

**George Sand and Rewriting:
The Poetics of Intertextuality in George Sand's "*Jacques Cycle*"**

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ABSTRACT

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Until now, for George Sand scholars, two main images of the Sand corpus have been dominant, "un grand fleuve d'Amérique" and "une grande œuvre multiforme." While both images evoke the strength and diversity of styles, approaches and genres in Sand's literary production, they also suggest a certain vagueness in regards to the contours of this oeuvre. Moreover, when speaking about the author's novelistic writing, scholars and the larger reading public alike often refer to her work as the "eighty or so" novels and short stories she wrote, giving the impression that her work knew no boundaries. In place of this relative sense of unruliness, I propose the vision of an oeuvre unified by a strong theory of the novel and suggest how this corpus is structured by both intertextuality and polyphony. For this purpose, I borrow from Riffaterrian theories of textuality while proposing my own theory of intertextuality in regards to its function in the Sand corpus. I explain how George Sand hands us an actual key to deciphering her entire literary production and how one can understand the theoretical implications of this literary gesture. This key is what I call the author's "*Jacques cycle*," the series of rewritings of her 1834 novel *Jacques* that she highlights in her 1866 novel *Le Dernier Amour*. There, the author speaks about *Jacques* and its rewritings as key novels that have followed the evolution of her thinking as a writer in addition to her reflections on societal concerns. Viewed from this perspective, Sand places intertextuality, rewriting, and metaliterary reflection at the very heart of her conception of literature on the same plane as her societal preoccupations.

My dissertation consists of an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. Chapter One presents George Sand's concept of intertextuality and literary palimpsest in her "Essai sur le drame fantastique." This work explains the theoretical basis behind George Sand's practice of rewriting, as well as her engaged stance vis-à-vis the literary debates behind the concept of originality. After exposing the stakes involved in this theoretical essay, I discuss in the second chapter Sand's specific practice of rewriting Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in her novel *Jacques*. More specifically, Chapter Two explores the importance of Sand's novel *Jacques* in her positioning on the literary scene of the 19th century. It underlines how her rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and her choice of the polyphonic epistolary novel enter in dialogue with the "horizons d'attente" associated with women's writing, while constructing what has been called a "textual masculinity." Chapter Three then examines the importance of *Jacques* in Sand's defense of the autonomy of literature. It demonstrates how she engages in the literary debates of her time in order to form her own aesthetics of the novel, and to assert the author's right to depict controversial social issues. My analysis focuses on reading Sand's key work *Jacques* as a response to realism; it is also based on her 1834 article, entitled "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*" that appeared the same year as *Jacques*. Finally, my fourth chapter deals with Sand's "*Jacques* cycle": it delineates the theoretical and interpretational implications of introducing a literary matrix within her corpus. Here, I investigate the author's rewriting of *Jacques* in her 1861 novel *Valvèdre* and in her 1866 novel *Le Dernier Amour*. This last chapter also explains how a matrilineal conception connecting these two novels to *Jacques* transforms their interpretation, while giving nuance to Sand's expression of the autonomy of fiction that she exposed in *Jacques*.

Indeed, contrary to what one may be accustomed to thinking, Sand's writing is a highly self-conscious act that incorporates much metaliterary reflection and proposes through the preciseness of its execution a personal theory of literature. While many scholars consider George Sand through the lens of idealism in opposition to realism, I suggest looking at her "performance" of literary theory as taking part in a much larger debate on the concept of the autonomy of literature. My dissertation therefore examines Sand's literary aesthetics through the frame of the 19th century's reflections on the autonomy of literature, notably in the 1830's and in the 1860's in light of the movement of "l'art pour l'art" in addition to her dialogue with realism. In short, while societal concerns play a large role in George Sand's writings, I would argue that literary theory is just as central in shaping the author's corpus. In this respect, George Sand's literary production is doubly a "littérature engagée," a writing shaped by her engagement in the societal debates of her time but also its literary preoccupations.

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Dedication

“When life throws fire at you, make fireworks.”

These fireworks are dedicated to

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and you made it happen.

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INTRODUCTION

Few 19th-century authors have generated as many contradictory images of both their persona and their writing as George Sand. She has been the object of both admiration and hatred. Considered among the foremost writers of her time, Sand was much in demand for her prefaces, endorsements, and advice, yet her writing was also scorned, belittled in her day and after. Evidence of the bad press that even now continues to follow the Sand corpus can be attributed, in large measure, to sometimes barely veiled misogynistic remarks posing as literary commentary. In her ground-breaking 1991 work on Sand's novelistic writing, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life*, Isabelle Naginski discusses how the very fluidity and ease of Sand's writing, one of its great virtues, was attacked: Sand was compared, as no similarly fluid male writer would have been, to a milk cow producing overflowing quantities of milk, and her work was described as the mindless missives of a frivolous, uncontrollably wordy female author. Baudelaire, for instance, commented that she wrote books as easily and quickly as one would drop letters off in a mailbox. Equally paradoxically, while images abound of a cigar-smoking George Sand in masculine attire, Nigel Harkness has pointed out this was just another caricature: the actual period during which she wore male clothing was relatively short (1). This iconic representation suggesting sexual androgyny persists today. On the other end of the spectrum, we find the "bonne dame de Nohant," the image of a benevolent, harmless grandmotherly figure in her beloved Berry—perhaps another way of dismissing her work by attacking her persona, in this case as ineffectual and "soft."

The contradictions continue to this day: the writer of *Indiana* inspired and continues to inspire the imagination of feminists; but it is hard to overlook the fact that Sand opposed giving women in her century the right to vote. In her novels, moreover, while her narrators often

express sympathy for the plight of women, they also give voice to the underlying misogyny of the period. In the last decade, more and more of Sand's texts previously out of print have been republished (with a notable increase especially in 2004, the bicentennial of her birth). Thus, the images of Sand continue to multiply, as readers discover deeper dimensions of both her persona and her writing. At the same time, as more and more images of Sand appear, certain constants also become clearer and more pronounced, and a new sense of coherence emerges from within this plethora.

Recent scholarship has brought out the key role intertextuality and polyphony play throughout Sand's corpus. Yet, few studies exist on how these two elements function in relation to the author's ideas about literary theory and how this theory in turn, structures the Sand corpus. Moreover, there remains a large gap between the reality of George Sand's work as one of the 19th-century's key writers and the perception of this work outside of the Sandian circuit. Especially missing is the portrayal of her engagement in the aesthetic and theoretical debates of her century. My dissertation attempts to contribute to filling in this missing portrait while demonstrating the centrality of literary theory in shaping and configuring Sand's literary production.

Latest Trends in Sand Research

Three recent publications on George Sand capture at once how much Sand studies have progressed and how far they still have to go. The first, *George Sand: Intertextualité et Polyphonie I: Palimpsestes, échanges, réécritures* (2010) is the first of two volumes containing the Acts of the 17th international George Sand Colloquium held in Dublin in June 2006.¹ The

¹ The following volume (2011) holding the same title has as its subtitle, *Voix, image, texte*.

second is *George Sand critique: Une autorité paradoxale* (2011), a volume compiling the articles of various Sand scholars based on a “journée d’études” examining the idea of George Sand as a literary critic and literary theorist. The third publication *Men of Their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand’s Fiction*. The titles of all three works indicate the specific approaches taken, but also emphasize the unusual viewpoints represented, a fact which may generate a certain tension as well as irony.

In their “Introduction” to the Proceedings of the George Sand Dublin Colloquium, Nigel Harkness and Jacinta Wright point out their goal: to clarify “deux éléments clés de la pratique sandienne de l’écriture” (1). Their comments demonstrate how much they realize their title (and goal) may surprise, for intertextuality and polyphony are not the predominant traits that scholars outside of Sand studies would associate with the author. Pointing out the fact that these two notions are in general intertwined with the idea of modernity, they understand the resistance with which their proposal may be met. Their “osons le mot” in naming “la modernité” (1) of the Sand corpus confronts the discomfort that the academic world still seems to experience in imagining Sand’s creation from this new perspective. At the same time, the slightly “familiar tone” of the imperative mode in the first person plural betrays some humor in its exaggeration and irreverence. Their approach plays in this way with attitudes towards the concept of modernity, as this almost “sacred” principle to which one must always show a trembling respect. At the same time, this humor in the context of George Sand’s works serves to defuse the resistance they anticipate in regards to preconceived ideas and prejudices. Nigel Harkness and Jacinta Wright’s “osons le mot” exposes elitist attitudes to the concept of modernity while underlining the almost allergic reaction certain members of the intellectual community have towards George Sand. It teases, implying that the mere idea of considering such a “lowly” author under the banner of

modernity is in itself sacrilege: not only is she unworthy of any reconsideration but simply examining her under the frame of modernity could be an insult to modernity itself and dirty its sacred temples.

At the same time, Jacinta Wright and Nigel Harkness show how the Sand corpus shines light back onto our own ideas of modernity. They suggest that the discomfort certain members of the intellectual community may feel in examining George Sand's works under the notion of modernity may have to do with the parameters by which we view the notion of modernity itself. Bringing up Éric Bordas' introduction to his own publication, *George Sand: Écritures et représentations* (2004), they write:

Selon Éric Bordas, [Sand a] enfreint deux règles cardinales du roman moderne en utilisant la fiction pour présenter des idées et en adoptant une position d'énonciation insuffisamment impersonnelle (la voix de l'auteur—loin d'être absente chez Sand—semble bien trop présente). (1)

Interestingly enough, although Harkness and Wright do dare to place Sand under the banner of modernity, their final comment at the end of the first paragraph conveys certain misgivings. After citing Éric Bordas' opinion about Sand's breaking of the “deux règles cardinales du roman moderne” (namely the strong presence of an authorial voice and a perceived desire to communicate a message through the text, rather than only focusing on formal concerns or metaliterary discourse) they seem apologetic in their defense of this aspect of Sand's writing. Their choice of the conjunction of opposition, “néanmoins,” to present their persistence in seeing Sand's modernity in light of the polyphony and intertextuality played out in her text seems rather weak in comparison to their bold “call to arms” through their “osons le mot” at the beginning. In response to Éric Bordas, they simply note: “sa conception” [à Sand] du roman a néanmoins beaucoup en commun avec certaines des idées exprimées par Kristeva et Barthes dans leur théorisation de la textualité et de l'intertextualité” (1).

Rather than challenge Éric Bordas' judgment or the notion of modernity he propounds, their comment seems to acknowledge these traits in Sand almost as a weakness. On the contrary, I would argue that this facet of the Sand corpus is all the more modern because it pushes the frontiers of our notion of modernity. The questions should be: Does the notion of modernity necessarily have to exclude an authorial voice in addition to a "message"? Can a text adopt a modernist or modernizing attitude in its intertextual and polyphonic stance *and* include an authorial voice and message? The strong presence of a metaliterary discourse and evidence of metaliterary reflection are considered indices of modernity, and Sand's novels certainly show this trait. Does the voice of the author and the presence of a message necessarily cancel out this "modernity" or rather does it suggest that modernity can accommodate a more encompassing definition?

Olivier Bara and Christine Planté's title, *George Sand critique: Une autorité paradoxale* is even more direct in underlining the sense of George Sand as an anomaly in the literary field, as well as again this discomfort one has in reconsidering her position as a writer. The adjective "paradoxale" denotes the aspect of incongruity around the idea of considering George Sand an authority on the literary scene. The bad press from which George Sand's writing has suffered coupled with the relative amnesia that has covered entire domains of her literary creation has made us forget for the most part the authority she enjoyed in the 19th century, as well as the authority she represented. Though many have forgotten it, as Éric Bordas has correctly observed,² George Sand's corpus is "une œuvre considérable qui fut, en son temps, une œuvre considérée" (7). But it has become difficult to imagine George Sand as a greatly respected and even envied author and thinker of her time, since she is primarily remembered today as the

² See Éric Bordas' "Présentation" of his publication, *George Sand: Écritures et représentations* (2004).

“minor author” of a couple of “romans champêtres.” For this reason, right from the opening paragraphs of their 2011 “Préface,” Bara and Planté signal the revolutionary dimension of their earlier 2007 publication, *George Sand critique 1833-1876* on which the work of their present 2011 volume is based. The final sentence at the end of their first paragraph reminding us of the goals of their 2007 publication states: “Rappelons brièvement ce qu’impliquait le geste de donner à lire un tel ensemble” (1). The phrasing and choice of words suggest not only the significance of their earlier work, but imply the literarily “engaged” gesture symbolized by this publication. Bara and Planté’s “Préface” brings in the militant tone of a manifesto in their introduction through their categorical listing of points they wish to clarify. Point one in itself signals at once the resistance they sense in daring to consider George Sand in a different light, while challenging others to examine their own preconceived notions by following the arguments they expose in their present volume:

Il est possible, et souhaitable, d’envisager George Sand non seulement comme *objet* de critiques, victime qu’elle a été en tant que femme écrivain de la méfiance, l’hostilité et la satire contemporaines, mais en tant que productrice d’un discours sur la littérature, ses conditions, sa visée et sa réception. (11)

The choice of the adjective “possible” further reinforced by the addition of “souhaitable” highlight in an ever so slightly ironic tone, the challenge of undertaking a study that goes against the “impossibly” ingrained prejudices against Sand’s writing and the resistance that one encounters in trying to change these preconceived ideas. At the same time, in reconstructing the 19th-century literary scene including the prestige as well as scandal her writing evoked, Christine Planté and Olivier Bara remind us of the urgency and value of “rehabilitating” this memory of George Sand’s strong atypical presence on the literary landscape: George Sand, by simply being a woman writer, was already in herself an anomaly, and the fact that her authority was so wide-

ranging, persistent, and long-lasting in her time was all the more extraordinary, even paradoxical, in a particularly misogynistic century.³

This common theme of “daring” to consider things differently presents itself directly in Nigel Harkness’s *Men of Their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand’s Fiction*. Harkness, while playing on the expression, “men of their words,” chooses this main title to challenge us to reconsider both Sand’s identity and writing through a masculine theoretical frame rather than constantly relegating her to the camp of “women writers.” Like in Christine Planté’s and Olivier Bara’s commentary in daring to consider other approaches and viewpoints, the word play in Harkness’ title in addition to his explanations regarding his own approach to studying Sand reveal at once a certain underlying irony, as well as urgency in his project. The boldness of indirectly framing George Sand in the masculine is captured immediately in his title, especially in the manner by which it is presented on the cover of his book; the layout betrays Harkness’s refined sense of humor.

At first glance, the main title, “Men of Their Words” placed on the front cover of Harkness’ book would seem to be referring to George Sand the person “himself,” as though “he” were depicted by this category of “men of integrity.” We are induced moreover into making this interpretation, for Harkness’s title is placed directly under the large image of a cigar-smoking slightly androgynous George Sand in trousers.⁴ Furthermore, this sketched image of George

³ See also for instance Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch’s article, “George Sand and Her Sisters: Women Writers in the *Société des Gens de Lettres* (1838-1848).” Muelsch explains how Sand was the only woman ever elected to the SDGL committee (99) and was granted special privileges allowing her to abstain from responsibilities and duties expected of other members. Despite its gender biased stance (100), the SDGL was interested in using Sand’s well-known name to promote its own interests and would not even allow Sand to resign from the association in 1844 (99).

⁴ This cover illustration is a reproduction of Alcide Lorentz’s “Le Miroir drôlatique. Portrait-charge de George Sand” (Musée Delacroix, Paris).

Sand before a white background fills up a bit more than half the top of the front cover. By contrast, Harkness' title in white letters is put on the lower smaller half and set against a dark blue single-toned background; his main title, "Men of Their Words" is set almost three times as large (both in regards to the height of the letters as well as their thickness) as the subtitle placed a fair ways underneath this main title. We therefore have the impression that the principal title is a caption qualifying the identity of the "man" sketched above it. But a longer glance reveals to us that Harkness is playing on both the words and image placed before us, and we realize finally that "Men of Their Words" refers in fact to the "Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction" spelled out in the subtitle. On seeing the layout of his cover, we sense that he had chosen this specific Gavarni image of George Sand to make us think he is presenting the author as a male writer.⁵ This "joke" captured by Harkness' cover draws us into the goal of his study in daring reframe George Sand through the lens of masculinity.

Dissertation Topic and Contributions to the Literary Field

My dissertation, "George Sand and Rewriting: The Poetics of Intertextuality in George Sand's *Jacques cycle*" aims in its own way to break new ground by working on relatively uncharted territory in the Sand corpus while examining the author's work from an uncustomary angle. I propose that contrary to what one may think, a strong theory of the novel exists holding together the Sand corpus, and that this corpus is structured by intertextuality and polyphony. I suggest in my analysis that her literary practice itself "performs" this theory of the novel, and

⁵ I thank Nigel Harkness for the precisions he gave me regarding the cover of his book. Although normally authors of academic monographs rarely have much say in their own covers, here, Harkness was able to choose the image he wanted to present to make his statement: the Gavarni caricature of George Sand in male attire. Knowing the standard format of all books published by Legenda—a black and white image in the top half of the cover and then a different color for the bottom half, with the title underneath the image in the bottom half, Harkness used this design to his advantage.

that George Sand hands us an actual key to deciphering her entire literary production. My study focuses on this ‘key’ that the author signals in her 1866 novel *Le Dernier Amour*, which functions in many respects as her “dernier mot.” In this novel opening the last decade of Sand’s literary production, her protagonist indicates the centrality of her 1834 novel *Jacques* and two principle rewritings of this work, *Valvèdre* (1861) and *Le Dernier Amour*, while leaving open to speculation the existence of a series of rewritings centering around *Jacques*. This series of rewritings is what I will call, George Sand’s “*Jacques* cycle.”

In the passage in question, her hero, M. Sylvestre, tells us that *Jacques* is a work which has accompanied “Madame Sand’s” (247) evolution both as a writer and as a thinker (247-249). Indeed, this key novel and its rewritings have followed the evolution of Sand’s aesthetics while demonstrating her ongoing reflections on the institution of marriage, the question of adultery, the rapport between the sexes, and the ethical and moral debates regarding divorce. This passage, read together with the author’s different prefaces mentioning *Jacques*, reveals the importance of her 1834 novel as a central matrix among her literary creations. While pointing out the centrality of this work, Sand’s protagonist also signals the fact that she has rewritten *Jacques* several times: “C’était une œuvre de pur sentiment que l’auteur a refaite plusieurs fois sous d’autres titres, et avec des réflexions, on pourrait dire des acquisitions nouvelles qui ont dérouté les critiques inattentifs” (247). My dissertation aims to decipher the signification and purpose of this statement within the Sand corpus and to demonstrate its matrilineal centrality in Sand’s theories of textuality and intertextuality, in addition to her concept of literature and her philosophy of rewriting. Béatrice Didier has brought up the fact that *Le Dernier Amour* may be considered a rewriting of *Jacques*, but no one has examined this 1866 novel as Sand’s literary palimpsest.

Similarly, while different scholars have touched on the topic of rewriting and literary palimpsest in her corpus, no one has studied her rewritings of *Jacques* as she signals it in *Le Dernier Amour*.

By analyzing the implications of the theoretical base established by George Sand through *Le Dernier Amour*, my dissertation suggests an entire reorientation of the current view of the Sand corpus, while demonstrating the author's engagement with the literary aesthetics and ideologies of her time. My work on *Jacques* and the core novels of her "Jacques cycle" will be the first study of this matrix in detail, its theoretical implications, and the network of rewritings revolving around it.

My goal is to pursue the recent trend of scholars to examine Sand's use of intertextuality and polyphony in relation to her metaliterary reflection and literary theorizing, and to build on the approaches and discoveries set forth in the pioneering work of these three mentioned volumes of Sand research. In this sense, the aim of my dissertation is similar to Planté and Bara's first point expressed in their "manifesto," that is to examine and demonstrate Sand's writings as highly engaged works in the critical discourse and metaliterary debates of her time. The groundbreaking work done in *George Sand critique: Une autorité paradoxale* is in its examination of George Sand's articles in the moments where she decides to "put on the literary critic's hat;" this volume builds on the excellent critical edition that Planté directed of a 2007 anthology of Sand's literary criticism, *George Sand critique 1833-1876*.⁶ I build on the findings of these two core works with regard to Sand's vision of the literary critic and of the role and form literary criticism should take. However, whereas these two works focus uniquely on George Sand's articles, my dissertation will focus on George Sand's novels to show how her metaliterary reflections

⁶ Prior to this 2007 publication, many of these texts were relatively difficult to access. *George Sand Critique: Une autorité paradoxale* bases many of its analyses on the texts of this publication.

structure her entire corpus both at the macro- and at the micro-level of passages in her texts themselves. I demonstrate how Sand's literary theories govern even the structure of her phrases in addition to the manner in which she conceives her own novelistic production. My analysis aims thus to show her theory of the novel through the novel.

In my study, I show how Sand dialogues with literary ideas of her time. While borrowing from the discourse of both the aesthetics of realism and the movement, "l'art pour l'art," Sand ultimately upholds her own personal vision of the autonomy of art expressed in her own concept of what she has named the "vérité poétique" of literature. I agree with Planté and Bara's "manifesto" that it is not only possible but desirable for studies in 19th-century French literature to see how George Sand, herself, is as they put it, "productrice d'un discours sur la littérature, ses conditions, sa visée et sa réception"(11). George Sand was not just an "*objet de critiques*" (1), but she was herself a literary authority who generated her own literary theory and participated fully in the literary debates of her time.

By rewriting, I mean the reproduction either in part or in full of another literary text, while playing with its configurations and structure. Rewriting, in this sense, encompasses the idea of literary palimpsest, the idea of "hypertextuality" as defined by Gérard Genette in his book, *Palimpsestes, la littérature au second degré* (8). I will also extend the notion of rewriting to include intertextuality as the citation in full or in part of specific literary passages or identifiable configurational structures of another text; this notion will therefore include the idea of the diegetic events of a specific text, as well as the rapport between the different characters in a novel.

My dissertation will build as well on Nigel Harkness' concept of Sand's "textual masculinity." Since the beginning of Sand scholarship, critics have concentrated almost entirely

on the feminist ideas in Sand's novels, her status as a "femme écrivain," or presentation and construction of her women characters at the expense of what Harkness has pointed out as her carefully constructed masculinity. Harkness' book discusses Sand's male pseudonym, male persona (the "male" identity that she adopted in relation to her male colleagues⁷) and masculine positioning on the literary scene in addition to the painstakingly constructed "textual masculinity" of her texts. This "textual masculinity" includes the projection of a male narrator or male narrative voice, the capturing of a "masculine style," and the depiction of a homosocial community sharing common patriarchal values in her novels as well as in the depiction of this homosocial community through the rapport created between Sand's narrator and the reader himself. As Harkness puts it, "Sand performs masculinity by speaking and writing" (8). My Chapter Two complements Harkness's work while developing further the ideas of a "gendered" textuality. I discuss how Sand, by positioning herself under a masculine tradition and "masculine" style of writing, engages with preconceived notions about women's writings.

Harkness, in bringing up the constancy and insistence with which Sand tries to project masculinity in her writings, suggests that in persistently studying Sand through a feminine or feminist frame of analysis, we are reading Sand against her. Describing what he considers this predominant, but erroneous, approach, he writes: "masculinity is read as a mask, a strategy, and criticism's goal is to defuse the strategy, to search out the textual moments when the mask slips in order to uncover hidden feminine (if not feminist) discourses and meaning"(9). According to him, such an approach of framing masculinity uniquely through the notion of artifice, and femininity through the idea of authenticity is problematic (9), because "it assumes an essence, a

⁷ See especially the opening pages of Harkness' book where he cites statements made by Balzac, Barbey d'Aurevilly, and Henry James. These male colleagues express how they see Sand as another male colleague rather than a female writer because of the force of her genius, her character, her temperament, and her writing.

fundamental truth in a literary work, linked to biology as a determining component of authorial intention”(9). Moreover, as Harkness reminds us, “it is no straightforward operation to map Sand’s gender identity onto femininity” (9).⁸ For this reason, he suggests that a more productive approach would be seeing the innovations that Sand brings to the notion of masculinity and how it is portrayed in her texts. Taking Harkness’ conclusion into account, Chapter Two will demonstrate how Sand’s *Jacques* builds a “textual masculinity.”

My study will also contribute to a greater understanding of Sand’s lifelong “literary dialogue” with Rousseau, for *Jacques* is itself a rewriting of Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Examining these rewritings in dialogue with Sand’s theory of intertextuality and conception of literary criticism and theory of the novel is particularly enlightening, especially in the case of an author for whom literary theory and creation are closely intertwined. Whereas most studies on the ties between George Sand and Rousseau have focused on the latter’s influence on the author’s ideas on education, marriage and political thought, my study will center on the importance of Rousseau within Sand’s literary imagination and her theories about the novel.

Finally, my dissertation, in purposely focusing on lesser known works by George Sand, will show other pieces and sides of her writing overlooked by many scholars. Although in the introduction to their publication, Jacinta Wright and Nigel Harkness do not address this point directly, I will add that the resistance towards viewing the Sand corpus under the banner of “modernity” is simply due to a lack of knowledge and/or attention of many—or most—of Sand’s works.

⁸ Harkness defines Sand’s writing as “strongly marked by an engagement with masculinity as both gendered identity and discursive position” (7).

Although the situation has changed greatly for many scholars due to the work of Sand critics and the publication of *George Sand Studies*, for many readers today, George Sand is still primarily seen as the author of a few “romans champêtres,” whose controversial, troubling aspects have, for the most part, been conveniently erased and even forgotten. Presented in a rather pale, even dusty and simplistic light to middle school children for numerous years, works like *La Petite Fadette* and *François le Champi*, taken out of the ethnographic and political frame in which they were conceived, have come indeed to be viewed as boring, outdated pieces of country life by an author out of touch with our modern, industrial, urban mentality. At best, from such a lens, Sand’s “romans champêtres,” and thus by association, Sand’s entire corpus, are “remembered” as “cute” and moving memories of childhood readings.⁹ At worst, such water-downed artificially “sweetened” readings take on the taste of bad, cheap candy consumed past their expiration date. No wonder then that those who have only been “fed” such products and not sampled her other works would be conditioned to reject any other reading of George Sand on the basis of their past impressions.

Landmark studies on Intertextuality and George Sand

At the 2004 George Sand Colloquium held at Cerisy, Jacinta Wright, in her pioneering study, “S’habiller du vêtement du maître” underlined the importance of Sand’s “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” For Wright, this fairly extensive 90-page or so long article commenting on the idea of literary palimpsest and originality functions as a key to understanding Sand’s usage of rewriting and her own theory of intertextuality. At the same time as she points out in her article,

⁹ On top of our own “nostalgic” childhood reading experiences of this type, such “nostalgic” readings are further reinforced by memories of literature itself, the most evident being Marcel Proust’s memories of reading *François le Champi* in *Du Côté de chez Swann*.

Sand's theory of intertextuality stands out in her century, for unlike her fellow writers, especially in the 1830's, she does not seem to suffer from any "anxiety of influence" and absolutely rejects the myth of the originality of the author-creator. On the contrary, in her article, Sand explains how the concept of originality is not only irrelevant, but harmful to the evolution of literature in stifling its creativity. In this essay, Sand takes as her point of departure the accusations of plagiarism that Goethe directed at Lord Byron. She explains how the latter, in learning that Goethe saw in his *Manfred*, a rewriting of *Faust*, is absolutely mortified that one doubt his originality. It is in defending the brilliance of what she considers Byron's rewriting of this form, the "drame fantastique" invented by Goethe, that Sand proposes a theory of intertextuality. In her article, Jacinta Wright points out the novelty of Sand's views, especially her idea of a "domaine public" from which all writers can borrow as well as to which they can contribute back. She calls Sand "une des premières théoriciennes de l'influence et de l'intertextualité" (95-96). In her reflections and practice of intertextuality George Sand can indeed be read as a precursor to twentieth-century theoreticians like Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva on the subject.

While Jacinta Wright and Nigel Harkness' 2010 publication on intertextuality and polyphony further brings to light the numerous intertextual approaches that Sand demonstrates in her work, they do not form a global synthesized view of how intertextuality actually functions in structuring her whole literary corpus or serves as the very basis of her own theory of the novel. This work, being a collection of articles from the 2006 Dublin Colloquium, and not a full-fledged carefully thought-out demonstration of a specific problematic leading to a conclusion, can only give a smattering of different perspectives on the subject in question. However, this landmark publication serves as an excellent reference and useful tool for researchers reflecting

more deeply on the subject, and it has served my own work on the use of intertextuality and polyphony in George Sand's novels.

In regards to other significant publications dealing specifically with George Sand's writings, and especially her novels, the most pioneering work would be Isabelle Naginski's *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* (1991). Naginski's work was ground-breaking in its examination of narrative voice in George Sand's novels; she put forth the notion of Sand's narrators as being grammatically masculine, but feminine in terms of their sensitivity and sympathy to the plight of women in patriarchal society. Naginski's study thus drew attention to the complexity of gender captured textually in Sand's works. My dissertation therefore builds on both Naginski's and Harkness' work in showing how Sand's writing, in aligning itself to a male lineage of authors, engages with the stylistic expectations of women's writing.

Another prominent work is Naomi Schor's *George Sand and Idealism* which traces the fortune of Sand's reputation as a writer in light of realism's ultimate triumph at the detriment of other aesthetic movements like idealism; the sentimental novel lost its hold with the rise of the realist novel. Schor's study is central in situating Sand's aesthetic positioning in regards to the novels' history, and in so doing, her book invites us to rethink the articulation between the author's literary creations and the aesthetic movements they are a part of. However, I do not entirely agree with her conclusions regarding Sand as an "idealist" author. I consider Sand's positioning much more complex; my study attempts to show the nuances in her metaliterary thinking and dialogue with different aesthetic movements. In particular, I concentrate on her reflections in regards to the growing autonomy of literature during the 19th century. My dissertation is the first in-depth study on Sand's dialogue with "l'art pour l'art" ideas through her novelistic writing.

Kathryn Crecelius' *Family Romances: George Sand's Early Novels* (1987) is an important study examining the love triangle configuration in Sand's early novels through the Freudian inspired schema of a father-sister-brother model of desire and its resolution. Although I do not entirely agree with her Freudian inspired reading of desire, Crecelius' critical commentary and close readings show much insight, and her chapter analyzing Sand's rewriting of Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in *Jacques* is very thought-provoking. My own study builds on Crecelius' in the sense that my analysis focuses in part on Sand's manipulation and exploration of the love triangle formation and the centrality of this figure in her rewritings of *Jacques*.

One other important monograph on Sand treating specifically her novels is Béatrice Didier's *George Sand écrivain: Un grand fleuve d'Amérique* (1998). Didier's volume is a collection of articles that she had written on George Sand over the course of many years. As one of the first pioneers to work on Sand's vast corpus, Didier's work is quite remarkable in pointing out the finesse and complexity in the structure of Sand's fictions. Her close analysis of the multiple narrative frames employed in *Le Dernier Amour* is particularly well-explained, and her close readings of Sand's works demonstrate care and attention to the text. Nicole Mozet's *George Sand: Écrivain de romans* (1997) is also noteworthy, for it reminds us of the troubling gender relations and taboo undertones underlying even what would be considered George Sand's "innocent works," like her "romans champêtres" for instance. Martine Reid's 2004 special volume on George Sand in the journal, *Littérature* deserves special attention as well. This edition titled *George Sand: "Le génie narratif"* compiles the work of different Sand scholars considering the Sand corpus through the diversity of her experimentations and reflections on different literary genres. It shows the large panoply of literary genres that George Sand experimented with in addition to presenting lesser-known works in the Sand corpus. Finally, it is

important to mention Françoise Massardier-Kenney's *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand* (2000) as the first major study examining the notion of the performativity of gender in Sand's novels. Her readings especially of *Jacques* and *Indiana* bring out the contradictions underlying Sand's heroes which finally subvert their patriarchal authority and question the real motives behind their words and actions.

In regards to recent major colloquium publications treating George Sand's novels, one should mention Jeanne Goldin's *George Sand: L'écriture du roman* (proceedings of the 11th international George Sand Colloquium held in Montreal in 1994 and published in 1996), Brigitte Diaz and Isabelle Naginski's *George Sand: Pratiques et imaginaires de l'écriture: colloque international de Cerisy-la-Salle juillet 2004* (2006), and *George Sand: Une écriture expérimentale* (proceedings of the George Sand Colloquium held at Wellesley College in 2004 published in 2006). These conference publications have brought more and more attention to Sand's work as a writer by highlighting the importance of literary experimentation in her novels in addition to the diversity of genres explored. What these studies have shown especially is Sand's constant attempt to push beyond what Jauss would call the "horizons d'attente" of readers; in this respect, Sand scholars have been speaking more and more about her "hybrid writings" and the endings that she stages in her novels which "don't quite seem like endings."¹⁰ My dissertation proposes an interpretation of the "hybrid" quality of Sand's works while demonstrating how this characteristic of her writing enters into her own concept of literature. I bring a new perspective to this discussion by linking it to Sand's dialogue with the movement, "l'art pour l'art."

¹⁰ I attended both the Cerisy and Wellesley conferences, and much of the discussion centered on the concept of "hybrid writing" and Sand's experimentations with the notion of finality and endings.

Choice of Corpus and Textual Analysis

I circumscribed the corpus and approach of my dissertation on several principles: bringing to light key aspects of George Sand's writing which remain relatively unfamiliar to scholars; choosing specifically lesser-known works in the Sand corpus that merit to be acknowledged as central to her literary production; recognizing that Sand actually gives the reader an "instruction manual" to her corpus thus allowing us to read Sand "with her" rather than "against her." It is essential to recognize that for Sand, theory and practice are closely intertwined and often conceived as an indivisible unity. Finally, I attempted to integrate the latest approaches and discoveries in Sand research and particularly those in the three main publications named at the beginning of this Introduction.

My approach consists in focusing on very close readings of a few of George Sand's novels and showing how, through these close textual analyses, we can trace her theories on the novel. Rather than choosing a large array of different novels and texts, I chose to concentrate on what I consider her core works revolving around a central matrix, her 1834 novel *Jacques*. However, while focusing on the core nucleus of three novels, *Jacques*, *Valvèdre*, and *Le Dernier Amour*, I analyze the importance of Sand's 1834 preface, "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*," in showing its value as a principal text in her reflections on the autonomy of literature; I also comment on the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," her key essay in regards to intertextuality. As Sand's correspondence often functions in close correlation to her literary creation, a great part of my dissertation will also draw on her letters. Moreover, as many Sand scholars have pointed out, the author's letters often serve as a "laboratoire d'écriture," and the borders between her literary and non-literary creations are ambiguous. Finally, since George Sand clearly viewed *Jacques* as an important matricial text and basis of her literary creation, a great part of my dissertation will

focus on this key novel. I will examine *Jacques* from the perspective of literary aesthetics but also in regards to Sand's reflections on the institution of marriage, gender relations in 19th-century society, and the status of women.

The importance given to close readings and textual analysis in this dissertation is linked to the main hypothesis underlying my examination of George Sand's work. Sand achieved success on the literary scene through her work. More specifically, this success must have been due, in great part, to her ability to navigate the literary debates in vogue. The whole 19th century and the 1830's in particular was a time when the aesthetics of the novel were rapidly evolving.¹¹ The fact is that Sand knew how to engage with these fluctuating discourses, while drawing attention to both the interest and quality of her work.

Hypothesis 1: Engaging in the Literary Trends of the 19th Century

This principle underlying my study is based on premises proposed in *George Sand critique: Une autorité paradoxale*. Planté and Bara remind us of the exceptional prestige and authority with which George Sand was known in the 19th century despite the strong misogyny of her time. Knowing the difficulty for any male writer to achieve success on the literary scene and remain at the top of his field, one can imagine how much more difficult success must have been for a woman writer. As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated in *Les règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, success on the literary scene depends on understanding the trends of a given period, being able to anticipate future trends, and strategizing in order to attract attention through one's writing and consequently rise to prominence. Success thus includes being aware of one's

¹¹ See especially Margaret Cohen's *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* as well as Marguerite Iknayan's *The Idea of the Novel in France: The Critical Reaction, 1815-1848*.

competitors, including authors presently in vogue in addition to the upcoming new talents. Success and long-lasting success cannot be due to luck alone, especially for a woman author. My hypothesis is that George Sand must have succeeded on the literary scene through the strength of her writing and its ability to engage with all the different trends in vogue throughout the course of her career. The fact, moreover, that her endorsement and advice were highly in demand reveals that she was recognized for having mastered the literary game and its codes. For these reasons, one would expect to find within Sand's writings evidence of a highly engaged metaliterary reflection, standing out in the strength and quality of its execution.

Hypothesis 2: Image of Coherence

The latest volumes in Sand research clearly show intertextuality and polyphony as key traits in George Sand's writings. While intertextuality and polyphony may be traits of an author's writing that exist independently without any clear-cut master plan, the constancy of intertextual allusions, as well as the intertextual frame that Sand introduces in her corpus through her "*Jacques* cycle," suggests an author interested in creating and projecting a larger over-arching meaning and frame to her entire corpus. One may consider this concept through the analogy of music. Polyphony and counterpoint necessarily demand rigor and attention to structure by the nature of counterpoint and its requirements. Similarly, in literature, the strong presence of interwoven voices and texts may be the manifestation of a mind thinking in systems and configurations, and attentive to the logic governing one work or a whole corpus.

The idea of George Sand attentive to the coherence and structure of her whole literary production, and even methodical in her work, may go against the more familiar, customary image of her as a totally spontaneous, improvisatory, even nonchalant author. Nevertheless, it is a possibility worth considering. In my readings, I look for evidence that the Sand corpus may be

conceived in a more structured manner, and that there may be an underlying coherence and overarching coherent vision of her work. One could conceive that finding such a coherence would not be so unusual in a century that saw, for instance, Balzac create his *Comédie humaine* and Zola, his saga *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

To a certain extent, this global vision of an author's work is in the *Zeitgeist*. With the rise of commercial interests in literary publishing, editors and publishers were interested in tapping into the "star power" of best-selling authors like George Sand. As a result, the concept and marketing ploy of the "Œuvres complètes" of an author caught on very quickly. While the idea of the publication of the complete works of an author may originate from material interests, nevertheless, the editorial demands could induce authors to conceive their writings as part of a coherent whole. For instance, publishers in preparing such "collectors' editions" would often ask the author for a preface introducing his complete works. In 1842, George Sand herself had to write a "Préface générale" for the prospectus of her *Œuvres complètes* for an edition published by Perrotin. In 1851, she wrote another "Préface générale" for the collection of her *Œuvres illustrées* published by Hetzel. Finally, in 1875, a year before her death, in a project that never saw its completion due to the untimely death of the editor, George Sand was asked to write yet another preface for another edition by Hetzel of her *Œuvres complètes*.

My hypothesis of an underlying coherence (either natural or induced) in George Sand's novelistic production is not so foreign, if we look at the content of Sand's literary prefaces. For instance, in one version of her 1842 "Préface générale,"¹² Sand begins by signaling the natural coherence that she sees in her literary creations:

¹² In Anna Szabó's edition of George Sand's prefaces, this version is titled "Version (II) inédite, 1842" (73). Sand wrote four versions of her 1842 "Préface générale;" she kept one for the final publication.

Je viens de relire attentivement et dans l'ordre où je les ai composés toute la série de mes romans, et, au lieu du désordre d'idées que je m'attendais à y découvrir, j'ai été frappée d'y trouver l'unité qu'une tête plus forte ou plus mûre eût apportée dans son plan général. (Szabó *Préfaces I* 73)

Sand is downplaying her own talents here in a pose of false modesty, but it is nevertheless interesting that she points out the seriousness with which she prepares the writing of her preface. According to this opening paragraph, this preparation consisted of rereading her entire production of novels over the course of eight years and paying special attention to the shape of her work. Although Sand claims that she expected to find a “désordre d'idées,” the fact that she was specifically on the lookout for any order or disorder suggests a conceptually sensitive view. Whether or not the anecdote that she recounts is true is less important than the description of her examination process and her expectations in looking at this “system.” Curiously enough, in the second paragraph to this same version of her 1842 “Préface générale,” Sand brings up again this idea of scrutinizing her own works in the order in which they were written: ‘En relisant avec attention (et dans l'ordre où ils furent écrits) la série de volumes que j'offre aujourd'hui au public..., je ne suis ni surpris ni humilié d'y trouver des contradictions et des inconséquences de détail’ (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 74). Nevertheless, despite pointing out the contradictions and discrepancies she finds here, she insists that these apparent incoherencies placed in proportion with her whole corpus only bring out its larger coherence:

L'on retrouve dans toutes les conceptions de l'esprit humain, et jusque dans les plus faibles tentatives, une véritable unité d'ensemble, que les contradictions de détail servent à confirmer pour qui comprend bien l'être et sa vie. (Ibid.)

One important difference in this version however, is how she presents her work as part of a master plan. She contextualizes her corpus as part of a larger unity in which she sees the spirit of humanity. Finally, despite having claimed to be surprised when discovering the underlying

coherence of her entire corpus, Sand tells her readers a page later that they should find in her literary creations “l’unité d’intention et de sentiments” (75). Above all, this preface shows us the value that Sand places on the coherence of her own work; she clearly desires that one recognize this unity of intent and feeling in her corpus.

Outline of the Dissertation

My dissertation on intertextuality and rewriting in George Sand’s “*Jacques cycle*” bases its choices on the idea of deciphering the underlying coherence that George Sand claims about her entire corpus. I therefore propose to allow Sand’s words guide us in our choice of texts studied as well as in the approach taken. While Sand often downplays the importance of her own work, she also insists on the importance of specific works. It is necessary to distinguish between these two positions. For the most part, Sand scholars have pointed out the false modesty motivating her claims about not being a particularly strong intelligence or great writer, and tended to brush aside her demeaning remarks about herself. However, we should not ignore her positive judgments about her own work under the assumption that these positive comments are of the same nature as her pejorative ones. We should consider taking at their face value her positive ones. Thus, when we see Sand insist on a particular point or give us directions on how to read her work, we should consider taking them seriously and follow her leads.

My dissertation therefore takes as its point of departure—as well as its structuring element—this idea of following Sand’s indications, when she points out, either directly or indirectly, the importance of a particular work and how to read it. For this reason I have chosen to work on George Sand’s “*Jacques cycle*.” Similarly, I devoted a chapter to her “*Essai sur le drame fantastique*” because Sand clearly believed in the importance of this work and the ideas of rewriting and intertextuality exposed in it.

My dissertation consists of four chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter One presents George Sand's concept of intertextuality and literary palimpsest in her "Essai sur le drame fantastique." This work explains the theoretical basis behind George Sand's practice of rewriting, as well as her engaged stance vis-à-vis the literary debates surrounding the concept of originality. After exposing the stakes of this theoretical essay, I discuss in the second chapter Sand's specific practice of rewriting Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in her novel *Jacques*. More specifically, Chapter Two explores the importance of Sand's novel *Jacques* in her positioning on the literary scene of the 19th century. It underlines how her rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and her choice of the polyphonic epistolary novel enter in dialogue with the "horizons d'attente" associated with women's writing, while constructing what Nigel Harkness would call a "textual masculinity." Chapter Three examines the importance of *Jacques* in Sand's defense of the autonomy of literature. It demonstrates how she engages in the literary debates of her time in order to form her own aesthetics of the novel, and to assert the author's right to depict controversial social issues. My analysis focuses on reading Sand's key work *Jacques* as a response to realism; it is also based on her 1834 preface, entitled "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*" that appeared the same year as *Jacques*. Chapter Four deals with Sand's "Jacques cycle": it delineates the theoretical and interpretational implications of introducing a literary matrix within her corpus. It investigates the rewriting of *Jacques* in her 1861 novel *Valvèdre* and in her 1866 novel *Le Dernier Amour*. It explains how a matrilineal conception connecting these two novels to *Jacques* transforms their interpretation, while giving nuance to Sand's expression of the autonomy of fiction that she exposed in *Jacques*. Ultimately, my dissertation attempts to show the centrality of theory in George Sand's corpus.



Cum uni, tum nobis omnibus oppugnatur. De ignibus devorantibus vitae spectaculum faciamus.

(Eitas Kire)



Fig. 1. caricature of Louis-Philippe as a pear, *La Caricature* November 24, 1831

CHAPTER 1. REWRITING AS A LITERARY PHILOSOPHY

Sand often downplays the importance of her literary creations or minimizes her pretention to holding any literary theory, but she expresses very serious attention to exploring the notion of rewriting in at least two articles, the “Essai sur le drame fantastique,” published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in December 1839, and “Fenimore Cooper,” published in *Le Journal pour tous* in 1856. The former article in particular has caught the attention of Sandian critics fairly recently. During the Colloque de Cerisy in 2004, the year of the bicentennial of Sand’s birth, Jacinta Wright indicated the centrality of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” Wright called this work “une clé” (“S’habiller” 96) for deciphering Sand’s literary output during the 1830’s—a period when Sand rewrites “les textes phares” (Ibid.) by authors such as Goethe, Byron, and Rousseau. She calls Sand “une des premières théoriciennes de l’influence et de l’intertextualité” (Ibid. 96-97). Much more than just a key to understanding Sand’s literary practice in the 1830’s as Wright has stated, I would affirm that the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” functions as a manifesto in presenting the principal tenets of Sand’s theoretical thinking on literature and its evolution and furthermore, her correspondence regarding this work is essential to understanding Sand’s vision of literature. This chapter will elaborate on Jacinta Wright’s findings and offer an alternative interpretation to her discussion regarding the key metaphor of rewriting Sand presents in her “Essai” while showing the centrality of Sand’s correspondence in her theory of literature.

I. AN AUTHOR CONCERNED WITH LITERARY THEORY

The “Essai” read especially in dialogue with Sand’s letters in this period reveals itself as a work that very much defines her identity, evolution, and vision as a 19th-century writer throughout her entire literary career. It first comes out in 1839, but Sand will republish it in 1845 in the same volume as her novel *Jeanne*,¹³ and then publish it one last time in 1875 in a volume titled *Autour de la table*. We also know that between these dates, her article “Fenimore Cooper,” published in 1856, almost twenty years after her first draft of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique,” will borrow a key metaphor for rewriting from the “Essai.” Moreover, “Fenimore Cooper,” which first comes out in the review *Le Journal pour tous* (October 18 and 25), turns up again in 1862 in another collection of Sand’s writings likewise titled “Autour de la table,” thus the very same title as the previously mentioned 1875 volume, in which it will also appear.¹⁴ As we can see, the publication alone of these two articles dealing with rewriting, “Essai sur le drame fantastique” and “Fenimore Cooper,” punctuates every decade of Sand’s whole literary career: 1838, 1845, 1856, 1862, and 1875, one year before Sand’s death, when they are finally published together.

The “Essai sur le drame fantastique” stands out as a particularly important work by its conception as well as by the circumstances of its composition. Sand’s correspondence revolving

¹³ E. Dentu in the “Collection Hetzel” will also republish the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” in a collection of Sand’s works gathered under the title *Souvenirs et impressions littéraires*. The latter is mainly composed of different prefaces from a large number of Sand’s novels. It also includes a small number of articles published in different reviews as well as her *Lettres à Marcie*, which closes the collection. In this volume, Sand’s “Essai” is listed as the first work right after the “Avertissement,” and runs from page 3 to 98. The fact that this work is placed at the very beginning of this collection and published in its entirety seems to highlight its prominence. We can also interpret this editorial choice as an indication that Dentu views the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” as a sort of preface to Sand’s other works, a guiding thread for her entire literary production.

¹⁴ Information on the publication dates and circumstances of George Sand’s articles are from *George Sand Critique, 1833-1876: Textes de George Sand sur la littérature* under the direction of Christine Planté.

around this article casts light on a largely ignored side of her complex literary persona. For an author too often believed to be completely spontaneous, writing quickly and easily, the events surrounding the composition and publication of this essay reveal, on the contrary, a George Sand who is thinking seriously and deeply about her own literary theories and ideas, trying to compose this piece of writing with the greatest care, paying attention to the period of its publication, and especially worrying about its reception. Her letters to Buloz and Charlotte Marliani demonstrate how closely her conception of the role of the publishing industry was interwoven with her vision concerning the evolution of literary forms and literary tastes in the reading public. Read together with her correspondence, the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” reveals George Sand’s strong engagement in the literary debates of her time and her strong convictions about the course literature should take while offering a key to understanding her entire literary production. For these reasons, I will devote a large part of this chapter to Sand’s correspondence and explain the theoretical reasoning her letters express before entering into my analysis of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique.”

Conception of the “Essai sur le Drame Fantastique”

By itself alone, Sand’s correspondence regarding the circumstances surrounding the composition and publication of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” reveals to what extent the commercial business of literary publishing was closely interwoven with her own theories of literature and its goals. In her letters, we see that carefully preparing and controlling the conditions of her article’s publication is primordial for Sand and her vision of literature. To begin with, the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” claims attention among her literary creations because it is an article with a particularly long gestation period between its first draft and the date of its first

publication. This long delay is a result of the time Sand spent reflecting on this work in addition to the factors involved in its publication.

Though the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” appeared in print in December of 1839, we know through her correspondence that Sand sent a first draft in September 1837 (*Corr. IV* 187, fn. 3) to Gustave Planche, literary critic, writer and frequent contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.¹⁵ She asks him to read it carefully and give her his honest opinion and comments about this fairly theoretical piece. Explaining the stakes of this article for her, she writes:

Si l'idée est absurde je jetterai l'essai au feu, et tâcherai de m'éclaircir à moi-même avant de recommencer. Si je réussissais à faire non pas ce que je *conçois*, mais ce que j'*entrevois* dans ma tête, ce serait le seul écrit de moi que je voudrais soigner un peu. (*IV* 181)

Gustave Planche, Sand's mentor and trusted friend, is also a well-established literary critic supporting her first steps into the literary scene in Paris. Writing to him in such a way about the ideas and theories she is striving to formulate shows how deeply she values thinking correctly and clearly about her art. Equally importantly, her letter demonstrates how serious she is about being able to express her ideas publicly.

The very fact that Sand is asking Planche for his critique is significant because, as a major literary critic writing for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he can give her access to the public forum of contemporary literary debates in an influential review. The theoretical ideas that she will eventually announce in what will become the 1839 article are not light, private musings that she might just put away in a drawer but ideas she wants to articulate fully, polish, and publish, however long it may take her. In other words, despite generally denying a desire to articulate a

¹⁵ Jacinta Wright notes these two dates in her article, “‘S’habiller du vêtement du maître’: George Sand et le travesti intertextuel” (96).

theory or theorize her own literary practice, Sand is eager to enter in full force into the literary debates and theoretical preoccupations of her time through a strong, well-refined article in the contemporary literary press.

Indeed, the long waiting period between the first draft she sends to Planche and the date of publication two years later, in addition to what we can imagine as her reflections on the ideas presented in the article, show how central the process of conception and clarification of the ideas in this piece is to Sand. Her statements to Planche draw a distinction between the notion of “conceiving,” as denoted by “je *conçois*” and “seeing” or “starting to see” as denoted by “j’*entrevois*.” It is as though she wants to emphasize the distance traveled and the enormity of the efforts required between these two moments of conceptualization and crystallization of her initial ideas. In her letter, she underlines the two words for added emphasis. Moreover, far from minimizing the importance of her work, as she often does, or the time and efforts spent editing and polishing her writing, in the case of the “*Essai sur le drame fantastique*” Sand openly admits that her vision is proving hard to put into words and that the article deserves to be written with particular care. She even declares that it could possibly become her most important work, the only one worthy of such care, as denoted by her assertion, “ce serait le seul écrit de moi que je voudrais soigner un peu.” Obviously, there is an element of exaggeration on Sand’s part. Nevertheless, the number of times she mentions the “*Essai sur le drame fantastique*” in her correspondence between 1837 and 1839 is striking. Jacinta Wright counted eighteen references to this article, which Sand calls alternatively her “long article critique” (*Corr. IV 588*)¹⁶ and her

¹⁶ Actually, Jacinta Wright, who noted the occasions when Sand speaks of her article, misquoted the first occurrence. In her article, she writes, “grand article” instead of “long article.”

“grande tartine” (Ibid. 600), right up to the date of June 30, 1839, when the author announces to François Buloz, her publisher, her decision to send it to him.

A Literary Gamble?

Sand is ready to risk her career and financial success on the publication of the “Essai.” We know through her correspondence that she is having serious financial difficulties during this period, especially in June 1839, and yet, she refuses to betray her principles to commercial demand. She complains to Buloz about her strained circumstances in a letter dated June 7, 1839, and sends another one to Charlotte Marliani a few days later (around June 20, 1839), in which she laments not having enough money to live on: “Vous voyez dans quel état sont mes finances. Buloz est furieux contre ma *Métaphysique*¹⁷ et se rebelle fièrement... Mais en attendant je suis sans argent. Je serais sans pain si je n’avais du crédit à Nohant” (IV 687). For an author whose livelihood depends on producing novels that will consistently appeal to a readership eager to obtain the latest stories by Mme Sand, her dogged insistence on publishing an eighty-four-page-long essay which will most likely not make any money is noteworthy.¹⁸

Her determination is all the more remarkable as it might put her future literary career in jeopardy. In the preface to her 2002 edition of Sand’s “nouvelles,” *La Marquise, Lavinia, Metella, Mattea*, Martine Reid describes the 1830’s as “un monde éditorial en plein essor, fortement chevillé à la presse [adoptant] des manières industrielles” (7). Speaking of this quick-

¹⁷ Sand is referring to her works which are more “abstract” or theoretical writings like her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” These include *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre* and *Spiridion*. See also Sand’s letter to Charlotte Marliani April 16, 1839 in the *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, p. 634-635. Speaking of her novel *Gabriel*, she writes, “je vous envoie un nouveau roman sous forme dramatique, qui réjouira le cœur de Buloz car la *philosophie* et le *mysticisme*, les deux plus grandes pestes de cet honnête Buloz, y sont assez déguisés pour ne pas l’effaroucher” (634).

¹⁸ In Sand’s 1876 edition of *Autour de la table* where her “Essai sur le drame fantastique” is republished, this article is 84 pages long.

turn-over mentality, she explains, “pour gagner de l’argent, il faut faire vite, reprendre demain en volume ce qui la veille a paru en feuilletons dans un journal ou une revue” (7). As Reid notes, by 1835 George Sand is already being counted among France’s “bestseller” authors, for the publisher Félix Bonnaire already has his eye on her: “associé avec François Buloz au financement de la prestigieuse *Revue des Deux Mondes*, [il] imagine de tirer parti de la réputation d’une jeune femme écrivain, George Sand, en publiant ses œuvres complètes” (7). In a period when “fidéliser la clientèle autour d’une œuvre en train de se constituer” (Ibid.) is key,¹⁹ publishing such a long, abstract, serious didactic essay is extremely risky. For this reason, Buloz keeps trying to convince Sand to publish works that are more accessible to the general public. He reminds her in his March 19, 1839 letter that continuing to publish such theoretical, abstract writing may alienate her wider base of readers:

Spiridion a eu moins de succès que l’*Uscoque* et a été traité de *mystique*. Je vous parle ici en épicier. Néanmoins je crois qu’il serait bon pour vous comme pour nous de faire paraître quelque chose de *moins philosophique* avant les *Sept Cordes de la lyre*. (IV 615, fn. 2)

We can see that Buloz is trying to negotiate with Sand and reason with her in good faith. His sentence, “Je vous parle ici en épicier” attempts to have Sand understand the difficult position in which she is putting him. Though he may want to serve a higher cause in art, Sand should recognize that he must, like any merchant, think of commercial gain or at least of balancing his budget, just as she, his supplier, should remember her own commercial interests.

Buloz’s proposal to strike a balance between publishing Sand’s more abstract, intellectual works and her more accessible novels shows that he understands her desire to publish higher-

¹⁹ As Martine Reid explains in more detail, the idea is to create a popular following, a public wanting to “faire ‘collection’” (7) of an author’s works, meaning “s’assurer le monopole des textes existants comme celui des textes à venir” (7-8).

mindful works of art, but he is alarmed by her unwillingness to compromise. Seeing Sand's refusal in her March 25, 1839 response, he writes again. His April 15, 1839 letter is even more clear about the risks, and alludes to the harm that is already being done by her persistence in this direction: "Ce que je crains pour vous, c'est de vous voir renoncer au roman proprement dit; c'est ce que craint aussi le public qui vous aime et vous suit" (Ibid. 641, fn. 2). George Lubin's footnote concerning Buloz's letter mentions that the situation is becoming critical for Sand's publisher: although certain of Sand's novels like *Mauprat* and *La Dernière Aldini* are selling well, sales of her reprints are sluggish. According to Lubin, Buloz's letter shows that one of the reasons why Sand's *l'Uscoque* and *Spiridion* are not selling is that readers are put off by the philosophical underpinnings of *Spiridion*.

By rejecting the easy commercial success of bestsellers while advocating for her more "metaphysical" works like *Spiridion* and her "Essai sur le drame fantastique" Sand is essentially refusing to lower her artistic standards and defending her own vision of literature. Her April 21, 1839 letter in response to Buloz's comments suggests that *l'Uscoque* is not among what she considers her intellectually and artistically superior "metaphysical" works.²⁰ Answering Buloz's "épicière" remark, she writes, "vous êtes donc encanaillé horriblement mon pauvre Buloz, puisqu'on préfère *l'Uscoque*, la plus mauvaise chose que j'aie faite, à *Spiridion* qui est la moins mauvaise ?" (Ibid. 613)²¹ *L'Uscoque*, which Sand claims to be so terrible, is a kind of adventure

²⁰ Sand herself has suggested the lighter character of this work; in her February 8, 1838 letter Buloz, she calls it "mon dernier conte vénitien" (IV 359), and indicates she wanted it to complement her other short story, *Les Maître Mosaïstes*, which will be published in 1838. The term "conte" already suggests a shorter format and less intense work. Moreover, even in her much later 1854 notice to the reprint of this novel, she calls it "une fantaisie," thereby denoting once again the lighter character of this work.

²¹ We know too that unlike novels like *Spiridion*, to which she will still refer many years later, Sand does not particularly comment on or signal the importance of *l'Uscoque*; on the contrary, as we see here, she minimizes its literary value. However, at the same time, Sand's attitude towards *l'Uscoque* is not so much that she considers *l'Uscoque* of little literary value. In putting down *l'Uscoque*, Sand is focusing attention on the particular importance

novel without philosophical pretensions satisfying the tastes of the period. Such a relatively entertaining novel about a pirate, which Anna Szabó has designated as “proche du genre frénétique” (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 223, fn. 459),²² should normally be a crowd-pleasing bestseller. Buloz’s comments therefore demonstrate that Sand’s growing reputation as a “difficult” and possibly boring “metaphysical” author is starting to affect the sales of even her more accessible works. Though Sand’s reply stresses that *l’Uscoque* is selling better than *Spiridion*, we perceive the very real urgency of the situation through Buloz’s allusion to readers’ disaffection and the effects on his sales. According to him, not only is Sand risking “literary suicide” but her demise is already in progress, though it is still avoidable if she would only give her readers what they want.

Imposing Her Principles on the Publishing World

For Sand, however, defending her own principles and imposing her own values on the publishing world is the only acceptable position, and she scorns those willing to stoop to the undistinguished demands of mass consumption. In her March 25, 1839 letter to Charlotte Marliani, she calls Buloz’s letter stupid precisely because the latter told her that *Spiridion* had less commercial success than *l’Uscoque*. Making fun of Buloz’s concerns, she even exaggerates his reasonable and well-intentioned offer to negotiate. Whereas Buloz only asked for something “‘moins philosophique’ avant les *Sept Cordes de la lyre*” (*Corr. IV* 614, fn. 2), Sand pretends that Buloz asked her for a saucy little story. There is an element of bad faith in her unwillingness

of her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” *L’Uscoque* is actually a complex novel in itself and worthy of greater attention, particularly in its treatment of both gender and genre.

²² Anna Szabó is referring to the French literary movement known as the “Romantisme frénétique,” which reached its climax in the 1830’s. Inspired by the English Gothic novel, it is characterized by an aesthetics of excess, paroxistic feelings, and a fascination with the bizarre. Many authors of the Romantic period experimented with elements of the Romantisme frénétique.

to compromise when she tells her friend, “Buloz ... est consterné et me demande en grâce un petit conte grivois bien gentil. Je le renvoie à Paul de Kock.”²³ She goes on to mock Buloz’ commercial concerns while laughing at his aspirations to be seen as an enlightened publisher: “je le gratte sur sa bosse de l’amour-propre, en lui disant qu’il a fait de la revue un *monument*. C’est par là, qu’il faut le prendre” (Ibid. 616). By “monument,” Sand is referring here to her March 25, 1839 letter to Buloz where she tells him what a great service he is doing for art, in setting high standards for the sort of publications he will accept in his review (Ibid. 613).

Though she understands the stakes in the publishing profession, Sand’s remarks reveal a certain haughtiness on her part as she upholds her own, higher principles. Her comments about how to manipulate Buloz by his “amour-propre” show how little esteem she has for a publishing world obsessed with money, what is in fashion, and what will sell. Similarly, she has little patience for proud publishers claiming noble intentions. Anything short of total devotion to art based on principle alone would earn ridicule, as her comments about Buloz show. Further on, she tells her friend:

Il craint les épiciers, mais il ne serait pas fâché d’être grand homme tout comme un autre et quand on lui dit qu’il a fait de grandes choses et de grands sacrifices ! (5f.50c. peut-être !) il est fier comme un paon ! Quel cuistre ! (Ibid. 616)

George Sand is playing on the sense of “épicier” we mentioned above. Here, however, she transforms Buloz’s original meaning by having the word refer to the supposed grocers she pretends Buloz had said to be among her readers. She clearly delights in attacking what she considers her publisher’s falsely noble aspirations when she mentions the modest sum of “5f.50c.” in parentheses right after the words, “grands sacrifices.” The addition of the adverb,

²³ Paul de Kock is a popular 19th-century author whose writing was considered less serious and lower art. See for instance, http://www.fabula.org/actualities/lectures-de-paul-de-kock_24781.php.

“peut-être,” underlining the uncertainty even of losing this small amount, further undercuts Buloz’s “grand sacrifice” and adds to her biting irony.

Sand’s constant mentioning of money transactions shows how little she esteems the financial interests driving the publishing industry, and her June 23, 1839 letter to Buloz is proof that she is only interested in writing according to her own principles. As she puts it, “je ne ferai jamais en littérature que ce qu’il me plaira de faire quelle que soit votre opinion et celle de vos abonnés et quant aux affaires, je n’exigerai jamais que ce que vous regarderez comme utile à vos intérêts” (Ibid. 619). Striking back, Sand proposes somewhat mischievously that Buloz take on other authors that can help him make money since she refuses to compromise: “Si la revue ne peut se soutenir sans *nouvelles*, il n’y a pas que moi qui sache en faire. Balzac et Frédéric Soulier [*sic*] en font de beaucoup plus intéressantes. Vous pouvez vous réconcilier avec l’un ou acquérir l’autre.” (614). By using “réconcilier” et “acquérir,” Sand, while ostensibly speaking about the possibility of getting more crowd-pleasing authors to write for the review, suggests that Buloz’s publication is, when all is said and done, only interested in material, business transactions. The close proximity of the words “réconcilier” and “acquérir,” moreover, stresses that reconciling differences and disputes is just another transaction; one can just swallow one’s pride, forget differences, and buy or sell reputations in the soulless, free-trading market of the publishing world.

In firm opposition, Sand proclaims her independence at any price. Half-jokingly refusing even the idea that she should always be “un écrivain à succès,” Sand affirms that she should have the right to bore her readers, should her writings have this affect as Buloz claims, since this right is already enjoyed by others: “vous ne pouvez me refuser le privilège d’endormir vos lecteurs quand vous l’accordez à d’autres moins anciens en titre, à la revue” (Ibid. 690). Sand, who

perfectly understands the publishing world and its fads and fashions, downplays Buloz's worries; rather than a literary suicide, her writing choices might be at worst a temporary cause of literary drowsiness. By the choice of the verb "endormir," Sand suggests that just as she may be putting readers to sleep in her present writings, she can just as easily wake them up when and if she chooses to do so. For Sand, then, an author's honor and artistic independence are non-negotiable, indisputable, and inalienable.

Mastering the Editorial Game

At the same time, George Sand understands that being able to impose her own ideological and theoretical principles requires obtaining the acceptance of the commercial world to execute her demands, and this acceptance depends on market forces and financial interests in the publishing industry. Sand is essentially betting on her power as a bestselling author to push the limits in this literary gamble and force her editor to comply with her wishes. Refusing to bow to market forces is not enough. Getting one's way requires engaging full force in the editorial game and mastering it.

Christine Planté's 2006 edition of the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," notes that Sand pushes back at Buloz to have the "Essai" published: "Sand livre bataille²⁴ pour [le] publier dans la *Revue des Deux Mondes*" (54). She pushes equally hard to have him publish *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre*, a difficult piece, which Sand suggests is yet another work concerning the "métaphysique." Drawing attention to Buloz's actions, the editorial comments in Planté's edition show how far the publisher is ready to go to discourage Sand from publishing her "Essai sur le drame fantastique": "Buloz a compromis—intentionnellement?—le projet de Sand: il a fait

²⁴ See for instance Sand's letter to Buloz around June 23, 1839 in the *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, 689-691.

publier dans la revue, en trois numéros, les 1er juin, 15 août et 15 octobre, un article signé Henri Blaze et consacré au *Second Faust*” (54). Moreover, in his June 7, 1839 letter to Sand, he tells her clearly that he wants to dissuade her entirely from writing such “metaphysical” works: “j’en dirais bien d’autres si je savais que mes grincements de dents puissent vous dégoûter à jamais de votre métaphysique plus que ballanchienne!”²⁵ Buloz’s “grincements de dents” also suggests that he feels forced to give in to what he truly thinks is a sort of stubborn caprice on Sand’s part.

In a period like the 19th century, when so many commercial interests are at stake for those investing in the most popular writers, compromises must be struck between authors and their publishers. While authors are dependent on publishers for bringing their works to print, publishers too are dependent on “stars” like Sand to generate sales. Understanding her position of strength, Sand resorts to a sort of blackmail to pressure Buloz into publishing her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” Suspecting the latter’s intentions behind his publishing of Henri Blaze’s article on *Faust*, she confronts him:

J’ai aussi un article de critique qui fera environ 2000 f. et que je vous aurais envoyé, si Mme Marliani ne m’eût écrit que vous étiez trop obéré pour le prendre. Vous venez pourtant d’insérer un article sur *Faust*, ce qui me prouve que le mien sur *Faust* et *Manfred* n’était pas hors de saison à la revue. Vous saviez que je l’avais à votre disposition et vous avez donné la préséance à celui de votre beau-frère. (*Corr. IV* 669)

The “article de critique” to which Sand alludes is her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” By mentioning the “2000 f” she esteems her work’s worth for Buloz’s journal, it is clear that Sand is indirectly waving her star status as an author at him and reminding him how he depends on her for his financial success.

²⁵ This passage is from Buloz’s June 7, 1839 letter. The letter is cited in Sand’s *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, 687, footnote 1. The adjective “ballanche” is referring to Pierre-Simon Ballanche, a French writer and philosopher.

By concretely speaking about sums of money, Sand is strategically reminding Buloz of her leverage over him. In her next move, she offers to leave if he does not wish to comply with her publication plans. Referring to what she considers Buloz's bad faith in publishing Henri Blaze's article, she writes him: "pourquoi ne me le diriez-vous pas franchement, et pourquoi ne me donneriez-vous pas la liberté de la porter ailleurs?" (669). Evidently, Sand is bullying Buloz by not giving him any other choice aside from publishing her article. Standing up for the quality of her work in addition to her commercial success, she proudly announces to him, "Vous concevez bien que je ne réclamerai pas l'exécution absolue d'un traité qui vous semblerait onéreux" (669).

Sand perfectly understands this game between publisher and author. We will never know to what degree she believes in this "2000f" success she is waving at Buloz, but we can sense a certain bluff in this game between them. Gambling psychologically with Buloz's desire to retain a "star" author, she insists over and over on her track record for success. For instance, in the next sentence, she tells him, "Si mes ouvrages n'ont plus bonne chance de succès à la revue je n'utiliserai certainement pas du droit que vous m'avez donné de les faire accepter *quand même*" (669). The negative phrase "n'ont plus bonne chance de succès à la revue" is strategically placed to remind Buloz precisely of her works' solid past track record for commercial successes and especially of those that benefited his journal. Sand's bluff seems to work, for Buloz gives in to her demands. He ends his response to her letter with "Adieu, tigresse d'Arménie" (671, fn. 1), which indicates that he is not particularly happy about being coerced, but also suggests a certain affectionate, grudging respect for his "star" author.²⁶ His post scriptum asking Sand to send him

²⁶ Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch in her analysis of the business aspect of the editorial market speaks of Sand's difference from her female colleagues: "George Sand... held an exceptional status within the literary market of the July Monarchy and commanded great respect as a business interlocutor as well as an author" (103).

her “Essai sur le drame fantastique,” which he refers to as “le *Goethe* de G.S.,”²⁷ shows that Sand has won this battle. Moreover, as George Lubin has pointed out, this gesture shows that “malgré l’aigreur, les ponts ne sont pas rompus” (671).²⁸ Finally, controlling right up to the most minute details, Sand makes sure her article appears at the most favorable moment, for in her June 30, 1839 letter to Buloz, she writes, “Je vous enverrai mon article sur Goethe-Bryon-Mickiewicz quand on aura un peu oublié celui de Blaze. (...) nous ne pouvons entretenir le public de Goethe deux fois en peu de temps” (Ibid. 700).

II. AN AUTHOR ENGAGED IN THE LITERARY DISPUTES OF HER TIME

Far from being a literary caprice, Sand’s insistence on publishing the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” on her own terms reveals at once her engagement as an author in the literary debates of her time and the importance she places on this particular work. On the one hand, Sand’s correspondence shows how little she respects the financial interests of the publishing industry. On the other hand, her letters acknowledge the indirect but major role that publishers play in contemporary literary debates. They have a dual status, for while having to sell books in order to make a living, they also act as intermediaries for artists to reach the public. In this sense, they are not merely selling goods; they are involved with artistic creation. Similarly, in a 19th-century publishing industry where commercial demands and market factors enter more and more into play, authors become more and more vocal about the legal and commercial rights they have over their literary creations. For writers, therefore, literature is no longer just a product of artistic

²⁷ George Lubin points out this detail in his edition of Sand’s *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, p. 671, footnote 1.

²⁸ Sand, *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, 671, footnote 1.

value but also of commercial value, subject to legal contracts. Both Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" and her correspondence with her editor over the publication of this article clearly reveal these shifting values and the need to address at once artistic, commercial, and legal factors when presenting her own ideas on literary theory. In turn, the author's literary theories are closely interwoven with this new commercial, legal, and artistic reality. In the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," Sand's discussion on rewriting confronts fully and dramatically 19th-century concerns over originality and artistic creation by coloring it with the notion of intellectual property rights and plagiarism.

Engaging the Publisher through Theory

For George Sand, engaging in the literary disputes of her time is not just writing about literature but also engaging her publisher on a theoretical level. Her March 25, 1839 response to Buloz's earlier "épicier" remark is particularly pertinent in that respect. We will remember Buloz's original sentence, "je vous parle ici en épicier" (*Corr. IV* 615, fn. 2) which evidently alludes to the commercial aspect of his profession. Sand however chooses to "misinterpret" her publisher's use of this image in order to manipulate him and engage him in her vision of literature.

In her March 25, 1839 letter to Buloz, she pretends to understand that Buloz is referring to the supposed grocers in her readership and is asking her to write at a lower level for them, for she tells him: "Vous avez peut-être beaucoup d'épiciers autour de vous qui préféreront l'*Uscoque* à *Spiridion*" (613). She claims he is probably overly influenced by these less intellectual, non-literary members of his reading public who would not be able to appreciate "metaphysical" works like her "Essai sur le drame fantastique," for she refers to them as these "vingtaine de voix ayant ainsi prononcé à votre oreille" (613) against *Spiridion*. By appropriating

Buloz's phrase, she accuses him of aiming too low and of forgetting the gains he had so admirably achieved in the past: "Il me semblait pourtant que votre revue se faisait chaque jour plus sérieuse, et qu'elle pouvait se soutenir sans insérer du Paul de Kock ou du Paul Fouché" (613). The adverb "pourtant," is strategically placed to play on Buloz's pride in owning a high quality review and not accepting "easy" authors like Paul de Kock. The underlying message is, "I believed you were better than this, but I was in fact mistaken."

