classes. Sand found the division of people and focus on individualism to be a detriment to the whole of society. She also viewed the Revolution of 1848 as social in nature, not just political, “Our revolution is not only political, but social. Socialism is the goal, the republic is the means.”<sup>28</sup> The republic that emerged from the revolution may not Sand’s ideal form of government, but it brought her closer to her idea of a socialist government in which there no more social distinctions, popular sovereignty was guaranteed, and the workers controlled the workplace.

By 1848 Sand had entered the political fray, and even Leroux eventually found himself persuaded to become politically active. Following the February Revolution of 1848 Louis-Philippe d’Orléans abdicated the throne and was exiled from France. This event led to the Provisional Government of the French Republic, whose goal was to prepare the country for a new constitutional republic. Following the change in government, Leroux was elected mayor of Boussac and lent his support to the Provisional government, while Sand continued to publish articles and pamphlets supporting socialist ideals. In her article, “La souveraineté, c’est l’égalité” Sand defends her beliefs against her detractors. Listing potential arguments against popular sovereignty and then countering them, Sand declared,

“You are mistaken. First your examples are almost always false. This farmer who cannot read may have a more generous heart or purer morals than yours. But

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<sup>27</sup> George Sand, “Socialisme” in *Politique et polémiques (1843–1850)*, (Paris, 2004), Présentation Michelle Perrot (Paris, 1997): 307; “cette souveraineté implique des devoirs, en premier lieu celui de la réforme sociale.”

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 307; “Notre révolution n’est pas seulement politique, mais sociale. Le socialisme est le but, le république est le moyen.”

supposing that they are perverted or rude, consider that the vice and stupidity of the poor are the work of a society who does nothing for them and who left their soul and their life to become the prey of evil”<sup>29</sup>

This aspect of popular sovereignty was an important aspect of Sand’s socialist ideas. Due to her adherence to theory of democratic socialism, the idea of a democratic system of representation was a core tenet of her beliefs. She argued that the workplace would be controlled by the workers, but all men should have equal representation in politics. Many who argued against popular sovereignty did not consider the fact that the existing social structure inherently perpetuated inequality in the lower classes. While those of the upper classes often assumed that the problems of the lower classes were self-induced, Sand drew attention to the fact those in the lower classes still display admirable traits, and, even if they do not, their objectionable actions are partly due to the fact that they live in a social structure that has often denied them the help and assistance they need. Although these issues would continue to be the subject of debate for years to come, Sand demonstrates her fervent belief in a socialism that will confirm popular sovereignty. By obtaining this right, more people will have the ability to vote on and have an impact on all areas of France’s socio-political structure.

In defending her argument, Sand leaves no possible objection unanswered. Sand preemptively addresses the possible objection that God chooses to make some men inherently good and other inherently bad. Rejecting this as a valid counter point she states,

“What do you know of a man who was just born? Your law of inequality which strikes all of the poor in order to perpetuate their state of misery, does it choose their elected from the cradle? Chance does the rest in your society. In all classes, we see good and bad men emerge.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 314; “Vous vous trompez. D’abord vos exemples sont presque toujours faux...Ce paysan qui ne sait pas lire a peut-être un cœur plus généreux ou des mœurs plus pures que le vôtres. Mais en supposant qu’ils soient pervers ou grossiers, considérez que la vice et l’abrutissement du pauvre sont l’ouvrage d’une société qui n’a rien fait pour eux et qui a laissé leur âme et leur vie devenir la proie du mal.”

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 314-315; “Que savez-vous d’un homme qui vient de naître? Votre loi d’inégalité qui frappe en masse sur tous les pauvres pour perpétuer leur état de misère et d’ignorance, choisit-elle ses élus au berceau?... Le hasard fait le reste dans votre société. Dans toutes les classes, on voit surgir des hommes bons ou mauvaises.”

Once again, Sand tackles a prominent counter-point raised by those in the upper classes. Instead of taking responsibility for the failures of the social structure, or making an active attempt to change it, many felt it was sufficient to blame existing disparities between classes on God or fate. Sand identifies the main fault in this belief, which is the fact that there are bad men in every class. Sand accounts for the fact that there may be more “bad” people in the lower classes as it is much more likely that the poor have difficult lives because of the unfair structure of social classes and an imbalance of power. In order to turn Sand’s vision of socialism into a reality, it is necessary for all men to be equal, so that they can partake in the representative institutions that protect civil liberties. Therefore, Sand’s fierce defense of popular sovereignty is also a defense of her concept of democratic socialism.

While the acknowledgement of popular sovereignty as the basis of the Republic is one of the main aspects of Sand’s view of socialism, the other essential element of her belief is the importance of the public sphere. Following the idea of “fraternité,” Sand placed importance on the public sphere and the fraternal bond that connects the public. One of Sand’s main concerns was educating the public, so in March of 1848, following the success of the revolution and the implementation of the Provisional Government, Sand wrote the first of her “Lettres au Peuple.” This public letter was published and distributed by editor Jules Hetzel as a brochure and later republished in George Sand’s own weekly newspaper *La Cause du Peuple*. In addressing “le peuple” it appears that Sand was truly addressing all of France as she believed, “The tyrant is as unhappy as the slave...[and] the well-being that one does not wish to share with others...is a remorse which oppresses the soul and disturbs sleep.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore it is not just the poor who

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<sup>31</sup> George Sand. “Lettres au Peuple,” *Politique et polémiques* 235; “le tyran est aussi malheureux que l’esclave..[et] le bien-être qu'on n'espère pas faire partage aux autres [...] est un remords qui opprime l'âme et trouble le sommeil”

would also benefit under her vision of a socialist government. The first letter titled “Hier et Aujourd’hui,” introduced Sand’s idea, “It is coming, oh people! A very simple, but very absolute truth, of which you yourself will soon be imbued with; and here is this truth: the isolated man is nothing.”<sup>32</sup> She expanded upon this concept stating, “The present, is life and life is not in isolation. Until today society lived under the caste system: It was social isolation.”<sup>33</sup> Similar to Sand’s focus on breaking down social classes in order to ensure equality, Sand once again calls for the destruction of social classes as they promoted a sense of separation and isolation. Sand described the effect that this isolation had on French society,

“In this state of fateful separation, members of the general family, deprived of the necessary contact that they should have between them, did not recognize each other. Deprived of political rights, you were in a state of minority and eternal childhood... A portion of humanity cannot separate itself by the heart and the thought of contact and consent of others, without falling into the false and the unjust.”<sup>34</sup>

By dividing the French in various social classes and giving certain classes the power make decisions that affect all of the French it is impossible for those in power to make choices that positively impact everyone in France. In Sand’s word choice there is even a sense of a desire to move towards universality. In using the non-formal “tu” instead of the formal “vous,” Sand may be indicating her desire to fully remove distinctions and hierarchies from all aspects of life. According to Sand’s belief, it is only in removing social distinctions and allowing all Frenchmen equal rights, that decisions will be made in the best interest of France as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> George Sand. “Hier et Aujourd’hui,” *Politique et polémiques* 240; “Cela vient, ô peuple! d'une vérité bien simple, mais bien absolue, dont tu seras bien bientôt pénétré toi-même; et voici cette vérité: l'homme isolé n'est rien”

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 241; “Le présent, c'est la vie et la vie n'est pas dans l'isolement. Jusqu'à ce jour, les sociétés ont vécu sous le régime des castes: c'était l'isolement social”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 241; “Dans cet état de funeste séparation, les membres de la famille générale, privés du contact nécessaire qu'ils doivent avoir entre eux, se méconnaissent mutuellement. Privé de droits politiques, tu étais dans un état de minorité et d'enfance éternelle...Une portion de l'humanité ne peut pas se séparer par le cœur et la pensée du contact et du consentement des autres, sans tomber dans les faux et dans l'injuste”

<sup>35</sup> It is only once this change is made that Sand believes women can start the fight for their own rights.

While many of Sand's ideas and concepts of socialism tend to be broad, and lack specifics, she does touch upon the matter of taxation. Many workers and farmers living in the countryside were upset about the increase in taxes once the Provisional Government of the Second French Republic took power in February of 1848. In an effort to soothe some of these frustrations the *ministère de l'Instruction publique* for a series of pamphlets to be written aimed at laborers and those living in the country. With help from Jean Reynaud and Agricol Perdiguier, Sand went to work creating a pamphlet. Sand and Perdiguier decided to write a dialogue between two working class brothers with Sand writing from the perspective of Blaise Bonnin and Perdiguier writing from the point of view of Claude Bonnin. In these pamphlets,

“She defends the idea of a tax as a means of redistribution, a tax which would not be proportional, but progressive. She advocates for a fiscal reform modifying the tax base by the future assembly which would also have control of the state budget.”<sup>36</sup>

One of the ways that Sand tried to appeal to the workers was to highlight the honorability of paying one's debt. Focusing on the honor of France, Sand states,

“And yet the Republic does not want to take advantage, in order to make its own work easier and shorter, of the right it would have to declare the State insolvent. She makes an appeal to all French citizens. She tells them: ‘You live in a country of honor; let each bring his last in order to save the honor of the nation.’”<sup>37</sup>

Sand continues her appeal by mentioning the fact that the those who live in the city were happy to pay the tax as they understood it as a necessary sacrifice. In a tone that at times borders of propagandistic, Sand attempts to use this comparison to appealing to her reader's ego. Sand claims, “If the men of the countryside did not immediately think the same, it is because they

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<sup>36</sup> Michelle Perrot. “Paroles de Blaise Bonnin aux Bons Citoyens,” *Politique et polémiques* 268; “Elle défend la conception de l'impôt comme moyen de redistribution, impôt qui serait non pas proportionnel, mais progressif. Elle préconise une réforme fiscale modifiant l'assiette de l'impôt par la future assemblée qui aurait par ailleurs le contrôle du budget de l'État.”

<sup>37</sup> George Sand. “L'Impôt,” *Politique et polémiques* 269; “Et pourtant le République ne veut pas profiter, pour rendre son travail plus aisé et plus court, du droit qu'elle aurait de déclarer l'État insolvable. La République tient l'honneur de la France et veut payer les dettes de l'État. Elle fait un appel à tous les citoyens français. Elle leur dit: ‘Vous habitez le pays de l'honneur; que chacun apporte son dernier pour sauver l'honneur de la nation’”

have not yet had the time to fully know the truth and to reflect on this on this truth.”<sup>38</sup> While perhaps appearing somewhat condescending, Sand appears to use this sense of competition between city dwellers and country dwellers to encourage the acceptance of the new tax. In this pointed comment towards those living in the country, Sand sets up her next argument in favor of taxation.

Sand’s writing eventually transitions from cajoling to a focus on necessity of taxes. She acknowledges that historically taxes were not put to good use, “We have a bad idea of taxes because, under the monarchies, tax always had a bad use.”<sup>39</sup> She then expands upon how under the Republic taxes will be put to good use, “Tax is meant to take a little extra from each in order to give a lot to all. Therefore, it is not much to pay an eighth of one’s income, in order to have the necessary outlets for trade, and the guarantee of property.”<sup>40</sup> Returning to her role of public educator, Sand identifies some of the main benefits of taxation. As Sand continues her explanation of the taxes, she describes the possible inequality that could develop if the government did not collect any taxes from the people,

“If each were to look after themselves, or to open a path to transport crops and goods, the richest could not do so, and, in order to keep one eighth of his income, each would lose the entirety of his income. We would soon live like savages who give up cultivating the land and die in misery in a fertile land.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 269; “si les hommes des campagnes n’ont pas pensé tout de suite la même, c’est parce qu’ils n’ont pas encore eu le temps de bien connaître la vérité et de faire sur cette vérité de bonnes réflexions”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 270; “On se fait de l’impôt une mauvaise idée parce que, sous les monarchies, l’impôt a toujours eu un mauvais emploi.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 270; “L’impôt est destiné à prendre un peu du trop de chacun pour donner beaucoup à tous. Ainsi, c’est peu que de payer huitième de son revenu, pour avoir les débouchés nécessaires au commerce, et la sûreté de la propriété.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 270; “Si chacun était obligé de se garder soi-même, ou de s’ouvrir un chemin pour transporter ses récoltes et ses marchandises, les plus riches ne le pourraient pas, et, pour conserver le huitième de son revenu, chacun perdrait la totalité de son revenu. Nous vivrions bientôt comme les sauvages qui renoncent à cultiver la terre et meurent en misère dans des pays fertiles”

With Sand ever focused on achieving equality, her stance on taxation makes sense as she fears that without a fair system of taxation there would once again be a divide between the rich and the poor. By giving the government control of public areas such as transportation, an element of equality is guaranteed. Her belief in the necessity of taxation also demonstrates her characteristic practicality or pragmatism. Although ideally Sand would not want to tax the working class she knows that the government needs money in order to function. Although Sand tries to appeal to the *campagnards* by a variety of means, it is this last explanation that illustrates how taxes fit into Sand's understanding of socialism.

