

## ABSTRACT

George Sand and Her Heroines: Boundary-Breaking Women in the Age of Romanticism

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The French Romantic author George Sand subverted societal gender roles in both her daily life and her writing. From crossdressing in public to divorcing her husband to engaging in numerous love affairs, Sand utterly rejected gender conformity in her own life. Similarly, her works of fiction challenged modern concepts of gender and placed the female condition on display in order to fervently critique it. While a member of Romanticism, Sand stood out from her peers by manipulating elements of the genre to create strong heroines and emphasize their fight against society. This thesis will examine three of Sand's works—*Indiana*, *The Marquise*, and *Gabriel*—as well as her own life in order to explore the ways in which she and her heroines pursued female liberty. Further, it will analyze the ways that Sand manipulated literary genre and narrative strategies to place the female condition on display through her works.

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GEORGE SAND AND HER HEROINES:  
BOUNDARY-BREAKING WOMEN IN THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Baylor University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Honors Program

By  
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Waco, Texas

May 2020

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to Dr. Theresa Kennedy who helped me with this project from beginning to end. Thank you for your guidance, your swift replies to my emails, and your encouragement when the anxieties seemed too big to overcome.

Thank you to Dr. Al Beck who told me “頑張つて” when I needed to hear it the most. It may have seemed small, but it was the push I needed to complete this project.

Thank you to Dr. Ginger Hanchey, who taught me how to write freshman year, how to read literature sophomore year, and how to translate *Beowulf* from its original language senior year. At least one of those skills came in handy during this project. Most of all, thank you for being a friend all four of my years at Baylor.

Thank you to the friends who supported me when I needed reassurance, let me cry when I needed to be an Enneagram Four, and made me laugh when I needed a break. Kendra Cameron Kaveney, Amar Pancar, Rahil Chandra, and Bahna Miller, y'all were my rocks through this project and outside of it. Baylor would not have been Baylor without you.

Thank you to my dad and brother Logan, who care nothing for French literature but still let me vent in my downtime during our COVID-19 quarantine.

Finally, and perhaps most of all, thank you to my mom, who was the first heroine in my life. You were my first reader and my biggest cheerleader, through this project and my entire Baylor experience.

All of you were instrumental in my completion of this thesis and my time at Baylor. I am so grateful for each one of you.

*Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,  
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions  
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance  
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can*

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning,  
"To George Sand: A Desire"

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Heroines: Indiana, the Marquise, Gabriel, and George*

The French Romantic author George Sand is famous for far more than her writing. While her love affair with Frédéric Chopin granted her fame, her countless other love affairs, at least one potentially with a woman, resulted in infamy. She also scandalized the public by dressing as a man and engaging in male pursuits—horseback riding, hunting, and smoking tobacco in public. However, the subject matter of her novels and works of theatre were equally scandalous. Sometimes subtly, but normally overtly, her works criticized the female condition endorsed by the patriarchal society of her time. Sand's protagonists were women who suffered under this same female condition and protested against it or fought back against it in some way. Some of them were victimized more than others, and some were stronger than others, but they were all united with each other and their author in their suffering caused by the male-run society in which they lived.

Three works which demonstrate the range from weak to strong in Sand's heroines' response to their oppression are *Indiana*, *The Marquise*, and *Gabriel*. Each of these features a heroine who, like Sand, possesses boundary-breaking ideals and goals. Yet due to circumstance and personality, each one acts on these ideals in a different manner. *Indiana* represents the weak heroine, passed from the control of one man to another nearly her entire life. While she possesses the revolutionary notion that women ought not to belong to men and should be allowed to have their own thoughts and ideas, she relies on a man to save her from her marriage and carry her off into another

controlling relationship. The Marquise is stronger, a woman who refuses to remarry after her husband passes away and who knows what she wants. When she discovers an actor she is attracted to, she plays the typical male role of pursuer in their brief relationship. Gabriel has a major advantage over her fellow heroines: she was raised and educated as a man and is able to live like one. While she still faces oppression due to her biological sex, she has freedoms the other heroines do not have because of her gender fluidity.

The behavior of all three women shares one key characteristic, however—it reflects that of their author. Despite their differences, all three heroines and their circumstances were inspired in some part by the experience of George Sand, as was typical for nineteenth century female writers who suffered under the patriarchy. As explained by Gilbert and Gubar, these women “project what seems to be the energy of their own despair into passionate, even melodramatic characters who act out the subversive impulses every woman inevitably feels when she contemplates the ‘deep-rooted’ evils of patriarchy” (77). Indeed Sand, like many of her female peers, inserted herself and her experiences into her novels and plays. Her heroines, then, reflect Sand’s own attitudes and desires in regards to her anxieties and frustrations with the patriarchy. Her works stand out from those of the male Romantic authors as a result of her female experience and the way she chose to share that experience through her works. Further, she manipulated the narrative strategies and themes of Romanticism to create a contrast between her novels, which demonstrate the injustice of the female condition, and male-authored Romantic novels.