In mentioning Paul de Kock, Sand is speaking in bad faith for she knows Buloz has higher aspirations and would not accept such low standards. Indeed, George Lubin's comments point out that Paul de Kock has never appeared in Buloz's review, and that Paul Foucher's publication was limited to "un proverbe, *la Nièce du gouverneur*, dans le premier tome de la revue en 1831" (Ibid., fn. 1). Moreover, the use of "se soutenir" followed by the negation, "sans insérer du Paul de Kock ou du Paul Fouché" is meant to further "rub in" her insulting insinuations. This infinitive is particularly apt at communicating the idea of self-sufficiency, autonomy, and independence because a reflexive construction is by definition a sentence where a subject acts on itself. Sand is therefore trying to flatter Buloz in claiming that his review was superior to the others precisely because it appeared so independent.

However, flattering Buloz and manipulating him into publishing her own "metaphysical" works is not the only goal. She is also attempting to win him over to her own idea of the mission of art and literature as a means to educate and refine the tastes of the public:

Vous avez peut-être beaucoup d'épiciers autour de vous qui préféreront l'*Uscoque* à *Spiridion*... Qu'est-ce que cela prouve ? Qu'il faut un peu laisser dire les gens, et tenter de leur faire avaler de meilleurs aliments que ceux auxquels ils sont habitués. Autrement leur estomac sera toujours grossier et ne pourra digérer que la charcuterie [*sic*]. Vous avez une mission à remplir à cet égard et vous l'avez longtemps remplie à vos risques et périls. Ne l'abandonnez pas. (Ibid. 613)

From Buloz's original allusion to the "épicier," Sand derives the metaphor of art as a more refined sort of food than the crude "charcuterie" some readers are used too. What Sand is trying to convey here is that publishers must think beyond material interests: while artists are responsible for creating high-caliber works of art, publishers have the noble responsibility of making this food for the spirit available to the masses. Artists thus share with publishers the mission to help humanity evolve.

Placed in this theoretical context, one can better understand Sand's dogged insistence on publishing her "Essai sur le drame fantastique" with her publisher's support. Reminding Buloz of his own noble role in rising above merely providing a literature of entertainment, she tells him, "Vous avez pris la revue par terre et vous l'avez relevée, et elle va toujours de mieux en mieux quoique de plus en plus en sérieux, quoiqu'elle ait perdu Balzac qui certes plaisait beaucoup et avec raison" (613).²⁹ Neither literary suicide nor literary battle, George Sand's dealings with the publishing world are an attempt not only to gain strategic allies for her theory that literature's function is educating and refining minds, but also to ensure her own position as an influential 19th-century writer.³⁰

Presenting a New Literary Form: "Le Drame Fantastique"

For George Sand, presenting a new literary form through her "Essai sur le drame fantastique" centering on Goethe's *Faust*, Byron's *Manfred*, and Mickiewicz's *Dziady* is part of

²⁹ Sand is perfectly aware of the "literary playing field" and its main players. She recognizes writers of talent, as her comment on Balzac shows, just as she notes with scorn lesser authors who are ready to prostitute their art for commercial gain.

³⁰ Thanks again to Nancy Rubino for her comments here to me—Sand's higher artistic and philosophical ambitions reveal at the same time her desire to be recognized as an artist with greater artistic aspirations; she does not want to be taken for a "lowly" artist like Paul Kock and write only for financial success.

her mission in elevating the level of the reading public of the 19th century. At the time of Sand's writing, the type of Romantic theater that she calls the "drame fantastique" is still fairly new and the reputation of at least two of the authors discussed still not entirely established or their work truly understood. For this reason, Sand's article stands as an important landmark in the study of the reception of a new literary form and of the authors who Sand considered its outstanding exponents. According to her, this new genre invented by Goethe and taken up and rewritten by Byron and Mickiewicz had been misunderstood in France. She explains how the unusualness of its form and content makes it hard for the French public to comprehend, and attributes this "cultural shock" to the fact that France is "beaucoup trop classique pour apprécier de longtemps le fond des choses, quand la forme ne lui est pas familière" (Sand, "Essai" 112).

Although Goethe's first *Faust* was published in Germany in 1808, the first French translation appeared in 1822.³¹ The second part had still not been translated when Sand's "Essai" came out. The French version was only published in 1840.³² Therefore, *Faust* is still a relatively new work for the French public. Up to the moment of Sand's article, French reception had very much been colored by Germaine de Staël's critique of Goethe's *Faust*. (Planté, *George Sand Critique* 56). In their preface to the "Essai" in *George Sand Critique 1833-1876*, the editors Bara, Fontana, and Jensen explain how Staël, though admiring Goethe's genius, criticizes the strangeness of the form of his *Faust*, its apparent intellectual chaos, and its bad taste; in short, "la transgression générique choque car *Faust* n'est ni une tragédie, ni un roman" (56). Sand's

³¹ Sand used the second edition of Nerval's translation published in 1835 for her "Essai."

³² Sand knew of the existence of the *Second Faust*, published in Germany in 1832, and had probably read translated extracts before writing the "Essai." See *George Sand Critique 1833-1876*, p. 55.

contribution, they state, is precisely that she expresses “un point de vue à contre-courant, car elle apprécie la nouveauté de la forme” (56).

In regards to Byron, Planté’s edition points out that the British author, closely associated with the “mal du siècle” effect, is very much in vogue in France (56). Sand’s “Essai sur le drame fantastique” asserts, however, that Byron’s *Manfred*, suffering from this “rewriting” label, does not receive the consideration it should. As for Adam Mickiewicz, he is discovered quite late in France.³³ The first publication in Paris of his poems in his native Polish dates from 1828. He is first translated into French in 1830. It is in this context that on reading Bugraud des Marets’ 1834 translation of *Dziady*, Sand becomes enthusiastic about Mickiewicz. The “Essai sur le drame fantastique” is therefore in great part inspired by this newly discovered author.³⁴ Bara, Fontana, and Jensen, speaking of the high profile Sand’s commentary on Mickiewicz will acquire, tell us: “Le commentaire qu’elle en donne dans l’Essai s’impose et fait longtemps autorité en tant que contribution essentielle à la découverte de Mickiewicz en France” (Planté, *George Sand Critique* 59).

What George Sand calls the “drame fantastique” is not so much a structurally defined form, like a five-act tragedy for instance, but rather a work centered on philosophy, or rather Sand’s own conception of philosophy. In her opening statements, she makes it clear that this “drame fantastique,” interchangeably called a “drame métaphysique,” can vary enormously in terms of its formal structure or genre, for in naming the three works she considers its best representatives, she shows that the authors themselves have designated them under different genre categories—theater as well as poetry: “*Faust*, que Goethe intitule *tragédie*, *Manfred*, que

³³ See *George Sand Critique 1833-1876*, p.58-59.

³⁴ See also Sand’s *Correspondance*, Vol. 4, 187, footnote 3.

Bryon nomme *poème dramatique*, et la troisième partie des *Dziady*, que Mickiewicz désigne plus légèrement sous le titre d'*acte*" (Sand, "Essai" 111). What is new in this form, according to Sand, is "l'association du monde métaphysique et du monde réel" (Ibid. 115). By "métaphysique," Sand is designating in a fairly vague, widely inclusive manner the symbolic and abstract dimension of this conception of writing. Describing for instance, Goethe's *Faust*, she explains:

Pour me servir de la langue philosophique, je pourrais dire que Faust et Manfred représentent le *moi* ou le sujet ; que Marguerite, Astarté et toutes les figures réelles des deux drames représentent l'objet de la vie, du *moi* ; enfin que Méphistophélès, Némésis, le sabbat, l'esprit de Manfred et tout le monde fantastique qu'ils traînent après eux, sont le rapport du *moi* au *non moi*, la pensée, la passion, la réflexion, le désespoir, le remords, toute la vie du moi, toute la vie de l'âme, produite aux yeux, selon le privilège de la poésie, sous des formes allégoriques et sous des noms consacrés par les croyances religieuses chrétiennes ou païennes, ou par les superstitions du moyen âge. (Ibid. 116)

As suggested by Sand's description, this essential metaphysical character of the "drame fantastique" includes elements of philosophy for it deals with questions of existence and representation. At the same time, her use of these terms is very permeable and ambiguous in its blurring of boundaries between what we would consider today as separate domains. Sand's presentation of this philosophical content includes elements of psychology, not only in the terms she uses, such as "le *moi* ou le sujet," but also in her listing of the emotions the "drame fantastique" centers around: "la passion, la réflexion, le désespoir, le remords." Furthermore, Sand incorporates a spiritual dimension within this emotional and philosophical content by including both the terms "toute la vie du moi" and "toute la vie de l'âme" in this list.

Nevertheless, while mentioning the religious aspect of the "drame fantastique," Sand is careful to re-center this spiritual dimension within the boundaries of literary representation and the role of the imagination. To this effect, she mentions how this spectacle of the metaphysical is

to be composed “selon le privilège de la poésie” and “sous des formes allégoriques.” Likewise, in addition to Christian religious beliefs, Sand affirms that it will also stage pagan beliefs as well as superstitions. The only over-arching principle governing the “drame fantastique” she specifies relatively clearly is that this new form should stage in a visible, exteriorized manner elements that are abstract and invisible, because they represent the “monde intérieur.” Speaking of this new principle underlying *Faust*, she writes, “Cette représentation du monde intérieur, ce grand combat de la conscience avec elle-même, avec l’effet produit sur elle par le monde extérieur dramatisé sous des formes visibles, est d’un effet très-ingénieux et très-neuf” (116).

Promoting Perfectibility in Literary Tastes

George Sand is particularly invested in introducing this new genre, for this form, as she describes it, is linked to her ideal of perfectibility and the evolution of literature. She sees the “drame fantastique” as true innovation, a form that expresses a new level of consciousness and intention driving the visible dramatic effects produced on stage. Contrasting the symbolic way in which Goethe uses the supernatural in *Faust* with examples such as “les furies d’Oreste,” “les spectres d’Hamlet, de Banco et de Jules,” and “le don Juan de Molière et le don Juan de Mozart,” Sand states, “ces apparitions n’ont pas le caractère purement métaphysique que Goethe leur a donné” (116). Clarifying her position, she explains how, in her opinion, these past uses of the supernatural in theater probably did not have an allegorical function intended by their authors and were probably not interpreted as allegorical either by the public (117). Sand affirms that for the most part, “les masses qui ont assisté à leur représentation scénique les ont prises au sérieux,” (117) meaning they took them at face value and did not project a deeper level of meaning on them. Expounding on this point, Sand emphasizes, “Au temps de Shakespeare, l’ombre d’Hamlet produisait plus d’effroi et d’émotion qu’elle n’éveillait de réflexions philosophiques” (117).

According to her, it is this focal difference in authorial intention that characterizes the “drame fantastique”:

Quelle qu’ait été la pensée frivole ou sérieuse de tous ceux qui, avec Goethe, avaient fait intervenir des êtres surnaturels dans l’action dramatique, il est certain qu’ils ont eu recours à cette intervention comme moyen dramatique bien plus que comme moyen philosophique. (117)

What is essential to note in George Sand’s distinction between the exploitation of the supernatural in past works and that of Goethe’s is the manner in which she infuses her analysis with the idea of progress and increasing sophistication. At first, Sand seems to acknowledge this difference as merely a difference in focus and not a judgment of their artistic value (i.e., dramatic effects as opposed to philosophical expression), for she concedes that authors before Goethe could certainly have had other layers of intention and meaning behind their dramatic effects: “Ils ont eu, sans doute, en ceci, une pensée de haute moralité ou de critique incisive” (117), the difference being only that “cette pensée n’était pas la pensée fondamentale de leur œuvre” (117). However, her value judgment regarding the increased sophistication and higher degree of evolution of the “drame fantastique” becomes more and more apparent as she advances in her analysis. She affirms, for instance, “je suis persuadée que Shakespeare a conçu son magnifique drame beaucoup plus naïvement que Goethe ne put se le persuader, et que ce qui semblait à celui-ci subtil et si mystérieux dans le héros de Shakespeare, avait une explication très-claire et très ingénue dans les idées superstitieuses de son temps” (117-118). It is true that the adverb “naïvement” is not in general a pejorative notion in Sand’s writings, for it is often equated with purity and the ability to feel and perceive different experiences in a deeper, freer, and more immediate manner. Nevertheless, it also expresses a lesser degree of sophistication.

In terms of her theorization of this form, Sand clearly sees the “drame fantastique” as more advanced, contributing to the progress of mankind. Discussing the different ways in which

supernatural elements were used before and after *Faust*, she refers to the latter as marking the limit between “l’ère du fantastique naïf employé de bonne foi comme ressort et effet dramatique, et l’ère du fantastique profond employé philosophiquement comme expression métaphysique, et ... dirai-je religieuse?” (119). The designation of these two usages as representatives of two different eras anticipates Sand’s further precision in her next sentence about the “drame fantastique” as leading the way to the future and representing an evolution not only in art but also in consciousness: “ces grands ouvrages dont j’ai à parler appartiennent à la philosophie, c’est-à-dire à la religion de l’avenir, le scepticisme de Goethe, comme le désespoir de Byron, comme la sublime fureur de Mickiewicz” (119). Essential to remark here again is the term “religion de l’avenir,” for Sand makes clear she is using it in a much larger more encompassing dimension than a religious creed. As a more evolved, sophisticated and complex form, the “drame fantastique” includes a certain mysticism and faith while leaving room for reflection and doubt; while being abstract, this form also deals with human emotions from hope to fear.

On another level, Sand’s “Essai sur le drame fantastique” serves as a forum for promoting her own ideas about the perfectibility of the human spirit, aside from her actual discussion about the evolution of literary forms. While reminding her readers that the supernatural apparitions in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* were probably not interpreted in an allegorically and symbolically sophisticated manner, Sand is at the same time subtly demonstrating how sophisticated their own tastes and readings have become. Explaining the immense popularity of Shakespeare in his own time, she suggests how absurd it would be to imagine his original public as capable of registering the same type of complex interpretations 19th-century critics were projecting on the author: “comment concevoir l’immense popularité des drames les plus profonds de Shakespeare? Il faudrait supposer un public composé de

métaphysiciens et de philosophes, assistant à la première représentation d'*Hamlet* ou de *Macbeth*" (118). Evidently, Sand's comments serve as a lesson about the historic specificity of reception and historical context, and the errors one can encounter in projecting one's own reading onto authorial intention.³⁵ However, by underlining how readers have already evolved in the sophistication of their interpretations, Sand is also suggesting indirectly that this potential for progress should be encouraged. By pointing out to them more and more refined food (to borrow Sand's own metaphor discussed earlier) in the form of increasingly sophisticated works of art, readers can evolve yet further in their literary tastes and understanding.

Defending Rewriting: Sand's Responsibility as an Artist

Sand's "literary engagement" goes well beyond the introduction of new literary forms and abstract theories and reveals her strong beliefs in the roles and responsibilities of artists themselves. Defending rewriting as well as those who rewrite is for her, central to and inseparable from her theory of rewriting presented in the "Essai sur le drame fantastique." Her "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is doubly interesting for not only is it a founding theoretical text in the Sand corpus, it is also a type of "littérature engagée" in the Sartrian sense. In short, defending her politics of rewriting includes defending those accused and "condemned" for rewriting.

Far from just an abstract, intellectual debate, the issue of rewriting for Sand is an almost politicized contemporary concern where much is at stake. For this reason, she is careful to frame this theoretical question within a contemporary context. Taking as a point of departure a literary dispute between Goethe and Byron over the question of ownership, originality, and plagiarism,

³⁵ See especially the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," p. 117-118 where Sand speaks about such erroneous interpretations by the 19th century as "manqu[ant] de circonspection, et ... en grande partie, très arbitraires" (117).

Sand slowly constructs her own theory about rewriting and the reasons for defending this literary practice. She begins by explaining the exact context of this source of tension between Byron and Goethe where the latter claims in a journal that Byron's *Manfred* is a rewriting of his *Faust*. To clearly situate and illustrate this contemporary debate, Sand reproduces the exact passage from *Le Journal L'Art et l'Antiquité*, where Goethe makes this accusation, and labels it, "JUGEMENT DE GOETHE" in addition to stating where his opinion was published: "Tiré DU JOURNAL L'ART ET L'ANTIQUITÉ" (114). In the extract she cites, Goethe's very categorical statement shows he does not doubt for a minute that Byron used his *Faust* to create *Manfred*: "Ce poète metaphysicien s'est approprié mon *Faust*, et il en a tiré une puissante nourriture pour son amour hypocondriaque" (115). Though earlier on in his article he refers to *Manfred* as "un phénomène merveilleux" and says that Byron's borrowing deeply touched him ("[il] m'a vivement touché" (115)), his words also show a certain smug superiority and pride at being the inventor of a strong, exceptional work, as evidenced by his choice of the phrase, "puissante nourriture." The addition of the possessive adjective, "mon" in front of "*Faust*" further underlines this pride of ownership, and a self-conscious sense of originality.

It is clear from this example that the idea of rewriting—how it is perceived, and how it intersects or causes friction with 19th-century values—stirs up very strong feelings, which obviously has implications for the literary figures of the period and on its literature. By taking up such a vivid, concrete "case study" and showing the stakes involved, Sand takes the bull by the horns, bringing to the forefront this drama, which nowadays we call the "anxiety of influence," weighing on 19th-century authors.³⁶ By creating such a dramatic "mise en scène" for this 19th-century dilemma, not only does Sand show the urgency of this literary debate but she

³⁶ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

strategically draws attention to the importance of her own entry into the heart of this serious literary argument. Addressing and resolving the dilemma of rewriting while at the same time establishing Sand's voice in such a central literary concern, the "Essai sur le drame fantastique" serves both the ambitions of a young author eager to impose her own vision and a higher, disinterested, philosophical purpose.

Defending Lord Byron

Being accused of plagiarism or of borrowing ideas from another writer is experienced as a particularly serious offence and dishonor by authors in this period. Consequently, by a slippery extension of these principles, rewriting, viewed as "innocent" in previous centuries, takes on pejorative overtones in the 19th century, simply through semantic association with plagiarism. What used to be considered at least a neutral or even positive literary practice³⁷ becomes in a sense contaminated (though wrongly in Sand's opinion, as we will see) by this century's fear of plagiarism, a practice legally frowned upon but also looked down on morally and artistically. Being accused of plagiarism thus would amount to being designated as creatively impotent,³⁸ hence the danger of being seen as rewriting another's work. Given the manner in which Goethe

³⁷ In the Renaissance particularly, imitation was promoted as a good and necessary practice. We will remember that Joachim du Bellay in his *Défence et Illustration de la langue française* encourages literary imitation as a means to enrich the French language, especially through the imitation of texts and literary genres from Antiquity. Sand, as we shall see in her "Essai sur le drame fantastique," will try to remind readers that rewriting was not associated with plagiarism in the past. It is important to note as well that although the positive notion of imitation coexisted with the new ideas regarding originality, this traditional positive concept of imitation is losing ground in the 1830's (I thank Michel Murat for reminding me of the coexistence of these two attitudes in this particular period and how ideologies are shifting specifically in the 1830's). Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is reacting to what she considers as this unhealthy new attitude of the 1830's. As we will see further on in this chapter, her essay is "literarily engaged" in fighting against what she considers a harmful new atmosphere dominating the 19th century.

³⁸ Jacinta Wright, describing the reactions of Nodier, Musset, and Byron when accused of plagiarism, speaks of their "reaction viscérale" ("S'habiller" 99), in the sense that these accusations are experienced practically as physical ailments. She says for instance that Nodier experiences the accusation against him as "une grosse maladie" (99). See especially pages 98-100 in her article.

states his claim, it is not surprising that Byron would reject the former's assertions as extravagant and totally unfounded. To capture Byron's sense of indignation in his defense, George Sand also reproduces Byron's exact words, titling this extract as "FRAGMENT DE LETTRE DE LORD BYRON A SON ÉDITEUR, Juin 1820" (114). In this passage, Byron claims never to have read *Faust*, but only to have experienced a portion of Goethe's masterpiece through a friend translating it aloud to him: "Je n'ai jamais lu son *Faust*, car je ne sais pas l'allemand; mais Matthew Lewis, en 1816, à Colligny, m'en traduisit la plus grande partie de vive voix, et j'en fus naturellement très frappé" (114-115). Interestingly enough, the only real direct inspiration Byron acknowledges is nature herself, choosing to simply attribute the origins of his work to the view of a few mountain ranges: "mais c'est le Steinbach, la Jungfrau et quelques autres montagnes, bien plutôt que *Faust*, qui m'ont inspiré *Manfred*" (115). Other than that, he only admits in passing that as a child he loved reading certain Greek dramas like Eschyle's *Prométhée*, which he concedes could possibly have influenced him somewhat: "J'aimais passionnément le *Prométhée* d'Eschyle... Le *Prométhée* a toujours été tellement présent à ma mémoire, que je puis facilement concevoir son influence sur tout ce que j'ai écrit" (115).

It is essential to note that Sand presents these two sides in an almost juristic manner by her careful labeling and titling of the exact context and medium in which each side's statements appeared, in addition to her direct reproduction of entire paragraphs of these articles inserted within her essay. It is as though we are witnessing an actual trial, where each side's carefully labeled first-hand "evidence" is brought before the eyes of the jury. Jacinta Wright in her analysis of Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" reminds us that the 19th century and especially the 1830's is a period when the ideas of intellectual property and authorial rights become institutionalized and that the *Société des Gens de Lettres* is founded in 1838. She notes

as well that George Sand is elected to be a member of this committee in March 1839. Indeed, this organization and its activities are in her thoughts, for in a July 2, 1839 letter to Balzac, Sand expresses concern about enforcing the intellectual property rights of authors. She also complains to François Buloz about the inactivity of this organization.³⁹ Wright therefore sees a link between the type of metaphors that Sand uses in her essay to speak about rewriting and the legal terminology concerning plagiarism and intellectual property rights arising more and more frequently in this period. Adrian Johns, in his book *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars From Gutenberg to Gates*, also notes that although the term “piracy” starts being applied in conjunction with artistic expression in the latter half of the 18th century, it is only in the 19th century that the notions of intellectual property and plagiarism as we know them become truly institutionalized. Thus, it is in this atmosphere of increasing public awareness and disapprobation of plagiarism, influenced by legal developments in this area, and coupled with the 19th century’s preoccupation with originality, that accusations of plagiarism take on a heightened, aggressive tone within the period’s literary discourse.

Taking on the Question of Intellectual Property

Jacinta Wright points out that Sand borrows the legal language coming into usage around the notion of intellectual property, but the author actually goes much further than that in her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” Much more than an abstract intellectual controversy, the question of rewriting and intertextuality in the 19th century has become a sort of literary crisis which affects the very lives and livelihood of the intellectual community. By framing her

³⁹ I am referring to a comment by Jacinta Wright; she underlines this fact in her analysis of the context around Sand’s writing of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” See page 97 of her article, “‘S’habiller du vêtement du maître’: George Sand et le travesti intertextuel.” See also Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch’s article, “George Sand and Her Sisters: Women Writers in the *Société des Gens de Lettres* (1838-1848).”

discussion through this “literary trial” situation and employing a vocabulary and terminology colored by legal jurisprudence, Sand reveals the very real vulnerability and concrete harm to which all 19th-century authors are exposed when accused of this literary crime. Resolving the question of rewriting and originality therefore practically amounts to a moral responsibility to defend the reputation of these very “masters” unjustly accused of plagiarism. As she puts it, her “Essai sur le drame fantastique” aims to repair the damages caused to two innocent victims: “Il ne s’agit de rien moins que de restituer à deux des plus grands poètes qui aient jamais existé, la part d’originalité qu’ils ont eue chacun en refusant ce qu’il a plu à la critique d’appeler le même ouvrage” (119). The legal connotations suggested by the word “restituer,” denoting an act of legal compensation, are further enhanced by Sand’s next sentence warning the critics about their “legal responsibility” so to speak, and recommending that they should weigh their judgments carefully and wisely. Pleading for justice on behalf of Mickiewicz, for whom she fears an equally unfair critique as that which Byron had to suffer vis-à-vis Goethe, she employs the legal term “peser ses arrêts” to express the weight and authoritative influence critics can have on the reputation of an author, which can be as damning or as liberating as that of a judge pronouncing his final decision on a legal case: “Je m’imagine accomplir un devoir religieux envers Mickiewicz en suppliant la critique de bien peser ses arrêts quand de tels noms sont dans la balance” (119). The phrase “dans la balance” further develops the image of the scales of justice. Interestingly at the same time, by employing the phrase, “un devoir religieux,” Sand adds a spiritual dimension to her “legal” argument, suggesting the moral responsibility of engaging in this literary debate where so much is at stake.

Indeed, Sand suggests that the critics themselves in their hasty judgments on such serious matters have failed morally, as though abdicating their true “legal” responsibilities. Speaking of

Mickiewicz, she complains that critics have been too quick to dismiss this author's inspired words as plagiarism, as they did with Byron. She again makes use of a juristic-sounding terminology: rather than use the word "plagiarism," describing uniquely literary or artistic productions, she chooses the word "contrefaçon,"⁴⁰ a term also employed in other legal contexts, as "contrefaçon" denotes counterfeiting. The field of intellectual property, by borrowing this term from the domain of commercial law, also appropriates the weight and material nature of this word. By employing "contrefaçon," Sand makes the reader perceive the seriousness of this accusation of plagiarism even more: "Ainsi le peu de critiques français qui ont daigné jeter les yeux sur la magnifique improvisation de Mickiewicz, ont dit à la hâte: "Ceci est encore une contrefaçon de *Faust*" (119). By presenting the problems surrounding the interpretation of rewriting in such a vivid manner, Sand shows the urgency in resolving this 19th-century creative and "moral" crisis.

III. AN AUTHOR INVESTED WITH A MISSION FOR HER TIME

For Sand, resolving the question of rewriting is absolutely crucial in advocating for the future of literature. Winning her case would in a sense serve as a legal precedent with far-reaching consequences. Finding herself at this crossroads in literary history where the anxiety of influence is so intense for authors of her time, she sees this obstacle as blocking the very evolution of literature and art itself. A century that cannot resolve its relationship to the past and its artistic and cultural heritage is a century that cannot evolve, she realizes. Rewriting is, for Sand, the necessary motor for the evolution of her art.

⁴⁰ Both "contrefaçon" and "plagiat" are used relatively interchangeably to denote the illegal copying of intellectual property in the 19th century; French authors often complained about counterfeit editions of their works.

Building a Theoretical Base and Defense

George Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is, in many ways, a strategically positioned theoretical work. During the composition of the "Essai," Sand is writing *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre* (Planté, *George Sand Critique* 55), which Christine Planté's editorial team have termed "un essai de drame fantastique" (Ibid. 53) and which Sand herself has referred to as a "petit drame fantastique" and "espèce de drame fantastique" in her letters during August and September 1838.⁴¹ The editors in Christine Planté's edition of *George Sand critique 1833-1876* have proposed that Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is specifically motivated by the desire to demonstrate the superiority of the Romantic genre inaugurated by Goethe. According to them, illustrating the superiority of this genre and associating her name to it would boost the prestige of *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre*. As they express it in their preface, "Sand s'attache ainsi à définir dans son Essai la forme du 'drame fantastique' qu'elle tente de mettre en œuvre au même moment, et cela sans hésiter à se placer dans la lignée prestigieuse de Goethe, Byron et Mickiewicz." Furthermore, composing this more theoretical work and critique of Goethe's *Faust* helps her to define and invent the type of writing she is aiming for in writing her own "drame fantastique." As Planté's editorial team puts it, "La démarche critique et la composition littéraire se nourrissent mutuellement" (53-54). In his study of *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre* and the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," Olivier Bara sees such close proximity between the two works that he speaks of "leur entrelacement dans l'esprit et dans la pratique de Sand" (236). Moreover, the similarities between Sand's *Sept Cordes de la lyre* and Goethe's *Faust* being so very visible, certain critics have called the former a rewriting of Goethe's *Faust*. Given that Sand's *Sept*

⁴¹ Olivier Bara notes these two occurrences in his article, p. 236. For a detailed study on the *Sept Cordes de la lyre* in light of Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique," see Olivier Bara's article, "George Sand et le démon de l'allégorie: *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre* au miroir de l'*Essai sur le drame fantastique*."

Cordes de la lyre is appearing in *La Revue des deux mondes* starting from April 15, 1839, the author therefore has a personal stake in defending the practice of rewriting itself. The “Essai sur le drame fantastique” read in this context is thus an absolutely necessary strategic work for both preparing a more receptive atmosphere around rewriting as well as establishing Sand’s work as part of a prestigious tradition being built around this new genre.

Leading Back a Century “Malade” and Gone Astray

Most importantly, however, one needs to recognize that Sand’s essay goes far beyond both her personal literary ambition and the desire to defend the reputations of two authors she admires. To reduce this work to “une justification esthétique de son œuvre précédente” (Planté, *George Sand Critique* 54), *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre*, or to “interrogations sur le rôle philosophique de la littérature” (Ibid. 55), is to miss, to a large extent, the greater purpose of the “Essai.” Planté’s editorial team recognizes the complexity of this particular work, but their analysis of Sand’s article barely mentions the role of rewriting and Sand’s presentation of intertextuality, seeing it mostly as a “défense et illustration d’une forme nouvelle.” Though Sand’s title refers to this type of Romantic drama, her discussion is framed within the larger context of the evolution of literary forms themselves and the necessity for changing attitudes towards the appropriation of literary forms. For this reason, she devotes so much of her essay simply to countering the 19th century’s attitude towards rewriting and defending the originality of those who rewrite. The reputations of important artists are at stake when accused of plagiarism, but even more importantly, the outcome of these “literary trials” can directly influence the type of writing and literary experimentation in which authors choose to engage. Putting Byron and Mickiewicz on trial is, in a sense, putting on trial the very practice of rewriting and as result, passing judgment on the course that literary creation should take in the future.

Sand's essay expresses a certain moral mission in leading back onto the right path a century she perceives as having gone astray in both its focus and attitude towards artistic creation and progress. The author is very much alarmed by what she considers the misguided attitude of the 19th century towards rewriting. Citing the position of the 17th century in contrast to her own, she observes, "cependant on n'avait pas crié au plagiat lorsque Molière et Racine avaient traduit littéralement des pièces quasi-entières d'Aristophane et des tragiques grecs" (113). She praises the tolerance of this earlier century: "C'est que le siècle de nos vrais classiques avait été plus tolérant et plus naïf que le nôtre, et c'est pourquoi ce fut un grand siècle" (119). The word "naïf," on the one hand, suggests ignorance, but, presented in a positive manner here, it denotes innocence and purity. By inference then, Sand is suggesting that the 19th century, in misreading Byron and Mickiewicz and accusing them of plagiarism, has become corrupt and lost.

Challenging what she therefore considers her century's erroneous understanding of the concept of rewriting, Sand, in direct opposition, offers her own definition of rewriting and originality through her defense of Byron's *Manfred*. She begins by noting the negative opinions that started to circulate when Goethe claimed that Byron rewrote his *Faust*. Alluding to the serious impact of these assertions on Byron's reputation, she tells us: "Ainsi toute l'Europe littéraire a cru Goethe sur parole lorsqu'il a décrété, avec une bienveillance superbe, que Byron s'était approprié son *Faust*, et qu'il s'était servi pour ses propres passions, des motifs qui poussaient le docteur" (119). By adding the adjective "toute" before the name "l'Europe," Sand emphasizes how thoroughly reputations can be broken by the suspicious speculations circulating about an author copying the work of another. It is therefore not surprising that Byron should completely refute Goethe's claims. Commenting on Byron's response, Sand identifies fear as motivating his denial before such accusations, describing him as "effrayé" (119) when he

purposely downplays any conscious knowledge of being at all influenced by Goethe. Moreover, she calls his reaction “une légèreté affectée” (119) when he concedes, “[la] première scène, cependant, *se trouve ressembler à celle de Faust*” (119).

Seeing a Continuity in Literature

For Sand, Byron’s error lies not in rewriting *Faust* but in denying that he did. Rewriting is something to be proud of and not to be hidden, and Byron should fully embrace his artistic choices, whether they be conscious or subconscious. What is more, in her view, by rewriting *Faust* Byron reveals his superior intelligence, insight, and vision for it shows that he is the only person who truly, and well ahead of his time, understood the potential of this form inaugurated by Goethe: “Il ne fut peut-être donné qu’à un seul contemporain de Goethe de comprendre l’importance et la beauté de cette forme, ce fut le plus grand poète de l’époque, ce fut lord Byron” (113). Continuing her defense, Sand suggests that the reason behind the accusations of plagiarism leveled at Byron is a serious, fundamental misunderstanding on the part of critics who confuse rewriting with plagiarism. For Sand, originality is a function of style and ideas and not a question of reusing a literary form practiced by another. As she puts it, literary forms, once created, belong to the whole intellectual and artistic community and therefore they can neither be “owned” nor “claimed” by their creator: “Aussitôt émise, toute forme devient une propriété commune que tout poète a droit d’adapter à ses idées” (113). As Jacinta Wright has pointed out, Sand’s use of the words “propriété commune” echoes the legal language pertaining to the notion of intellectual property being debated in this period. By adopting this emerging legal terminology in her counterattack, Sand suggests the legitimacy and “legal” authority of her own views and definitions in contrast to the faulty, unfounded claims of these critics.

To further explain her vision of originality in literature and art and render it more concrete, Sand uses the metaphor of clothing design. In her essay, she compares literary forms to pieces of clothing that a master tailor cuts out but which, once cut out, he leaves to his disciples to alter, modify, and adapt according to their imagination, taste, and intelligence. For Sand, not recognizing the originality in the execution of different rewritings would be as absurd as not seeing as original the creations of the gifted artisans who appropriate the form given by the master tailor but transform it in such a way that this new piece of clothing becomes their own statement. For this reason, she condemns the blindness of critics who have been too quick to attack these original rewritings as plagiarisms and imitations and not recognizing the glaring evidence before their eyes: “Elle [cette critique] s’est imaginé devoir crier à l’imitation ou au plagiat, quand elle a vu les nouveaux poètes essayer ce nouveau vêtement que leur avait taillé le maître, et qui leur appartenait” (113). For Sand, rewriting and borrowing literary forms is a good, time-honored, common literary practice; the true anomaly, in other words, is not this “standard” practice, but rather the 19th century’s misunderstanding of rewriting and anxiety towards it.

To make her point even stronger, Sand calls on the authority of the 17th century by citing the names of Corneille and Racine, the undisputed masters of the “Grand Siècle.” Further developing her clothing metaphor, Sand asserts that each new literary form, each new piece of clothing cut out by the master, belongs fully to those who come after, whether it be in Corneille and Racine’s or in her own time:

[C]e nouveau vêtement que leur avait taillé le maître ... leur appartenait cependant aussi bien que le droit de s’habiller à la mode appartient au premier venu, aussi bien que le droit d’imiter la forme de Corneille ou de Racine appartient encore, sans que personne le conteste, à ceux qui s’intitulent aujourd’hui les conservateurs de l’art. (113)

In other words, protesting against what she deems the unfair tyrannical judgments of 19th-century critics overstepping their bounds, Sand upholds rewriting as a legitimate act, as natural, inalienable, and indisputable as one's right to alter and adapt a piece of clothing to the style of a new period. It is especially pertinent to note that "Les conservateurs de l'art" cited here is an indirect allusion that readers in her time would understand as referring to Boileau and his *Art Poétique*, known for its conservative principles and strict rules. Interestingly enough, Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" begins by evoking the lasting influence of the Grand Siècle and showing how Classical aesthetics as represented by Boileau and his *Art poétique* are to a great extent preventing the French public from appreciating the "bizarrerie," irregularity, and excessive qualities of German romanticism. The original goal of the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," as Sand states it, is precisely to explain this new genre to a French public unaccustomed to its irregular aesthetics. By noting first the shortcomings of the "Grand siècle" in its rigid resistance to aesthetic difference, Sand underlines even more how excessive and intolerant the 19th century is in regards to its judgment of rewriting. Thus, through this allusion, Sand denounces the excessive, irrational and unreasonable harshness of her own century, as even in a 17th century known for its preoccupation with what one could call "literary correctness," one would not have condemned the practice of rewriting.

Having established the normality and literary acceptability of rewriting, Sand then returns to Byron's case. Imagining her own answer to what she considers Goethe's provocative, misplaced claims she writes: "Goethe avait dit que *Faust* était l'original de *Manfred*. Eh bien! soit" (120). The brusque impatience that we sense in her "Eh bien! soit" is followed by Sand's replacing *Manfred* within the context of history, as just another banal occurrence which should elicit neither surprise nor indignation:

Faust a servi de modèle dans l'art du dessin dramatique à Byron et à Mickiewicz, comme Eschyle à Sophocle et à Euripide, comme Cimabue dans l'art de la peinture à Raphaël et à Corrège, et leurs drames ressemblent à celui de Goethe beaucoup moins qu'une pièce classique quelconque en cinq actes et en vers ne ressemble à une autre pièce classique quelconque en vers et en cinq actes, comme *Athalie* ressemble au *Cid*, comme *Polyeucte* ressemble à *Bajazet*, etc. (120)

The lengthiness of Sand's sentence, punctuated with the monotonous rhythm and feel of the preposition "comme" and coupled with the repetition of the adjective "quelconque" stressing the banality of the situation, seems to express a certain weariness, as though Sand were explaining a clearly commonplace, almost boring concept known to all since the beginning of time. One should also note here Sand's allusion to the literature of antiquity, which further adds weight and authority to her argument of rewriting as a common place, age-old tradition. At the same time, by mentioning these Greek authors in the same sentence as the great tragedies of French Classicism, Sand evokes the long chain of progress that links these civilizations and time periods holding all these writers and works together, generation after generation. Equally interesting, Sand draws examples, not only from literature, but from painting, as we see in her allusion to Cimabue, Raphaël, and Corrège. Moreover, the painters cited are from centuries different from those of the writers she names (the 17th century and Antiquity)—Cimabue (1240-1302), Raphaël (1483-1520), Corrège (1489-1534). She illustrates in this way that intertextuality exists also in other artistic disciplines, and that her theory of artistic forms applies to all the arts. Moreover, by naming artists and writers from Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, as well as the 17th century, Sand suggests the solidarity holding together the arts from one century to another. Her statements thus show that there exists not only a continuity between centuries of human thinking, but also an interconnectedness between the arts.

Rethinking the Master's Clothes

Jacinta Wright has suggested that Sand's choice of the clothing metaphor is in part motivated by her identity. I propose rather an alternative interpretation coming from Sand's view of artistic continuity. In Wright's article, she has drawn attention to Sand's use of the clothing metaphor and seen in this "geste d'essayer le vêtement du maître" "une description frappante de l'acte d'écrire pour la femme-auteur" (96). Speaking about this difference, she tells us, "il me semble que la pratique littéraire de Sand confirme l'idée que son statut de femme-auteur, donc d' "étrangère" littéraire, lui offre une certaine liberté de passer outre cette machine critique" (96). For this reason, Wright speaks of this "travesti intertextuel," as allowing "une certaine mobilité dans un monde littéraire tout entier masculin" (96).⁴² She also points out the work of feminist critics⁴³ who have suggested that Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence" does not really apply to women authors. Wright has suggested that unlike her male colleagues wanting to distance themselves from these "pères littéraires," Sand has tried to get closer to them. Many critics, including Wright, have pointed out that especially in the 1830's, Sand's novels clearly show their rewriting or filiation with the works of other authors, and especially male authors.

Surely, gender difference does play a certain role and the clothing metaphor of trying on the master's clothing cannot be "un geste innocent" (96) for a woman author, as Wright suggests. However, Sand's tailoring metaphor actually goes beyond the idea of male- or female-gendered boundaries or characteristics. First, though we may think of sewing and making clothes as

⁴² We will remember as well that in *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand speaks quite fondly of the newfound freedom she discovers on first wearing male attire and putting on boy's boots which allowed her to slip in and out of theatres and public spaces without the formal constraints of "being a woman."

⁴³ She notes in particular, Sandra M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979, p.48-49.

associated with women, Sand's specific metaphor clearly alludes to the domain of male professions. In speaking of the "maître" who cuts out this clothing for his disciples, she is referring to the tailoring profession, placed within a guild or guild-like structure. Therefore, though choosing what might appear at first as an apt metaphor for a woman writer familiar with the domestic concerns of cooking and sewing, Sand, by employing this specific tailoring image is actually projecting herself outside of this domestic sphere and into the world of the trade professions.⁴⁴ This metaphor thus also encompasses the age-old tradition of apprenticeship in guilds associated especially with the Medieval Ages and the Renaissance, of masters passing on their learning and skills to journeymen and apprentices, thereby further enforcing Sand's presentation of literature and art as a historic continuity, where no anxiety of influence should exist.

The craftsmanship model also seems more pertinent than the idea of gender difference in explaining how Sand does not seem to suffer from a 19th-century anxiety of influence towards her literary predecessors; it also fits more closely the model of rewriting she proposes. In the system of trade professions, masters train disciples who learn the trade so that they too, in their turn, can leave and become masters in their own right. In such a system, the notion of anxiety of influence or of an original artistic creation coming from nowhere is totally irrelevant and even absurd. Disciples learn through copying a master and striving to improve eventually on the basic skills and knowledge they acquire so that they become full-fledged masters themselves with their own distinct touch or signature. Though the names of certain particularly innovative master craftsmen will be remembered as exemplars in their profession, the objective is above all to

⁴⁴ I would say that "imposing" this view of a woman's domestic skills on what is clearly the metaphor of the guild system is reading Sand against herself. I fully agree with Nigel Harkness that because critics know the biological sex of George Sand, they have still tended to read Sand against herself in seeing indices of femininity where there aren't any, or in overly emphasizing any possible markers of femininity.

advance their art, their community, and the artistic forms and techniques they inherit from the past.

There seems to be much evidence to support the view that Sand's philosophy of art is affiliated with the spirit of craftsmanship and apprenticeship. Looking at her literary output, we see that towards the end of the 1830's and into the 1840's and 50's, Sand is increasingly interested in artisans and artisanal traditions. Already in 1837, Sand publishes a short novel in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* dealing with artisans and their art. This novel, *les Maîtres Mosaïstes*,⁴⁵ published in book form in 1838, several months before the "Essai sur le drame fantastique," tells the story of mosaic artisans in Venice. In the 1840's moreover, Sand will publish a number of novels dealing with the craftsmen's world. Among the best known of these works will be *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, published in 1840 and inspired by the carpenter journeyman Agricol Perdiguier. Sand, in fact, becomes very personally invested in encouraging artisans like Perdiguier to enter politics. During the 1840's, she will also be actively supporting worker poets like Charles Poncey. In the 1840's and 50's, Sand's works will give important roles to artisans, craftsmen, and trade professionals. These titles will include *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845) and her other rustic novels. Furthermore, at least two of her novels dealing with music will present musicians in apprenticeship positions: *Consuelo* (1842) and *Les Maîtres Sonneurs* (1853).

⁴⁵ *Les Maîtres mosaïstes* will be published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 15, September 1, and September 15, 1837 (*Corr. IV* 63, footnote 4). It will then be published in book form in a volume in April 1838 (*Corr. IV* 358, fn. 2).

Advocating for the Future Evolution of Literature

Sand's model of artistic creation that she proposes in the "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is clearly an apprenticeship model. Masters are given credit for the forms they invent, but they hold no monopoly over their invention; on the contrary, once it is presented to the public, it is common knowledge that should benefit the entire community either directly or indirectly. The question of ownership and borrowing thus becomes irrelevant in such a model, and consequently does the question of hierarchy. Speaking about "le drame fantastique," Sand tells us: "le drame fantastique est une forme. Elle a été donnée ; elle est retombée dans le domaine public le jour où elle a été conçue" (120). Sand's subtle addition of the prefix, "re" is important for it expresses the idea of repetition, or of a return to the place of origin. The notion of originality on which the 19th century is so fixated thus betrays an incomplete understanding of true human creativity and invention; rather than being isolated phenomena, inventions are born of other, past inventions which are part of this greater "domaine public" to which they will return and contribute in their turn. In that sense, pride in being original and unique is a vain, ignorant pride, blind to the reality of history and a true understanding of one's own position within this larger reality and history of artistic invention.

For this reason, while presenting Goethe's "drame fantastique" as a new form and acknowledging the importance of his discovery, Sand also insists that once he has invented it he has no rights over it and should not hoard it; it belongs to humanity and the works of past contributors from which he too benefited and drew inspiration. We sense that Sand is trying very hard to do justice to both sides, for while giving Goethe credit for this form, her phrase also suggests a reprimand for having overstepped his rights: "il ne dépendait pas plus de Goethe de s'en faire le gardien jaloux, qu'il ne dépend de ceux qui s'en servront après lui d'ôter quelque

chose à la gloire de l'avoir trouvée" (120). Similarly, though having congratulated Byron for recognizing and using Goethe's genre, Sand also reprimands him indirectly for not acknowledging Goethe's role:

Byron prit donc la forme du *Faust*, à son insu sans doute, par instinct ou par réminiscence ; mais, quoiqu'il ait récusé la véritable source de son inspiration pour la reporter au *Prométhée d'Eschyle...*, il n'en est pas moins certain que la forme appartient tout entière à Goethe: la forme et rien de plus. (113-114)

Sand's phrase, "à son insu sans doute" is quite curious; while trying to be fair to both sides, her addition of the negative adverbial phrase "sans doute" in Byron's case only, shows that she recognizes that the issue of imitation and artistic borrowing remains sensitive in this 19th century. The "sans doute" added here is like a gracious gesture she holds out to Byron to help him save face in this situation; it thus functions as a token officially affirming her belief in his good faith. However, at the same time, her "il n'en est pas moins certain" in conjunction with the affirmation of Goethe as "la véritable source" cancels this official stance. We sense thus Sand's care to strike the perfect tone: while judging Byron's denial in not recognizing Goethe's contribution, she also attempts to soften this blow to his pride. She offers in this way an official acquittal while simultaneously giving a private reprimand. The double discourse on Sand's part demonstrates that while affirming there should not be any shame in the rewriting or borrowing of literary models, mentalities cannot change immediately. Education about the true value of rewriting should be encouraged, but there must be sensitivity and patience at the same time. While affirming that the honor of inaugurating a new Romantic genre belongs wholly to Goethe, Sand is careful to add that it also stops there, as expressed by her carefully placed negation, "rien de plus."

Sand's insistence on this "rien de plus" is absolutely crucial in the model of literary invention that she proposes, in contrast to a system that privileges the inventor. In this "balanced

system,” where each one has his own contribution or role to play, those that contribute later have their efforts equally recognized. By proposing such a practice as the norm, Sand puts forward a conceptual frame which encourages the evolution of literary forms. Rewriting, no longer seen as inferior, but simply the act of reexamining, revisiting, and reworking a form, would do away with the anxiety of influence and encourage artistic contributions in this collaborative effort for literary and artistic progress.⁴⁶ Therefore, when speaking about the “drame fantastique” inaugurated by Goethe, Sand presents this form as no longer belonging to Goethe, but to the future, to be worked on by other writers to come, thus furthering the evolution of this form: “Maintenant, [cette forme] appartient à l’avenir, et l’avenir lui donnera, comme Byron et Mickiewicz ont déjà commencé à le faire, les développements dont elle est susceptible” (120).

What is the most important in Sand’s concept of rewriting is the idea of continuity and perfectibility.⁴⁷ In such a model, the question of influence becomes entirely irrelevant, for there is no idea of debt or “stealing” from a predecessor. In its place, Sand has put the idea of a “public domain” from which all writers should draw and profit. Individual writer’s contributions, whether they are inaugurators of a new form or contributors to an existing one, are equally valuable. For this reason, Sand claims, “Je ne comprends pas plus l’assertion de Goethe se croyant imité, que les dénégations de Byron craignant d’être accusé d’imitation” (115). Sand’s

⁴⁶ Sand’s proposal of this artisanal, guild model of literary invention suggests at the same time the idea of an evolving “œuvre monument” to which all artists contribute. Sand’s notion of intertextuality seems to prefigure in this way the theories of Barthes and Kristeva. However, in advancing the image of clothing as a model of intertextuality, Sand’s gives an interesting twist to the more abstract, objective “œuvre monument” model of intertextuality. The clothing model includes in this way the idea of personal, individual expression while suggesting the idea of fashion, and thus adds a specifically temporal and cultural dimension to the concept of intertextuality. In my opinion, the interest in Sand’s model is specifically her ability to express through the preciseness of her metaphors, the complexity of intertextuality: the abstract, the concrete, the temporal, and the cultural are integrated in her intertextual conception.

⁴⁷ The idea of perfectibility is in the *Zeitgeist*, and in this sense, Sand participates in these larger discourses of the 19th century—for example, Ballanche, Enfantin, the Saint-Simonians.

use of the *passé composé*, present indicative, and simple future all within the same sentence in the quotation regarding Byron and Mickiewicz cited in the last paragraph further stress the importance of recognizing a historic continuity in the development of a literary form or work. It is central to recognize here that Sand uses the *passé composé* of “commencer” to show that Byron and Mickiewicz are just pioneers among the very many who, Sand believes, will further advance Goethe’s invention.

Writing against those who may claim Goethe’s superiority, Sand even turns the argument around to put everything back into proportion: “Cette forme n’est qu’un essai dans *Faust*, essai magnifique, il est vrai mais que l’on voit élargi et complété dans *Manfred*” (115.). The restrictive construction “ne ... que,” in particular, reinforces the idea of putting Goethe’s contribution back within the perspective of artistic perfection as a continuum in perfectibility. Along with the conjunction, “mais,” it emphasizes the idea of giving each one his full due and nothing more, (the “rien de plus” we saw earlier). Sand’s choice of the words “élargi” and “complété” even subtly suggests that Byron’s contribution is greater because his form is more advanced. The adjective “complété” in particular, attributed to Byron, by default, suggests that Goethe’s work in contrast is “incomplete,” lacking, and thus, less perfect than Byron’s work. Through these slight insinuations, Sand is attempting to rebalance the situation for Byron’s reputation as an author writing after and simply imitating Goethe. In this way, Sand’s “Essai sur le drame fantastique” puts into practice the principles she had announced earlier of restituting to Byron the honor he deserves in helping advance Goethe’s form through his rewriting.

For Sand, every contribution is important for the evolution of art and literature, and this progress, in turn, participates in the greater evolution of humanity. For this reason, one cannot truly attribute an exact value to the contributions of individual authors. Even what would seem at

first glance as unimportant or even erroneous may have its own value in the greater scheme of things. Explaining this principle, she tells us: “Rien n’est inutile, rien ne sera perdu dans ce grand laboratoire où l’humanité entasse lentement et avec ordre ses matériaux divers pour le grand œuvre⁴⁸ d’une régénération universelle” (139). For Sand, even what would appear at first to be hurtful to humanity may have its own beneficial function:

Déjà une appréciation plus philosophique de l’histoire nous montre qu’aucune grande intelligence n’a été vraiment funeste au progrès de l’humanité, mais qu’au contraire toutes ont été des instruments plus ou moins directs que la Providence a suscités à ce progrès, même celles qui, relativement aux contemporains et relativement à leurs propres idées sur le progrès, semblaient agir en un sens contraire. (139-140)⁴⁹

As we can see, framed within this vision of human progress and perfectibility, vanity and pride have no real sense. Remembering this larger frame of the evolution of humanity and working for this greater good is finally the true eternal principle.

CONCLUSION

For a long time, preconceptions about George Sand have made people take at face value her self-mocking, often ironic and amusing comments she has made about her works, her art, and her “lack of thought” in writing. However, with the increasing number of colloquia, monographs, and articles devoted to precisely her critical, theoretical, and political writings, a new image of

⁴⁸ Sand’s choice of the word, “œuvre,” while reminding us again of the guild system (especially read in conjunction with “ses matériaux divers,” suggesting building and construction materials) seems at the same time to prefigure the idea of an “œuvre monument.” The difference here is that Sand enlarges this notion of an “œuvre monument” and has it encompass as well the idea of human evolution and progress.

⁴⁹ Such a passage echoes others for instance in Sand’s *Histoire de ma vie* where she speaks of her vision of history and in particular, allusions to the Terreur, this “low moment” of the French Revolution (we also find such allusions to the French Revolution and its role in history scattered throughout Sand’s works).

this strong-willed, unusually alert, thoroughly engaged woman writer is emerging. Ready, willing, and able to tackle the most heated debates of her time concerning originality, the anxiety of influence, and the role of the press and its critics, George Sand, in her letters and critical works delivers a thoughtful, carefully orchestrated attack back at what she considers the “maladies,” wrongdoings, and erroneous judgments of her century. Perfectly understanding the stakes involved in a new editorial world trying to capitalize on the latest trends, tastes, and fashions of a reading public eagerly following and awaiting the latest works of its literary stars, Sand steps back to better impose her own aesthetic principles, values, and vision. In her letters with her publisher François Buloz especially and with her confidante Charlotte Marliani, we see a young writer controlling the situation through her rhetoric, her play on words, images, and metaphors. Her understanding of human psychology, moreover, allows her to influence, manipulate, and win over her reluctant publisher. In this way, through the intermediary of this literary ally despite himself, Sand publishes what she wants, when she wants, and the way she wants. After a fairly lengthy period of two years between the date of its conception and its publication, Sand’s “*Essai sur le drame fantastique*” finally comes to print. This theoretical critique, while presenting a new Romantic genre, “le drame fantastique” to her reading public, offers at the same time a theory of rewriting, and a reflection on her own century’s intense preoccupation with originality and its uneasiness with imitation, literary appropriation, and rewriting.

Through her multi-faceted approach towards these questions, Sand develops her own argument for rewriting and intertextuality, drawing on the authority of literary history and traditions of past centuries. She also draws on the legal language coming into use in conjunction with the latest developments in the field of intellectual property, as well as on her knowledge of

craftsmanship and its functioning. Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" is a "theoretically engaged" work in the sense that it boldly addresses the aesthetic and moral dilemma of originality in the 19th century and takes a firm stance in the heated debates of her time; we could say that her literary "engagement" is a Sartrean type of "littérature engagée" for her time, in both theory and practice. In both her letters about this essay and her "metaphysical" works pushing for literary experimentation and freedom, Sand clearly voices what she considers the roles and mission of art and of the ideal artist-poet. At the same time, while standing up strongly for her beliefs, Sand strives for a balanced judgment and sensitive tone in order to present a fuller picture of the complex question of originality. Her "Essai" demonstrates sensitivity to the emotional responses and insecurities this question elicits in 19th-century authors. Writing such a work is an absolute necessity for Sand, for she believes in the need for educating her contemporaries and leading her century back onto the right path. In this way, the "Essai sur le drame fantastique" expresses a certain urgency, a call to unblock the neuroses of the century and encourage writers to draw on the wealth, knowledge, and achievements of the past. Sand's essay is thus a militant discourse advocating action based on her theory of Art and her faith in the perfectibility of the human spirit and its creative and philosophical endeavors.

CHAPTER 2. REWRITING AS POSITIONING: THE CASE OF GEORGE SAND'S *JACQUES*

After Sand's literary debut with *Indiana* in 1832, which many critics have hailed as "le nouveau roman de l'époque," and her surprisingly "modern" *Lélia* (1833), her next major work, *Jacques*,⁵⁰ an epistolary novel rewriting Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, might appear to be a troubling literary anomaly. *Jacques* was published in 1834, just two years after *Indiana*, and she started writing it less than a year after her strangely "avant-garde" *Lélia* (1833). Naomi Schor called *Lélia* "a narratologist's nightmare" (57) due to the non-determinability of its literary genre and "hybrid" qualities,⁵¹ and the modernity of its form continues to fascinate today. After such a bold pioneering debut, Sand's decision to construct a perfectly regular epistolary novel "constructed along eighteenth-century lines" (Harman 72) might be considered an incomprehensible step backwards. Moreover, choosing the epistolary novel form, a form often associated with a tradition of women writers, could indicate a strange "change of heart" for an author who had up to then been vying for a place among her male colleagues. Indeed, Sand herself has suggested that *Jacques*, the sole epistolary novel in her literary output, was a

⁵⁰ *Jacques* is completed after but published before *André*.

⁵¹ *Lélia* is composed of different types of writing associated with different genres. It starts out with letters that are quite destabilizing at first because we are not told who the letter writers are nor to whom the letters are addressed. Moreover, although *Lélia* starts out with these "anonymous" letters, Sand does not stick with the letter form, but changes to third-person narrative passages like in a typical novel. At the same time, the tone and style of writing are hard to define. Some parts are more poetic and lyric while others are more philosophical and abstract. Isabelle Naginski has pointed out the symbolic and allegorical character of this work, and yet, *Lélia* is not entirely an allegory. See the chapters on *Lélia* in her book, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life*.

circumstantial work and “a one-time occurrence.”⁵² In her 1853 preface to the novel (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 209),⁵³ she has called *Jacques* “un livre douloureux” with “un dénouement désespéré” written in a temporary moment of deep suffering now past. When alluding to this darker period in her life, Sand qualifies this novel as “l’expression et le résultat de pensées tristes et de sentiments amers” (Ibid. 209).

Composed in Venice shortly after her rupture with Alfred de Musset, *Jacques* could indeed be simply seen as a commentary on her unhappiness at the time as many critics have.⁵⁴ This Venetian voyage became a nightmare for both lovers. Musset’s illness, gambling, infidelity, and instability hurt Sand and broke up the couple, while her liaison with the Doctor Pietro Pagello caused the situation to further deteriorate. Nevertheless, in her May 12, 1834 letter to Musset, Sand denies that *Jacques* tells their story: “Ce n’est l’histoire d’aucun de nous. Il m’est impossible de parler de moi dans un livre.”⁵⁵ We are thus left questioning what *Jacques* is about and why Sand chose to write it.

Sand’s narrative itself is troubling, especially when read against the patriarchal values expressed in Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. While drawing attention to her *Jacques* as a rewriting of her predecessor’s work, Sand reveals greater allegiance to the ideas of attraction

⁵² See both Sand’s 1853 preface to the novel in her *Œuvres Illustrées* and the 1841 “dédicace” Sand writes to M. and Mme A. Fleury where she presents *Jacques* as a work influenced by an unusual period, but a period which is now over.

⁵³ This 1853 preface is for a volume of her *Œuvres Illustrées*. *Jacques* is one of the novels republished in this edition.

⁵⁴ See K J Harman, p. 81-82. For Harman, 20th-century critics have too often limited their interpretation of *Jacques* to a fictional translation of this unhappy Venetian period in the lives of the two lovers, seeing for instance in *Jacques* a Musset who sacrifices his relationship with Sand so that the latter can be with her new lover the Dr. Pagello.

⁵⁵ This letter is cited by Luce Cyzba in her article, “*Jacques* ou les impasses du dialogue et de l’Histoire” (99, fn. 1). It is also cited by David Powell in his “Présentation” to his edition of the novel.

expressed in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Her novel recounts the unhappy marriage between her eponymous hero, Jacques, a 35-year-old former officer in Napoleon's army and his much younger wife Fernande. As the novel progresses, each spouse realizes the incompatibility of their values and life experiences while discovering greater affinities with another outside of their marital bonds. Realizing the situation is unsustainable and divorce impossible, the "chef de famille" decides to sacrifice himself for the future happiness of his wife with her lover and commits suicide⁵⁶—outcome normally unthinkable in a patriarchal society.

However, despite appearances and circumstances to the contrary, George Sand's decision to rewrite Rousseau's 18th-century novel is not a coincidental "literary error" or circumstantial anomaly, nor should it be understood as simply a personal history; the choice of narrative arc is instead a strategic move. This chapter will demonstrate that Sand's rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as her own version of an epistolary novel is actually a fully coherent, decipherable, and strategically thought-out decision on her part in a bid to be considered one of the top writers of the 19th century.

I. A STRATEGIC POSE IN HER CENTURY: THE POLYPHONIC EPISTOLARY NOVEL

George Sand's decision to write in a literary genre associated with the 18th century was a logical and strategic choice. Her specific generic choice of a polyphonic epistolary novel would not only attract attention but allow her to demonstrate her mastery of the complexities of

⁵⁶ Although Jacques' suicide is never proven (since his body was never found), readers are encouraged to believe that Sand's hero killed himself. Critics at the time, moreover, read *Jacques* with the certitude that Sand's hero committed suicide and were absolutely scandalized by this thought.

polyphonic writing.⁵⁷ As opposed to a monophonic novel where there is one writer and one side of a correspondence, a polyphonic epistolary novel is an epistolary novel where one sees more than two different writers and readers in the text. As a genre, the epistolary novel form is associated with a strong tradition of women writers of the 18th century like Mme de Genlis, Mme de Duras, and Madame de Krüdener. Thus, it is not surprising that critics from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries have often associated the form itself with the idea of women's writing, and linked the notion of epistolarity with the idea of a feminine style and feminine essence of writing. At the same time (paradoxically perhaps), while women writers produced many of the best-sellers in the genre, male writers too have created works considered landmarks of the form. Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* are considered masterpieces of the polyphonic epistolary novel. Rewriting Rousseau's work through her own novel, *Jacques*, therefore allows George Sand to not only position herself in the prestigious literary lineage of her predecessor and the successes of male authors in the genre but also write back at ideas regarding the work of women writers and the traditions associated with them.

Positioning Against the Norm

By the 1830's, the epistolary novel has become viewed, for the most part, as an obsolete form, associated more with 18th-century sociability than 19th-century Romanticism.⁵⁸ Various

⁵⁷ See Laurent Versini's *Le roman épistolaire* and Christine Planté's "Sand et le roman épistolaire: Variations sur l'historicité d'une forme."

⁵⁸ Although there seems some discrepancy as to the exact moment of its disappearance as a genre "in vogue," it is clear that most critics agree that by the beginning of the 19th century, despite epistolary novels continuing to be read, the form itself is now seen as belonging to another era. The genre itself reached its apogee in the 18th century, both in terms of the number of novels produced as well as in terms of the quality of the novels written. Novels considered masterpieces in the genre were all written in the 18th century. For a resume regarding the different dates proposed as to the epistolary novel's decline and disappearance, see K J Harman's thesis, *The Nineteenth-Century Epistolary Novel: Parodies and Travesties of a Genre*, p.1-5, 8.

critics like Laurent Versini, Jean Rousset, and Otis Fellows have mentioned the abrupt decline in the fortune of the epistolary novel form after *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* despite authors continuing to write in the genre. Versini, qualifying this form as “trop liée au classicisme” (*Le roman épistolaire* 210), affirms that Romantic authors favored less conventional genres better adapted to poetic self-expression (Ibid.). Christine Planté, speaking more precisely about the period in which Sand’s *Jacques* is written, has noted a slight renewed interest in epistolary writing. She points out that a handful of Romantic authors continued to experiment with the epistolary novel, but that these experiments were either monophonic epistolary novels “du côté de la monodie” or “du journal intime” (“Sand et le roman épistolaire” 78), genre explorations that combined other literary forms, or letters assembled together functioning like an essay rather than telling an actual story. As a “pure” polyphonic epistolary novel composed entirely of letters, *Jacques* therefore stands out as the exception among exceptions.

From another standpoint, choosing to rewrite Rousseau’s masterpiece rather than an epistolary novel by a woman writer, like Madame de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, is a significant gesture, for it suggests Sand’s desire to align herself with a masculine literary lineage. As Nigel Harkness has put it, “masculinity mattered for Sand. It also mattered in the literary world in which she affirmed her presence” (7). In a misogynistic 19th-century France, masculinity was associated not just with physical strength but also intellectual vigor and literary quality. Harkness speaks of how “rhetorical tradition [was] linked with forceful style and vigorous masculinity” (8), as evidenced by terms such as “voix mâle” and “style mâle” (8). He also notes the “enforced masculinity of novelistic discourse” (8) in this period, as the voice of power, authority, and dominance. Moreover, despite the association between women authors and the epistolary novel tradition, in France, the most prestigious polyphonic epistolary novels

considered references in the genre were by men⁵⁹: Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Montesquieu's *Les Lettres Persanes*, and Richardson's novels (*Clarissa* in particular).⁶⁰ David Powell, too, affirms Sand's masculine positioning for he states, "Sand ne se réfère qu'aux modèles masculins" ("L'intertextualité," 31). As for Dominique Laporte, he goes as far as to suggest that Sand's decision to write a polyphonic epistolary novel is a way of distancing herself from a feminine epistolary novel tradition: "En citant *Clarisse Harlowe*... et *La Nouvelle Héloïse*... comme repoussoirs de *Jacques*, George Sand éloigne son roman d'une forme monodique consacrée par ses devancières" ("Ne m'appellez donc jamais" 251).

Nevertheless while taking into consideration this factor of masculine positioning and literary prestige, one must read Sand's choice of rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in a larger, more historicized context. One must remember that the process by which women writers fall out of the canon may be much more recent and that women authors such as Isabelle de Charrière, Claire de Duras, and Mme de Genlis were widely respected and read in their own time.⁶¹ Moreover, although we may associate 18th-century women writers less with a polyphonic epistolary novel tradition today due to the fact that the most prestigious polyphonic epistolary novels in the canon are by male authors, women novelists certainly wrote in this genre. Laurent Versini has suggested in his study of the epistolary novel in France that women authors employed the

⁵⁹ See David Powell's "L'intertextualité de l'épistolarité: Le cas de *Jacques*," p.31 and Dominique Laporte's, "'Ne m'appellez donc jamais femme auteur': Déconstruction et refus du roman sentimental chez George Sand," p. 251-252. See also, Raymond Trousson's preface to his anthology of French women authors of the 18th century: *Romans de femmes du XVIII^e siècle*, p. xxi. Trousson speaks of the polyphonic epistolary novel of women authors as "sans atteindre l'ampleur et la diversité de ces grands modèles" which he refers to as the *Lettres persanes*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and *Les Liaisons dangereuses*.

⁶⁰ Although Samuel Richardson was an English author, he was widely known and read in France, due to the popular translations of his novels as well as Diderot's *Eloge de Richardson*.

⁶¹ See for instance, Sainte-Beuve's *Portraits de Femmes*.

polyphonic epistolary novel form more prominently than their male counterparts in the latter quarter of the 18th century.⁶² Therefore, the view of 18th-century women epistolary novelists by 20th-century critics like Laurent Versini and Raymond Trousson may not be the same as that of George Sand's time, and Laporte's statement in linking the monophonic epistolary novel and women writers⁶³ is not entirely correct and should be more nuanced. In her reconstruction of the literary scene of the 1830's, for instance, Margaret Cohen has demonstrated that the sentimental novel women authors were writing was widely read in the 1830's.⁶⁴ Sand's choice of rewriting Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* should therefore not just be read as an intention to align herself with her predecessor for the sake of literary prestige. It should also be read as an indication of her opposition to the type of sentimental novel that women authors were expected to write, as will be argued later. Refusing to align herself in a tradition of women writers is therefore an expression of Sand's own artistic independence and positioning herself apart from the norm.

Signaling Her Independence

While rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* could certainly be read as aligning herself with an illustrious predecessor, on closer examination, Sand's rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* reveals

⁶² Versini's study distinguishes between two different periods of women epistolary novelists: before *La Nouvelle Héloïse* especially, women writers like their male counterparts wrote mainly monophonic ones, although two-voiced epistolary novels start becoming more common after 1750. In this first period of women's epistolary writing which is mainly monophonic, he characterizes it as "le mode d'expression idéal de leur sensibilité, de leur révolte, de leur féminisme" (*Le roman épistolaire* 74). The second period, between 1780 and 1820, he describes as a period where "une nouvelle pléiade de femmes règne sur le roman épistolaire" (182). He characterizes this second period as returning to "la vocation sentimentale et féminine du genre" (182).

⁶³ Dominique Laporte's observation is actually based on Jean Rousset's comments linking women authors and the monophonic epistolary novel. See Jean Rousset's *Forme et Signification*, p.70.

⁶⁴ Margaret Cohen's book, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* reminds us that realism and the types of realist novels written by male authors such as Balzac and Stendhal were not the dominant forms in the 1830's and 1840's (9, 18). The sentimental novel written especially by women writers was the dominant form against which realism was trying to assert itself (18).

itself less an adherence to the ideas of Rousseau and more a strategic pose in signaling her difference from him. It is important to remember that in *Jacques*, Sand is rewriting a post-revolutionary work in a post-Napoleonic context, for she makes clear that her eponymous hero is a 35-year old former officer in Napoleon's army. The story takes place during the Restoration. Moreover, while Jacques is clearly modeled on Rousseau's M. de Wolmar, and his wife Fernande on Rousseau's heroine, both the starting and ending points of Sand's novel stand out in opposition to her predecessor's. Whereas in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the story of passion comes first and is replaced by Julie's marriage of reason with M. de Wolmar and the triumph of morality; in *Jacques*, it is the contrary: Fernande's rational choice of marrying a superior man and remaining faithful to him gives way to the adulterous passion she feels for another once she and Jacques are married.

Likewise, although George Sand uses a genre strongly associated with the 18th-century values of sociability, civility, and "honnêteté,"⁶⁵ she ultimately exploits its potentials to express a 19th-century aesthetics and the new values of Romanticism in contrast to her predecessor's work. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the idea of sociability is brought to its most concentrated expression in the harmony between the correspondents, which Laurent Versini has called, "l'harmonie des 'belles âmes'" (*Le roman épistolaire* 90). For this reason, Versini prefers to call Rousseau's work, a "roman de la vertu et du bonheur" (*Ibid.*), a "roman épistolaire symphonique" rather than a "roman polyphonique" (*Ibid.* 90-91).⁶⁶ Similarly, Jean Rousset in his analysis of the novel

⁶⁵ See for instance, Laurent Versini, *Le roman épistolaire*, p. 48-49.

⁶⁶ Versini, speaking about Rousseau's work, points out "la convergence spirituelle, fruit de la transparence des consciences et de l'influence magique de Julie [qui] assurent à l'ensemble l'unité sans discordance d'une symphonie où chaque partie doit quelque chose à l'âme du compositeur" (90). For a musician, "symphonique" would not be the correct term for it is an adjective only denoting a work for an orchestra or large musical ensemble. Such a work thus can be either polyphonic or monophonic in structure. By his appropriation of the term, Versini is referring to the

speaks of the plurality of voices moving towards a harmonious unity centered around Rousseau's exceptional heroine: "toutes les lettres convergent vers elle; elle est le centre, et les autres sont les miroirs qui la reflètent" (91). Consequently, as explained by Rousset, emphasis is less on the amorous exchange between Saint-Preux and Julie with which the novel opens, but more on the collective harmony created at Clarens: "Le couple est absorbé dans la société idéale de Clarens comme le dialogue épistolaire des premières parties cède la place à la correspondance collective" (91). Sand's novel however takes the opposite direction, both in her presentation of characters and in their grouping into distinct, highly accentuated duos.

Reflecting more the storyline of Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, the couples in Sand's story break apart and form new pairs instead of converging their voices into a new harmonious community. Moreover, in contrast to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the letters in *Jacques* stage before us a discordant community where the irreconcilable differences between the spouses cannot be overcome. In the letters exchanged between the five principal correspondents—the husband and wife, Jacques and Fernande and their confidants Sylvia, Clémence, and Octave—the enormous difference in character displayed between the spouses already suggests their incompatibility while their affinities with others hint at the new pairings in which they will find themselves. In Sand's novel, Sylvia is Jacques' confidant and soul mate; like him, she is presented as a superior being endowed with exceptional intelligence and moral strength. Both of them are described as resembling the larger than life tragic heroes and heroines of Romantic novels. Jacques in particular, while modeled on the cold, rational figure of Rousseau's M. de Wolmar, is described by Fernande right from the start as a doomed Byronic hero: "Il me semble qu'il a le sourire triste,

idea of the harmony and grandeur associated with an orchestra: the idea of a large group of musicians playing together where the sounds of the individual instruments join together in a seamless harmonious unity.

le regard mélancholique, le front serein et l'attitude fière; en tout l'expression d'une âme orgueilleuse et sensible, d'une destinée rude mais vaincue" (7). Fernande, in contrast, is often portrayed like a child by the other correspondents. In speaking to Sylvia about his soon-to-be wife, Jacques mentions being charmed at seeing Fernande's "longs cheveux blonds se détacher et tomber en désordre sur ses épaules au moindre mouvement de sa jeune pétulance" (34) and "ses grands yeux noirs, toujours étonnés, toujours questionneurs, et si ingénus" (34). Fernande's confidant, Clémence, also speaks to her as though her childhood friend were much younger than her. In her letters, she often scolds Fernande for not knowing better the consequences of her actions. Eventually, Fernande will stop writing to this confidant as Octave takes on this role and she recognizes in him her soul mate. As for Octave, his role shifts the most dramatically. Originally, he was Sylvia's lover, but their relationship is more or less dissolved by the time he meets Fernande. Recognizing in Jacques' young wife the same romantic aspirations he feels in himself and the similarity of their temperaments and interests (including their childish immaturity), the superficial young man sees in her the love of his life.