Sand's focus on popular sovereignty, the public sphere, and taxation act as the foundation of her idea of a democratic socialistic state. When connecting all of these various ideas and elements of Sand's socialist beliefs, a fuller picture of Sand's ideology becomes clear. Sand sums up many of her ideas in her proclamation,

“Reign fraternally with you equals of all classes; because the Republic, this holy ark of the covenant, under the ruins of which from now on we must all perish rather than abandon it, the Republic this form par excellence of lasting societies, proclaims and consecrates before the universe, that which it takes as witness to its pledge, equal rights for all men. You are going to reign, you are going to reign, you are going to be initiated to the knowledge of those of your brothers whom yesterday we called your masters.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Sand's writing lacks the specificity that may be found in that of many of the time's more prominent socialists, it is clear that Sand's main focus is on equality. All the other aspects of her beliefs work to support this primary concern of social equality.

Understanding this belief as the basis of Sand's political and social opinions allows for a

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<sup>42</sup> George Sand. *Bulletins de la République: émanés du ministère de l'intérieur du 13 mars au 6 mai 1848*. (Paris, 1848): 21; “Règne fraternellement avec tes égaux de toutes les classes; car la République, cette arche sainte de l'alliance, sous les ruines de laquelle désormais nous devons tous périr plutôt que de l'abandonner, la République, cette forme par excellence des sociétés durables, proclame et consacre devant l'univers, qu'elle prend à témoin de son serment, l'égalité des droits de tous les hommes. Tu vas régner, tu vas régner, tu vas être initié aux lumières de ceux de tes frères qu'hier encore on appelait tes maîtres.”



greater understanding Sand's works and her beliefs on other topics such as women's rights and abolition. Equality is Sand's goal, but practicality is a necessary part of the means. In terms of taxation, a tax is a practical investment needed to achieve a governmental system that favors equality. As Sand addresses the larger social questions of her time, these concepts of equality and practicality will remain at the forefront of her beliefs.

### Sand's View on Women's Rights

Believing that equality for women could only be achieved following a dramatic reconstruction of French government and society, Sand prioritized socialism over women's rights. Despite this prioritization, the fight for women's equality remained an issue closely linked to her closely held socialist beliefs. There are scholars who miss the link between Sand's socialist beliefs and her ideals about women's rights due to Sand's condemnation of many of the feminist groups that were emerging in the 1840's. One such group even nominated Sand as a candidate for the National Assembly, earning a swift condemnation from Sand herself.<sup>43</sup> In a letter to the editors of *La Reforme* and *La Vraie République*, Sand wrote,

“A newspaper written by ladies who proclaimed my candidacy for the National Assembly...But my silence would make one think that I adhere to the principles of which this newspaper would like to be the representative. I therefore implore you to receive and make known the following declaration:

1. I hope that no vote wants to lose their vote in taking the fantasy to write my name on their ballot...freedom of opinion is equal for both sexes, but I cannot allow

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<sup>43</sup> A group of feminists gather at the Club de la Rue Taranne suggested the possibility of Sand being nominated to the National Assembly. Shortly after this suggestion was published in *La Voix des Femmes* (6 April 1848) causing rumors to swirl that Sand was nominated for a seat in the National Assembly. Naomi Schor, ed Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, “Feminism and George Sand: Lettres à Marcie,” *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge 1992), 41.

that, without my consent, I be taken for the symbol of a female group with which I have never had the slightest relationship pleasant or unpleasant.”<sup>44</sup>

Sand’s response to this nomination can be often be read as anti-feminist, but even in her response it is clear that Sand’s reasoning is logical and not a rejection of feminist views. Sand’s points break down why she does not agree with this group using her name to promote their cause. The first reason highlights the fact that Sand would not want any voters to use their vote attempting to elect her. In nominating Sand without consulting her first, voters could believe that Sand was truly running for office and their vote would ultimately go to waste. For Sand and many others, these votes are precious and to squander them on a fake candidate would mean there is less of a likelihood that the true socialist candidate would be elected. The other main point that Sand makes in her letter is the fact that she has never met any of these women nor is she affiliated with the group they belong to. Sand does not want to represent the ideals of a group with which she has no relationship. While there are still some who may read into this event as demonstrating Sand’s antifeminist beliefs, in reality this was an attempt to use George Sand as a figure head for a cause without her consent.

Sand fully explains her views on women’s rights and how they align with her socialist beliefs in her letter written in April of 1848 to the Comité central of the socialist party. In this letter, Sand breaks down her beliefs into their simplest form, “Should women one day participate in politics? Yes, one day, I agree with you, but is this day near? No, I don’t think so, and in order

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<sup>44</sup> George Sand. *Correspondance*, 391-392; “Un journal rédigé par des dames a proclamé ma candidature à l’Assemblée Nationale... Mais mon silence pourrait faire croire que j’adhère aux principes dont ce journal voudrait se faire l’organe. Je vous prie donc de recevoir et de vouloir bien faire connaitre la déclaration suivante:

1. J’espère qu’aucun électeur ne voudra perdre son vote en prenant fantaisie d’écrire mon nom sur son billet. ... la liberté d’opinion est également pour les deux sexes, mais je ne puis permettre que, sans mon aveu, on me prenne pour l’enseigne d’un cénacle féminin avec lequel je n’ai jamais eu la moindre relation agréable ou fâcheuse”

for the status of women to be transformed in this way, it is necessary that society is radically transformed.”<sup>45</sup> Sand does not disagree with the main idea that women should participate in politics, she disagrees with the way in which the feminist groups of her time are attempting to achieve this. For Sand, the right to participate in politics comes at the end of women’s fight for equality. She raises the fact that,

“The woman being under the guardianship and dependence of the man by marriage, it is absolutely impossible that she presents guarantees of political independence, unless individually breaking, and in defiance of the laws and customs, this guardianship that the laws and customs sanction.”<sup>46</sup>

In order to begin this progression towards total equality between the sexes, Sand believed that women first need to focus on gaining rights and liberties in their marriages. The opinions of the feminist groups are not inherently different from Sand’s own opinion, it is simply a disagreement in the means to achieve the same goal. Sand choosing a different path to the same result does not mean she is not feminist and it does not take away from all of the powerful arguments she has made in favor of women’s rights. It is Sand’s ardent belief in practicality that inspires both her socialist ideals and her opinions on women’s rights .

Furthering the argument that Sand puts forth in many of her novels, Sand again attacks the restrictions placed on women in marriage. To make sure that there is no uncertainty regarding her opinions on women’s rights Sand asserts,

“...I will say all my thoughts on this famous emancipation of women which we have talked of so much lately...It simply consists of giving back to women the civil rights that marriage alone takes from them, that celibacy alone conserves for them, detestable error of our legislation that in effect places the woman in a greedy dependency of man, and which makes marriage a state of eternal minority,

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<sup>45</sup> Sand. *Correspondance*, 401; “Les femmes doivent-elles participer un jour à la vie politique? Oui, un jour, je le crois avec vous, mais ce jour est-il proche? Non, je ne le crois pas, et pour la condition des femmes soit ainsi transformée, il faut que la société soit transformée radicalement.”

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 401; “La femme étant sous la tutelle et dans la dépendance de l'homme par le mariage, il est absolument impossible qu'elle présente des garanties d'indépendance politique, à moins de briser individuellement et au mépris des lois et des mœurs, cette tutelle que les mœurs et les lois consacrent.”

whereas most young girls would decide to never marry if they slightest notion of civil law at the age when they renounce their rights.”<sup>47</sup>

For Sand the fact that women’s rights are taken away from them the moment they get married was clearly a political, social, and legislative issue. While there are those who view the current arrangement between men and women as natural, due to their belief that women are fundamental inferior to men, Sand rejects this idea and fully conceptualizes women’s rights as a political issue. Sand even questions the conservative line of thinking,

“It is strange that the conservatives of the old order always affectionately attribute in their lying motto these words of family and property, since the pact of marriage, as they admire it and proclaim it, absolutely destroys the rights of property to all of one sex. Either property is not a sacred thing as they claim, or marriage is not an equally sacred thing, and vice versa. Two sacred things cannot destroy each other.”<sup>48</sup>

In order to achieve that radical transformation that would grant rights to married women and eventually allow women to partake in politics, Sand sees the necessity of a new political system. The first step in towards achieving these goals is to instate a completely new form of government that will allow married women to retain their rights. Once this victory is one women can start to move towards total equality in all aspects of life, from the home to the political arena.

According to Sand, it is the socialist party and their ideals that will bring this change to France. Sand demonstrates her complete faith in the changes that the socialist party will bring to society,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 402; “...[J]e dirai toute ma pensée sur ce fameux affranchissement de la femme dont on a tant parlé dans ce temps-ci...Il consiste simplement à rendre à la femme les droits civils que le mariage seul lui enlève, que le célibat seul lui conserve; erreur détestable de notre législation qui place en effet la femme dans la dépendance cupide de l'homme, et qui fait du mariage une condition d'éternelle minorité, tandis qu'elle déciderait la plupart des jeunes filles à ne se jamais marier si elles avaient la moindre notion de la législation civile à l'âge où elles renoncent à leurs droits.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 402; “Il est étrange que les conservateurs de l'ordre ancien accolent toujours avec affectation dans leur devise menteuse ces mots de famille et de propriété, puisque le pacte du mariage, tel qu'ils l'admirent et le proclament, brise absolument les droits de propriété de tout un sexe. Ou la propriété n'est pas une chose sacrée comme ils l'affirment, ou le mariage n'est pas une chose également sacrée, et réciproquement. Deux choses sacrées ne peuvent se détruire l'une l'autre.”

“This reform is very possible and very soon, I am certain. It is one of the first question that a socialist republic will focus on, and I do not see that it can do the slightest damage to marital faithfulness or to good domestic harmony, unless one regards equality as a condition of disorder and discord. We believe the opposite, and humanity has decided so definitively.”<sup>49</sup>

Sand claims that not only is this reform one that a socialist republic will address, it will also have priority. When considering the tone and audience to which this letter is addressed to, this statement appears to demonstrate the fact that Sand’s principle of socialism is deeply intertwined with her view on women’s rights. As Sand’s social views are linked to her idea of equality, it is impossible to separate socialism from her concept of feminism. In Sand’s view both socialism and feminism are based on the concept of equality. Socialism encompasses a broader ideal of equality, while feminism focuses on attaining equality for women, especially married women. While there are undoubtedly other reasons that Sand supported the socialist party, her letter demonstrates that her feminist beliefs are intrinsically tied to her socialist beliefs.