In *Indiana*, Sand created a heroine who was not allowed to be one—a revolutionary who was too suppressed to ever be able to share her own boundary-



breaking values. While Indiana as a character is far weaker than Sand in both personality and behavior, they are bonded by their unhappy marriages and desire to be free from them. Both Sand and Indiana were married to older, harsher men who had no interest in academics, the arts, emotions, or deep thinking—both men who were incapable of truly understanding their wives. *Indiana* was published the year after Sand left her husband and began considering a legal separation. It is likely, then, that Sand's own marital experiences influenced her writing as she penned Indiana's arduous journey out of her own marriage. Unlike Sand, Indiana did not have the strength to walk out on her husband and instead waited for a new love interest to provide an out. While Indiana possesses many of the traits of the typical Romantic hero, Sand uses Indiana's weakness to demonstrate the fact that women, both within the Romantic tradition and in reality, were not allowed to be heroes.

Sand's novella *The Marquise* depicts a stronger heroine than Indiana in a woman who plays the role of pursuer in a love affair. The Marquise also possesses the power of narration which typically belonged to the male Libertine and Romantic heroes, as she is the one telling her story decades later to a young male listener. Just as the Marquise was not afraid to play the typically-male role of initiator in her relationship with a stage actor of lower class than herself, Sand was no stranger to the role of pursuer in love affairs. It was she who made the first move in her relationship with Chopin, not the younger composer who found the successful author intimidating (Doumic 175). While the Marquise's relationship with the actor was short-lived and chaste, her participation in it demonstrates her strength. The fact that she still tells the story in her old age reveals how content the brief affair made her. Sand certainly gave elements of her own personality

and drive to the Marquise, and perhaps defends her own numerous affairs through the novella.

Gabriel is one of Sand's strongest heroines due to her ability to be either a man or a woman, a trait the author shares to a certain extent. While her biological sex is female, Gabriel was raised believing she was male. In her adulthood, she uses the power of her masculinity to achieve liberty. When she tries to live as female for a love interest, she discovers that freedom being ripped from her as she starts to fall under male control. In the last act, she discovers that she can only be free in isolation because too many have learned the truth about her sex and have threatened to reveal it publicly. Like Gabriel, Sand found herself being pulled towards both male and female traits and habits. In fact, several of her peers described Sand as both male and female or somewhere in between, including Victor Hugo and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Both Sand and Gabriel cross-dressed in public and behaved like men. Through her pseudonym, Sand was even able to write as a man and enjoyed the freedom which masculinity provides both in her daily life and as an author. Like Gabriel, however, she was confined to femininity because people knew she was not biologically male. Neither could achieve true freedom in life, then, because they would always be women as long as they walked the earth. When she is murdered at the end of the play, Gabriel rejoices because she can finally achieve true freedom in death. The same was true for Sand: "In fact, Barrett Browning declares, only in death will Sand be able to transcend the constrictions of her gender" (Gilbert and Gubar 67).

Sand's female voice makes her stand out from the male Romantic writers of the time. Her unique experience as a woman who suffered the female condition prompted

her to create heroines who responded to that condition in various ways, all pushing back against it to some extent. Sand created heroines who reflected her own experiences, behavior, and desires. Through her depictions of these heroines and her manipulation of the Romantic genre, Sand displays her experience with the female conditions and its unfairness in her works. This thesis will examine Sand's own life and the content of *Indiana*, *The Marquise*, and *Gabriel* in order to demonstrate the way Sand inserted her own experience with the patriarchy into her works in order to vocalize her disapproval of the female condition and societal gender roles.

## CHAPTER ONE

### George Sand: The Subversive Romantic

The French Romantic author George Sand refused to conform to society's expectations, challenging gender roles in both her everyday life and in her writing. She was a woman raised by women who cross-dressed from a young age, spent most of her life independent from men, and employed her sexual freedom by engaging in numerous affairs with significant people. As an author, she had overwhelming success, becoming popular across Europe and was the most famous nineteenth century woman in either Europe or the United States (Gerson 1). While her works were filled with female protagonists who subverted society's expectations by playing roles normally reserved for male ones, it was Sand herself who outperformed many of her heroines in these areas. From divorcing her husband, to wearing men's clothes and smoking in public, to a potential lesbian love affair—or several—George Sand never conformed and never strayed from scandal. This chapter will explore many of the ways that Sand challenged gender roles and secured her own liberty throughout her life. Of course, a complete account of Sand's entire life would not fit within these pages, so this chapter will specifically recount some of the most prominent times that Sand subverted gender roles in her adulthood and the childhood circumstances that inspired them. An understanding of the unusual life of this author and the decisions she made will inform a reading of her female protagonists in the chapters to come.