Rewriting the Story of Adultery

The new character groupings that Sand introduces in her own epistolary novel suggest in themselves that *Jacques* will not uphold the patriarchal values of marriage and stability expressed in her predecessor's work. Rather, her epistolary novel, in proposing another configuration to the story of adultery, will subvert these values and question the legitimacy and virtue of the marriage of reason idealized in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Indeed, the incompatibility of views and values between the spouses becomes rapidly unsustainable despite the determination of both parties to stay together. The situation takes on a heightened tone when Sylvia comes to see Jacques, and her own lover, Octave, follows her there—Octave who had been dismissed by

Sylvia falls in love with Fernande and she, with him. The latter soon realizes that he shares greater affinities with Jacques' wife. Meanwhile, the feelings between Sylvia and Jacques deepen as they share more and more their most intimate thoughts. However, while Fernande and Octave rapidly declare their passion for each other, Sylvia and Jacques never directly admit their love to each other. This tense situation is further complicated by the fact that Sylvia is Jacques' adopted sister and possibly his half-sibling, and they never learn the concrete truth about their real blood ties to each other, and neither do we. Recognizing the legal impossibility of divorce and wishing to allow his wife the possibility for future happiness with a more compatible spouse, Jacques decides to secretly kill himself. Sand's story of adultery therefore diverges from the patriarchal norm in which the adulterous woman is punished and dies, and the lover similarly pays for his "sins;" *Jacques* ends shockingly with the death of the husband.

Equally shocking, the hero's death is not a "romantic" suicide like Werther's but a painful, logical conclusion at which he arrives. Jacques' rational decision is furthermore underlined by the fact that figuratively speaking in relation to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand's hero is the equivalent of Rousseau's perfectly self-contained man of reason, M. de Wolmar. In Sand's novel, it is only after a rigorous, rational examination of society's laws and prejudices against adultery that Jacques realizes the only option he has is to commit suicide.⁶⁷ Only in staging his own death as an accident can he preserve his young wife's happiness from the condemnation of society and from her own conscience.

Sand's plot therefore turns upside down in a transgressive manner the traditional plot of adultery: not only is Jacques' adulterous wife not punished, but she lives "happily ever after" with her young lover, Octave. What's more, Sand transforms and repositions the figure of the

⁶⁷ See *Jacques*, p. 300-301.

betrayed, “disgraced” husband by staging him as one of her protagonists and even titling her novel after him. Rather than the traditional image of the weak cheated-on husband in a minor role,⁶⁸ she stages Jacques as a larger-than-life hero, and it is Octave rather, whom she ridicules.

Strategically Establishing Similarities with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

Meanwhile, the very visible parallels Sand establishes between *Jacques* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* clearly demonstrate she wants us to read her work in relation to that of her predecessor. The characters themselves are modeled attentively on Rousseau’s. In Sand’s *Jacques*, the eponymous hero is known for his “sang- froid” (217), thereby making him a superior being comparable to M. de Wolmar whose impeccable self-control⁶⁹ and reason is described by Julie as “sa froideur naturelle” (273).⁷⁰ Even the phrasing with which he is described is similar to that of her predecessor: as Jacinta Wright has pointed out, while we are told by Julie that M. de Wolmar “ne rit point” (273), we are told by Fernande that “Jacques ne rit pas tous les jours” (5). We will remember too that Julie tells Saint Preux she would choose M. de Wolmar over him (Rousseau 276) because of her husband’s moral superiority, self control and perfect rationality, and evidently, the fact that Julie’s father speaks about having his life saved by his courageous friend, M. de Wolmar weighs yet more into her decision.⁷¹ Likewise, Jacques’ courage is pointed out in

⁶⁸ I thank Michel Murat for reminding me of this important difference in configuration from the traditional love triangle combination.

⁶⁹ See also *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, p.368 where Jules finally learns about the past sufferings that M. de Wolmar had to live through. She admires “le sang-froid et la modération d’un homme capable de taire six ans un pareil secret à sa femme; mais ce secret n’est rien pour lui, il y pense trop peu pour se faire un grand effort de n’en pas parler.”

⁷⁰ See especially *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, p.368 where M. de Wolmar speaks of his character and his past. Describing himself, he tells Julie, “J’ai naturellement l’âme tranquille et le cœur froid.”

⁷¹ Julie’s father presses her to marry M. de Wolmar, in part to pay off this debt to his friend. Julie’s marriage of reason would therefore serve at the same time to solidify friendship and family ties.

a similar manner, for Fernande learns from M. Borel, a family friend and fatherly figure to her, that Jacques had saved his life during the Napoleonic wars. Moreover, like Julie in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Fernande deeply admires Jacques' many accomplishments, admits his intellectual and moral superiority, and professes her desire to be with him over anyone else for these very reasons.

Both marriages, furthermore, are founded more on reason, more on a mutual esteem than on passion, and emphasis is placed not just on the couple but also on the couple's effect on their intimate community of friends as well as on the larger community in which they live. As in Rousseau's novel where there is a great age difference between Julie and her husband (M. de Wolmar is 50 years old), in Sand's novel, Fernande, seventeen years old, marries Jacques who is thirty-five. (In Sand's novel, this age difference emphasizes that their marriage is not on the basis of a wild passion but on a rational decision, because Fernande is not forced to marry Jacques.) In both novels as well, the theme of "virtue" and duty is omnipresent: Rousseau insists on Julie's virtue and her charitable work in the community, especially after her marriage to M. de Wolmar; in Sand's novel, we see Fernande's good heart right in her first letter where she speaks of her desire to bring food and comfort to a poor neighbor (9-11); we know furthermore that Jacques marries her for her purity, goodness, and virtuous innocence uncorrupted by the ways of society.

In addition to these similarities between the characters, we recognize elements reminiscent of Rousseau's text: above all the love triangle situation in a "Rousseauist" setting in the Alps (the story takes place in the countryside on Jacques' property in the Dauphiné) reminds us of the utopist Clarens in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Other parallels include episodes that reproduce certain key events in Rousseau's text: in one central episode, M. de Wolmar, in a token of trust, leaves Julie and her former lover Saint-Preux alone together while he is away taking care of

business matters. In the same way, in Sand's novel, Jacques leaves Fernande alone with Octave during a short absence. The author even goes as far as to copy minute details in another episode such as Saint-Preux's use of a telescope during his brief "exile" at Meillerie in order to observe from afar Julie's house; in her text, Octave uses a "lunette d'approche" (231) to see Fernande from afar; although Octave is not "exiled" from Fernande's presence at this point, it is nevertheless in this particular letter that he claims he will banish himself from her presence (231) because he is too in love with her.⁷²

Writing Back at Rousseau

Many of the parallels in Sand's *Jacques* are constructed however, not just to signal her novel as a rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* but to express her own critical commentary on Rousseau's work and question his ideas regarding morality in addition to the education and role of women. Raymond Trousson, speaking about the author's rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, affirms that Sand modifies and adapts her predecessor's story for her own purpose, for she contests both the verisimilitude of Rousseau's work and the lesson it conveys (759). It is true that Sand's rewriting questions the utopist nature of Rousseau's Clarens and the possibility for such a perfectly harmonious community. Yet, rather than contestation, her version of Clarens has more to do with bringing out the underlying tensions already inherent and hinted at in her predecessors' novel and questioning the basis of this society. We will remember for instance that in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, M. de Wolmar, on welcoming Saint-Preux to their community, explains to him that Clarens is a place where no one should be ashamed of expressing his true thoughts. Explaining his moral principles, he tells him that anything one says in a private conversation

⁷² This letter by its style will remind readers of Saint-Preux's first letter where he specifically tells Julie he must flee from her because he has fallen in love with her.

should be repeatable before everyone else in this exceptional community. In Sand's novel however, this high principle of morality, sincerity, and frankness is transposed into very concrete, down-to-earth, and even ridiculous terms by Octave.⁷³ Praising the wonderful reception he experiences in Jacques' house, the young man translates these ideals into the concrete image of "cette table où il est permis de mettre les deux coudes, et d'où l'on peut se lever autant de fois qu'on veut pendant le repas" (231). Sand's copy therefore indirectly reminds readers of the large distance separating the abstract principles staged in Rousseau's novel and the practical reality of human existence. As Trousson puts it, "La romancière a ramené les héros rousseauistes de l'empyrée sur la terre" (753).

From another standpoint, by translating the high principles governing Clarens into the merely exteriorized gestures of table etiquette, Sand indirectly undermines the legitimacy and solidity of even these principles themselves. Octave's "transposition" suggests that M. de Wolmar's abstract principles of morality dictated uniquely by reason are incomplete, superficial and surface virtues producing only empty, mechanical actions divorced from a deeper consideration for the complexities of human existence. Indeed, if we look carefully at the end of Rousseau's novel, Julie's deathbed scene already calls into question the utopist calm and morality on which Clarens is founded. In this scene of regret, Julie, having called Saint-Preux to her side, proclaims him her one true love, putting into question therefore the validity, truth, and virtue of her life with M. de Wolmar: "La vertu qui nous sépara sur la terre nous unira dans le séjour éternel. Je meurs dans cette douce attente: trop heureuse d'acheter au prix de ma vie le droit de t'aimer toujours sans crime, et de te le dire encore une fois!" (566). In expressing her

⁷³ For examples of other such passages, see also *Jacques*, p. 215 where Octave, speaking about their life together on Jacques' property, writes: "Nous vivrons tous deux de chasse, de pêche, de musique et d'amour contemplatif." See also p. 218: Octave underlines the "puerility" and illusory happiness of their copy of Clarens in exclaiming to Fernande, "Ah! nous sommes bien enfants, tous, et bien heureux!"

final moments as “cette douce attente” and happiness at leaving life itself, Julie suggests that Clarens was finally based only on an unsustainable illusion where she could not speak the truth of her love for Saint-Preux. In fact, Rousseau’s heroine confesses to her former lover that only death could guarantee that she not succumb eventually to her feelings for him.⁷⁴ By expressing this lifelong struggle in a spontaneous exclamation, “Un jour de plus peut-être, et j’étais coupable!” (564), Julie underlines that M. de Wolmar’s utopist calm based on reason is finally only a surface, deceptive calm, an illusion of stability obtained at the price of what Trousson has called “une mutilation de l’être” (759).⁷⁵ On another level, this spontaneous cry of the heart shows that an absolutely transparent, open society where one can simply speak one’s mind devoid of any dangers, anxieties or misgivings is impossible; evidently, as Julie’s admission shows, some truths cannot be said aloud.

Significantly, it is only at her deathbed that Julie finally feels free enough to denounce as wrong and empty, M. de Wolmar’s moral reasoning in reuniting her and Saint-Preux at Clarens. By qualifying this reunion as “pas bonne” (564) and expounding on this error as, “Je me suis longtemps fait illusion,” Rousseau’s heroine expresses her misgivings on M. de Wolmar’s morality based on reason and will-power alone. It is in these final moments of her life that she realizes there is another morality, one that is perhaps deeper than M. de Wolmar’s system, as her words to Saint-Preux suggest: “venez partager et guérir mes ennuis: je vous devrai peut-être plus que personne” (564.). In bringing up the idea of a debt she owes to Saint-Preux (“je vous devrai

⁷⁴ See especially *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in the passage where Julie affirms the impossibility of holding out a whole lifetime against her natural inclinations for Saint-Preux, “J’ose m’honorer du passé ; mais qui m’eût pu répondre de l’avenir?” (564).

⁷⁵ The significance of this deathbed scene is quite complex with many layers of meaning, among which the question of how to interpret Julie’s deathwish. See especially Mary Trouille’s *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* for a larger discussion of this scene as an indirect suicide and the many ambiguities and discrepancies between the characters’ behaviors in regard to the principles they profess.

peut-être”) in conjunction with the idea of a guilty conscience as expressed by “mes ennuis,” Julie is admitting her doubts regarding the life of virtue she had chosen. Rousseau’s heroine realizes that by adhering to a morality dictated by society and reason represented by her husband, she neglected the duties she owes to a truth and morality dictated by the heart, and Sand’s novel especially brings out this point as I will explain shortly.

The type of “surface” translation I brought up in regards to Sand’s copying of elements of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is also used as a strategy by the author to critique Rousseau’s ideas about the education and role of women. In *Jacques*, Fernande shows herself completely docile to Rousseauist principles of women’s education in that she does not seek to realize her own intellectual potential for herself but sees her only duty as pleasing her husband. Fernande’s letter to Clémence expressing this belief is certainly a barely veiled, caricatural transposition of such a subscription to Rousseau’s principles:

Que m’importe de cultiver le peu de talents que j’ai ou d’en acquérir de nouveaux ? Jacques en a pour nous deux, et j’en jouis comme s’ils m’appartenaient [...]. Je ne désire pas non plus former et orner mon esprit: Jacques se plaît à ma simplicité ; et lui, qui sait tout, m’en apprendra certainement plus en causant avec moi que tous les livres du monde. (96)

One may choose to laugh at such an exaggerated depiction of a female character refusing any education and learning through books and mock the ridicule of Fernande’s statement relegating her own identity to Jacques’ person and tastes. Nevertheless, both the reader and Sand’s hero are soon confronted, ironically enough, with the disastrous consequences of Fernande’s well-intentioned ignorance. To Jacques’ horror, Fernande’s innocence does not make her an exceptional mother nor spouse like Rousseau’s virtuous heroine, but keeps her a “femme-enfant,” knowledgeable enough at most to keep up a doll’s house. Knowing that her husband has many talents does not make them her own! On the contrary, we see Jacques describe to Sylvia all

the blunders his young wife makes at the birth of their children and tell her how he has had to intervene:

Je suis obligé d'interposer mon autorité pour qu'elle ne [...] fasse pas mourir [ses enfants] par l'excès de sa tendresse: elle les réveille quand ils sont endormis pour les allaiter, et les sèvre quand ils ont faim ; elle joue avec eux comme un enfant avec un nid d'oiseaux. (145)

Evidently, Jacques' observations are a transparent critique of both the education of women and their conditions in a post-Napoleonic state. After all, in regards to their status under the Napoleonic code, women are considered hardly more than children, not being able to own property and needing their husband's authority and permission in all matters regarding public life.

Viewed from another angle however, as Françoise Massardier-Kenney has suggested, Sand's depiction of Fernande's maternity experience is a way of questioning the traditional view of motherhood as part of women's instinct, and thus, nature ("Singularité" 46). Massardier-Kenney points out that in *Jacques*, it is not the biological mother who is best able to take care of these children, but Sylvia, who is neither married nor has children. Moreover, in contrast to Fernande, Sylvia, we are told, has received a strong education based on Jacques' principles of equality (Ibid. 43). By putting in question this traditional center piece of what would be considered a woman's identity, Sand reframes as a learned, cultural behavior rather than a feminine essence, motherhood, and by consequence, other such givens of womanhood as well (Ibid. 44). Similarly, whereas, Rousseau glorifies maternity and pregnancy as an almost sublime, mythical moment of a woman's life, Sand, as Massardier-Kenney points out, reframes it for the physically hard reality that it is, in mentioning for instance, Fernande's fatigue and other difficulties both during and after pregnancy (Ibid. 45). In this way, Sand's rewriting of *La*

Nouvelle Héloïse demystifies at once the essentialist myths of femininity popularized by Rousseau while showing the difficult realities of women's lives.

II. POSITIONING AGAINST THE SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, as mentioned earlier, functions not just as a strategy for Sand to position herself in relation to Rousseau but it is also a means to distance herself from the sentimental novel. Because the authors of sentimental novels were predominantly women, choosing to rewrite a masculine literary reference allowed Sand to write back against the type of literature women were expected to compose in addition to the preconceptions concerning the nature and essence of women's writing. Since *Jacques* is written a few months after her novel *André* which was received as a popular sentimental novel, examining first Sand's reaction to the literary success *André* represented for her can help us better contextualize how distancing herself from the sentimental novel may have played a large role in Sand's conception of *Jacques*.

Writing against a Feminine Tradition and Striving for Recognition

In her March 17, 1839 letter to Charlotte Marliani, Sand's comments about her novel *André* show how condescendingly she views the sentimental novel and the type of readership it attracts. Here she seems to even reject her own novel for she turns up her nose at the success it had.⁷⁶ At the same time, she puts the blame on publishers like Bonnaire and Buloz, for in aiming to please a supposedly undemanding readership, they encourage such bestsellers:

⁷⁶ See Dominique Laporte, "Ne m'appellez donc jamais femme auteur": Déconstruction et refus du roman sentimental chez George Sand," p. 248.

Il faut vous dire aussi que tout ce qui est un peu profond dans l'intention effarouche le Bonnaire et le Buloz, parce que leurs abonnés aiment mieux les petits romans comme *André* et compagnie qui vont également aux belles dames et à leurs femmes de chambre. (*Corr. IV* 607)

Obviously, novel readers were not just women. However, by referring to this female readership as representing a lower level of taste, Sand is expressing the underlying prejudices against women held by society and the male literary community. By placing two entirely different social classes of women on the same plane, Sand suggests that all women, regardless of their difference in economic or educational level, are incapable of appreciating more sophisticated literary fare.⁷⁷ The exaggerated stance of Sand's comment reveals the extent to which she purposely sought to distance herself from a female readership supposedly only interested in entertaining literature. Achieving success only among women readers, this "lectorat décrié" ("Ne m'appellez donc" 249) as Laporte has put it, would be a failure for an author wanting to conquer the admiration of a more enlightened, and consequently male, public.

Nevertheless, despite Sand's dismissive comments in her letter to Charlotte Marliani, *André* is clearly an ambitious novel.⁷⁸ Although the tragic love story represented in *André* could fit into the sentimental novel category, it is certainly not a "petit roman" at all. Depicting the love story between a rich young nobleman, André, and a poor young woman, Geneviève, Sand's novel, as Nigel Harkness has noted, actually gives greater prominence to the depiction of the father-son relationship and "explor[es] the symbiotic links between property, kinship, and

⁷⁷ Obviously, Sand does not really mean that women are by essence incapable of intellectual sophistication. On the contrary, she believed in the importance of education for both sexes and all social classes. We know of her personal investment in forming "poètes ouvriers" like Charles Poncey and her successful efforts in teaching one of her own women servants to read (she speaks about the latter experience in *Histoire de ma vie*).

⁷⁸ One should note too that it is in 1838 that Sand publishes her *Essai sur le drame fantastique* and is concentrating on writing and publishing her more "metaphysical" works as I explained in Chapter One. Thus, it is not surprising that she should speak so condescendingly of any novel which would seem less serious, and less philosophical.

patriarchy” (*Men of Their Words* 95). *André* reads more as a critique of patriarchal society in its portrayal of a dysfunctional father-son relationship coupled with the “phallogocentric power of an abusive, tyrannical father” (Ibid. 102). At the same time, Sand’s love story is also a story of artistic initiation weaving together quite remarkably the Promethean and Pygmalion myths of creation (Ibid. 103). Not just the average “grisette,” Geneviève, whose profession consists of making and selling artificial flowers, develops into a remarkable artist when she learns botany and literature from André. In Sand’s themes, we can see that even when writing a “sentimental novel,” she refuses the idea of an easy entertaining piece of work but instead projects complexity. In this sense, although Laporte calls *Jacques*, “un refus du roman sentimental,” we could say *André* is an even more striking example of this “refus du roman sentimental,” for this refusal is already taking place paradoxically within her own execution of the genre.

Above all, what is essential to understand about Sand’s 1839 comments is that positioning is her priority in these early years. She is ready to sacrifice a good novel, if it could be interpreted as belonging to a frivolous, “women’s genre.” Whereas she seems to “disown” *André* in her 1839 letter, Sand later reclaims this work by mentioning it precisely in her 1853 preface to *Jacques* (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 210). It is at the end of this preface that she mentions *André* in a rather curious manner: “J’ai écrit ce livre à Venise en 1834, ainsi que *Leone Leoni* et *André*” (Ibid.). The fact that Sand chooses to take this occasion to mention *André* nineteen years later shows how much she actually values this work and believes in its significance.⁷⁹ In her other prefaces she does not usually write such statements listing other works written in the same time period. Moreover, including this statement as her last sentence in a short preface when there

⁷⁹ In the same way, Sand’s mentioning of her 1834 novel *Leone Leoni* in this 1853 preface suggests that it is not the minor novel that many critics have taken it for.

is no obvious correlation hints at its significance; in essence, Sand is signaling that *André* and *Leone Leoni* can shed light on *Jacques*. In this sense, *Jacques* is a particularly dialogic novel; it is one that should be read at once intratextually (meaning in relation to Sand's other works), temporally (as part of Sand's "Venice period" in addition to the actual temporal period in which her story is taking place), and intertextually as I will explain shortly.

On another level, Sand's mention of *André* in the company of *Jacques* would seem to suggest the "family resemblance" she wants to underline between them. We might read this gesture as Sand underlining in *André* the same complexity and refusal of the "roman sentimental" that *Jacques* represents.⁸⁰ Most importantly however, by mentioning *André* in her preface to *Jacques*, Sand is symbolically reinstating in an official manner, this novel as part of her corpus after having renounced this "sentimental novel" in 1839 because of the threat to her reputation as a serious author.⁸¹ Obviously, Sand is not against the sentimental novel as a genre in itself; she would not even have written one to begin with, if this were the case. Rather, it is the idea of facility associated with the sentimental novel that she refused. By 1853, we can imagine that Sand, more than twenty years into her writing career, no longer needs to think about proving her worth in the same fashion as the young George Sand, and can finally put together all the puzzle pieces of her authorial identity.

⁸⁰ Dominique Laporte, though not mentioning *André* in this manner, points out how for him both *Jacques* and *Leone Leoni* can be read as "critiqu[ant] le romanesque sentimental conçu par [l]es devancières [de George Sand]" ("Ne m'appellez donc" 250). Sand's correspondance shows moreover that she was working on *André* "and *Jacques* at the same time. She speaks of writing *Jacques* "alternativement" with *André* (*Corr. II* 522).

⁸¹ Although it is not for the same "gendered" reasons, Sand speaks condescendingly about *L'Uscoque* in 1838. This adventure novel had a certain success among what Sand pretended were undistinguishing readers. *L'Uscoque* borrows certain elements from the "roman frénétique" and would thus be considered by Sand as not a serious work of art. Therefore, it is not gender itself that is most important but what would position her as a serious, prestigious author; gender is only part of the picture; genre is another key to the puzzle.

Purposely Engaging in Complexity

Certainly, viewed as part of the crucial first years in building up a young author's career (which debuted with *Indiana* only two years before), Sand's choice of a complex literary form for *Jacques* makes perfect sense, both in terms of her positioning as an author as well as in her questioning of preconceptions regarding women's writing. Wanting to avoid being labeled as a writer of "easy" sentimental novels, it was important for her to demonstrate her ability to compose serious works of art.⁸² The polyphonic epistolary novel was a perfect genre for proving her skill because it was a recognizably difficult form and would allow her to demonstrate her mastery of writing technique, capacity to handle serious subjects, and knowledge of literary culture. Writing a rigorous polyphonic epistolary novel like *Jacques* in a prestigious male literary tradition could be seen as a considerable challenge. Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* on top of it and weaving in other works would be a "tour de force."

Modern day critics, for the most part,⁸³ now see *Jacques* as a novel written in reaction to the sentimental novel associated with women writers. I would argue that Sand actually goes much further than that. Not only is she writing against this "feminine" genre, but she is writing against the very "essence" of women's writing and the presumed natural qualities associated with this writing. Resisting the "horizons d'attente"⁸⁴ of facility and spontaneity expected of

⁸² In *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, Margaret Cohen notes that the sentimental novel written by women writers was the dominant form widely read and appreciated, especially during the first decade of the Restoration. She adds however that the novel, at this point, was still not considered a prestigious, serious literary form (29).

⁸³ Dominique Laporte and Christine Planté for instance.

⁸⁴ I am borrowing this term from Jauss' theory of literary genres. Jauss defines genre in terms of "horizons d'attente," that is, the range of expectations both readers and writers have in regards to the specific literary genre.

women writers is precisely one of the reasons Sand's *Jacques* has perplexed readers,⁸⁵ I would argue. Projecting complexity and demonstrating mastery in the writing of a difficult polyphonic epistolary novel is a way of projecting a vigorous textual masculinity.⁸⁶

To a certain extent, the continuing aesthetic misunderstandings and negative critical reactions Sand's work has continued to encounter are specifically due to this misreading by readers of both her time and ours in regards to her textual style and project in *Jacques*. Among modern critics, Christine Planté's aesthetic judgment of *Jacques* can serve here as a particularly helpful point of reference, for it allows us to better contextualize the disorienting novelty of Sand's stylistic project in revealing where this misunderstanding occurs. Planté's stance is a curious paradox: while pointing out George Sand's apparent desire to distance herself from a woman's tradition of epistolary writing ("Sand et le roman" 79), Planté nevertheless seems to expect the author to write in this very style. She affirms that all Sand's epistolary novels have had bad press (Ibid. 77) but attributes this rather categorically to stylistic and aesthetic flaws. Framing the problem with Sand's epistolary novels in terms of an inadequacy, Planté claims that her novels lack the "facilité féminine proverbiale en la matière" (Ibid. 79). To bolster her point, she refers to the expertise of Laurent Versini who has called the 97 letters in *Jacques* to be "longues, verbeuses et ennuyeuses" in comparison to the "passionnante correspondance

⁸⁵ At the time of her publication of *Indiana*, writers did not know that George Sand was a woman. However, by 1834, her readers would have known her real identity. I am suggesting here that a woman author writing a complex polyphonic epistolary novel would be unusual. My discussion of Christine Planté's and Laurent Versini's comments regarding *Jacques* in this chapter shows that *Jacques* continues to perplex readers even today and not just in Sand's time.

⁸⁶ I am playing off this concept introduced by Nigel Harkness in his book, *Men of Their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction*. Harkness argues that Sand constructs the impression of a homosocial community sharing common patriarchal values through her use of language. Masculinity is subsequently a textual creation in her novels. In addition, it is a part of her authorial persona which she has carefully crafted through language.

authentique de George Sand” (Ibid.).⁸⁷ Versini’s choice of this comparison read together with Christine Planté’s comments are particularly illuminating because they demonstrate how one expected women’s epistolary novels to resemble their everyday-life letter-writing style. In other words, women’s novels were expected to project an “ease” of writing conveying the impression of transparency and a simple, unmediated, artless communication.

Stylistic Expectations about Women Authors

Though neither Planté nor Versini cite a single textual example in Sand’s *Jacques* of what they mean, by “longues, verbeuses et ennuyeuses,” we know to what models of epistolary writing Planté is comparing Sand’s *Jacques* because she names her references—“Mmes de Genlis, de Duras, de Souza, de Krüdener” (Ibid.)—authors often praised as the epitome of this “feminine” epistolary style. Throughout the 18th century this ideal of feminine writing linked specifically to “epistolarity” is propagated in manuals on epistolary style as well as by critics like Jean-Baptiste Suard.⁸⁸ Often cited, Suard’s description concerning women’s nature and epistolarity captures in a succinct portrait the type of qualities one expected from women’s writing:

On conçoit aisément que les femmes qui ont de l’esprit et un esprit cultivé doivent mieux écrire les lettres que les hommes même qui écrivent le mieux. La nature leur a donné une imagination plus mobile, une organisation plus délicate: leur esprit, moins cultivé par la réflexion, a plus de vivacité, et de premier mouvement, il est plus primesautier, comme dit Montaigne. (Planté, *L’Épistolaire, un genre féminin* ? 11)

⁸⁷ It is interesting to note that Versini in commenting on *Jacques* speaks of it precisely in relation to the idea of “authenticity” of style, in the sense of a natural style as opposed to a clearly literary style. In Chapter 3, I argue precisely that the perceived artifice of Sand’s style in *Jacques* is not a lack; on the contrary I propose that this artifice is a purposefully, calculated effect.

⁸⁸ Christine Planté cites Suard’s *Du style épistolaire et de Mme de Sévigné* (1778) as one of such writings that especially engrained this idea of a feminine epistolary style, praised for its perfection precisely for its seeming freshness, ease, and artlessness. See Planté’s “Introduction” to *L’Épistolaire, un genre féminin?*.

As Suard's commentary suggests, epistolary writing was viewed as the ideal vehicle for women's writing because the nature of feminine expression was believed to coincide with the function of the letter. Idealized as inimitable by men, the beauty of women's writing was thought to stem from a sort of natural grace emanating from the purity and authenticity of their being. Assumed by nature to be more imaginative and less reflective, it would follow that women would be more spontaneous and fresh in their ways of self-expression. At the same time, "leur esprit moins cultivé par la réflexion" also alludes to women's lack of education in comparison to men. Receiving less education than men, women, allegedly, would conserve a certain grace believed to be founded on an innocence uncorrupted by knowledge of the outside world. Suard alludes to this purity later on in his text through the phrase, "renfermées dans l'intérieur de la société et moins distraites par les matières et par l'étude" (Ibid.). Aesthetically speaking, due to the purity of their souls, the essence and beauty of women's writing translated into the expected qualities of immediacy, spontaneity, authenticity, and the grace of simplicity. Through this association, the letter, understood as both receptacle and vehicle for conveying intimacy and immediacy of thoughts and emotions, would therefore be considered a more feminine genre, far better suited to the presumed qualities of women's nature and lifestyle.

While literary research has since disproved and deconstructed⁸⁹ this notion of a nature of writing proper to women, what Christine Planté's aesthetic opinion reveals is that still today, one approaches the writing of women authors differently from that of male authors. Planté's assessment of Sand here is based on a gendered assumption: because one knows that George

⁸⁹ It is important to note that to her credit, Planté adds the adjective "proverbiale" when speaking about this supposed "facilité féminine" of women's writing. Planté's work on women's writing has certainly shown that the supposed nature of women's writing is a fictional and historical construct rather than an actual inherent quality based on biological identity.

Sand is biologically a woman, one assumes she must be writing in a women's tradition of novelistic writing and adhering to the aesthetics governing this "feminine genre." Today, we may not necessarily expect women writers to display the feminine qualities of writing we explained above—spontaneity, facility, authenticity and simplicity—but as Planté's assessment shows, we remain more likely to automatically define or align women writers (or at least compare them) to a women's tradition of writing, and thus, see them (and evaluate them) through criteria associated with this tradition. This explains in part the continuing confusion concerning *Jacques* despite Sand's care to signal in multiple ways her adherence to a masculine literary tradition. Male authors, on the other hand, seem at least somewhat less prone to be automatically read in this gender-aligned way⁹⁰ (in part because the literary world is historically a male-dominated world and so there are fewer "feminine genres" to which one could align authors). Because of its unusually strong masculine pose, Sand's *Jacques* is therefore a particularly interesting case study. As a "literary anomaly" resisting the ideas associated with women writers, *Jacques* pushes theory and practice to its very limits.

Polyphonic Shock: A Woman Writer Mastering a "Masculine" Literary Grammar

Playing Sand's *Jacques* against the "critical generic mismatch" reflected in Christine Planté's and Laurent Versini's comments may give us an idea of the "polyphonic shock" her novel would produce for readers expecting her to write in a "women's genre," but getting past it and reflecting on this polyphony is where the real interest lies. Viewed through the criteria of

⁹⁰ Coincidentally, it is in this same article where Planté voices her aesthetically gendered opinion of Sand's aesthetics that we see the absence of this bias when it concerns her analysis of a male author: when speaking of Balzac's duo-voiced epistolary novel, *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées*, she claims that he "démontr[e] de façon éclatante avec *les Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* sa maîtrise d'un roman réputé aristocratique et féminin" (79).

“facilité féminine,” Sand’s complex polyphony of diverse tones, viewpoints, writing styles, and approaches would certainly appear absolutely incomprehensible and disorienting. Examining the epistolary styles of the various correspondents may help us see more clearly what bothered critics in Sand’s text as well as provide us with clues on how to read her unusual aesthetic project.

Indeed, Versini is partly right if we look at the letters of different correspondents, starting with Fernande’s fairly long first letter to Clémence. This letter, which opens Sand’s novel, is a little over eleven pages. It is a sort of affectionate babble, with her prattling away with this old friend from the convent where they both were “pensionnaires.” Could “verbeuses” as well as “ennuyeuses” denote then the little “nothings” she shares with her friend, and the “unnecessary,” seemingly unstoppable childish banter she makes us hear? For instance, making fun of herself for having dared criticize her mother, she exclaims:

Allons! voilà que, malgré moi, je me mets encore à tourner ma mère en ridicule. Ah! je suis encore trop pensionnaire. Il faudra que Jacques me corrige de cela, lui qui ne rit pas tous les jours. En attendant, tu devrais me gronder au lieu de me seconder comme tu fais, vilaine ! (5)

Of all the characters in the novel, Fernande is the youngest and the most inexperienced, and everyone treats her in many ways like a child who still has a lot to learn. While claiming mischievously that she needs to be disciplined, as indicated by the phrases, “Jacques me corrige de cela” and “tu devrais me gronder,” Fernande, at the same time, shows how comfortable and secure she feels in just rambling on and on before her old friend, through the teasing tone of the adjective “vilaine” with which she addresses her.

On the other hand, we may imagine “verbeuses” as stylistically referring to the often overly long sentences with which she speaks when she is caught up in her own emotions.⁹¹ We see her babbling happily away when describing to her confidant the happy beginnings of her married life with Jacques. At times even Fernande herself realizes how her “conversation” with Clémence may sound like the mindless silly chatter of a “romanesque” imagination. After her lengthy enthusiastic description painting Jacques like the hero of a novel, she exclaims to her friend:

Ne me dis pas que je fais des phrases de roman; si tu voyais Jacques, je suis sûre que tu trouverais tout cela en lui, et bien d'autres choses sans doute que je ne saisis pas, car j'ai encore avec lui une timidité extraordinaire, et il me semble que son caractère renferme mille particularités qu'il me faudra bien du temps pour connaître et peut-être pour comprendre. Je te les raconterai jour par jour, afin que tu m'aides à en bien juger ; car tu as bien plus de pénétration et d'expérience que moi. (7)

However, by telling her friend not to say she is making “des phrases de roman,” but to accept her description of Jacques as “real,” Fernande is preparing us for Jacques’ own writing style. As we will see further on in my analysis, Jacques indeed speaks with the accents of a Byronic hero (in addition to looking like one⁹²).

On the other hand, “verbeuses” et “ennuyeuses” may denote the absolute opposite of Fernande if it refers to the speech of her older-sounding, more experienced friend Clémence. In her often long, disserting lessons of conduct about the nature of men and women, Clémence advises her friend Fernande on the dangers of society. In passages such as the following, she

⁹¹ Surely, Suard did not have Jacques’ young wife in mind and her run-on sentences when referring to the graceful beauty of feminine style emanating from this spontaneous “vivacité” of women’s nature (though Fernande be the very image of “primesautier” at times!).

⁹² See Fernande’s description of Jacques in her first two letters.

laments the insufficiency of what is considered a good enough education for women. Learning uniquely domestic skills without any purposeful forming of the mind, a woman, as she explains would be little more than a child, especially if she has not even seen the world:

Une jeune personne, au sortir du couvent, trouve sa position toute faite, soit qu'on la marie, soit que ses parents la tiennent pour quelques années encore auprès d'eux. Travailler à l'aiguille, s'occuper des petits soins de l'intérieur, cultiver la superficie de quelques talents, devenir épouse et mère, s'habituer à allaiter et à laver des enfants, voilà ce qu'on appelle être une femme faite. Moi, je pense qu'en dépit de tout cela une femme de vingt-cinq ans, si elle n'a pas vu le monde depuis son mariage, est encore un enfant. (17)

Clémence's speech itself reproduces a certain monotony: the slightly saccadic rhythm in her listing of infinitives one after another suggests the boredom she seems to attach to the less intellectual activities women were expected to perform and which punctuate their daily life.⁹³ This rhythmic effect actually carries into Clémence's next sentences as she walks us through her exposition of a woman's life:

Je pense que le monde qu'elle a vu étant demoiselle, dansant au bal sous l'oeil de ses parents, ne lui a rien appris du tout, si ce n'est la manière de s'habiller, de marcher, de s'asseoir et de faire la révérence. Il y a autre chose à apprendre dans la vie, et les femmes l'apprennent tard et à leurs dépens. (17)

As Sand's character explains, even after a woman leaves the convent and prepares for her introduction into society, she continues to learn nothing: the new skills a woman learns may

⁹³ May we possibly see the slightly monotonous rhythm of these phrases as Sand writing back against Rousseau in his overly idealized portrayal of a woman's life and her domestic activities? In this sense, by presenting from a slightly misogynistic viewpoint such domestic activities as almost boring and brainless, Sand is questioning her predecessor's insistence in relegating women uniquely to the domestic sphere; such a constraint as expressed by Clémence would not allow women to learn other skills and knowledge, include this crucial, "autre chose à apprendre dans la vie" to which Clémence is referring. This "feminist" denunciation of preventing women from developing their potential outside a relatively "boring" domestic sphere is also an argument put forth by her heroine Alida in Sand's *Valvèdre*. I would add as well that Sand, in certain of her novels like *Gabriel* and *Mauprat*, seems to purposely portray intelligent, exceptional heroines who are bad and awkward at domestic activities like needlework. In this way, Sand suggests once again that such domestic activities are not essentially feminine activities that come to women naturally and intuitively but they are only culturally learned activities that a culture associates with women and/or imposes on them.

themselves vary, but without a true education of the mind underneath this veneer of culture, it is only the continuation of yet more seemingly boring, brainless acts.

While a similar rhythmic monotony punctuating the infinitives here would suggest changes in this next period of a woman's life to be only superficial, the slight grammatical modifications however add another dimension to Clémence's exposition. The infinitives in this passage, unlike earlier do not stand alone but are the grammatical object of the verbal construction "apprendre la manière de;" we also have this time "le monde" as the grammatical subject of this construction while, "demoiselle," indicating the woman, becomes here the indirect object. New here as well is the idea of a spectacle introduced by the metonym, "l'oeil de ses parents." Putting all these elements together then—the idea of a show, a list of infinitives belonging to the lexicon of the performing arts, the world as teacher or trainer, the woman as trainee who learns all these acts, the idea that these skills require little intelligence which could possibly imply that even an animal can learn them—Sand subtly outlines before us the image of woman as "chien savant," thereby underlining the ridicule of women's superficial education. Women presented this way are thus shown not as agents of their own destiny, but as dependents: dependent first on their family and, later on, on their husbands.

In short, through her subtle manipulation of grammar, rhythmic phrasing, and metaphors, Clémence tries to impress on Fernande's "young mind" the lack of dignity and shameful dependency which women's education imposes on them. Like domestic animals, women are entirely dependent on their "owners" for their very existence. Not having been taught to fend for themselves and survive in the "jungle," women like domestic animals are therefore easy prey. And it is often a lesson learned too late as Clémence's "à leurs dépens" suggests. Readers familiar with the "usual George Sand," would recognize of course that woven transparently

within Clémence's voice are the accents (and style) and critique of Sand's own "voice." Through her character, Sand is giving us her customary critique of women's education and the dangers this puts women in. Not having learned anything of substance, the inexperienced young woman who has only seen the world through the gates of a convent and through the confines of her family home knows nothing and is an easy victim—a theme developed in *Leone Leoni* for instance. Interestingly enough here, while "repeatedly" hammering into her young "pupil" the worldly wisdom she has accumulated as a young widow, Clémence herself recognizes that her pedantic scolding may be "ennuyeuse" for Fernande. Suggesting to her young friend that should Fernande decide she's heard enough the same old refrain as indicated by the adverb, "déjà," she can always stop their correspondence: "Prends garde à toi, ma chère; je te parle bien durement, bien cruellement, mais tu cherches l'appui de ma raison, et je te l'offre d'une main ferme. Je t'ai déjà dit que, le jour où la vérité te serait trop rude à supporter, tu n'avais qu'à cesser de m'écrire" (116). Having had enough of hearing her friend repeat the same old lesson, Fernande finally stops their correspondence later on in the novel.⁹⁴

While one could consider these two letter samples by Fernande and her friend as "longues, verbeuses, et ennuyeuses," such a judgment would be missing the larger dimension of Sand's text. Literary concision and efficiency in narrating events are clearly not the central focus here, but the poetic and discursive function of her text. What Sand is aiming at is rather the drawing of portraits through language and demonstrating her mastery of this literary grammar while exposing the problems with women's education.

⁹⁴ See especially letter 54 where Fernande claims that Clémence is overly harsh with her and simply wrong (p.215-216).

Creating a Poetic Aesthetics and Drawing Portraits through Language

Similarly, one could qualify as “longues,” “verbeuses”, and “ennuyeuses,” Jacques’ and Sylvia’s lengthy, lyrical exchanges towards the end of the novel, but that would be misreading Sand’s focus on the creating of a poetic aesthetics. Running for pages on end, these letters are stylistically quite different from those of Fernande and her friend, for they express through the colors of a dark Romanticism the suffering both Jacques and Sylvia have endured. Narrating the failure of Jacques’ marriage and the consequences this situation is having on all parties, most of the novel is filled not with light chatter about the small amusing events of domestic life⁹⁵ but with the accents of suffering and regret of a soul in pain. Starting from letter XXIX,⁹⁶ Jacques is already writing Sylvia about the disillusionment and suffering he is experiencing in his marriage. Newly married, his exclamations show surprisingly that he already foresees the end of his love relationship and is “looking back” with regret on this brief ephemeral moment of happiness: “Six mois d’amour, c’est bien peu! Encore combien de jours, parmi les derniers, ont été empoisonnés!” (128) In a lyrical outburst of melancholy and despair, Jacques laments how his life now seems like a road through a hostile, arid desert:

Les premiers transports de l’amour sont si violents et si sublimes ... mais quand il s’éteint, toute la nudité de la vie réelle reparaît, les ornières se creusent comme des ravins, les aspérités grandissent comme des montagnes. Voyageur courageux, il faut marcher sur un chemin aride et périlleux jusqu’au jour de la mort ; heureux celui qui peut espérer de ressentir un nouvel amour! Dieu m’a longtemps béni, longtemps il m’a donné la faculté de guérir et de renouveler mon cœur à cette

⁹⁵ See Christine Planté’s volume, *L’Épistolaire, un genre féminin ?* for a more in-depth discussion regarding the style and themes one expected women’s epistolary writings to contain. See in particular, Christine Planté’s “Introduction,” Brigitte Diaz’s “Les femmes à l’école des lettres: La lettre et l’éducation des femmes au XVIIIe siècle” and José-Luis Diaz’s “La féminité de la lettre dans l’imaginaire critique au XIXe siècle.”

⁹⁶ In my 1857 edition of *Jacques*, this letter starts at page 127, which is not even halfway through this edition’s 353 pages.

flamme divine, mais j'ai fait mon temps, je suis arrivé à mon dernier tour de roue: je ne dois plus, je ne puis plus aimer. (128)

Unlike the passage from Clémence's letter just discussed, Sand adds additional layers of complexity to her hero's voice, for we hear not only different voices, but different tones and different registers of speech. The declamatory quality of Jacques' first statements pronounced in the third-person point of view are reminiscent of the sort of lines pronounced by the heroes of tragedy. Moreover, phrases such as "Voyageur courageux, il faut marcher sur un chemin aride et périlleux jusqu'au jour de la mort" resemble the type of proverbial-sounding generalizations spoken by such characters. The phrase "heureux celui qui peut" in particular borrows the structure of proverbs—adjective followed by a demonstrative pronoun followed by a relative pronoun. However, on another level, this type of stylized phrase with such a relative pronoun phrase could also remind readers of the type of lyric, stylized poems written by Joachim du Bellay such as "Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un bon voyage"⁹⁷ or his "Nouveau venu, qui

⁹⁷ This poem is from Du Bellays' *Les Regrets*. The title of this collection is coincidentally quite fitting if we read it in an intertextual manner with the passage in *Jacques* expressing the eponymous hero's regrets. As I will explain further on in Chapter Three, intertextuality plays a large role in Sand's *Jacques*. The novel functions very much like a "roman à clef"—intertextuality and literary allusions abound on practically every page of *Jacques* and thus, Sand could indeed have these poems by Du Bellay in mind when composing this passage. For a reader alert to the many "intertextual winks" in Sand's novel, the line "heureux celui qui" would probably bring to mind the works of this poet.

cherches Rome en Rome.”⁹⁸ The expression of personal lamentation, loss, and ruin especially echoes this second du Bellay poem,⁹⁹ and thus, serves as a “poetic pivot” towards what follows.

Indeed, from the sententiously styled generalizations of the earlier phrases, Jacques’ monologue moves into a personal, intimate self-lamentation. Sand accomplishes this modulation in tone through shifts in both the point of view adopted and the types of figurative images used. From the more “exteriorized” metaphors of a grandiose apocalyptic landscape (“les ornières,” “les ravins,” “les apérités grandissent comme des montagnes”) pronounced in the third person, Jacques shifts to the “smaller-scale” metaphors of his own personal path of sorrows (“je suis arrivé à mon dernier tour de roue”) expressed in the first person. In short, Jacques’ “monologue” moves from the voice of the tragic hero pronouncing an “outward focused” grandiose wisdom reminiscent of proverbs to the inner pain expressed in the humbled voice of a broken man speaking from the heart: from “heureux celui qui peut espérer de ressentir un nouvel amour,” we are left finally with “j’ai fait mon temps” et “je ne puis plus aimer.”

This change in register from the theatrical accents of tragedy to the intimate accents of personal pain does not however bring a weakening in emotional charge and poetic effect. On the contrary, these passages read as pure poetry.¹⁰⁰ Jacques, in adopting the usage of the first person point of view, arrives at the deeper voice of Romantic pathos, for Sand pays careful attention to

⁹⁸ I thank Nancy Rubino for reminding me of this possible intertext which works particularly well here for explaining Jacques’ style. The protagonist’s more stylized lamentation in the third-person singular captured through “heureux celui qui peut” takes on more and more the first person, more personal accents of Romanticism as Jacques’ “monologue” progresses. Joachim du Bellay is often regarded in the history of French poetry as introducing a more personal voice in French poetry as opposed to earlier poetry built more on poetic convention than on a “real” individual voice. He stands in this way as a point of conjunction between two different trends: the expression of personal emotion vs. poetic convention. In this sense, du Bellay is the first “Romantic” in the history of poetry as poetry moves from poetic convention to personal expression.

⁹⁹ “Nouveau venu qui cherche Rome en Rome” is from Du Bellay’s *Les Antiquités de Rome*.

¹⁰⁰ See my preceding footnote in regards to Joachim du Bellay.

both the rhythm and construction of her phrases, and especially in the last sentence of this passage cited above:

Dieu m'a longtemps béni, longtemps il m'a donné la faculté de guérir et de renouveler mon cœur à cette flamme divine, mais j'ai fait mon temps, je suis arrivé à mon dernier tour de roue: je ne dois plus, je ne puis plus aimer. (128)

While taking advantage of the natural cadences in French syntax, Sand also adds commas here for poetic effect.¹⁰¹ These commas act as cadences governing how we are to hear and break up her phrases, for words that fall on these pauses right before the comma take on more prominence as well as words that begin right after the pause. In this way, we hear more the words, “béni”, “longtemps,” and “cette flamme divine” in the first half of Jacques’ sentence. The conjunction of opposition, “mais” that we hear more prominently at the beginning of the second half then functions as a semantic pivot underlining the abrupt change in fortune in the protagonist’s life. In this way, Sand brings out the contrast between the positive connotations of these words in the first half of Jacques’ sentence and the darker colors of the second half—in this latter half, words falling on these strategic points of audition produced by the commas include, “temps,” “je,” “dernier tour de roue,” “plus,” and “aimer” in addition to the natural cadences on “guérir,” “mon cœur,” and “plus” just before the final word “aimer.”

Cadences also help bring out certain repeated words like “longtemps” and “plus,” thereby producing a slight echo effect. By drawing attention to these two words expressing Jacques’ sense of deep loss, Sand thus enhances the “pathos” produced in her text. Finally, the last pause

¹⁰¹ Brigitte Diaz on p.358 of her article, “‘On ne changera pas *un mot* à mon ouvrage’: L’écrivain et ses pouvoirs” notes the importance of punctuation for Sand: Sand even composed a small article on this subject in *Le Temps*. In particular, she writes, “On a dit, ... ‘le style c’est l’homme.’ La ponctuation est encore plus l’homme que le style. La ponctuation, c’est l’intonation de la parole, traduite par des signes de la plus haute importance.” Diaz commenting on this article tells us, “Ce petit essai sur la ponctuation relève d’une analyse stylistique assez audacieuse pour l’époque (Bien avant Apollinaire ou Aragon, elle suggère la suppression de la ponctuation dans le texte poétique.)” (358).

inscribed by the usage of the colon brings maximal drama to Jacques' conclusion: "je ne dois plus, je ne puis plus aimer." The heavy pause that this dramatic realization produces then serves as one last moment of calm before Sand pulls out all the stops in what may be considered a coda of tears that ends in a sweeping crescendo of grief. The metaphors of an apocalyptic nature we saw at the beginning of this passage progressively descend into metaphors of loss, death, and abandonment as Jacques' monologue progresses and his discouragement reaches its paroxysm (128):

Mon amour, mon pauvre dernier amour ! je l'embaumerai en silence, et mon cœur lui servira éternellement de sépulcre; il ne s'ouvrira plus pour recevoir un amour vivant. Je sens la lassitude des vieillards et le froid de la résignation qui envahissent toutes ses fibres; Fernande seule peut le ranimer encore une fois, parce qu'il est encore chaud de son étreinte. Mais Fernande laisse éteindre le feu sacré et s'endort en pleurant; le foyer se refroidit, bientôt la flamme se sera envolée ... O solitude ! solitude du cœur ! (128)

Intertextual play, the interweaving of different poetic styles, and subtle changes in point of view all come together through Sand's mastery of punctuation, rhythm, and dramatic flair as she leaves us with Jacques' abrupt final cry of the heart, "O solitude! Solitude du coeur!"

While George Sand's *Jacques* may have been conceived in part as a reaction to the sentimental novel women authors were expected to write, Sand's demonstration of literary technique, writing styles, and agile polyphonic performance, reveal that she is aiming to go well beyond gendered categories and be recognized as an independent artistic spirit. In examining George Sand's cast of characters and how they all speak, we can see that Sand's "verbosity" neither attempts to show us the "aristocratic grace"¹⁰² of women's writing identified by Jean-Baptiste Suard, nor a spontaneous, authentic personal voice. Rather we sense by the wide range

¹⁰² We will remember Planté's opinion concerning Balzac's "maîtrise d'un roman réputé aristocratique et féminine" which was made in contrast to Sand's style in *Jacques*.

of tones, styles, and characters she presents before us that it is this panoply itself her purpose. In this sense, *Jacques* is, above all, a novel demonstrating polyphony, reflecting on polyphony, and enjoying polyphony in its “plaisir du texte.”

III. THE ART OF THE FUGUE

In many ways, *Jacques* can be read as Sand’s own “Art of the Fugue” though her “literary fugal” masterpiece was written at the beginning of her career rather than the end as was presumed in the case with J.S. Bach. This musical analogy functions particularly well here because the concept of a polyphonic epistolary novel form already lends itself quite naturally to the idea of musical polyphony due to the multi-voiced structure of the genre: we hear the voices of the different characters writing and answering each other through the back and forth of their letters. Moreover, the adjective, “polyphonic” that critics like Laurent Versini use to designate an epistolary novel with multiple letter writers is borrowed directly from the musical domain, thus, reinforcing this semantic association between musical polyphony and literary polyphony.¹⁰³ The term, “fugue,” designating a type of music where two or more independent musical voices are interwoven, would therefore be quite apt to translate the effect of a polyphonic epistolary novel. Moreover, Sand’s text as we have seen has a particularly musical aspect due to the careful construction of her phrases, her attention to rhythm, cadences, and the building up of drama, and thus, the musical analogy would be particularly pertinent.

¹⁰³ Aside from borrowing the term “polyphonique” from the musical domain, Versini also employs the word “symphonique” as we saw earlier in his explanation of *la Nouvelle Héloïse*. Musical terminology to describe literature is often used, and as I argue, it captures quite fittingly the effect of the polyphonic epistolary novel form.

As a masterpiece of fugal writing, Johann Sebastian Bach's "Art of the Fugue," would be a fitting metaphor to describe *Jacques*, for one could argue that this novel is the same type of masterpiece in Sand's own literary production. Legend has it that towards the end of his life, Bach was writing this unfinished work as his legacy and musical statement to serve as the ultimate contrapuntal expression displaying all the knowledge and skill he had amassed in a lifetime.¹⁰⁴ It is a virtuoso and intellectually complex piece of music, which, many scholars would agree, has a particularly mystical, abstract quality to it. Similarly, Sand's *Jacques* has a distinctive showmanship dimension¹⁰⁵ as well as an evident meta-literary component; as I will explain further on in this chapter, one senses that Sand does not wish to just tell a story through a "literary fugal form," but to tell "the story which will tell all stories."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, her literary fugue is a statement about her own century. In this sense, "the Art of the Fugue" would be an apt metaphor in explaining at once the type of project Sand seems to be aiming for while capturing the specific structural traits, difficulties, and complexities involved in writing a polyphonic epistolary novel.

Writing a "Comédie Humaine"

The concept of a masterpiece in art capturing the totality of that art is a topos that one finds in different centuries and different arts. Aside from Bach's 18th-century *The Art of the Fugue*, we find for instance, among the best known examples of such works displaying at once

¹⁰⁴ This is actually a myth, for musicologists and historians have found evidence that Bach's *Art of the Fugue* was started much earlier, around the 1740's.

¹⁰⁵ We see this already with the panorama of writing styles, characters, and tones she sets before us and which I discussed in Part II of this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ I mean this both in a metaliterary sense as "the Novel" which will explain all others, as well as in the sense of a literary matrix which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

the artist's mastery of his art as well as his vision regarding the meaning of this art, Vermeer's 17th-century "The Art of Painting," also known under the name, "The Allegory of Painting." In the 19th century, Courbet's painting, "L'Atelier," could be considered such a statement regarding his vision of art in addition to the demonstration of his skills as an artist. This painting in conjunction with his "Un enterrement à Ornans" has been described by both the artist and his critics as a sort of manifesto of realism and a statement regarding the art of painting. In literature, we could read Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, as another such instance of an artist attempting to capture through his art, a vision of his own art. To a large extent, as I will explain, Sand's *Jacques* could be considered in this lens as her own *Comédie Humaine*, painting before us "the Art of Literature" and performing before us her "Art of the Fugue."

In the panorama of speaking and writing styles displayed, her "exercice de style" reveals a certain theatrical element. We sense at times that Sand is simply having fun playfully waving before us idiotisms in the speech patterns of individual characters. We can almost see transparently right through to Sand the author and imagine her laughing for instance when she chooses mischievously to place words like "vilaine" in Fernande's mouth (in teasing moments when writing to Clémence as we saw earlier). Similarly, we can see Sand's hand when she traces before us certain caricatural types: M. Borel, Jacques' good friend, a former "colonel," is instantly recognizable with his "bon sens grossier" (48),¹⁰⁷ "ses grosses moustaches" (43), and his exclamations of "parbleu!" In a sense, this sampling of characters and different lexicons functions like the "demo tape" of a young author "who does her scales" in front of us while enjoying the "bells" and "whistle sounds" she is producing. At other instances, such as in the

¹⁰⁷ There are just a few letters by M. Borel himself. We do however, hear his voice fairly frequently when Fernande transcribes conversations where she hears him speaking about Jacques. At other moments, she reproduces for her friend Clémence what he and his wife tell her directly.

passage of Jacques' letter just analyzed, Sand displays a seriousness in her art, in carefully controlling, modulating, and structuring each sentence and each phrase, while interweaving additional styles, voices, and tones in her writing.

Styles and tones however are not Sand's only aims. On the one hand, Sand's polyphony captures the individual "essence" and personality of each character through the tone and style of his/her writing, but on the other hand, we sense that her characters function additionally as "types" and "categories" in that they represent a class or group greater than themselves. While copying more or less the story and protagonists in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand introduces some important additions for this effect. The preciseness with which she appears to have chosen these supplementary elements suggests these are not coincidental but are symbolically motivated additions: it is a purposeful attempt to go beyond Rousseau's characters in giving them a "social" dimension and voice that Rousseau's text did not have in the same way.

Certain Sand scholars have pointed out how each one of these newly added layers represents a different social identity. Nancy Rogers speaking of Sand's three main female correspondents denotes Fernande as representing the point of view of "une jeune fille inexpérimentée et naïve" (114). Clémence, on the other hand, is described as "une jeune veuve cynique ... qui répète tout ce qu'elle entend et ainsi reflète l'avis de la société" (114). Sylvia, she calls "une femme/ sœur ... qui trouve le côté sauvage de Jacques à la fois le plus vrai et le plus beau" (114). I will add as well that in Sand's story, we learn about Sylvia's past and discover that she was a child born out of wedlock, representing thus, this "outlawed," illegitimate element of society. Even more disturbing however, as an illegitimate child, Sylvia never learns whether she is Jacques' half-sister or not (and neither do we). By inscribing this additional detail into her text, Sand, not only adds an extra layer of complexity to her story but gives Sylvia's social identity

another level of social meaning: given their amorous (though not openly declared) feelings for each other, Sylvia and Jacques' relationship also represents the taboo of incest.

As for the cast of male characters in Sand's novel¹⁰⁸: Jacques is a rich "roturier" (3) "hériter d'un million" (5) which has allowed him to conquer the aristocratic repugnance of Mme Theursan, without which the latter "ne lui aurait jamais pardonné d'être roturier" (5). At the same time, the "capitaine Jacques" (5) is a war hero who had distinguished himself serving under Napoleon Bonaparte but is now an "officier retiré du service" (5). M. Borel, on the other hand, with his "bon sens grossier" (48) is one of these rough, gruff "braves butors" (49) as Clémence calls them, who represent a more brute masculinity. Reflecting the frank male camaraderie and solidarity in the military, M. Borel's good heart and unshakeable loyalty make up for his lack of finesse¹⁰⁹ in contrast to Jacques who, we are told admiringly by Madame Borel, somehow found the time to learn "tout ce qu'il sait en littérature, en poésie, en musique, en peinture" (29) and is always the favorite of all the young women he meets. Octave, in opposition to Jacques' deep Romantic brooding, is a superficial, young dandy who has "la passion des romans" (264). Much younger than his future rival, like Fernande, he has little experience of the world and judges everything through the novels and romantic stories that he reads.

In simply looking at the panoply of social types in *Jacques*, we get the impression that Sand is consciously designing her fictional world "à la Balzac" so to speak. There is a certain "calculated" feel to her pick of social categories, including age, social class, and profession:

¹⁰⁸ See also Jacinta Wright's article: "Une Mauvaise Copie de Monsieur Wolmar": Sand's Subversion of Rousseau's Masculinities." Wright speaks about the different types of masculinity and especially social class each male character represents.

¹⁰⁹ See especially pages 265-266 in letter LXXIII where M. Borel writes to Jacques, pledging his loyalty and services to his good friend. He presents the rough common sense of an "old school" military man: "Je ne sais bien ce que tu entendais par là, toi qui es un philosophe, et dont les idées diffèrent beaucoup des nôtres; moi, je suis un vieux militaire et ne connais que le code du régiment" (265).

because there just so happens to be “one of each” social type, we sense that our author is picking out specific combinations to fill specific social slots in her fictional world. In this regard, *Jacques* is a microcosm of what one would call Sand’s own “comédie humaine.” This social dimension in her novel allows Sand to weave into her story a social critique and to demonstrate how cultural and social forces influence in complex ways the behavior of her individual characters. On another level, it also allows our author to incorporate diverse viewpoints and opinions on different issues, especially in regards to the institution of marriage and debates around divorce, which I will explore further on in my analysis.

Finally, above all, what the panorama of writing styles in *Jacques* reveals is an author attempting “to go beyond” writing a story. In adding layer upon layer of complexity, Sand goes further and further away from the act of narration and more and more towards discourse and abstraction (whether it be in the sense of character types, social discourse, or a reflection on the possibilities of her art). Far from Suard’s ideal of feminine spontaneity unhindered and unfiltered by reflection, Sand’s *Jacques* speaks the force, control, and careful orchestration of a mastercraftsman eager to display his art. Rather than an 18th-century epistolary novel telling a story, Sand in a sense has handed us a literary fugue.

Orchestrating Intertextual Abstractions

Like J.S. Bach’s *Art of the Fugue*, *Jacques* is not meant to be a spontaneous, easy sounding work, but constructed to sound as a complex, intellectual, even abstract project designed to show one’s mastery of technique, knowledge of literary traditions, and understanding of the potentials of polyphonic epistolary novel writing. In this sense, understanding *Jacques* through the music analogy would be helpful, for the fugue has a certain abstract and intellectual quality, in the sense that it is not a work that aims uniquely to move listeners and play on their

emotions. A musical fugue is a particularly apt analogy in understanding the polyphonic epistolary novel in the context of the 19th century, for it holds a similar status as the epistolary novel in the Romantic period. Under the entry, “fugue” in the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, one explains that although this genre was long out of fashion by the Romantic period, “it was the general consensus that the fugue was the quintessential contrapuntal genre.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, although polyphonic epistolary novels have become more or less obsolete, Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Laclos’s *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* were still recognized as masterpieces, and mastering the technical difficulties of writing a polyphonic epistolary novel is quite evident for any serious writer. Attacking a polyphonic epistolary novel is one could say equivalent to attacking in the literary domain, “the quintessential contrapuntal genre,” and hence, its attraction for an ambitious young author.

Writing a successful polyphonic epistolary novel is an intellectual exercise which demands skills parallel to those required in fugal writing. As a multi-voiced art form, the fugue demands artistry, strong compositional technique, and a firm basis in harmony: composers must interweave melodies and phrases pitted against each other playing in different voices and pitch levels. Moreover, each musical voice (for example, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) must function independently but also together as an integral composition. While it is true that different voices in an epistolary novel do not sound simultaneously as in musical polyphony, successful writers of polyphonic epistolary novels, like their musical counterparts, must be able to keep track of all the different letter voices/writers and their stories at the same: to succeed, authors of polyphonic epistolary novels must weave together all the different voices, individual events, and various

¹¹⁰ Most composers of the Romantic period did not write fugues, though fugue writing technique was still being taught. Like the epistolary novel, the fugue itself is well out of fashion: even more archaic than the epistolary novel, the form was already falling out of fashion by the time of J.S. Bach’s death in 1750. However, important fugal passages continue to figure in both the Classical and Romantic periods and beyond.

personalities expressed by each letter writer and reader in their novels, pit them or show them off against each other, while keeping in mind the overall general shape and harmony of their literary compositions, that is the general tone or atmosphere of their works as well as the over-arching narrative connecting all the letters in the novel. Each individual narrative strand or episode of events must serve as a building block to the overarching general structure much like the different musical episodes and musical motives in the fugue must fit together in a coherent readable overarching architecture.

Aside from mastering “contrapuntal techniques,”¹¹¹ both successful composers of musical fugues and writers of polyphonic epistolary novels require a good sense of rhythm, a sense of drama, as well as possess an innate feel for cadences and pauses in addition to moments of silence. Both polyphonic forms therefore require all the more a spirit of abstraction (in the sense of distancing oneself enough from the present moment of writing and stepping back to see the general picture)¹¹² in order to carefully orchestrate and “calculate” correctly the many variables “sounding together.” Neither the musical fugue nor the polyphonic epistolary novel form can therefore permit a truly “spontaneous” self-expression due to the structural demands of the genre. We could speculate that because of this necessity to constantly focus on the form, polyphonic writing would encourage thus, a certain mindset towards conceptualization and intellectual visualization. In other words, the very nature of polyphonic writing lends itself to thinking in abstraction in addition to narrative drama.

¹¹¹ “Counterpoint” comes from the latin “contrapunctus,” originating from “contra punctum.” It means literally “note against note;” thus, the idea of different musical themes, subjects or musical lines sounding simultaneously against each other.

¹¹² Evidently, all art requires distance, but due to the structural complexity and technical demands of the polyphonic epistolary novel, this is all the more compounded for writers of the genre.

Over and above the structural demands of polyphonic writing, Sand's *Jacques* includes additional layers of abstraction away from the narrative function of communicating a story (By abstraction here, I mean other layers of meaning and function that go beyond the simple telling of a story or a spontaneous self-expression.). Already, as a literary palimpsest, Sand's "narrative" project alone is far from a spontaneous self-expression but more an intellectual, even "mathematical" exercise playing on top of an existing literary form and work. Gérard Genette's term of "hypertextuality" is thus quite fitting for describing the exponentially derivative nature of this type of literature among the different categories of what he calls "la littérature au second degré." Being in part generated and conceived through the implementation and reconfiguration of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Jacques* thus takes on an extra level of signification and structural complexity. Equally significant in Sand's text, is the manner with which the author reveals this rewriting. Despite the many visible parallels between her novel and Rousseau's, Sand nevertheless makes explicit her literary palimpsest in indicating her own characters specifically as copies of Rousseau's.

The reference to Rousseau's novel appears when Octave speaks about Jacques to his wife Fernande:

Ton mari est une mauvaise copie de M. de Wolmar; mais certainement Sylvia ne se pique pas d'imiter le désintéressement et la délicatesse de Claire; c'est une coquette froide et très éloquente, rien de plus. Cesse de mettre ces deux êtres de glace au-dessus de tout, cesse de leur sacrifier ton bonheur et le mien. (260-261)

Here the word "copie," while functioning as just an element of metaphorical content to designate Jacques' character traits, is at the same time, a sort of "intertextual" wink at the reader. It is as though Sand is challenging us "transparently" through Octave to "figure out" this literary reference she is rewriting all along while inviting us to read Rousseau's novel "in counterpoint"

to her own. Especially significant is the fact that Octave is the most “romanesque” character in the whole novel, for he is an avid reader of novels and literature, speaking often about his desire to “play the hero” in his amorous adventure with Fernande or about his impression of “living a novel.” On some occasions, he compares himself to seducers like Lovelace: “Je ne pense pas que Lovelace, à ma place, eût agi aussi vertueusement que moi” (181). On others, it is to the hero of Beaumarchais’ play that he measures himself: “hasardant des excursions sentimentales et mystérieuses autour de la demeure de mon inhumaine, ni plus ni moins que le comte Almaviva,¹¹³ et t’écrivant sur un genou, à la lueur d’une torche de résine” (168). In this example, Octave is speaking about writing letters to his original love object, Sylvia, before falling in love with Fernande; the reference to the physical act of writing emphasized by mentioning the “genou”¹¹⁴ on which he writes, the saturation of Romantic et poetic clichés (“des excursions sentimentales et mystérieuses,” “the pale light of dusk, writing in secret to one’s beloved while “risking one’s life,”), in addition to the flauntingly artificial turn of phrases practically picked out of a poetry book (“la demeure de mon inhumaine”) all underline that we are in a universe of writing. At yet other moments, in speaking about his growing feelings for Fernande, he often refers to their budding relationship as a novel: “Je t’avouerai que je commençais à devenir sérieusement amoureux de Fernande lorsque heureusement Sylvia a découvert le roman

¹¹³ There is another indirect reference to this type of hero. Here, interestingly, as though to underline that we are indeed in a universe of fictional signifiers, Sand has Sylvia speak about her own impression of Octave. As a “fictional response” to Octave’s projection of himself serenading her as the Count Almaviva, Sylvia writes, “[Octave] il est venu chanter et soupiner sous mon balcon, comme un amant de Séville ou de Grenade” (205).

¹¹⁴ Sand is actually playing on two different registers: the image of the “genou” here serving as a more “banal” physical support for writing much like a table but also the metaphor for submission in Romantic poetry: the poet/lover who kneels down before his beloved, pledging his loyalty and life for this “Lord” (courtly love of course is already based on this metaphor of the beloved as one’s “Seigneur” to whom one pledges one’s allegiance). In this image alone, Sand is playing with at least three different layers of meaning and abstraction: the literal, the metaphoric, and the poetic/aesthetic.

et l'a terminé avec quelques reproches et une poignée de main. Elle a bien fait: ce roman me montait trop au cerveau" (265).

It is particularly significant that Sand has Octave (who spends his time consciously copying fictional characters) utter the word "copie," for this choice particularly underscores the artifice as well as artistry of Sand's own novel as a "littérature au second degré." All the names of fictional characters that Octave includes in his speech, along with numerous repetitions of the word "roman," the mention of other literary genres, and references to the act of writing like in the passage cited serve to remind us constantly that not only are we in a fictional universe but it is a fictional universe copying other fictional universes—Sand in this way pushes abstraction¹¹⁵ up yet two notches: rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* being ground zero, naming fictional characters as the next level, and signaling her rewriting through the word "copie." And yet, in this move, Sand does not actually break the fictional illusion, either in these passages or in the specific passage where she names Rousseau's characters: in her fictional universe, Sand has Octave use literature only as metaphors to figuratively explain his experiences.¹¹⁶ She introduces thus a complex borderline situation where she draws attention to the fictional illusion but does not cross the frontiers between our reality and her fictional universe. In this way, Sand's own "Art of the Fugue," while demonstrating her vision of her art, remains an integral performance, and not a lecture by a "musicologist."

¹¹⁵ By abstraction here, I mean a metaliterary distancing; we are several levels removed from the act of narration. It is "metaliterariness" which is put at the forefront in this "revelation" passage, addressed to us the reader.

¹¹⁶ There is no direct intervention by the author addressing the reader for instance.

Sounding Goethe's *Elective Affinities* and Imagining Other Harmonies

In addition to her principal rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand's *Jacques* integrates a secondary palimpsest in rewriting at the same time Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Here abstraction is pushed yet further for it is never explicitly named but can only be deciphered by an attentive reader recognizing the strong thematic connection between the two works. Nerval is among the first to speak about this more hidden rewriting, which for him was quite evident:

Je lis Jacques, j'en suis à la moitié du premier: [...] Cela paraît combiné presque comme le roman de Goethe, les Affinités électives, dont lui-même donnait l'analyse soit en termes de chimie. Les quatre personnages de Jacques sont bien posés, comme ceux des Affinités ; on peut même les représenter par a, b, c, etc. ; seulement, je crois que dans Goethe, le quatrième est x, l'inconnu. (799)

Here, Nerval is referring to Goethe's project in the *Elective Affinities*.¹¹⁷ In this novel, Goethe attempts to translate into fiction his theory that human relationships obey scientific laws of nature. According to the laws of chemistry that Goethe is trying to show, elements that are more closely attracted to each other will form new pairings when put in contact; even if these elements were originally combined together with other elements, the stronger attraction will dissolve the weaker attraction to make way for this stronger pairing.

In *Jacques*, Sand seems to favor Goethe's theory, as new couples re-form precisely because of their respective affinities. As I explained earlier, despite Fernande's sincere love for her husband and desire to stay faithful to him, she discovers that she cannot resist her attraction to Octave: both are young and want to live a passion like those they read about in books. Similarly, Sylvia and Jacques, though refusing to live an adulterous situation, nevertheless have difficulty denying their attraction to each other. Resembling each other in age, strength of

¹¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the parallels between Goethe's *Elective Affinities* and Sand's *Jacques*, see Kathryn Crecelius' chapter on *Jacques* in her book, *Family Romances: George Sand's Early Novels*.

character, and similar moral values and aspirations, they prefer to write and converse with each other much more than with their own “official” partners. This configurative regrouping resembles that of the new couples formed in *The Elective Affinities*: one younger more “romanesque” couple and one older more serious couple.¹¹⁸

We can read the intertextual link between Sand’s *Jacques* and Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* as Sand’s way of emphasizing the theoretical dimension of her own work. Viewed through this lens, *Jacques* is less the “telling of a story” and more the exposition of an abstract concept: the illustration and enactment of the “scientific laws” of love and attraction proposed by Goethe. Intertextuality serves in this way to open up a theoretical and experimental space through which one can imagine other ways of “hearing” and understanding human nature and behavior.

To especially underline her rewriting of *The Elective Affinities*, Sand reproduces specifically the catastrophic conclusion of this work. In both novels, the children born within wedlock die. In Goethe’s novel, it is Charlotte and Eduard’s son. In Sand’s novel, it is Jacques and Fernande’s twins, a boy and a girl that die. In Goethe’s novel, we are told that though this child was conceived by the lawfully married parents, each spouse was actually thinking of their extramarital love for another during the actual moment of conception: Charlotte was thinking about the Captain while Eduard was dreaming about Otilie. In this sense, by sleeping with one another, each spouse is being unfaithful to his “natural love” or his “âme soeur” so to speak—the individual with whom he has more natural affinities.

¹¹⁸ In Goethe’s novel, Eduard, less mature and more impulsive than Charlotte his wife, feels naturally attracted to Otilie, Charlotte’s niece who is a younger, more artistically drawn, enigmatic woman. Charlotte, more serious in character, similarly feels a natural affinity for Eduard’s older friend the Captain, by nature much calmer, more serious, and more rational than her husband.