Despite the clarity of Sand’s arguments, her views on feminism and socialism have often been reduced to simple antifeminist beliefs by modern scholars. Some scholars question why Sand did not support the feminist groups that called for her nomination to the National Assembly. Sand not only explained why she did not support this, and she later fully detailed her views on the most effective way to promote feminism. In regards to Sand’s response to the feminist group, *La Voix des Femmes*, Margaret Cohen questions Sand’s motivations,

“Sand’s hostility to this organization is, nonetheless, surprising, for the activities that she condemned closely resembled her own at the time. . .we can turn to the psychological and political pressures that may have produced [this

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 402; “Cette réforme est très possible et très prochaine, j'en ai la certitude. C'est une des premières questions dont une république socialiste aura à s'occuper, et je ne vois pas qu'elle puisse porter la moindre atteinte à la fidélité conjugale ou à la bonne harmonie domestique, à moins qu'on ne regarde l'égalité comme une condition de désordre et de discorde. Nous croyons le contraire, et l'humanité en a jugé ainsi définitivement.”

condemnation]...But Sand's reply is also consonant with her theoretical position on a woman's most appropriate means of social intervention."<sup>50</sup>

One has to question why Cohen digs into the psychological and political pressures of the times before analyzing Sand's own explanation of her beliefs. Similar to the reception of some of Sand's novels at the time, critics today still seem to miss or blatantly ignore Sand's opinions. Just as her feminist critique in *Indiana* was missed by so many male reviewers, once again Sand's feminist beliefs are misconstrued by scholars who reduce Sand's feminist leanings down to a single rejection of a feminist group. While political and psychological pressures are important to use to build context, one cannot ignore Sand's own words as she explains why and how her thoughts diverge with other feminists.

The fact that Sand rejected a group that appeared to support many of the ideals that she puts forth in her writing, is no doubt surprising to many. It even makes sense that scholars would decide to examine some of Sand's novels written in the 1840's to see if there are any ideas that support the idea that Sand is not as progressive as she appears to be. In 1849 Sand published *La Petite Fadette*, a novel centered on two twin brothers, Landry and Sylvinet, who fall in love with the same girl, Fadette. Landry ends up proposing to Fadette much to the chagrin of his brother and his father père Barbeau, who does not believe that Fadette is a suitable wife. Fadette breaks off the engagement to spare her lover the scorn of his family and the town, but the two eventually marry at the end of the novel when Fadette returns to their small town. Back in 1849 readers considered this novel a simple country love story, but more recently readers identified

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<sup>50</sup> Cohen, Margaret. "A Woman's Place: La Petite Fadette v. La Voix Des Femmes." *L'Esprit Créateur* 29, no. 2 (1989): 26–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26285819>.

Cohen claims that Sand argues that women should fight for these social ideals within the domestic realm instead of the political arena.

commentary on political and sexual equality. Upon analyzing Sand's *La Petite Fadette*, Margaret Cohen concludes,

“Summing up the moral of *Fadette*'s end, we might put it thus: women should not counter the père Barbeau's rule with hostile revolt, not only because such revolt fails to dissipate his superior power but also because it betrays the specifically feminine contribution that women can make to social reform. Charity and love have a more powerful effect on the injustices of the père Barbeau's world than aggression, and these qualities are engendered and protected in the femininely gendered domestic realm. To *La Voix des Femmes*'s demand for political participation, then counters with the argument that revolution begins at home.”<sup>51</sup>

While Cohen's arguments are faithful to the novel's events, the interpretation of Sand's feminist ideas from this novel are completely incongruous with Sand's own words. While the concept that the “revolution begins at home” does in some way reflect Sand's beliefs, it ultimately simplifies them to the point where Sand appears almost regressive. For Sand the revolution first starts in the home as women cannot be active participants in the political realm until they are no longer slaves to their husbands. Before women can fight on the frontlines of politics they must first break the chains that keep them bound to their husband and their family. Sand expresses this belief in a letter written to the Comité Central in 1848,

“Oh poor humans, until you break the scaffold and the chain of prison for the criminal, insult and inner slavery, prison and public shame for the unfaithful wife. Until then, the woman will always have the vices of the oppressed, that is to say that vices of the slave and those of you who cannot be tyrants, will be what they are today in such great numbers, the ridiculous slaves of their vindictive slaves.”<sup>52</sup>

Comparing Sand's own thoughts with the analysis of modern scholars highlights this misinterpretation. There is no emphasis on charity and love, Sand sees marriage and domesticity

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<sup>51</sup> Cohen, “A Woman's Place,” 34.

<sup>52</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, 404; “ô pauvres humains, jusqu'à ce que vous brisiez à la fois l'échafaud et la chaîne du baigne pour le criminel, l'insulte et l'esclavage intérieur, la prison et la honte publique pour la femme infidèle. Jusque-là, la femme aura toujours les vices de l'opprimé, c'est-à-dire les vices de l'esclave et ceux de vous qui ne pourront pas être tyrans, seront ce qu'ils sont aujourd'hui en si grand nombre, les esclaves ridicules de leurs esclaves vindicatifs.”

not as necessarily as the woman's realm, but as a prison she is confined to. While Sand does think the marriage and the home is where women should begin their revolt, she does not encourage women to kill their enemies with kindness, she emboldens women to fully break down the institution of marriage as it was known and rebuild it upon the basis of equality between man and wife.

### Sand on the Abolitionist Movement

Just as surprising to some modern scholars is Sand's apparent silence when it came to the issue of slavery in the 1840's. Once again those who think that Sand's silence represents her acceptance misinterpret Sand's work and her ideals. Although it is not just Sand this time who faces scrutiny; there are scholars who criticize the entire socialist party for their lack of action against France's colonial actions in Algeria and the island colonies.<sup>53</sup> The main criticism focuses on the fact that, "Despite the universalist idiom they often used, socialists responded to these divisions in ways that conflicted with the inclusiveness of a statement such as Leroux's."<sup>54</sup> This criticism may be broadly accurate, as there were undoubtedly many socialists whose views did not extend to those who lived beyond mainland France, this critique does not necessarily reflect on Sand herself. Sand was never as direct in her criticism of racial inequality and slavery as she was about women's rights, yet her anti-colonial sentiments were often featured distinctly in her novels. Similarly Sand's letters and writings indicate her aversion towards racial inequality and France's colonial efforts. Without these close readings one could easily misinterpret Sand's indirectness for a lack of support.

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<sup>53</sup> Slavery was abolished twice in France. Once regarding slavery in the French colonies in 1794. Slavery was then reinstated under Napoleon I in 1802. In 1848 slavery was once again abolished by the new republican government.

<sup>54</sup> Andrews, Naomi J. "Selective Empathy: Workers, Colonial Subjects, and the Affective Politics of French Romantic Socialism." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 36, no. 1 (2018): 2. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26892965>.



Similarly to the issue of women's rights, Sand's hesitancy to vocally support the emancipation of slaves and the colonized, appears to indicate her concern that the politicians are not going about the issue in the most efficient way. Similar to Sand's concerns regarding women's rights, Sand was also wary of the manner in which abolitionists were attempting to gain freedom for enslaved people.<sup>55</sup> Based on Sand's views on women's right it is evident that Sand believes that large social issues, such as those of race and gender, must be fixed in a certain manner. By rushing to fix a problem without fully considering the best tactics, Sand sees the inefficiency and the potentially the inability for the inequality to be ameliorated. Sand states general distaste for many of the politicians of her time,

“Anyone who takes pleasure in hearing himself called a politician or socialist will therefore be, in my opinion, very ridiculous...All men who have read a few systems or toyed with some utopians in his brain, believes himself a profound socialist. Can there be anything more frivolous? But in all times, the French have always had a mania for forming regiments without knowing with whom, and for writing on their banner a word that they do not understand.”<sup>56</sup>

Sand was unwilling to join a cause that she does not fully understand. She mocked those who rushed to join a group despite or not knowing the group's goals or motivations. Despite this reluctance to herself an abolitionist, Sand did have praise for those who fought for emancipation of the colonies, such as Victor Schoelcher. With these associations in mind, an in depth look at Sand's writing exposes her true anti-slavery and anti-colonial beliefs.

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<sup>55</sup> Doris Y. Kadish “George Sand, Napoleon, and Slavery,” University of Georgia. 13.

<https://slavery.uga.edu/index.html>; “Her response to the abolitionist agenda of emancipation at this point in time appears to parallel her attitude toward the feminist agenda of suffrage for women. As with women so too with slaves, Sand refused to jump on the liberationist bandwagon, judging precipitous and unproductive efforts to seek political rights for uneducated oppressed people.”

<sup>56</sup> George Sand, “Un Mot à la classe moyenne” *Politique et polémiques*, 165-166; “Quiconque prendra plaisir à s'entendre appeler politique ou socialiste sera donc, à mon sens, fort ridicule... Tout homme qui a lu quelques systèmes ou qui a caressé dans son cerveau quelques utopies, se croit un profond socialiste. Peut-on rien avoir de plus frivole? Mais de tout temps, les Français ont eu la manie de s'enrégimenter sans savoir avec qui, et d'écrire sur leur bannière un mot qu'ils ne comprenaient pas.”

A faint nod to Sand's true feelings is revealed in the Sand's letter, "Un mot à la classe moyen" published in the *Journal du Livret* following the February Revolution. Sand's letter is brimming with optimism regarding the new republic. She asserts that this republic will succeed while the last one did not since,

"The republic is the most beautiful and the best form of modern societies. It would be false to say that it is a dream of the golden age applicable only to primitive men. The republics of the past were incomplete sketches. They perished because they had slaves. The republic we are inaugurating will only have free men, equal in rights."<sup>57</sup>

While there remains some ambiguity regarding exactly who this equality will truly belong to, there is an obvious sense that Sand sees true equality as a pillar of the new republic. Sand is slightly more explicit in her meaning when she explains that she is not just fighting for women's rights. She clarifies,

"We don't even advocate specifically for the cause of women; we do not separate into various causes this great, this eternal cause of the ignorant and the poor... we are in France about thirty million proletarians, women, children, ignorant or oppressed of all kinds."<sup>58</sup>

Although once again Sand refrains from using the direct phrasing that many scholars search for, she highlights the fact that she is not fighting only for women. Putting these two works together one can see a more clear picture of Sand's views. In the new republic that is formed in 1848, Sand imagines a France that guarantees equality for all and rejects any kind of slavery, both figurative and literal. She refuses to accept the conditions that women face under the existing marriage laws and she consequently rejects the actual slavery enforced by colonial policy that

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<sup>57</sup> Sand, "Un Mot à la class Moyenne," 230; "La république est la plus belle et la meilleure forme des sociétés modernes. Il serait faux de dire que c'est un rêve de l'âge d'or applicable seulement à des hommes primitifs. Les républiques du passé ont été des ébauches incomplètes. Elles ont péri parce qu'elles avaient des esclaves. La république que nous inaugurons n'aura que des hommes libres, égaux en droits."

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 190; "Nous ne faisons même pas un plaidoyer particulier pour la cause des femmes; nous ne séparons pas en causes diverses cette grande, cette éternelle cause des ignorants et des pauvres... nous sommes en France environ trente millions de prolétaires, de femmes, d'enfants, d'ignorants ou d'opprimés de toute sorte.."

places other under oppression. Those who are unable to piece together all of Sand's work and the messages she espouses will be unable to identify her clear and anti-slavery and anti-inequality beliefs.

Sand's remarks regarding the work of leading abolitionists such as Victor Schoelcher, demonstrate Sand's respect for their views, but disagreement with Schoelcher's methods.

Schoelcher was one of the most radical and ardent supporters of abolition even if meant that France would lose its colonies. Though his pro-abolition argument is, "attentive to property rights and the needs of the state, maintained that the defense of the rights of all citizens must come before democratic state-building, even if this priority should cost France her American colonies."<sup>59</sup> As can be deduced from Sand earlier opinions on women's rights, this seemingly "drastic" thinking for the time would not align with Sand's own method of achieving equality.