### *The Early Years*

The author was born on July 1, 1804 and given the legal name Amantine Lucille Aurore Dupin. While her father was descended from the King of Poland Augustus II, her mother was a commoner—the daughter of a bird seller (Doumic 4-5). When the girl was just four years old, her family moved from Paris to Nohant in the French countryside to live in her grandmother's chateau. Shortly after this move, her father was flung from his horse in a freak accident and died (Barry xxvii). His death prompted the immediate conflict between her grandmother and her mother over where she should live and who ought to raise her. While both women would play a role in her upbringing, Sand's mother soon decided to return to Paris, allowing her wealthier mother-in-law to raise and educate Sand in Nohant (Sand, *Story* 489). While she had a male tutor and other men were present in her life throughout her childhood, Sand did not have a strong father figure after her father's passing. The primary female influence on her upbringing by her widowed mother and grandmother would influence her opinions and actions later in life.

From a young age, Sand did not conform to traditional gender roles. While her father was still alive, his commander Murat would dress her in an elaborate little uniform and introduce her to others as his aide-de-camp (Sand, *Story* 444). This was the first time she ever cross-dressed, and seeing her dressed as a little boy made Murat treat her like one. When she played with the other children before moving to Nohant, she preferred that they explore their imagination rather than play the traditional games. They would play family or military, and she frequently played Napoleon himself in their games, theatrically taking on a male role even then (Sand, *Story* 427). While at Nohant, Sand spent her days playing with her half-brother Hippolyte. In her autobiography, Sand wrote

that at first, she had to prove that she was not a delicate little girl, and instead proved to him that she was “a very resolute boy” (456). Since she grew up playing with the boys, getting dirty, and making mud pies, and since she was educated like her male peers by a man, Sand insists she was raised like a boy (*Story* 822).

In 1817, her grandmother sent Sand to live at a nearby convent, as was the fashionable thing for young women of the upper class to do in order to complete their education (Doumic 15). During her stay at the convent, Sand discovered an overwhelming piety within herself that would evolve into a respect for religion and spirituality even as she stopped being religious herself later in life. Her grandmother pulled Sand away from the convent when she started to grow ill, however, eighteen months before her passing (Doumic 19-20). During this period, Sand’s grandmother began to look for a suitable husband for her seventeen-year-old granddaughter. The young woman, however, chose horseback riding and enthralling herself in nature over worrying herself with suitors (Barry xxviii). Another significant thing happened during this period: Sand again began crossdressing. Her tutor, who had always seen her as one of the boys he tutored, encouraged her to wear boy’s clothes when she accompanied him hunting, so that she could run more easily.

From here on, others began to view the young Sand as different, her grandmother included (Sand, *Story* 781-782). In her memoir, Sand provides a list of the ways she had begun to scandalize the citizens of her town:

At that time, no woman of the area was permitted to go riding... My costume... was considered an abomination; the study of skeletons, a profanation; hunting, destructive; study, an aberration; and my relationships with young men... whom I had continued to treat as childhood chums and whom I saw quite rarely at any rate, but whose hands I shook without blushing or trembling like a lovesick hen—were deemed effrontery, depravity. (*Story* 783)

Hearing the rumors being spread about her daughter, some true and many exaggerated, Sand's mother wrote to her, reproaching her for studying osteology and behaving in this manner. The young woman confidently responded to her mother, defending her behavior and insisting that women ought to be educated (Doumic 23). These first political statements demonstrate the feminist ideals Sand would continue to develop.

### *Marriage and Motherhood*

Eighteen months after Sand had been removed from the convent, her grandmother passed away, prompting a transitional period in Sand's life (Sand, *Story* 799). She returned to her mother, but the Parisian woman proved to struggle with parenting, frequently giving into bouts of paranoia and anger. Realizing and embarrassed over her own instability, her mother sent the young Sand back to the country to stay with a couple she had met only three nights before, the Du Plessis (Sand, *Story* 821). This couple her mother had only recently met functioned as wonderful temporary adoptive parents to Sand (Doumic 28). During her time with her new family, Sand received many marriage proposals, all of which she rejected. About these proposals, Sand wrote, "I could not accept the idea of being asked for in marriage by men who did not know me...and whose only aim, consequently, was to conclude a business transaction" (*Story* 821). Marriages arranged for social or monetary gain did not interest her, but she was not turned away from the idea altogether. In fact, she wrote that the Du Plessis' marital happiness made her finally understand the value of a marriage built on trust and friendship (Sand, *Story* 825).