Sand's novel emphasizes this "transgression" through the emblem of Jacques and Fernande's twins, for the twins themselves are a constant reminder of this moment of "adulterous" conception. Jacques tells Sylvia, "Octave est celui de tous que ma fille préfère ; [...] Sylvia est la favorite de mon fils" (218). Thus, we may read in the affections of each child the symbol of each spouse's true love: their affections underline that Jacques' true, natural love is Sylvia while Octave's is Fernande. Presented from this angle, infidelity would mean betraying one's own natural inclinations and one's true love rather than one's legally wedded spouse. Consequently, a marriage not based on love would be a lie since one is lying to oneself as well as to one's spouse; in this sense, this type of institutional marriage would be "illegitimate" and thus, by semantic extension, "adulterous" in nature. Indeed, this is Jacques' conclusion: "Ce qui constitue l'adultère, ce n'est pas l'heure qu'elle accorde à son amant, c'est la nuit qu'elle va passer ensuite dans les bras de son mari" (301). By having the husband himself speak and confirm the legitimacy of this subversive logic, Sand appropriates the voice of patriarchal authority to add weight to this unorthodox conclusion.

The catastrophic conclusion of the children's deaths in both novels suggest moreover that nature has her own laws and will pronounce her own judgment of life and death even though man's institutions do not recognize them. Octave, alluding to Fernande about their own future love child born out of wedlock, voices this unspoken moral law hinted at in Goethe's work: "les enfants de l'amour ne meurent jamais: Dieu les doue de plus d'avenir et de vigueur que ceux du mariage" (332). Octave has absolute faith that living in harmony with nature, that is, with one's natural instincts and with one's "soul mate," is the true legitimate law.

In *Jacques* however, Sand does not just recreate events in Goethe's work but she gives her own spin off of Goethe's "scientific demonstration" of natural forces. She combines his

chemical theory of attraction with a theory of magnetism. In one key passage, Octave, writing Fernande about their love, tells her:

Notre destin est de nous rencontrer, de nous comprendre et de nous aimer. Le hasard finit par se soumettre à l'amour. La force attractive surmonte tous les obstacles et l'aimant va embrasser le fer dans les entrailles de la terre, en dépit du roc qui les sépare. (333)

In evoking “destiny,” Octave emphasizes the fatality, or the impossibility of resistance. Employing the term, “se soumettre” moreover brings out the idea of a force that must be obeyed, like the laws of science. This idea is further developed by the example he gives of magnetism, presented here as a power that one cannot resist. In fact, he chooses to employ the word “force attractive” rather than magnetism, underlining in this way again the idea of a natural force.

Important to note here especially is Sand’s further spin on the abstract, in which she employs figurative language on two simultaneous levels that “fuses together” and “doubles” each other. On the one hand, we have a scientific metaphor to explain the attractions of love. On the other hand, we have a “love metaphor” to express a scientific phenomenon. In this “tour de force” of language play, Sand paradoxically uses “poetic” language to denote a scientific phenomenon and vice versa. The magnet, “l’aimant” is personified by her choice of the word, “embrasser,” which normally refers to the actions of lovers embracing each other. This personification is further developed when she presents earth itself as a lover whose physical body is suggested by the noun, “les entrailles.” Moreover, the poetic representation of “la terre” as a lover is of course a traditional personification: the idea of the earth as a woman. “Les entrailles” literally means the intestines, but in a more poetic context, it also evokes the womb by its proximity to this organ. Quite evidently, Sand is playing as well on the actual word for magnet in French, based on the present participle of the verb, “aimer.” “L’aimant” here, denoted as a force,

thus represents a masculine value (doubled by the gender of the actual word in French) penetrating into the wombs of the earth (represented here as a female entity which is similarly doubled by the gender of the actual word in French) and evokes figuratively the image of sexual penetration.

Finally, by evoking the image of the rock unable to stop this union between the magnet and the earth, Sand reinforces the idea of an unstoppable force to which all must yield. This force of attractive affinities is so strong that it breaks through even the density of solid rock. Poetic, logical, scientific and aesthetic mastery of language here combines in one virtuoso linguistic demonstration to express the force of Goethe's theory of elective affinities: the hard consonants of the monosyllabic "roc" crowning Sand's virile display of her mastery of abstract language (the ability to build levels of meaning in just two lines). Clearly, it is by choice that *Jacques* does not "speak" with the "facilité féminine proverbiale en la matière" of epistolary writing. On the contrary, speaking in such a heavily structured, dense, and compact language Sand chose not to "write as a woman" so to speak; in *Jacques*, she has chosen to "write as a man."

IV. A WRITER SOCIALLY ENGAGED THROUGH INTERTEXTUALITY

Paradoxically, what may have seemed at first as the abstract aesthetic project of rewriting Rousseau's 18th-century masterpiece becomes the very basis for an impassioned plea for concrete social change. In framing elective affinities to be a scientific law in regards to amorous attraction, Sand demonstrates the necessity of new laws on marriage and divorce in addition to the education of women. David Powell has called *Jacques* "une réflexion sur les souffrances du

mariage tel que l'impose le Code Napoléon" (7).¹¹⁹ More than just a reflection on this suffering, I would argue that Sand's *Jacques* is the relentless pursuit of an idea brought to its only logical conclusion. If elective affinities be a scientific law in regards to amorous attraction, this means it can quite readily happen and does happen. Sand's *Jacques* explores the case of what happens when this "scientific law" is pitted against the laws of a society where divorce is impossible. Intertextuality serves in this way to provide at once the basis and point of departure for social reflection.

Denouncing the Waste of Human Potential

In her 1853 preface to *Jacques*, Sand is very explicit that Jacques' suicide be read as a symbol and warning for her time of the necessity for changing mentalities in regards to adultery and divorce. She presents this death as that of a man of her time "caught between a rock and a "hard place" so to speak, precisely because of society's attitudes and moral judgment towards not only adulterers but the "innocent" spouse, victim of this adultery:

Je ne prétends pas nier cette conséquence du roman, que certains cœurs dévoués se voient réduits à céder la place aux autres et que la société ne leur laisse guère d'autre choix, puisqu'elle raille et s'indigne devant la résignation ou la miséricorde d'un époux trahi. (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 209)

¹¹⁹ The Napoleonic Code brings women's rights a large step backwards in removing from them the few rights (though still limited) they enjoyed as citizens under the Old Regime. On the one hand, by rewriting a prerevolutionary work like *La Nouvelle Héloïse* into a post-Napoleonic context, Sand, in invoking the suffering of the different characters, may be asking whether society may be going backwards rather than forwards in terms of gender and marriage politics. *Jacques*, in this sense, would be continuing Sand's reflection on these issues which one sees already in *Indiana* (I thank Joanana Stalaker for bringing this up.). On the other hand, in rewriting Rousseau's novel, Sand does not present the ideals of her predecessor's novel as better or more advanced: there is no nostalgic look back on this earlier period, nor particular emphasis on the ideas of the Enlightenment; on the contrary, emphasis is placed more on the idea of a future, more progressive time when the institution of marriage can be built on the entirely new basis of natural affinities and love (See for instance, p. 36 in *Jacques*). Moreover, in *Jacques*, Sand frames her novel within a post-Napoleonic period more for the purpose of painting in a "mal-du-siècle" color to depict the type of "mal-du siècle" sentiment weighing down her peers and expressed in works like Musset's *Confession d'un enfant du siècle* and Obermann's *Senancour*. I would argue thus that this post-Napoleonic period Sand is painting for us is used more as a contrast in relations to an imagined more enlightened future. This interpretation in my opinion is more in line with Sand's ideas regarding the perfectibility of the human spirit.

In the eyes of society, there is only one acceptable choice for the husband: he must punish his wife in addition to punishing his wife's lover for having offended his honor. Anything short of action, and often violent action—the husband would either have to challenge the lover to a duel or kill him—would be condemned, for in a patriarchal society, the wife's adultery would be considered a stain against her husband's honor. Resignation and forgiveness would therefore be considered dishonorable, unacceptable, and incomprehensible.

In placing the noun “miséricorde” here, Sand is already preparing her argument in revealing its incoherency in a supposedly Christian society: in Christianity, forgiveness is considered among the highest virtues for it resembles the grace of God who has pardoned man for his sins. Resignation, too, in the idea of “longsuffering” is considered among these greatest virtues incarnated by Christ and his suffering on the cross and acceptance of God's will. By framing Jacques' suicide in this context, Sand therefore accuses society as being the real sinner and not Jacques, for not only does society not recognize Jacques' Christian virtues and mock them but it has pushed a “saintly” man to take his own life:

La société ne se montre pas fort chrétienne. Aussi Jacques finit-il peu chrétiennement sa vie en s'arrogeant le droit d'en disposer. Mais à qui la faute ? Jacques ne proteste pas tant qu'on croit contre cette société irréligieuse. Il lui cède, au contraire, beaucoup trop, puisqu'il tue et se tue. (Ibid.)

In reframing Jacques' suicide through the lens of Christian virtues, Sand transforms what would normally be considered a Christian sin (suicide is considered one of the seven deadly sins for it represents despair, and thus a loss of faith in God), into practically the martyrdom of a saint choosing to die rather than betray his faith and his beliefs. This martyrdom however is not presented as a glorious act, but as a hopeless unjust result resolving nothing. Consequently, focus

is put on what is wrong with the century itself. As Sand suggests, Jacques' tragic dilemma in regards to marriage and adultery is not just an isolated case but an over-arching problem of her century: "Il est donc l'homme de son temps, et apparemment que son temps n'est pas bon pour les gens mariés, puisque certains d'entre eux sont placés sans transaction possible entre l'état de meurtriers et celui de saints" (Ibid. 209). The only options being to kill or be killed, both solutions are therefore a terrible waste of human life and potential.

Even more terrible, as Sylvia tells Jacques, should a woman commit adultery, the consequences are by far worse for her than for the husband. For this reason, marriage itself is a potential danger for any woman: though one may marry for love, in the event that the feelings of either partner change, the woman will suffer:

[q]uand les lois, la croyance et l'usage vous défendront à tous les deux de vous consoler par un autre amour! les lois, la croyance et l'usage sont des mots pour toi; ce seront des chaînes pour cette femme, quel que soit son caractère; pour les secouer, il faudra qu'elle subisse tout ce que la société peut faire de mal à un de ses enfants rebelles. (47)

On learning Fernande's feelings for Octave, Jacques realizes that only with his own death can there be true resolution, for death alone can dissolve marriage bonds in a society where marriage is considered "indissoluble." In seeing Fernande suffer in trying to stay faithful to him, he understands that even if he were to withdraw himself from this marriage, she would still feel guilty.¹²⁰ Writing to Sylvia, he describes Fernande as "pale, abattue [et] souffrant toutes les angoisses d'une conscience timorée, incapable de mentir" (301). In a society not yet capable of recognizing love to be subject to the "laws of natural affinity" and not free will, one's conscience

¹²⁰ See *Jacques*, p. 244 and 301.

would still be one's prison.¹²¹ In this inexorable progression of logic, Jacques understands then that his own death be the only solution possible:

Ma mort ne peut que lui faire du bien. Je sais que son cœur est trop délicat pour s'en réjouir ; mais malgré elle, elle sentirait l'amélioration de son sort. Elle pourrait épouser Octave par la suite, et le scandale malheureux que leurs amours ont fait ici serait à jamais terminé. (304)¹²²

Far more terrible than the death of a Werther¹²³ in a fit of despair, the cold, lucid reasoning of a perfectly sane man arriving at the decision that he must die can only cause horror. As I mentioned earlier, in the usual configuration of the love triangle story, the person who dies is the one who, either through his identity or behavior, transgresses, troubles or threatens the social order: in general, it is the woman; in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the heroine who had originally committed this "fault" dies; in *Werther*, it is the young lover. In *Jacques*, patriarchal society would expect that either Fernande and/or Octave disappear. In creating this shocking "third solution," Sand suggests (thus in light of these other intertextual norms) that the husband is the troubling element, an "hors-la-loi" blocking the harmonious existence of the "natural" couple. Through this theoretical frame Sand suggests indirectly that if the husband, as in Jacques' case, can be seen as superfluous and a source of trouble in this "natural order," the basis for marriage itself must be faulty and therefore needs to be reexamined and reformulated.

¹²¹ This idea will be further explored in *Valvèdre*, Sand's 1861 rewriting of *Jacques*. This novel takes place in Switzerland (reminding us therefore at the same time that it is intertextually related to Rousseau's *la Nouvelle Héloïse*), and Sand purposely points out that her story is situated in a country and time period where divorce is legal. Moreover, in this novel, Alida, the heroine, is Protestant, and we are told that her religion allows her a religious divorce. However, we learn that she is unwilling and unable in her mind to divorce her husband Valvèdre despite finding herself in an adulterous situation with a young man with whom she feels greater affinities. Her feelings of guilt and moral beliefs prevent her thus from taking advantage of these legal possibilities.

¹²² See also *Jacques*, p. 236-237.

¹²³ Goethe's *Werther* is another intertext that Sand has incorporated in *Jacques* although it is not as thoroughly developed as her rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Elective Affinities*.

Rethinking Marriage and Imagining a New Order

Although he speaks of marriage as “une des plus barbares institutions que [la société] ait ébauchées” (36), Jacques, in expounding his ideas, reveals that he is not against marriage in itself but for its evolution and reform. “Barbares” in this sense denotes more the idea of a primitive form that needs to evolve:

Je ne doute pas qu’il ne soit aboli, si l’espèce humaine fait quelque progrès vers la justice et la raison; un lien plus humain et non moins sacré remplacera celui-là, et saura assurer l’existence des enfants qui naîtront d’un homme et d’une femme, sans enchaîner à jamais la liberté de l’un et de l’autre. (36)

On the one hand, Jacques employs the word, “aboli” in speaking about his belief that the institution of marriage be replaced in the future. On the other hand, however, the comparative adjectival construction, “non moins sacré” that he uses to designate this future “lien plus humain” reveals that at heart, he takes marriage for a sacred tie. Transitioning very naturally from the idea of “sacred,” he brings up the question of parenthood, suggesting in this way that it be a sacred duty within this new system. By bringing up the idea of children and parenthood, Sand shows that unlike what her detractors may say, she takes familial responsibilities and the rearing of children very seriously: protesting against the wrongs of the institution of marriage in the present is not the same as being against the family and the foundations of society. Moreover, by framing the question of liberty (brought up by the infinitive construction, “sans enchaîner à jamais la liberté de l’un et de l’autre” (36)) directly in conjunction with parenthood, Sand shows that this liberty she is pleading for is not an irresponsible one, but a carefully balanced, thought out, moderate concept.

Jacques’ manner of illustrating his ideas about marriage and the necessary option of divorce is at the same time a “mise-en-abyme” of Sand’s literary project. In speaking about the

men and women of his time as “trop grossiers” and “les femmes trop lâches pour demander une loi plus noble que la loi de fer qui les régit,” he suggests that his ideas would be too advanced for his time. As he explains, “à des êtres sans conscience et sans vertu, il faut de lourdes chaînes. Les améliorations que rêvent quelques esprits généreux sont impossibles à réaliser dans ce siècle-ci” (36). In exposing his views to Fernande in such a futuristic, abstract, and even slightly mystical tone and presenting the necessity for changing mentalities before the implementation of such “new laws,” Jacques is in effect signaling Sand’s own novel as one of these attempts at education. What Jacques is arguing for is not so much the abolishment of marriage but the need to reconsider the wisdom of “eternal,” undissolvable bonds of marriage as the best foundation for society.

While Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* serves as the theoretical basis in Sand’s argument for allowing divorce, it also serves as a theory guiding the construction of a better basis for marriage and stronger family ties. Precisely because of this “law of attraction,” it would make sense that marriage be based on more solid, durable ties, in harmony with nature. Moreover, in not going against nature, spouses would theoretically experience less suffering and greater happiness in feeling “at one” with their life partner.

Throughout the novel, different characters express their affinities for each other or point out the affinities between other characters. Jacques writing Sylvia explains how he has the impression that they share the same soul for he feels perfect understanding between them, “Toi seule me comprenais, toi seule pensais comme moi. Il semblait qu’une même âme nous animât,¹²⁴ et que la plus noble partie te fût échue en partage” (351). Indeed, as scholars like

¹²⁴ Octave writing to Herbert expresses similarly this idea of sharing the same spirit, for speaking about his affinities with Fernande, he writes, “nous sommes faits l’un pour l’autre, et que son être est de la même nature que le mien” (255).

Kathryn Crecelius and Dominique Laporte have pointed out, this better match is revealed in the structure of the novel itself. Crecelius indicates that the most number of letters is exchanged between Jacques and Sylvia (128). Laporte in his chart listing the actual numbers of letters exchanged between the two characters gives us twenty-three as the number of letters written by Jacques to Sylvia and twelve as those written by her to Jacques. Significantly, he even labels Sylvia in his table as Jacques' "âme soeur et la confidente" ("L'art romanesque" 126). In contrast, Jacques only writes three letters to his wife and she only two letters to him. This "limited correspondence" has been suggested by Crecelius as mirroring "the non-communication between Jacques and Fernande" (128). On the other hand, Fernande exchanges seven letters with Octave, and he, nine with her.

Even Fernande remarks that her own husband would have been better off with Sylvia. In speaking to Octave about Sylvia to describe the more solid bond between Jacques and this close friend, she says: "son âge, son éducation et son caractère la rapprochent de Jacques, et doivent établir entre eux une confiance bien mieux fondée"(160). Semantically "mieux fondée" suggests as well the idea of legitimacy, and therefore by extension, this phrase conjures up indirectly the idea of marriage bonds. Coincidentally, Fernande voices this very thought, "il est certain qu'il lui a bien enseigné et fidèlement transmis sa manière d'aimer. Que ne sont-ils époux!" (189). Interestingly, Octave, while agreeing with Fernande about this point in a later letter, takes this same occasion to point out their own natural affinities with each other:

Il y a huit mois que je me tais; j'ai supporté héroïquement ce terrible hiver passé à vos cotés, sans distraction et presque tête à tête, car vous ne pouvez disconvenir que nous faisons deux à nous quatre: Jacques et Sylvia font un, vous et moi faisons un autre; ils se comprennent en tout, et nous nous comprenons de même. (222-223)

This “nous faisons deux à nous quatre” underlines the strength of the natural affinities in this new configuration of the couples: Octave with Fernande and Sylvia with Jacques. As described here, attraction is like the fusion between two beings that become one.

In this letter to Fernande, Octave is nevertheless much more forceful in drawing attention to his own amorous feelings for her whereas Fernande, right up this point, has insisted that this attraction be platonic. With the addition of the adverb, “héroïquement,” Octave transforms the dynamics by clearly shifting it towards an amorous relationship. Drawing on the cliché of the lover heroically keeping silent about his burning desire out of respect for the woman he secretly loves but also wanting her to recognize this “silent” grandeur by speaking of it, Octave’s discourse here reflects the position he will continue to take with Fernande. At certain moments, he employs a more platonic vocabulary. At others, he declares his passion. While telling her for instance, “nous sommes comme deux amis qui s’entretiennent de leurs plaisirs et de leurs peines, et qui se révèlent mutuellement ce qu’ils éprouvent et ce qu’ils sont. Vous et moi nous ne nous racontons rien, nous n’avons qu’une âme” (223), he also tells her, “Mais il faut des embrassements et des étreintes ardentes à ce feu qui s’allume et s’avive chaque jour de plus en plus ; car tu m’aimes, peut-être !” (223). Octave is absolutely convinced that Fernande be destined for him because they understand each other perfectly, resembling each other even in their shortcomings as he suggests in a letter to his friend, Herbert, “C’est celle-là qui est née pour moi, et dont les défauts mêmes semblent combinés pour resserrer nos liens et rendre notre intimité nécessaire” (320). For this reason, he believes their relationship not only more legitimate, but necessary. Octave’s phrase “notre intimité nécessaire” (320) also suggests indirectly the domestic intimacy of marriage and thus, that he and Fernande, too should be spouses; his phrase echoes therefore, Fernande’s “mieux fondé” in regards to Jacques and Sylvia.

On the other hand, just by sampling the content of letters between the spouses, we can foresee the drama build up between them, even without the complication of Octave's presence. Often expressing entirely opposite viewpoints and values, they suffer in their writing to each other. Whereas Fernande believes in eternal love, Jacques does not, and this becomes the root of a perpetual tension between them. Writing to her husband about this distress, she explains, "C'est là ce qui me fait frémir, car je sens que mon amour sera éternel, et vous, vous ne savez rien du vôtre" (71). On the one hand, she senses Jacques' refusal to swear an eternal love for her to be a question of deep belief, for she notices his emotional response, stopping short as if "frappé de la crainte de commettre un sacrilège" (71). On the other hand, she reproaches him nevertheless for refusing her this reassurance she desperately needs: "Oh! Jacques, il vous en coûtait si peu de me dire deux mots qui m'auraient rassurée plus que toute votre lettre, et que j'aurais crus aveuglément: *Je t'aimerai toujours!*" (71).

In Jacques' answer alone to Fernande's reproach, we sense the dynamics that will determine their relationship: this tug of opposite temperaments in addition to their different beliefs; both husband and wife refuse to compromise for the differences between them are too profound. While seeming to give Fernande what she wants to hear, the "si" Jacques employs actually allows him to avoid owning these statements: "Oui, je t'aimerai toujours, si tu le veux, si tu peux le désirer toujours" (73). In further expounding on his answer, we see that the rhetorical questions with which he responds to her actually negate his already conditional responses: "Peut-être sera-ce possible entre nous, qui sait? Tu es sûre de toi, cher ange? [...] Pourquoi chercher à soulever les voiles sacrés du destin?" (73). What's more his final response absolutely negates

even his tentative affirmative statements earlier on: “Les cœurs les plus fermes ne résistent pas toujours à son choc inévitable. Quelles promesses, quels serments peuvent lier l’amour?” (73)¹²⁵

In short, by presenting to readers a married couple so entirely incompatible in contrast to the alternative of happier configurations, Sand puts into question the wisdom of forcing all couples to stay married together at all costs. Rather than persist in this “dialogue de sourds” (101) as Luce Cyzba has called their exchanges, it would make more sense to dissolve a situation that can only cause suffering so that new and healthier bonds can take its place. Only in this way can marriage be the strong, productive harmonious basis for society that Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* dreams of.

Pleading for Women’s Education

Intertextuality serves to convey yet other lessons. By playing off the overtones and themes in the libertine novel in conjunction with Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, Sand draws our attention to the urgent necessity of improving education for women. More specifically, *Jacques* illustrates how women’s lack of education makes them particularly vulnerable to the dangers in society and what effect this can have on their families and loved ones. In Sand’s novel, Fernande’s lack of education and lack of experience make her a relatively easy victim for anyone wishing to take advantage of her situation.

¹²⁵ See especially p. 74. Jacques refuses to tell Fernande what she needs to hear because for him, this would amount to sacrilege. For him, love is not something one can promise and swear to in a black and white manner as the adjective “subtile” he affixes to his metaphor for love shows: “Je suis honnête, mais je ne suis pas parfait; je suis un homme et non pas un ange. Je ne puis pas te jurer que mon amour suffira toujours aux besoins de ton âme ... La pitié, la sollicitude, le dévouement, je puis jurer ces choses-là, c’est le fait de l’homme; l’amour est une flamme plus subtile et plus sainte, c’est Dieu qui le donne et qui le reprend”(74). This explains his intransigence in this matter and what Fernande had perceived from Jacques as “la crainte de commettre un sacrilège” (71), as we saw.

While the metaphor of elective affinities is specifically Goethe's idea in his *Elective Affinities*, we recognize at the same time that the discourse of perfect mutual understanding and the joy of feeling in perfect harmony with another are simply part of romantic discourse in general. On the one hand, we have the idealized love discourse of a Saint-Preux. On the other, we have the language of manipulative seduction of the Vicomte de Valmont from Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. It is essential to remember as well that Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is written after Rousseau's novel and is partly a response to it and the dangers to which women's lack of education and experience expose them.¹²⁶

Sand incorporates this additional intertext to open up a reflection on women's education. While there are many moments of sincerity, Octave recognizes at the same time the artifice and clichés in aspects of his correspondence with her. He switches from one register to the next. On the one hand he speaks with what seems authentic passion of their natural affinities and passion for each other: "Quelle digue peut s'opposer à l'amour de deux êtres qui s'entendent et dont les brûlantes aspirations s'appellent et se répondent à toute heure?" (262-263). Nevertheless, he also claims that these ideal sentiments are just airy sentiments hiding more carnal desires:

Je conçois les joies extatiques de l'amour intellectuel chez des amants jeunes et pleins de vie, qui retardent voluptueusement l'étreinte de leurs bras pour s'embrasser longtemps avec l'âme. Chez les captifs ou les impuissants, c'est une vaine parade d'abnégation qu'expient en secret le spleen et la misanthropie. Je divague donc avec Fernande, et je m'élève dans les régions du platonisme tant qu'elle veut. Je suis sûr de redescendre sur la terre et de l'y entraîner avec moi quand je voudrai (263).

¹²⁶ Significantly, the preface of Rousseau's *la Nouvelle Héloïse* already brings up this issue indirectly in speaking about the dangers of reading novels. Here, the author repeats a common topos about the dangers of reading novels which could compromise the innocence of young women in inspiring in them the amorous fantasies they read about, leaving them thus easy victims to unscrupulous men taking advantage of such "romanesque" minds.

By calling “amour intellectuel” the idealized poetic language of lovers and emphasizing that the “real point of the game,” is seduction, Octave is in fact taking the same stance as a “libertin” rather than a trembling young lover who believes every word he utters. The slightly precious turn of the phrase, “je conçois” suggests moreover this tone of superiority in the libertine’s attitude.

Above the “game” of these novices-to-love who are satisfied with merely intellectual projections of the “real thing,” the libertine understands the true target. Imitating these villains, Octave suggests indirectly the stupidity of young lovers who prefer “s’embrasser longtemps avec l’âme” to the more rich, satisfying voluptuousness of a physical embrace. By using a much fuller, richer and more poetic sounding phrase including the six syllables of “voluptueusement” to describe the physical act of love, Octave suggests that in comparison “s’embrasser longtemps avec l’âme” is a much poorer substitute. In fact, he even insinuates that the inability to go further than this airy platonic discourse is the sign of the incapacity and even failure (perhaps to the point of impotence?) of a second rate lover, rather than a noble choice to abstain from carnal pleasure. The phrase “vaine parade d’abnégation” further reinforces this idea of failure if we take “vaine” to mean useless.

On the one hand, we know that Octave is not the evil character he pretends to be but merely a “child” wishing to be the heroes and villains he admires in novels. We see him for instance writing to Herbert, “Mais ces aventures m’amusent et m’occupent; j’ai vingt-quatre ans, cela m’est bien permis” (174). He even admits to himself how ridiculous and simple-minded he must appear in falling for his own game: “j’étais à la fois l’acteur inspiré et le spectateur niaisement émerveillé!” (255). On the other hand, however “innocent” in conception, Octave ends up compromising Fernande. In succumbing to his charms, the result is the same, as her letter to him shows: “Octave! Octave! ...vous m’avez perdue, par la conduite où vous persévérez

obstinément. À quoi serviront cette sollicitude et ces poursuites passionnées qui exposent votre vie et qui ruinent mon honneur ?” (276).¹²⁷

Most important to realize is that Fernande had actually been warned about this situation by her friend Clémence in Letter XLV (190-194); her letter foretells in quite an uncanny manner Fernande’s future fault, in addition to guessing correctly Octave’s behavior and strategies. For instance, she tells her friend, “Et l’ennemi change ses batteries, et, pour t’apprivoiser, te parle d’un amour qu’il n’a peut-être jamais eu pour Sylvia, et qui bien certainement n’est qu’un prétexte pour arriver à toi. Tu accueilles ce prétexte avec empressement, et sans concevoir le plus léger soupçon sur sa sincérité, tu cours au rendez-vous” (191-192). Ironically indeed, this is exactly what happens as Octave’s letters with Herbert and with Fernande will show. He does use Sylvia as a pretext: he asks to meet her so that she listen to his sad story;¹²⁸ he pretends he needs her to intervene for him in regards to his relationship with Sylvia, and the two do meet exactly as predicted. Coincidentally, Octave also repeats to Herbert what Clémence had suggested he would say (191), “Ah! je n’ai jamais aimé Sylvia, c’est impossible, nous nous ressemblons si peu!” (255)

Even more ironic is that Clémence’s letter was not just forgotten by Fernande. The latter, very angry at her friend, actually writes to her in letters LII (209-212) and LIV (215-219), denying and commenting on each point brought up by Clémence. By putting so much emphasis on the fact that these foretold events have been pondered over by Fernande, Sand demonstrates in this way that the latter has totally failed to interpret, understand and decipher all these danger

¹²⁷ In Fernande’s letter LXXIV to Octave, we learn how this scandal has erupted and made Jacques as well as Fernande the laughingstock of society and we hear the scorn with which one speaks of them (275).

¹²⁸ This is told especially in Fernande’s letter LII to Clémence (209-212). See also, *Jacques*, p. 255.

signs before it is already too late. In short, Fernande becomes living proof of Clémence's observations: women's education teaches them nothing: as she had put it: "Il y a autre chose à apprendre dans la vie, et les femmes l'apprennent tard à leurs dépens" (17).

Indeed, we may ask ourselves how it is that Clémence, normally about the same age as her friend would know so much more. Both having been "pensionnaires" in the same convent and supposedly subjected to the same poor education, it is surprising that she should have amassed so much more wisdom.¹²⁹ For an attentive reader, the enigma in fact is answered right at the end of her first letter to Fernande (letter IV), precisely in Clémence's signature. Françoise Massardier-Kenney had noted in passing that Clémence's full name is Mme de Luxeuil, and reads this as "le clin d'oeil de *Jacques aux Liaisons dangereuses*" (40, fn. 8). Mme de Luxeuil, as she explains, reminds one of the name "Madame de Merteuil" (40, fn.8).

Although Massardier-Kenney does not offer a more in-depth explanation for this signature, one can read this detail as a fairly important key intertext. Of the five principal correspondents: Jacques, Sylvia, Fernande, Octave, and Clémence, only Fernande and Clémence sign with their family name, and only in their first letter. For this reason, I suggest this "clin d'oeil" to be more than a merely gratuitous detail, placed as a brief inside joke with the reader. May we read in this alteration of the first syllable of Merteuil from "Mert," to "Lux," a clue to her past? "Lux" suggests the Latin word for "light", but read in conjunction with "Mertueil" here, it also suggests "luxure," one of the seven deadly sins. "Luxure" refers specifically to debauchery and an abuse of sexual pleasure. Read through this "script," we can speculate that

¹²⁹ We do know that Clémence has been married and widowed, so she must be somewhat older than Fernande. We know too that Luxeuil is her name by marriage (I thank Thelma Jurgrau for reminding me about this detail.). However, as "pensionnaires" and close friends together in the same convent, Clémence cannot be a lot older than Fernande.

Clémence de Luxeuil¹³⁰ understands particularly well the strategy of the seducer, perhaps because precociously “enlightened” by her own very experienced sexual past, like a Marquise de Merteuil. Having learned the game very well, in both playing and directing it like an autodidactic Marquise de Merteuil or a Vicomte de Valmont, she has seen on the front lines, young women fall over and over again, for they have had neither a true education of the mind nor the wisdom of experience. With such a name, however, we may assume that Clémence too, has paid the price. Like her sisters before her, she too, may have learned her own lesson, too little and too late.

CONCLUSION

While functioning on one level as a literary challenge, intertextuality and rewriting in George Sand’s *Jacques* reveal themselves finally to be a fully integrated performance. Using the 18th-century epistolary masterpieces of Rousseau and Goethe as a challenge to create *Jacques*, Sand defies the novel trends of her own time to her own advantage. On the one hand, her 1834 polyphonic epistolary novel shows the virtuosity of a young author displaying her cultural knowledge and artistic mastery. Sand weaves together in her own “Art of the Fugue” diverse styles, tones, and aesthetics displaying her skill and mastery in portraying different types of characters, their ways of thinking, speaking, and writing. On the other hand, her novel goes well beyond simply telling a story or displaying technique. Sand’s use of polyphony and intertextuality are a means of showing her reflections on literature in addition to her thoughts on

¹³⁰ Luxeuil is also the name of an actual place. The Abbaye de Luxeuil was an important abbey. George Sand often interweaves names of real places or people into her novels but plays on the different connotations associated with them. She also plays on the sounds of names. (Leone Leoni is another such example.)

societal issues. Consequently, the speaking and writing styles of her individual characters represent different social types and abstract concepts; as voices in her own “Comédie Humaine,” they enhance her social critique and demonstration that there is an urgent need for building a better and stronger basis for society. Similarly, by playing off theoretical concepts expressed in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* in her own rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand demonstrates how the institution of marriage needs to evolve, taking into consideration the compatibility of the spouses in addition to the “scientific laws” of natural attraction and affinities.

In portraying the case of a married couple who can neither communicate nor divorce, *Jacques* progresses in an inexorable march towards the inevitable suicide of its eponymous hero. By focusing on the figure of the betrayed husband, which is in itself an original angle for a novel at the time, Sand’s *Jacques* demonstrates how the impossibility for divorce can destroy even the basis for a healthy patriarchal society in destroying the “chef de famille.” While Jacques’ death in liberating Fernande for a life of illegitimate love could make this “happy end” appear as a sort of fantasy novel; by re-centering the course of events on the tragic color of the hero’s death, Sand leaves us rather pondering over its horror arousing both pity and fear. In this 19th-century mal-du-siècle universe, the sacrifice of the “hero” is meant to shock in demonstrating the absolute waste of human potential. In this way, the aesthetics of somber Romanticism contribute to the message of despair and powerlessness in this conjugal situation. Jacques’ suicide pulls thus the alarm on the necessity for new laws on marriage and divorce while calling for compassion for those who cannot yet profit from this new “social contract.” As she puts it in her 1853 preface to *Jacques*: “il y a quelque chose à modifier ou dans la loi, ou dans l’opinion, car le but de la société devrait être de rendre la perfection accessible à tous” (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 210). From an individual “case study,” *Jacques* becomes thus a call for the reform and regeneration of

an entire society: “l’homme est bien faible quand il lutte seul contre le torrent des mœurs et des idées” (Ibid. 210).¹³¹ Far from insignificant and apart from practical concerns, literature becomes in this way an essential tool in an ideological combat for social progress.

Finally, Sand’s portrayal of a heroine unable to save herself from falling into the arms of her seducer (despite his good heart, the damage is done) despite the “pedagogy through letters” she receives, is essentially one more “tour de force” move by a 19th-century author commenting at once on 18th-century ideas, on women’s education, as well as on an 18th-century form. Fernande’s “failure to learn” is, one could say, a critique of this education centered almost entirely on learning to write letters. In this limited 18th-century view of education for women, learning epistolary writing was considered sufficient for the average woman. On the one hand, it was considered too complicated or hard for a woman to learn more intellectually demanding skills and arts. On the other hand, it was presumed too distracting if one were to give them a larger more serious education on other subjects; encouraging women towards higher aspirations outside of the domestic sphere on which they should be focusing would be unacceptable.¹³² In this sense, Sand’s *Jacques* writes back at the misogyny of books devoted to women’s education justifying such limits and inspired in part by Rousseau’s *Emile*. Fernande’s fall suggests in this way that learning epistolary correspondence alone can no longer be enough and has never been enough for young women to know and decipher the dangers of society. Writing letters cannot

¹³¹ In situating her novel in a post-Napoleonic period, Sand’s comments directly address the marriage politics and laws affecting women and imposed on them by the Napoleonic Code. However, by reframing these laws and mentalities within the larger framework of the whole of society, Sand reminds us that these laws do not affect only women but through them, they affect men as well, in addition to their families.

¹³² See especially Brigitte Diaz’s article, “Les Femmes à l’école des lettres: La lettre et l’éducation des femmes au XVIIIe siècle” in Christine Planté’s volume, *L’Epistolaire, un genre féminin ?*

replace crucial knowledge or experience of the world, and the consequences of limiting women's education affect men as well, as *Jacques*' "case study" shows.

Viewed from yet another angle, Fernande's seduction by Octave can be read as the critique of a 19th-century author that the letter form itself can no longer be a sufficient nor appropriate vehicle for conveying lessons. May we read *Jacques* as Sand's writing back against the idea of the letter as a pedagogical form?¹³³ In the novel, Fernande's seduction is clearly staged in counterpoint against Clémence's warnings and "pedagogical lessons" about the vulnerability of women unprepared for the dangers of society. Quite significantly, as we will remember, Fernande's friend herself recognizes that Fernande may find these lessons she voices as repetitive, annoying or boring and suggests that at some point, the latter will no longer want to hear her "heavy pedanticism." Indeed, not only does Fernande stop their correspondence, but she apparently cannot "hear" the ideas expressed in them.

Read from this perspective, *Jacques* becomes a reflection on literary genres themselves as the modes of communication that a century chooses to adopt or reject. Not surprisingly, in a 19th-century Romanticism preoccupied more with the idea of personal expression and personal experience than the values of sociability, a form in which a "je" with more authority lectures another on abstract precepts and principles may no longer be the best means to persuade or to impart ideas. Fernande's failure to hear then is a demonstration that a period holding new values—the "moi"—in contrast to the "nous" (representing the "je" and "tu") of the 18th

¹³³ In the 18th century, the letter form was considered more "digeste" than pedantic treatises written by pedagogues, thus, one often appropriated the correspondence form as a vehicle for women's education (B. Diaz 134). Furthermore, women writers themselves frequently used the epistolary form to communicate their own ideas on pedagogy and even incorporated pedagogical dissertations within the form.

century—demands new forms to convey them. To put it otherwise, a “genre désuet”¹³⁴ is a communication “désuète.”¹³⁵

In George Sand’s *Jacques*, what may have appeared at first as a step backwards in the trajectory of a bold pioneering young author reveals itself to be finally the very symbol of a “modern” metaliterary reflection where theory meets practice. In her dazzling “Art of the Fugue” demonstrating the limits of an 18th-century genre in reaching a “new audience,” George Sand shows the need for new forms for a new century. In this sense, as Kathryn Crecelius puts it, “*Jacques* forms a bridge between the eighteenth-century form and twentieth-century literary concerns” (140). Indeed, rewriting Crecelius’ remark about *Jacques*, I would say, it is not “despite” [but *because of*] her use of a somewhat dated genre ... [that] Sand created in *Jacques* a surprisingly modern novel” (127)¹³⁶ and shows consequently that a woman author can, so-to speak, think and write like a man.

¹³⁴ I am playing off an idea from David Powell’s article, “L’intertextualité de l’épistolarité: Le cas de *Jacques*”: “on pourrait même dire que le choix chez Sand d’un genre désuet se prête bien à l’évocation d’une société elle aussi désuète” (34). His article suggests that Sand’s usage of an “outdated form” is a symbolic way for her to show the 18th-century values of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are outdated as well. I am suggesting a similar view but focusing more on the form itself as a means of expression.

¹³⁵ See also Versini, *Le roman épistolaire*, p. 48-49: Versini explains the atmosphere and values depicted in the epistolary novel of the 17th and 18th centuries. The letter form plays both a real and symbolic role in transmitting the values of the period. Versini situates the epistolary form within these values: “conversation et la lettre: deux formes du “commerce” qui fait la dignité de l’être humain ” (49): “Honnêteté, sociabilité: le roman épistolaire les exprime, les véhicule, les répand; avec leur disparition au profit d’élans populaires ou de l’individualisme romantique, il disparaît ou se survit, tant il est vrai que ce genre, expression d’une société à laquelle il renvoie son reflet, est un fait de civilisation.”

¹³⁶ I am modifying and rephrasing Kathryn Crecelius’ statement, “Despite her use of a somewhat dated genre, even for her time, Sand created in *Jacques* a surprisingly modern novel” (127).

CHAPTER 3. REWRITING AS METALITERARY THINKING

George Sand's *Jacques* holds a defining place in her entire literary production. In the preceding chapter we saw how the composition of this novel played a major role in Sand's positioning on the literary scene of the 1830's. However, much more than an early virtuoso piece attempting to draw attention, this 1834 novel serves as a cornerstone in the Sand corpus; as a particularly intertextual and metaliterary rewriting of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, it functions as a matrix around which she articulates her conception of the novel. This work accompanies her evolution as a writer throughout her whole career, whether it be in terms of her aesthetics, her reflection on literary genres and literary discourse or a critique on marriage and social progress. Composed in the same year as her article, "A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*," *Jacques*, in conjunction with this other key work, lays the foundation for Sand's theories on the novel. Although both writings remain relatively little known today, each one may be considered in its own domain as Sand's first "manifesto" defending the autonomy of the novel. Written following the accusations of immorality expressed at the reception of *Lélia*, both works put forward the literary and aesthetic preoccupations troubling Sand in this period, which are also those of other authors in these early years of the 1830's. In this regard, *Jacques* and Sand's 1834 article take on their fullest sense when read in conjunction with Théophile Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Understanding Gautier's "l'art pour l'art" stance in this 1834 preface and how it coincides with the rise of the literary critic and his moral and cultural authority can help us better understand similar mechanisms at work behind Sand's defense of the novel's autonomy. In turn, the specific "metaliterary demonstrations" staged in *Jacques* will inaugurate other such reflections in later novels of her "*Jacques* cycle," which I will discuss in Chapter 4. In

many ways then, *Jacques* was a determining force in Sand's entire literary production, for it shaped both her theories on literature and novelistic writing.

I will begin my analysis of *Jacques* by first describing the context of the 1830's which gives rise to the emergence of realism and an increased presence of the press. I will discuss how the rise of the literary critic as a voice of authority spurs Gautier's "l'art pour l'art" stance as expressed in his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and how this same historical framework affects Sand's own metaliterary reflections in her writing of *Jacques* and the 1834 article, "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*." I will then explain how her conception of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* enters into the metaliterary reflections of this period. My discussion of Sand's novel will be presented in relation to the latest developments in current Sand criticism regarding her conception and practice of the critic's profession.

I. THE JULY MONARCHY, A NEW PERIOD IN LITERATURE

In the 1830's, defending the autonomy of her novelistic writing was at the forefront of George Sand's preoccupations, and metaliterary reflection is central to this defense. This period marks a paradigm shift for the novel, especially with the emergence of realism and the growing importance of literary criticism in the press. To a great extent, the ideological stance behind Sand's rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is motivated by these events during the 1830's following the July Revolution in addition to the growing authority of the press.

The 1830's, a Moment of Paradigm Shift

It is not surprising that metaliterary reflection plays a large role in George Sand's *Jacques*, for the 1830's is a pivotal period in the novel's history, marked at once by essential

aesthetic and ideological shifts in the genre due to the decline of the sentimental novel, the growing number of authors writing in the genre,¹³⁷ and the expanding presence of the press. In her analysis of the period, Margaret Cohen pinpoints this novelistic evolution as a result of the July Revolution of 1830 which made the ethical and political concerns expressed through the aesthetic framework of the sentimental novel seem outdated (11). Up to this period, the sentimental novel's central conflict portraying the difficulties in accommodating the negative and positive rights of citizens¹³⁸ had greatly appealed to readers and writers. Especially after the French Revolution, the genre resonated with society's attempts to resolve the tensions underlying the ideals of the Revolution: balancing the rights of the individual with the values of the collective. However, in the aftermath of the July Revolution, the ethical struggle of the heroine of sentimental novels (in general, the main character was a woman) in choosing between two equally valid ethical concepts—the right and duty to individual happiness and freedom vs. the duties binding her to her family and society¹³⁹—no longer resonates as strongly in a society more concerned with what Cohen has called “the problem of unequal social division” (134). The decline in the sentimental novel's predominance¹⁴⁰ thus opens up a fluctuating period of literary

¹³⁷ Marguerite Iknayan's *The Idea of the Novel in France: The Critical Reaction 1815-1848* points out that the number of novels published in the 1830's rises spectacularly especially in comparison to the preceding decades. See also Isabelle Naginski's *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* where she discusses these figures reported by Iknayan.

¹³⁸ See Cohen, p.10, 11, and 110.

¹³⁹ By transforming this unease into aesthetic pleasure, the sentimental novel, as explained by Cohen, forges an aesthetic community held together by this sympathetic bond created through the reading experience, and thus, offers “aesthetic consolation for the impasses of the social contract” (110). With the July Revolution however, this type of “sentimental problem-solving rely[ing] on an Enlightenment distance between aesthetics and politics” (Cohen 11) no longer seems pertinent.

¹⁴⁰ The sentimental novel originated before the French Revolution, appearing around the time of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, but it is only after the French Revolution that the genre becomes the predominant subgenre. The form itself reaches its heights in the first decade of the 19th century.

experimentation as different authors and literary genres attempt to gain ascendancy in developing a new literary aesthetics better adapted to expressing the new social and political preoccupations under the July Monarchy. This situation is further complicated by the context of a new society seeing the rise of the press as a moral and cultural authority.

By ushering in a change in political regime, the July Revolution therefore transforms both the literary and social context for novel writers in the 1830's. This change in regime from the Restoration to the July Monarchy under Louis-Philippe particularly brought into focus what Cohen has called the "contradiction between the July Monarchy's symbolic foundations in Revolutionary ideals and its political and economic organization favoring the privileged classes" (134). As Cohen puts it, "the July Revolution relegitimated Revolutionary ideals" (169). Meanwhile, in a society suddenly faced with a newfound freedom of the press as opposed to the strong political censorship prevalent during the Empire and the Restoration, writers following the July Revolution were eager to directly give voice to the new political and social preoccupations of the period.¹⁴¹ It is in this moment of more relaxed censorship that novel writers pursue what this critic has called "literature's new power to accede to public affairs" (12).¹⁴² As a result, realism and what she has coined "the sentimental social novel" emerge to become the two predominant subgenres in the 1830's and 1840's, although "the prominent sentimental novel of

¹⁴¹ In fact, it was the growing perception among writers and intellectuals that written opinion should have a say on political matters (Cohen 11) which led to the 1830 Revolution itself; newspapers resisting Charles X's order to suspend the liberty of the press on July 25 led to a crackdown by the authorities ultimately triggering an open revolt by workers, students, and republicans in reaction to these offenses. Christophe Charle, in his book, *Le siècle de la presse 1830-1939* notes that the press did not form a united front in resisting the suspension of its freedom, for right wing papers obeyed this order. However, what was important was that this crackdown on the press caused the public to react and take to the streets. Moreover, Charle adds that the revolt in the streets was directly encouraged by "les journaux libéraux les plus en pointe" (39) and that these papers contributed to the "détournement de la révolution au profit de la branche d'Orléans en organisant l'appel au duc d'Orléans, futur Louis-Philippe" (39-40).

¹⁴² Cohen points out that this shift in conception was already happening in the 1820's and only intensified in reaction to Charles's X's increasingly repressive censorship at the end of the Restoration (11).

the post-Revolutionary years ... remained appreciated until the middle of the century” (Cohen 78).

The appeal of realism and the sentimental social novel resided principally in their ability to represent in an impactful way for readers the social realities in this period. Authors subscribing to realism vaunted the power of realist descriptions in capturing the details of everyday life and especially in exposing the darker elements of society such as poverty, oppression and power politics. Similarly, the sentimental social novel, while inheriting the frame of the central conflict staged in the sentimental novel, transformed this clash between “opposing ethical duties” taking place within the conscience of the main character into the depiction of what Cohen calls “the heart against the code” (134)—the conflict between the desires or aspirations of the main character and the external obstacles he faces from society or another powerful collective; the force of the sentimental social novel is thus in its portrayal of oppression, of the abuse of power, and of social injustice and inequality.

Although realism will eventually win out over the sentimental social novel towards the last years of the 1840’s and especially after the political crisis of 1848, in the first decade of the July Monarchy, the sentimental social novel is the dominant subgenre against which realism must try to assert itself. The period will therefore see what Cohen has called, “Balzac and Stendhal’s “aggressive campaigns to masculinize the novel in realist poetics” (14) since sentimental novels in this period are dominated by women writers. To this effect, she speaks of Balzac’s strategic denigration and erasure of the sentimental novel in his portrayals of the literature in this period in addition to his disparaging of women writers.¹⁴³ In the first edition of

¹⁴³ See Cohen’s analysis of passages in Balzac’s *Muse du Département* and *Illusions perdues* for instance p. 26-31, 77-82. She also shows similar aggressive strategies denigrating women authors and sentimentalist poetics by Stendhal in the 1830 *Le Rouge et le Noir* (84).

his *Scènes de la vie privée*, which first started appearing in March 1830, the author goes as far as to proclaim realist poetics the only legitimate one for the novel in announcing, “details alone will constitute from now on the merit of works improperly named *Novels*” (Ibid. 116).

A Decisive Epoch Shaped by a “Romantisme Frénétique”

In the early 1830’s however, novelistic aesthetics are far from decided, and Cohen’s model built on the binary opposition between realism and the sentimental social model leaves in the dark major literary discourses at play in the period resulting from other clashes inaugurated by the July Revolution. While Cohen’s model explaining the rise of realism as an alternative aesthetics and discourse to the sentimental social novel is central to understanding the main battle on the literary field in the 1830’s and 40’s, the situation, I would argue, is much more fluctuating and complex than the one she portrays. A fuller picture inscribing the attempts by other novelistic subgenres to impose themselves on the literary scene in addition to the rise of the press in this period is just as crucial in understanding the literary context to which George Sand’s *Jacques* is reacting. It is true that these other subgenres are less dominant than realism and sentimentalism, but nevertheless these lesser skirmishes too shape the literary field; at times, these side battles may even determine in a stronger manner the novelistic discourse of the period in addition to the literary creations produced. In her book, Cohen notes in passing that the “roman gai,” “le roman noir,” and “le roman historique” were also vying for status in the literary field before realism and the sentimental social novel solidify their ascendancy as the two dominant forms in the 1830’s. Of these lesser subgenres, Cohen comments the most on the influence of the French “roman historique” inspired by foreign historical novels—novels by

Walter Scott (Scottish), Fenimore Cooper (American), and Alessandro Manzoni (Italian).¹⁴⁴ One can certainly see how the representation of different periods of history in the historical novel could influence the development of realist aesthetics in its attention to details. I would argue however that “le roman noir” and its further development in the early 1830’s¹⁴⁵ as “le roman frénétique” have an equally decisive if not greater impact on both the novel’s history and the discourse surrounding realism. Sand’s 1834 metaliterary reflections, I would say, are determined to a great extent by these “side skirmishes,” and in this perspective, her own literary battle through *Jacques* and her 1834 article fight on the same terrain as Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

It is only in this context of the effects of “le roman frénétique” on the literary field read in conjunction with the emergence of realism that the approach taken by George Sand’s 1834 *Jacques* can be understood in its fullest sense, for it is in the first years of the 1830’s that “le romantisme frénétique”¹⁴⁶ reaches its heights. Despite being generally considered a minor subgenre most associated with Pétrus Borel’s 1833 *Champavert, contes immoraux*, the form had considerable impact in the early years of the 1830’s (and even afterwards). This subgenre

¹⁴⁴ According to Cohen, this subgenre starts rising in prominence after 1820 but declines quickly after 1830, its apogee being Hugo’s 1831 *Notre-Dame de Paris* (24).

¹⁴⁵ Cohen’s book, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* touches a little on the influence of the English Gothic novel best known through the novels of Ann Radcliff but she barely speaks about the significance of the “roman noir” in shaping the literary field, mentioning just that it “peaked in popularity in the 1790’s to 1810’s” (78). She does not mention at all “le romantisme frénétique” popular in the early 1830’s which marked the literary imagination of the 19th century despite being considered a minor subgenre.

¹⁴⁶ Émilie Pezard’s recently defended thesis (June 27, 2012), *Le romantisme “frénétique”: histoire d’une appellation générique et d’un genre dans la critique de 1821 à 2010* speaks of the evolution as well as the confusion regarding this term which has been used to designate three different moments in literary history. Originally the term, “genre frénétique” was coined by Charles Nodier in 1821 to refer to Romanticism in general, and not specifically the type of “romantisme frénétique” associated with Pétrus Borel’s *Champavert ou les contes immoraux* (1833). For a larger discussion distinguishing between the terminology, “genre frénétique,” “roman noir,” and “roman gothique,” see Émilie Pezard’s “Position de thèse” at <http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/Position-de-these-Pezard.pdf>. See also Anthony Glinoe’s *La Littérature frénétique*.

representing the excesses of Romanticism was actually quite substantial in shaping the literary imagination, the literary discourse, and even the literary field of the 1830's and beyond. This form which can be considered a further development of the "roman noir" was originally itself inspired by the English gothic novel associated especially with Ann Radcliff. The "romantisme frénétique" however accentuates the more horrific, shocking, and at times even obscene, repulsive aspects of the "roman noir." I would propose that it is precisely the consequence of this development which brings to the forefront the issues confronting George Sand during the period she writes *Jacques* and inspires Théophile Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* demonstrates in a central manner the consequences of the effects of the "romantisme frénétique" on the literary field of the 1830's, and thus it sheds light on the situation confronting George Sand in 1834. Quite significantly, Théophile Gautier's famous preface to his 1835 novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*¹⁴⁷ discusses at length in a panoramic tableau of the literary scene in the years around 1830 to 1834 the reactions of critics scandalized by the "roman frénétique." Contrary to what Margaret Cohen suggests, it is clear that Gautier's expression of "l'art pour l'art" within the context of his preface is more a response to the reaction of critics denouncing the immorality of this subgenre and the excesses of Romanticism it symbolized, than a direct contemporary challenge to realism and the sentimental social novel (Cohen 24).

While the much later "l'art pour l'art" movement exemplified by the Parnassians¹⁴⁸ will credit Gautier's preface as a founding text theorizing the autonomy of art, the priority in this

¹⁴⁷ Although *Mademoiselle Maupin* is published in 1835, the preface itself, according to Anne Geisler-Szmuewicz, is written in 1834, in all likelihood between the summer and autumn of 1834 (14-15).

¹⁴⁸ What is considered the "l'art pour l'art" movement itself is actually situated much later in history with the group known as the Parnassians (1866) although Gautier's principle of the autonomy of art expressed in the 1835 preface to *Mademoiselle Maupin* is considered by many as a founding text theorizing the basic principles of the movement.

preface is actually given first to denouncing what Anne Geisler-Szmulewicz has termed, “l’excès de moralisation et ... la censure qui frappe toutes les œuvres prétendument irrévérencieuses de la nouvelle école” (17). Although Gautier does not name this “nouvelle école” to which critics are reacting, the precise fictive example he gives us of such literary criticism demonstrates that he is referring to what would be called “le romantisme frénétique.”¹⁴⁹ Labeling this literary pastiche he composes as “Modèles d’articles vertueux sur une première représentation” (*Mademoiselle de Maupin* 79), he writes:

Après la littérature de sang, la littérature de fange; après la Morgue et le bague, l’alcôve et le lupanar; après les guenilles tachées par le meurtre, les guenilles tachées par la débauche... Voilà où mènent l’oubli des saintes doctrines et le dévergondage romantique: le théâtre est devenu une école de prostitution où l’on n’ose se hasarder qu’en tremblant avec une femme qu’on respecte. (Ibid.)

Indeed, Gautier’s theory is initially framed less as a reaction to the idea of art’s utility—the idea that art should serve the good of society,¹⁵⁰ and more as a rejection of the heightened moral discourse triggered by the period’s “dévergondage romantique.” On the one hand, the large part Gautier accords to this subgenre is clearly done as a means of provocation for affirming the absolute freedom of the artist-creator to write under whatever aesthetics he chooses to employ or defend. On the other hand, the importance he gives to this subgenre manifests how much the

¹⁴⁹ Gautier specifically names the “roman frénétique” itself further on in his preface under the name “le roman-charogne” (90) and describes this type of literature in referring to the horrific clichés of images and satanic acts typically associated with the genre. Moreover, just before this specific passage, the author speaks about what he calls “le roman moyen âge” in similar terms. Here, he is speaking about the “roman historique” which also came under the influence of the “roman noir” and English gothic novel.

¹⁵⁰ In his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier makes fun of the different philosophical and social movements of his time spreading the ideas of perfectibility and encouraging the diffusion of such ideas through art. He mentions specifically the Saint-Simonians (97), “M. de Lamennais” (77), and “Charles Fourier le phalanstérien” (107) but also alludes to Pierre Simon Ballanche (117). However, the author makes clear that he is positioning his notion of art against any theories or ideas of perfectibility and not targeting only specific philosophical movements. See for instance, p.106 where he belittles contemporary ideas of perfectibility by pitting them against the awe inspiring monuments of past civilizations.

excesses of Romanticism not only marked the period but also the imagination of the 19th century and its critical discourse.¹⁵¹

Significantly, this “minor” subgenre and its effects are evoked by Sand herself when she relates to us her literary debut and evolution as a writer in her autobiographical *Histoire de ma vie*.¹⁵² Here she recounts how the excesses of this Romantic period influenced her as well. Referring to “ce cataclysme” (*Œuvres autobiographiques II* 159) in Romanticism taking place in the early 1830’s (and thus, her own literary debuts writing first in the journals of the period), Sand admits having been tempted to “faire comme les autres écoliers, puisque les maîtres donnaient le mauvais exemple” (159) and notes that “[à] cette époque, on faisait les choses les plus étranges en littérature” (159).¹⁵³ Like Gautier then, Sand herself experiences this aesthetic movement as a pivotal moment, for both of them take part in and contribute to this change in aesthetic values and forms.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, she mentions the presence of “les critiques du moment qui résistaient à ce cataclysme” (159). The manner with which she speaks about the aesthetics of this “romantisme frénétique,” possibly twenty or more years later shows the extent this subgenre and its aesthetics touched her as well as a whole generation of writers.

¹⁵¹ Anne Geisler-Szmulewicz’s notes commenting on Gautier’s many allusions to the accusations of immorality pronounced by critics of the period against “le roman frénétique” indeed confirm that the genre triggered a heightened sense of moral indignation among the many critics appalled by this type of literature. See especially, p.78, 90, 93, 94, 100-101.

¹⁵² *Histoire de ma vie* is published in 1854-1855 although the author started writing parts of it in 1847.

¹⁵³ Sand thus speaks about this period as a common shared experience: “On cherchait des titres impossibles, des sujets dégoûtants” (159). She admits even that “des gens de talent eux-mêmes subissaient la mode, et, couverts d’oripeaux bizarres, se précipitaient dans la mêlée” (159).

¹⁵⁴ Anna Szabó has designated Sand’s novel, *L’Uscoque* (1838) as “proche du genre frénétique” (*Préfaces I* 23).

The Heightened Voice and Authority of the Critic

Most of all, what is essential to remark in both Sand's and Gautier's comments about the period's reactions, is their mentioning of the decisive role and presence of the literary critic in the 1830's. As Anne Geisler-Szmulewicz has noted, "Les critiques moralisateurs sont les premiers visés" (17) in Gautier's preface.¹⁵⁵ The question of morality brought up immediately in the first sentence of Gautier's preface is framed squarely within the context of the press. Speaking about the contemporary period, the author draws attention to "la réhabilitation de la vertu entreprise par tous les journaux, de quelque couleur qu'ils soient, rouges, verts ou tricolores" (73). The "quelque couleur qu'ils soient" that Gautier adds to the different colors he names, captures thus how politically diverse the press has become after the July Revolution, while contrasting in a humorously irreverent manner the narrow, one-minded "réhabilitation de la vertu" he claims undertaken by these very publications. It is important to remember that the growth and rising authority of the press is a major new development in the 1830's ushered in by the July Revolution itself.¹⁵⁶ Although newspapers will still face attack by the political regime, the Charter of 1830 strongly proclaims the liberty of the press. As a result of this major symbolic

¹⁵⁵ Coincidentally, as Anne Geisler-Szmulewicz points out, Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, was actually written, not in reaction to one of his own literary works or those of a contemporary author, but in response to the critical reception he had himself received in regards to his article on "François Villon" published in January 1834 (14-15). The critic in question, a certain A. Jay writing in the *Constitutionnel* attacks Gautier for enthusiastically praising this poet of the Medieval period known for the "immoral content" of his writing. For A. Jay, this alone proves the "goût de l'apologiste ou plutôt du panégyriste de Villon" (Geisler-Szmulewicz 15) and calls Gautier, "l'admirateur de ses théories de débauche et d'escroquerie" (Ibid.).

¹⁵⁶ See also my footnote 141 regarding the rise of the press during the 1820's; the press' increasing view of itself as a voice of authority was what propelled it forward into attaining this major threshold of 1830.

step in 1830¹⁵⁷ the number and types of newspapers¹⁵⁸ expand tremendously, thereby giving the press a new visibility as well as cultural and moral authority.

Particularly significant in this period in regards to literary developments is the establishment and rise of literary journals and with it, the voice of literary critics commenting on the writings of contemporary authors. Christophe Charle in his overview of the press' history remarks, "Les principaux courants intellectuels du temps s'expriment de préférence dans les revues" (62). He stresses that it is precisely during the July Monarchy that several of the most influential journals are founded and calls these, the "organes essentiels de la vie intellectuelle pendant la plus grande partie du XIXe siècle, voire au-delà" (62).¹⁵⁹ Among the most famous of such journals is *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, founded in 1829; with François Buloz's direction from 1831 onward,¹⁶⁰ this publication affirms the distinctly cultural and literary orientation for which it is known. Under Buloz's management and ambitions, *La Revue des Deux Mondes* publishes the top authors and literary critics of the 19th century, which will include among others, the critics Gustave Planche, Sainte-Beuve, and Jules Janin. Looking at François Buloz's objectives for his publication gives us a glimpse as to the sort of literary and cultural authority he aims to establish through the authors and critics he engages:

¹⁵⁷ France will have to wait till 1881 with the "loi du 29 juillet 1881" before the press finally gains its full liberty as we know it today. See Christophe Charle, p.133-141.

¹⁵⁸ The statistics that Christophe Charle gives us in his study of the press reveal the enormous diversity of different newspapers holding various opinions and political viewpoints after the 1830 July Revolution. See especially his chapter, "La presse de la monarchie de juillet," p.49-69.

¹⁵⁹ For this overview, see Christophe Charle's *Le siècle de la presse* p.62-69.

¹⁶⁰ François Buloz's takes over direction of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1831 and owns it after 1833 by buying it himself.

Littérairement, pour en faire la revue la plus complète qui ait pu et qui puisse jamais paraître—attendu le faisceau d'écrivains qu'on a su grouper autour de ce recueil dont ils ne peuvent s'éloigner.

Politiquement, pour aider l'ordre établi, mais dans le sens du progrès et des gouvernements qui s'y vouent et en se vouant à eux dans cette pensée. En peu de temps, les espérances des fondateurs ont été dépassées. (Ibid. 64)¹⁶¹

As we can see, Buloz's ambitions for his journal extend well beyond the boundaries of literature but aim to establish itself as both a political and moral authority.

Between times, literature itself will expand its presence by even entering into the space of non-literary journals and newspapers targeting a large diffusion and a mass audience. Notably, newspapers like Émile de Girardin's *La Presse* and Armand Dutacq's *Le Siècle*, both of which will be founded in 1836, will popularize the "roman feuilleton" in their bid to attract and retain the fidelity of their subscribers hooked into following the episodes of these popular stories, week after week or day after day. In harnessing the appeal of the "roman feuilleton," newspapers capitalize on this new mass market of readers, for their popularity meant not only an increase in the number of faithful subscribers but an increase in advertising revenue as businesses prefer to place more ads in more popular papers.¹⁶² In fact, as Christophe Charle points out, newspapers depended more on the revenue generated by advertising since the income from subscriptions alone would not be enough to cover the operating costs of the industry (due to printing costs and other commercial expenses).¹⁶³ In this sense, including more literature into newspapers becomes

¹⁶¹ Charle is citing these passages from the "Papiers François Buloz, Fonds Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, Institut de France, H 1429-1432."

¹⁶² Coincidentally, the conservative paper, *Le Constitutionnel*, in its bid to regain the public it had lost by the rise of these other two papers, will adopt the same market strategy in publishing Eugène Sue's blockbuster success, *Le Juif errant* (1844-1845). *Le Journal des Débats*, previously the paper the most read along with *Le Constitutionnel*, will also take this approach in publishing Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* in 1842-1843. See Christophe Charle, *Le siècle de la presse*, p.45-48.

¹⁶³ See Christophe Charle, *Le siècle de la presse*, p.48.

vital in simply keeping afloat the industry itself, especially as subscription costs fall due to increased competition between rival publications and the need to generate even more revenue from advertising becomes ever more pressing. As a result, other types of specialized journals including political and philosophical journals like *La Revue Indépendante* will eventually adopt this trend of integrating literature into their own publications.

Questioning the Moral Authority of Critics

While it is true that newspapers of mass diffusion like *La Presse* and *Le Siècle* have not yet appeared in 1834, the sheer explosion in the number of new newspapers and journals alone inaugurated by the July Monarchy has propelled to the forefront critical discourse and the figure of the critic, whether it be through the “Chronique” section¹⁶⁴ of a newspaper recounting notable events of culture and politics, the compte rendu of literary publications, the diffusion of articles of literary criticism, or the increasing representation of the “journaliste” and literary critic as a type in the “littérature panoramique”¹⁶⁵ of the period. It is in this perspective of the heightened presence of literary criticism and the consequences of this new authority on the literature and culture of the period that one can best understand the metaliterary reflections exposed in Théophile Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and George Sand’s *Jacques* and her article, “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*.” Opposing the moral authority of the critic triggers both Gautier and Sand to defend the autonomy of art, I would argue.

¹⁶⁴ See especially, p. 632-633 in Marie-Ève Thérénty’s “Pour une histoire littéraire de la presse au XIXe siècle.”

¹⁶⁵ See for instance, José-Luis Diaz’s article “L’esprit sous presse : Le journal et le journaliste selon la “littérature panoramique” (1781-1843)” in *Presse et Plumes. Journalisme et littérature au XIXe siècle*. In his article, Diaz analyzes the evolution in the representation of the journalist as a type in works aiming to portray a cross-section of society. This genre of literature was very popular in the 19th century. Among such works were *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1839-1841), the *Nouveau Tableau de Paris* (1834-1835), and *La Grande Ville, Nouveau Tableau de Paris* (1842-1843). In this period as well, one starts to see specific series focusing on different figures of society; for instance, one finds a *Paris-journaliste*, *Paris-bohème*, *Paris-actrice*, etc.

On the one hand “le romantisme frénétique” certainly triggered the many denunciations of immorality pronounced against it by the critics of the time. On the other hand, I would say that this genre served more as a lightning rod to the new power dynamics unleashed by the July Revolution by intensifying the clash between authors (“excessively”) eager to assert their creativity and independence and critics ready to exercise their newfound moral and artistic authority given them through the expansion of the press. In Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the author clearly alludes to the clichéd images associated with the “roman frénétique” to show that he rejects the authority of the “journaliste vertueux” (80-81). In one key passage, Gautier suggests that such critics lack of judgment by equating authors of the “roman frénétique” to the characters in their novels. When he describes for instance the immoral character that critics imputed on the authors of the “roman frénétique,” Gautier borrows the images and vocabulary of the subgenre itself: “ils donnaient bénévolement à entendre que les auteurs étaient des assassins et des vampires, qu’ils avaient contracté la vicieuse habitude de tuer leur père et leur mère” (90). Continuing on in this passage, he employs yet more vivid and provocative images to further bring home his point ; he accuses critics of claiming that such authors “buvaient du sang dans des crânes, qu’ils se servaient de tibias pour fourchette et coupaient leur pain avec une guillotine” (90). In other passages however, the idea of this literary form takes a more symbolic dimension, for the author soon multiplies the examples of works condemned for their immorality to include those outside of this subgenre. Significantly, he cites among others, George Sand’s novels, *Indiana* and *Valentine* (83) as works which brought on accusations of immorality against the author; incidentally, George Sand’s article, “À propos de *Lelia* et de *Valentine*” mentions *Valentine* and this heightened moral discourse against her, confirming thus Gautier’s impressions of the period.

The many allusions to the “romantisme frénétique” in the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* finally become a rallying cry for all literature of the period accused of immorality, in order to more vividly counter-attack and question the legitimacy of the literary critic as a voice of moral authority. Denouncing the moral authority of literary critics as illegitimate in the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* becomes thus a pre-emptive strike against the reaction that this work could provoke. In this way, Gautier opens up the path for *Mademoiselle de Maupin* to be accepted as a new model for “l’art pour l’art,” defying morality, classical beauty, and the pressures for a utilitarian art.¹⁶⁶ In the same way, through their affirmation of the novels’ autonomy, both Sand’s article, “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” and her novel *Jacques* clear the road for her future writings.

II. AN 1834 STATEMENT TO ASSERT THE AUTONOMY OF LITERATURE

As it is for Gautier, the question of the morality or immorality of literature in combination with the authority of critics is particularly acute for Sand in 1834, the same year Gautier composes his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. The question of how the novel should navigate the notions of morality, reality, and verisimilitude is clearly at the forefront of George Sand’s mind during her composition of *Jacques* and her 1834 article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*.” Like Gautier and other writers of the time, Sand herself was attacked for the immorality critics saw in her novels, and in a number of her prefaces in the 1830’s and beyond, she mentions these allegations and denounces the injustice of these literary authorities.¹⁶⁷ Anne

¹⁶⁶ I thank Nancy Rubino for her input here regarding Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

¹⁶⁷ We see that already in her 1832 preface to *Indiana* the question of a perceived immorality by the critics of the period is on George Sand’s mind ; the beginning two phrases of her first sentence address this concern: “Si quelques

Geisler-Szmulewicz in her edition of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, speaking about what she calls the “puritanisme ambiant” (17) of the period affirms, “Nombreux sont ceux qui réagissent au nom de la liberté de l’art de l’écrivain” (17), citing among them the names of Jules Janin, Musset, and Nerval. She confirms as well that “[l]a dénonciation des critiques était en réalité fréquente” (18), mentioning for instance that Musset himself had targeted such critics in the “Dédicace” of his *Un spectacle dans un fauteuil* published at the end of 1832 (18). In the same way as Gautier, the metaliterary reflections triggered by the period will lead Sand too, to define her own theories about the autonomy of the novel as well as “perform” them in her novel *Jacques*. George Sand’s article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” demonstrates the centrality of 1834 in the author’s metaliterary reflections, and examining it first would help us better understand the specific approach with which the author rewrites Rousseau’s novel.

Distinguishing between Authorial Voice and Oeuvre

According to Anna Szabó, “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” is not only Sand’s first defense of her novelistic writing but also a “premier regard rétrospectif sur l’œuvre” (*Préfaces I* 39, fn. 18). Sand critics have commented largely on the author’s 1842 general preface to her *Œuvres illustrées*, but Szabó, in the introduction of her edition to Sand’s prefaces points out how this little known 1834 article should be considered in the same way as “une espèce d’art poétique” (9) by the author. This literary commentary by Sand is a work contemporary to her writing of *Jacques*,¹⁶⁸ for it appeared for the first time in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on April 1st 1834 under the title, “Romans et nouvelles” before serving as the 1834 preface to her novel *Le*

pages de ce livre encourageaient le grave reproche de tendance vers des croyances nouvelles, si des juges rigides trouveraient leur allure imprudente et dangereuse, il faudrait répondre à la critique qu’elle fait beaucoup trop d’honneur à une œuvre sans importance” (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 34).

¹⁶⁸ *Jacques* is written between January and July 4, 1834.

Secrétaire intime, part of a two-volume edition of Sand's works titled "Romans et nouvelles."¹⁶⁹ Composed like *Jacques*, several months after *Lélia*,¹⁷⁰ Sand's article tells us how deeply the outcries of immorality against this novel marked her; she affirms that it is because of the extraordinary virulence of these attacks that she decided to openly defend herself for the first time against these critics and comment on her art. In this sense, her article echoes Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in defending art against the abuse of authority exercised by the literary critic.

In her article however, George Sand presents her argument from the point of view of reception whereas Gautier's approach comes more from the perspective of the artist-creator exercising his independence. Sand's article makes clear that normally, she does not believe in writing prefaces or other types of literary commentary to explain her novels or defend her own work. Explaining this situation as an exception, she notes "D'ordinaire, il est d'assez mauvais goût d'expliquer au lecteur ce qu'on a voulu faire" (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 39). Expounding on her reasons, she tells us: "si l'idée qui a inspiré un livre n'est pas assez claire par elle-même ou n'est pas assez nettement expliquée dans le poème ou le roman qui lui sert d'enveloppe ou de symbole, les commentaires et les gloses ne servent de rien" (39). For Sand, it is evident that literature should be able to defend itself by the clarity of its ideas and form. While recognizing that a good piece of literature may be criticized and misunderstood when first published, she points out nevertheless that this initial misunderstanding does not justify the defense of a work:

¹⁶⁹ Anna Szabó notes in her edition of *Les Préfaces de George Sand* that this two volume edition contains her novel, *Le secrétaire intime*, *Metella*, *La Marquise et Lavinia*, and that Sand's "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*" is most often mentioned as the preface to *Le Secrétaire intime* even though this preface does not comment on or introduce *Le secrétaire intime* in any way (I 39).

¹⁷⁰ *Lélia* is written between December 1832 and March 1833 and published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on May 15, 1833.