Yet despite their differences in opinions on how to obtain this equality, it is clear that Sand still respected Schoelcher and his ideas. In journal entry from December of 1851 Sand stated,

"Schoelcher would have found himself at a barricade which had just been erected and which was guarded by five men. He would have urged these men not to sacrifice themselves unnecessarily... He is a worthy man, this Schoelcher, not very advanced, but firm and loyal from his point of view."<sup>60</sup>

Although at this point in time Schoelcher had already succeeded in his fight for emancipation, Sand still seems to disagree that his methods are always the best. While this statement regarding Schoelcher may come off as a back-handed compliment, it is an expected response from Sand.

As can be seen in her responses to other social issues, there is a respect for the ideas that

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<sup>59</sup> NESBITT, NICK. "Victor Schoelcher, Tocqueville, and the Abolition of Slavery." In *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant*, 68. Liverpool University Press, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5vjnb3.7>.

<sup>60</sup> George Sand. "Journal de Décembre 1851," *Souvenirs et idées*, (Paris: Calamm-Lévy, 1939): 87; "Schœlcher se serait trouvé à une barricade que l'on venait d'élever et qui était gardée par cinq hommes. Il aurait engagé ces hommes à ne pas se sacrifier inutilement... C'est un digne homme ce Schœlcher, pas très *avancé*, mais ferme et loyal à son point de vue."

Schoelcher represents. Sand admires his dedication to his cause, yet she claims he is not advanced because she does not agree with the means he typically employed to obtain his goals. Sand's comments on Schoelcher reinforce the fact that, although Sand shared similar social ideals with many of her more progressive contemporaries, she felt it was necessary to use more practical means or methods of achieving these rights. In Sand's view, in order to maintain these rights in the long run it was necessary to be pragmatic, even if that meant delaying the attainment of these rights.

When evaluating Sand's role in this moment in France's history, many scholars like to put Sand into very definite categories. Either Sand is a feminist or she is not. She is either pro-abolition or she is fully against it. When presented with Sand's writing and works it becomes quickly evident that her beliefs do not fit neatly into these categories. She is a somehow a feminist who believes women should not have the right to vote quite yet. The reason that Sand is able to exist in both categories is due to her nearly zealous belief in practicality. Sand is not looking for immediate gratification; she is willing to take the longer more pragmatic path to equality. In attempting to understand Sand in relation to the terms feminist and abolitionist it is important that these titles are preceded by her foremost role as a pragmatist. Sand may not be a feminist but she can be considered a pragmatic feminist or a practical progressive. With this insight into unique belief system, it is easier to understand how Sand and her works fit into the bigger political and social environment of France in the 1840's.

### Chapter Three: Optimism in the Face of Calamity

With the creation of the French Second Republic, it appeared possible that some of George Sand's hopes of democratic socialism might come to pass. Ultimately this was not to happen as Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, was elected president of the Republic in December of 1848. By 1851, Louis Napoleon staged a coup d'état against the republic to become Emperor Napoleon III of France, creating the Second French Empire. Sand herself was neither a supporter nor critic of Napoleon III, noting both his strengths and his flaws, "Without real instruction he showed great intelligence and had the rudiments and even flashes of genius...[he was] capable of the greatest political crimes because his notion of the rights of humanity differs from ours."<sup>1</sup> Napoleon III remained emperor for nearly twenty years until the France's loss in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Only two months into the war, Napoleon III was taken prisoner at the Battle of Sedan, a decisive victory for the Prussian forces.<sup>2</sup> The loss of the emperor caused the Government of National Defense to take control of the country, and questions remained about the policies that would be adopted by this new governmental system. With Prussian troops quickly approaching Paris and unsettled new government, the scene was set for the rise of the Paris Commune.

By 1871 Paris was under siege by the Prussian troops. Without food or supplies many Parisians were left to starve. Finding the situation hopeless, the Government of National Defense eventually came to an agreement with Otto von Bismack for an armistice.<sup>3</sup> Elections were held in February 1871 to establish a government that would negotiate terms of peace with Prussia.

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<sup>1</sup> "George Sand on the Dead Emperor." The New York Times. February 14, 1873. 5.  
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1873/02/14/79033508.html>

<sup>2</sup> David Wetzel, *A duel of giants: Bismark Napoleon III, and the origins of the Franco-Prussian War*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> David Wetzel. *A duel of giants*.

Adolphe Thiers, originally a leftist republican but at this time considered moderately conservative, was elected chief executive of the new government.<sup>4</sup> The newly elected National Assembled was largely composed of monarchists and Thiers himself was supported both by monarchists and conservative republicans.<sup>5</sup> The radical republicans and socialists who had remained in Paris throughout the empire and the war soon found supporters in the members of the National Guard who had attempted to defend the city against the Prussians. These Parisian now felt betrayed by the government's surrender. From the government's base in Versailles, Thiers attempted to seize the arms that National Guard had refused to give up following the war. This action lead to the beginning of the uprising of the Paris Commune. The Parisians took over several governmental buildings and Thiers decided to withdraw his troops. For the next two months the capital would be under control of left-wing communards.

Although not fated to rule for long the communards attempted to enact progressive policies within the city during their time in power. There was a specific focus on free public educations and even a committee devoted to girls' education. Overall the Commune aimed to achieve "municipal autonomy" along with "a system of communal insurance against all social risks,' including unemployment and bankruptcy, as well as systematic investigation into procuring capital and credit for individual workers."<sup>6</sup> The commune was headed by The Commune Council, composed of sixty-five men. While all members of this body aimed to create political and social reforms, from the start there were divisions regarding the future of the

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<sup>4</sup> At this point in time Thiers was a believer in a republic, but did not believe in a full democracy. He was wary of the lower classes hesitant to support universal suffrage. Thiers tended to be fiscally conservative and, "he favored strong central government with extensive powers to regulate local governments, he opposed national government spending on local projects that he expected communities to maintain."; Abigail Mellen, "Adolphe Thiers: The Making of a Conservative Liberal." (New York University, 1991): 237.

<sup>5</sup> Many republicans were suspicious of Thiers as had at one point indicated support for the restoration of a monarchy. They feared that he was part of a larger plot to ultimately destroy the Republic; John Merriman, *Massacre: Life and Death of the Paris Commune*. (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> John Merriman. *Massacre*. 37.

Commune. Prudhonians and Jacobins formed the two major divisions with the Prudhonians believing in a true popular democracy without any existence of a state. Contrary to this belief, the Jacobins preferred a more authoritarian structure.<sup>7</sup> With these internal conflicts, the Commune struggled to assemble a stable political infrastructure in the city. The Commune also struggled to find the necessary money and resources to keep the promises it made to the people of Paris. By the time Thiers arrived with his troops only a few months later, despite all of its grand intentions, the Commune began to crumble under all the pressure.

While insurrections had not been that uncommon in France over the past few decades, Thiers crushed this rebellion with appalling violence, the likes of which had been seen since the Great Revolution. On May 7 of 1871 Thiers' troops returned to Paris and commenced "the bloody week." The *communards* set up barricades and attempted to defend the city, but by the end of the week up to twenty-five thousand people were dead, a majority of them communards. The French troops' vicious treatment of the communards or anyone suspected to be a communard led to retaliatory killing of prominent hostages and the burning of buildings such as the Tuileries Palace and the Hôtel-de-ville. As this grim period came to an end, many French were haunted by the brutality of the past week. For French intellectuals this was also a challenging time to an open socialist as many socialists and communists had been killed or exiled during "the bloody week."

George Sand, still a leading socialist, was rather reserved on the subject of the Paris Commune. Unlike the Revolution of 1848, Sand did not publish pamphlets supporting either side of the conflict. Despite this reticence, Sand did disclose her opinions on the situation in both her correspondences with her friend and fellow novelist Gustave Flaubert and her 1872 novel,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid 41.

*Nanon*. In these writings, it is clear that although Sand distances herself from the actions of the Commune of Paris, she retained an ardent belief in classless society based in equality. Although considered by many to be a failed experiment in socialism, Sand used the Paris Commune to reaffirm her faith in socialism. Blending a sense of pragmatism and optimism, Sand claimed that a true socialist society could only be achieved through non-violent means.

### Sand's Initial Reactions to the Paris Commune

To understand Sand's reaction to the Paris Commune it is important to understand the situation Sand found herself in during the spring of 1871. Although the events of the Paris Commune did not cause Sand to fully reject the political principles that she developed in the 1840's, Sand did renounce the Commune and the communards. Sand's opinion of the Commune was likely affected by disastrous French performance in the Franco-Prussian War. In November of 1870, Sand wrote in her book recording her life during the war, *Journal d'un voyageur pendant la guerre*,<sup>8</sup>

“Thousands of men have just strewn the battlefields with their mutilated corpses... But we know at least that part of the life of these dead passes through us and there increases tenfold the love of truth, the horror of war for war's sake, the need to love, the feeling of the ideal life, which is none other than normal sight as we are called to know it... War has come, war is at the heart of France, and, today, Paris is besieged !”<sup>9</sup>

Following France's many losses to Prussia, Sand was horrified by the war and was focused on finding the best path towards peace for the country. While many communards in Paris felt

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<sup>8</sup> George Sand used this work to record her emotions throughout the Franco-Prussian war. This work is more like a diary, allowing Sand to react to the events and the difficulties of the war.

<sup>9</sup> George Sand. *Journal d'un voyageur pendant la guerre* (Le Castor Astral, 2004), 21; “Des milliers d'hommes viennent de joncher les champs de bataille de leurs cadavres mutilés... Mais nous savons au moins qu'une partie de la vie de ces morts passe en nous et y décuple l'amour du vrai, l'horreur de la guerre pour la guerre, le besoin d'aimer, le sentiment de la vie idéale, qui n'est autre que la vue normale telle que nous sommes appelés à la connaître... La guerre est venue, la guerre est au cœur de la France, et, aujourd'hui, Paris investi!”



betrayed by the government for agreeing to an armistice with the Prussians, Sand was more focused on the need to rebuild France. After the losses of the Franco-Prussian War, a civil war within France could only further weaken the country. While Sand may have shared some of the same goals as the communards, such as free public education, she did not agree with the means they were using to obtain these goals.

As the only other viable option to the communards, Sand reluctantly decided to support Adolphe Thiers and his new republic. Writing to her friend and fellow writer, Edmond Plauchut, Sand remarked, “Mr. Thiers is not the ideal, we shouldn’t ask him to be it. We have to accept him as a bridge between Paris and France, between the Republic and reactionaries, since France, outside of Paris, is reactionary.”<sup>10</sup> Although Thiers may not have been Sand’s ideal alternative to the communards, Sand recognized in Thiers the surest way to peace and stability in France. With Thiers came the promise of a stable republic, while the Commune seemed too unstable to guarantee any lasting changes. Sand’s pragmatic outlook once again can be identified as Sand supported the more practical politician instead of the much riskier communards. Sand looked towards the only person who appeared to offer the assurance of continued stability for the new French republic. One can feel the hope that Sand rests in Thiers in her letter to her friend André Boutet, “May Mr. Thiers heal our wounds, it’s the only role he takes on and it’s the only good at the moment.”<sup>11</sup> After such a devastating war, Sand decided once again to take the most practical route to safety and stability. With the communards’ extreme leftist views and use of violence, Sand cast all of her hope upon Thiers to maintain a secure republic.

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<sup>10</sup> George Sand, Georges Lubin. “A Edmond Plauchut” *Correspondance: Textes Réunis, Classés, et Annotés par Georges Lubin. Tome Vingt-Deuxième.* (Paris: Garnier, 1987): 352; “Mr Thiers n’est pas l’idéal, il ne fallait pas lui demander de l’être. Il fallait l’accepter comme un pont jeté entre Paris et la France, entre la République et la réaction, car la France, *hors des barrières de Paris, c’est la réaction.*”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 318; “Puisse Mr Thiers cicatriser nos plaies, c’est le seule rôle qu’il s’attribue et c’est le seul bon en ce moment.”

Another factor in Sand's disapproval of the Commune was the fact that the commune threatened the newly formed French Third Republic. After living in an empire for nearly twenty years under Napoleon III, Sand hoped to finally see the creation of a progressive republic. While Sand was originally somewhat open-minded towards Napoleon III's rule, her goal as a democratic socialist had always been to achieve a republic that maintained progressive principles. The Third Republic appeared to Sand as a second chance for the actualization of her social and political beliefs. Before the creation of the Paris Commune and following Napoleon III's defeat and capture at the Battle of Sedan on September 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1871, Sand wrote to her friend Juliette Adam on September 5<sup>th</sup>, "Long live the Republic anyway! ...Paris conquered its freedom without firing a shot; I hope that, planted like this, it is viable."<sup>12</sup> Although France just experienced defeat in this battle Sand still rejoiced as Napoleon III's capture allowed for a new republic to be established. In another letter written on September 5<sup>th</sup> to her friends Eugène and Esther Lambert, Sand wrote,

"I hope, despite all our disasters, that peace will be treated honorably. I don't see what the Prussians would do with France if they dreamed of conquering it, Europe wouldn't allow it. It was a private quarrel with Badinguet, one let it crush him. Poor France, she atones for her mad servitude! But the honor is recovered and God is now for us."<sup>13</sup>

With this battle coming months before the establishment of the Paris Commune, Sand thought France had finally achieved both peace and a new republic. Sand saw this war as quarrel between Napoleon III, also referred to as Badinguet, and Prussia. With Napoleon III's capture Sand imagined that her dream of a peaceful republic for France would come true. It is only with the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid 170; "Vive la république quand même! ...Paris a conquis sa liberté sans coup férir; j'espère que, plantée ainsi, elle est viable."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 170; "J'espère malgré tous nos désastres, que la paix va se traiter honorablement. Je ne vois pas ce que les Prussiens feraient de la France s'ils pouvaient rêver de la conquérir, l'Europe ne le permettrait pas. C'était une querelle privée avec Badinguet, on l'ai laissé écraser. Pauvre France, elle expie sa folle servitude! Mais l'honneur est reconquis et Dieu est maintenant pour nous."

rise of the Paris Commune only five months later that Sand saw her dream put in jeopardy once again.

While Sand did not support Commune, she also demonstrated her frustration with the government's reaction towards the communards. Sand was deeply distressed by the violence that she foresaw occurring as the Commune continued to resist the government of Thiers. In a letter to Edmond Plauchut in late March of 1871, Sand denounced the violence,

“What sadness and anxiety! If only you could oppose a firm and cold resistance without bloodshed! This party of the exalted, if it is sincere, is insane and rushes with joy of heart into an abyss. The Republic will sink there with it. Legal Paris did not see clearly. In spite of a reaction which was not very formidable, it threw itself into extremes.”<sup>14</sup>

Sand sent this letter before the end of the Commune, yet already she seemed to anticipate that the violence would only increase. Speaking of the communards, Sand anticipated their bloody end, “Poor people! They will commit excesses, crimes, but what vengeance will crush them.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite Sand's esteem for the Republic, she was distraught by the thought of the bloodshed that would occur when Thiers attempted to put down the revolt. Sand even appeared to fear that this violence would jeopardize the Republic itself. With this foreseen violence, she also predicted that the Republic would fall along with the Commune. While Sand did long for a republic, she felt that it was only possible to achieve a republic through non-violent means.

One of the reasons that Sand also condemned the Paris Commune was due to the violence she believed it incited in Paris.<sup>16</sup> At this point in Sand's life, her beliefs were heavily influenced

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid 349; “Quelle tristesse et quelle anxiété! Si vous pouviez opposer une ferme et froide résistance sans effusion de sang! Ce parti d'exaltés, s'il est sincère, est insensé et se précipite de gaîté de cœur dans un abîme. La République y sombrera avec lui. Le Paris légal n'a pas vu clair. Par dépit contre une réaction qui n'était pas bien redoutable, il s'est jeté dans l'extrême.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 350; “Pauvre peuple! il commettra des excès, des crimes, mais quelles vengeances vont l'écraser.”

<sup>16</sup> Overall the government's reaction to the commune was much more violent than the commune itself. Due to Sand's remote location in Nohants, she did not always have access to up to date or reliable information. This meant that some of the reports she received came from the government in Versailles which spread anti-commune propaganda.

by her pacifism. This stance developed in Sand's older years, as she was not an ardent pacifist throughout many of the other violent periods of her life. Sand's belief in pacifism can be seen in the letters she wrote to her friends following Napoleon III's defeat in Sedan. In many of the celebratory letters that Sand sent that day she highlighted that a republic was won "Without opposition"<sup>17</sup>, alluding to a lack of violence. She continued in one of her letters, "That's why I said: let's not bloody the ground we want to defend."<sup>18</sup> While it is true that overall the Versailles government's eradication of the commune was much more brutal than any violence perpetrated by the commune, in some ways this violence could be seen as having been instigated by the commune.<sup>19</sup> The Republic was won with comparatively little bloodshed, but according to Sand's pacifist views, the communards' revolt against the new government incited additional unnecessary fighting. While Sand did back Thiers' government, she only did this out of a feeling of necessity. Sand did not support the violence committed by Thiers' troops, but she found the communards more to blame in this situation. As Sand would portray a couple of years later in her novel *Nanon*, her true goal was to achieve a republic without any violence or bloodshed.

Sand's stance regarding the Paris Commune may seem less progressive or socialist leaning than her political tendencies in the 1840s, but it can be seen that Sand's pragmatic view towards socialism still remained. Sand did not disavow any of her earlier beliefs that she held in 1848, instead she felt that, "the Paris Commune really endangers the current republican process.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid 170; "sans coup férir"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid 173; "Voilà pourquoi je disais: n'ensanglantons pas le sol que nous voulons défendre."

<sup>19</sup> The total number killed has been reported as 25,000 people. A majority of this number is made up of communards and those suspected of having any affiliation with the communards. The communards were responsible for some deaths, and they did kill hostages from the French government. It was also claimed that the communards set fire to many buildings in Paris to slow down the Versailles troops (although the Versailles troops were undoubtedly responsible for some of the fires, as the shots from their guns caused some buildings to catch on fire). The total killed also includes those were arrested by the soldier from Versailles and were summarily tried and executed by courts-martial.

She knows that the whole country is not ready to accept this government too left.”<sup>20</sup> Having worked towards a socialist future, Sand knew that the country was not ready to accept a fully socialist nation. Although Sand did not agree with the timing or the actions taken by the commune, this event still did not cause her to lose faith in the possibility of a socialist France. As Sand expanded upon in her letters to Gustave Flaubert, the failure of the Commune was not synonymous with the failure of socialism. Although Sand did not believe that the communards would succeed in their goals, Sand did not fully give up on achieving a socialist society created without violence.

### The Sand-Flaubert Correspondences

George Sand and Gustave Flaubert began their correspondences in 1862. At that point in both of their lives they were established authors and no longer in the prime of their youth. Despite having differing views on both writing and politics, the two became close friends staying in near constant contact through letters. Flaubert considered himself a liberal<sup>21</sup>, but his views were not nearly as socialist leaning as Sand. In a letter sent during the Paris Commune Flaubert claims, “I hate democracy (at least the kind that is understood in France), that is to say that exaltation of mercy to the detriment of justice the negation of right, in a word, antisociability.”<sup>22</sup> Whereas Sand’s focus was on achieving equality, Flaubert remained more concerned with preserving justice. Weeks after the rise of the Paris Commune Flaubert wrote to Sand lamenting the actions of the Commune, “What can one say of the socialists who imitate the proceedings of

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<sup>20</sup> Georges Buisson. *George Sand and the Commune of Paris: Des jours sans lendemain*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2021): 118; “la Commune de Paris met réellement en danger le processus républicain en vigueur. Elle sait que l’ensemble du pays n’est pas prêt d’accepter ce gouvernement trop à gauche.”

<sup>21</sup> Flaubert was often critical of the right, but did not believe in universal suffrage for all men. He supported Thiers in putting down the revolt started by the communards, yet he greatly disliked Thiers overall (see Flaubert’s December 15, 1867 letter to Conard).

<sup>22</sup> Aimee L. McKenzie. *The George Sand-Gustave Flaubert Letters*. (New York: Liveright, 1921), 198.

Badinguet and of William: requisitions, suppressions of newspapers, executions without trial, etc.? Ah what an immoral beast is the crowd.”<sup>23</sup> Although the communards promised new liberties and rights to all classes, Flaubert did not see this government as significantly different than those that came before it. In fact Flaubert found the Commune to be a return to the Middle Ages. Although many might have shared this disdain with both the Commune and the socialists’ agenda as a whole, Sand was still able to see hope in the socialist cause despite the events of 1871.

In Sand’s response to Flaubert, she identifies the communards as separate from her ideas of socialism and the attempt to procure equality. She asserts her opinion on the matter,

“For me the ignoble experiment that Paris is attempting or is undergoing proves nothing against the laws of the eternal progression of men and things, and, if I have gained any principles in my mind, good or bad, they are neither shattered nor changed by it. For a long time I have accepted patience as one accepts the sort of weather there is, the length of winter, old age, lack of success in all its forms.”<sup>24</sup>

While in 1848 Sand’s view on universal suffrage and women’s rights could appear cynical, Sand’s views could now be seen as idealist or optimistic. With the events of the Paris Commune being generally considered a failure, Sand’s continued belief in a progressive government could appear to be misguided. Yet despite how her outlook might appear, Sand once again viewed the situation with a sort of clarity. The Paris Commune was a poorly executed attempt at overtaking the city. It had not been planned in advance, and it was a reaction to the Franco-Prussian War and the unstable government. While this event could be used as a reason to give up on the socialist cause, Sand sees that in reality that was not a true attempt at socialism. The Paris Commune was a haphazard reaction to tensions that had been rising for decades. With this

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 195.

knowledge, Sand was secure to remain patient and wait for the time to come when a true progressive system would be established and bestow equality on the people of France.

In contrast to Sand, Flaubert was of the mindset of those who did not believe in the possibility of the type of progress and social betterment that Sand yearned for. In the September following the end of the Paris Commune, Flaubert wrote to Sand to implore her to give up on her dreams and beliefs in equality and the goodness of man. Flaubert claims,

“Ah! dear good, master if you could only hate! That is what you lack, hate... Why do you feel ‘the great bonds broken’?... Your bonds are indestructible, your sympathy can only attach itself to the Eternal... I too, I used to believe in the amelioration of manners. One must wipe out that mistake and think of oneself no more highly than they did in the time of Pericles or Shakespeare...”<sup>25</sup>

He sees the current events as proof that there will never be progress towards a better more democratic society. After nearly a century of continuous political and social shifting, Flaubert does not see Sand’s views as realistic. In viewing Sand as unable to hate, Flaubert identifies Sand as a person who is too idealistic. He believes without hate Sand is unable to see the world as it truly is. While Sand views the Paris Commune and the subsequent reaction to the commune as more of an anomaly, Flaubert sees this as the way of the world noting, “Several years of quiet deceived us. That is all.”<sup>26</sup> While many Flaubert and others cannot see beyond the current violence to possibility of a different future, Sand continues her faith that a non-violent republic could eventually be achieved.

One of the ways that Sand was able to keep her hope alive was by identifying the fact that many of the communards were not true communists or socialists. Many Parisians were lumped into the same category as the communards causing Sand to defend them,

“It is not the people of Paris that has massacred the prisoners, destroyed the monuments, and tried to burn the town. The people of Paris is all who stayed in

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 210.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 210.