“Il faut accepter la condamnation, si injuste qu’elle puisse être; il faut se résigner et attendre du temps la justice lente, mais inévitable, qui ne manque jamais aux pensées vraies” (39). As the adjective “inévitable” affirms, good literature is ultimately literature that can speak for itself, not needing any mediator to defend its own worth and meaning.

In this view of literature then, literary commentary is not only undesirable but superfluous.¹⁷¹ In this sense, despite differing in their approaches, Sand and Gautier finally end up resembling each other in their conclusions—in Sand’s view the critic is superfluous; in Gautier’s, the critic is illegitimate in his overreach of power and authority. By showing that the critic’s authority is baseless, Sand’s article consequently serves a strategic function in the same way as Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*—like Gautier’s preface clearing the grounds for his own novel, Sand’s pre-emptive strike against the authority of the literary critic clears the road for *Jacques*’ “performance” of the autonomy of the novel. Since “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” was published only a few months before *Jacques*, and Sand had taken great pains to prepare for her novel’s entry on the literary scene,¹⁷² it would be logical that she

¹⁷¹Sand’s refusal to defend her work through any critical commentary is a constant. Even eight years later, in an unedited draft of her 1842 “Préface générale” to her *Œuvres complètes*, she writes “J’abandonne de grand coeur à la critique, généralement très spirituelle et très érudite en France, le mérite littéraire de mes écrits. Mais je n’accepte point ses arrêts sous le rapport philosophique et moral. Je ne les combattrai jamais personnellement, sûre qu’elle les redressera en temps et lieu; et qu’une justification de mes croyances deviendrait, avant dix ans, un monument de puérilité. Qui donc lit, de nos jours, ces énormes plaidoyers de Rousseau contre ses contemporains?” (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 78).

¹⁷² In Chapter One, we saw how attentive Sand is to even the moment of publication of works she considers important like her “Essai sur le drame fantastique.” Here, I would argue, Sand is equally attentive to orchestrating her novel’s entry onto the literary scene of the 1830’s. Yves Chastagnaret, in the chapter of his thesis regarding *Jacques* points out how Sand, with Buloz’s help, prepares for the impact both expect *Jacques* to effectuate on the literary scene: “Il n’en demeure pas moins que dans l’esprit de Buloz comme dans celui de la romancière, ce roman devait être magistral puisque dans le traité du 9 décembre 1833, il est stipulé qu’il devra avoir la prééminence sur tous les autres, la romancière ne pouvant publier aucun ouvrage avant lui, ni moins de trois mois après publication” (1807). Chastagnaret suggests moreover that Buloz expects the novel to create a huge effect for he points out that in Sand’s contract with Buloz, it is stated that in the case of a re-edition, Buloz “aura la préférence à prix égal sur tout autre éditeur” (1807), citation from Sand’s *Correspondance, t. II*, p.455).

publish such a “manifesto” beforehand. On another level, however, by pronouncing the uselessness of defending literature right in her opening paragraph, Sand is, in essence, hinting that underneath her literary defense belies another motivation.

“A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” ultimately functions more as an occasion for the author to formulate her own conception of art and her theories concerning art’s autonomy. What is central in Sand’s justification of her defense is precisely the distinction she makes between defending her own work and defending her own person. She begins by characterizing the attacks made by critics against her: “Depuis quelques mois, les attaques dirigées contre l’auteur de *Lélia* ont pris un caractère tellement grossier, tellement personnel, qu’une réponse publique est devenue nécessaire” (39-40). Sand raises the idea of the personal dignity and respect due to any author, but this idea of the unacceptability of personal attacks takes on another dimension as she gradually shifts the focus away from the “victimized” artist. As the article progresses, it becomes more and more apparent that Sand is attempting to separate the idea of an artist’s personal opinion from his/her own works of art. In other words, what is unacceptable is less the accusations of immorality than the assumption that a work of art be assimilated to the personal voice of the artist or to his person.

Sand performs such a shift from personal defense of the artist to the defense of art in several steps. At first, she tries to clarify that her novels are not, as her attackers have claimed, “un plaidoyer contre la société, contre les institutions qui la régissent, contre l’humanité entière” (40). Disavowing that her novels are her own personal propaganda against marriage, Sand states, “*Indiana* et *Valentine* ne sont pas un pamphlet contre le mariage, mais un tableau exact ou infidèle” (41). What is crucial in this statement is how Sand turns the reader’s focus from the notion of a personal opinion to the idea of an objective presentation. By removing the word,

“plaidoyer,” Sand essentially erases the idea of a biased and militant authorial voice speaking; similarly, she refuses that one define her novels as “un pamphlet,” which would once again implicate the hand of a militant author. In fact, the image of the artist’s persona is totally set aside, for Sand avoids using the pronoun “je” in this passage: there is no “je” visibly present defending her own unique vision by telling us what she thinks. In structuring her preface in such a way, Sand is essentially manipulating us, through the absence of this “je qui parle,” to focus on the text, and not on the persona of the author—a point all the more important for a woman author. Finally, by replacing “un plaidoyer” with “un tableau,” Sand not only erases the visibility of an active authorial presence but transfers our focus directly onto this finished object of art, standing as it were by itself. Her literary commentary attempts in this way not only to explain her own viewpoints, but also to employ a structure and style that demonstrate and enhance the expressed ideas.¹⁷³

Refuting the Question of Morality and Deconstructing Realism

In essence, Sand’s article dissolves the question of “morality” by borrowing from the discourse of realism: in claiming to be only an objective observer and presenter of a reality external to herself, George Sand evades the accusation of holding condemnable intentions or voicing reprehensible personal opinions. As a matter of fact, Sand invites the reader to judge this “tableau exact ou infidèle” presented in her novels: “c’est au lecteur à juger des souffrances morales infligées à une âme délicate et pure par la brutalité impérieuse et par l’égoïsme poli” (41). By designating the reader as judge and authority, the author places the weight of personal responsibility on the reader while establishing an “impersonal” point of reference for her novels.

¹⁷³ I will speak more about this stylistic trait in Sand’s literary commentaries especially in my analysis of *Jacques* and Sand’s conception of the form and function literary commentary should take.

In the same way, by seeming to present her novels as simply a painting reflecting a reality that the reader can attest to, Sand is suggesting that her novels are no more immoral than a mirror.

Viewed in the light of this 1834 article, then, Sand's choice of employing a polyphonic epistolary novel form in *Jacques* can be read as part of her strategy to establish a distance between the voice of the author and her text. The polyphonic epistolary novel is the literary form (excluding drama) that masks the most the presence of the author because of the multiplicity of voices and the absence of any narrator that could be suspected of being the author.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, Sand adopts the 18th-century convention of a fictional editor who compiles these "real letters" for us to read. In a footnote, this fictional editor explains to the reader how he has chosen to only publish a certain number of the letters he has in his possession: "Le lecteur ne doit pas oublier que beaucoup de lettres ont été supprimées de cette collection. Les seules que l'éditeur ait cru devoir publier sont celles qui établissent certains faits et certains sentiments nécessaires à la suite et à la clarté des biographies" (202). In bringing up the existence of a complete collection of letters from which the letters in *Jacques* are chosen, Sand underlines their real material existence and thus, proof that these letters exist by themselves outside the novel. Moreover, she deprives the supposed editor of any authorial characteristics such as the expression of personal preference or aesthetic concerns in his selection of letters, giving him only a practical role in making the biographies clearer. Furthermore, by employing the word "biographies," which is normally only used for real people and not fictional characters, Sand suggests that the letter writers really exist.

¹⁷⁴ Critics like Massardier-Kenney have pointed out however that despite Sand's "prévisions" in choosing such a narrative form, readers including certain critics today, have read "Sand contre elle-même" in assuming that her male protagonist, Jacques, represent Sand's voice and ideas, ignoring the many clues as to the flawed viewpoints and "bad faith" of her hero. In Sand's time especially, as I noted in Chapter Two, the bad press concerning *Jacques* is due primarily to the "immoral" message one continued to attribute to the author's intentions; consequently, such critics read her novel as an expression of Sand's desire to destroy marriage and the foundations of society simply because the eponymous hero questioned the legitimacy of the institution of marriage at the time.

All these elements combine together to stress not only the absence of any authorial voice, but also the referential distance between Sand's creations and herself.

While George Sand's "realist" pose in her 1834 preface supported by this "editorial footnote" in *Jacques* would seem to place her novelistic aesthetics under the banner of realism, a closer look at her article's argument reveals that the author is not yoking her fictional representation to our external reality. Going back to her metaphor, a "tableau exact ou infidèle," one is struck by the asymmetry of the phrase which makes us pause and question her adjective, "infidèle." Stylistically, rhythmically, and semantically, one would expect to hear in place of "infidèle" the adjective "inexact." To borrow Michael Riffaterre's terminology, the term "infidèle," is particularly "agrammatical" here, for the idea of infidelity includes the idea of intentionality (the decision to deviate from or purposely turn away from a person or an idea), and thus, the notion of a human consciousness and subjectivity; such an adjective would normally not be used to describe an inanimate object like a painting or a mirror. Sand signals in this ironic way that she is only borrowing, and not subscribing to, realism's discourse about reflecting reality in an objective and exact scientific manner. The irony of Sand's "agrammaticality" resides in the inherent contradiction she stages before us between her realist pose affirming objectivity and the twist she gives to it implying intentionality (the adjective "infidèle") and therefore cancelling out objectivity. In other words, Sand's "realist" pose borrows from the vocabulary of this very discourse—the concept of realism as an author being faithful to reality or the outside world—to show her own non-adherence to it.

In a similar way, the footnote by Sand's fictional editor in *Jacques*, twists the 18th-century convention of authenticity. First the editorial note, which is only a few lines long, is placed in the middle of Sand's novel rather than in a preface expounding on the circumstances of

the discovery of these “manuscripts.”¹⁷⁵ Consequently, this footnote interrupts our reading thereby making us reflect on the conventions of authenticity as well as on the notion and perception of authenticity. Second, while the word, “biographies” is never used for fictional characters and, thus, seems to suggest the real existence of the letter writers, it is not really used either by the fictional editors of 18th-century novels to express the real existence of the epistolary correspondents. One would speak rather of the “found” letters or “compiled” letters showing “la vie” or “l’histoire” of a character. On another level, the word, “biographies” suggests more a textual, written account of a life that an author has “interpreted” and composed according to the documents at his disposition. In this sense, analogous to my explanation of Sand’s twist to the realist pose in her 1834 article, Sand’s *Jacques* gives a similar ironic twist to the 18th-century convention of the fictional editor—while taking this pose of “guaranteeing authenticity,” Sand’s fictional editor (who is transparently George Sand herself), by placing his “agrammatical” footnote in the middle of the novel, cancels its function, thereby signaling its artifice and “infidelity” to 18th-century conventions of authenticity.

On a deeper level, Sand’s ironic twist on realist discourse in her 1834 article puts the spotlight back onto realism itself. While authors may claim to be merely copying reality, they are not really holding up a mirror to reality but choosing to be faithful to reality in their depictions of details. By attracting attention to the word “infidèle” (especially through pairing it with “exact”), Sand essentially deconstructs the fallacy of realism through exposing its intentionality, and thus subjectivity. Just as Roland Barthes has shown that there is no “degré zéro d’écriture,” Sand points out there is no “degré zéro d’intentionnalité.”

¹⁷⁵ There was no preface in the first edition of *Jacques*.

Conceptualizing a “Poetic Truth”

Through the “agrammaticality” of her adjective “infidèle,” Sand invites us therefore to re-examine her own realist pose and its intentionality in her 1834 preface. Indeed, a careful examination of Sand’s text clearly shows that the author does not conceive of her art as a direct reflection of reality. By drawing attention to the notion of intentionality, the adjective “infidèle” brings us back to the concept of art she had exposed to us towards the beginning of her article. We will recall that in speaking about her refusal to defend any work of literature, Sand had mentioned her conception of the work of art as an entity built around an idea: “si l’idée qui a inspiré un livre n’est pas assez claire par elle-même ou n’est pas assez nettement expliquée dans le poème ou le roman qui lui sert d’enveloppe ou de symbole, les commentaires et les gloses ne servent de rien” (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 39). Rather than a reflection of reality, art then, according to Sand is the reflection of an idea. It is essential to remark as well how Sand navigates any possible accusation of immorality critics could accuse her of in regard to her holding immorally reprehensible ideas. Similar to the passage regarding the “tableau exact ou infidèle,” here too, Sand leaves out any mention of the artist-creator—there is no specifically stated “je qui parle.” Focus is thus put on the idea which inspires the book and not the idea which inspires an authorial presence. In this way, Sand captures in a complex, yet subtle manner the notions of intentionality and “objectivity” at the same time in her discourse about the autonomy of art. Her sentence states that a work of art is not a direct reflection of reality but an entity constructed and determined by an idea, and yet its grammatical structure seems to imply that this idea can neither be attributed to the subjectivity of the author himself nor his personal voice. Strangely enough, Sand seems to be implying then that the work of art is the reflection or symbol of a seemingly “autonomous” idea,” and not the author’s personal opinion. At this point, Sand’s argument therefore seems to

be more akin to “l’art pour l’art” rather than realism. Nevertheless, in leaving in a curiously upended manner her suggestion of an “autonomous idea,” we are left puzzled—if the idea is not indicative of the author’s subjectivity then where does it come from? The only thing fairly clear at this point is her refusal of a realist aesthetic despite her realist pose.

Indeed, the further development of Sand’s argument in her article demonstrates that her “realist pose” does not take as referent our world in the sense of a realism à la Balzac, made of numerous details and descriptions, measureable facts and norms. Yet, Sand’s depiction of her own positioning shows that it is not quite a “l’art pour l’art” stance. The author makes it clear that the referent here is an inner subjective referent. In directing the reader’s attention to judge the “souffrances morales infligées à une âme délicate et pure par la brutalité impérieuse et par l’égoïsme poli,” Sand is effectively asking her readers to imagine and decide for themselves what suffering would feel like in such a situation and to ascertain whether her portrait “feels” truthful, instead of asking them whether her “case study” actually exists in the norms of society. After asking her readers about the “exactitude” and the verisimilitude of her “subjective” portrayal (but a “subjectivity” placed on the reader and not the author), she clarifies this distinct separation she makes between fictional reality and our reality: “Comme le mariage et l’amour peuvent très bien exister en dehors de ces deux conditions, la vérité poétique du tableau n’a rien à faire avec les institutions et les passions qui servent à l’encadrer” (41). Sand’s sentence here is again “agrammatical” both in terms of style and “grammar” due to the non-parallelism between the first half of the sentence and the second half. The reader is stopped by the difficulty of understanding the exact meaning of the phrase though one gets the general “gist of Sand’s idea.” To decipher the sense of this sentence requires reconstructing how the phrase should have sounded. Similar to the example we saw with “tableau exact ou infidèle” where the adjective

“infidèle” is purposely “cut and pasted”¹⁷⁶ into the place “inexact” should have occupied, the second half of the sentence Sand has put before us is “cut and pasted” in the space where another phrase should have been. Put differently, agrammaticality here signals the “hypertextual” dimension of Sand’s phrase, and deciphering the whole meaning of her sentence requires reconstructing the “hypotext”¹⁷⁷ on which it is derived. Reconstructing Sand’s sentence to read “grammatically,” one would probably propose, “Comme le mariage et l’amour peuvent très bien exister en dehors de ces deux conditions, la vérité poétique du tableau [peut très bien exister en dehors des institutions et des passions] qui servent à l’encadrer.” Comparing the “hypotext” I have deduced from Sand’s phrase with her actual phrase, one can see the parallel in meaning between them. Both sentences delimit the idea of separation. Sand is basically saying, “just as love and marriage can very well exist without brutality and selfishness (“ces deux conditions”), poetic truth can very well exist outside of society and the norms of human behavior, represented here by the words, “institutions” and “passions.” The additional nuance that Sand injects into this phrase through the “hypertext” is the dimension of finality that the negation “n’a rien à faire avec” introduces as opposed to the idea of possibility that the verb “pouvoir” would convey. Through the “agrammaticality” here, Sand thus underscores the absolute separation between the “reality” of art and our reality.

What is essential to retain in Sand’s details concerning the “reality” of her fictional world is therefore what she calls “vérité poétique,” which effectively dislodges her fiction from any external discourse, artistic restraints, or assumed adherence to any dogmatic rules of representation. By using the term “vérité poétique” Sand is drawing attention to the fact that the

¹⁷⁶ I am borrowing this idea from Antoine Compagnon’s *La seconde main, ou, le travail de la citation*.

¹⁷⁷ I am borrowing the terms “hypertexte” and “hypotexte” from Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsestes*.

“truth” or reality presented in novels is a constructed, textual reality, answerable only to its internal coherence and effect on the reading experience. This fictional reality may or may not resemble our own, but it is a separate reality based on the construct of language as its referent, as suggested by the adjective, “poétique.”¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, by obliging the reader to reconstruct the hypotext of her sentence (and thus decipher the poetics and mechanics governing it) rather than to state her point in a more straightforward manner, Sand demonstrates her concept of a poetic truth in the sense that the performativity of the text serves to enhance her theoretical discourse. The autonomy of the literary text is, thus, for Sand, centered not just on the point of artistic creation but also on the reading experience itself. The moment of fictional truth is therefore an internal referent (in the sense that it is subjective) formed during the reading experience and actualized by the reader during his reading; “fictional truth” is thus, an active, dynamic process based on the reading process, and it varies for the individual reader.¹⁷⁹

Curiously enough however, despite professing a clear distinction between the reality presented in her fiction (underlined here by the negation, “n’a rien à faire avec”) and our own reality, Sand reminds us that there is an indirect correlation between the reality of her fiction and that of the reader, as suggested by the phrase, “les institutions et les passions qui servent à l’encadrer.” While evoking the idea of boundary and frontier to denote the separation between fiction and reality, the infinitive, “encadrer,” also suggests at the same time the idea of a frame,

¹⁷⁸ While Sand’s conception of fictional truth resembles curiously enough our own modern literary critical view of textuality (especially Riffaterre’s *Fictional Truth*), her discourse about “vérité poétique” fits within the 19th-century definitions of l’art pour l’art.

¹⁷⁹ Sand’s explanation of “poetic truth” as a dynamic process based on the reading process also resonates with the portrayal of “poetic truth” in Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. In Gautier’s work, the dynamic subjectivity of the reading process is enhanced by his thematics. As Nancy Rubino pointed out to me, *Mlle de Maupin* is a symbolic representation of androgyny or hermaphroditism—constantly shifting and not being able to be pinned down, and therefore something that can be read differently according to who is doing the reading.

and thus, contextualization and focus. Essentially, Sand is attempting to have us “feel” the nuances involved in her conception of art: on the one hand, she is defending the independence of art to paint its own reality as well as depict any subject (denoted by “réalité poétique”); on the other hand, this notion of the autonomy of art includes recognizing that our reality does shape our interpretation of this art, in addition to providing a context through which we can understand it.¹⁸⁰

Establishing a Literary Autonomy through Irony

Once we have examined all of Sand’s arguments however, one should recognize the duality and irony of her article itself. On the one hand, her article conveys the nuances in her conception of a “vérité poétique.” On the other hand, while it is true that Sand constructs her text with many subtle arguments and carefully builds the logic of these arguments, in the end, one can’t help but notice the sophist dimension of Sand’s explanations in countering what she considers the “illegitimacy” of the critic’s moral authority in addition to the ironic frame with which she forms them. Essentially, Sand skirts the issue of the morality or immorality of the author in reframing and reorienting the problematic. By assuming a realist discourse, she turns the focus away from the author and onto the work of art presented as merely reflecting an objective truth. Through this “realist pose,” she places the weight of personal responsibility onto the reader, thus avoiding the question of authorial intention and accountability. However, while assuming this pose, she also shows her non-adherence to realism’s proclaimed objectivity by expressing her own intentionality through the adjective “infidèle.” This positioning at the same

¹⁸⁰ In this sense, Sand’s text resonates with our 20th-century notions of realist representation put forth by Roland Barthes in his article “L’effet de réel.” As Barthes explains realist details are not denotations of reality but they only signify or represent reality: “le ‘réel’ y revient à titre de signifié de connotation” (88). Realist representation feels real because the accumulated realist details derived from our reality produces an “effet de réel” (Ibid.).

time undermines realism's discourse by signaling the fallacy on which this discourse is based—the affirmation of objectivity in merely reflecting reality as opposed to the admission of subjectivity and intentionality whereby an author chooses to be faithful to reality. By exposing in this ironic manner the limitations and “bad faith” of any proclaimed objective truth of representation, Sand suggests in the same way the fallibility and relativity/subjectivity of moral truth; in so doing, she implies as questionable the critic's moral authority. At the same time, in deconstructing the proclaimed objectivity of realism itself, Sand also undercuts the shield that a “realist pose” affords her, and thus, leaves in plain view the artifice of her theoretical demonstration.

On a deeper level however, it is paradoxically through the glaring artifice of Sand's sophist stance that her “literary manifesto” actually demonstrates the autonomy of art. I would argue that it is precisely in hinting at the contradictions she leaves in her arguments that she demonstrates the artifice of her demonstrations, and thus, the distance between the abstract logic of the ideas presented and their translation into reality. While grammatically and “poetically,” the author manages to illustrate her conception of the autonomy of art, in the sense of not reducing the ideas or opinions expressed to the author's person, it is hard to comprehend how one can reconcile the notion of the autonomy of art with the idea of intentionality that Sand hints at in her demonstration. Likewise, while we can follow the logic of Sand's argument in her framing of an idea inspiring a book rather than an idea inspiring an author, in reality, an idea comes from somewhere. The ingenuity of Sand's demonstration lies precisely in its evident contradictions which pit the logic of language she puts before us with our own common sense contradicting the abstract reasoning she leads us through. Although Sand skirts the issue, it is obvious that the intentionality she hints at through her portrayal of an “autonomous idea”

inspiring a book is the intentionality of the writer composing his book around his/her own idea; intentionality implies agency. Similarly, while we can follow the abstract logic she leads us through in defending the independence of art to paint its own reality and “choose” the subject it wishes, in reality, “art” does not choose by itself; behind this autonomous projection lies the hidden intentionality of the artist-creator. It is finally Sand’s own performance of words in her deconstructing of literary aesthetics and its fallacies that illustrate her conception of art and its autonomy as linguistic play and abstraction. Sand’s demonstration is thus a meta-meta-critique of theory itself through a performance of language aimed at exposing the artifice of theory and abstract logic while enjoying the irony involved in this “game of words.”¹⁸¹ In the same way, by observing Sand’s illustration of her theory, we could say that literature and literary aesthetics are finally just another “game of words” where the notions of morality or immorality are simply irrelevant.

III. *JACQUES* AS A REFLECTION ON THE ART OF WRITING A NOVEL

Like her 1834 article, George Sand’s *Jacques* signals itself as an exceptional focal point of metaliterary reflection. The compositional choices made in this work, the constant intertextual allusions incorporated in the text, the frequent usage of metaliterary discourse and metaphors, and the decision to rewrite Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* signal what Michael Riffaterre would call in its “overdetermination,” a carefully constructed metaliterary stance. Moreover, these decisions reveal an author fully aware of the literary debates which have followed the

¹⁸¹ I thank Nancy Rubino for her many insightful remarks, especially in pointing out the centrality of irony in Sand’s discourse. As she expressed it to me, “If there was ever a 19th-century version of “deconstructing” an idea, perhaps irony comes the closest to it, and that’s what I think Sand is doing.”

novel's history, its recently acknowledged legitimacy as a "serious" art form, its rise in popularity among readers, as well as the aesthetic shifts the novel has been undergoing. In writing *Jacques* and her "*Jacques* cycle," George Sand fully engages with the problematics of novelistic discourse regarding the morality of the genre, as well as the question of authenticity or sincerity in its aesthetics. By analyzing how the author centers these debates through the novelistic writing in her 1834 novel, we see at the same time how she positions herself in relation to the emerging aesthetics of realism in the novel.

Signaling a Metaliterary Stance through the Epistolary Novel Form

George Sand's *Jacques* is, by its construction, internal logic and logistics, not only a tragic love story of adultery but a clear reflection on the concept of the novel and on the processes involved in reading and writing. Aside from the metaliterary significance of writing in an "anachronistic" genre,¹⁸² choosing to write in the epistolary novel form would be in itself a logistically motivated decision. For an author interested in employing a form that would structurally enhance a metaliterary discourse, the epistolary genre is an ideal medium. As Janet Altman has explained, the concept of an epistolary novel implies characters writing letters to be read by another party, and thus, it is a genre in which the act of reading and writing are highlighted. Simply by each letter beginning and ending, we are reminded of the physical acts of picking up and putting down a pen. Common diegetic events such as those of characters

¹⁸² See Chapter 2 where I comment on the significance of writing a polyphonic epistolary novel in the 19th century when this genre has become an outdated form associated with the writing of the 18th century.

intercepting (and thus reading) letters not intended for them¹⁸³ further remind us that we are reading texts written between characters and intended to be read by another.

What Janet Altman has called this “mise-en-abyme of the writer-reader relationship within the form itself” (200) is what makes for the specificity and uniqueness of the epistolary novel in relation to other first person narrative genres. The fact that each letter in an epistolary novel is written to be read and understood by a specific correspondent means that this intended presence will necessarily define not only the contents of the letter, but also the style, tone, and narrative strategies used. In other words, in an epistolary text, there can be no “immaculate conception” (Ibid. 88), to borrow Altman’s expression, for the text written by the “I” is always influenced by the imagined presence of the “you” to whom this “I” is writing. The weight of this “you” is such that Jean Rousset goes so far as to call the intended reader or narratee, “un personnage de roman” even when he or she is silent in the novel itself, as in the case of monophonic epistolary novels: “le destinataire absent y est présent de tout son poids, la correspondance entière est suspendue à son comportement invisible; ce personnage silencieux n’est pas un figurant, il est un personnage du roman” (72). By refusing to call the intended reader “un figurant,” but “un personnage du roman,” Rousset is stressing the fact that this absent narratee is never just a passive recipient listening to the story he is told. The narratee functions instead as a central character who can dramatically transform the narration of events inside the

¹⁸³ This narrative device of unintended readers intercepting a letter or the opposite case of characters losing or never receiving letters intended for them is of course a frequent strategy and motive found in epistolary novels, though not always employed. In the case where authors inscribe such events in the diegesis, such readings or missed readings changes the course of the diegesis. Unintended or “missed readings” of a letter lost for instance, highlight thus, the articulation between discourse and narrative: not only does the unintended or “missed reading(s)” “change” the course of the story line but they also have a decisive effect on both the contents of subsequent letters written by characters as well as the actions which take place in the diegesis.

story: his reactions or imagined reactions shape the writing of the narrator, and thus, the narrative we read.

Rousset does not expound on this narrator-narratee situation in regards to the polyphonic epistolary novel, but we can extrapolate from his comments how it would pertain to this genre. In the case where narratees are not only present but become in their turn narrators who write back, the reading and writing process is all the more dynamic and amplified. Read through Altman's theoretical framework concerning the epistolary novel in conjunction with Rousset's, the central drama of the epistolary novel is the dynamics of the reading-writing experience: it is the source from which the narration takes off and the foundation on which it is grounded. In short, choosing to write an epistolary novel, and especially a polyphonic epistolary novel, is choosing a genre which stages in a particularly dramatic and effective manner the interpretational and metaliterary concerns which enter the composition of literature itself.¹⁸⁴

Focusing on Interpretation rather than Narration

In *Jacques*, not only are the structural possibilities of the genre exploited when the characters pick up pen and paper to write, but the contents of the letters themselves focus on the reading experience. The central focus of the novel is on interpretation: different characters constantly comment on how they perceive themselves and others, that is, how, they "read" and explain each others' words and behavior, either directly or indirectly (by analyzing the actions of those described in letters). As Janet Altman has pointed out, letters in epistolary novels often function as commentary in which characters give their interpretation or opinion of what they hear

¹⁸⁴ As Altman explains, it is through this "mise-en-abyme" of the reading-writing process that epistolary narrative "metaphorically 'represents' literature as a whole" (212).

and see, or as a forum where they discuss each others' letters.¹⁸⁵ This function of the letter as interpretational commentary is constantly put into play by George Sand, but in *Jacques*, the act of interpretation presented before us takes on additional levels of symbolism and significance.

In Sand's novel, the polyphony of interpretations by different characters is exploited not only to show different points of view about a specific event or behavior but to stage conflicts in interpretation, highlighting in this way the drama of interpretation itself. In one key incident, Fernande, not knowing what else to do about the continual misunderstandings and tensions between her and her husband, decides to throw herself at his feet: "Il faut que j'en finisse; il faut que je me jette aux pieds de Jacques, et que je le conjure de me pardonner mes folies. Cela ne peut pas m'humilier: ce n'est pas à mon mari, c'est à mon amant que s'adresseront mes prières" (123). What is central to note here is how Fernande pits the indirect object, "mon mari" in opposition to "mon amant." She understands that throwing herself on her knees can be interpreted as either a moving gesture expressing total trust and confidence before her beloved ("mon amant") or read as a posture of submission motivated by fear before brute authority. In telling us she is addressing the lover identity rather than the husband figure, Fernande is expressing the faith that the beauty of her action will be understood as this sublime movement of the heart trusting entirely in the affections of her spouse. Though she admits Jacques' superiority, she is not bowing down in base submission to the legal and moral power represented by the idea of the husband role. To her horror, she soon realizes that Jacques totally misreads her, for he answers her in anger and disgust: "Oh! ce n'est pas ainsi que je veux être aimé; inspirer à ma femme le sentiment qu'un esclave a pour son maître !" (130-131).

¹⁸⁵ See Altman, p. 92 where she speaks of the portrayal of reading, close reading, analysis, and explication in epistolary narratives.

On the one hand, the couple's discordant "readings" of words and events demonstrate the irreconcilability of their differences while underlining the concordance of views and closer affinities they find in other relationships: Fernande with Octave and Jacques with Sylvia.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, by demonstrating these painful differences precisely through the couple's diametrically opposed interpretations of words and events, Sand is placing this conjugal drama squarely on the act of interpretation itself: the actual disintegration of Jacques' marriage begins with tensions over the misinterpretation of words and events between him and his wife. Read in this sense, *Jacques* is above all the drama of (mis)interpretation and interpretational discourse, and the narrative itself—the breakdown of a marriage—only the logical denouement of this story of reading and "misreading".

On another level, the differing plausible interpretations of events pronounced by different characters, the readings and misreadings¹⁸⁷ constantly staged before us, and the warnings about "misreading" offered by various characters, serve to remind us of the complexities involved in interpreting correctly and judging justly. One strategy which Sand exploits is having a character present us with a perfectly convincing, plausible interpretation of an event which seems perfectly "natural" (in that it enters into the "norms" of expected human behavior), and then later serving us another entirely convincing interpretation that totally contradicts and dislodges the first one. In one important scene, Jacques, in hearing a romance sung by his young wife, is so moved that

¹⁸⁶See especially Chapter Two concerning the differences in values held by Fernande and Jacques.

¹⁸⁷ At various moments such as the episode I just discussed, different characters misread events they witness, hear about, or read about. For another striking example of such readings and misreadings, see especially the drama surrounding Fernande's bracelet given to her by Jacques as a token of his love. This episode of a lost bracelet given mistakenly to Octave who then alters the inscription on it is constructed in a particularly complex manner with special symbolic and metaliterary significance. This sequence deserves to be analyzed for itself, for it is commented on in great detail by different characters in different letters spanning a great part of the novel. An analysis of these passages alone could be the subject of a larger study. See especially pages 165, 177, 179, 190, 195 and 196.

he suddenly breaks his pipe. Fernande, seeing the vivacity of this movement immediately attributes it to the memory of a former lover he could possibly prefer over her (108) and is overwhelmed by jealousy and sadness. We learn, however, in Jacques' letter that this sudden rush of emotion had nothing to do with missing a past lover, but rather an instance of poetic nostalgia for this younger period of his life when he had fallen in love for the first time (112). As the protagonist explains it himself, it was the poetry of this period of youthful illusions rather than the memory of the actual woman which moved him so deeply: "la différence qu'il y a entre aimer un souvenir romanesque et regretter un amour oublié" (113). By presenting Fernande's letter first, which makes perfectly "normal" sense, Sand causes us to initially adopt as truth her heroine's interpretation because no other explanation would seem to be possible for an outside observer. It is only in hearing Jacques' own explanation (a more complex and much less evident interpretation) immediately after her "reading" that we are convinced of Fernande's mistake.

By having us "fall into" the same error of judgment as Fernande, Sand makes us experience directly the same fallibility of reading as her heroine, thus reminding us that interpretations are only hypotheses or theories of a given moment, and are therefore good only until a better theory appears. Like theories, they can and must be replaced when new evidence contradicts them or when old evidence brought to light disproves the old theory. Sand demonstrates in this way that a given interpretation is only a temporal and relative truth dependant on the evidence at hand, and correct interpretation requires reading this evidence from all possible angles. *Jacques* therefore functions as both a lesson in interpretation and as a reminder of the fallibility of human judgment, even in things which seem the most evident. What Sylvia says to Jacques regarding Fernande can therefore be read as a transparent warning to us the external reader: "Ne sais-tu pas qu'en de certaines occasions il faut refuser le témoignage

même des yeux et des oreilles?” (203). A truthful reading is often more subtle and demands greater attention to nuances than what would appear most apparent.

Metaliterary Dimension of the Reading-Writing Experience

What is central above all in Sand’s text is how she infuses a metaliterary dimension into the usage of “ordinary commentary” in epistolary novels. In *Jacques*, characters often analyze themselves or others (directly or indirectly) through literary metaphors, literary clichés, or roles associated with literary texts. That is to say, emphasis is put precisely on the question of interpretation concerning enunciative and performative stances taken by various characters in relation to literary genres. Moreover, words relating to literature or literary genres, in addition to direct or indirect allusions to literary texts, abound in an unusually concentrated manner in this novel; a close analysis of such occurrences in the text suggests furthermore that these are not coincidental, but placed purposely in Sand’s work for a metaliterary function, as we shall see. To borrow Damien Zanone’s expression, these words associated with literary genres “innervent le texte sandien” (“Romantiques ou romanesques” 6) and should be read as the markers of a continual metaliterary reflection, and especially so, when they accompany the interpretational discourse of characters regarding the words and behaviors of themselves or others.

Quite tellingly, Damien Zanone in his study of the prevalence of the words “romanesque” and “romantique” throughout Sand’s novels, points out that the word, “romanesque” is found twenty-three times in *Jacques* and fifteen times in Sand’s *Monsieur Sylvestre* (1865) as examples of such lexical concentration (6).¹⁸⁸ If we subscribe then to Zanone’s hypothesis concerning the

¹⁸⁸ Zanone does not state specifically that *Jacques* is the novel where the words “romanesque” and “romantique” occur the most number of times in the whole Sand corpus, but in my own knowledge, it appears that *Jacques* is either the novel by Sand or one of the novels by Sand where the word, “romanesque” occurs the most number of times.

frequency of such words as the evidence of Sand's metaliterary reflection on the novel, then *Jacques* and the "*Jacques* cycle," by association, stand out as instances of exceptionally concentrated metaliterary reflection. Indeed, when one examines in detail this "*Jacques* cycle," of which *Monsieur Sylvestre* is a part, one discovers that metaliterary reflection on the novel in matters of form, content, and aesthetics, is a central trait of this cycle based on "rewriting."

In *Jacques*, this type of indirect "literary reflection" is notably concentrated on the character of Octave. We will remember from Chapter Two that Octave not only plays the role of Fernande's seducer, but he is also a character having "la passion des romans" (264), who spends much of his time reading. Describing his literary and artistic activities to his friend, Herbert, he explains: "Enfermé dans ma petite chambre d'auberge assez fraîche et sombre, j'emploie à dessiner ou à lire des romans (tu sais que j'ai la passion des romans) les heures les plus chaudes de la journée" (264). In this passage, George Sand emphasizes her character's distancing from the real world and refuge in fiction through the contrast between his reading space and the outside world. The spatial separation underlined by the adjective, "enfermé," designating enclosure reinforced by "petite," an adjective signifying intimacy and modifying "chambre," show how much Octave is "in his own world;" that is, in the private thoughts of his own "romanesque imagination." His little room is moreover presented as entirely insulated and cut off from the outside world, for it is described as "assez fraîche et sombre," in contrast to the exterior heat and light of day indicated by "les heures les plus chaudes de la journée." The adjective "sombre" is all the more telling of this strong opposition Sand is constructing between Octave's own little world and the "real" outside world, for quite evidently, ideal conditions for reading and drawing require light. The relative "agrammaticality" of the adjective "sombre," to borrow Michael Riffaterre's terminology, signals the overdetermination with which Sand is constructing

her portrait of Octave's "artificial space" reserved for artistic endeavors. In other words, "sombre" is chosen more for its poetic connotation in a binary opposition with the heat and light of the outside world than for its literal meaning for describing the space itself.¹⁸⁹

Quite logically, different characters frequently speak about him in terms related to literature. For instance, Clémence, warning Fernande about the danger of Octave for the former's reputation, tells her, "il joue au roman autour de toi" (191), and calls him "le lutin" (191) who reappears constantly to trouble her friend. In another passage, Fernande describes Sylvia making fun of Octave by pointing out how little he resembles novelistic heroes: "Sylvia plaisantait un peu Octave sur ce grand appétit, qui n'avait rien, disait-elle, du héros de roman" (211). Octave, too, refers to his own adventure with Fernande at various points in the text as a novel. Writing to Herbert about this pleasant adventure, which he had intended to be brief, he calls this light adventure precisely, "mon roman" (181): "J'ai donc coupé court à cette intrigue, qui prenait une tournure trop folle ; mais trop fou moi-même pour me résoudre à détruire tout à fait mon roman en un jour, j'ai pris Fernande pour confidente et pour protectrice" (181).

Most interestingly, however, are the moments in which Octave speaks in detail about himself using literary terms. As we saw in Chapter Two, this character is constantly comparing himself to novel heroes and villains and speaks of his experiences through fictional metaphors related to literature. What is important to notice in these fictive stances he chooses is not just the choice of heroic or villainous characters he imagines himself in, but his own constant metaliterary discourse accompanying them. While projecting himself in these roles, Octave at the

¹⁸⁹ On another level, we could read the agrammaticality of this "literary" portrait that the most "romanesque" character paints of his "reading world" as Sand reminding us that the "reality" in fiction is not the same reality as our own reality. As the logic of language in literature does not obey the same logic as that of our everyday use of language, it would follow that the logic of fiction would not necessarily resemble the logic of our reality. Literary language and especially the choice of language in fiction are based on poetics and overdetermination, and not factual reality.

same time questions whether his part in them would be perceived as authentic. For instance, while telling his friend Herbert about his desire to seduce Fernande and play the hero of a romantic novel, he also gives his own critical assessment of the situation: “Je suis un trop honnête homme et un héros de roman trop maladroit pour abuser sérieusement de cette petite coquetterie; mais il m’est bien permis de faire durer encore le roman pendant quelques jours.” (173).¹⁹⁰ Here, the repetition of the word “roman,” is notable, for it adds a metaliterary dimension to the interpretive discourse he pronounces regarding his own behavior. Octave is comparing himself here to heroes of the novels he reads, but he is also speaking metaphorically of his amorous adventure with Fernande as a novel, thus pointing out the “romanesque” character of this beginning relationship.

On the one hand, by inscribing himself in the metaphor of a novel character, Octave is in a sense “writing” himself as a novel hero. On the other hand, by critiquing himself, he plays at the same time the role of reader and critic. Octave thus stands out as a particularly metaliterary element in Sand’s text: by constantly inscribing/ “writing” himself as heroes, villains, or other characters in different literary genres, coupled at the same time by his “reading” of these identities, Octave is essentially giving us the entire writing and reading experience. Significantly too, of all the characters in the novel, not only is Octave the one character who steps back the most often to comment on the artifice of his actions through literary terms, but he is also the one character who is constantly imagining and preparing for the scenarios he would like to stage in addition to dreaming about the costumes or “accessories” involved. For this reason, Dominique

¹⁹⁰See also p.181, another interesting passage where Octave develops this same idea. Here, he compares himself to Lovelace, the villain in Richardson’s *Clarissa Harlowe*.

Laporte compares Octave to “un acteur ou un magicien révélant les ficelles de son métier” (“L’art romanesque ” 131).

One passage illustrates especially well the manner with which Sand highlights Octave’s special status as a particularly metaliterary element in her novel. In this episode, her character writes to his confidant Herbert about his role in the love-triangle configuration. Although Octave does not have intentions as evil as a Valmont or a Madame de Merteuil, in wanting to seduce Fernande, he occupies, in effect, the position of the libertine seducer. Recognizing this configurative position, he comments on the incongruity between his own character and the “part” he finds himself in: “Mais je suis un scélérat fort ingénu, et je trouve mon bonheur dans la pensée et dans l’espoir du crime plutôt que dans le crime lui-même” (213). Nevertheless, right after the lucidity and critical distance he shows us in his remarks, he immediately shifts gears just a few lines later; adopting the identity and speech of this role he just critiqued, he tells his confidant, “L’idée que j’étais le maître de bouleverser cette âme naïve et ravir ce trésor suffisait à mon orgueil (213). The abrupt change in tone and style of speech between these two instances further brought out by their proximity underlines the difference in their identities. From Octave “the critic,” Sand’s character jumps into Octave “the actor.”

The epistolary context moreover enhances the metaliterary stance of Octave’s position. In *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, even though the Vicomte de Valmont and Madame de Merteuil enjoy the physical sensual pleasures of preying on their naïve victims, the greater pleasure for them is actually in the intellectual aspect of control and manipulation.¹⁹¹ It is this sophistication of

¹⁹¹ On another level, by establishing Octave in the configurative position of the libertine seducer, Sand further highlights this character as an exceptionally metaliterary element in her novel if we read this position through Janet Altman’s theoretical frame of epistolary character categories. Altman speaks about the special status of the libertine seducer through the notion of a “Super Reader” (94). The idea is that in order to seduce, the libertine must be an exceptional reader who is able to perfectly interpret everything around him/her as well as control and influence the

desire—the voluptuousness in the mind—that distinguishes the spirit of libertinage from lower forms of debauchery. One must admit however, that such sophistication and refinement on this level doesn't really resonate with Octave's childlike character incapable of tasting such cruel refinement. Obviously he enjoys playing "a Valmont," but at the same time, we must remember that this is a private letter to his confidant Herbert, the friend to whom he "takes off his masks" and in front of whom there is no "role playing." Thus, put in this context and compared with his other letters to Herbert, Octave's words here seem totally out-of-line with his usual sheepish confessions (He is always lamenting the fact that he lacks the grandeur of "real" heroes and villains.). Moreover, his "bon enfant" nature is totally incompatible with the calculated cruelty and sophistication necessary for someone declaring, "bouleverser cette âme naïve et ravir ce trésor suffisait à mon orgueil." The glaring incongruity of this phrase with Octave's character is further reinforced by his next declaration, "je goûtais un raffinement de vanité à la voir se livrer, et à ne pas vouloir abuser de sa confiance," which, one must admit, is certainly beyond his level of maturity and finesse.¹⁹² The strangeness of this passage in Octave's mouth may be read therefore as an example of a sort of "Riffaterrien agrammaticality." The "copy-and-paste feel" of this type of agrammaticality signals the otherness of Octave's words as not coming from himself but from a real libertine character. Octave in this sense is a focal point of intertextuality and metaliterarity signaling and commenting on itself.

readings (either directly as in influencing the interpretations characters make, or indirectly as in the censorship or interception of letters) of other characters (94).

¹⁹² We will remember earlier for instance Sylvia teasing Octave about his appetite unbecoming of a "héros de roman" (211).

Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as a Symbolic Move

Aside from this internal metaliterary discourse that George Sand places within her novel, her decision to compose *Jacques* as a rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is already in itself a significant metaliterary act. The process of reformulating or imitating alone requires metaliterary thinking, for in order to rewrite one first needs to have defined the structure and identity of the object to be rewritten. Composing a literary palimpsest involves “metagenre” thinking, to borrow Julia Amramson’s term,¹⁹³ for rewriting partakes in elements of genre identification and construction—in seeking to imitate an ensemble of characteristics and structures, it engages in the same process of abstraction, conceptualization and actualization involved in the notion of genre.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, as Sand’s own first complete rewriting of another text,¹⁹⁵ this project takes on a heightened metaliterary meaning, and even more so when we know Sand to be the future author of the “Essai sur le drame fantastique” (1839)¹⁹⁶ (and read *Jacques* with this essay in

¹⁹³ See Julia Abramson’s *Learning through Lying*.

¹⁹⁴ The concept of genre involves abstraction in the sense where one needs to conceptualize the structural and stylistic elements common to all examples of a given genre. Conceptualization and actualization take place when an author writes in a chosen genre, but it also occurs in the reading process when readers identify a work as being in a particular genre, especially when this work actualizes markers they associate with this genre. Genre, in this sense calls upon the idea of Jauss’ “horizons d’attente.” To put it differently, we recognize a work as an imitation of another work when it displays an ensemble of characteristics and structures we associate with its model; similarly, we recognize a text to be a novel when this text contains the ensemble of elements we associate with this genre.

¹⁹⁵ Although we see intertextual allusions in certain scenes and passages of Sand’s earlier novels, she does not rewrite or reformulate a whole novel in its entirety. Many critics have pointed out intertextual elements from *Paul et Virginie* in her novel *Indiana* for instance. However, *Jacques* is her first literary palimpsest.

¹⁹⁶ As we saw in Chapter I, Sand considered this essay theorizing on intertextuality as one of her most important and spent a considerable time formulating and polishing it. As we will see, Sand’s treatment of elements associated with Rousseau’s novel adheres on many points to the concept of intertextuality she explains in her essay. *Jacques* can thus be read in two different ways: 1) as the laboratory of literary experimentation on intertextuality which allowed her to write her conclusions in the “Essai” 2) as the “scientific” demonstration of this already thought-out theory of literature which she will only “write down” several years later. In the first case, *Jacques*’ significance would be in the theoretical experiment and questioning she stages before our eyes. In the second, *Jacques* is a significant example of her intertextual theory put into practice.

mind) and keep in mind that *Jacques* is the matrix novel of her “*Jacques* cycle.” From this perspective, the concept of “metagenre” holds particularly true, for in rewriting *Jacques* numerous times in the course of her career, George Sand has in a sense created the “*Jacques* genre.” Finally, Sand’s rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* takes on yet further symbolic significance when we know that *Jacques* is the first major novel by Sand which takes as its title the name of a male character¹⁹⁷ and a title moreover that reminds us of the author of the work she rewrites, namely, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, especially in the 1830’s, assumes a certain metaliterary dimension because of the pivotal importance of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* within the history of the novel. As a period of aesthetic shifts for the novel, the 1830’s parallels to a certain extent earlier moments in the novel’s history when the genre was not yet considered a serious, legitimate art form; facing similar challenges, especially with the emergence of realism, authors were facing attack regarding the immorality of the genre and having to think through literature’s rapport with reality and verisimilitude. Not surprisingly then, in this new chapter of the novel’s evolution, an author like Sand would reflect on the “roots” of the genre itself; rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is essentially centering one’s metaliterary thinking on the problematics surrounding the novel.

Most commentators on the history of the novel recognize Rousseau’s masterpiece as the one novel which finally obtained for the genre its “titres de noblesse,”¹⁹⁸ the year of its

¹⁹⁷ Sand wrote *Melchior* in 1832 but this is a short story and considered a minor work by Sand herself. Similarly, *Aldo le Rimeur* written in 1833 is a minor work which Sand has called a “petit poème dialogué.” *Le secrétaire intime*, written towards the end of 1833 has a title which refers to the male protagonist, but Sand does not give the character’s actual name in her title. Finally, *André*, although finished in May 1834 is published after *Jacques*. See also Sand’s 1842 “Préface générale” to her *Œuvres complètes* where she signals *Jacques* specifically as writing from a new male perspective (Szabó, *Préfaces* I 84).

¹⁹⁸ See for instance, George May’s *Le dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle: Étude sur les rapports du roman et de la critique, 1715-1761*.

publication in 1761. When one recognizes the turning point that Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* marked in the novel's history, it is not surprising that Sand, in her own "novel of firsts"¹⁹⁹ would choose to essentially rewrite this other "novel of firsts." Up to Rousseau's time, the novel was considered a "bastard" genre unworthy of the attention of serious writers. As a fairly recent genre, it was an "outlaw" in comparison to time-honored, "noble" traditions like tragedy, with its highly reglemented unities of time, place and action supported by various treatises and theoretical discourses from authors since antiquity.²⁰⁰ This lack of "governance" seemed moreover to go hand-in-hand with the accusations of immorality leveled at the genre; in acting as our "reality," these fictions would be "lying." Intertwined with this discourse of "morality"/"immorality" were also the notions of authenticity, sincerity, and verisimilitude ("vraisemblance") which further added to the complexity of these accusations.

The controversy around the novel hinged essentially on the tensions between these terms and how authors and critics negotiated them.²⁰¹ Seeming too real would appear as lying (thus immoral), but not resembling our reality enough would be lacking verisimilitude and thus lacking authenticity. In turn, the lack of authenticity was linked to the notion of insincerity. The

¹⁹⁹ In the final version of Sand's 1842 "Préface générale," Sand herself signals the significance of *Jacques* as a novel of firsts in her novelistic production; *Jacques*, as she explains, distinguishes itself from her previous novels, because the main character is a man and gives the male point of view on questions she had explored in her previous novels: "Je fis un nouveau roman que j'intitulai *Jacques*, et dans lequel, prenant un homme pour type principal, je demandai encore, et cette fois au nom de l'homme, comme je l'avais fait jusqu'alors au nom de la femme, quel était l'idéal de l'amour dans le mariage" (Szabó *Préfaces* I 84).

²⁰⁰ These ideas regarding the unity of time, place, and action serve as the theoretical base for tragedy. They are elaborated from Aristotle's *Poetics*.

²⁰¹ Among such strategies would be the use of the preface for instance, where an editor would vouch for the authenticity of the letters making up an epistolary novel. Others, on the other hand, would signal directly or indirectly the "fictionality" of the novel—by revealing the novel as an artificial creation rather than reality, the author would be "speaking truth." See especially Georges May's *Le dilemme du roman* and Jan Herman's *Le mensonge romanesque: Paramètres pour l'étude du roman épistolaire en France*.

question of morality linked to fictional truth and verisimilitude was further compounded by the question of novelistic content.²⁰² Often taking as their subject a love story or story of seduction, novels were viewed as quite possibly dangerous, especially for young girls who should emulate the behavior they see in these fictions. In short, the notion of the immorality of the genre lay essentially in the perceived permeability readers and writers saw between the fictional reality of novels and reality itself and the potential dangers this could entail.

The triumph of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in the 18th century lay in great part on its ability to navigate these problematics: it succeeded in touching readers through a language which seemed to them both sincere and real while presenting a love story which extolled the moral virtues of its exceptional heroine Julie. Readers were so caught up by the idealized figures of Julie and Saint-Preux that certain of them even carried on correspondences playing out these sentimental roles and wrote Rousseau about how his novel inspired them to become better people. We know that Rousseau himself for a number of years was convinced to take part in this type of role-playing with two admirers of his work.²⁰³ In addition, the maternal values and moral excellence that Rousseau's idealized heroine represented inspired the whole nation—Rousseau's novel for instance prompted a whole “breast-feeding campaign” and promoted an idealized domesticity for women. Read in this lens, the success of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is not just the success of a best-seller but a success in terms of negotiating the theoretical debates of morality, authenticity, and verisimilitude surrounding the novel.

Although the question of the morality of the genre will continue to trouble writers and readers over the course of the next century, the breakthrough that Rousseau achieved in creating

²⁰² For a detailed history on these debates concerning the novel, see especially George May's *Le dilemme du roman*.

²⁰³ See Mary Trouille's *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Readers Read Rousseau*.

this “virtuous” love story finally won for the novel its newfound legitimacy as a serious, noble genre that could be pleasing and instructive at the same time. Moreover, in incorporating philosophical thought and discussions on education, morality, and society, Rousseau showed that the novel could edify the minds and moral character of its readers and be much more substantive than telling a frivolous love story. Rewriting in the early 1830’s a novel like *La Nouvelle Héloïse* which succeeded in triumphing over the accusations of immorality leveled at the genre therefore takes on a heightened significance while bringing together in a particularly focused manner the literary, philosophical, and aesthetic debates that have marked the history of the genre.

IV. THE CRITIQUE OF THE NOVEL WITHIN THE NOVEL

Not surprisingly, Sand’s preoccupation with defending the autonomy of art translates with particular strength²⁰⁴ into her rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. As we saw in her 1834 article, “A propos d’*Indiana* et de *Valentine*,” she does not believe in the utility of literary criticism in explaining or defending literary works because of her firm conviction that good literature can defend both its own meaning and its own value. Literature is at once both the expression and the commentary of its own expression because it suffices in itself. Theoretically, then, this vision of literature would imply that metaliterary reflection and metaliterary commentary not only take place within the literary text but may be the preferred space of literary criticism and defense. Viewed in this light, the Sandian text is a hybrid composition where the frontiers of literary criticism and literary creation are both ambiguous and permeable. Marie-Ève

²⁰⁴ We know from her 1842 “Préface générale” to her *Œuvres complètes* that even almost ten years later (*Lélia* is published in 1833), Sand still remembers *Lélia* as a landmark in the unusually violent accusations of immorality her work faced. *Lélia*, she tells us in this preface, “mit la critique dans une véritable fureur” (Szabó, *Préfaces* 183).

Thérenty has pointed out the close, even overlapping ties between Sand's theoretical thought and literary creations: "La critique constitue ... un laboratoire d'expérimentations théoriques et génériques qui suit, précède et prolonge de fort près le geste de la création" ("Réécritures" 26). I would argue however that *Jacques* is not only one of these instances which follow closely Sand's theoretical thinking but is a literary creation which puts forward through its very execution a theory of the novel. In the same way, her subsequent rewritings of *Jacques* constitute further developments and precisions regarding her conception of novelistic writing, which I will explore in Chapter Four.

A Defense of the Novel through *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

While the idea of a work of art being able to defend itself is only suggested indirectly in Sand's article, "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*," one version of her 1842 "Préface générale"²⁰⁵ to her *Œuvres complètes* states it explicitly and may be considered a more elaborated version of the type of literary defense Sand hinted at in 1834. Like her 1834 article, this 1842 preface brings up the virulent accusations against *Lélia* and reaffirms Sand's belief that a work of art should be able to defend itself; for this reason, the more developed ideas of a literary defense raised in this 1842 version may be what Sand had in mind when writing her "A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*." In this 1842 version, Sand, speaking about the errors of judgment she feels literary critics are making in her time, imagines what art and poetry can do:

²⁰⁵ Anna Szabó points out the importance of this 1842 preface in her edition of Sand's prefaces: Sand wrote three different versions of this preface before writing her fourth version which she will finally submit for publication. I will add that a close reading of each preface in itself in addition to a comparison of the different versions (in regards to what Sand conserves and what she throws out) clearly show the care and thought with which Sand wrote these documents. One sees Sand trying out different approaches for each preface as Claire Barel-Moisan has pointed out in her article, "Pour une poétique de l'adresse au lecteur dans les préfaces et les fictions sandiennes." Szabó's edition reproducing the four versions shows us as well the edits Sand makes; there are entire lines and words crossed out. Szabó also identifies a letter to Hetzel dated April 1851 where Sand speaks of her wish that one publish her 1842 preface with her new 1851 one in the publication of her *Œuvres illustrées* undertaken by Hetzel. The passage cited here comes from "Version (II) inédite, 1842" in Anna Szabó's edition of Sand's prefaces.

“Un poème répondra aux accusations lancées [contre] un poème. Un tableau expliquera un tableau condamné. Et même un roman pourra justifier un roman mis au banc de la critique, sans qu’il soit besoin d’autres plaidoyers” (77). What Sand’s description suggests, then, is a certain notion of an insider’s knowledge which is both irreplaceable and irreplicable: to optimally defend a work of art and to capture the full sense of a work is to explain it “from the inside.” This optimal defense will allow the other “to feel,” in a sense, how it works, not just see it rationally from the outside.²⁰⁶ Entering the debates concerning the notions of morality or immorality, authenticity, and verisimilitude through rewriting Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is essentially getting at the heart of the matter through an “insider’s perspective.” Through this lens, rewriting Rousseau’s masterpiece is using her predecessor’s work to rethink the novel.

Earlier on I noted how Damien Zanone, in his article, “Romantiques ou romanesques? Situer les romans de George Sand,” has traced the usage of “romanesque” and “romantique” in Sand’s novels, demonstrating how the presence of these terms expresses a certain metaliterary reflection throughout Sand’s corpus. What Zanone has called the “discours métacritique qui accompagne, en basse continue, la création sandienne de fictions” (12), I would argue, should be traced not only through words such as “romantique” and “romanesque,” but through specific intertexts which run through Sand’s novels. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is clearly one of the most important intertexts²⁰⁷ if not the most important one that accompanies, “en basse continue” to borrow Zanone’s term, Sand’s novelistic discourse within her novels.

²⁰⁶ See also Sand’s article on Charles Poncy’s poetry brought up in Marie-Ève Thérénty’s article (p.31), “Réécritures, palimpsestes et création générique dans la critique sandienne.” Here she cites Sand’s views of the insufficiency of literary criticism in capturing the whole essence of a work; for Sand, it is important to capture the emotional effect of a work and not just explain it rationally. Speaking about the analysis of a poem, she writes: Il faudrait en faire l’analyse; mais c’est froid, une analyse en prose. C’est impuissant à communiquer l’émotion” (410).

²⁰⁷ Other important intertexts which one can trace throughout Sand’s corpus include Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* for instance and Prévost’s *Manon Lescaut*. In a similar way to the “*Jacques* cycle,” one could establish “cycles” linking

George Sand's dialogue with Rousseau's masterpiece is a lifelong conversation, spanning from her earliest novels to her later ones. Officially, the title of Rousseau's work only appears for the first time with her 1837 novel *Mauprat*, although she has been borrowing elements from *La Nouvelle Héloïse* or confronting Rousseau's work right from the start. Her very first novel, *Rose et Blanche*,²⁰⁸—before officially taking the pseudonym George Sand and before *Indiana* (1832)—written in collaboration with Jules Sandeau and signed J. Sand, already in 1831 names Rousseau's title. We are told that the heroine, Rose, has only read one book and it is *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Rousseau's novel and characters are spoken of by Rose as points of reference from which she can measure her experience of the world. For instance, she speaks of Horace Cazalès as "supérieur à Saint Preux" (212). In another chapter entitled "Les Livres Saints," Rose reading for the first time St. François de Sales' *L'Esprit*, also takes *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as a point of reference with which she compares this new discovery; ironically, for her, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is much more spiritual²¹⁰ than this religious text. This apparently surprising conclusion by Rose may be read as both an homage to Rousseau as well as a reflection on preconceived ideas on different types of texts or authorities, for instance the idea of novels as especially dangerous to young female readers. On yet another level, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* takes on symbolic significance because it is the only book that Blanche has read and thus, it underlines

Sand's novels to these other works. However, the *Jacques* cycle is the only one which she mentions clearly within her novelistic production in specifying that she has rewritten *Jacques* several times in the course of her career. In addition, one may trace other cycles rewriting Sand's own novels, but that would be another large study in itself.

²⁰⁸ Many critics now believe that almost all of this novel was written by George Sand, with little collaboration from Jules Sandeau.

²⁰⁹ Raymond Trousson, in his article, "De *Jacques* à Jean-Jacques ou du bon usage de *La Nouvelle Héloïse*," tells us: "Dès *Rose et Blanche*, Rose est sauvée du vice par la découverte bouleversante de *La Nouvelle Héloïse*" (751).

²¹⁰ Rose reading St. François de Sales' *L'Esprit* is shocked to find that this holy book is so preoccupied about the body whereas Rousseau's novel, for her, seems to concentrate much more on spiritual matters.

the importance of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as a novel of firsts in Sand's literary imagination. In the same way, the name "Blanche" suggests at once the idea of purity and virtue associated with Rousseau's heroine as well as the color of a blank page. *Rose et Blanche* being Sand's first published novel, it is again a novel of firsts signaling itself as a novel of firsts, reminding us of Rousseau's "novel of firsts" that finally legitimized the status of the genre and established its "virtuous morality."

Like her character Rose, Sand herself, too, uses *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as a point of reference, throughout her own writing career, as Raymond Trousson notes in his article, "De Jacques à Jean-Jacques ou du bon usage de *La Nouvelle Héloïse*": "[dans *Lélia*,] Lélia invite Sténio à revivre "les transports de Saint-Preux;" dans *Mauprat*, Edmée pleure avec délices à la lecture de *La Nouvelle Héloïse* et, dans *Consuelo*, l'héroïne compare encore un jardin trop bien tenu à l'Elysée de Julie" (751). References to Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* as well as to his other novels or philosophical works can be found scattered throughout Sand's works, from all periods of her career as a writer. In *Isidora* (1846), for instance, the title character also goes by the name of Julie. Moreover, in case we miss the allusion to Rousseau's heroine, Sand actually has the hero, who incidentally is named Jacques, reminding us thus, of "Jean-Jacques" (Sand's hero here also reminds us of her 1834 eponymous hero,²¹¹ and thus, reminds us simultaneously of Sand's novel *Jacques*²¹²), show us the link between Sand's heroine and Rousseau's: "je sais seulement qu'elle s'appelle Julie, comme l'amante de Saint-Preux" (70). To further emphasize the connection with Rousseau, Sand also tells us that *Isidora* reads *le Contrat Social* in her

²¹¹ This male protagonist in *Isidora*, could be read as the same protagonist in Sand's 1834 *Jacques*, after he has "disappeared" in the Alps. In this sense, he is a recurring character in Sand's literary universe much like characters in Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*. The character Jacques appears too in a later novel, *Le Diable aux champs* (1851).

²¹² Indeed we find certain details which encourage us to read hidden associations between the two texts.

garden²¹³ (65). Finally, the author's preface to her 1860 novel *Constance Verrier*, specifically writes back at Rousseau's preface to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. In short, the fictional discourse that Sand establishes with Rousseau's masterpiece throughout her entire career shows both the presence and importance of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in her metaliterary reflections and how it is closely linked to her own conception of the novel. As a central point of reference in her literary imagination, it is thus logical to imagine that Sand chose to rewrite Rousseau's masterpiece as her defense of the novel through the novel.

The Defense of the Novel through a Literary Palimpsest

Defending the autonomy of the novel through a literary palimpsest is essentially putting into practice the principles laid out in her article "À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*." In *Jacques*, Sand's defense of novelistic writing, through her rewriting of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, functions on several different levels. On the most basic level, by signaling her own work as a palimpsest of Rousseau's "virtuous" love story, Sand is, in effect, strategically using the "moral authority" of her predecessor's work as a "guarantee" of her own work's moral character: in copying a recognized moral model, it would follow by logic that Sand's own novel be of the same "morally" righteous nature. The author thus uses Rousseau's novel to defend her own. Evidently, this type of reasoning is only a pretext which fools no one and can be read in the same manner as the claims of authenticity with which 18th-century novelists presented their works; both are essentially part of an understood literary game and a wink at the literary debates

²¹³ We are told by a narrator at the beginning that the male protagonist Jacques is a philosopher. He is trying to compose a sort of treatise on the nature, identity, and role of women. This planned work (which he never finishes) is in a sense an attempt to lay down the foundation for a new "contrat social" which would take into consideration the specificity of women's being, hence, the link with Rousseau in addition to the name of the male protagonist. I would add too that Isidora is reading Rousseau's work in a garden; thus, in nature, but a cultivated, and thus, planned nature.

concerning the morality and truth of the novel.²¹⁴ However, on a deeper level, in presenting her own “copy” precisely as a “mauvaise copie” through the mouth of “Octave,” Sand invites the reader to push his critical thinking to a heightened level of sensitivity: not only should he pick up the cues in Sand’s text which show her own text to be a rewriting of Rousseau’s work but he must decipher what Sand may mean by “une mauvaise copie.” Her “defense of the novel” in *Jacques* is designed to take place through the reading process and requires the active participation of the reader as “final authority.” Such a defense of the novel through *Jacques* rejoins in this way the principles of the autonomy of the literary text laid out in the author’s 1834 article and simultaneously puts into practice the notion of a defense of the novel through the novel.

While Sand has Octave, the most “metaliterary element” in her novel, make the precise correlation between Jacques and Sylvia as bad copies of Rousseau’s characters, she does not directly indicate the roles Octave and Fernande play. It is up to the reader to interpret her clues. We will remember that Octave tells Fernande: “ton mari est une mauvaise copie de M. de Wolmar; mais certainement Sylvia ne se pique pas d’imiter le désintéressement et la délicatesse de Claire; c’est une coquette froide et très éloquente, rien de plus” (260-261). By not explicitly explaining how Octave is a “bad copy” of Saint-Preux, Sand makes us focus our critical analysis on him in the act of “deciphering” him. Moreover, in Octave’s case, Sand plays on both senses of the word, “mauvais.” As we have seen, Octave is constantly bringing up the morality of his own thoughts and actions by comparing himself to the heroes and villains of novels he reads. At the

²¹⁴ In their prefaces, 18th-century novelists often presented their work as authentic documents they had found or merely compiled for a publication. For this reason, such novels are often written as epistolary novels or as memoirs which would support this novelistic lie. Of course, no one in general was fooled by such literary conventions, and in “accepting” these stories as real or true, readers would be simply suspending their disbelief and “enjoying the game.” See George May’s book, *Le dilemme du roman au XVIII^e siècle*.

same time, he is always wondering whether he can be as heroic as he aspires to be, or whether he is simply a ridiculous copy of his models. In short, Sand is essentially making us focus on Octave, and through him, the debates regarding the morality/ immorality of the novel as well as the aesthetic problem of projecting authenticity, sincerity, and verisimilitude.

Evidently we know that Octave lacks the ideal qualities associated with Saint-Preux. Nevertheless, by drawing attention between her own character and Rousseau's hero, Sand's rewriting shines light on her predecessor's text by making us decipher what exactly she is copying or "miscopying." Undoubtedly, we recognize in the configuration presented that Octave is modeled on Saint-Preux, for like Rousseau's hero, he is in love with a young woman to whom he writes and of whose affections he hopes to be assured. Nevertheless, while writing letters to Fernande which often employ an idealized language like that of Saint Preux, he comments on both his style of writing to this young woman as well as his intentions on whether to seduce or not seduce her. What is interesting in his comments regarding the honor of his intentions is the relativity of his discourse. This is especially significant when considered in addition to his manner of describing the sincerity of his own language. By having Octave speak with what would seem absolute sincerity and then reveal or at least make us question later these "moments of truth," Sand in essence makes us reexamine our own "horizons d'attente"²¹⁵ as to what constitutes linguistic or textual indices of sincerity.

The question of sincerity and authenticity is especially brought to the forefront in one key moment of Sand's story. Octave, in a moment of great exaltation, promises Fernande he will

²¹⁵ I am using Jauss's term to define more specifically the literary expectations of the reader as opposed to the more general sense of expectations. "Horizons d'attente" thus denotes at once the reader's literary expectations in respect to the traits he associates with certain literary genres, which is further determined by the historical moment of reading as well as the historical moment of the authors' literary creation. The notion therefore also envelopes the idea of the reader's personal literary experience and education, including his notions of literary theory.

overcome his own passion for her. For a moment, the gushing lyrical enthusiasm of Octave's long letter expressing his will power to heal and live up to Fernande's faith in his virtue seems authentic. We see him write her in sentences full of ardent exclamations and references to the grace of God: "O mon ange, ô ma bien-aimée, nous sommes sauvés! Que Dieu te couvre de ses bénédictions, ô la plus pure et la plus sainte de ses créatures! Oui, tu as raison, on a la force qu'on veut avoir, et le ciel n'abandonne point au danger ceux qui se recommandent à lui dans la sincérité de leur cœur" (227). His energetically inspired letter read especially in parallel to others' observations of him certainly seem to show a sincere determination in overcoming his passion. Wanting to believe this miracle, he writes Fernande: "Un instant, un mot a suffi pour faire de moi un autre homme. Puisque tu es sûre de moi, je le suis aussi" (229).²¹⁶ Fernande's letter describing her observations during this moment of exaltation especially seems to confirm "proof" of this miracle:

O cher Octave!... j'avais comme une révélation de ce qui allait s'opérer entre nous, et ce fut un prodige en effet que ma résolution et ton enthousiasme en ce moment... comme ton visage pâle devint vermeil et animé; comme tes yeux fatigués et presque éteints s'illuminèrent d'une flamme sublime. Ce rayon du ciel a laissé son reflet sur ta figure, et depuis hier tu as une autre expression, une autre beauté que je ne te connaissais pas. Ta voix aussi a changé. (232)²¹⁷

By having Fernande meticulously describe the physical changes she saw in him, Sand underlines the apparent authenticity of Octave's good intentions and the ardent faith they both had in that "day of truth." In addition, right after Fernande's letter, we see Jacques' own letter describing the good resolutions he sensed in Octave that day, for just before the exalted scene between the two

²¹⁶ See especially p.230 where Octave seems truly caught up in believing that the purity of his love for Fernande will alone give him the strength to sublimate his desires like a Saint-Preux.

²¹⁷ Fernande moreover describes herself as swept up in this transformational moment and describes herself too as changed as though touched by grace.

lovers, Octave had planned to leave Fernande: “Hier soir, quand je suis monté à cheval, il est venu avec moi, et il m’a parlé d’un voyage qu’il compte faire bientôt à Genève. J’ai compris qu’il voulait s’éloigner de Fernande ; j’ai pressé sa main sans rien dire, et il s’est jeté dans mes bras” (235). Octave’s passionate letter coupled with the spontaneous displays of emotion other characters observe in him thus convince us of the reality and nobility of Octave’s good intentions.

On the other hand, we must question Octave’s sincerity: in a later letter referring to the “miraculous” inspired moment he had spent with Fernande, Octave refers to such a moment of exaltation as merely empty language and performance. Speaking of his desire to seduce her, he writes: “Je divague donc avec Fernande, et je m’élève dans les régions du platonisme tant qu’elle veut. Je suis sûr de redescendre sur la terre et de l’y entraîner avec moi quand je voudrai” (263). The metaphors in this passage in particular encourage us specifically to establish parallels with Octave’s earlier exalted letter we analyzed above. The sarcasm of the phrase “je m’élève dans les régions du platonisme” expressing the idea of ascent and flight sounds in counterpoint to a similar metaphor of flight in his earlier, more “virtuous” letter, “je saurai m’élever jusqu’à toi, et planer du même vol au-dessus des orages des passions terrestres, dans un ciel toujours radieux, toujours pur” (229). The cynicism in this later letter to Herbert suggests thus a libertine attitude behind what had appeared to us Octave’s “proven” sincerity and noble aspirations.

However, in yet other letters to his confidant Herbert, Octave admits he is sincerely in love with Fernande and not a heartless seducer. Although he desires to possess Fernande, he does not wish to harm her and suffers in this fight with himself. As he tells Herbert, he is truly unhappy and feels torn:

Je ne sais pas où je vais. Je fais mon portemanteau vingt fois par jour; tantôt je veux aller à Genève oublier Fernande, Jacques et Sylvia, et me consoler avec mon

fusil et mes chiens; tantôt je veux aller me cacher à Tours, dans quelque auberge d'où je serai à portée d'écrire à Fernande et de recevoir ses réponses; tantôt je ris de pitié en me voyant si absurde; tantôt je pleure de rage d'être si malheureux. (256)²¹⁸

What Sand's depiction of her "Saint-Preux" ultimately brings out is the artifice and autonomy of the literary text. The portrayal of her character's sincerity or insincerity, morality or immorality, on the one hand, depends on the style of language he employs. On the other hand, the perception of his authenticity or insincerity changes according to the different passages Sand adds as evidence to support or contradict her character's behavior and words. Moreover, even seemingly solid "concrete" evidence, such as the direct witness accounts by Fernande and Jacques in regards to Octave's visible body language, reveal themselves no more consistent than his words. Sand reminds us in this way, that the logic of fiction is not the same one as our own reality, for it is uniquely a textual construct. A characters' expression of sincerity, morality, and authenticity is finally just a performative act; a moment of enunciation or performance dependent on the "arbitrary decisions" the author incorporates in her composition of a text.

In staging before us this artifice of the literary text, Sand expels the question of morality as irrelevant. Through Octave, Sand puts the focus back on the performativity of the literary text as just as an act of language constructed around its own internal coherence (which parallels the theoretical position Sand demonstrated in her 1834 article and which I discussed earlier). In fact, Sand even stages before us the stance that maybe we, too, should take in regards to judging the "message" or the "morality" of her literary text. Trying to figure out himself whether he was truly authentic or hypocritical, or merely inspired, he exclaims to his confidant:

²¹⁸ See also *Jacques*, p.262 where Octave writing to his confidant Herbert speaks of his scruples and how torn he feels between seducing Fernande and staying virtuous: "je vaincrai ses scrupules et les miens: oui les miens; car je t'avoue, Herbert, que je suis le plus misérable séducteur qu'il y ait jamais eu." For this reason, Harman calls Octave, "an accidental seducer" (109).

Oh! J'ai eu une belle nuit avec Fernande! j'ai versé à ses pieds des larmes qui m'ont semblé descendre du ciel; mais peut-être n'était-ce qu'une comédie que je jouais vis-à-vis de moi-même, et dont j'étais à la fois l'acteur inspiré et le spectateur naïvement émerveillé! Qui sait, qui peut dire ce qu'il est? (255)

May we see then, Octave's final rhetorical question as the key to understanding and experiencing literature? Since no one can know for certain the "absolute" answer or truth of the literary text, Sand suggests that it is beside the point. What counts finally for her hero is the idea of the aesthetic experience. Experiencing literature in this sense is ultimately just accepting and simply "enjoying the ride," enjoying the linguistic adventure of a fictional universe. What counts above all, then, is this "belle nuit" that we shared with Octave and Fernande through the letters we read "with them." Upholding the autonomy of novelistic writing is above all upholding this "plaisir du texte" by separating it essentially from the expectations that it "prove" or express any morality or immorality.

Demonstrating the Artifice of Literary Representation

On another level, it is important to notice that Octave's inspired letter to Fernande is closely modeled on a similar situation in Rousseau's novel. His exalted exclamations resemble Saint-Preux's passionate submission to Julie, when she similarly exhorts her lover to sublimate his passion for her. (Fernande, alarmed, like Julie, convinces Octave that this is just a feverish delusion from which he can heal; she orders him to trust in the strength of their own virtues as Julie does with Saint-Preux.) Like Saint-Preux before Julie, Octave attributes his own strength to Fernande's virtue whose presence alone will allow him to surpass himself, "Que serais-je devenu loin de toi? Mon âme se serait souillée de regrets, de fureurs, de projets, et peut-être d'entreprises insensées pour te retrouver et te ressaisir, au lieu que tu m'aideras à être vertueux et tranquille comme toi" (227). In his exaltation, he is sure that his faith in Fernande's virtue will give him the

strength to regain his own equilibrium and moral strength. In this letter written after their meeting in which Fernande asked him to stay and trust their own virtue, Octave speaks about how this moment transformed him:

Ce calme ... est descendu en moi depuis six heures. Chose étrange et délicieuse! En rentrant dans ma chambre, purifié par mes résolutions, apaisé par ton chaste embrasement, je me suis endormi du plus profond et du plus bienfaisant sommeil que j'aie goûté depuis trois mois, et je viens de m'éveiller plus calme et plus joyeux que je ne l'ai été de ma vie. Oh! Quel bien m'ont fait tes paroles! (229-230)

By showing us such a moment of grace seemingly confirmed moreover by Fernande's witness account, Sand demonstrates how she could have created a virtuous love story like *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and made Octave a hero like Saint-Preux.

The arbitrariness of the “literary decision” is especially brought out in one pivotal moment when Jacques confronts Octave about his adulterous relationship with Fernande. Envisioning a noble scene of heroic self-sacrifice in which his self-imposed voluntary exile would protect the honor of his beloved Fernande, Octave writes: “C’eût été un autre genre d’héroïsme que de le faire rester en lui disant “Ta femme est pure, reprends-la, et je pars.” However, immediately after creating these lines in this “alternate reality” for himself, he denounces his ability to perform it, “Mais il est écrit que je ne serai jamais un héros, cela m’est impossible, et j’ai une antipathie insurmontable pour les scènes de déclamation” (295). On one level, the expression “il est écrit que” simply expresses the metaphor of destiny as a written book and expresses Octave’s lucidity in regards to his own character: he understands that he is only a mediocre and superficial young man incapable of a truly heroic disinterested act. On another level, this expression can be read as a transparent “metaliterary” joke between George Sand the author and us the external reader in reminding us that the destinies and character of fiction are ultimately just creative choices and literary play, so to speak. In other words, Octave is not a

heroic character like Saint-Preux simply because George Sand chose to not write him as one. In fact, Sand has Octave describe himself in his own “reading” of his own character, not as a noble hero of sentimental drama but as a ridiculous character of the burlesque: “Je me connais trop bien: je serais parti par la porte, et au bout de huit jours je serais rentré par la fenêtre; j’aurais avoué que depuis un an je suis le plus niais des séducteurs, et je serais devenu criminel aussitôt après cette belle confession” (295). Through Octave, Sand reminds us that defending the autonomy of literature entails remembering that it is literary play independent of any moral message.

Finally, read through yet another angle, Sand’s rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* may be viewed as both an analysis of Rousseau’s work as well as an homage to her predecessor. Marie-Ève Thérénty’s work on the role of citation and rewriting in George Sand’s work as a literary critic can be useful here in helping us understand the significance of Sand’s rewriting. In her article, “Réécritures, palimpseste et création générique dans la critique sandienne,” she shows how Sand’s use of citation demonstrates her evaluation of a work: “le flux citationnel dépend fortement de l’évaluation. Une évaluation positive entraîne un éboulis de citations. Pour elle, la citation, loin d’être remplissage, est un authentique plaidoyer pour les bons livres” (30). In other words, the more Sand inserts citations in her literary commentary the more this shows her positive approval of a work.²¹⁹ In this logic, it would follow that absolute approval of a work would mean its entire citation, and indeed this is what Thérénty finds in her examination of

²¹⁹ We will remember that in her 1834 article, Sand expressed the idea that a good piece of literature can defend itself.

Sand's work as a literary critic (31).²²⁰ Rewriting, in light of Thérénty's findings, would be the ultimate homage, for it is in effect the entire citation of another's work.

Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is therefore displaying the artistry of Rousseau the writer. Through Octave's changing stances and linguistic styles read in relation to the commentary he gives us about the rhetoric he employs in seducing (or not seducing) Fernande, Sand effectively reminds us of the mastery and decisions involved in making a text sound authentic and persuasive. Although Rousseau's Saint-Preux evidently has authentic feelings for Julie, the rhetoric he employs in his early letters to her are nevertheless carefully orchestrated to move her. It is essentially the masterful language of seduction and thus, manipulation,²²¹ although performed in a "sociable" manner in the spirit of "honnêteté." In this way, Sand's "mauvaise copie" of Saint-Preux reminds us that even the most heartfelt, "authentic" letters are not pure free-flowing spontaneity, but a performance requiring verbal mastery to move another in the way one wants. In this sense, Sand's rewriting of her precursor's work reminds us precisely of the skill behind a literary masterpiece that succeeded in moving a whole generation and beyond.

At another level, by precisely highlighting the manipulative aspect of love letters, Sand demonstrates that the love letter, even in situations of true love,²²² are letters of seduction; even if noble in intent, they share certain traits and rhetorical qualities with the libertine tradition. In bringing out these libertine undertones, Sand reminds us that Rousseau's work not only inspired

²²⁰ Citing Sand's "Essai sur le drame fantastique" and "George De Guérin," as examples, Thérénty notes how Sand's enthusiastically positive evaluation of the works discussed in these two articles is expressed not only through her citation of passages but by a statement of regret in not being able to cite more.

²²¹ Even Julie, in her letter X recognizes the manipulative aspect of Saint-Preux's letter writing and comments on it.

²²² Incidentally, we discover more and more towards the end that Octave is truly in love with Fernande and not just a seducer whose sole aim is to seduce.

other “romans épistolaires moralisateurs” but also the “romans libertins,” and specifically Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* through *Jacques* is, in this manner, the ultimate homage to Rousseau, for it reminds readers of the richness of a work and how its writing inspired other literary masterpieces.

V. INTERTEXTUALITY AND POLYPHONY

While intertextuality and polyphony function together in George Sand’s *Jacques* to assert her vision of the autonomy of literature and its independence from our reality, the author’s very usage of intertextuality in the structuring of her text conveys in itself a certain ideology concerning an aesthetics of the novel. To a great extent, *Jacques* can be read as George Sand’s critical response and commentary to the emergence of realism, much in the manner of her 1834 article I analyzed earlier. In this respect, David Powell’s comments in the introduction to his edition of Sand’s work partially confirm my own reading, for according to Powell, the use of intertextuality in *Jacques* serves essentially to “renforcer le statut de l’écriture” (42). While it is true that Sand’s intertexts and literary clichés constantly remind us that her universe is a fictional one, her usage of them does not actually break the fictional illusion. On the contrary, as I explained in Chapter Two, Sand’s novel expresses, rather, an extreme borderline situation where, despite the many intertexts and references to writing, the fictional illusion itself is never compromised, but only underlined. In this regard, I would argue that her conception of the autonomy of fiction is not in the idea of a destruction of the fictional illusion, but only a reminder to us that this fictional reality is separate and different from our own reality. Intertextuality in this context is part of a larger strategy of creating a perceived textual reality.

Intertextuality in *Jacques* as a Response to Realism

Jean-Marc Bailbé in his article, “*Jacques* ou l’illusion romanesque,” gives us a fairly extensive account of the types of literary clichés and literary references in Sand’s text.²²³ As his description makes clear, the accumulation of details²²⁴ and romanesque clichés in Sand’s novel serves to evoke a world of literature, of literary references and of literary traditions, for he tells us, “Le lecteur est sans cesse plongé dans une atmosphère tour à tour intime et fantastique, qui laisse toujours la place au rêve et aux souvenirs littéraires” (320). Among these “souvenirs littéraires” which Sand weaves into her text are the “conte oriental,” “roman d’aventure,”²²⁵ idyllic pastorals,²²⁶ old chronicles and legends,²²⁷ and fairy tales.²²⁸ We also see allusions to *Paul et Virginie*, to Richardsons’ *Clarissa Harlowe*,²²⁹ as well as to other classic 18th-century references such as Beaumarchais’s *Le Mariage de Figaro*. In this “roman à clé” of literary references, Joseph-Marc Bailbé notes for instance a hidden reference to Laurence Sterne’s

²²³ See especially Bailbé, p.320.

²²⁴ Sand’s *Jacques* is full of passages and details alluding to other texts. Specific passages and images are clearly intertextual “winks” at specific passages in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

²²⁵ When Octave fantasizes about fighting heroically for his dear Fernande, he writes, “J’escaladerais les murailles de Babel, et je braverais tous les gardiens de la beauté, eunuques, chiens et gardes-chasse” (264-265).

²²⁶ In writing about raising his future son with Fernande, he tells her, “je m’en charge; je le recevrai dans mon sein, je le nourrirai moi-meme avec du lait de biche et des fruits, comme les solitaires des vieilles chroniques que nous lisions l’autre jour ensemble. Il reposera à mes côtés, il s’endormira au son de ma flûte; il sera élevé par moi, il aura les talents que tu aimes et les vertus que tu auras besoin de trouver en lui pour être heureuse; et quand il sera an âge de garder son secret et le nôtre, il ira t’embrasser” (332). See also, *Jacques*, p. 278: “je me vêtirai en paysan, et je travaillerai pour que ta fille ait une robe de soie.”

²²⁷ See my preceding footnote. Sand also makes a reference to Régulus, a Roman patriot-martyr, whose courage and sense of honor were legendary.

²²⁸ Fernande tells *Jacques* how she sees herself as living in a fairy tale in which Jacques is the Prince Charming who comes to rescue her.

²²⁹ Octave imagines himself a Lovelace. See *Jacques*, p.181.

Tristram Shandy in the “chanson de *Lila Burello*” that Jacques sings when filling his pipe to calm his impatience; this little tune is actually a recurring motive in Sterne’s novel: “A quoi mon oncle Toby n’opposait jamais d’autre argument que le sifflotement de douze mesures de Lillibullero” (319, fn. 10).²³⁰ Other literary references we see in Sand’s novel include a reference to Byron’s *Childe Harold* (296) and William Dafoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*²³¹ as well as intertextual resonances with Goethe’s *Werther*, Chateaubriand’s *René*, and two plays by Marivaux,²³² to name the most evident intertextual echos. Finally, as explained in Chapter Two, Sand’s *Jacques* also interweaves and rewrites Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*.

While I agree with Bailbé that the numerous novelistic clichés and literary intertexts in Sand’s *Jacques* plunge us into a dream-like world of literary memories, I do not entirely agree with his conclusion. Rather than a vague literary “impressionism,”²³³ I would argue that the overabundance of such details and elements creates instead an effect of literary saturation. Although Bailbé does not speak of what I consider a literary saturation, he does point to such elements in Sand’s text as “un certain nombre de signes romanesques, accumulés de façon trop apparente dans le cours du récit pour ne pas répondre à une intention bien déterminée de la romancière” (320).

²³⁰ I would add that among such more “hidden” literary elements is the name of Jacques’ horse “Fingal,” which would be an “intertextual wink” at James Macpherson’s poems, *The Works of Ossian*. “Fingal” is one of the heroes and titles of these poems.

²³¹ I thank Thelma for reminding me of this reference in a letter by M. Borel.

²³² In both, Marivaux’s *La Double Inconstance* and *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hazard*, we find a character named Sylvia, reminding us of certain traits in Sand’s character Sylvia. The theme of marriage and love, especially of the fate and role of women in marriage certainly resonates with Sand’s own preoccupations. Moreover, in *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hazard*, there is an exchange of partners, like in Sand’s novel.

²³³ See the passage I cited earlier from Bailbé’s article, p. 320.

The key here is Bailbé's phrase, "un certain nombre de signes romanesques, accumulés de façon trop apparente," which suggests that it is not the individual objects or literary intertexts named that are important in their referentiality; rather, it is their accumulated effect that is central. For instance, among the signifiers that Bailbé cites in Sand's text are "l'écuelle de terre, le tablier d'indienne bleue, le cheval Fingal, la pipe de bois de cèdre incrustée de nacre, les gants de chamois jaune paille, même cette lunette d'approche d'Octave, un peu ridicule" (320). All these precise details do not have any diegetic function in Sand's text but are there for the accumulated literary effect due to the literary associations they bring to mind. In this sense, they function in the same way as Flaubert's "baromètre"²³⁴ that Roland Barthes had pointed out in his article, "L'effet de réel." Essentially, the saturation of literary details in Sand's novel through this "overdetermination" of literary clichés and intertexts can be read as her metaliterary reaction against the aesthetics of realism. In reply to Barthes' "effet de réel," Sand counters precisely with her "effet de textuel."

Demonstrating the Performativity of Literary Codes

While, at first glance, the saturation of intertexts and literary clichés in Sand's novel may be read as a rejection of realism, a closer look at her usage and placement of these elements within her novel reveal a different literary attitude. Above all, what is striking upon close examination of Sand's text is its minutely planned structure and meticulously constructed artifice. *Jacques* is very much a text that flaunts its own literarity, not only through the use of intertexts,

²³⁴ In their accumulation, such "détails inutiles"(Barthes 84) prevalent in realist novels have no narrative or communicative function but are there to produce what Barthes calls "un effet de réel" (Ibid. 88). In other words, it is the accumulated result of the "illusion référentielle" (Ibid.) of such realist details, giving the impression of signifying reality, that create the impression that the fictional universe in realist novels is the same as our reality.

but through its organization of intertexts and literary clichés that answer each other between the different letters we see. A prime example is between Sylvia's second letter to Jacques and his response to hers. Aside from the literary play Sand stages between these two letters, what is interesting is precisely the theoretical implications this intertextual dialogue generates in regards to Sylvia's first letter to Jacques.

First, it is important to recognize that Sylvia's second letter arises in stark contrast to her first letter. While her two-page-long first letter adopted the fairly natural tone of a concerned close friend, this second letter expresses a dark, brooding Romanticism. Sand encourages us to compare them for both letters treat the same subject. In both, Sylvia expresses her misgivings to Jacques about a man like him marrying a young woman eighteen years younger.

On reading Sylvia's second letter to Jacques, we are plunged directly into the dark atmosphere of Romanticism. Far from the conversationally familiar tone of "Vraiment, Jacques vous allez vous marier?... Il me paraît que vous agissez bien vite, et j'en suis effrayée" (12) with which her first letter to him had begun, we witness here the heavy drama in the tragic destiny of the Romantic hero. In place of the rather natural conversational air between two close friends, Sylvia's second letter now warns Jacques against marrying Fernande through the dark tones of Romantic fatality. The natural ending and somewhat affectionate tone of Sylvia's first letter, "Adieu; prends au moins le temps de réfléchir. Pense à ton passé; pense à celui de Sylvia" (14), takes on an entirely new dimension in her second letter. The original call for reflection becomes a prolonged, almost theatrical, lamentation where the female protagonist expresses "les plus funestes pressentiments" (44) she foresees in this new period of Jacques' life. In this letter, Sylvia claims reading a foreboding future in the repeated dream sequences she has been having about her friend. She describes seeing his "figure pâle" appear before her, coming to sit by her

bed night after night. Addressing Jacques directly in a rather rhetorical fashion about the anxiety this apparition has inspired, she writes, “Pourquoi ton spectre erre-t-il avec moi dans les bois au lever de la lune?... Viens-tu m’avertir de quelque danger, ou m’annoncer quelque malheur plus épouvantable que tous ceux auxquels a suffi mon courage ?” (44) In the space of one paragraph, Sand strings together cliché after cliché of Romanticism: the image of a wandering specter appearing mysteriously night after night, the danger but also the charm of the woods at twilight, the sense of a yet unknown but horrifying danger greater than any other yet encountered... This chain of clichés including the theme of Romantic solitude captured by phrases such as “assise au pied de la montagne,” “le ciel ...voilé,” and “le vent [qui] gémissait dans les arbres,” arrive at a climax in the evocation of this mysterious but certain threat which Sylvia expresses as, “Jacques, il faut qu’il y ait un orage sur nos têtes” (45).

Sand’s heroine even addresses her friend in highly coded Romantic imagery and themes, portraying him directly as this larger-than-life tragic figure ardently aspiring for something greater he knows deep down he can never attain. She addresses him as a passionate (44) doomed being, much stronger than other men but damned by a tragic flaw, “Peut-être sous le masque de la force vas-tu commettre la plus insigne faiblesse” (44). However, while recognizing this weakness, she expresses at the same time her certitude that even against the odds, his strength will prevail: “Je sais bien que tu t’en tireras de quelque manière étrangement heroïque” (44). In accumulating before us all the clichés associated with the Byronic hero, Sand makes sure we understand the purposeful artifice of her project: the staging before us of all the accessories and props of Romanticism.

Equally fascinating is Sand’s orchestration of Jacques’ answer to Sylvia’s dark premonitions, for he answers her precisely with another set of literary codes. He tells her that,

contrary to what she may believe, his experience is absolutely the opposite of her fears: “Ce matin je respirais avec volupté les premières brises du printemps, je voyais s’entr’ouvrir les premières fleurs. Le soleil de midi était déjà chaud, il y avait de vagues parfums de violettes et de mousses fraîches répandus dans les allées du parc de Cerisy ” (50). Jacques’ response essentially adopts all the literary clichés that one finds in the “amour courtois” of Medieval and Renaissance lyric poetry. Here it is the theme of falling in love for the first time, associated with the season of spring and the motives that come with it: the first breezes of spring, the awakening of nature indicated through the mentioning of the first flowers coming to bloom, the reference to morning, and the appearance of the first vegetation—the “mousses fraîches.” The saturation of such literary clichés continues on in Jacques’ next few lines, with his mentioning of the singing of birds, the first buds appearing, coupled with the theme of love and hope: “Les mésanges gazouillaient autour des premiers bourgeons et semblaient les inviter à s’entr’ouvrir. Tout me parlait d’amour et d’espérance” (50). In subsequent lines, we find yet more such clichés including “les bienfaits du ciel,” “les herbes naissantes,” “l’effusion de mon coeur,” “divins ravissements,” and the feelings stirred up by the love experience denoted by “la fièvre.”

Reflecting on Literary Styles

What is most important to recognize in George Sand’s staging of different literary aesthetics and intertextual elements is how this demonstration is done precisely to invite us to reflect on the idea of literary codes themselves. In the exchange between Jacques and Sylvia, Sand is careful to make sure we read Sylvia’s foreboding second letter in dialogue to Jacques’ letter. She has her hero mention precisely, “Et pendant ce temps tu vois mon spectre épouvanté errer autour de toi, rêveuse!” (50). By clearly drawing this connection between the letters of her two characters, Sand encourages us indirectly to reflect at the same time on the factors linking

the style of their different letters. The implication of this metaliterary “direction” is that it reminds us too to reflect on the style of Sylvia’s first letter which had initiated the ensuing correspondence (we will remember that both letters treated the same subject). By “depositing” this first letter written in a relatively natural, conversational style among this series of letter exchanges built on other aesthetics, Sand essentially is reminding us that this “neutral” style is just one style among others. Even what might appear as a “neutral style” is just another artifice. Put differently, there is no “degré zéro de style,” just as there is no “degré zéro d’écriture”—writing is always writing through a code of language, and is thus, always an aesthetic positioning. On yet another level, we could read this first “neutral” styled letter as symbolically representing a realist aesthetics. By presenting this “realist letter” among Jacques and Sylvia’s “literarily” styled ones, Sand is putting realism (as well as the notion of verisimilitude in regards to novelistic discourse) “back in its place.” In this regards, realism is essentially subsumed among other literary codes of writing.

Equally important to recognize is how Sand frames the “romanesque” situations in which she puts her characters. Octave’s first letter to Herbert is a prime example. In this letter, Octave describes how he has been spending his time in an incredibly strange way:

Je suis dans un pays où je n’ai jamais mis le pied, que je ne connais pas, où je n’ose marcher que sous un déguisement. Quant à mes occupations, elles consistent à errer autour d’un vieux château, à jouer du hautbois au clair de la lune, et à recevoir de temps en temps un coup de cravache sur les doigts. (167)

Octave’s description signals precisely that his present reality does not resemble ours but rather the decor and plot of a novelistic adventure. Moreover, he acknowledges to his friend how unbelievable his experiences must seem as his comments suggest: “Si tu veux savoir où je suis et de quoi je suis occupé, j’aurais quelque embarras à te répondre” (166-167). Most importantly, however, we learn that, fantastic as they may seem, the enigmatic details he mentions are not

some fabulation on his part; he has experienced every point he has brought up: he has secretly followed his former lover Sylvia to a place he does not know and has disguised himself to prevent her from recognizing him. During the course of these events, he has been circling Jacques' property trying to catch sight of Sylvia, for he knows she has been staying with Jacques and Fernande. Coincidentally, their residence happens to be an old castle. We learn too later on that Octave did play his oboe during a moonlit night and that this episode will have even more bizarre consequences. The "coup de cravache" Octave mentions too is real; while trailing Sylvia during a hunting expedition, the latter recognizes him under his disguise and whips his fingers to warn him she has discovered him.

By the same token, in this first letter, Octave's detailed descriptions of his present habitation and "undercover" activities show us he is fully living what would seem to be an imagined, fictional situation. He has set up lodgings with "un vieux garde-chasse avare et sournois" (167) with the "mauvaise mine" (167) of a murderer. Expounding on his activities to his friend, he tells Herbert: "C'est donc au milieu des bois que peuvent me chercher tes conjectures, dans la plus romantique vallée du monde, protégé par un déguisement de chasseur braconnier plutôt que vêtu en honnête homme" (168). Most importantly however, Octave tells us he is not just disguised as a "chasseur braconnier" but he is really living this identity, for he describes himself as "braconnant en effet sous la protection de mon hôte, et préparant avec lui, tous les soirs, le souper que nous avons conquis les armes à la main" (168.). Sand's hero fully takes on this identity as his reality to the point of even assuming its material discomforts for he describes himself, "dormant sur un grabat" (168). Through Octave, Sand has inverted the codes of representation: in this fictional world, the novelistic has become the everyday norm.

Read on a metaliterary level, Sand is effectively reminding us through Octave's real "everyday" experiences that the reality of fiction is built on its own internal logic. She demonstrates in this way that the notion of verisimilitude could not apply for instance to the idealized fictional world of a sentimental novel. In a fictional world where the "romanesque" is the norm, the codes of representation applicable to realism would make no sense. To further underline her point, Sand, in fact, has Octave, her most "fictionally aspiring" character (in the sense that he is constantly aspiring to be the heroes and villains he reads about) describe his ideal in this same letter. In the midst of his extraordinary experiences pursuing Sylvia (resembling those of the fictions he reads), Octave, weary of this existence, dreams of an ordinary life among common mortals so to speak:

J'aime la vie des champs, mais non pas sans une compagne qui me fasse goûter les plaisirs de l'esprit et du cœur, au sein de cette vie matérielle où l'effroi de la solitude me gagnerait bientôt. Peut-être suis-je propre au mariage; j'aime les enfants, je suis doux et rangé, je crois que je ferais un très-honnête bourgeois dans quelque ville, du second ordre de notre paisible Helvétie. (171)

Sand has essentially inverted the codes of representation. In Octave's fictional world, what would normally be considered the romanesque is the everyday, and what would be considered the ideal is the mediocre. In the 19th century, rural populations were much more important, and "la vie des champs" was a sizable reality if not the majority. By listing among his ideals then the hard life of a peasant, the everyday joys of fatherhood and the quiet existence of a "très honnête bourgeois" in some small town somewhere, Sand's "most novelistic" character is in effect dreaming about the ordinary as his ideal.

At the same time, it is imperative to recognize that Sand is still "stylizing" somewhat this ordinary reality she is showing us through Octave. The examples Octave presents are what we could consider realist details presented through a clichéd and somewhat caricatural manner. As

we can see, while alluding to the difficult realities of a peasant's life ("cette vie matérielle"), the hero states he would only consider such a life ideal if his wife be able to share with him "les plaisirs de l'esprit et du coeur." In the 19th century, when peasants were for the most part illiterate, such a pastoral dream would only be a fantasy. The phrase "notre paisible Helvétie"²³⁵ in the same way has a precious turn to it, signaling again the literary artifice of Octave's "realist" imagination.

Through Octave, Sand is essentially reminding us that even a realist aesthetics is still a fictional style. As her character continues to expound on his dreams of an ordinary existence, the images he presents us become more and more caricatural and exaggerated to the point of ridicule. Developing on his ideal of a country wife with education and delicacy, he writes, "Je pourrais me faire estimer comme cultivateur et père de famille; mais je voudrais que ma femme fût un peu plus lettrée que celles qui tricotent un bas bleu du matin au soir" (171). Readers of Sand's time would certainly recognize the humor behind Octave's evocation of a woman "un peu plus lettrée" presented at the same time with the literal sense of "un bas bleu" meaning a blue stocking; as we know, "un bas bleu" was a pejorative term designating woman writers with pretention. The sophistication of this "literary laugh" signals ever more the artifice of Octave's constructions while reminding us of the hand of the author herself. Similarly, after going through the possible "realist" destinies he imagines before him, he ultimately rejects as impossible this "other world": "Et moi-même je craindrais de m'abrutir en lisant mon journal et en fumant au milieu de mes dignes concitoyens et des pots de bières, presque aussi simples et inoffensifs les uns que les autres" (171). Key here is the image of Octave as an "être à part" reading the

²³⁵ Being a rewriting of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, this choice of the name "Hélvétie" referring to Switzerland, is very likely yet another "intertextual wink" Sand is giving us to Rousseau's work, in addition to the literary clichés associated with her predecessor. Moreover, as Thelma Jurgrau reminded me, it was also Octave who makes the first reference to Rousseau's novel when he speaks of Jacques as "une mauvaise copie de M. de Wolmar."

newspaper and smoking while those around him are represented almost as brutes described here with their “pots de bières.” Sand’s character thus, underlines once again here the difference between his reality and this other “realist” world. By the same token, through the artifice and humor with which Octave paints for us this “realist” world, Sand reminds us yet again “in laughing with us” that a realist representation is ultimately just a literary code among others.

CONCLUSION

While voicing the questions and concerns raised by her 1834 article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*,” George Sand’s *Jacques* reveals itself finally to be as much a literary game as a serious metaliterary discussion. The author affirms a 19th-century autonomy of literature, but she also brings the novel back to the rudiments of the 18th-century literary experience by creating a work that aims to please and instruct at the same time—though with a twist. On the one hand, Sand is deeply marked by the virulent accusations of immorality with which her novel *Lélia* was received and feels the need to speak out about her work. On the other hand, she deeply believed that good literature can defend itself, either by itself or with the “help” of other literature. *Jacques*, is, in many ways, Sand’s multi-faceted defense of the autonomy of the novel through the novel, and its performance, a lesson on literary theory.

George Sand’s *Jacques* read in dialogue with both her 1834 article “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” and Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* reveals an author fully engaged in the ongoing literary debates of the novel in regards to the problematics of its morality or immorality, and to the manner in which one should navigate the questions of verisimilitude, authenticity and sincerity. Her 1834 article adopts a realist pose to shield the author against any accusations of immorality critics could direct at her. Nevertheless, this positioning ultimately demonstrates

itself as only a pretext. Sand's ironic defense deconstructs the artifice and fallacy of realist representation posing under the sign of objectivity. Read carefully, Sand's "sophist" demonstration shows itself to be just a play on words and theoretical frames, suggesting in this way the autonomy of literature to be, when all is said and done, simply "le plaisir du texte." *Jacques* similarly flaunts its own artifice as a textual construct. Her character Octave, known for having "la passion des romans," becomes the focal point of this literary reflection, and his comments (underneath their humor) often reveal the deeper metaliterary reflections of George Sand the author, especially in regards to the emerging aesthetics of realism.

The "overdetermination" of "romanesque" details in Sand's text in conjunction with her use of intertextuality and literary clichés can be read as the author's conscious construction of an "effet de textuel" in response to the "effet de réel" of realism later theorized by Roland Barthes. By flaunting the artifice of her literary composition and the literary codes it is playing with, Sand is essentially reminding her readers that the fictional reality represented in novels is uniquely a textual reality built on its own internal logic. In this way, through her affirmation of a "vérité poétique" (theorized in her 1834 article), Sand's text dislodges itself from the constraints of realist representation and upholds the autonomy of the artist-creator. Furthermore, by playing with realist codes of representation and revealing their artifice, Sand's *Jacques* puts realism "back in its place" as finally just one style among others and not as a superior aesthetics of writing that should dominate others. In this respect, *Jacques* is Sand's response to what Margaret Cohen has called the "aggressive campaigns" of realism trying to impose itself. Understood in this sense, upholding the autonomy of literature is also upholding a plurality of aesthetics and reminding readers of their equality as possible codes of expression to be exploited freely and timelessly.

Upholding the autonomy of literature is at the same time upholding the autonomy of the reading experience itself, in refocusing on the reader as the final voice of authority so-to-speak. Intertextual allusions and differing interpretations presented to us and commented on in the course of our reading point to a diverse array of metaliterary reflections. They also center the drama of Sand's text on the act of interpretation itself. In this sense, Sand's composition of *Jacques* is her response to the increasing presence of the press and the rise of the literary critic as a voice of authority. *Jacques* recenters the literary experience as a personal reading experience, where what counts above all is how a text touches the reader and how he makes sense of what he reads. Finally, through her "performance" of rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand gives homage to the artistry behind Rousseau's own work while showing her own mastery of the literary codes she has inherited.

While the moral authority with which literary critics invested themselves has certainly clashed with the creative independence of authors in the 1830's, the metaliterary reflection it generated (in addition to the exasperation it has caused) led to the conceptualization of a greater autonomy for art and the absolute freedom of the artist creator, neither subject to moral discourse or aesthetic boundaries, nor the rules of society. For Sand, as for Gautier, defending the autonomy of literature therefore includes the need to redefine the boundaries of critical discourse and the role of the literary critic. As Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* insinuates, literary authority does not include moral authority. His preface refutes the ideology of critics claiming that art should have a moral duty and social utility. For him, art answers only to itself and pursues only beauty as its end goal which is separate from both truth and morality. In turn, Sand's *Jacques* and her 1834 article reply, "literature is its own beginning and end, needing no

critic to accuse it nor defend it.” When all is said and done, the literary text is finally just a play on words where the question of morality or immorality should simply be irrelevant.

In short, 1834 reveals itself a key year in regards to the autonomy of literature. Read through the larger frames of political and social changes brought about by the July Revolution, what may have seemed at first as literary anomalies or more marginal works in regards to the “main battle” between the sentimental novel and the realist novel show themselves finally as central pieces. It is in this wider context—taking into account the expanded presence of the press and the rise of the literary critic as a moral and cultural authority— that Sand’s *Jacques* can be understood in its fullest sense. The clash between critics ready to exert their newfound authority and authors eager to demonstrate their independence and experiment with different literary aesthetics creates an explosive mix of literary creativity where writers and creators rethink the rapport between art and representation and how to navigate or theorize the ties between art and reality, morality, authenticity, and verisimilitude. 1834 sees Gautier’s formulation of his theory of “l’art pour l’art” in the preface to his *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Musset publishes his *Lorenzaccio*, putting into practice his concept of “un spectacle dans un fauteuil.” 1834 also sees the publication of Sainte-Beuve’s *Volupté* and Balzac starts *Le Père Goriot* and with it the crystallization of his concept of characters reappearing in a fictional universe. In their diversity, each work is finally part of a larger collective reflection on the autonomy of art. To this larger chorus of voices, George Sand’s *Jacques* and her article, “A propos de *Lelia* et de *Valentine*” propose their own metaliterary performance.

CHAPTER 4. CONFIGURATIVE THINKING

George Sand's practice and vision of literature reveal an attentiveness to the perception of form and how the perceived combination and recombination of different elements associated with a given form can create meaning through its influence on the reading process. By rewriting her 1834 novel *Jacques* numerous times in the course of her career and signaling this rewriting in her literary corpus, George Sand taps into the potential that such a reading frame can open up in terms of signification and literary experimentation. Essentially, by pointing out the existence of a network of rewritings based on *Jacques*, Sand injects what I would define as a "configuratively conscious" and "configuratively oriented" dimension into her work, in the sense that she draws attention to the precise actualizations and re-combinations at play of elements associated with this key novel. At the same time, "configurative thinking" and attention to form go well beyond literary and formal experimentation; her rewritings of *Jacques* serve as part of George Sand's larger project of reflecting on societal concerns while upholding the importance of theoretical thinking about her art within this mission.

The fact that Sand purposely gives us a retrospective view of her entire literary career in her novel *Le Dernier Amour*, more than thirty years after the publication of *Jacques*, and signals the fact she has rewritten the latter several times, shows how strongly she insists on the centrality of this novel in her corpus. It also indicates the centrality of rewriting itself as an organizational principle. Sand describes *Jacques* as a key point of reference in regards to her evolution both as a writer and as a thinker. This novel and its rewritings are presented not only through the notion of a change in her aesthetics, but also through the idea of a change in her perspective and approach on the questions of marriage, divorce, and gender relations. *Le Dernier Amour* and what I call Sand's "*Jacques* cycle" (Sand's rewritings of *Jacques*) underline the importance of a

comparative, and “configuratively” attentive reading of her entire corpus centered on the combination and recombination of elements associated with her novel *Jacques*.

In this chapter, I will examine the function of Sand’s conceptual framework which she introduces by signaling her rewritings of *Jacques*. I will also show how an “intertextual” approach is key to apprehending the full sense of this “cycle.” To this end, I will focus my analysis on *Valvèdre* (1861) and *Le Dernier Amour* (1866), for they are the two novels that Sand specifically names, thereby highlighting their importance as core novels in her “*Jacques* cycle.” I will conclude by explaining how such a conceptual understanding of this core structure can help us better comprehend Sand’s entire literary universe.

I. THE NOTION OF A “JACQUES CYCLE”

The specific place in *Le Dernier Amour* where George Sand signals she has rewritten *Jacques* several times in the course of her career is also the place where she suggests how these rewritings should be read. In this passage about three quarters of the way through the novel, M. Sylvestre, the main male protagonist, explains how reading *Jacques* affected him as a young man. Commenting on this novel by “Madame Sand” (247) which had moved him in his youth, he tells us, “C’était une œuvre de pur sentiment que l’auteur a refaite plusieurs fois sous d’autres titres, et avec des réflexions, on pourrait dire des acquisitions nouvelles qui ont dérouté les critiques inattentifs” (247). M. Sylvestre’s statements point out that Sand’s rewritings of *Jacques* have accompanied her evolution both as a writer and as a thinker (247-249). Moreover, as we shall see shortly, the author makes it clear that she is speaking to us here through her hero and that his words reflect more or less how she would like her corpus to be understood. For this purpose, she has her protagonist M. Sylvestre claim, “J’avais assez bien compris l’ensemble de

son œuvre et suivi la marche de ses idées” (247). Furthermore, to make absolutely clear we are to see M. Sylvestre as Sand’s double, he speaks about the impressions and opinions held by “Madame Sand” (247) as important to him because they resemble his own. As he puts it, “Mes instincts se rapportaient assez aux siens” (247).

Conversely however, Sand leaves relatively vague both the number of her rewritings and the titles of these works. Out of her entire corpus, only Sand’s 1861 novel *Valvèdre* is named by M. Sylvestre as one of these rewritings when he points how Sand’s eponymous hero does not act in the same manner as her 1834 hero; in the passage in question, M. Sylvestre states “Valvèdre ne recommence pas Jacques” (249). Aside from this designation, George Sand suggests to us only through her hero’s words that *Le Dernier Amour* is another recurrence, for in the specific passage where the aforementioned citation appears, M. Sylvestre is comparing himself to both Jacques and Valvèdre when analyzing his own marital situation. He thus establishes himself as a sort of rewriting of Sand’s heroes when he says, “Un autre personnage de l’auteur de *Jacques* eût pu venir, plus tard ou plus tôt, m’influencer quelque peu.” Explaining how Valvèdre does not “recommence” Jacques, he states: “L’infidélité de sa femme rend la vie à son coeur. Il couve et garde un autre amour” (249). Because she does not name more novels as specific rewritings of *Jacques*, Sand obliges the reader to take guesses as to which other novels she is alluding to and in what ways they can be considered as rewritings. Similarly, it is up to the reader to deduce what Sand means when she uses the term rewriting and to reconstruct the definition of this term through the two specific examples mentioned in *Le Dernier Amour*.

Deciphering Sand’s Project of Rewriting in *Valvèdre*

The manner in which Sand indicates that her novel *Valvèdre* is a rewriting of *Jacques* shows that she uses the term rewriting in a very broad sense, and that it is up to the reader to

(re)construct the meaning behind this concept. As we saw, in the specific passage in *Le Dernier Amour* where M. Sylvestre names *Valvèdre* as a rewriting of *Jacques*, the author shows that her novel differs largely from its model. Indeed, not only does the storyline itself differ, but the new orientation Sand gives it entirely changes its focus.

Unlike *Jacques*, the 1861 novel is concerned less about communicating the story of suffering experienced by two incompatible spouses (Valvèdre and Alida) than about telling the tale of the prodigal son (Francis) falling into the path of adultery. The main story, too, is de-centered: whereas the title of her 1834 novel takes its name from her main male protagonist, *Valvèdre* takes its name from a less central character, the only parallel being that the title refers to the husband character in the novel. It is true that other characters talk about Valvèdre and make us anticipate what this mysterious character would be like; nonetheless, we only see him for the first time more than 100 pages into the novel,²³⁶ for Sand's story focuses on the adulterous passion between Valvèdre's wife Alida and the narrator Francis. Were the title of Sand's novel to match up with the main story, one would have to rename the 1861 novel "Francis" which would be the equivalent of titling Sand's 1834 novel "Octave" as Francis plays the same role as Octave, the adulterous young lover in Sand's *Jacques*. The "rewritten" Octave, however, repents and returns to the path of virtue after Alida's death (In *Valvèdre*, Sand gives us a chance to see the perpetrators of adultery (Alida and Francis) living a hellish existence.). The rewriting practiced in *Valvèdre* therefore has less to do with the main storyline of Sand's 1834 novel and more to do with her treatment of the common theme of adultery and its consequences.

²³⁶ In my 1863 edition of *Valvèdre*, this is more than a third of the way into the novel, for we see Sand's character appear for the first time only on page 130. Moreover, even at this late point in the novel, we do not learn his true identity until much later, on page 162. The novel itself, including the preface occupies 360 pages.

As a version of the prodigal son, Sand's *Valvèdre* concentrates on Francis' straying from the path of virtue and using the knowledge he gains from his disastrous adventure with Alida. The question of adultery brought up in *Jacques* is therefore inscribed within this tale of error and redemption. The novel ends not on the tragic note of the husband's death, as in *Jacques*, but on the young lover's rehabilitation into society and his return into the family structure. Moreover, as a tale of confession, *Valvèdre* is not a polyphonic epistolary novel like *Jacques*, taking place during the Restoration, but a retrospective narration in the first person, recounting events that happened during the July Monarchy.²³⁷

***Valvèdre* as the Story of the Prodigal Son**

Francis's retrospective narration, embarked on twenty years later, begins with his departure from the family home at age twenty-three; this trip undertaken with the blessings of his father, a professor of literature and philosophy in Brussels, aims at opening the young man's horizons before he settles down in life. Accordingly, his travel plans are at first perfectly respectable; in line with his identity as what one would call "un fils de bonne famille," Francis sets off initially to see his old childhood friend Henri and the latter's family residing in Geneva. Both families are close and hope that Francis will eventually marry one of Henri's sisters. After arriving in Geneva, however, Francis learns that his science-loving friend has left on an expedition in the Swiss Alps with the renowned "savant," Valvèdre. This incident is what eventually leads to his downfall, for it is while seeking his friend that he accidentally runs into the great scientist's wife at an inn and gets taken in by the fantasy of seducing the capricious,

²³⁷ As noted in Chapter 3, the period of the 1830's is a period of fluctuating literary aesthetics for the novel. Recounting a story situated within a "heightened" period of metaliterary reflection therefore enhances the many metaliterary reflections exposed in her novel, aside from alluding to the time Sand wrote the novel she is now rewriting.

superficial young woman. He hears from another traveler, Moserwald, that the passionate and emotionally volatile Alida is not happy in a marriage to a cold stoical husband constantly neglecting her because of his scientific pursuits. This knowledge piques Francis' interest, especially since he is a young man passionate about literature and aspiring to live the sort of exciting romantic adventures he reads about (like Octave in *Jacques*).

In the course of events, Francis, elopes with Valvèdre's wife, throwing aside any scruples about betraying the mentor of his childhood friend Henri. Their relationship, however, remains platonic for the unstable young woman ends up regretting her actions and infidelity to her husband. Dying of remorse, Alida leaves behind two young sons, Paolino and Edmond. After Alida's death, Francis too repents of his actions; blaming himself for having allowed his overly active imagination dictate his actions, he throws himself into hard manual labor, working in metallurgy and putting his intelligence to work helping the community around him. At the end of seven years, Valvèdre, who has forgiven Francis, takes upon himself the complete rehabilitation of the young man. He sends his young son, Paolino, to Francis so that the latter can become Francis' young apprentice. Only upon learning the true identity of his young apprentice much later and recognizing the grace of forgiveness does Sand's hero return to the community of his friends. The novel ends with Francis' marriage to Rosa, one of Henri's sisters, and the anticipation of Valvèdre's future remarriage to Henri's other sister Adélaïde. The main storyline of *Valvèdre* therefore would seem in no way to resemble the tragic story of Sand's *Jacques*. In this way, Sand forces us to ponder over her reasons for signaling her 1861 novel as a rewriting of *Jacques* and to try to decipher her concept of rewriting.

***Le Dernier Amour*, a Philosophical Reflection rather than a Novel**

Similarly, the storyline of *Le Dernier Amour* does not follow particularly closely that of Sand's 1834 novel, and like *Valvèdre*, Sand gives her 1861 novel a different narrative orientation. The focus is less on the narration but more on the philosophical reflections and analyses it brings up. As Sand's omniscient narrator puts it before giving center stage to her hero, M. Sylvestre, "C'est moins un roman qu'un exposé de situations analysées avec patience et retracées avec scrupule" (29). This story recounted by M. Sylvestre himself tells of the disastrous marriage of its protagonist and the events leading to the horrific death of his wife Félicie, twenty years younger than he. Sand's hero, having had a difficult marriage and realizing that he could not save his only daughter who had gone astray, decided to leave his unhappy past and start a new life elsewhere. He sets forth for Italy but ends up remaining in Switzerland for he finds work there and gains the respect and confidence of his employer, Jean Morgeron. With the urging of his new friend, he marries Morgeron's sister, Félicie. At first, the newly wedded couple are very happy together but the situation is soon upset by the latter's cousin Tonino, an amoral and cynical young man whom Félicie had taken into her home and raised, as the poverty of Tonino's family made them unable to take care of him. Closer in temperament and age to Félicie than Félicie is to her husband, Tonino manipulates his cousin and eventually seduces her and rapes her. Once Félicie's physical desires have been awakened by the almost animalistic attraction between them, she can no longer feel as intimate with her husband, despite her regrets and true love for M. Sylvestre. The latter, far from ignorant about this liaison between his wife and Tonino, is constantly analyzing the situation in both its causes and effects. The novel's events are punctuated by his extensive reflections on this situation.

In putting before us her protagonist's reactions and understanding of events, Sand therefore suggests that even without Félicie's fall, problems would have arisen between the spouses; she hints in this way at her hero's intolerance vis-à-vis others' weaknesses, his pride, and the belief in his own intellectual and moral superiority. In addition, M. Sylvestre is presented as inherently susceptible to believing the worst about women's fidelity. His preconceived ideas are moreover compounded by the knowledge of Félicie's unfortunate past—she had been seduced at the tender age of fifteen by an unscrupulous foreigner pretending he wanted to marry her. In effect, it is in part M. Sylvestre's suspicions and jealousy that cause the downfall of the young woman desperate for the unconditional love, faith, and approbation of her hard-to-please husband. Sensing her spouse distancing himself from her and knowing that she can never regain the trust and intimacy she craves from him, Félicie allows herself to be led further and further astray by her calculating, selfish cousin. Finally, in a fit of remorse and despair, she commits suicide—she knows that only through her own death can she be redeemed in the eyes of her husband. Far from ending with this tragic death however, the rest of the novel recounts M. Sylvestre's analysis of all the events leading up to his wife's fall and painful death and his attempts to see all the different sides of their story.

The Notion of “Configuration” and “Configurative” Thinking

While there are certain parallels between the two novels George Sand has indicated as rewritings of *Jacques* and her 1834 work, it would be rather difficult to speak of them as actual rewritings in the more structurally specific sense of “hypertext” as defined by Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*. *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* do not really recount the same story as *Jacques*: rather, they borrow from and manipulate certain “motifs,” themes, and symbols. Therefore, it would be more accurate to describe these novels as

rewriting the “idea” of *Jacques* rather than Sand’s novel itself. Rewriting in this sense would refer to the rewriting of an ensemble of elements associated with *Jacques* and their specific grouping and organization in the 1834 novel.²³⁸ Looking at the common denominators among the three novels would help us decipher exactly what the “idea” of *Jacques* is comprised of.

Valvèdre and *Le Dernier Amour* have certain traits in common with *Jacques*. Above all, we recognize the love triangle consisting of an older husband married to a much younger woman who becomes attracted to another man with whom she feels a greater affinity and stronger passion. This older husband figure is always presented as a superior being, in both intellectual and moral strength. However, he is always viewed by his wife as stoic and cold. In contrast, the wife’s lover is a relatively superficial young man having artistic aspirations and a passion for literature. In all three novels, the story of adultery itself is linked to the idea of the incompatibility of the spouses due to either their natural temperaments or experiences in life, or both. Although initially the spouses are happy in a union that both parties freely chose, in all three cases, the marriage ends in a disastrous manner with the death of one of the characters in the love triangle. Significantly, since these rewritings are based on the rewriting of a novel which is itself a rewriting of Rousseau’s novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand includes elements reminiscent of her predecessor’s work in addition to the love triangle.²³⁹ The elements always present at some point in the novel are the geographical allusion to Switzerland and to the Swiss Alps in addition to and often in combination with the idea of an utopist setting or community

²³⁸ In this sense, Sand’s concept of rewriting would pertain more to the sense of “genre,” and has more to do with metagenetic thinking.

²³⁹ *Jacques* also rewrites Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* but Sand does not signal this rewriting as forcefully among her rewritings of *Jacques*. The only element she retains is the idea of attraction between individuals sharing greater affinities, which leads to the breakdown of a marriage and the constitution of a new couple sharing greater affinities. In *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand further highlights this theme by having her character Félicie pass a copy of Goethe’s novel to her husband.

reminiscent of Rousseau's Clarens in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. In essence, Sand's concept of rewriting her novel *Jacques* as deduced through her execution of *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* concerns the (re)actualization, (re)combination, (re)orientation, and manipulation of thematic, diegetic, spatial, and temporal elements associated with her novel *Jacques*.

Because the multitude of factors at play are closely integrated with the idea of how they are combined together in a recognizable form, I believe that the words "configuration" and "matrix" best capture how they function in Sand's rewritings of *Jacques*, rather than to simply say that *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* rewrite the "idea" of *Jacques*. As I explained, Genette's definition of "hypertext" seems to me too specific to describe Sand's broader and looser fitting concept of rewriting; one cannot really speak of a "pastiche," or "parody," or "satire" when referring to *Valvèdre* or *Le Dernier Amour*. As to the term "comparison," it is too vague for it does not capture the specificity, function, or theoretical dimensions involved in Sand's concept linking it to the idea of a perceived form. Similarly, the term "intertext" seems to me too broad if it is defined as just the "presence of a text within another text." While Julia Kristeva's definition of "intertext" would certainly apply to some aspects of the "*Jacques* configuration" (i.e., what I originally called the "idea" of *Jacques*), the Bakhtinian concepts of polyphony and dialogism don't quite capture the specificity of Sand's intertextual approach in her actualization, recombination, and reorientation of this configuration. Sand's rewritings, it seems to me, convey almost a "material," tangible dimension in their manipulation of form and structural elements. I would go so far as to argue that Sand's approach to rewriting has an almost mathematically calculated feel to it—in the combinations she stages before us, we sense at times she is trying one combination after another in a methodical manner. Similarly, while Michael Riffaterre's concept of "intertextuality" as extensible to literarity itself certainly fits to a great extent the

metaliterary dimension of the “*Jacques* configuration,” it does not capture, in my opinion, the specificity of the “hands-on,” experimental dimension of Sand’s rewritings of *Jacques*. For the same reasons, while certain elements of Sand’s rewritings of *Jacques* could fall under Genette’s subcategories of “allusion” or “quotation,” these²⁴⁰ do not capture the precise combinational and configurative focus of Sand’s practice of rewriting in her “*Jacques* cycle” or how the concept of a series of rewritings derived from *Jacques* would transform the reading experience itself. I would propose therefore the concept of rewriting *Jacques* demonstrated in her novels to be the actualization and manipulation of the “*Jacques* configuration.”

As defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term “configuration” includes the idea of a definable structure or image, the perception of spatial orientation, and the notion of the disposition of elements in space in conjunction with the distribution of these elements. “Configuration” therefore also expresses the idea of ratio and proportion because it takes into account the rapport or relative positioning between different variables and entities. For these reasons, the word “configuration” also involves the idea of “gestalt,” for the view of the whole is required in order to speak of ratio and proportion. Thus, Sand’s demonstration of her concept of rewriting in *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* resonates with many of the definitions that the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives us for “configuration.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Genette defines the term “intertextuality” as “une relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes.” He identifies three subcategories of intertextuality: “citation” (the explicit and thus most literal presence of a text in another), “plagiat” (which he further defines as “un emprunt non déclaré, mais encore littéral”), and “allusion” (*Palimpsestes* 8).

²⁴¹ A few of these definitions which suggest the ideas of spatial disposition, ratio, proportion, and organization in relation to a perceived form or figure include: 1. a. Arrangement of parts of elements in a particular form or figure; the form, shape, figure, resulting from such arrangement; conformation; outline, contour (of geographical features, etc.). 1b. Arrangement of elements; physical composition or constitution. 2. *Astron.* Relative position, apparent or actual, of planets or other celestial bodies; *esp.* in earlier use, the relative positions or ‘aspects’ of the sun, moon, and planets, recognized in Judicial Astrology. (The latter is earliest English use.) 3. State of being conformed in figure or fashion 4. A representation by a figure, an image. *Obs.* 6. *Psychol.* = Gestalt n. Also attrib.

Keeping in mind the different elements I proposed as being part of the “idea” of *Jacques* in light of the definitions offered by the *OED*, I would suggest my own definition of “configuration” in relation to how this concept is at work in Sand’s literary universe. I define the notion of “configuration” as a recognizable grouping and organization of specific traits and variables associated with a given entity. In *Jacques*, therefore, it consists of the traits and variables I proposed above contained in the “idea” of *Jacques* that Sand actualizes and manipulates in her rewritings of this novel. Because of the specific dimensional, orientational, spatial and proportional aspects involved in the manipulation of these variables grouped together in a recognizable pattern derived from the one portrayed in *Jacques*, I believe that “configurative manipulation” and “configurative thinking” best capture Sand’s concept of rewriting. While Riffaterre’s usage of “intertext” also includes a part of the concept I have proposed here, “configurative manipulation” is more specific in describing the aspect of textual manipulation at play in Sand’s literary universe—the focus on the (re)combination of elements of a perceived ensemble as opposed to the Riffaterrian “trace intertextuelle” concentrating more on specific intertextual details in a text;²⁴² the word “configuration” includes the idea of an actual “figure” and not just the idea of abstract elements and individual details. I will therefore use the term “intertextual” when I refer in a more general way to a perceived connection between two or more different texts and “configurative thinking” or “configurative manipulation” when I want to refer more specifically to Sand’s focus on the actualizing or (re)combining of the configurational elements of a text.

²⁴² Genette proposes the concept of “hypertextuality” as opposed to “intertextuality” to distinguish between the two different focuses. According to him, while Riffaterre’s theory of intertextuality itself includes aspects of what he himself would define as hypertextuality or transtextuality, in actual practice, Riffaterre’s application of them, concentrates more on intertextual occurrences inside a text than on the larger structure of a whole work: “La ‘trace’ intertextuelle selon Riffaterre est donc davantage (comme l’allusion) de l’ordre de la figure ponctuelle (du détail) que de l’œuvre considérée dans sa structure d’ensemble” (*Palimpsestes* 9).

Implications of a Matricial Dimension

As pointed out earlier, Sand wrote *Jacques* several times in the course of her career and overtly signaled the centrality of this novel within her corpus. For an attentive reader who takes Sand's statement about her rewriting into consideration, it would theoretically reorient the entire reading experience. On the one hand, such a statement would inspire a heightened attention to Sand's manipulation of both the form and content of her novels in encouraging a greater level of consciousness towards the different configurations she is actualizing and manipulating as opposed to isolated variables examined only individually and not in their rapport with other variables. On the other hand, by injecting into her corpus the idea of one central configuration at work that has been rewritten several times within her body of texts, Sand taps into the interpretational potential that would introduce the notion of a core matrix. Essentially by hinting at but not stating the titles of all her rewritings of *Jacques*, the author makes of her 1834 novel, not just one matricial configuration at play in her literary corpus, in the sense of a "mother work" from which certain texts are derived, but the central matrix around which all her novels revolve, in the sense of a semantic and structural nucleus.

Michael Riffaterre's theories regarding what he calls "la production du texte"²⁴³ can help us conceptualize the type of semantic and structural nucleus that Sand has essentially generated in her literary corpus. I choose to borrow Riffaterre's term "matrix" to define the position of Sand's *Jacques* because, in many ways, a mechanism similar to that theorized by Riffaterre is at work in Sand's whole literary corpus. For Riffaterre, the matrix is the semantic given from which a specific text or passage of a text is derived. The matrix itself may be a key word or phrase in the text itself but more often it is an absent key phrase or sentence that makes its presence

²⁴³ See Michael Riffaterre's book, *La production du texte*.

perceived by continually generating variants of itself. Because meaning is generated through the constant “rewriting” or reformulation of this perceived matrix, the matrix therefore becomes the semantic nucleus of the text around which the entire passage or the entire text is organized. As formulated by Riffaterre, the notion of a “matrix” therefore includes the ideas of repetition, rewriting, and reformulation in addition to the concept of a semantic and structural center that is perceived even when the exact phrase or word is absent in the text itself. By adopting Riffaterre’s terminology, I suggest that these same factors are at play in an analogous manner in the Sand corpus but at the level of her whole literary production and not just at the level of individual texts or passages.

By introducing the idea of a number of rewritings in her literary corpus but not giving us an exact list, Sand has in essence made every work in her literary corpus suspect. Leaving open to interpretation which novels in her corpus are rewritings of *Jacques* in effect positions every work in an interrogative stance with *Jacques* since readers must be constantly on the alert for signs that the specific work(s) they are reading or have read may be part of this matricial network. The absence or presence of rewriting would not change the perceived presence of the matrix because in any case, the “directional” reading pointing to Sand’s *Jacques* remains. Essentially, this binary interrogative stance established with every one of her writings would make of *Jacques* what I could call the “virtual center” of Sand’s literary universe, since this perceived centering is not an actual designated fact by Sand the author, but happens only in the mind of the reader; in this sense, Sand’s “virtual center” performs in a manner similar to the Riffaterrian idea of a literary matrix as a perceived semantic nucleus even if the actual word or phrase is not literally present. *Jacques* is in this way, the “perceived” center of Sandian poetics, constructed through the reader’s active participation in the interpretive process. The exact

passage in *Le Dernier Amour* where M. Sylvestre speaks about Sand's rewriting of *Jacques* seems moreover to confirm such an interpretation. The idea of a gestalt reading is, in addition, "overdetermined" by her hero's mentioning the totality of Sand's corpus right after speaking about her rewritings of *Jacques*; he uses specifically the words, "l'ensemble de son œuvre" (247) and "la marche de ses idées" (247).²⁴⁴ Finally, a further result of this virtual dynamic center is the amplification of the perceived presence and visibility of the matrix text itself; each individual work, due to its interrogative stance with the matrix, essentially points back to it. In theory, then, through the reading process, the matrix becomes the virtual center around which the author's whole literary corpus revolves.

On the one hand, the perception of a "virtual center" ties the whole Sand corpus together by means of this common interpretational denominator through which an attentive reader would necessarily direct his gaze when reading Sand's works. On the other hand, by foregrounding the notion of a network of novels based on the rewriting of one of her own works, Sand invites the reader at the same time to see her own works in relation to each other, not just in terms of a binary comparison but through the lens of a larger configurational dialogue with the matrix and with other works derived from this matrix. Crucial to recognize is the new overarching interpretive dimension that Sand introduces into the reading experience; she invites us to see her works as an interconnected and constructed whole, or at least in a manner which makes the reader more conscious of the polyphonic and intertextual ties within her whole corpus. Finally, as the "virtual center" of Sand's literary universe as well as the designated matrix of a number of rewritings, *Jacques* draws attention to the author's own mode of literary creation. Far from being

²⁴⁴ The title of Sand's novel, *Le Dernier Amour*, opening the last decade of Sand's literary career, read in combination with these metaliterary comments, further suggest that they may be viewed to a certain extent as Sand's "dernier mot," where the author reveals her cards and the "hidden meaning" behind her entire literary production. I will discuss this aspect further on.

individual compositions *à l'improviste*, Sand's "*Jacques* cycle" especially demonstrates her fictional universe to be a configuratively thought-out one where she experiments in a methodical manner, different combinations and organizational principles in the expression of her art.

II. CONFIGURATIVE REFLECTION THROUGH A LITERARY MATRIX

George Sand's decision to identify in *Le Dernier Amour* two of her novels as rewritings of *Jacques* casts a spotlight on them and encourages us to read together this "core group" as a trilogy of sorts. Clearly recognizable configurative similarities between these novels, which will be discussed shortly, play an important role in encouraging a comparative reading. On the one hand, the interpretational spotlight of rewriting cast on her core trilogy encourages a configurationally attentive reading between the three novels, but on the other hand, it also draws attention back to the mechanisms at work within Sand's whole literary universe. As I explained earlier, by pointing out to the reader the existence of rewritings of her novel *Jacques* but not indicating the exact number or titles of these works within her corpus, Sand essentially induces the reader to be conscious of a larger interpretational frame governing her corpus—works should be read in relation to her novel *Jacques* but also in relation to each other. Additionally, the knowledge that *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* rewrite *Jacques* also shines a light back onto the *Jacques* matrix and the ideas expressed in it. As I demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three, Sand's 1834 novel has two key dimensions: an engagement with metaliterary concerns and a focus on social and societal reflections; these dimensions are further underscored by M. Sylvestre in his description of *Jacques* as accompanying both the author's aesthetic evolution and her social and societal reflections related to the questions of love and marriage. It is not surprising therefore that both concerns are also found in *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour*.

Valvèdre's Configurative Similarities with Jacques

In *Valvèdre*, the full sense of Sand's metaliterary and societal reflection is revealed only in reading it through its rapport with *Jacques*; configurative similarities are crucial in establishing the tie between them for they invite readers to read the novels in dialogue. Indeed, similarities between the two novels seemed so clear that it alarmed Sand's editor. Remembering the huge scandal that *Jacques* had caused, Buloz was particularly concerned about the intertextual reading *Valvèdre* would induce. In a letter to Sand, he therefore begs her to remove some of these details: "Ne négligez pas, si vous le pouvez, d'éloigner la ressemblance" (Massardier-Kenney, "La singularité" 39).

Examining *Valvèdre* certainly reveals elements of the "*Jacques* configuration" identified earlier. The 1861 novel takes place in a similar idyllic setting to *Jacques*, and we have a similar love triangle, composed of an older husband married to a much younger woman. Both stories have an adulterous situation: while recognizing her husband to be a superior man, Alida, like Fernande, feels greater love and affinity for a younger man. In this novel, too, the situation leads to devastating consequences and to the death of one of the protagonists.

Since the characters of Sand's 1861 novel are modeled on those in *Jacques*, *Valvèdre* also contains elements reminiscent of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Like *Jacques*, *Valvèdre*, stoical and above human passions, is described like Rousseau's M. de Wolmar: "Il est supérieur aux passions, aux souffrances, aux orages de la vie" (114). Further signaling the common tie both novels share with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Valvèdre* takes place in the Swiss Alps. Moreover, we learn at the end of Sand's novel that Francis' friend Henri moves his family to a site associated with Rousseau's masterpiece, a residence "en pleine campagne, dans un site

magnifique, au bord du Léman” (337).²⁴⁵ Similarly, Francis is modeled on Octave. Like his counterpart in *Jacques*, Francis describes himself as a superficial young man, and he spends his time reading, writing, drawing, and playing music. Like Octave, he falls in love with the immature wife of Sand’s eponymous hero. The parallels occur even in minute details; Francis, for instance, plays the oboe like his counterpart, and in both stories, the amorous encounter with the desired woman is initiated through the younger man’s playing of this instrument: its mysterious sound catches Fernande by surprise one evening and charms her ears;²⁴⁶ it is also this music that charms her children to sleep.²⁴⁷ In *Valvèdre*, it is the sound of Francis’ oboe which catches Alida’s attention.

Reflecting on Different Configurational Outcomes

Set against the many similarities, the differences in configuration between the two novels capture attention. The many parallels between the two novels reinforced by Sand’s designation of *Valvèdre* as a rewriting of *Jacques* encourage the reader to recognize the differences themselves as the expression of significant semantic changes. The principal change that Sand brings to *Valvèdre* is in the ending of the novel: unlike *Jacques*, *Valvèdre* does not kill himself—a point that the author highlights when she has M. Sylvestre bring this up in his comparison of the heroes.

²⁴⁵ Lake Léman is an important site in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

²⁴⁶ See *Jacques*, p. 158 where Fernande describes this incident: “j’ai entendu sous ma fenêtre le son d’un hautbois. Je n’ai d’abord songé qu’au plaisir de l’écouter.”

²⁴⁷ See *Jacques*, p. 175. Fernande describes how Octave secretly enters her room and starts playing the oboe. Fernande’s daughter, who was not feeling well and could not sleep, calms down right away at the sound of Octave’s oboe and falls immediately asleep, as though charmed by Octave.

As mentioned, Sand underscored the importance of this new orientation when she spoke about *Valvèdre* for the first time in her novel *Le Dernier Amour*. Introducing her 1861 novel as a rewriting of *Jacques*, she has M. Sylvestre say, “Valvèdre ne recommence pas Jacques” (249). Sand does not present this detail as an isolated fact; not only does she encourage us to compare the destinies of her three male protagonists, but she invites us to read them in combination with other aspects of their lives and compare the different configurations she has staged before us. In this way, she suggests that the different outcomes are the consequence of these different combinations. At the same time, Sand is careful to remind us that these configurational variants are fictional details resulting from the aesthetic and metaliterary considerations of the period in which they were composed, and not necessarily the societal and philosophical reflections that the author wishes to portray.

In the 1866 novel, Sand makes clear through her protagonist, M. Sylvestre that the different destinies portrayed in her three novels result from both aesthetic differences inspired by the different periods in which they were written and the societal factors she stages before us. Metaliterary elements are therefore presented as equally important as the social and political realities represented in determining the (re)orientations and (re)combinations at play in each of the three novels. *Jacques*, *Valvèdre*, and *Le Dernier Amour* represent three distinct aesthetic and historical periods as well as three different political and social realities.

In the passage in question, M. Sylvestre begins by presenting the diegetic choice of Jacques’ suicide in combination with the tragic story presented in Sand’s 1834 novel as the result of a “mal-de-siècle” Romanticism. In describing this period, her hero tells us, “C’était une époque encore agitée par l’irruption des vues passionnées du romantisme, l’époque provenant des René, des Lara, des Werther, des Obermann, des Childe Harold, des Rolla, types des

meurtris, des désespérés ou des fatigués de la vie” (247-248). In employing the indefinite article, “des,” M. Sylvestre suggests that Sand’s 1834 hero is just one example among many melancholic and/or suicidal heroes of the period. Rather than the exception, M. Sylvestre suggests that Jacques was the norm. Consequently, he describes Jacques less as an individual character and more as a type: “Jacques était un peu bâtard de cette grande famille de désillusionnés qui avaient eu leur raison d’être historique et sociale” (247). For this reason too, he calls Jacques “l’Obermann²⁴⁸ du mariage,” minimalizing in this way both the protagonist’s suicide and the specific causes pushing him to this tragic act. Rather than the cause of his death, Sand’s 1866 protagonist suggests that Jacques’ unhappy marriage “n’était pour lui que la goutte de fiel qui fait déborder la coupe” (249).

It is obvious that Sand is recontextualizing *Jacques* within the aesthetics of its period to tactically downplay the scandal her 1834 novel had caused—the fact that she had dared stage the death of the husband figure within the love triangle configuration was read by many critics as the author’s attack on the fundamentals of society: as the “chef de famille,” the husband represented order and authority in a patriarchal society. In reframing her 1834 protagonist’s suicide as just a diegetic combination inspired by a “mal-de-siècle” period, Sand defuses thus the emotionally charged response of potential readers horrified by the “immoral” intentions they could impute to the author. Therefore, by insisting that the fictional world she presents is merely the actualization of the aesthetics of a certain period, Sand strategically re-centers our attention onto the configurations themselves and how they are recombined and manipulated in her writings.

²⁴⁸ “Obermann” is both the title of Senancour’s novel and its protagonist. Obermann greatly influenced writers in the Romantic period, and Sand herself wrote an article about Senancour’s novel. The novel, originally published in 1804, captured the “mal-de-siècle” aesthetics of a Romantic generation.

Framing the stories presented in her novels as just aesthetic actualizations therefore achieves two purposes. On the one hand, Sand's metaliterary commentary reasserts the autonomy of art by expounding on the nature of the "reality" represented in fiction—as just a play on configurational combinations determined by the aesthetics of a period, the reality of art is not the same as our own reality.²⁴⁹ The death of the husband in a story of adultery may seem morally unthinkable but not if it is a diegetic variant made imaginable by a period of time when the suicide of Byronic-type heroes were in vogue (especially in a period known for the excesses of Romanticism, as I pointed out in Chapter Three). On the other hand, by defusing the emotional charge attached to her diegetic variant in *Jacques*, Sand clears the way for readers to compare, in an objective, rational manner, not only the "diegetic solutions" staged before them (i.e., the conclusions of each novel), but also the configurative groupings leading up to each individual case.

The Influence of Societal Factors on Diegetic Outcomes

While Sand comments largely on the aesthetic period inspiring her 1834 novel, she does not explicitly say much about the aesthetic ideologies concerning *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour*. As a consequence, this silence on her part obliges us to decipher for ourselves how the diegetic combinations portrayed in the later novels reflect the aesthetics of their time. Viewed from another angle, however, this silence demonstrates Sand's preference to focus on societal factors, for she comments rather on these elements in both *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour*.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ In Chapter Three, I analyzed how *Jacques* can be read as Sand's demonstration of the autonomy of art. As a rewriting of *Jacques*, *Le Dernier Amour*, through such passages, also reasserts Sand's vision of art as a domain where accusations of immorality against an author's work are irrelevant.

²⁵⁰ In this key passage of *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand's silence in regards to the aesthetic movements in vogue during the composition of both *Valvèdre* and her 1866 novel seems to suggest that the author's long commentary in regards to *Jacques* is more a strategic attempt to downplay the scandal the novel provoked at its publication. It is only in

In expounding on how *Valvèdre* does not recommence Jacques, M. Sylvestre in *Le Dernier Amour* only speaks about the societal and legislative changes of the period portrayed in Sand's 1861 novel; in contrast, the difference in aesthetic period is only suggested indirectly—we are only made to understand that *Valvèdre* is not written in the “mal-de-siècle” period of Romanticism because the diegetic difference expresses another aesthetics: “*Valvèdre* ne recommence pas Jacques. Il couve et garde un autre amour. La question du divorce est soulevée. Les personnages appartiennent à cette législation et peuvent en profiter” (249). The juxtaposition of sentences in the passage cited concluding with the infinitive, “profiter” suggests that *Valvèdre* need not die, because society has changed and new legislation pertaining to divorce has been introduced. M. Sylvestre's words therefore link the positive, more constructive outcome in Sand's 1861 novel directly to these new developments as opposed to the condition for Jacques in Sand's 1834 novel. As explained in Chapter Two, Jacques came to the rational conclusion that he had to die because divorce was not possible in the period of his story, and society did not recognize the incompatibility between spouses as a legitimate reason for dissolving a marital union; moreover, as Sand's 1834 protagonist had explained, mentalities and social attitudes had not yet evolved enough for society to accept natural affinities between two individuals to be a legitimate basis for forming a new union. Even if both spouses agreed to live separately due to their incompatibility, society would not accept that either pursue a more compatible partner for a more satisfying relationship. In *Valvèdre* however, Francis' story takes place in Switzerland during the 1830's. In Switzerland, as opposed to the Restoration period in France portrayed in Sand's *Jacques*, divorce is allowed. *Valvèdre* is therefore not bound by the same legislation as

Valvèdre that Sand's narrator and principle protagonist tells us explicitly that Francis's story takes place in the 1830's and that the actual narration itself (and thus the written account of his experiences) takes place twenty years later. It is also only in *Valvèdre* that Francis mentions that the ideas of “l'art pour l'art” are in vogue during the period of his amorous adventure with Alida in addition to allusions regarding the excesses of Romanticism.

Sand's 1834 hero. Furthermore, as a Protestant who has not contracted a religious marriage with his Catholic wife Alida, Valvèdre is free to divorce his wife should both parties desire it. By indicating these different combinational variables as responsible for the different outcome staged in her 1861 novel, Sand demonstrates the urgency for societal and legislative changes in France—Jacques' story would not have to repeat itself if laws provided an alternative; Valvèdre's fate illustrates this alternative.

Similarly, in *Le Dernier Amour*, M. Sylvestre suggests that he too will not “recommence” Jacques because the combination of societal factors at play is different from those in Sand's 1834 novel. Here, however, the situation is slightly altered for Sand makes us understand that it is up to us to figure it out; her hero does not tell us the reasons as directly. In M. Sylvestre's story, we know that divorce is an option, for as in *Valvèdre*, M. Sylvestre's story takes place in Switzerland—the reader draws this parallel by seeing the protagonist mention this new societal situation in Sand's 1861 novel. In *Le Dernier Amour*, moreover, Sand's hero directly encourages us to read his own situation in light of both Jacques and Valvèdre, since just before introducing his own case, he presents the outcome of Sand's 1861 protagonist as a contrast to Jacques' suicide: “L'adultère, cette fois, a puni et tué l'épouse. L'époux a triomphé de la colère et de la douleur” (249). Whereas Jacques' decision to kill himself was considered by M. Sylvestre as a defeat, Valvèdre's case is viewed as a triumph, not only because he survives, but because he transcends his own pain in not allowing himself to be consumed by negative, destructive feelings. Immediately after these conclusions, M. Sylvestre speaks about his own situation, but significantly, he does not emit any clear judgment about his own case but merely tells us, “Ma situation n'était point la même, tant s'en faut” (249).