Paris after the siege... Those who stayed in Paris were the merchant and the workmen, those two agents of labor and of exchange, without whom Paris would no longer exist... It is now recognized that the oppressors of that torment were in the minority. Then the people of Paris were not disposed to fury, since the majority, gave evidence only of weakness and fear. The movement was organized by men already enrolled in the ranks of the bourgeoisie<sup>27</sup>, who belong no longer to the habits and needs of the proletariat.”<sup>28</sup>

Part of the reason that Sand did not consider all of the communards true socialists was due to the fact that not all of them were laborers or farmers. With many involved in this rebellion being members of the bourgeoisie or members various sub-sects of socialism, Sand separated those who she viewed as socialists with those who fell under other categories. Overall Sand’s idea of a true socialist revolved around farmers, laborers, and even members of the bourgeoisie who supported a classless non-violent republic that promised universal suffrage, worker’s rights, and public education.<sup>29</sup> With her analysis of the situation Sand was able to see through some of fear that propagated following “the Bloody Week.” While those involved in the commune were purported by the Versailles government to be socialists or extremist republicans, in reality these people were not all part of one uniform group. As was seen in the 1840’s, there are many sects of socialism and republicanism. Part of the reason that the commune failed was due to this lack of uniformity within the communards. Grouping all leftists in with the communards was a reaction based in fear not fact. While some such as Flaubert fully distanced themselves from any politics resembling communism and socialism, Sand understood the truth of the situation and did not hold the many responsible for the actions of the few. Given the correct circumstances, Sand still

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<sup>27</sup> This criticism of the bourgeoisie may appear ironic as Sand herself, and many other intellectuals, were members of the bourgeoisie class. In this particular instances, Sand’s frustrations seems to stem from the fact that the bourgeoisie are pretending to be proletariat and are taking on the role of the proletariat.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 214-215.

<sup>29</sup> While there many more nuances to Sand’s belief in socialism, these are some of the main causes she advocated for. Sand was neither a Proudhonian nor a Jacobin which were the major groups involved in the Paris Commune.



believed it possible for the socialists to come together without violence to form a classless republic.

Beyond understanding the nuances of the socialist and communist parties, Sand was also correct in her assertion that the communards were mostly part of the bourgeoisie and not part of the proletariat. Of the people that made of the Commune's governing body, a minority were true workers or laborers. The majority of those making decisions were merchants and members of the bourgeoisie while only about thirty-five of the eighty-one deputies could be considered true proletarians.<sup>30</sup> While Flaubert might encourage Sand to hate, in reality it was Sand's ability to be sympathetic to the people and to fully understand their circumstances that allowed her to have a more objective understanding of the situation. While Sand's claims that those involved in the Commune were not true socialists might appear to be a denial to accept the failure of socialism, she was actually able to see the reality of the situation. Others may have given up on the socialists because of the events of 1871, but Sand knew that the Communards did not necessarily represent the majority of socialists. Her ability to maintain an optimistic viewpoint on the situation allowed her to continue to pacifist and socialist beliefs into her old age.

### Nanon

In 1872 George Sand wrote her one of her last works that would truly grapple with the social issues raised by the Paris Commune. In an attempt to demonstrate the possibility of achieving a progressive republic through peaceful means, Sand rewrote the story of Great Revolution in her novel, *Nanon*. Set in 1848, but recalling the events of the French Revolution of

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<sup>30</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin. *A History of Modern France*. 145, "Most of the *Communards* were neither proletarians nor doctrinaire socialists. Of the eighty-one deputies to the Commune council, at most thirty-five were genuine workers, primarily skilled artisans rather than factory workers; thirty were educated professionals of various sorts (including fifteen journalists); and most of the remainder could be classified as small businessmen."

1789, Nanon is the titular character and narrator of this work. The story focuses on Nanon's life as a peasant in the fictional town of Valcreux in the years leading up to and during the French Revolution. In her town Nanon finds friendship and eventually love with Èmilien de Franqueville, the youngest son of a landed aristocratic family, who was originally sent to the Valcreux to train with the monks. In recent years scholars have turned their attention to *Nanon*, analyzing Sand's complex work. Some such as Biliana Kassabova<sup>31</sup>, examine the shifting temporalities and their effects within the novel while others such as Patrick Bray examine the effect of Sand's use of the countryside and fictional spaces creating a 'carte blanche' for her characters. Despite the many different analyses of this work, overall *Nanon* is a rejection of violence and a testament to pacifism.

While Sand remains faithful to the true events of the French Revolution, by setting the majority of the novel in the fictional countryside town of Valcreux, Sand is able to reimagine the revolutionary events from the point of view of Nanon. In this reimagining, Sand often draws attention to the futility of violence. In one particular scene in a moment of peace before the Terror reaches their village, Nanon and Èmilien ask the Prior in their town his opinion on the Jacobins. He responds by asking if they understood what caused the downfall of the church,

“But do you know what caused the clergy to wither away and succumb? It is the weariness of fanaticism, and the weariness that leads to impotence is an inevitable punishment... Well, you ask me what the Jacobins are... they are men who put the Revolution above everything and of their own conscience, as the priests put the Church above God himself. In torturing and burning heretics, the clergy said, ‘It is for the salvation of Christendom.’ In persecuting the moderates, the Jacobins say, ‘It is for the salvation of the cause,’ and the most exalted perhaps sincerely believe it is for the good of mankind...I believe it only benefits of what is good

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<sup>31</sup> Biliana Kassabova “Frenchmen Into Peasants Into Frenchmen: Revolutionary Past and Future in George Sand's *Nanon*” *Dix-Neuf*, 24:1; Patrick M. Bray “Carte Blanche: Charting Utopia in Sand's *Nanon*.” *The Novel Map: Space and Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Northwestern University Press, 2013)

and that it is harmed en masse and for a long time when it is harmed by a temporary and particular harm.”<sup>32</sup>

Although the Christians attempted to strengthen the church by persecuting heretics, the Prior shows that it was very violence that led to the downfall of the church. In comparing the Jacobins to the church Sand uses a concrete example of an institution that tried to succeed using brutal means, and the ineffectiveness of this choice. Through this scene Sand uses this monologue to highlight her belief that violent means only detract from the goals.

Within this same passage the Prior returns this question back to Nanon and Émilien. He tells them that they will be better judges of the Jacobins,

“You will judge better, you who are young; you will see if the anger and cruelty which are always at the end of man’s beliefs succeed in bringing about better beliefs. I can hardly believe it, I see that the Church has perished for having been cruel. If the Jacobins succumb, think of the massacre of the prisons, and then you will say with me: You cannot build a new Church with what made the old one crumble.”<sup>33</sup>

As the radicalism of the church was experienced by the Prior, now the extreme views of the Jacobins will be experienced by Nanon and Émilien, giving them the opportunity to decide for themselves if violence can bring about a better future. In posing this question to the children, Sand also draws attention to the cyclical nature of this type of violence. Throughout her lifetime she lived through multiple bloody revolutions which never seemed to fully achieve their goal, the

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<sup>32</sup> George Sand, ed. Nicole Mozet, *Nanon*, (Les Éditions de l’Aurore, 1987): 102; “Mais savez-vous ce qui a fait ainsi dépérir et succomber le clergé? C’est la lassitude du fanatisme, et la lassitude qui mène à l’impuissance est un châtement inévitable... Eh bien, vous me demandez ce que c’est que les jacobins... ce sont des hommes qui mettent la Révolution au-dessus de tout et de leur propre conscience, comme les prêtres mettaient l’Église au-dessus de Dieu même. En torturant et brûlant des hérétiques, le clergé disait: ‘C’est pour le salut de la chrétienté.’ En persécutant les modérés, les jacobins disent: ‘C’est pour le salut de la cause,’ et les plus exaltés croient peut-être sincèrement que c’est pour le bien de l’humanité... Je crois qu’elle ne profite que de ce qui est bien et qu’on lui fait du mal en masse et longtemps quand on lui fait un mal passager et particulier.”

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 102; “Vous jugerez mieux, vous autres qui êtes jeunes; vous verrez si la colère et la cruauté qui sont toujours au bout des croyances de l’homme réussissent à amener des croyances meilleures. J’ai peine à le croire, je vois que l’Église a péri pour avoir été cruelle. Si les jacobins succombent, pensez au massacre des prisons, et alors vous direz avec moi: On ne bâtit pas une nouvelle Église avec ce qui a fait écrouler l’ancienne.”

commune being only the latest example of this cycle. Sand devotes over a full page to the Prior's monologue denouncing the violence of the church and the Jacobins, further drawing attention to this issue and equating violence on the right and the left. After all the failed governments that Sand has lived through, it is clear that she now believes that way to achieve a lasting peaceful and successful government is through non-violent means.

Throughout the novel, Sand continues to critique violence, while also demonstrating her optimism that a republic can be achieved without brutality. Due to Émilien's aristocratic background, at one point in the novel, he is arrested and sent to prison. Nanon goes to find and rescue him from possible execution. When she finds Émilien and enters into his jail cell, she finds that he shares his cell with an old priest. Although Nanon offers to help the priest escape as well he is determined to meet his fate and is ultimately executed. Following his execution Nanon speaks out against the republic only for Émilien to remind her, "Let's not curse the Republic," he said to me, 'let's mourn it, on the contrary!' These ferocities, these injustices are outrages against her; it is she who is being killed by sacrificing innocent people and demoralizing the people, who no longer understand her!"<sup>34</sup> In Émilien's response one can see Sand's unwavering devotion to the idea of a republic. For Sand violence is not inherent in the acquisition of this form of government. For her, violence is actually contrary the idea of a republic. It is extremists who take go too far in their attempt to attain a republic that they ultimately taint and destroy it. Many believed that it would take violent and revolutionary actions to instate a Republic in France, but Sand condemns this belief. Similarly both Thiers and the communards considered violence necessary to build their republics, which Sand also rejected. Through Émilien's

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid 135; "Ne maudissons pas la République, me dit-il, pleurons-la, au contraire! Ces férocités, ces injustices sont des attentats contre elle; c'est elle que l'on tue en sacrifiant des innocents et en démoralisant le peuple, qui ne la comprend plus!"

response she identifies the her conviction that peace and peaceful means are inherently part of a true republic.

Following Émilien's rescue and during another brief reprieve for both him and Nanon, Émilien once again works to reassure her of the possibility of a peaceful future. When Nanon admits to Émilien that she imagines the sound of the falling guillotine when she is alone he responds,

“To take revenge is to do evil; to surrender is to authorize it. We will have to find a way to repress without punishing and to fight with weapons that do not hurt. You smile? Well, these weapons have been found and it is only necessary to know how to use them: it is free discussion that enlightens minds, it is the strength of opinion that thwarts fratricidal plots, it is the wisdom and justice that reign deep in the heart of man and that a good education would develop, while ignorance and passion stifle them. There is therefore a remedy to seek, a hope to maintain. Today, we only have barbaric means and we use them... Evil begets evil, we must always come back to the idea of the prior. But after that will come the need to understand each other and to sacrifice the sophisms of fever to the voice of nature. Perhaps at this moment Robespierre is putting Danton to death, he is crushing his party; but remember what I'm telling you: the year won't pass without Robespierre being put to death. Forced to wait, let's wait! May he not take away the Republic! But, if that happens, let us not be surprised. It will be necessary, for it to be reborn, that it be human above all and that murder has become a crime in the eyes of all men.”<sup>35</sup>

With the echo of the Prior's word evident in Émilien's monologue, Sand shows the passing down of this wisdom and belief to the next generation. Although Émilien was imprisoned and nearly executed, he personifies the hope for the next generation to end the cycle of retaliatory and destructive violence. In this speech Sand also offers what she believed was the alternative to

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid 160-161; “Se venger, c'est faire le mal; se livrer, c'est l'autoriser. Il faudra trouver le moyen de réprimer sans punir et de combattre avec des armes qui ne blessent point. ...c'est la discussion libre qui éclaire les esprits, c'est la force de l'opinion qui déjoue les complots fratricides, c'est la sagesse et la justice qui règnent au fond du cœur de l'homme et qu'une bonne éducation développerait, tandis que l'ignorance et la passion les étouffent. Il y a donc un remède à chercher, une espérance à entretenir. Aujourd'hui, nous n'avons que des moyens barbares et nous les employons...Le mal engendre le mal, il faut toujours en revenir à l'idée du prier. Mais après cela viendra le besoin de s'entendre et de sacrifier les sophismes de la fièvre à la voix de la nature...Puisse-t-il[Robespierre] ne pas emporter la République! mais, si cela arrive, ne nous étonnons pas. Il faudra, pour qu'elle renaisse, qu'elle soit humaine avant tout et que le meurtre soit devenu un crime aux yeux de tous les hommes.”

violence. Émilien claims that free discussion offers a path between taking revenge and surrendering. Although not explicitly stated, this also raises one of Sand's main objectives in a republic, public education for all. At the beginning of the novel Émilien teaches Nanon to read, causing her to undergo a life changing transformation in which her view of the world changes drastically due to her ability to access written works. Public education would foster an environment for enlightening conversation between different parties. Sand's optimism for a peaceful progressive republic is clear in this passage. Although the events of the Commune caused some to believe that a socialist-leaning republic was impossible, Sand imagined the possibilities for what could occur post-commune if peaceful and liberal policies were enacted. In this monologue Sand offers hope to the coming generations and identifies the tools which could replace violence in order to achieve a stable and lasting republic.