Deriving Meaning from Configurationally Focused Readings

By not having her protagonist judge his own story but only expound on the difference between his own situation and that of the other characters, Sand makes a configurationally comparative reading and interpretation the focus of the situation in *Le Dernier Amour*. To make sense of M. Sylvestre's case, we are obliged to compare the variables at play in regards to those of Sand's protagonists in her earlier two novels. Right after telling us that his case may be different, he expounds on his remark by saying, "Tant qu'elle avait réussi à me tromper, ma femme ne m'avait pas rendu malheureux, et aucune autre ne devait plus me présenter l'idéal d'une meilleure existence" (249). Unlike the situation between Jacques and Fernande, M. Sylvestre was not unhappy in his own marriage. Indeed, whereas the spouses in Sand's 1834 novel were portrayed right from the start as unable to understand each other even on the most fundamental questions, M. Sylvestre's pain started solely because Tonino seduced the latter's wife. True, Félicie and M. Sylvestre have different temperaments—Félicie is portrayed as passionate though exhibiting strong self-control, while M. Sylvestre is described as rational and cool-headed—they are not presented as incompatible. On the contrary, Sand portrays the husband and wife as very happy before Tonino's perverse actions. Moreover, as his phrase "l'idéal d'une meilleure existence" suggests, M. Sylvestre considered his life with Félicie among his best moments. He even tells us that Félicie is the love of his life, for he indicates that not only was she his first true love but she was also the last love of his life.²⁵¹ Would it not then make more sense that his wife's adultery would affect him deeply? In citing the destinies of Sand's other two protagonists as examples of the effects of adultery on the husbands, M. Sylvestre suggests the seriousness of this type of betrayal—a question of life and death.

²⁵¹ See especially, *Le Dernier Amour*, p. 31 and p. 98.

It is important to note that when M. Sylvestre speaks about the fates of Sand's other two heroes, he does not yet know the dire outcome of his own story, although he does know of the adulterous passion his wife feels for Tonino. We however know from his comments that he will not take the same suicidal path as Jacques. M. Sylvestre's hints regarding the difference in configurational factors that affect his own "ending" are therefore crucial in making our own judgment about him, just as he himself did, regarding Sand's two other protagonists.

What is central to remark in M. Sylvestre's explanation of the diegetic difference between his own story and that of Jacques is the way he links this difference to the idea of his own maturity. Sand's 1866 protagonist tells us that he too knew the temptation of a death like Jacques': "si j'eusse écouté la voix qui sanglotait au fond de mon coeur et celle qui murmurait des imprécations dans mes rêves, j'aurais monté à la prairie de Quille et j'aurais cherché dans le glacier voisin la mort ignorée que me souhaitait mon rival, et qu'eût acceptée ma femme" (249).²⁵² Despite feeling such suicidal sentiments, Sand's hero tells us, he would not act on them, because as he puts it, "j'étais devenu un homme" (249.). The question of maturity is thereby presented by M. Sylvestre as the most decisive factor in determining his own fate and preventing him from becoming another Jacques. Expounding on this idea, her protagonist tells us, "La lâcheté ou plutôt l'inutilité du suicide m'était apparue, en même temps que la notion du devoir s'était agrandie et formulée" (249). Combining the various elements M. Sylvestre has traced for us in comparison and in contrast to those in *Jacques* and *Valvèdre*, we understand better the reasons why her 1866 protagonist employs the word "l'inutilité" in speaking about suicide. As mentioned earlier, both *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* take place in Switzerland; therefore, as

²⁵² Sand draws attention to the parallel between her 1866 hero and Jacques, for in her 1834 novel, Jacques commits suicide by seeking death in the glaciers of the Swiss Alps.

in Valvèdre's case, M. Sylvestre has the option of divorce and doesn't need to "disappear" like Jacques in order for his wife to start a new life with a partner better suited to her. Suicide would thus be unnecessary as well as an act of cowardice in not facing the reality of life and its responsibilities. This consciousness attributed to his maturity and understanding the "larger picture" is therefore the central factor determining the new fate and outcome of Sand's hero in her 1866 novel, as in her 1861 novel. In short, if we were to add our own two sentences complementing the two sentences M. Sylvestre used to describe the outcome of Valvèdre's story, we could add that in *Le Dernier Amour*, "l'époux apprend; il part après la douleur et la colère."

Highlighting the Factor of Education

In placing the question of suicide in direct correlation with that of maturity, M. Sylvestre provides us with a key to understanding the configuration of elements leading to Félicie's downfall as well as to her subsequent suicide; at the same time, since death and suicide take center stage among the variables at play in the "*Jacques* matrix," M. Sylvestre's comments are crucial to pointing out the link between these components and the idea of education. As mentioned, in *Jacques*, Sand's hero commits suicide because he sees no other way out of his dilemma at a time when social attitudes and legislation neither allow the dissolution of incompatible marital relationships nor the formation of healthier, more satisfying ones. In Chapter Two, I explained how Sand's 1834 protagonist linked the issue of education with that of social reform; for Jacques, educating society must precede social progress in reforming the institution of marriage and allowing the possibility for divorce. Education is therefore key to determining the configurations of life and death in Sand's "*Jacques* cycle."

Of the three protagonists, Jacques, Valvèdre, and M. Sylvestre, Valvèdre is presented as the most enlightened, the most generous, and the most educated. Significantly, of the three

novels, *Valvèdre* is also the only one that has a happy ending, despite the adulterous drama leading up to the death of Alida. In the 1861 novel, Sand's protagonist, although betrayed by his wife, understands the latter's adulterous passion for Francis as just human weakness, not a horrendous crime that should be severely punished; rather than consider suicide, he throws himself all the more into his work while being open to the possibility that another woman better suited to him may exist. Sand suggests throughout the novel that it is precisely Valvèdre's openness to life and learning that allow him to see the greater picture beyond himself and his present situation. As will be explained further on in this chapter, the defining characteristic that sets him apart from other men is precisely his superior education in all branches of knowledge. Although M. Sylvestre in *Le Dernier Amour* does not directly attribute Valvèdre's happier destiny to the protagonist's education, we understand in reading Sand's 1861 novel in conjunction with M. Sylvestre's comments regarding suicide that education is a large factor contributing to the great "savant's" actions and reactions.

In speaking about Valvèdre, M. Sylvestre signals the positive influence that Sand's enlightened protagonist shows in what could have been an absolute tragedy not only for him but his whole family and loved ones. Sand's 1866 protagonist carefully describes the calm rationality, great empathy, and mature responsibility with which Valvèdre takes care of the disastrous situation his wife's adulterous passion has caused: "L'époux trahi ne croit pas devoir rompre des liens qui établissent sa protection sur sa femme. Il assiste à sa dernière heure, il ne se remarie que quand il peut donner une autre mère à ses enfants" (249). Because Valvèdre understands Alida, he does not wish to punish her but offers her comfort. Understanding human nature in a more complete manner than Sand's 1834 hero, Valvèdre is tolerant of human weakness, unlike Jacques for instance, who is impatient with what he considers his young wife's

“childish needs”²⁵³ for love and affection. It is essential to recognize that although Alida suffers from remorse for having betrayed her husband, she does not commit suicide; she dies rather from illness due to her own weak constitution. Moreover, receiving the grace and forgiveness her husband offers her in her final moments, she dies in peace. In *Valvèdre*, it is the largeness of mind due to education that prevents the story from ending as an irreparable catastrophe; what could have been a tragedy becomes, instead, a tale of redemption and hope. In the same way, we can say that due to the lessons he learns and the grace of forgiveness made possible by Valvèdre’s enlightened education, Francis, the “prodigal son,” is finally able to come home and not be forever condemned for his past errors.

Most significantly, however, it is essential to recognize that Valvèdre’s “happy end” is made possible not just because of his own education, but especially because he is able to remarry a young woman perfectly suited to him due to her own equally balanced education. M. Sylvestre’s final sentence detailing the positive outcome of Sand’s 1861 hero clearly centers on the fact that he remarries. Similarly, the last two sentences of *Valvèdre* focus on the happiness of this couple and the idea of their future marriage. Francis, after having spoken about his own marital happiness with Henri’s sister Rosa, tells us how he finally reaches perfect contentment in learning that he has managed to bring together Valvèdre and Adélaïde: “Ils s’aimaient et ne se croyaient pas aimé l’un de l’autre. Le jour où, par mes soins et mes encouragements, ils s’entendirent fut le plus beau de leur vie et de la mienne” (360).

²⁵³ I explain this in greater detail in Chapter Two. Jacques refuses to “stoop down” to explain things to Fernande and is often intolerant with her inability to understand things in the way he does. He expects a maturity of her that is beyond her age and education and becomes impatient and hurtful to her when she cannot understand or accept his “higher” values.

In short, by drawing attention to the perfect ending of *Valvèdre* in contrast to the tragedy of both his and Jacques' stories, M. Sylvestre encourages us to compare the heroines in each of Sand's three novels and reexamine the reasons which led them to fall into adultery in the first place. Keeping in mind too the link he pointed out between the question of education and maturity in conjunction with the positive ending of *Valvèdre* as opposed to that of *Jacques*, we recognize that Sand is making a plea for women's education. In all three novels, Sand suggests that it is their lack of education that makes her female protagonists succumb to unscrupulous seducers ready to prey on their naivety and innocence. As explained in Chapter Two, Clémence's letters to Fernande denounce women's lack of access to a quality education and knowledge of the evils of the outside world that makes them liable to seduction. Although Octave is not a Lovelace at heart, he nevertheless easily seduces Jacques' wife and causes great damage to her and her husband's reputation, thereby actualizing Clémence's predictions regarding her ignorant young friend. Similarly, in *Valvèdre*, we are told that Alida does not have any substantive education; reading only novels which further overheat her already excessive imagination and passionate nature, Valvèdre's wife naturally falls for the romantic fantasies Francis weaves for her—she believes he is a promising young poet with a great future and elopes with him.²⁵⁴ In regards to *Le Dernier Amour*, M. Sylvestre attributes his wife's adultery to her lack of education, which made her unable to defend herself against the perverse intelligence of her cousin Tonino. We will recall too, that Félicie had been seduced at the age of fifteen by a foreigner taking advantage of her naivety. The heroine of Sand's 1866 novel therefore draws particular attention to the question of education in relation to women's destinies.

²⁵⁴ Alida is also easily bored and rejects the efforts of Henri's sisters to interest her in their "work." She has a distinctly melancholic disposition, as though some corruption has entered both her body and her spirit (I thank Thelma Jurgrau for reminding me of this point.). The theme of mental and physical illness is also present in *Le Dernier Amour*, and encourages the reader to read Félicie in parallel with Alida.

Of Sand's three heroines, Félicie's fate is the most tragic. In the course of the novel, we learn that Félicie comes from an extremely poor family who denied her love and affection; moreover, she neither had the benefits of any proper schooling nor moral education. Because of the severity of Félicie's educational and emotional deprivation in these formative years, M. Sylvestre suggests that the young woman is destined for misfortune. In analyzing his wife's downfall, he suggests that his attempts to rectify the situation could not succeed. His descriptions of her constantly frame her as a primitive being, unable to comprehend the morals of society. He compares her character to that of indigenous peoples of the New World, referring to "ces natures généreuses mais incultes" (255). In speaking of her downfall, he makes this comparison even more explicit, "Comme les sauvages qui ne savent pas que l'ivresse conduit à la mort ou à l'imbécilité, Félicie avait voulu boire *l'eau de feu*" (254-255). He suggests, in this way, that Félicie's error was innocent and not ill-intentioned, and it is rather the lack of nurture which accounts for her fall. Félicie's horrible suicide by poison at the end of Sand's novel is doubly poignant: her lack of education not only causes her downfall but it also causes her death. Having lost the love of her husband, she does not even consider the possibility of divorce or the option of a new life with another man. Unable to look beyond the present and see the larger picture, Félicie sees suicide as the only option.

In contrast to Félicie's situation, Adélaïde's happy marriage to Valvèdre ending the novel particularly stands out. In examining her background, we see that she comes from a privileged family. Not only has she grown up within a loving and supportive family, but she has received an exceptional education in both the arts and sciences and been encouraged in her own study of the natural sciences. Exceptional in both areas, she is Valvèdre's equal because she has received a similar all-encompassing education; her superior mind and character are thus due to the

knowledge and wisdom she has gained through her training. Her relationship with Valvèdre brings to mind the “friendship” that Sylvia and Jacques share in Sand’s 1834 novel; we will recall that, in the matrix novel, Sylvia is Jacques’ equal and soulmate precisely because of the vigorous, demanding education she received through Jacques; although they are unable to marry because the law prohibits divorce and would not accept their union, Sand suggests they would be perfect together.²⁵⁵ By portraying Adélaïde as the perfect partner for Valvèdre and making this utopian relationship now possible in her 1861 novel, George Sand reiterates the centrality of education in realizing this ideal, an ideal of course only possible in conjunction with social and legislative progress.

By encouraging us to compare and contrast the different combinations at play in regards to the fates of the different characters, their marital situations, and educational and family backgrounds, Sand demonstrates the urgency of women’s education and its central role in ensuring not only the happiness of husbands and their families but also the greater good of society. It is through the larger comparative reading frame established through the “*Jacques* configuration” that Sand enhances her plea for women’s education. From this perspective, Sand’s “*Jacques* cycle” is her strategic response to Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile*, especially when we acknowledge *Jacques* to be a rewriting of Rousseau’s 1761 novel. By focusing attention on the consequences resulting from starkly different backgrounds of her

²⁵⁵ A secondary obstacle, of course, is in the fact that they could possibly be half-brother and half-sister because of their father who had had an affair with Sylvia’s mother. However, that blood tie is unproven and furthermore officially unknown by society. It is important too, to recognize the difference in reaction between Sylvia and Félicie. Whereas Félicie kills herself in despair for she cannot see any hope in another future, Sylvia, despite knowing she cannot marry Jacques, does not even think of suicide. We can suspect that due to her education which gives her both emotional strength and the ability to see a larger picture of life of which marital ties are only one type of relationship, Sylvia does not feel the need to die. Moreover, Sand shows us in the novel that Sylvia understands how lives are interconnected: a suicide or a death does not just affect one individual but it has an effect on the larger community—families, friends, etc. Therefore she understands the importance of continuing to live in order to fulfill her responsibilities in these interconnected relationships. In all three novels in this “core trilogy” of the “*Jacques* cycle” (but also in Sand’s other novels), the theme of the responsibilities of individuals is important.

heroines, Sand demonstrates all the more the urgency of women's education. In a sense, Sand is proposing an alternative to *Emile's* Sophie through her creation of Adélaïde. As an excellent scientist herself, Adélaïde is able to assist her husband in his scientific endeavors. As she is equally versed in the arts, she can also give him pleasure by her intelligent company. If Rousseau truly believed that women's role and education is to better serve their husbands²⁵⁶ then Sand's Adélaïde would be both "une nouvelle Héloïse" and "une nouvelle Sophie."

III. METALITERARY THINKING IN VALVÈDRE THROUGH A NEW FRAME OF READING AND WRITING

In addition to enhancing Sand's reflection on societal questions, the wider reading frame that Sand establishes through her designation of *Valvèdre* as a rewriting of *Jacques* encourages readers to reflect on metaliterary concerns. Besides a very present metaliterary discourse running throughout this novel,²⁵⁷ it is through the configuration of elements in the "*Jacques* matrix" that

²⁵⁶ While Adélaïde is portrayed as both an exceptional scientist and artist, she does not use her knowledge to further her own reputation or launch a career. She is presented as a good partner who is very useful in assisting Valvèdre with his work and not seeking the limelight for herself. Valvèdre too is presented as a scientist who pursues knowledge for its own sake in advancing humanity and not as means to gain money or fame for himself. In helping Valvèdre then, Adélaïde is indirectly contributing to human and social progress. In this way, Sand shows how women's education not only contributes to the domestic happiness of their husband and family but also for the greater good of society.

²⁵⁷ The themes of artifice, authenticity, sincerity and verisimilitude are particularly pronounced in this novel. Many passages deal with the question of the performativity of language and how authenticity and sincerity can be portrayed and perceived as such. These ideas brought up in Sand's text would require a deeper analysis in themselves. Throughout the text for instance, Francis poses the question of poetic eloquence. On the one hand, he suggests that poetic eloquence can be perceived as the expression of true emotion in the sense where a character inspired by love for instance, suddenly becomes "a poet." At other points in the novel however, he suggests the opposite opinion: he speaks of being all of sudden tongue tied under the influence of a strong passion. From this viewpoint, silence expresses truth rather than eloquence, read as empty rhetoric and therefore false. The metaliterary dimension of Sand's text is further enhanced by her use of symbols; several episodes in Sand's story center around a precious sapphire mistaken for a fake one for instance; other episodes concern disguise and mistaken identities. Francis himself, in his narration, moreover, constantly points out his bad faith and dishonest ruses.

Sand has us reflect on the autonomy of the literary text. In this sense, *Valvèdre* further develops the concept of “vérité poétique” Sand had expressed in her 1834 article, “A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*.”²⁵⁸ As I argued in Chapter Three, *Jacques*, flaunting the artifice of fictional representation through its numerous intertextual allusions, upholds the autonomy of the literary text and the liberty of the artist-creator theorized in the 1834 article. *Valvèdre*, while continuing a metaliterary dialogue with *Jacques*, engages with the ideas expressed in the movement, “l’art pour l’art” becoming more and more predominant in the 1850’s and 1860’s.

Calling for Larger Conceptual Frames

To a great extent, *Valvèdre* can be read as George Sand’s own vision of the autonomy of literature in response to the period of its composition. Defending the autonomy of art is central to George Sand’s conception of literature, but the author makes it clear in *Valvèdre* that her vision of this autonomy is not the same as that of the “l’art pour l’art” movement, which is becoming more and more important in the 1860’s.²⁵⁹ In her novel, Sand shows that her artistic choices should not be read as an adherence to any aesthetic ideology or a belief in the superiority of any aesthetics. On the contrary, the author demonstrates her literary choices as uniquely dictated by the individual situations she is trying to show in her novels and the effect she is trying to create.

Right from the start, Sand’s *Valvèdre* demonstrates that it will focus on the question of the aesthetics of the novel and the choices authors have before them. The author does not begin

²⁵⁸ See my Chapters Two and Three regarding these concepts.

²⁵⁹ What is known as the “mouvement parnassien” appears around the middle of the 19th century. This movement resulted from the ideas of “l’art pour l’art” that Gautier had expressed in his 1835 preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. The development of the “l’art pour l’art” movement becomes increasingly extreme and pronounced in its focus on form and the rejection of any social or political engagement on the part of the artist. The name “Parnasse” itself appears in 1866 when the editor Alphonse Lemerre publishes *Le Parnasse contemporain*. The publication becomes the symbol of this movement.

her story right away but launches a discussion about the technical details and questions that a writer must consider when beginning a story. *Valvèdre* opens by what appears as the voice of Sand the author apologizing for imprecision in the story she is going to tell us: “Des motifs faciles à apprécier qui figureront dans ce récit, le lecteur voudra bien n’exiger de moi aucune précision géographique” (3). This direct first-person address to the reader combined with the reference to the pronoun, “moi” seem to confirm our impressions regarding the speaker’s identity. We therefore are at first led to believe that Sand herself is telling us that she has been obliged to conceal the real names of the places portrayed in her story in order to protect the identities of its protagonists. Naturally then, we are inclined to read the novel’s second sentence as spoken by the author herself—“Il y a plusieurs manières de raconter une histoire” (3). At the same time, the expositional quality of the impersonal construction, “il y a,” in conjunction with the promise of technical details, combine to give the opening a feeling of impartiality, and hints furthermore at Sand’s own aesthetic ideology and positioning as an author.

The opening pages of *Valvèdre* focus almost entirely on examining in a rational, objective manner the aesthetic approaches available to an author. Aside from the brief mention of the “moi” in the opening sentence, Sand does not use the first person at all until the second page of her novel. Thus we have the impression of listening to a sort of “author-professor” simply expounding on the “manières de raconter une histoire,” as this narrator enumerates the advantages of different aesthetic approaches. The narrator-author begins by explaining a realist aesthetic and its advantages in capturing details describing reality and precise geographic locations: “Celle qui consiste à vous faire parcourir une contrée attentivement explorée et fidèlement décrite est, sous un rapport, la meilleure” (3). The use of the passive voice in combination with the formal (and slightly stiff) sounding demonstrative pronoun, “celle qui”

establishes a certain distance as though the authorial persona were merely listing and analyzing the principles of art, presented as scientifically established categories and theories. The impression given is that of observing a professor carefully dissect an entity as the narrator expands on the merits of detailed description: “c’est un des côtés par lesquels le roman, cette chose si longtemps réputée frivole, peut devenir une lecture utile, et mon avis est que, quand on nomme une localité réellement existante, on ne saurait la peindre trop consciencieusement” (3.). In designating the novel as “cette chose” rather than a carefully crafted art form or a work she has a personal stake in, Sand’s narrator-author continues to give us the impression that literature is just a phenomenon based on the execution of formal elements and techniques. The phrase, “un des côtés” further contributes to the sense that we are solely analyzing the formation of a material construct.

From another standpoint, the focus on aesthetic concerns combined with a seemingly distant authorial voice can be read as literary posturing. In focusing on form in such an abstract manner, Sand is, in a sense, adopting through this authorial persona a “l’art pour l’art” stance, especially as the narrative voice goes on to express a preference for an aesthetics rejecting a realist stance. Right after his analysis of the advantages of a realist aesthetics, the narrator-author surprises us, “mais l’autre manière, qui, sans être de pure fantaisie, s’abstient de préciser un itinéraire et de nommer le vrai lieu des scènes principales, est parfois préférable pour communiquer certaines impression reçues” (3-4). The choice of an aesthetics affirming the autonomy of art free from the constraints of any representation of reality in conjunction with the idea of the independence of the author-creator echoes certain principles of “l’art pour l’art.”

This stance, too, reveals itself to be a disguise, for Sand makes clear in the next few sentences that her novel will not be about formal, metaliterary concerns divorced from any

moral, social, or philosophical message. The illusion of an authorial voice giving us a lesson about the abstract principles governing her art is quickly dispelled and immediately re-contextualized for we learn that what we just read in the opening paragraphs was not the author speaking but the narrator. Right after the abstract exposition of literary principles, Sand's narrator speaks about his own personal case in explaining the reasons behind his choice of literary aesthetics: "je ne serais pas libre de choisir entre ces deux méthodes, c'est l'histoire d'une passion subie, bien plus qu'expliquée, que je me propose de retracer ici. Cette passion souleva en moi tant de troubles, qu'elle m'apparaît encore à travers certains voiles" (4). This new information therefore reframes the opening passage. What we had taken for an abstract exposition of literary principles was in fact Sand's hero considering the choices open to him in narrating the adulterous adventure he had lived twenty years ago. The opening reflections we heard were, on the contrary, Francis' attempts to discern the best approach in conveying an emotionally charged story with a moral message—throughout the novel, we will hear the protagonist condemn the immorality and perversity of his younger self.

In short, Sand's carefully crafted introduction to her novel *Valvèdre* reveals itself to be the author's illustration of her nuanced position regarding the autonomy of the novel. By creating this initial confusion around her narrator's identity, Sand draws attention to the duality of her narrator's role in addition to the duality of her narrative project. On the one hand, Sand suggests her own sympathies to certain principles of the "l'art pour l'art" movement, in its focus on form and its defense of the novel's autonomy. Formal, aesthetic, and metaliterary reflections are a key point of the Sand corpus, as I have signaled. On the other hand, by subsuming these reflections and incorporating them within her diegesis, she distances herself from a "l'art pour l'art" ideology overly focused on form and aesthetics. The execution and revelation of Sand's

deceptive narratorial pose early in the novel reveals itself in this way not as a gratuitous literary joke playing only on form but as a metaliterary one purposely signaling the author's own ideological stance in *Valvèdre*. That is to say, Sand's 1861 novel's concentration on metaliterary and aesthetic concerns is not an end in itself: *Valvèdre* is about telling a story, but within a story—the metaliterary lesson is incorporated within the diegesis and closely intertwined with it.

In *Valvèdre*, Sand suggests that the story to be told is equally as important as the examination of techniques used to build it. Going back to Francis' explanation regarding his preference for another aesthetics, we see that his selection is not an abstract ideological choice but it is a decision closely intertwined and determined by the type of story he wishes to tell: “mais l'autre manière, qui, sans être de pure fantaisie, s'abstient de préciser un itinéraire et de nommer le vrai lieu des scènes principales, est parfois préférable pour communiquer certaines impressions reçues” (3-4). We will learn a few lines later that the “certaines impressions reçues” Francis mentions refers to the story of an adulterous passion he wishes to communicate. The discussion of technical concerns are therefore subordinate, and aesthetic approaches are presented more as tools to convey with optimal precision the sentiments he wishes to portray. What's more, in direct opposition to a “l'art pour l'art ideology,” Sand's opening suggests already, through the traces of remorse expressed by Francis, that this tale of the prodigal son conveys a moral message. The clues dropped by the narrator on the second page—“cette passion souleva en moi tant de troubles” (4), “ma vie durant ces jours terribles” (4)—reach a climactic revelation on the following page. Recounting to us the day of his departure from the family home, Francis makes it clear that his story will be a moral tale of regret: “Ma mère pleura; mais elle me cacha ses larmes, et je partis: hélas! pour quels écueils de la vie morale!” (5). In mentioning his mother's tears in conjunction with the interjection “hélas,” the metaphor of a

shipwreck introduced by “écueils de la vie,” and the addition of the adjective, “morale,” Francis foreshadows the tragic events of his own story; by taking away any possible suspense or uncertainty regarding his own fate, Sand’s character thus puts the entire emphasis of his story on its moral dimension.²⁶⁰

For a Literary Aesthetics Not Circumscribed by Literary Ideology

While it is true that Francis’ metaliterary discourse is directly related to the telling of his own story, it is also true that his reflections are not entirely circumscribed by this story. By having us mistake the voice of Sand’s narrator as her own at the beginning of the novel, the author is, in effect, suggesting to us that she is also speaking to us through Francis and that we should understand that these metaliterary reflections are also hers. In effect, in *Valvèdre*, her protagonist’s choice of a literary aesthetic and thus Sand’s own, can be identified as the aesthetics of the “vérité poétique” outlined in her 1834 article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*.”²⁶¹ Francis’ choice of an aesthetic that “s’abstient de préciser un itinéraire et de nommer le vrai lieu des scènes principales” coincides with the ideas expressed in that article. Just as the aesthetics described in *Valvèdre* eschews “pure fantasie,” Sand’s 1834 concept of “vérité poétique” admits only an indirect tie to reality. Whether or not these aesthetics are linked, Sand’s opening to *Valvèdre* makes clear that her choice is not to align herself with any one school of

²⁶⁰ These expressions of regret with their melodramatic quality are also clichés of Romanticism. Francis’ narration of his own experiences as a young man aspiring to live “romanesque” adventures and his subsequent regret can therefore be read as a critique of the pitfalls of Romanticism (I thank Thelma Jurgrau for pointing this out to me.).

²⁶¹ Essentially, Sand’s concept of “vérité poétique,” discussed in Chapter Three, refers to the idea that the reality of art is a reality that is separate from our own, and therefore, one cannot reduce a work of art to the person or the personal opinions of the artist-creator. At the same time, while this reality of art only obeys its own internal logic, it is a reality that can be influenced by our own since it is also through the lens of our own experience and knowledge of reality that the writing and reading processes take place. Sand’s concept of the autonomy of art therefore cannot be reduced to a “l’art pour l’art” stance.

aesthetics over another. First of all, the “*autre manière*” is not named, and second, the author, in clarifying her preference for a particular one is careful to add, “*parfois*” to modify her adjective “*préférable*.” In this way, through Francis, Sand indicates that choice depends on both time and circumstance.

What is essential to recognize in Sand’s explanations of the different aesthetic approaches an author may choose from is that she presents them in relative terms and not as absolute values. She shows us both approaches in the emotional context best suited to them: “*La première sert assez bien le développement graduel des sentiments qui peuvent s’analyser; la seconde laisse à l’élan et au décousu des vives passions un chemin plus large*” (4). Sand is essentially arguing for a more nuanced view in artistic matters, rather than a hierarchical one. Moreover, we will remember that when discussing the advantages of realism, Sand suggested that the dominance of this movement is associated with a certain period in the novel’s history, not as an eternal position due to its superiority over other approaches.²⁶² In this way, Sand reminds readers that other literary schools, though less dominant at present, are just as valid.

What is central to notice in these opening pages of *Valvèdre* is precisely the manner in which George Sand enters the debates on literary aesthetics. Rather than proposing or defending one at the expense of another, she navigates them through the notion of artistic autonomy and authenticity. On the one hand, in presenting the advantages of each approach, she is defending the liberty of the artist to choose the optimal approach for his work, free from the constraints and pressures of any aesthetic movement. On the other hand, her description seems to suggest, curiously, a sort of autonomy of the literary text as almost having a life of its own. Francis’ phrasing seems to imply that the aesthetic means will emerge naturally from the specific

²⁶² According to Margaret Cohen, after 1848, realism has more or less won out against the sentimental social novel.

situation one is attempting to portray, as well as independently from the author's volition: "D'ailleurs, je ne serais pas libre de choisir entre ces deux méthodes, car c'est l'histoire d'une passion subie, bien plus qu'expliquée, que je me propose de retracer ici" (4). By employing the negation "je ne serais pas libre de choisir," Francis is essentially putting the focus back on the literary object. According to him, the content and the effect one wants to convey will naturally dictate its form. At the same time, this "autonomous" poetics is dictated by the felt experience of life,²⁶³ for the written account of his story is intimately linked to the passion he is attempting to portray. Sand demonstrates in this way the nuances behind the concept of "vérité poétique" she expressed in her 1834 article: while art is an autonomous, independent construct, it is not isolated from the diversity of life and human experiences. For this reason, abstract aesthetic debates are irrelevant if focus is not put directly on the unique case to be written about. As infinite and varied as human experiences can be, so too should be art that captures the impressions of this subjectivity of the artist-creator. At the end of the day, it is the direct reading experience that counts, and knowing that, as author-creator, one has employed the optimal tools for conveying the impressions, emotions, and details one wants to get across.

Francis's explanations about the choice of his literary aesthetics reveal Sand's rationale for rejecting a rigid alignment to any specific aesthetic movement. His description of the period he wishes to convey is intended to convince the reader that a realist aesthetic would be inappropriate because his life at the time was so troubling that he can't remember many specific details:

Il y eut même des jours, des semaines peut-être, où je vécus sans bien savoir où j'étais. Je me garderai donc de reconstruire, par de froides recherches ou par de

²⁶³ We may remember that Sand in 1834 wrote, "la vérité poétique du tableau n'a rien à faire avec les institutions et les passions qui servent à l'encadrer" (Szabó, *Préfaces I* 41).

laborieux efforts de mémoire, les détails d'un passé où tout fut confusion et fièvre en moi comme autour de moi. (4)

Through Francis, Sand effectively highlights the superfluousness of literary debates in claiming how futile, counterintuitive, and irrational they are. As human experiences can vary so greatly, it would be unreasonable to expect one aesthetic ideology to fit all cases. Rather than denaturalize a story to fit an aesthetic ideology, Sand suggests that it is better to choose an ideological frame adapted to fit the content and the effect that the writer wishes to create. In the passage cited above, Francis uses his phrasing to convey just how denaturalizing and alienating doing otherwise would be: the designation of “froides recherches” here is pitted against the “fièvre” with which he associates this period. It would therefore make no sense to undertake the reconstruction of cold, exterior details when this period was lived as “une fièvre en moi comme autour de moi.” By the same token, undertaking “laborieux efforts de mémoire” to capture a period lived under the sign of total confusion and disorientation would not convey its essence. Walking us through his reasoning, Francis declares, “il ne sera peut-être pas mauvais de laisser à mon récit un peu de ce désordre et de ces incomplètes notions qui furent ma vie durant ces jours terribles” (4).

Through Francis, Sand reminds us that literary aesthetics are ultimately just modes of representation and tools to be used. A certain literary aesthetic may be in fashion in a given period, but this does not mean that it is superior to others, or that it should dominate and constrain other modes of representation. What I called in *Jacques* the “effet de textuel” that I pointed out in Chapter 3 seems to express the principles of “l'art pour l'art,” but read in conjunction with *Valvèdre*, we see that Sand's view is more nuanced. Upholding the autonomy of art is not necessarily aligning oneself with “l'art pour l'art,” but freeing art from any attempt to constrain its aesthetics. Finally, the choice of an aesthetic approach means reflecting on the

best manner to achieve the results one is aiming for and letting the optimal approach “emerge by itself” through the “internal logic” of what one wants to convey.

Reflecting on the Mechanics of Rewriting

For an author interested in expressing precise nuances of meaning, the interpretational frame created by her designation of a number of novels rewriting *Jacques* allows Sand to direct the reader’s attention to the treatment of isolated “micro” details that might have seemed gratuitous and to the way they are played out differently in each novel of the “*Jacques* cycle.” This intertextual “micro” focus not only allows Sand to create new nuances of meaning, it also magnifies the mechanisms at work in the poetics of a text.

In *Valvèdre*, reading Francis’ attempt to seduce Alida through his playing of the oboe takes on additional levels of meaning and nuance when read as Sand’s “transposition” of the equivalent oboe episode in her 1834 novel. The “*décalage*” between this scene and the “horizons d’attente” of the reader based on their knowledge of Octave’s successful ruse to seduce Fernande takes on an especially metaliterary dimension when read in light of Sand’s reflections on the autonomy of fiction played out in *Jacques*.²⁶⁴ In this episode, Francis, like Octave in *Jacques*, is confident he can seduce Alida through playing his oboe.²⁶⁵ As we shall see, by inducing her

²⁶⁴ See my discussions in Chapter 3 of Sand’s “performance” in *Jacques* of her reflections on the autonomy of literature read in light of her article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*.” The metaliterary aspect of this scene is further reinforced by both Francis’ ongoing critical commentary of his own expectations and performance during this scene as well as by the different artistic means he uses to seduce Alida: music, acting, and poetry. Moreover, at the end of this scene, he hands Alida a published collection of his own poetry which he presents as the work of an anonymous poet, after telling us that he carried this volume in his baggage along with a pirated copy of a recent novel bought in Geneva. See p. 58, *Valvèdre*. By slipping in the image of a pirated copy of a novel, Sand brings up the theme of copying—good copying as opposed to bad copying, and by extension, I would add, it also reminds us of the idea of rewriting.

²⁶⁵ Among wind instruments, one should note that the oboe is the instrument of serenades. Mozart’s *Serenades* written for wind instruments is an example. There are often important solo passages for the oboe in particular. As another side remark: Robert Schumann wrote some “Romances” for oboe and piano. (I thank Sabine Beutin for this information.). However, in literature, the guitar is traditionally the instrument associated with the lover serenading

readers into error, Sand provokes them to reflect on the meaning behind their initial interpretations, while also encouraging them to hypothesize about the new situation introduced and the purpose of this deceptive rewriting.

The initial oboe sequence in *Valvèdre* is at first made to resemble a specific episode in her 1834 novel. In the original episode, Fernande had been scared and troubled because it was a dark, humid night and the gardener had claimed to have seen a ghost the night before. However, as she tells her friend Clémence, on hearing Octave's oboe, she forgot all her fears: "Je n'ai d'abord songé qu'au plaisir de l'écouter" (158). Despite all likelihood, Fernande, under the spell of this music, automatically assumes that her husband Jacques is playing. Sand underlines the impossibility of this fact, for just before this passage she has her heroine tell us that Jacques and Sylvia had gone out specifically to survey some work in a neighboring farm property (158). This reason coupled with her knowledge of Jacques' unromantic nature should have raised the alarm for Fernande—that it was not her husband standing underneath her balcony and serenading her with an oboe! Nevertheless, since Octave succeeded in charming Fernande, we therefore expect that Francis will be similarly successful. We are taken off guard by Sand's twist of events in her 1861 novel.

In *Valvèdre*, moreover, Francis carefully calculates his chances of charming Alida through his music while making it seem he is not playing specifically for her. Believing himself to be clever and irresistible, Francis expects to be congratulated on his performance, for he has thought through all the possibilities: "Ma porte était assez éloignée de celle de madame de Valvèdre pour que ma musique ne troublât pas trop son sommeil, si elle dormait, et, si, elle ne

his loved one. The oboe, in this sense, seems rather "agrammatical" and even ridiculous juxtaposed to the instrument one would expect.

dormait pas... elle s'informerait peut-être de l'agréable virtuose" (57). We sense especially Francis' smug though naïve pretension in believing that no one can see through his ruse and imagining himself an "agréable virtuose" that any young woman would wish to meet. To his mortification, however, it is not Alida but her valet de chambre who arrives precisely at the very moment when Francis considers he is playing his supreme passage. As he tells us, it is "au beau milieu de ma plus belle mélodie" that Alida's servant arrives, and asks him to refrain from playing because his lady is not feeling well. Particularly humiliating is the phrasing with which Alida's valet de chambre asks this favor: "si monsieur ne tient pas absolument à faire ses études dans une auberge, il y a madame qui est très souffrante, et qui demande en grâce à monsieur..." (57). The contrast between Francis' expectations and the pathetic outcome is inherently humorous but its comical effect is further amplified by the echo of Octave's successful seduction of Fernande.

What Francis considers his most sublime musical phrase is not only taken for just a banal practice session, but as almost a torment for the woman he believed he could easily seduce. The somewhat excessive preciosity in the turn of the phrase, "demande en grâce à monsieur," further rubs in this unforeseen humiliation. On reflecting on this modification, we realize that while this turn of events differs from the equivalent episode in *Jacques*, it actually stays true in spirit to her model; in Sand's 1834 novel, Octave is constantly mocking himself and reminding us sadly that he is only a ridiculous rendition of the heroes and villains he aspires to be. Here in *Valvèdre*, this actualization of Octave's lucid understanding of himself is performed before us.

In "miscopying" the oboe episode in *Jacques*, Sand is, in effect, signaling that she is copying something different from the diegetic details of a text. On the one hand, showing us Francis' failure in seducing Alida could be read as Sand giving us a lesson in capturing the

poetics of a text—from this angle, her *Valvèdre* is a close rewriting of *Jacques*, because it is a rewriting based on the character and essence of a work, and not the exact copying of surface details, such as the exact events or “plot” details staged in her model text. In this way, Sand’s configuration highlights the metaliterary dimension in *Jacques*; she is copying the theoretical and aesthetic principles expressed in *Jacques*. Just as she gave us “une mauvaise copie” of Saint-Preux in her *Jacques*, here too, she gives us “une mauvaise copie” of her Octave.

Configurative Humor through Showing the Master’s Hand

In *Valvèdre*, the “overdetermination” of the diegetic variants George Sand stages before us, one after another, flaunts the artifice of these variants themselves and thus further hammers out her point regarding the autonomy of the literary text and the liberty of the artist-creator. In a surprise move, Sand replays the twist in plot she has just staged. Less than fifteen minutes after the incident just discussed, Alida sends her servant back to Francis and asks him to resume his playing. We therefore anticipate once again the success of Francis’ seduction attempt, believing that this time Sand will really satisfy us with the course of events we had originally expected. We interpret his seeming “reversion” to the anticipated sequence as Francis’ change in fortune, as a sign that Alida has indeed been charmed by Francis’ oboe playing, and that her initial rejection may have simply been an act of “coquetterie.” In fact, we are only set up for another sleight of hand, and we fall into error a second time.

As Francis recounts the events that unfold, Sand gives us one more alternative “ending”: “Madame de Valvèdre me remerciait beaucoup, et, ne pouvant dormir malgré mon silence, elle m’autorisait à reprendre mes études musicales” (61). Sand thus hands us a complete overturning of the power dynamics portrayed in *Jacques*: the seducer not only fails, but is told he can go back to his musical practice. Thus, Francis endures the supreme humiliation of a pretentious

seducer; what he had considered his irresistible mastery of the music of seduction is received as merely the practice session of an amateur.

Nevertheless, right when we have given up on ever seeing Francis attain his goal, Sand resumes the sequence of events we originally expected. Ironically, in one last masterful move, the author reestablishes in her own “copy” of this oboe sequence the same “logistic” function of the oboe incident in *Jacques*. Although the means are not the same, since Francis does not charm Alida directly through his oboe playing, the diegetic implication is the same as in *Jacques*: Francis establishes first direct contact with the woman he aims to seduce through his oboe playing, just as Octave did in Sand’s 1834 novel. Therefore, despite the comic element, Francis’ enterprise, is, in this sense, a success. Right after this episode, Alida takes the occasion to ask the young man for a book to read. Rather than music, it is through a book of his own love poetry, presented incidentally (and symbolically) as the publication of an anonymous poet, that Francis begins to seduce Valvèdre’s wife. The heavy insistence with which Sand purposely breaks from the equivalent event in her “*Jacques* cycle,” coupled with Francis’ final gesture in handing a book for Alida to read (reminding us in this way that we are reading a book given us by Sand-the-author),²⁶⁶ therefore makes us reflect on the logic governing a literary text and, by the same token, the concept of rewriting.

Essentially through this oboe episode, Sand displays a selection of alternate configurations of the original seduction scene. If we are aware that *Valvèdre* is a rewriting of *Jacques*, we anticipate that Francis will reproduce Octave’s success; we expect a replica but we get a reversal. When Sand “gives” Francis a second chance by sending Alida’s servant back with a new message, we think this time the hero’s plan will be completed, but it is aborted. Finally,

²⁶⁶ See also footnote 264.

after having been thrown off twice by the author, just when we have stopped expecting anything, Francis reaches his goal but through an entirely different means than Octave. Through her handling of the oboe episode, Sand makes us feel the manipulative power and the freedom to dictate the rules of her literary universe that she enjoys as an author.

Tapping into the Potentiality of Nuanced Details

Even details seemingly as minute as the ages of George Sand's characters in the core trilogy of her "*Jacques* cycle" are carefully orchestrated to make us reflect on the poetics of a literary text in addition to tapping into the interpretational potential a configuratively focused reading frame has to offer. Despite using the same configuration of characters in *Jacques* as in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand does not replicate in *Valvèdre* the same combination of age differences. A close examination of these divergences reveals that they are central in conveying the author's critique of women's education.

In *Valvèdre*, Sand changes a number of details in regards to the age ratios of her characters. While the eponymous hero is older than his wife, Alida, the age difference is not extreme: Sand's hero is forty years old while Alida is thirty. In both *Jacques* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, there is a large difference in age between the spouses; Jacques is thirty-five while Fernande is eighteen; in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, M. de Wolmar is fifty while Julie is only in her late teens. The age rapport between the lovers in *Valvèdre* is on the other hand inverted from the combinations shown in *Jacques* and Rousseau's novel. Francis is much younger than Alida, for at twenty-three years old, he is seven years younger than she. In *Jacques*, Octave is twenty-four years old, and thus, he is six years older than Fernande but he is a good deal younger than Sylvia. Similarly, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Saint-Preux is only a few years older than Julie. These age

discrepancies would therefore seem to be purposeful and not gratuitous if one reads *Valvèdre* with the age configurations of the other two novels in mind.

A closer look at George Sand's departure from these age combinations suggests that these choices are made to better express the poetics of her fictional world in *Valvèdre*. When we look at the interactions between the characters in her 1861 novel, we discover that, despite the numerical differences in age with their models, there is little difference in regards to the portrayal of her characters' maturity in relation to the originals on which they are based. Alida, despite being much older than Francis, is presented as equally immature, and, at times, even more so: the only models of behavior she believes to be worth aspiring to are the overly idealized romantic love stories she reads in novels. By making Alida much older than in the configurative combinations of *Jacques* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand is able to better highlight her immaturity; Sand's thirty-year-old heroine is presented as the equal of her twenty-three-year old lover. In a similar way, Valvèdre, although only ten years older than his wife, acts with a wisdom well beyond this ten-year age difference, and thus, his biological age only underlines his maturity. In this respect too, Valvèdre's exceptional maturity stresses all the more his wife's extraordinary immaturity, and consequently, the enormous gap in the "psychological age" between the spouses. Finally, at the end of the novel, we discover that after his wife's death, Valvèdre marries his soulmate, Adélaïde, who is twenty years younger than him. This configurative departure from the matrix functions therefore in the same manner as discussed above. By making Adélaïde twenty years old, Sand underlines her young heroine's unusual maturity: Adélaïde is the perfect partner for her forty-year-old husband.

In bringing out the differences in age and age ratios, a configuratively focused reading frame allows for an enhancement of Sand's critique of women's education. As mentioned earlier,

the maturity of Sand's characters is linked to their education. By inverting the age ratio between Alida and Francis, Sand underlines the catastrophic consequences that a poor education can bring: Alida lacks even the maturity of an immature young man, seven years younger, to the point that the latter is able to take advantage of her boredom and seduce her. Her situation therefore stands out all the more compared to the situation between Adélaïde and Valvèdre. Because of Adélaïde's superior education, she is Valvèdre's equal despite their twenty-year age difference.

Read through yet another angle, the difference in age configuration in *Valvèdre* serves to emphasize the importance of natural affinities in lasting relationships Sand had brought out in her 1834 novel. By stressing Valvèdre and Adélaïde's affinities along with Adélaïde's extreme maturity, Sand highlights in this rewriting of *Jacques* that marriage should be based above all on compatibility, and that age is not the main factor in such attraction.²⁶⁷

In short, what would appear at first to be Sand's departures from her matrix/matrices ultimately reveal themselves as means to bring out the essence of her original text and its own "vérité poétique." By diverging from the age configurations of the characters in *Jacques* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Sand, as with her alteration of the oboe sequence, reminds us here that the poetics of a literary text constitute a "performative" truth determined by the artist-creator and constructed according to the internal logic of the text. At the same time, "fictional truth" is dependent on the clues left by the author for the reader, as it relies on the active participation of the reader, who must engage with the text to decipher its meaning.

²⁶⁷ At different moments in her text, Sand has Francis describe how he notices a vague attraction between Adélaïde and Valvèdre though both seem to sublimate it.

Essentially, through the creation of the wider reading frame of the “*Jacques* cycle,” Sand draws attention to intertextuality itself and the way it functions in the reading-writing process. While one could, to a certain extent, read a work as an isolated unit with its own internal coherence and autonomous signification, one’s reading is nevertheless colored by the memories of one’s past readings and knowledge of literature. George Sand’s choice of an intertextual matrix—rewriting Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* principally and Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* more covertly—therefore re-centers the reader’s attention on intertextuality as the very basis of reading, writing, and interpreting. *Valvèdre* and the “*Jacques* cycle” make a powerful argument for an intertextually and configuratively sensitive mode of reading, which can bring out hidden layers of meaning, as well as enhance the pleasure of the reading experience.

IV. INTERDISCIPLINARY THOUGHT

Above all, the “*Jacques* cycle” and especially Sand’s “core trilogy” of rewritings, are about interdisciplinary approaches, polyphonic points of view, and thinking through art in a nuanced, comprehensive manner. In this sense, the intertextual consciousness that Sand has introduced within her own corpus reflects her deep belief in developing wider frames of both reading and thinking. Far from being just metaliterary reflections, the literary debates opened up in *Valvèdre* reveal themselves finally as a strategy to encourage interdisciplinary thought and thus free art from the conceptual constraints any ideological movement may put on it.

The Ideology of “l’Art pour l’Art”

In the years leading up to the 1860’s, the ideas of “l’art pour l’art” are gaining in force, and *Valvèdre* may be read in many ways as George Sand’s response to this ideology. The

concept of art as having no other end except for itself actually appeared much earlier, especially in the writings of Kant and Schiller in Germany, but only in the 1860's do these ideas fully become the official artistic movement known as Le Parnasse. Incidentally, 1861, the year of publication of Sand's *Valvèdre*, is a key year for the movement, for Catulle-Mendès founds the journal, *La Revue Fantaisiste*, around which the group of writers associated with "Le Parnasse" will form. Although the Parnasse movement officially comes into being only in 1866, with the publication of *Le Parnasse Contemporain*, the ideas of "l'art pour l'art" are already very much in vogue by this point. Charles Baudelaire's article, "Théophile Gautier," published in 1859, is a prime example of these ideas circulating in this period to which Sand's *Valvèdre* is reacting. Examining this article first will therefore help us understand the positioning of Sand's 1861 novel.

It is important to recognize that the ideas of "l'art pour l'art" had already been entering France as early as 1804 through writers familiar with the works of the German philosophers Kant and Schiller,²⁶⁸ but it is with Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* that one associates the ideas of the movement itself. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the ideas expressed in Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835)²⁶⁹ will become a rallying cry of the Parnasse movement emerging in the latter half of the 19th century. For authors invested in the movement, the author himself becomes a certain symbol and model of this literary ideal. Baudelaire's article on Gautier published in the journal *L'Artiste* on March 13, 1859 presents the

²⁶⁸ Benjamin Constant is often named as the first to have used the phrase, 'L'Art pour l'Art' already in 1804. Other French writers known to start diffusing these ideas are Victor Cousin as well as Madame de Staël. See especially Madame de Staël's writings in *De l'Allemagne* and Victor Cousin's *Cours de Philosophie de 1818*.

²⁶⁹ The preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* was written in 1834.

latter as the very incarnation of the ideal artist and expounds on the idea of art as having no other end except beauty itself.

Whereas Gautier's preface, in defense of the autonomy of art, simply rejects linking art to the notions of morality and utility, Baudelaire's more radical article goes further by erecting a whole theory limiting each type of spiritual quest to a specific goal. According to him, "Les différents objets de la recherche spirituelle réclament des facultés qui leur sont éternellement appropriées" (111). Ideally, these domains and their ends should be clearly delimited in order to achieve their optimal effect. Categorizing these spiritual goals ("facultés") as "le Vrai," "le Bien," and "le Beau," Baudelaire then pairs each with the domain most suited to it: "Le *Vrai* sert de base et de but aux sciences; il invoque surtout l'intellect pur.... Le *Bien* est la base et le but des recherches morales. Le *Beau* est l'unique ambition, le but exclusif du Goût" (112).²⁷⁰

What is essential to retain in Baudelaire's theorizing of this type of targeted spiritual quest is the notion of purity and hierarchy he adds to his concept. While "le Vrai," "le Bien," and "le Beau" may be closely associated, he nevertheless sees these three "facultés" as separate. Aiming for two or more of these values simultaneously as one's goal, would therefore dilute both the quest and the final result. Thus, an object or field of study (i.e., a science, an art form, a work) which seeks to fulfill more than one ideal—le Vrai, le Beau, or le Bien—would be considered less "noble" than one whose goal was more targeted. As Baudelaire puts it, "plus un objet réclame de facultés, moins il est noble et pur, plus il est complexe, plus il contient de bâtardise" (112).

²⁷⁰ While conceding that these end goals could overlap to a certain extent, he affirms nevertheless that for each type of spiritual quest, there is always one end goal more dominant than the other(s) (112) because more inherently aligned with the specific quest in question. For instance, he writes, "Bien que le Vrai soit le but de l'histoire, il y a une Muse de l'histoire, pour exprimer que quelques-unes des qualités nécessaires à l'historien relèvent de la Muse" (112).

In Baudelaire's model, any mixing of "facultés" and non-alignment between a domain and its appropriate "faculté," according to the categories he defined, would be an error. For this reason, he writes, "C'est vraiment, pour un esprit non entraîné par la mode de l'erreur, un sujet d'étonnement énorme que la confusion totale des genres et des facultés" (112). His theory thus calls for rectifying this chaos by delineating clear boundaries and categories for art as well as for other domains of knowledge.

In its most extreme form, such a principle of "l'art pour l'art" would theoretically constrain the artist/ poet from anything that could possibly enter into the domains of "le Vrai" and "le Bien." As we saw earlier, Baudelaire names the sciences and history as fields whose focus should be "le Vrai." Logically then, art should not enter into the domain of science or aim to communicate truth. In the same way, any art with a moral message or intent would be seen as corrupt, for it would be deviating from the absolute end goal. For Baudelaire, since art falls under the domain "le Goût," it should therefore only pursue beauty as its end. Such "l'art pour l'art" principles carried to their extreme would thus forbid any mixing at all between art and other domains for it would theoretically corrupt the ideal of art itself.

Not surprisingly, in speaking about poetry, which he presents as the purest form of art, Baudelaire absolutely condemns this art form from having any end except for itself, in its expression of beauty:

Si le poète a poursuivi un but moral, il a diminué sa force poétique; et il n'est pas imprudent de parier que son œuvre sera mauvaise. La poésie ne peut pas, sous peine de mort ou de déchéance, s'assimiler à la science ou à la morale ; elle n'a pas la Vérité pour objet, elle n'a qu'Elle-même. Les modes de démonstration de vérités sont autres et sont ailleurs. La Vérité n'a rien à faire avec les chansons. (113)

The principles of “l’art pour l’art” formulated by Baudelaire therefore systematize in a much more pronounced manner the separations between art and truth and between art and morality than Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. For Baudelaire, maintaining absolute boundaries between “Le Bien,” “Le Beau,” and “Le Vrai” is as crucial as delimiting the domains targeting each one of these faculties. As the phrase, “sous peine de mort ou de déchéance” demonstrates, “l’art pour l’art” principles laid out in his 1859 article forcefully condemn any mixing between poetry, science, or morality. The word, “déchéance” moreover suggests that any poetry expressing a moral goal or aiming to express any truth would be corrupt by its very nature. Similarly, Baudelaire refuses the idea that art should be useful and calls “l’idée d’utilité” (114) “la plus hostile du monde à l’idée de beauté” (114.). This theoretical base of “l’art pour l’art” therefore demands that the ideal poet and artist not only focus solely on the expression of beauty as the end goal but also actively reject any subject or domain which does not enter exclusively into this goal of aesthetic expression.

Responding to “l’Art pour l’Art”

Although George Sand does not name them, she clearly shows that she disagrees with the “l’art pour l’art” principles expressed by Baudelaire. In *Valvèdre*, the major scene of the debate against “l’art pour l’art” takes place during Francis’ second encounter with Valvèdre,²⁷¹ when the latter is passing through the mountains on his way to Brigg (139). On seeing the great scientist, Francis opens a discussion with him about “l’art pour l’art.” Before presenting Valvèdre’s arguments, Francis informs us that he was an enthusiastic proponent of the movement at the time

²⁷¹Francis had encountered Valvèdre for the first time when he witnessed the latter using his knowledge of the sciences to save a sick child (125-126). Because he met Valvèdre under these circumstances, Francis assumes that the savant is a country doctor. He does not learn Valvèdre’s name or identity until much later in the novel.

of this debate: “Je parlai avec abondance et conviction. Je ne rapporterai pas mes paroles, dont je ne me souviens guère et que le lecteur imaginera sans peine en se rappelant la théorie de l’art pour l’art, si fort en vogue à cette époque” (135). Although he tells us he will not directly state these principles, he affirms that Valvèdre’s responses are sufficient to show what he must have said: “La réponse de mon interlocuteur, qui m’est très-présente fera, d’ailleurs, suffisamment connaître le plaidoyer” (135). What is interesting here is how Sand not only leaves out all the arguments of “l’art pour l’art,” thus suggesting their relative unimportance, but tells us how, in contrast, Valvèdre’s have remained very present for him. The great “savant’s” first comment about “l’art pour l’art” as “une erreur funeste” is therefore implied as all the more significant, when we hear him declare to Francis: “Vous défendez votre Église avec ardeur et talent, me dit-il ; mais je regrette de voir toujours des esprits d’élite s’enfoncer volontairement dans une notion qui est une erreur funeste au progrès des connaissances humaines” (135). Expounding on his reasons for accusing the movement as pushing back human progress, Valvèdre contrasts this contemporary period with a healthier past where one held what he considers more progressive attitudes: “Nos pères ne l’entendaient pas ainsi; ils cultivaient simultanément toutes les facultés de l’esprit, toutes les manifestations du beau et du vrai” (135). In citing the use of all the faculties of the human mind and the embrace of all manifestations of beauty and truth as the healthier norm, Valvèdre shows he absolutely condemns the idea that art should focus exclusively on beauty.

Crucial to Sand’s framing of this debate is precisely the manner with which she situates it in a much larger context than a literary debate on aesthetics. On the one hand, Valvèdre’s arguments clearly counter the sort of “l’art pour l’art” theories expressed by Baudelaire’s article on Théophile Gautier; cultivating simultaneously “toutes les facultés de l’esprit” and “toutes les

manifestations du beau et du vrai” is presented by Valvèdre as a virtue as opposed to Baudelaire’s condemnation of it as an error (112). On the other hand, by purposely not specifying the principles that Valvèdre rejects, while expanding the debate beyond a literary context, Sand transforms the debate itself. In *Valvèdre*, “l’art pour l’art” is debated and framed through the context of interdisciplinary knowledge rather than as a debate on one literary aesthetic in comparison to another. George Sand’s actual demonstration against “l’art pour l’art” is presented precisely through the axis of science versus art.

Significantly, in Sand’s novel, Francis frames his meeting with the great scientist as an encounter between art and science. Just prior to his discussion with Valvèdre about “l’art pour l’art,” Francis had been searching for inspiration in nature in order to write what he hopes to be great poetry. On seeing Valvèdre, he presents himself as a “pauvre comédien ambulante” (131) who had just been reciting “un fragment de rôle” (131). When Sand’s hero tells the young man that he does not resemble an actor, Francis counters by reframing both their identities under the sign of their respective disciplines, “Pas plus que vous n’avez l’air d’un médecin de campagne. Pourtant vous êtes un disciple de la science, et moi, je suis un disciple de l’art” (131). Moreover, in their discussion, Francis not only insists on this dichotomy, but establishes each of their identities as the very representatives of their field; he refers to himself and Valvèdre as “les deux types que nous représentons” (132).

The debate between Valvèdre and Francis is not so much the condemnation of “l’art pour l’art” as an aesthetic movement but rather the condemnation of erecting barriers to human knowledge.²⁷² Through the course of their debate, Sand’s eponymous hero tells Francis that he

²⁷² This theme comes up too in *Le Dernier Amour*. See especially p. 254 where M. Sylvestre tries to take on Félicie’s education: “Je voulais lui prouver que la recherche du beau ne se divise pas en études rivales et en manifestations d’antagonisme, que Rossini et Newton, Mozart et Shakespeare, Rubens et Leibnitz, et Michel-Ange

does not believe in this separation between the disciplines, and expresses his conviction that true art is just as useful as science, “Les artistes m’ont toujours semblé aussi sérieux et aussi utiles que les savants quand ils sont vraiment artistes, et un grand esprit qui tiendrait également du savant et de l’artiste me paraîtrait le plus noble représentant du beau et du vrai dans l’humanité” (134). Central here is the affirmation of the utility of artists through the provision Valvèdre puts in his statement, “quand ils sont vraiment artistes.” While he does not specify what he means by “vraiment artistes,” his phrasing in the second half of his sentence implies what he considers the traits of a true artist. Since Valvèdre’s sentence begins with a statement concerning the value of artists, we understand that the second half of his sentence is, in fact, describing in greater detail his conception of a true artist. This “grand esprit” is thus semantically referring to the idea of a true artist; therefore, by “artiste,” Valvèdre means a certain openness of spirit, an openness to learning and profiting from all fields of knowledge regardless of the domain in which one finds them.

Particularly interesting in Valvèdre’s explanation is how he subverts the opposing dichotomy between art and science that Francis had tried to impose in their discussion. Sand’s eponymous hero defines the ideal artist as “un grand esprit” who would synthesize the two disciplines without giving preference to either. This is underlined by his usage of the adverb “également.” At the same time, the phrasing with which Valvèdre designates his ideal suggests that absolute beauty and truth require a balanced and complete knowledge in both domains of learning. In other words, what Baudelaire would consider “le Vrai” et “l’utile” are not exclusive to science, just as “le Beau” is not the sole domain of art.

et Molière, et tous les vrais génies, avaient marché où se complète l’harmonie des sublimes inspirations aussi droit les uns que les autres vers l’éternelle lumière.”

Noteworthy here is the poetic balance with which Valvèdre's phrase is composed. The weight and rhythm of the first half of his phrase is harmoniously balanced by that of the second half. Moreover, in the first half of Sand's clause, the three syllables of both "du savant" et "de l'artiste" are preceded by the verb "tenir," conjugated in the third person singular in the conditional mode. The second half of this clause therefore mirrors the construction of this first half: the substantives, "du beau" and "du vrai" are preceded here by the verb, "paraître," also conjugated in the third person singular in the conditional mode; we will note too the similarity of the phonemes "drait" in the verb "tiendrait" and "trait" in the verb, "paraîtrait." Equally important to notice is the care with which Sand chooses the syllabic sonority of her words: the three-syllable combination of "du savant," rather than, for instance, the four-syllable combination, "de l'érudit" or the five syllable one of "du scientifique." Choosing this combination keeps the syllabic, and thus rhythmic equality between the two identities Valvèdre is trying to establish as equals; rhythmic equality here therefore enhances the semantic equality he is creating. In the same way, the elegant two syllable combinations of "du beau" and "du vrai" balance each other²⁷³ while also echoing the syllabic equilibrium of "du savant" and "de l'artiste" in the first half of her clause. We have thus a perfect rhythmic equilibrium established between "du savant" and "de l'artiste," echoing that established between "du vrai" and "du beau."

Valvèdre's phrase captures in its sonority and construction a sense of the harmonious ideal he proposes. The structural composition of his phrase expresses the interdisciplinary synthesis he envisions, for here there is no grammatical or semantic opposition created between the identities of the "artiste" and the "savant;" they are literally placed together on the same side

²⁷³ We can imagine for instance a less perfect combination if Sand had chosen for instance, the four syllabic combination of "de la beauté" with the five syllabic combination of "de la vérité." Not only would these choices create a syllabic imbalance, the length of the words would simply interrupt the elegance of her phrase. No other solution can be as concisely elegant as her choice of "du vrai et du beau."

of Sand's clause. Likewise, there is no grammatical or semantic opposition created between "du beau" and "du vrai," as both words are placed together in the same half of her clause. Finally, in her hero's phrasing, the binary contrasting and opposing identities with which Francis frames his world view are subsumed in Valvèdre's unifying vision, which designates all mankind together under the substantive, "l'humanité." The rhythmic and accentual finality of the four conclusive syllables of "l'humanité" answer therefore in a perfect echo to the four syllables of "un grand esprit" with which Sand's clause began.

Interdisciplinary Performance: For a Synthesis of Human Knowledge

The force and beauty of Valvèdre's poetic description express his ideal, but they serve at the same time to reveal that Sand's hero is the very ideal he is illustrating. Valvèdre is a renowned scientist, known for his work in the natural sciences, but he is also known for his wisdom, generosity, and humanity. He is not a "mad" scientist lost in his own abstractions; while sharing his knowledge with other savants and furthering the knowledge of mankind, he also uses his knowledge and skills to help those in need. Francis tells us that his first encounter with Valvèdre was "dans un misérable chalet," (126) where he awoke to see this man whom he assumed to be a "petit médecin de campagne" (126) heal the extremely weakened, sick child he had seen the night before and had assumed would die. Valvèdre's words show him not just as a great scientist with a beautiful, generous soul, but as an equally great poet.²⁷⁴ In this way, Sand signals the superiority of her hero and his views and therefore suggests that we too should pay particular attention to his comments in the novel, especially his arguments here against "l'art pour l'art" in his debate with Francis.

²⁷⁴ In the "l'art pour l'art" debate Valvèdre has with Francis, the style of his phrases express the same sort of rhythmic equilibrium of the sentence I just analyzed. These pages read almost as poetry.

Sand's call for breaking down the barriers between fields of knowledge becomes more apparent as she has Valvèdre not only develop his argument, but essentially perform it through his own language. Giving his critique of poets who limit themselves only to knowledge of their own art, he writes:

Le lyriste, en général, se détourne de ces pensées, qui le mèneraient haut et loin: il ne veut faire vibrer que certaines cordes, celle de la personnalité avant tout ; mais voyez ceux qui sont vraiment grands ! Ils touchent à tout et ils interrogent jusqu'aux entrailles du roc. (137)

Again, what is central to recognize here is the poetic quality of Valvèdre's plea. Sand uses Valvèdre's language to portray how knowledge of other disciplines, especially science, can only enrich one's art. Contrary to Francis' claims that scientific details and what he considers dry science in its categorizations and measurements will harm the poetic inspiration, Valvèdre's imagery and enthusiasm demonstrate that being a scientist has not caused him to lose his poetic spark. In his speech to Francis, he incorporates metaphors and other figurative language to explain his logic. In saying that the poet, "ne veut faire vibrer que certaines cordes" (137), Valvèdre is using the metaphor of a string instrument such as a harp, for instance, to express the idea of inspiration; the harp, of course, is traditionally the symbolic instrument of the poet. He suggests thus that a poet, in closing himself off to other disciplines, is like a harpist refusing to make full use of his instrument by limiting himself to certain strings. Likewise, Sand's hero uses the language of poetry to describe the exploration of knowledge; the idea of geology is presented here not as an arid science but as the exploration of life itself. The science of the earth is personified, by the phrase "entrailles du roc." In this way, Sand's hero suggests that far from making nature dry and lifeless, the knowledge gained from the study of science brings nature to life all the more, and thus, can only enhance the work of a poet.

The rest of Valvèdre's argument to Francis either employs different metaphors mixing the study or practice of literature with a knowledge of the natural sciences, or uses lyrical language to talk about the study of science. When discussing the study of the natural sciences, he speaks, for instance, of "l'essor de la pensée" (136), "des mystères d'où s'épanouit la splendeur de la création" (136), "la source ineffable des éternels phénomènes" (137), and "la logique et la magnificence de Dieu" (137). Referring to the mysteries of nature, Valvèdre talks about the importance of deciphering "les divins hiéroglyphes" (137), and, in yet another passage, he mentions "l'histoire de la terre écrite en caractères profonds et indélébiles" (137.). Moreover, borrowing the idea of theatre, Valvèdre describes the "savant" as a "spectateur privilégié" (138) before the wonders of nature; speaking to Francis about the discoveries of astronomy, he tells him, "nous avons brisé la voûte de saphir de l'empyrée" (138). Valvèdre's speech clearly subverts Francis' categories by employing literary language to describe the study of science.

Countering Baudelaire's "l'Art pour l'Art" Principles

From another perspective, in "performing" the charm, passion, and marvel of science through language, what we could consider Valvèdre's "poem" counters Baudelaire's theories affirming the separation of "facultés" and their different natures. In creating a character who is both "savant" and poet and who demonstrates his artistic nature while speaking about science, Sand contradicts Baudelaire's vision of what "le Vrai" should be. Speaking about the incompatibility of poetry with the demonstration of truth, the latter had said, "La Vérité n'a rien à faire avec les chansons. Tout ce qui fait le charme, la grâce, l'irrésistible d'une chanson, enlèverait à la Vérité son autorité et son pouvoir" (113). Far from damaging this solemn gravity that Baudelaire attributes to the idea of truth and knowledge, Sand's Valvèdre shows that truth and knowledge also have another side; they can have their own charm and grace for these

qualities are not exclusive to the expression of art. In the same way, he shows that enthusiasm does not taint the dignity of intellectual pursuits; on the contrary, Valvèdre's enthusiasm brings out his admiration and awe before the eternal truths he experiences in the study of science. Rather, the poetic language he uses to describe the discoveries of science serves as an homage to science and asserts its authority. Similarly, the poetic quality of Valvèdre's improvised debate with Francis demonstrates what Sand would consider Baudelaire's error when he claims, "Froide, calme, impassible, l'humeur démonstrative repousse les diamants et les fleurs de la Muse; elle est donc absolument l'inverse de l'humeur poétique" (113). As the very incarnation of the inspiration of science and truth, Sand's protagonist is the absolute antithesis of Baudelaire's "l'art pour l'art" principles.²⁷⁵

Not only does Sand's language reveal Valvèdre to be a poet at the same time as he is a scientist, but Francis's comments describing Valvèdre's lyrical enthusiasm point to the latter as an inspired artist: "Mon nouvel ami parlait avec un charme extraordinaire ; sa voix et sa prononciation étaient si belles et son accent si doux, son regard avait tant de persuasion et son sourire tant de bonté, que je me laissai morigéner sans révolte." (138). Finally, to make his point that the barriers separating different disciplines are ultimately just artificial constructs that put obstacles on the quest for knowledge, he calls poets like Francis, because of their closed spirit, "savant incomplets systématiques, qui se ferment, de propos délibéré, les portes du temple, tandis que les esprits vraiment religieux en recherchent les sanctuaires et en étudient les divins hiéroglyphes" (136-137). For Sand, solely targeting certain domains of knowledge and

²⁷⁵ This whole "l'art pour l'art" debate Sand puts before us writes back so precisely at all of Baudelaire's points in his article on Gautier, one might suspect that she has this article in mind when she is writing this scene.

abstaining from others does not keep an artist pure in his spiritual quest for Art; on the contrary, it is keeping oneself blind from seeing the divine light of truth and its writings.

In barely naming “l’art pour l’art” in his discourse, Valvèdre is in essence extending his critique to all theories that put up barriers to knowledge. Refusing such constraining views, Sand’s hero tells Francis, “C’est que les notions sont faussées, comme je vous l’ai dit, et que les hommes d’intelligence s’amuse à faire des distinctions, des camps, des sectes dans la poursuite du vrai, si bien que ce qui est beau pour les uns ne l’est plus pour les autres” (137). While George Sand certainly has affinities for the “l’art pour l’art” movement’s affirmation of the autonomy of art, she cannot accept any dogmatic, divisive system that would limit both the expression and the exploration of knowledge. As her choice of the verb, “s’amuser,” shows, she considers such bickering not only harmful but childish. For this reason, George Sand refuses to take any clear-cut stance for or against any particular aesthetic movement (as we saw in the passages discussed earlier, the actual movement of “l’art pour l’art” is barely named), for, as Valvèdre calls them, these sects and camps are uniquely the “[t]riste résultat de la tendance exagérée aux spécialités” (137). Finally, Sand’s hero absolutely overturns Francis’ objection that knowing more about other domains and studying dry details would add nothing to his art. Rejecting the idea that the rigorous study of the sciences could be stifling for inspiration, Valvèdre gives his own perspective: “le poète qui chantera l’abeille ne perdra rien à la connaître dans tous les détails de son organisation et de son existence. Il prendra d’elle ainsi que de sa supériorité sur la foule des espèces congénères, une idée plus grande, plus juste et plus féconde.... L’examen attentif de chaque chose est la clef de l’ensemble” (140). For George Sand, a true artist understands that all knowledge is interrelated, and thus, knowledge in any domain will enrich art, and not just the knowledge of art itself or the “amour exclusif du Beau.” Breaking

down any perceived barriers between different domains is therefore crucial to the advancement of art.

CODA: *LE DERNIER AMOUR* AS "LE DERNIER MOT"

As the last novel in Sand's "core trilogy" of her "*Jacques* cycle," *Le Dernier Amour* holds a special status; in many ways, this 1866 novel can be read as Sand's "dernier mot" on both her vision of art and reflections on society. It is in this novel that Sand "reveals her cards" so-to-speak, naming *Jacques* as a key matrix in her whole literary corpus. It is also here that Sand gives us a summary of the most important themes and approaches in her work, while suggesting an evolution in her thinking. Centered, like *Jacques* and *Valvèdre*, on the questions of love, marriage, and adultery, as well as metaliterary reflections, *Le Dernier Amour* can be read to a great extent as the author's conclusions to all these questions. At the same time, these conclusions lead to yet other questions opening up other paths to explore, as Sand leads us from one frame of thinking to another. The last frontier of Sandian thought reveals itself, finally, as the abolishment of all frontiers.

The Art of Thinking

Right from the start, *Le Dernier Amour* demonstrates that it is a work looking beyond the boundaries of literature, and focusing on thinking through larger conceptual frames. This final configuration of Sand's "*Jacques* matrix" presents itself from its opening pages as a work focused on philosophical and moral considerations. The narrator recounting M. Sylvestre's story tells us: "C'est moins un roman qu'un exposé de situations analysées avec patience et retracées avec scrupule" (29). Emphasizing its "non-literary focus," he affirms, "Cela ne s'adresse donc

qu'au sens moral et philosophique du lecteur." Through her narrator, Sand makes us understand that the focus of this story of adultery is less on the story itself but rather on the reflections it opens up. Narrative and analytical frames are therefore carefully laid out to orient our reading of this "case study" of adultery towards a view of its larger theoretical dimension.

The question of adultery is addressed immediately from a theoretical standpoint in such a way as to show that there are many sides to this discussion. The novel opens with a conversation about what would be considered "un fait divers," not M. Sylvestre's story itself. Setting the scene, the narrator tells us that it is over the course of a dinner conversation that a group of friends hears about a murder in the community: "Un fermier des environs, que nous connaissons tous pour un homme honnête et sensé, avait tué sa femme dans un accès de jalousie trop fondée" (25). Significantly, despite the fact that the whole dinner party knows this man, he is presented in anonymous terms, for we never learn his name. What we have here is in the style of an item that one would read in a newspaper. The case is that of an ordinary man, neither violent nor deranged: the murderer is described as "un homme honnête et sensé." By framing this "everyman" as someone known by the group, Sand signals that her story be read as one that concerns everyone, and thus by extension, the reader. We hear the story along with the guests at the dinner table.

Underscored is the complexity and difficulty of judging the parties involved as well as the appropriate punishment. Due to the great divergence of opinions, the narrator notes that the dinner guests can neither reach common grounds as to the punishment of the adulterous spouse nor determine the guilt or innocence of the husband who committed the murder: "Je fus surpris de voir comme il était diversement apprécié par des esprits que semblaient relier entre eux, à beaucoup d'autres égards, les mêmes idées, les mêmes sentiments, les mêmes principes" (25).

Important to note here is the repetition of the adjective, “mêmes” expressing “sameness” and resemblance. The insistence on “même” brings out how unusual this outcome is for this homogenous group normally holding the same opinions, having the same tastes, and probably having similar backgrounds. Moreover, Sand tells us that these members of the same community are a group of friends for they are described as being at “un repas qui réunit de vrais amis” (25). The phrase, “vrais amis” stressing the bonds of friendship among these friends thus contrasts all the more with the fact that they cannot even agree on such a fundamental issue of society revolving around the core values of love, marriage, and justice. Describing the varied reactions he observes, the narrator tells us:

L'un disait que le meurtrier avait agi avec toute la lucidité de son jugement, puisqu'il avait eu la conscience de son droit; l'autre affirmait qu'en se faisant justice à lui-même un homme de mœurs douces avait dû être sous l'empire d'une démente passagère. Un autre haussait les épaules, regardant comme une lâcheté de tuer une femme, si coupable qu'elle fût, un autre encore regardait comme une lâcheté de la laisser vivre après une trahison flagrante. (25-26)

As presented here, the opinions of this close-knit group are nowhere near convergent but express the opposite ends of the spectrum of attitudes possible: from a belief in the absolute lucidity of the husband to the certitude that he must have acted in a bout of insanity; from the belief that such a murder shows cowardice to the conviction that cowardice is rather in not following through with murder. In addition, the use of superlative phrases such as “toute la lucidité de son jugement” and “si coupable qu'elle fût,” and expressions such as “avait dû être” and “une trahison flagrante” denoting absolute certitude and emotionally charged attitudes, show that each one feels strongly about his beliefs and considers his personal convictions absolutely right. In opening her novel in such a way, Sand demonstrates the necessity for recognizing the difficulty if not the impossibility of judging the question of adultery in a satisfactory, clear-cut and just manner. Since even a group of close friends cannot reach common ground on the issue, it is all

the more questionable that the problem of adultery can be easily resolved in a satisfactory manner considering the infinitely more varied opinions, beliefs, and sensitivities of a whole society of disparate individuals with different experiences. From another standpoint, in showing the absolute, emotionally charged convictions of each individual holding totally opposite opinions, Sand shows the danger that such views represent if one imposes his opinion on others. Not recognizing the diversity of viewpoints and their relativity in regards to the whole spectrum of possibilities could be potentially dangerous to society, if fundamental decisions are decided arbitrarily simply by who is in power at a given time. By suggesting the potential discord issuing from conflicting opinions pronounced in this “microcosm” of society, Sand illustrates the weight of responsibility put on those deciding such matters in addition to the urgency of finding an acceptable solution. Since such varied, extreme opinions exist on such an emotionally and morally charged issue, any decisions made and imposed on a community must be sensitive to this diversity. The art of thinking and deciding the fundamental problems of society requires recognizing the complex difficulty of thinking through all the viewpoints correctly in addition to comprehending the moral responsibility one has in conveying or imposing an idea.

In *Le Dernier Amour*, George Sand presents the specific question of adultery as a universal, eternal question affecting the fundamental values of humanity that must be thought out through the multiple dimensions of human existence in order to do it justice. While portraying this discussion on adultery among close friends, the narrator reframes the debate through the lens of different societal domains to show the further complexity of such an issue. Referring to the conversation as “les théories contradictoires qui furent soulevées et débattues” (26), he lists among these domains, “le droit moral de l’époux sur la femme adultère au point de vue légal, au point de vue social, au point de vue religieux, au point de vue philosophique” (26).

Through this carefully orchestrated opening, we understand that by the time we read M. Sylvestre's story, we should read him not as a singular case but as part of this original debate, and examine him through different viewpoints. Moreover, M. Sylvestre himself makes his entry into the novel as part of what I would consider an annex to this debate.²⁷⁶ Although he is in the room, we are told that he did not participate: "Un seul de nous n'avait pris aucune part à la discussion" (26). It is only when pressed that he gives his opinion, and only reluctantly. Furthermore, it is only later that we understand that he himself experienced a painful situation of adultery and had felt an urge to kill his own wife. Sand therefore hints right from the start, in staging this debate on adultery, the different viewpoints and configurations she will present before us. At the same time, by "adding" M. Sylvestre's story to one among many different approaches, Sand repositions literature itself as just one among many other frames of thinking through the fundamental but complex questions of society and therefore encourages readers to expand their own frames of thinking and reading.

The Art of Writing

For George Sand, recognizing the complexity of thinking correctly and comprehensively includes thinking about writing in order to effectively convey one's thoughts. It is true that the narrator of her 1866 novel, in describing his story, states quite categorically, "Ce n'est ni poétique ni intéressant au point de vue littéraire" (29) to emphasize its moral and philosophical

²⁷⁶ As I suggested, Sand's corpus, and especially the core trilogy of her "*Jacques* cycle" is conceived in a "configurationally" attentive manner where the author experiments with different approaches, narrative frames, and other types of frames. Each novel of this core trilogy takes a different narrative approach and frame. In *Jacques*, Sand uses the polyphonic epistolary novel form where no single point of view dominates. In *Valvèdre*, the title of her novel draws attention to a narrative re-orientation; as I explained earlier, Valvèdre is not the main character. In *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand plays with even larger frames of reading; not only is M. Sylvestre's story presented as "off-center" from the conceptual frames presented, but literature itself, we are made to understand, is yet another approach in exploring different fundamental questions affecting the individual and society.

dimension. Nevertheless, metaliterary concerns are underscored by the care with which Sand brings them to our attention. The narrator tells us first of all that the story we hear is a story that he himself had reconstructed and compiled according to the account that M. Sylvestre gave him of his own disastrous marital experience. Putting emphasis on the work of composition itself, he states: “Quoi qu’il en soit, et quelle que soit la valeur de cette révélation, la voici telle que j’ai pu la reconstruire en soudant ensemble les heures consacrées à diverses reprises à ce long récit” (29). George Sand reminds us through her narrator’s comments that writing a novel is not the transparent transcription of a story but a work that demands time and care in the organization of its components. In employing the verb “souder” in particular, Sand metaphorically presents writing as an artisanal craft—writing may be an intellectual act but it requires discipline and technique just as in the crafting of a material object; like artisanal pursuits too it requires time and patience as she suggests by the allusion to “les heures consacrées à diverses reprises;” the term “souder,” referring to the action of welding different components, focuses on the care of positioning, layering, and constructing a work of art. In this way, Sand reminds us that even in a work concentrating on communicating an idea, metaliterary concerns and formal elements remain foremost for a serious writer and thinker. On another level, the term, “souder” also captures the idea of not only joining together different elements but making smooth and almost invisible the seam between them. Her narrator therefore reminds us that works where the style and transitions between ideas or events described seem “invisible” or “transparent” are especially those where much thought and effort has been expended in rendering this effect. Essentially, Sand is telling us once more in this final configuration of her core trilogy of the “*Jacques cycle*” that there is no “degré zéro de l’écriture,” and that a work seeming to effortlessly and transparently communicate ideas is a carefully crafted illusion.

Significantly, while apologizing for what he considers his lack of style in not serving to the reader, “un mets plus savant et plus savoureux,” Sand’s narrator himself draws attention back to metaliterary concerns in explaining this “neutral” style as an aesthetic choice:

Le narrateur, *dont le but n’est pas de montrer son talent*, mais de communiquer sa pensée, est comme le botaniste, qui rapporte de sa promenade, non les plantes rares qu’il eût été heureux de trouver, mais les brins d’herbe que la saison rigoureuse lui a permis de recueillir. Ces pauvres herbes ne charment ni les yeux, ni l’odorat, ni le goût, et pourtant celui qui aime la nature y trouve encore matière à étudier, et il les apprécie. (30)

Asking the reader to excuse the imperfections of one’s style is a traditional literary cliché of false modesty used by authors. Central here however is Sand’s spin on this motif, for in this passage, it is neither George Sand-the-author speaking about the quality of her own work as an author nor her fictional narrator-author speaking about the quality of his writing. The narrator here is generalizing about what he considers the normal function of a narrator rather than speaking specifically about his own case; moreover, by employing the more technical term, “narrateur,” Sand’s narrator draws attention to both the act of narration and the persona narrating the story, thus shifting the focus to a metaliterary level. This fairly extended elaboration explaining the narrator’s position, reinforced moreover by the poetic comparison she makes between the role of the narrator and the work of a botanist, highlights the fact that Sand is taking advantage of this “literary cliché” and using it in an “agrammatical” manner. A closer look at her explanation moreover shows that it doesn’t really make sense in relation to the preceding sentence, “Je ... demande pardon [au lecteur] de n’avoir pas à lui servir aujourd’hui un mets plus savant et plus savoureux” (29-30). Essentially, Sand’s narrator is apologizing for his supposed lack of poetic or literary style but then telling us immediately albeit indirectly that this “defect” is purposely designed—the apology is therefore just a pretext for Sand to use as a forum for her own literary opinions. In effect, by “slipping in” this metaliterary comment in such a visible, contradictory

manner, the author is flaunting the artifice of using a “banal” literary cliché of false modesty, thereby drawing attention to her own ideological stance as a writer in regards to an aesthetics of the novel.

The Art of Refuting

This carefully choreographed metaliterary stance thus brings attention to the nuance Sand wants us to comprehend when she says that her story is “ni poétique ni intéressant au point de vue littéraire” (30)—the emphasis on metaliterary elements alone seems to contradict such a statement and signals that it should not be taken literally; I suggest that George Sand is claiming not so much that her novel is uninteresting from a literary perspective but rather that its style would not be considered interesting according to the criteria in fashion in the 1860’s, the years when “l’art pour l’art” was in vogue. Such a statement may thus be considered a way for Sand to signal her difference, her independence, and her disagreement with certain aspects of this literary trend regarding the function and aesthetic principles of art. Written in 1866, *Le Dernier Amour* is contemporary to the Parnasse movement. It would therefore not be amiss to read this work in part as Sand’s response to the principles of “l’art pour l’art,” especially when we know the importance the author gives to combating this ideology in her 1861 novel *Valvèdre*. 1866 moreover is a key year for proponents of “l’art pour l’art,” for starting from this year the editor Alphonse Lemerre publishes an anthology of modern poetry called the *Parnasse contemporain*, around which, authors like Gautier, invested in “l’art pour l’art,” officially group themselves.²⁷⁷ Keeping in mind Sand’s own engagement in countering the ideas of “l’art pour l’art” in *Valvèdre* in addition to other writings where she has clearly named and denounced this ideology, it seems

²⁷⁷ As explained earlier, the focus on formal elements, the ideal of beauty as focused uniquely on aesthetics, and the idea of separating beauty from the notion of truth and morality are key principles of the movement.

quite reasonable that in this key year of 1866 Sand would offer her own “literary response” to a contemporary movement she believes “une erreur funeste” as we heard in *Valvèdre*.

It is against the backdrop of “l’art pour l’art” that the botany analogy used by Sand takes on its fullest meaning as a strategically chosen image to counter the principles of l’art pour l’art. First, as a recurrent motif in *Le Dernier Amour*, botany establishes a link between this work and Sand’s *Valvèdre*, for the eponymous hero in the 1861 novel is a great scientist known for his work in the natural sciences. By extension thus, the botany analogy would also bring to mind Valvèdre’s condemnation of “l’art pour l’art.” In this sense, the botany motif may be a way for Sand to signal in *Le Dernier Amour* its shared ideological stance with *Valvèdre* in refuting the principles of “l’art pour l’art.” On another level, the botany motif also establishes the parallel between M. Sylvestre and Valvèdre. In *Le Dernier Amour*, Félicie tells us herself that before their marriage, her husband would spend hours pursuing his interests in botany; this information serves, in this way, to signal him as Valvèdre’s counterpart. Functioning as an intertextual element, the allusion to botany thus reminds readers that they are reading a text connected to a network of other rewritings of *Jacques*, a work which is in itself highly intertextual and metaliterary, as I explained in Chapter 3. The botany motif, in this way, underscores the metaliterary dimension and thus, “literary interest” of *Le Dernier Amour*. Finally, I would affirm that in a period when Sand seems particularly concerned about the ideas of “l’art pour l’art” and its influence on literature, choosing the subject of “botany” to express her conception of art, would probably be more than a mere coincidence, especially when we know the prominence of the Parnasse movement.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Sand’s reflections on “l’art pour l’art,” may have been particularly stimulated when Gautier visited her in Nohant in September 1863, two-and-a-half years before she began *Le Dernier Amour* (*Corr. XII* 749). In her edition of *Le Dernier Amour*, Mireille Bossis notes that *Le Dernier Amour* is published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* from July 1

It is essential to recognize that the passage in *Le Dernier Amour*, alluded to earlier, where Sand draws attention to its supposed “lack” of poetic and literary interest, is precisely a passage defending the literary interest of this “non” style. Significantly, despite claiming a “non-literary focus,” Sand spends about two pages commenting on the form and style of the narration of M. Sylvestre’s story. On the one hand, Sand insists on the importance of communicating ideas and not letting stylistic concerns or the focus on the form or style of narration distract from it (30). As illustrated in the passage cited, she suggests that the narrator should be like a simple botanist presenting his humble findings, not a performer showing off his talent and thus distracting the reader’s attention from the content of the story he is hearing (30). On the other hand, however, in emphasizing the ordinariness of the plants on which this ideal botanist fixes his attention and picks for his collection, Sand also draws attention to the type of subject chosen. By stressing that these are not rare plants (30), she underscores the fact that these specimens are found easily and readily in nature. However, while calling these plants “pauvres herbes” and pointing out that they do not charm the senses, her conjunction of opposition “pourtant” signals that despite such first impressions, they have their own beauty and are appreciated by certain individuals. In designating such an admirer as “celui qui aime la nature,” and placing this phrase right after the conjunction, “pourtant,” Sand hints in this way that the true connoisseurs of beauty are those who know how to see and appreciate more subtle charms.

The author’s defense of this more “common” beauty found in nature counters in this sense the “l’art pour l’art” ideal of beauty especially as expressed in Gautier’s poem, “L’Art.” Establishing first the sort of ideology Sand’s 1866 novel may be reacting to will help clarify her

to August 15, 1866. Bossis indicates that Sand in a February 1866 letter to Buloz alludes to the fact that she is writing *Le Dernier Amour* (8-9).

metaliterary commentary in *Le Dernier Amour*. Gautier's poem, composed in 1857 and later published in the 1858 edition of *Emaux et Camées*,²⁷⁹ along with his 1834 preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, are considered manifestos of the Parnasse movement. This poem expresses the Parnassian focus on art as the pure mastery of form. In this ideal of beauty, the focus is on formal elements, absolute technical command, and the ability of the true artist to exert in an impersonal, unbiased and rigorous manner his expertise in a domain requiring exceptional discipline and intellectual focus. Emphasis is thus on this cult of the perfect form attainable only through extraordinary efforts and the refusal to accept facility and anything short of perfection. For this reason, Gautier illustrates his concept of poetry through an analogy of the work of sculptors and artists working with cold, hard materials like marble, metal, and hard stones. Emphasis is therefore placed on the idea of difficulty in the painstaking labor of extracting from a hard, unyielding, and unforgiving matter a perfect form. His poem, inciting poets to take courage in this heroic task, thus ends with an order to work hard at their art and adopts the vocabulary of sculpture:

Sculpte, lime, cisèle;
Que ton rêve flottant
Se scelle
Dans le bloc résistant ! (*Poésies III* 130)

Although Sand does not directly state that she is writing against Gautier's *Emaux et camées*, I propose that she may indeed have been thinking about this collection of poems and the ideal of beauty it represents. Aside from the historical context that I pointed out in regards to the year 1866, the official recognition of the Parnasse movement with the publication of *Le Parnasse*

²⁷⁹ This collection of poems was published first in 1852.

Contemporain, and Gautier's 1863 visit to Nohant,²⁸⁰ one might hypothetically take the present participle "soudant," pointed out earlier, as an intertextual hint. Sand's narrator employs this word to describe the work involved in recreating M. Sylvestre's story: "Quoiqu'il en soit, et quelle que soit la valeur de cette révélation, la voici telle que j'ai pu la reconstruire en soudant ensembles les heures consacrées à diverses reprises à ce long récit" (*Poésies I* 29). While the verb "souder" may simply express the idea that writing resembles an artisanal activity, in the context of *Émaux et Camées*, the notion may indicate the welding of finer, more rare elements rather than metal work in a forge, for instance. "Souder" in Sand's passage thus may be a hidden allusion to the craft of jewelry that Gautier himself employs as a metaphor for his poetry: "Ce titre, *Emaux et Camées*, exprime le dessein de traiter sous forme restreinte de petits sujets, tantôt sur plaque d'or ou de cuivre avec les vives couleurs de l'émail, tantôt avec la roue du graveur de pierres fines, sur l'agate, la cornaline ou l'onix" (Gautier, *Poésies I* LXXXIV).²⁸¹ Unlike Gautier, Sand does not use the verb "souder" in any other work as a metaphor to express the art of writing.²⁸² For this reason, I suspect that she is using this verb either to allude to *Emaux et Camées* or to the more general Parnassian focus on the "sculptural" work involved in composing a piece of art.

In any case, in presenting her own ideal of beauty as "les pauvres herbes" that one can find readily in nature, Sand's more democratic concept shows that she rejects the Parnassian notion of beauty as a rare and ideal entity that only an elite artist can attain. Similarly, by framing

²⁸⁰ George Sand's residence is in Nohant, in the Berry region of France.

²⁸¹ See Gautier's *Rapport sur les progrès de la Poésie française* (1867) where he speaks precisely about the choice of his title, *Emaux et Camées* (Gautier, *Poésies complètes* LXXXIV).

²⁸² I did not find any occurrences of the word "souder" in this context in the ARTFL database or in the database, "Autour du romantisme: le roman 1792-1886."

her concept of beauty in the context of nature instead of through an example of a sculpture or other works of plastic arts, Sand shows that she rejects as the only acceptable ideal the Parnassian cult of a cold, eternal abstract beauty distancing itself from life in its preference for the frozen beauty of marble statues and bronze objects. The emphasis on nature and the idea of change that she brings in through her mentioning of “la saison rigoureuse” in speaking about the plants that a botanist studies, further stresses her opposition to the Parnassian ideology of art.

Finally, by calling attention to the metaliterary dimension of her 1866 novel while claiming its non-literary focus, George Sand “performs” her own nuanced position in regards to the importance of form and style in her own novels. After pointing out the simplicity with which M. Sylvestre tells his own story, her narrator gives us his own thoughts in hearing this story:

Je pensai, en l’écoulant, à cette admirable définition de Renan, que la parole est “ce vêtement simple de la pensée, tirant toute son élégance de sa parfaite proportion avec l’idée à exprimer,” et qu’en fait d’art “le grand principe est que tout doit servir à l’ornement, mais que tout ce qui est mis exprès pour l’ornement est mauvais.” (30)²⁸³

The importance that Sand accords to metaliterary reflection on formal elements in *Le Dernier Amour* shows us the high priority she gives to thinking about the concept of literary composition. The rather “artificial” manner in which she has her narrator “offhandedly” cite here a quotation by Renan attests to the care with which she reflects on her own art while revealing the dialogical literary and intertextual dimension of this thought.²⁸⁴ At the same time, the precisely “offhanded” manner with which she presents her metaliterary reflection illustrates the importance she gives to

²⁸³ Sand cites this passage by Renan taken from *Histoire des origines du christianisme*. The work is in 7 volumes and is published over a number of years. The second volume, *Les Apôtres*, which came out in 1866, is where Sand cites this passage.

²⁸⁴ Sand’s choice of this citation by Renan is particularly apt because of his work in different fields, philosophy, literature, science, and history for instance, and in particular his interest in the work of the scientist Claude Bernard.

the idea of balance and nuance in a work of art. While agreeing with “l’art pour l’art” principle that beauty must be a central concern in any work of art, Sand suggests that a work of art must also think beyond aesthetic preoccupations.

The Art of Judging

Above all, *Le Dernier Amour* is about the importance of extending reading frames and understanding the importance of broader reading frames in order to judge the fundamental questions of society. Sand impresses on us the difficulty of judging justly while reminding us of the fallibility of human judgment in addition to the relativity of truth itself. While the novel focuses on the question of adultery, it re-contextualizes the problem by placing it in relation to other fundamental questions of human existence. In thinking through the adulterous situation of his wife and commenting about his own reactions in such a situation, M. Sylvestre constantly links his reflections to the larger philosophical questions of human perception and consciousness, human nature, education, and the ties binding together mankind. The concept of relativity becomes central in this novel focusing finally on the question of human judgment. Read in this sense, *Le Dernier Amour* is about the art of judging.

In the novel, M. Sylvestre expresses much certitude about his own moral integrity, but this certitude is heard in counterpoint against the fear that he could possibly be mistaken in the knowledge he has about himself; his lucidity therefore warns him about the difficulty of judging others. Aware of the limits that individuals have regarding knowledge of their own behavior, he suggests that it would be presumptuous to think that any one person could determine the motives or the thoughts of another: “On serait embarrassé pour soi-même de décider pourquoi l’on fut lâche ou brave un tel jour... Comment donc faire ce travail pour un autre, eussiez-vous toutes sa confiance, et fussiez-vous assuré de sa sincérité ?” (250). In employing the antonyms “lâche” and

“brave” to capture the extreme degree of change one may find in the behavior of the same person from one day to the next, Sand’s protagonist suggests the difficulty in even defining the character of a single person let alone his/her motives behind a specific act. The phrase, “embarrassée pour soi-même,” pointing out the difficulty already of deciphering one’s own actions, further underscores the impossibility of knowing another’s deepest thoughts. In this way, M. Sylvestre suggests the impossibility of unlocking the secrets of the human heart and therefore the great probability of error in judging the guilt or innocence of another.

In the course of the novel, M. Sylvestre realizes that while man may strive to develop his mind and cultivate a high moral sense, there remain impulses he cannot control nor predict. Throughout the novel, Sand’s hero is portrayed both by himself and others as a rational being with strong moral principles and a strong education. Yet, to his own horror, he learns that despite his desire to rise above his own jealousy and the sense of betrayal his wife’s adultery inflicted on him, he cannot suppress the rage he feels. In one episode, right after having made love to his wife, he feels the need to inflict violence on himself: “Je déchirai ma poitrine avec mes ongles, j’avais besoin de haïr et de torturer quelqu’un, je me détestais et je me prenais moi-même pour victime” (281). At this point in the story, Félicie, understanding her mistake in allowing Tonino to seduce her, has broken off their affair and is trying to regain her husband’s affection. M. Sylvestre, despite knowing Félicie’s regrets and sincere repentance and despite having rationally made the decision to forgive her, realizes his heart cannot forget. What’s more, this episode reveals to him the irrationality of human emotions and impulses. Considering himself a man of reason, M. Sylvestre is horrified to see himself overcome with a physical desire for his wife and then realizing that this sexual desire does not coincide with love. Observing the uncontrollable urge to hurt himself after this moment of physical passion, he realizes that what he had taken for

the “higher” emotion of love was not love nor the grace of forgiveness he wished to show her. The feeling of violent disgust he experiences right afterwards makes him see that it was only the “lower” impulse of sex (279). The self-righteous image he has of himself is undermined by the “animality” he is forced to recognize within himself: “L’homme le plus doux et le plus civilisé peut avoir des moments de fureur féline où il ne s’appartient plus et où il est capable d’agir sans conscience de ses actions” (281). In having her protagonist speak about himself in terms of a generalization concerning humanity, Sand again reminds us to read M. Sylvestre’s “case history” as part of a larger reflection on human nature and human psychology. In choosing the words, “fureur féline,” her protagonist expresses the dangerous ferocity of these subconscious impulses which can take by surprise even a person known for stability and gentleness of temperament. *Le Dernier Amour* thus demonstrates that there are no set rules by which one can judge human behavior. By posing to himself the question of murder as a virtual possibility, M. Sylvestre suggests that this seeming moment of temporary insanity can happen to anyone: “J’étais donc capable à un moment donné, de subir cette démence et de l’exercer sur un autre?” (281). In framing her protagonist’s rhetorical question in the first person, Sand impresses all the more on the reader that this is a question one should ask oneself—this use of the first person essentially makes readers “pronounce” this question with M. Sylvestre when they read this episode. From another angle, this temporary fit of insanity reminds us of the opening scene of Sand’s novel where the dinner guests are discussing the state of mind the “fermier des environs” must have been in when he murdered his adulterous wife. By recalling to us this earlier theoretical discussion among friends, Sand alerts us once more to the impossibility of judging another and to the larger frames of reflection that she invited us to re-actualize: judging a

fundamental question of society and the issues at stake through the moral, legal, social, religious, and philosophical domains.

Recognizing the complexity of judging correctly also requires that one be aware of hidden factors pertaining to a given situation, and *Le Dernier Amour* emphasizes this point. Aside from the effects of the social and educational inequalities that one must factor in, Sand reminds readers of the biases and preconceived ideas that put women at a disadvantage. First, the configuratively-conscious reading frame introduced through her designation of *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* as different rewritings of *Jacques* makes us see the dramatic contrast between the fate of Francis as opposed to that of Félicie. Both Francis and Félicie regret their youthful errors' yet Félicie is treated much more harshly, while Francis is rehabilitated. After seducing Alida at age twenty-three, Francis spends seven years trying to make up for the suffering he has caused by living a virtuous life working in metallurgy and helping the community around him. He is rewarded by being reintegrated into the family structure and into a respected position in society. In contrast, Sand's heroine continues to be scorned by her community; despite thirteen years of a virtuous life where she too helps her community, she is never reintegrated nor recognized for her goodness.²⁸⁵

In addition to the numerical values of seven and thirteen, Sand is possibly playing on the symbolism of these figures associated with Félicie and Francis. Her heroine has repented almost twice as long as her hero for an error which should have been recognized as simply human and understandable due to the attenuating circumstances of her age and family background. The irony of Félicie's name is further underlined by the number thirteen symbolizing her unluckiness as a woman held to much stricter standards than men. Since she is viewed as having committed

²⁸⁵ Similarly, Alida's long, drawn-out, painful demise for an unconsummated adultery seems overly harsh.

an unpardonable crime by society, she does not receive any pity for her sufferings as a victim; not only is she ostracized by its members but her brother Jean is condemned by them as well. Because he had dared brave society's judgment of his sister and defended her, we are told that his fiancée left him and despite his wealth and good heart, no woman will marry him; his family too cut off ties with him because he dared take Félicie under his protection. Similarly, when Tonino speaks about Félicie's youthful error at age fifteen, M. Sylvestre is greatly affected by the idea of this "fault" as a mark that will never go away: "Tonino la faisait reparaître comme cette marque à l'épaule des forçats qu'on ravive en frappant dessus" (220). This metaphor of the type of mark placed on criminals suggests by extension that female adultery is considered a serious crime; women acknowledged guilty of adultery are therefore implied as having the same status as criminals sent away to prison, and like them, can never be truly reintegrated into society. Indeed, marrying M. Sylvestre does not "wash away" this mark of "steel" for Félicie. On the contrary, for many, M. Sylvestre himself becomes "soiled" by being associated with her. As opposed to Félicie, Francis as a man is much luckier, as suggested by the symbolic number of seven years of repentance as opposed to Félicie's thirteen. Ironically, despite working literally in metallurgy, his crime as a seducer in an adulterous affair does not brand him for life; no mark of "steel" remains on his person, and he is not ostracized nor branded as a criminal by others. The whole community where he works appreciates the young man's earnestness and desire to help others, and his marriage to Henri's younger sister is celebrated as a long-awaited, welcomed event. The configurative differences between these two novels in Sand's "*Jacques cycle*" therefore impress on readers that judging correctly must involve considering the biases of gender.

Finally, Sand reminds us that in order to assess the extent of guilt or innocence of any human being, it is necessary to distinguish between elements of personal responsibility and circumstances outside his control in addition to assessing the relative importance or unimportance of the specific matter in question. For this reason, Sand's hero claims, "avant de juger les coupables il fallait juger l'espèce humaine. Il fallait juger l'importance du délit, et, avant cela encore, juger l'espèce humaine. Il fallait même remonter plus haut et se perdre dans la contemplation de l'infini; car nous ne pouvons définir l'homme sans mettre Dieu en cause" (244). For Sand, judging any matter in context and in proportion is central to judging justly. For this reason, she insists that we read the question of adultery within the larger picture of human existence and morality. Her protagonist therefore speaks about the necessity of determining "l'importance du délit," thereby underscoring the objectivity required in weighing the actual consequences of a problem like adultery, as opposed to preconceived ideas due, for example, to the irrationality of emotionally biased opinions. Similarly, M. Sylvestre calls for the widening of the frames of thinking right up to the question of human nature, as suggested by the usage of the word, "espèce humaine." In employing the expression, "la contemplation de l'infini" while speaking about the question of judging a specific case, Sand especially underlines the idea of objectivity; in asking readers to replace the problems of humanity within the scope of the infinite, she is effectively encouraging them to allow enough distance in order to recognize eternal truths that are larger than the prejudices or limited knowledge of a particular moment in history or the imperfect legislation of a period. Finally, in mentioning God, Sand reminds us that judging justly requires deciphering not only the acts themselves but the causes of these acts. In referring to God, M. Sylvestre points out that the question of adultery is well beyond that of guilt or innocence but it is essentially addressing the roots of humanity, in understanding what defines

it. The art of judging therefore requires thinking through the question of libre arbitre; arriving at just conclusions is understanding that one needs to go back to the very beginnings of thought itself.

The Art of Educating

Teaching and understanding is finally “le dernier mot” in *Le Dernier Amour*. Recognizing the irrational elements of human identity and understanding the specific impulses and predispositions that each individual is powerless to control is as crucial as cultivating the potential he has at his disposition. For this reason, Sand has her protagonist tell us: “l’homme subit en grande partie la fatalité de ses instincts, son âme n’est pas absolument libre; en certains cas, beaucoup trop fréquents pour qu’on les dise exceptionnels, cette âme n’est même pas du tout libre” (245). By employing phrases like “la fatalité de ses instincts” and definitive expressions like “pas du tout libre” to express the case for certain individuals, M. Sylvestre emphasizes that there are some factors that one cannot change at all. The phrase, “beaucoup trop fréquents pour qu’on les dise exceptionnels” states quite pointedly that such cases of biological determination are not unusual. In having her protagonist centralize such a fact, Sand makes the reader confront the terrible reality that society would prefer to ignore. However, she also makes the reader understand that the idea of a biological determinism is not a basis for pessimism, for she has her protagonist also say, “Et pourtant Spinoza est sinon condamné, du moins dépassé et rectifié” (245). L’homme est un agent moral.” (245). The adverb of opposition, “pourtant” following the conjunction “et” emphasizes the fact that acknowledging the dimension of fatality in the determination of human behavior is not the whole story. Circumscribing first the elements that one cannot change as opposed to those that one can is primordial in establishing a better basis for an effective education, as Sand’s protagonist suggests.

In referring to man as “un agent moral,” M. Sylvestre adds nuance to the idea of the fatality of human instinct he had first pronounced. Explaining his definition of man as “un agent moral,” M. Sylvestre writes, “Quand il n’est pas, en tant qu’individu, responsable de ses pensées et de ses actes, il est susceptible, en tant que membre de l’humanité de le devenir” (245). By balancing the idea of the fatality of human instinct with the concept that human instincts and predispositions can be modified and channeled, he asserts that his opinion differs finally from Spinoza’s view of man though not entirely rejecting it. For this reason, he had preferred to qualify his own conception about the nature of man as going beyond and rectifying Spinoza’s theories, as the adjectives, “dépassé” and “rectifié” suggested. By introducing the word, “susceptible”, M. Sylvestre captures the idea of potentiality in his vision of human nature. Elaborating on his reflections about man’s potentiality, he tells us, “L’espèce a été créée perfectible” (245). In bringing up the word, “perfectible,” the author suggests that man and his instincts can evolve. Education therefore is key to Sand’s vision of humanity within this larger more nuanced picture. On the one hand, she acknowledges the importance of accepting that education and the desire to change things may not be possible for specific individual cases where biology and nature are strong, insurmountable factors. On the other hand, she expresses the importance of faith in the larger notion of mankind as a whole—as a species malleable and susceptible to learning and amelioration, humanity can evolve. For this reason, M. Sylvestre defines man as “virtuellement libre” (245). Education is therefore central in helping mankind eventually evolve beyond the pull of more animal instincts and thus, gain in his ability to exert free will.

From another perspective, this vision of mankind Sand puts before us calls for the centrality of compassion and understanding. At one key moment in *Le Dernier Amour*, the

author has a doctor warn M. Sylvestre to be sensitive to his wife's suffering and not judge her errors too harshly. Calling for compassion in such cases where the destructive side of nature is particularly dominant, M. Sylvestre tells us, "Il faut savoir pardonner; il y a des fatalités d'organisation devant lesquelles le médecin est forcément matérialiste" (302). By specifically having a doctor pronounce this statement, Sand establishes as a scientific truth the opinions her protagonist voiced earlier; libre arbitre is not necessarily possible for everyone. This voice of authority underscores the urgency in recognizing this fact of nature, thereby, avoiding unfair condemnation of those destined by nature to fail in society's expectations of them—judgments of guilt and innocence are irrelevant in cases where there is no possibility of choice. Educating society about the disadvantages that certain members are born with is therefore central in Sand's vision.

From yet another perspective, Sand reminds the reader that even in cases where an individual is not entirely at the mercy of genetic make-up, one cannot fully know the extent of guilt or innocence of the individual in question. M. Sylvestre tells us:

Il est impossible d'apprécier la dose de résistance intellectuelle et morale qu'une conscience humaine plus ou moins éclairée peut opposer à la violence brutale de l'instinct, il est impossible au philosophe et au physiologiste de prononcer avec certitude et au physiologiste de prononcer avec certitude une condamnation quelconque en matière criminelle. (250)

By mentioning that the experts themselves (the "philosophe" and the "physiologiste") are incapable of determining the exact extent of free will in deciding on human behavior, Sand suggests that any judgment of guilt or innocence would lack legitimacy. Similarly in pitting the opinions of Descartes, Spinoza, and Pascal against each other and showing the impossibility for these superior minds in history to reach common ground on the question of libre arbitre, Sand

demonstrates the futility of trying to arrive at finding certitude on such a key issue.²⁸⁶ She suggests in this way that ultimately innocence and guilt should not be the focus in matters of human error or crime since certitude is impossible.

In showing that truth can only be relative, M. Sylvestre proposes that it is much more productive to focus society's efforts on education and social progress. In discussing the case of Félicie and Tonino, he suggests that their destinies would be entirely different if they had received a better education. While conceding that nature had a role in their youthful errors, Sand's hero nevertheless asserts that what he considers, "deux victimes de leur organisation excessive ou défectueuse" (246) are also intelligent beings who could have had a different outcome: "une meilleure éducation et un milieu plus propice eussent pu [les] affranchir de la servitude de leurs appétits" (246). In bringing up the factors of education and environment as contributing to their faults, M. Sylvestre emphasizes the urgency of making education and societal progress a priority. Likewise, by drawing attention to the role of social inequalities which denied them this education in addition to a favorable environment in forming their moral values, Sand's hero also underscores the urgency of social and societal progress and reform:

J'avais devant les yeux un homme qui eût pu, avec l'aide d'une autre destinée sociale, devenir un très honnête homme ; une femme qui, dès l'enfance, préservée par l'amour paternel des dangers de l'isolement, eût pu rester pure et ne pas subir, le reste de sa vie, la fatalité morale et physique d'une première faute. (246-247)

By employing the phrase "un très honnête homme" in speaking about Tonino while pointing out that Félicie could have avoided "la fatalité morale et physique d'une première faute," Sand emphasizes that not only could these two young people have benefited from more favorable

²⁸⁶ M. Sylvestre tells us, "s'il est certain que Spinoza ait raison en faisant la liberté et la responsabilité de nos consciences moins absolues que ne l'admet Descartes, et si Descartes a raison aussi d'étendre, plus que ne le fait Spinoza, le domaine de cette responsabilité et de cette liberté, nous ne trouvons ni chez l'un, ni chez l'autre, le dernier mot de cette grave question" (244-245).

conditions in life but that society itself could have gained in producing two exemplary citizens. On another level, by presenting her ideas of social reform through an alternative configuration of her characters, Sand encourages readers to use configurative thinking to reflect on societal problems (i.e., imagining how modifying different variables can affect different outcomes). Configurative thinking in this sense becomes not just a means of creating fiction but a mode of imagining different ways of reconfiguring society to obtain a higher quality of life for all, while keeping in mind the numerous ways in which human ties hold together society.

By situating the question of adultery within the larger context of social progress and the fabric of society, Sand insinuates that finally, it is not so much the question of guilt or innocence of the parties that is important but its affect on the human ties holding together a whole community. For this reason, M. Sylvestre refuses to punish Félicie despite deciding her guilty of betraying him. Weighing the responsibilities and affections he feels he owes Félicie's brother, he decides that he cannot take action against his wife, for demanding "justice" as a betrayed husband would mean that he wrong both his wife and his friend along with the family ties holding them together: "Ce que Jean Morgeron avait fait pour sa sœur, je dois ne jamais l'oublier et le continuer autant que possible, car, avant d'être son mari, j'étais son frère. C'est comme tel que j'étais entré dans la famille" (209). By situating marital ties within the larger network of family ties, M. Sylvestre encourages the reader to keep in mind the idea of proportion and the importance of reading situations through a larger frame of justice. Similarly, he realizes that he cannot punish his wife without breaking the sacred vows of marriage requiring a husband to protect his spouse (215). Finally, in thinking through even the idea of vengeance itself on Tonino whom he has every right to punish, he decides against this possibility:

Eussé-je eu, selon moi, le droit de tuer mon rival, je ne l'eusse pas fait. Il était père de famille, et sa femme l'idolâtrait. Elle était pure et vraiment digne et

dévouée, cette Vanina. Elle nourrissait une innocente créature à qui l'on avait donné mon nom et que ma bouche avait bénie. Je me représentais l'horreur d'une scène de violence dont cette famille eût pu être témoin et victime. (251)

Understanding that individuals do not exist in isolation but are bound by ties connecting them with others, M. Sylvestre realizes the impossibility and injustice of any punishment. Punishing a “guilty” person necessarily involves the punishing of another linked to him. Sand’s hero realizes that in this sense, punishment always includes the consequence of punishing innocence, and he does not wish to cause the downfall of a whole family in demanding the blood of the father. Moreover, in his particular case, close family ties bind him to Tonino. As the godfather of Tonino’s child, he considers this tie sacred. Essentially through this “case study,” Sand points out that in the larger scale of things, punishment can never be a just act.

In *Le Dernier Amour*, education is thus demonstrated to be both the first and last word in preserving the moral dignity of mankind. Educating society in the goal of preventing any cries for justice should therefore be a priority if we follow the logic of her novel. By educating individuals and furthering their moral development, theoretically, there would be no more need for establishing the guilt or innocence of any individual and thus, no need to punish another. However, aside from this argument based on the human ties connecting any one individual, Sand proposes that the idea of punishment itself diminishes man. M. Sylvestre, speaking first about his own disgust at the idea of hurting another, frames his repulsion through the concept of human dignity: “je n’ai jamais eu le goût de tuer, de frapper ou de torturer. Je me fais une telle dignité humaine, que je ne connais pas d’expiation comparable à celle de se voir flétri à bon droit par le dédain d’un homme juste” (251). As Sand’s protagonist suggests, just the idea of inflicting suffering on another is offensive to human morality; according to him, disdain alone is a sufficient deterrent for a human being valuing virtue for itself. By underscoring the necessity of

social reform through its effect on the moral dignity of mankind (i.e. the effects of having to punish another), *Le Dernier Amour* demonstrates the urgency of actively promoting societal progress for the good of humanity.

Finally, by bringing up the idea of punishment, Sand underlines the importance of thinking thoroughly about laws and their application. Essentially, *Le Dernier Amour* illustrates the moral dimension that should be involved in the creation and execution of legislation, and by consequence the heavy moral responsibilities of those entrusted with this duty. The opening pages of her novel already pronounce a warning for those too quick to judge innocence or guilt and too quick to call for the punishment of those considered guilty. As mentioned earlier, *Le Dernier Amour* opens with a discussion among a group of friends who ponder over the question of adultery. Right after each one has given his opinion and expressed his heartfelt conviction regarding the guilt or innocence of the spouses in this crime of passion, one of the guests decides to test these convictions:

— Faites une loi dit-il, qui oblige l'époux trompé à trancher publiquement la tête de sa coupable moitié, et parmi ceux de vous qui se montrent implacables en théorie, je parie qu'il n'y aura personne à qui une pareille loi ne fasse jeter les hauts cris. (26)

By juxtaposing the abstract notion of punishment with the concrete image of its execution, Sand aims to provoke her readers to reflect on the distance between theory and practice. In presenting in such a dramatic manner the concept of punishment, Sand in effect makes us admit that the very notion of punishment is contrary to the idea of human dignity. In provoking us with the idea of such a legal proposition, she impresses on us the horror we should feel about the notion of punishment itself and how it should shock our very moral fibers as human beings. For this reason, her protagonist speaks of punishment as “une erreur fatale” and describes it as “une injure à la divine mansuétude de *celui* qui ne punit pas” (255). According to M. Sylvestre, God is

precisely “*celui qui ne punit pas;*” the divinity of God is defined in this way as the very idea of grace and mercy. From his comments, we can therefore extract that for Sand’s protagonist, the greatest virtue of man is being able to pardon, for it brings him a step closer to God. Conversely, he calls the idea of inflicting punishment, “*la plus amère douleur d’une âme généreuse*” (255). In this lens, the idea of carrying out retribution is the idea of immorality itself. As Sand’s hero describes it:

L’homme qui se plaît à rendre le mal pour le mal, qui trouve sa volupté dans les supplices qu’il inflige ou voit infliger, l’inquisiteur qui sourit au bûcher, le juge qui triomphe en arrachant une condamnation à mort, Dieu les renie sans doute cent fois plus que leurs victimes, fussent-elles cent fois coupables. (255)

Punishment and the infliction of pain are therefore incompatible with the idea of the perfectibility of man. The adverb, “sans doute” here affirms M. Sylvestre’s utmost conviction that punishment is never legitimate and absolutely condemned by God himself. By adding the phrase, “cent fois plus que leurs victimes,” Sand’s hero suggests that knowingly inflicting pain on another is worse than any other crime in existence. By stating that God himself would turn his back on such a sinner one hundred times more guilty than those the latter chooses to punish, M. Sylvestre illustrates how absolutely odious the idea of punishment should be for anyone. Essentially, punishing another is losing one’s humanity, for it is losing the grace of God and the spark of divinity he has placed in man.

Put back into perspective within the larger frames of the concept of humanity, mastering the arts of judging, thinking, reading, writing, and arguing, should not be about deciding innocence, guilt, or punishment but rather educating mankind. Centering *Le Dernier Amour* on the question of adultery is not so much focusing on judging this question but rather understanding the implications of daring to judge. The art of educating is therefore the art of reminding individuals about the core values holding humanity together and helping society

progress. Read in this sense, Sand's "dernier mot" in *Le Dernier Amour* is finally a plea for remembering the perfectibility of mankind and the need to focus on this larger end goal through education.

CONCLUSION

The wider and wider reading frames that Sand introduces through signaling her rewritings of *Jacques* reveal the author's attempt to capture all the complexities of life and of humanity itself within literature while proposing to us her vision of human perfectibility. By interweaving equal strands of metaliterary reflection and philosophy, the author presents her unique concept of the novel and its potentiality. On the one hand, the "metaliterary performances" she puts before us demonstrate the centrality of Sand's reflections on the concept of rewriting and on the autonomy of the novel discussed in previous chapters. On the other hand, while underscoring the importance of aesthetics, Sand insists on the moral dimension of her art. For her, literature includes a reflection on society and an engagement in the philosophical and social debates of her time. Drawing attention to the issue of adultery and the need for social and legal reforms in regards to marriage and divorce in addition to bringing up the urgency of greater equality between the sexes (especially in regards to the education of women), remain at the forefront of Sand's novels. At the same time, she reminds her readers that wider frames of reading and thinking are needed in order to make better judgments when resolving the problems in society.

Similarly, George Sand calls for the breaking down of any ideological barriers separating the different fields of human knowledge to further art itself. For this reason, she refuses to align herself with any specific aesthetic ideology. While sharing certain affinities with the movement

of “l’art pour l’art,” in its desire to uphold the autonomy of art and the artist, the author ultimately rejects the Parnassian movement’s extreme focus on formal concerns which, for her, limit the very progress of art. In response to “l’art pour l’art,” Sand proposes, in her 1861 novel *Valvèdre*, her ideal of an artist versed in all fields of knowledge and open to all forms of beauty in addition to being engaged in furthering the progress of society and the evolution of the human spirit.

This all-encompassing approach towards art mirrors itself in the concept of a “*Jacques* matrix.” By indicating the existence of a number of rewritings of her 1834 novel within her entire corpus without specifying each of these literary palimpsests, George Sand, in essence, establishes *Jacques* as the virtual center of her entire corpus; by not giving the reader a finite list of this intertextual network, Sand consequently makes every work in her corpus suspect. The binary interrogative stance the author establishes in this manner between each of her novels with *Jacques* enhances at once the centrality of this matrix novel and also encourages a configuratively sensitive reading of her works—that is to say, knowing that Sand has rewritten *Jacques* several times draws attention to any possible actualization or re-combination of elements associated with this key work. The author invites us in this way to compare and contrast all of her novels by being attentive to their similarities and differences especially apparent when viewed through the lens of the matrix. This metaliterary structure therefore allows her to tap into the potential that such a reading frame can open, in terms of signification and literary experimentation.

Drawing attention to the fact that her novels *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour* are rewritings of *Jacques* highlights the ties between the three works. They function thus as a core trilogy within the possible network of rewritings of Sand’s 1834 novel. This network of

rewritings that I call Sand's "*Jacques cycle*" permits the author to emphasize different variables (i.e., the different destinies of her characters, their differences in family background, and their differences in gender) on which she wishes us to focus in her reflections on social and societal problems. At the same time, such a larger reading frame allows for a deeper pleasure in the reading experience, when a reader picks up on the "metaliterary jokes" the author stages before him or experiences deeper nuances and levels of meaning produced through such a configuratively attentive reading. Finally, Sand also uses the core trilogy to express her conclusions as an artist; as the last work in this core trilogy, *Le Dernier Amour* functions as Sand's "dernier mot."

Ultimately, "le dernier mot" she conveys to us in *Le Dernier Amour* is the importance of reading and thinking correctly through the questioning of one's habits of seeing, judging, and being. In this sense, Sand's legacy is a plea for tolerance and compassion in recognizing that the "legitimacy" of human judgment is finally based only on relativity. She also reminds us that the question of adultery affects much more than the couple alone, for adultery affects all human ties and relationships. Her argument is essentially that there are duties, responsibilities, and human ties more important to conserve than to insist on breaking up a whole network of human associations through the fault of one or both members of a couple. Interdisciplinary thought and different configurative approaches serve thus to show us the larger links that hold humanity together. Sand underscores as well the need for education in protecting innocence from being seduced in addition to the need for social progress in combating poverty; in *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand's heroine Félicie serves as a prime example where poverty leads an individual to fall into error and shame, and finally results in death.

In presenting the issue of adultery through an interdisciplinary perspective, Sand also reveals her conception of literature as one perspective among others. Intertextuality can be considered metaphorically in this sense as the expression of interdisciplinary thought through the literary mode. Opening up larger and larger frames of reading and thinking is recognizing the infinite nuances and possibilities of human existence and human perception. In encouraging the widening of one's ways of seeing the world, the Sand corpus reflects the author's attempt to bring humanity to a higher level of being and expresses above all her profound faith in the perfectibility of the human spirit. The "*Jacques cycle*," is in this sense an homage to art and to humanity's ability to understand, to reflect, and to grow.

CONCLUSION

When one examines how George Sand fully engages with the esthetic and theoretical debates of her century through her novelistic writing, another image of her soon emerges. Until recently, for Sand scholars, two main images of the Sand corpus have been dominant: “un grand fleuve d’Amérique” and “une grande œuvre multiforme.” While both images evoke the strength and diversity of styles, approaches and genres in Sand’s oeuvre, they also suggest a certain formlessness. “Un grand fleuve d’Amérique,” the subtitle of Béatrice Didier’s monograph on George Sand, suggests the grandeur but also the wild, even unruly force of an American river and the wilderness around it. Similarly, “une œuvre multi-forme,” the phrase put forth by Françoise Van-Rossum Guyon in her paper for the 11th International George Sand Conference in Montreal (1994),²⁸⁷ captures the idea of the diversity of styles and genres but also implies a certain vagueness as to the shape of Sand’s literary production. Moreover, when speaking about her novelistic writing, scholars and the larger reading public alike often refer to “eighty or so” novels and short stories, as though one cannot arrive at the exact number.

In place of this relative sense of imprecision regarding the Sand corpus, I propose, on the contrary, the vision of an oeuvre clearly thought out and orchestrated according to a “master plan.” When one begins to scrutinize the intertextual ties holding her work together and linking it to the writings of other authors and also takes into consideration its polyphonic nature, one notices the extreme coherence, logic, structure, and precision of this “grande œuvre multiforme.”

²⁸⁷ “Une œuvre multiforme” is also the subtitle of the collection of articles on George Sand compiled by Françoise van Rossum-Guyon and published in 1991. This collection also begins with an article by van Rossum-Guyon entitled, “George Sand: Une œuvre multiforme.”

Contrary to what one may be accustomed to thinking, Sand's writing is a highly self-conscious act that incorporates much metaliterary reflection and proposes through its very execution a personal theory of literature. At the center of this literary corpus is what I call the "*Jacques* cycle," a series of rewritings of her 1834 novel *Jacques*. This series of rewritings is central to Sand's literary poetics, for it brings to the forefront the fact that she has always thought about literature in theoretical terms. In her 1866 novel *Le Dernier Amour*, the author speaks about *Jacques* through her protagonist, as a novel that Mme Sand rewrote several times under different titles (247)—M. Sylvestre indicates that these rewritings have followed the evolution of Sand's thinking as a writer, in addition to her reflections on social and societal concerns. In this respect, Sand places intertextuality, rewriting, and metaliterary reflection at the very heart of her conception of literature.

Intertextuality and Rewriting, the Cornerstone of the Sand Corpus

Intertextuality and rewriting are already the basis of George Sand's vision of literature in the first decade of her literary career, and they are closely intertwined with her "engaged" stance as a writer. An early proof is the care with which she composes her "Essai sur le drame fantastique"—a passionate defense of rewriting as a legitimate practice—and fights for its publication. The "Essai" demonstrates in what ways intertextuality is central to her ideas regarding the role and responsibilities of art and artists. For Sand, resolving and dedramatizing the 19th century's "anxiety of influence" is crucial to the evolution of literature, which is in turn linked to the notion of human progress and the perfectibility of the human spirit. For this reason, she sees it as her duty to defend not only artists accused of plagiarism for having borrowed elements from the work of other writers, but also the very practice of rewriting and the creation of intertextual links between works of art.

A Theoretically Engaged Writer in Her Century

As an artist, Sand is thoroughly engaged in the preoccupations and literary debates of her century. In both her correspondence and her literary works, one finds many discussions about her vision of literature and her thoughts regarding the publishing industry and its effect on literature. Her correspondence with Buloz and Charlotte Marliani in particular regarding the publication of her “Essai sur le drame fantastique” reveals an author invested in what she feels to be the mission of art. While understanding the commercial stakes behind the publishing industry, Sand nevertheless tries to persuade her publisher to strive for higher goals in art by publishing works that will challenge readers and thus contribute to the evolution of the human spirit. Similarly, her “Essai sur le drame fantastique” also takes on contemporary concerns. Her discussion on intertextuality begins precisely with her defense of Byron’s *Manfred*. She claims that Byron should be proud of rewriting Goethe’s *Faust* rather than be embarrassed to acknowledge any possible tie to his contemporary’s work. For this purpose, she proposes the concept of a “domaine public” from which all literature draws and to which it contributes. Such legal terminology lends legitimacy to the concept of rewriting while demonstrating the author’s awareness of the emerging concept of intellectual property resulting from commercial and legal developments in the publishing industry.

Establishing rewriting as a well-founded practice is central to Sand’s view of literature and its evolution. According to her, each author contributes to the evolution of literary forms by reworking, adapting, and enriching them, or creating new forms based on elements from this “domaine public.” Consequently, defending artists practicing rewriting is a duty especially in a century gone astray in its condemnation of what she considers a time-honored noble tradition. By specifically employing the metaphor of a master tailor who gives a model to his disciples to

adapt and appropriate, Sand further reinforces the legitimacy of borrowing and adapting forms inherited from the past. This metaphor of an artisanal model of creation evokes the age-old, proud tradition of apprenticeship in guilds where masters pass on their knowledge and techniques to journeymen and apprentices thus, contributing to the progress of their craft. Furthermore, her choice of the metaphor of clothing to express her concept of rewriting indicates the importance of history as coloring a work's style and character (i.e., the idea of fashion). Sand's theory of intertextuality is therefore a model which incorporates the temporal dimension of writing.

Finally, Sand's engagement in the literary preoccupations of her period also extends to educating the public about new forms of writing and new authors who merit attention. Her "Essai" attempts to introduce her readers to what she considered a new literary form, the "drame fantastique" represented by Goethe's *Faust*. Understanding that the formal innovations and new meanings introduced by such works might be overlooked or rejected by readers simply because they were disorienting, Sand saw the importance of presenting them and rendering them accessible through her explanations. For this reason, explaining Goethe's *Faust* to the public was as important as drawing attention to the little known writings of Mickiewicz. In this way, Sand's engagement is that of an author not only taking part in the literary debates of her time with other artist-creators but also that of an educator teaching a less enlightened public about advances in art. Being "theoretically engaged" in art thus also includes a practical dimension—serving as an intermediary between new artists and the public is as important as theorizing about art, for both are necessary to the evolution of artistic taste, and consequently to the progress of the human spirit.

A Strategically Positioned Literary Creation

As a “theoretically engaged” author, George Sand positioned herself strategically on the literary scene of the 19th century. When read carefully in relation to the aesthetic trends of its time, the author’s corpus, and especially her “*Jacques* cycle,” reveals itself as a carefully constructed literary universe. Already with her matrix novel *Jacques* George Sand is striving to establish herself among the top writers of the 1830’s. This 1834 novel reveals a keen awareness of the aesthetic trends and shifts on the literary landscape inaugurated by the July Monarchy. By employing the form of the polyphonic epistolary novel, Sand draws attention to her positioning on the literary scene, for the genre is no longer in fashion by the 1830’s. As a literary form, the epistolary novel is more closely associated with the idea of 18th-century sociability than with 19th-century romanticism. This slightly anachronistic position therefore allows Sand to exploit the form to underscore her own metaliterary reflections on novelistic writing. At the same time, in choosing to rewrite *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in her novel, the author places herself in the prestigious literary lineage of her predecessor.

Aligning herself with Rousseau through her novel *Jacques*, Sand distances herself from the sentimental novel tradition associated with women writers. In this work, Sand’s style itself forces readers to question their own expectations in regards to “women’s style of writing.” By performing what I would call a “vigorous textual masculinity” in her display of complexity and her mastery of literary techniques and codes, George Sand demonstrates that a woman writer can write “like” and as well as a man. She thus exploits the form of the polyphonic epistolary novel to display her virtuosity as a writer and knowledge of literary traditions; the many intertextual allusions in addition to her simultaneous rewriting of both Rousseau’s masterpiece and Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* flaunt the performative aspect of her literary creation. Contrary to Suard’s

conception of women's writing as transparent, simultaneous, and pure in its simplicity and authenticity, Sand demonstrates that a woman writer like herself can very much "sound other chords" and innovate. At the same time, through its many intertextual elements reminding readers that they are in a universe of texts, Sand's *Jacques* writes back at realism. In response to what Roland Barthes will later call, "l'effet de réel," George Sand essentially counters with what one could call "l'effet de textuel."

However, as a "tour de force" novel weaving together a plethora of intertextual elements, *Jacques* is much more than a show of virtuosity; while reflecting on the metaliterary and societal concerns of its time, it also performs Sand's own theory of the novel. In this sense, *Jacques* can be considered Sand's own "*Art of the Fugue*" in a manner similar to Bach's masterpiece. Through its form, virtuosity, novelistic discourse, and metaliterary reflection, Sand's 1834 novel not only attracts attention but announces her ambition to be considered among the top authors of her time.

On the one hand, the panorama of speaking and writing styles displayed in *Jacques* expresses a certain "plaisir du texte," and one can evidently sense at certain moments George Sand's sense of humor guiding her pen. On the other hand, the different social identities of her characters seem to suggest that Sand is giving us her own "Comédie Humaine." Her novel puts to the forefront her social critique of women's education and the necessity for rethinking the institution of marriage while allowing for the possibility of divorce. In this way, Sand's *Jacques* opens up a theoretical space for imagining a different social order where marriage takes into stronger consideration the realities of amorous attraction and a solid compatibility between the spouses. The tragic suicide of her eponymous hero serves thus as a means to signal the urgency of rethinking the institution of marriage and reforming the laws governing the marriage contract.

Ultimately, in interweaving her rewriting of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, Sand suggests that in order for Rousseau's utopist Clarens to truly last, it must be built on the stronger basis of marital commitments more in harmony with one's own nature and the "scientific laws" of amorous attraction exposed in Goethe's novel. Similarly, in modeling her own heroine on the principles of education Rousseau considered appropriate for women and showing its disastrous consequences in her own novel, Sand calls into question this type of education and suggests the need to reform women's education. In short, while rewriting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* may be read initially as aligning herself with Rousseau, George Sand finally uses this opportunity to differentiate herself from her predecessor's views and expose the underlying tensions already inherent underneath the surface calm of Clarens. The different viewpoints that Sand exploits in her execution of the form of the polyphonic epistolary novel thus allow her to examine the multiplicity of opinions and facets around complex societal issues while exploring the form's potential to express 19th-century aesthetic preoccupations.

An Oeuvre Reflecting on the Autonomy of Literature

Not surprisingly then, for an author who sees the concept of history as central to both art and the human experience, Sand's own metaliterary focus reveals itself as deeply anchored in the literary concerns of her time. The Sand corpus is constantly in dialogue with the aesthetic and ideological literary trends of the 19th century, and it is through this dialogue that the author asserts her own conception of the autonomy of literature. It is especially through what I have called the core trilogy of her "*Jacques* cycle" that she expresses the nuances of this theory. In many regards, the metaliterary reflections demonstrated in these three novels spring from the new period of aesthetic shifts inaugurated in the 1830's by the 1830 July Revolution. In this respect, George Sand's *Jacques* and her "*Jacques* cycle," in defending the autonomy of

literature, fight on the same terrain as Gautier, whose *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, theorizing the principles of “l’art pour l’art,” was composed in the same year as Sand’s matrix novel. On the other hand, Sand makes clear in principal rewritings of *Jacques* (i.e., *Valvèdre* and *Le Dernier Amour*) that her own concept of the autonomy of art is not the same as “l’art pour l’art” principles later expressed by authors like Baudelaire and leading to the Parnasse movement.

Under the July Monarchy and especially in the years right after the 1830 Revolution, novelistic aesthetics shift rapidly as authors explore different ways of writing and literary genres and subgenres better able to express the new social and political realities of the period. More concerned with the problem of unequal social division, as Margaret Cohen has pointed out, authors are moving away from the sentimental novel and its focus on the internal conflict played out in the heroine or hero’s dilemma. This changing literary landscape thus sees the emergence of realism vying for dominance with the sentimental social novel. At the same time, with the rise of the press as a voice of authority, the critic gains new prominence. Newspapers and critics eager to impose their vision of literature and culture, especially in regards to the idea of the utility and morality of art, clash with artists and writers equally eager to assert their newfound freedom of expression. In particular, the “Romantisme frénétique” representing the excesses of Romanticism served as a lightning rod for accusations of immorality and consequently became a symbol of resistance to the moral authority of critics. This usually decried literary movement associated more with the “minor romantics” triggered a heightened reflection by authors in regards to the autonomy of literature. These clashes caused authors and critics alike to reflect on the questions of both the morality or immorality of art and its articulation with reality. The greater freedom of expression symbolically guaranteed by the Charter of 1830 and made possible

by the 1830 July Revolution thus sets the scene for the theorization of “l’art pour l’art” and other reflections on the autonomy of art.

It is in this historical context of a broader reflection on the autonomy of art and literature that George Sand’s *Jacques* and her article, “À propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*” can be understood in their fullest sense. To a great extent, both can be considered Sand’s “literary manifesto” expressing her vision of the independence of art. After the virulent attacks by critics denouncing the immorality of her 1833 novel *Lélia*, the author defends not only the liberty of art but also the dignity and respect due to the artist-creator. By proposing the concept of “vérité poétique,” which asserts the autonomy of the literary text, Sand denounces as irrelevant any judgment about a work’s morality or immorality. What is striking about this particular article is Sand’s careful positioning of her own theoretical stance. On the one hand, she refutes any accusations of immorality critics could direct at her by borrowing from the discourse of realism: by suggesting that her art is separate from her authorial identity, Sand implies that it is no more immoral than a mirror reflecting reality. On the other hand, she flaunts the artifice of such a defense by hinting at the fallacy on which this discourse is based. By exposing the hidden authorial intent of realism to be faithful to reality, Sand shows that her original statement defending literature was ultimately just a pretext to expose her theoretical view about the autonomy of the literary text. Finally it is through this ironic, flauntingly sophist stance that George Sand demonstrates her own conception of the autonomy of literature as ultimately just a “play on words.”

A Configuratively Conceptual Art

Literary experimentation through the staging of different combinational variants is a constant in the Sand corpus, and her “*Jacques* cycle” highlights what I call “configurative

thinking” in her literary universe. By signaling the existence of a series of rewritings based on *Jacques*, Sand introduces what I define as a “configuratively” conscious dimension to her whole corpus, in the sense that she draws attention to the specific actualizations and re-combinations of elements associated with her matrix novel. The fact that Sand, in *Le Dernier Amour*, purposely gives us a retrospective commentary on her entire literary career more than thirty years after the publication of *Jacques* shows the centrality of this novel in her corpus as a structuring element. It also frames intertextuality, and more specifically rewriting, as an organizational and interpretational principle in her work. In her “*Jacques* cycle,” George Sand taps into the potential that a larger intertextual reading frame opens up in terms of signification and literary experimentation.

Essentially, if one gives credence to Sand’s comments in *Le Dernier Amour* about rewriting *Jacques* several times in the course of her career, this would theoretically reorient the entire reading experience of her corpus. In this 1866 novel, she has her male protagonist, Monsieur Sylvestre, tell us that “Mme Sand” had rewritten *Jacques* several times in the course of her career. On the one hand, such a statement inspires a heightened attention to the author’s manipulation of both form and content in her novels. On the other hand, by only hinting at but not stating the titles of all her rewritings of *Jacques*, the author establishes her 1834 novel, as not just one matricial configuration at play in her literary corpus, but the central matrix around which all her novels revolve.

Leaving open to interpretation the novels which could be considered a rewriting of *Jacques* would place every work in an interrogative stance with her 1834 novel. This binary interrogative stance established with every one of her writings would make of *Jacques* what I would call the “virtual center” of Sand’s literary universe, since this perceived centering is not an

actual fact designated by the author, but only happens in the mind of the reader through his active participation in the interpretive process. In this way, Sand's "virtual center" performs in a similar manner to the Riffaterrian idea of a literary matrix as a perceived semantic nucleus even if the actual word or phrase is not literally present. Finally, the idea of a series of rewritings centered on *Jacques*, not only highlights the possible intertextual ties each work in her corpus might share with her 1834 novel, but also invites the reader to see her works as an interconnected whole by rendering one more conscious of the polyphonic and intertextual ties between them.

In regards to the "core trilogy" of her "*Jacques* cycle," George Sand exploits this larger intertextual reading frame to encourage the reader to reflect on education, societal progress, the institution of marriage, and the concepts of love and attraction. This larger reading frame invites the reader to compare and contrast the different configurations of her matrix novel actualized in her rewritings in addition to comparing them with her 1834 work. More specifically, Sand draws attention to the different destinies presented in these three novels and suggests that these destinies result from differences in the configuration of variables portrayed in each of the three novels. The author demonstrates in this way how education, social factors, and gender influence and often determine the fates of her characters. Reading in this manner allows us to see the widely differing fates of Francis, the young hero in *Valvèdre*, and Félicie, the young heroine in *Le Dernier Amour*. Despite the disastrous consequences of his adulterous passion for Alida, Francis is forgiven and reintegrated into society after seven years whereas Félicie is never pardoned by her community after thirteen years of an exemplary virtuous life; the attenuating circumstances of her youthful error at age fifteen are ignored—the fact that her fall was in great part due to poverty, lack of education, and hunger for affection she did not receive as a child. In regards to the fate of her heroes in *Le Dernier Amour* and *Valvèdre*, George Sand points out

(through the hero of her 1866 novel) that Jacques commits suicide whereas Valvèdre heals from his wife's betrayal and eventually remarries a young woman endowed with a superior intellect and education in both science and art. The different variable configurations between the two novels suggest that education and societal factors are responsible for the happy end in *Valvèdre* as opposed to the tragic death of her hero in *Jacques*.

Sand also uses the larger reading frame over-arching the core trilogy of her "*Jacques* cycle" to have the reader reflect on both the autonomy of literature and the concept of rewriting itself. The author draws on the heightened comparative focus created by her designation of *Valvèdre* as a rewriting of *Jacques* to exploit the possibilities for producing meaning even in minute details which might otherwise have escaped detection or viewed as merely gratuitous. In *Valvèdre*, Sand's "transposed" rewriting of the oboe episode in her 1834 novel takes advantage of her readers' expectations in regards to the diegesis. By purposely deviating from the equivalent episode in *Jacques*—Francis, unlike Octave, does not succeed in charming Alida, Sand gives us a lesson on the concept of rewriting and capturing the poetics of a text through the composition of a literary palimpsest. In essence, such a transposition has us think about the logic governing a literary text and interpret exactly what Sand is "copying" in her rewritings of *Jacques*. This metaliterary dimension is underscored by the fact that in the 1834 novel, Octave himself had brought up the idea of good copies and bad copies when he first described Sand's hero Jacques as "une mauvaise copie de M. de Wolmar." In essence, by altering in *Valvèdre* the oboe sequence in *Jacques*, George Sand reminds the reader that fictional truth and the poetics of a text are decided by the author who can so-to-speak change the rules of his literary universe as she wishes. In this way, *Valvèdre* further expounds on the liberty of the artist-creator demonstrated in the matrix novel, and performs Sand's concept of the autonomy of literature.

While formal elements and metaliterary reflection are a central part of her writing, Sand is careful to demonstrate that her concept of the autonomy of art is not the same as that of “l’art pour l’art” principles overly focused on form which would later lead to the Parnasse movement in the 1860’s. In *Valvèdre*, Sand demonstrates that her metaliterary reflection is closely linked to both the effects she wishes to convey in regards to her story and the message and ideas she wants to transmit. Recounting in effect the tale of the prodigal son, her 1861 novel opens with a long discussion on the different manners and techniques of telling a story. However, this discussion which appears at first as a purely theoretical discourse voiced by the author reveals itself to be the narrator’s reflections on the best aesthetic and technical approach to take in the narration of his story. By subsuming in this manner her metaliterary discourse within her diegesis, Sand expresses to us her belief that the focus on formal elements is never an end in itself but is closely intertwined with the content and moral message of her story. Through Francis’s discussion of the different possible approaches to telling a story, Sand shows us that she does not believe in the superiority of any specific aesthetic movement and refuses to align herself with realism or “l’art pour l’art.” On the contrary, she insists on the value of different approaches and argues for the importance of upholding the liberty of the artist-creator in choosing among a large number of possible aesthetics.

Although George Sand denounces the constraining aspects of a “l’art pour l’art” movement overly focused on form, she refuses to frame her discussion within the parameters of a literary debate. In *Valvèdre*, Sand has her male protagonists discuss the ideology of “l’art pour l’art” through the axis of science vs. art. In fact, “l’art pour l’art” is hardly even named. While her refutation of this concept dialogues with many of the principles expounded by the proponents of “l’art pour l’art” (like Baudelaire for instance in his article on Théophile Gautier), Sand makes

clear that she is not denouncing one specific aesthetic movement but all ideologies that constrain the liberty of artistic choice. Finally, in framing her debate of “l’art pour l’art” within the parameters of science vs. art, and denouncing the barriers that any ideology may put on artistic expression as well as the pursuit knowledge, the author condemns the quarrels between partisans of different aesthetic movements. For Sand, the focus of art should be on broadening one’s knowledge of all aspects of human experience and remaining open to different approaches and viewpoints which can potentially enrich one’s art.

***Le Dernier Amour* as Sand’s Final word**

As the last novel in the “core trilogy” of Sand’s “*Jacques* cycle,” *Le Dernier Amour* functions to a great extent as the author’s “dernier mot.” In this work, George Sand, through her male protagonist Monsieur Sylvestre, gives us the key to deciphering her whole literary corpus, the evolution of this corpus and its aesthetics and her reflections on the literary and societal preoccupations of her time. While commenting at length on the narrational style of her male protagonist and other literary concerns, George Sand insists that this work is less a novel and more a philosophical analysis. Indeed, in *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand multiplies the different perspectives and approaches through which she examines the subject of adultery. By staging before us this topic of discussion among a group of close-knit friends and showing the wide range of judgments expressed and the impossibility to come to a common agreement in their opinions, the author demonstrates the complexity of such a social issue in addition to the relativity of truth itself.

This strategic framing of her examination of a difficult societal issue allows Sand to impress on her readers the importance of wider reading and interpretational frames in order to think, judge, and read correctly complex issues connecting all aspects of human existence. The

author reminds the reader in this way that judging the question of adultery expands beyond the marital couple itself and the love triangle situation. On the one hand, individuals are linked to different social networks, and thus, punishing or judging the person accused of adultery would necessarily affect the lives of those around him. For this reason, Sand calls for the need to tread carefully when pronouncing judgment, for punishing anyone necessarily results in inflicting pain on the lives of those associated with him or her. In *Le Dernier Amour*, M. Sylvestre realizes for instance that he cannot punish Tonino without punishing his own future godson, because condemning the former would have serious consequences on this innocent child who does not merit suffering for the “sins of the father.” On the other hand, M. Sylvestre, in examining the question of adultery through the lens of religion, philosophy, law, and science, concludes that it is almost impossible to discern the exact guilt or innocence of any single human being, since one cannot know for certain the specific motivation of that individual. In the analyses she stages, Sand suggests that a truly just examination of guilt would have to include the question of libre arbitre; for her, the question of guilt and innocence are irrelevant in cases where biological determination for instance is so strong that no free will can be exercised. Similarly, Sand argues that the environment and education of an individual are also responsible for determining to a great extent his actions and his potentiality. In presenting the different perspectives through which one can and should examine serious societal issues affecting society, Sand demonstrates not only the difficulty of judging correctly but also the urgency for social and societal progress in order create a more just society where each one has the possibility to reach his full potential.

In her “dernier mot” on literature expressed in the last novel of her “*Jacques cycle*,” George Sand thus resituates her art as finally one of many different perspectives through which one can examine society and human nature itself. While demonstrating the specificity of

literature, the author constantly reminds her readers that all fields of knowledge are interconnected and interrelated. Intertextuality read through this lens is finally the textual expression of interdisciplinarity itself. Understanding a work of literature requires reading it on the one hand within the context of its own historicity but also resituating it within the larger parameters of all literature and its dialogue with other works of art and fields of knowledge. Sand's "grande œuvre multiforme" is in this sense the celebration of all aspects of human existence but also a reminder of the frailty of man and the impossibility for anyone to arrive at absolute certitude. In short, the Sand corpus is both a theoretically and societally "engaged" corpus expressing a constant plea for compassion while expressing faith in the perfectibility of the human spirit through education and greater understanding in all fields of knowledge. The "*Jacques* cycle" is in itself the very proof that theory and action are at the heart of Sandian thought.

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