While Sand's condemnation of violence is interwoven in the dialogue and monologues of the characters, she also puts her characters in imagined situations to demonstrate a community achieved without violent means. Following Émilien's escape from prison, Nanon, Émilien, and Dumont, Émilien's former servant turned friend, end up camping out in a remote area called l'île aux Fades. Nanon comments on this moment in their lives,

“In 93, at the end of the old regime, where the peasant had nothing and where the great landowner still absent did not even know where his lands were located, in the midst of the anarchy of the countryside and forced depopulation, we were there a bit like Robinson on his island.”<sup>36</sup>

With this allusion to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Sand evokes the image of this trio creating their own small society while adrift from the rest of society. In her article, “Frenchmen Into Peasants Into Frenchmen: Revolutionary Past and Future in George Sand's *Nanon*,” Biliana

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid 146-147; “En 93, au sortir de l'ancien régime, où le paysan n'avait rien et où le grand propriétaire toujours absent ne savait seulement pas où ses terres étaient situées, au milieu de l'anarchie des campagnes et du dépeuplement forcé, nous étions là un peu comme Robinson dans son île.”

Kassabova argues how, “Sand rewrites the idealistic, male-centered narratives of both Defoe and Rousseau into a communal, family-based renewal...Nanon and Émilien need each other to create their own, this time successful version of the unity promised by the French Revolution.”<sup>37</sup>

Nanon, Émilien, and Dumont prosper on their own in this time, providing a glimpse into the unity that would be possible if violence was avoided. By providing this example Sand shows the reader what could be achieved only through peaceful means.

At the end of the novel, Sand uses the marriage of Nanon and Émilien to once again exhibit the possibilities if the peasants and progressive aristocracy come together. When discussing their potential marriage Émilien tells Nanon that the relationship between a noble and a peasant,

“It is, on the contrary, an easier alliance, I would almost say more natural, than the union of the nobility with the bourgeoisie. These two classes hate each other too much, and in this personal question which does not interest the people as much as is believed, the peasant remains neutral. What he wants is to be freed from his old drudgeries, from misery and extortion. He is freed from it forever, go! The peasant is the number, and we can no longer sacrifice the number to a caste.”<sup>38</sup>

The union between Nanon and Émilien demonstrate what is possible when the class distinctions broken and all can consider themselves French citizens instead of members of a certain class.

Kassabova summarizes this point, “The peasantry can become an integral part of society without violence, if given an active role in the construction of the new French nation.”<sup>39</sup> In this imagined happy ending Sand depicts what could be possible if the French were able to move away from brutality and destruction to peaceful means of unification. Whereas Sand’s happy endings

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<sup>37</sup> Biliana Kassabova “Frenchmen Into Peasants Into Frenchmen,” 107-108.

<sup>38</sup> George Sand. *Nanon*. 226; “C’est au contraire une alliance plus facile, je dirais presque plus naturelle, que l’union de la noblesse avec la bourgeoisie. Ces deux classes se haïssent trop, et, dans cette question personnelle qui n’intéresse pas le peuple autant qu’on le croit, le paysan reste neutre. Ce qu’il veut, c’est d’être affranchi de ses anciennes corvées, de la misère et des extorsions. Il en est affranchi pour toujours, va! Le paysan, c’est le nombre, et on ne pourra plus sacrifier le nombre à une caste.”

<sup>39</sup> Biliana Kassabova “Frenchmen Into Peasants Into Frenchmen,” 108.

sometimes seem impossible, such as the ending of *Indiana*, Sand is able to strike a note of believability with this ending. Perhaps due to Sand's use of imagined space or because this story is so closely intertwined with historical events, Sand ends this work with a sense of optimism for the future. This assurance in the possibility of a peaceful future helps evoke the image of a classless republic that could emerge in the wake of the Commune.

In the last paragraph of the novel, Sand uses Nanon to show the idealized figure that emerges from a non-violent society. Towards the very end of the novel Nanon remarks that, "I had become less peasant, that is to say, more French."<sup>40</sup> Nanon has finally achieved a state where she is no longer member of a class but a member of France. Nanon also comments that, "I, who, for a long time, no longer concern myself with politics — I don't have time..."<sup>41</sup> Nanon's removal from politics is the ultimate victory for a socialist such as Sand. Nanon is playing her role in society by farming and taking care of the poor and sick. Once this type of republic is finally reached Sand does not see a need for politics. Nanon is the incarnation of Sand's political and social hopes and dreams. Through marriage Nanon is the Marquise de Franqueville, but this noble title does not differentiate her from her neighbors and she contributes to her community like anyone else. Patrick Bray comments on Sand's portrayal of Nanon, "Nanon's call for nonviolence beyond ideology and for a return to work may be not only the most politically responsible of acts but the ultimate paradox: a pragmatic utopia."<sup>42</sup> While Sand's pragmatism had influenced many of her political and social stances, it is finally in the character of Nanon that Sand is able to combine this practicality with the idealistic version of France that she hoped would one day exist.

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<sup>40</sup> George Sand. *Nanon*. 234; "j'étais devenue moins paysanne, c'est-à-dire plus Française."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 235; "Moi qui, depuis bien longtemps, ne m'occupe plus de politique — je n'en ai pas le temps..."

<sup>42</sup> Patrick M. Bray. "Carte Blanche" 146.



## Women in *Nanon*

Although following a female protagonist, *Nanon* does not seem to address gender issues as strongly as other works of Sand's. While *Nanon* may primarily focus on imaging the attainment of a republic without violent means, Sand still makes sure to dedicate time to the female subject. Throughout the novel Nanon is shown to be a woman with notable agency, succeeding in nearly all of her endeavors and even rescuing Émilien. Despite Nanon's success Sand highlights the perils that Nanon faces along the way due to her gender. Finally at the end of the novel Sand demonstrates the happiness and equality the Nanon found in her marriage. The novel's ending may indeed show the possibility of her democratic socialist beliefs made into reality, but it also depicts Sand's objectives regarding women and gender in this reality as well. Sand uses Nanon to demonstrate what a republic could look like if it was achieved through non-violent means. Her portrayal of female characters, in particular Nanon, also exhibits the role women could have in this idealized republic.

Breaking gender stereotypes that exist even today, it is Nanon who ends up rescuing her lover. When Nanon learns that Émilien was arrested and put in prison, she becomes determined to save him no matter the cost. Despite objections from her friend Monsieur Costejoux, Nanon comes up with her own plan and approaches Dumont to see if he would like to accompany her, "I asked Dumont, who knew the countries and the roads, if he would take a risk with me, and he reproached me for having tried something without him. He approved of my plan."<sup>43</sup> Not only does Nanon come up with the plan to rescue Émilien, but she also is very obviously the leader, or at the very least an equal member of this expedition. Sand imbues Nanon with a level of agency

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<sup>43</sup> George Sand. *Nanon*. 127; "Je demandai à Dumont qui connaissait les pays et les routes, s'il voulait se risquer avec moi, et il me reprocha d'avoir essayé quelque chose sans lui. Il approuva mon plan."

and competency that is not always seen in female characters even within Sand's own novels. Whereas Indiana, from Sand's first novel *Indiana*, was often dependent on a man to protect her or care for her well-being, Nanon shows herself as a true equal in intelligence and judgement to her male counterparts.

When it comes to the actual rescue of Émilien, Nanon goes beyond being equal to Dumont and surpasses him in her ability to successfully save Émilien. As Nanon and Dumont go to the meeting point where they will regroup with Émilien after his escape, she soon realizes that Dumont is drunk and has jeopardized their ability to meet Émilien at the appointed time. Knowing that Dumont would not make it to Émilien in time Nanon decided,

“So I made up my mind. I made sure that Dumont slept very well in the fern, that no accident could happen to him. I hurried the donkey, made it double the pace. I passed the carter who had resumed his nap and did not see me abandon my uncle.”<sup>44</sup>

Whereas Nanon was previously shown as being more of an equal partner with Dumont in their endeavor to free Émilien, here it becomes clear that the success of this undertaking rests on Nanon's shoulders. She is forced to use her judgement to make a decision regarding the safety of both Dumont and Émilien. Although hesitant to abandon Dumont, Nanon does her best to ensure his safety while also trying to reach Émilien in time. Sand shows Nanon not only as a protagonist but almost as a heroine. While it is clear that Sand uses both Émilien and Nanon to break down the accepted class structure in France, Nanon also works to break down the established gender stereotypes as well. This depiction of what women can be provides insight into what Sand might have imagined women's role would be in her imagined peaceful post-commune republic. As she argued in the 1840's, it is only after universal suffrage has been achieved for all men, that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid 138-139; “Alors, je pris mon parti. Je m'assurai que Dumont dormait très bien dans la fougère, qu'aucun accident ne pouvait lui arriver. Je pressai l'âne, je lui fis doubler le pas. Je dépassai le roulier qui avait repris son somme et ne me vit pas abandonner mon oncle.”

women can hope to achieve the same. Once this non-violent republic is achieved for all, women would finally have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

While Nanon is portrayed as extremely competent and adept at handling herself in various situations, Sand still makes sure to draw attention to the perils that exist for women in a society that accepts violence. During Nanon's initial attempt to locate Émilien, she travels to the house of Monsieur Coustejoux without anyone to accompany her. When trying to get a ride with fellow travellers, Nanon realizes for the first time that her gender posed a risk to her wellbeing,

“I finally saw in my sex an obstacle and dangers of which I had never dreamed. Modesty revealed itself in the form of dread. In another moment, I might have had fun learning that I had become pretty. At that time, I was sorry. Beauty always catches the eye, and I would have liked to make myself invisible. I rolled over several projects in my head: I stopped at that of not showing myself at Châteauroux without having secured protection, and of returning to Valcreux to seek it, as soon as I had made sure of Emilien's presence in the convoy”<sup>45</sup>

Although escaping unharmed, Nanon received unwanted attention from the driver that she was able to convince to give her a ride. In a novel so focused on highlighting the evils of violence, it seems unsurprising that Sand would allude to ever present risk of violence against women.

Although she does not address it with the same detail that she focuses on the violence of revolutions, Sand seems to include in her critique a condemnation of violence against women as well. Sand demonstrates all that Nanon is capable of achieving, but she also exhibits how that potential could be ended due to the actions of men. This scene could easily be missed or forgotten by readers but it is an essential part of Sand's argument against violence. While

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid 125; “Je voyais enfin dans mon sexe un obstacle et des périls auxquels je n'avais jamais songé. La pudeur se révélait sous la forme de l'effroi. Dans un autre moment, j'aurais peut-être eu du plaisir en apprenant que j'étais devenue jolie. Dans ce moment-là, j'en étais désolée. La beauté attire toujours les regards, et j'aurais voulu me rendre invisible. Je roulai plusieurs projets dans ma tête: je m'arrêtai à celui de ne pas me montrer à Châteauroux sans m'être assuré une protection, et de retourner la chercher à Valcreux, dès que je me serais assurée de la présence d'Émilien dans le convoi.”

Nanon's character is often used to highlight women's potential, here Sand draws attention to the reality women face in the violent world of the 1870's.

With the ending scene, Sand invites her readers to share in her optimism for the future after the Commune, one achieved peacefully that breaks down barriers and allows all French people to live in harmony in their public and private life. Just as Sand imagines a utopia-like community at the end of the novel, Sand also envisions a happy and equal marriage between Nanon and Émilien. One of Sand's main arguments in the 1830's was to give women equal rights in marriage. When speaking of her love to Émilien Nanon tells him, "What I loved about you was not a more or less diligent workman; it's the big heart and the big mind that you have. It is goodness and reason. It is your friendship that is as sure and as faithful as the truth."<sup>46</sup> While these may appear to be similar to the words found in any love story, Nanon emphasizes Émilien's loyal friendship and reason, characteristics that support a marriage based in equality between the two partners. After Émilien's death towards the end of Nanon's life she laments, "I lost, last year, the friend of my youth, the companion of my life, the purest and fairest being I have ever known."<sup>47</sup> Again the language used is particularly interesting as the words "pur" and "juste" imply that this was a marriage of equals, and not a marriage in which Nanon often found her liberties restricted. In Sand's imagining of a perfect republic founded without violence, she also conceived of society in which men and women could be equal partners in marriage. In a final moment of imagining what could be achieved if peaceful means were employed, Sand shows society at perfect equilibrium. Both men and women are able to reach their full potentials

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid 226-227; "Ce que j'ai aimé en vous, ce n'est pas un ouvrier plus ou moins diligent; c'est le grand cœur et le grand esprit que vous avez. C'est la bonté et la raison. C'est votre amitié qui est aussi sûre et aussi fidèle que la vérité."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid; "J'ai perdu, l'an dernier, l'ami de ma jeunesse, le compagnon de ma vie, l'être le plus pur et le plus juste que j'aie jamais connu."

and both have equal rights in their marriage. Just as class restrictions were removed, so were the tension and resentment that came from the imbalance of power in marriage.

As Sand entered into this final phase of her life and career it became clear that while she still had optimism for socialist republic, she also feels that pacifism is an essential element to obtaining this goal. Her initial reactions to the commune demonstrate her aversion to the violence that occurred in the Franco-Prussian War. Just when she hoped that a republic had been achieved through mostly non-violent means, her pacifist hopes were shattered by the resistance offered by the communards. Despite her antipathy towards the Commune and the communards, Sand still clung onto the belief that France would one day achieve a peaceful socialist inspired republic. Despite objections from intellectuals such as Flaubert, Sand could not be dissuaded of her hope for a better political future. She then offered an insight into what her vision for the future looked like. By reimagining the French Revolution in *Nanon*, Sand demonstrated what could be possible for France if the French moved away from violent actions and reprisals. She imagined a country where men and women of all classes are free to reach their full potential without being oppressed by any other group or gender. While the Commune caused for many to despair, Sand used this moment in time as an opportunity to imagine the greatest possibilities for French politics and society.

### Conclusion: The Surprising Legacy of George Sand

George Sand died only four years after the publication of *Nanon*. She continued her prolific writing up until her death with her final work, *La Tour de Percemont*, being published the year of her death in 1876. The news of the death reached the United Kingdom only six days after her passing. One Scottish newspaper summed up Sand's life work stating,

“The history of her marriage with its unfortunate results gave rise to the theories propounded respecting the married state in George Sand's writing, which are not so much intended to revolutionize the institution itself as the conditions in which it is undertaken in France that lead to so many ill-assorted unions.”<sup>1</sup>

This quote captures the sometimes contradictory legacy of Sand. She often rejected the charge that she was anti-marriage. Sand did not condemn the institution of marriage itself, but she denounced the laws that bound married women. While saying that Sand did not intend to revolutionize the institution of marriage may not fully capture her feelings in regards to marriage, it does highlight the legacy Sand left behind. She was a master tightrope walker who always seemed to find the balance between seemingly conflicting beliefs.

Although Sand was not the first, nor perhaps the most influential social figure, she was vital in bringing these topics such as feminism and socialism to the public. Decades before she was born, women living towards the end of the ancien regime began to demand rights for women. Similarly, during the Commune of Paris, there were staunch female communards who took much more radical socialist stances than Sand. Despite others being earlier or arguably more devoted to some of these causes, Sand had the power to do what others could not. She was able to popularize these issues by weaving her critiques into her best-selling novels. Once again Sand walked a fine line. In order to reach a wide audience, her novels had to be easily digestible

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<sup>1</sup> “George Sand,” *Glasgow Herald*, June 14, 1876, <https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2013/06/07/the-death-of-george-sand-8-june-1871/>

by the public. This meant that she had to find a way to combine her arguments with an engaging plot so that her works appealed to all readers, not just those interested in politics. Some of her commentaries were subtle enough that there were even readers who missed these criticisms altogether. While this may sound like a failure, in reality it boosted the book's success. Those who read the novels carefully could discern Sand's arguments, while those who did not understand her arguments still helped to popularize the books and get them into the hands of more readers. This success is demonstrated through the fact that her novels are still read today as a criticism of 1800's France. From 1830 to modern times Sand brought attention to inequalities that plagued France.

While Sand a key figure in popularizing social concerns, she also raised important questions about what and who defined topics such as feminism or socialism. Sand demonstrated the possibility of arguing for women's rights without officially being a member of feminist groups. She similarly highlighted the feasibility for socialism to be grounded with pragmatism instead of just idealism. Along with drawing attention to women's issues throughout the decades. Sand set an example of the middle path. Sand's legacy continues this balancing act between being considered not feminist or socialist enough and being considered too feminist or socialist. While scholars debate which category Sand fell into, it is possible her legacy is the fact that she does not neatly fit into either category. What made Sand unique is that she always fits into some "other" category. Somewhere between established conventions and definitions, Sand continued to draw attention to the issues she found important without having to fully be defined by any one group or belief system.

The difficulty in casting Sand into one category is part of the complicated legacy of George Sand. She continually defied expectation and social conventions. She was a bourgeois

woman, yet she denounced the bourgeoisie. She often wore men's clothing to gain entrance into certain social settings, but just as easily she could be found wearing traditional women's attire. Her friend and admirer, Victor Hugo once stated, "George Sand cannot determine whether she is male or female. I entertain a high regard for all my colleagues, but it is not my place to decide whether she is my sister or my brother."<sup>2</sup> Sand truly was a tightrope walker. Whether it was in regards to gender norms or her stance of social issues, Sand always found a way to straddle the lines that typically acted as barriers between separate issues.

Reflecting on Sand's first novel *Indiana*, it is clear that while Sand's views continued to progress over time, *Indiana* marked an important moment when Sand entered the public arena to fight for her beliefs. Coming out of her own restrictive marriage, Sand knew first-hand the limitations experienced by married women. At the same time, France's colonial efforts offered what to Sand appeared to be a parallel experience of those oppressed by the French government. Despite many readers only finding the male characters in *Indiana* noteworthy, this text brought the issues of the women's lack of rights in marriage to the general public. Despite readers and critics often ignoring the issue of women's rights and dismissing the importance of her female characters, Sand was not fazed. Readers and critics would come and go, but *Indiana* remains. The arguments and parallels drawn still hold weight and resonate in modern times. In this work Sand embodies her stated sentiment, "The world will know and understand me someday. But if that day does not arrive, it does not greatly matter. I shall have opened the way for other women."<sup>3</sup> Sand did not try to force her readers to see her complex arguments regarding social

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Edwards, *George Sand: A Biography of the First Modern, Liberated Woman*, (New York: David McKay Company, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> This quote has been cited in secondary sources, but its original origins have not been recorded, Judy Chicago, Frances Borzello, and Jane F. Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Restoring Women to History* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2014).



issues. She was content with the knowledge that, even if readers never appreciated her work, it still served the purpose of starting the conversation around these social issues so that others might be able to pursue it further. In comparison to some of Sand's later works such as *Spiridion* or *Nanon, Indiana* offers a more subtle social critique in some ways, but it is no less powerful in its lasting effect.

*Indiana* remains the starting point from which Sand began to truly engage in the public sphere to fight for social rights. Sand is remembered as saying, "The old woman I shall become will be quite different from the woman I am now. Another I is beginning."<sup>4</sup> Sand was able to recognize in herself that she was ever changing. While maintaining some constants, Sand continuously pushed forward. Although there was no mention of socialism or the hope of an eventually socialist government in *Indiana*, by the 1840's Sand had evolved to argue for the rights of the lower classes and not just women and slaves. Through her friendship with Pierre Leroux, Sand developed a passion for the concept of democratic socialism. Although being a socialist and feminist in the 1840's might make some automatically believe that was a radical, she made clear that these beliefs could be based in pragmatism. While *Indiana* pointed out the problems that existed for women in marriage without offering many solutions, Sand took a much more practical approach in her political beliefs in the 1840's. Instead of fighting for rights with conceiving of a possible path to their obtainment, Sand considered how to best secure and maintain these rights in the long run. To this end, she first focused on achieving universal suffrage for French men and fixing the laws regarding marriage before achieving voting rights for women. If *Indiana* is the moment in which first stepped into the political arena, her ideas in

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<sup>4</sup> This quote is broadly attributed to George Sand although the original context is not supplied. It was published in Sue Monk Kidd and Ann Kidd Taylor, *Travelling with Pomegranates: A Mother-Daughter Journey to the Sacred Places of Greece, Turkey, and France* (London: Headline Review, 2011).

the 1840's mark Sand's development into a strategist trying to plan to achieve and preserve the social issues she fought for.

As Sand aged she her beliefs and works evolved with her. While maintaining her support of women's rights and socialism, by the 1870's Sand included pacifism as an essential element of her convictions. Following the violence of both the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, Sand denounced violence as a means to obtain equality. While many Parisians and French intellectuals were cynical when considering the possibility a peaceful socialist society, Sand maintained her sense of pragmatic optimism. Through her novel *Nanon*, Sand reimagined what France look life if the classes came together to achieve equal rights. In this work Sand demonstrated all the potential for a French republican society obtained through peaceful means. Her main character Nanon even highlighted the abilities of women if they were given the opportunity to achieve their full potential. In her evolving career as an active member of the social and political world of France, is it this work and this moment in Sand's life that demonstrate her ability to persevere. Despite failed republics, bloody wars, and brutal reprisals for socialists, Sand did not abandon her causes. Using more subtle techniques in the 1830s and later focusing on pragmatism in the 1840's, by the 1870's Sand was emblematic of pragmatic sense of optimism and dedication that was necessary to carry her beliefs through to the end. Sand did not give up on women's rights, socialism, or pacifism until her death. With her optimistic outlook exhibited by *Nanon*, Sand proved that she never let her goal get out of sight. Although she knew her goals might not be achieved in her lifetime, she was confident that they would eventually be made real.

Sand's work and her legacy are often hard to pinpoint as she often evaded society's and critics' expectations. Never one to fit into a mold, Sand rejected common notions of what

feminism or socialism should or should not be. While this can make it challenging to analyze her life and beliefs, it also provided an opportunity for scholars, critics, and readers to engage with these topics for over a century. Sand caught public's attention in the 1830's and her hold on public imagination has never ceased. It is easy to be distracted by her numerous love affairs or her clothing choices, but ultimately Sand always draws attention back to the social issues she stood for. Just in considering these more trivial aspects of her life, a reader is forced to consider that social status of women in France in the 1800s and start to contemplate the numerous inequalities that existed. Sand might not have been the first person to address these issues, but she made them more accessible for the public while also helping smooth the way for other women and social leaders.

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