Furthermore, it was through the Du Plessis that she would meet the man she would soon marry, Casimir Dudevant, in the April of 1822. He was an old family friend

of theirs, prompting him and Sand to spend a great deal of time together. They took to each other instantly, although at first as friends, not romantic interests. When he did ask for her hand in marriage only a couple months later, he went straight to Sand, not her mother or the Du Plessis. He told her that he wanted the decision to be made out of her own free will, and gave her time and space to make her decision (Sand, *Story* 830). Sand found Casimir to be pleasant and honest, and above all, her friend. She also appreciated that he never courted her like her other suitors, so she had no reason to reject his proposal (Domic 29). The young couple was married that September, then moved to the chateau in Nohant in October (Barry xxviii-xxix).

Sand gave birth to Casimir's son, a healthy child named Maurice, in the summer of 1823. Sand referred to his birth as "the most beautiful moment of my life" (*Story* 838). One might not expect a woman who so rarely took to traditional gender roles to have strong maternal instincts, but Sand had always possessed them: from being a young child caring for her dolls, to watching over the Du Plessis' children, to finally desiring her own (Sand, *Story* 825). Therefore, she was completely absorbed with Maurice, as she would later be with her daughter.

However, her joy over the birth of her son soon faded as the normalness of married life returned. Arguably, her marriage to Casimir was unhappy from the start. Although the marriage was arranged by the two of them and was not a business transaction like the marriages Sand hated, it was also not built on love. While the two likely cared for each other early on, they lacked an emotional connection and never truly understood each other. In a letter Sand wrote to her husband in 1825, she explained her misery in these early years of marriage. The two had nothing in common—Casimir did



not like music, literature, studying, or philosophical discussions, so she tried to give these up in order to find harmony with her husband (Barry 311-312). Of course, this only resulted in her becoming bored and unhappy, and completely lacking mental engagement. René Doumic argues that Casimir's greatest crime was that he was simply an ordinary man. Sand was by no means an ordinary woman, leaving them with a doomed marriage from the beginning (35).

In the hopes it might benefit their marriage somewhat, the couple began to travel around the country with their young son. These voyages, however, proved to have the opposite effect. She met Aurélien de Sèze in Cauterets and was immediately attracted to his wit. In him she found all the traits her husband was lacking, and she allowed a passionate, but most likely platonic affair to commence between them (Barry 313-314). She spent hours alone with Aurélien when her husband was off hunting, as a close bond developed between the two of them. While Sand insists and history seems to prove that nothing more than friendship existed between her and Aurélien, the two possessed an emotional intimacy that she never had with Casimir, and her marriage suffered as a result. This friendship likely made way for the future affairs that both Sand and her husband would engage in in the following years.

The first of these was Sand's affair with her childhood friend Stéphane de Grandsagne. She reconnected with him in 1827 while spending time in Paris, and the two became lovers for about a year. One significant thing occurred as the result of this affair: her daughter Solange was conceived (Barry xxix). Whether her husband was aware of this affair is unclear, but it was around the same time that he began to take a fancy to maid servants. The day after Solange was born in 1828, Sand caught her

husband with one of these maid servants at the chateau in Nohant (Doumic 45). This event was swiftly followed by two others which would lead to her ultimate separation from Casimir. First, she met Jules Sandeau, who would later give her her pen name, in the summer of 1830. She fell in love with him, perhaps the first man towards whom she experienced true romantic love, and they began an affair (Barry xxx). Second, she found Casimir's testament, to be read after his death, in which he cruelly detailed every grievance he had with his wife. Upon reading the testament, Sand confronted her husband and revealed her decision to leave her children at Nohant and spend half the year in Paris alone, receiving a monthly allowance from him. (Barry 317). Finally, George Sand had secured her own freedom.

### *Finding Her Voice*

Sand spent the next couple of years traveling back and forth between Paris and Nohant, living openly with Jules Sandeau during her time in Paris, and beginning to write her first published works. One of the times she voyaged back to Paris, she took Solange along with her, and the mother and daughter remained together for several years (Sand, *Story* 876). The distance kept things peaceable between Sand and Casimir during these years, as did Sand's refusal to ask him to increase her small allowance. In order to decrease her budget, Sand's mother advised her to start wearing men's clothing. Sand appreciated the practicality of the idea, and soon became enamored with the comfort of her boots and ease with which she could slip in and out of public places (Sand, *Story* 892-893). Around the same time, she coauthored a number of novelettes with Jules Sandeau, published under the name J. Sand (Barry xxxi). Sand desired to continue using the pseudonym when she published *Indiana*, but out of modesty and a desire not to have his

name on a work he had nothing to do with, Sandeau insisted she choose another one. In order to please both Sandeau and her publisher, she quickly selected the name George (Sand, *Story* 907). Thus, a legacy began.

Sand spent the remainder of the 1830s writing novels and some theatre and engaging in numerous love affairs. A significant one of these was with the actress Marie Dorval, whom Sand met and befriended in 1833. In her autobiography, Sand dedicates an entire chapter to her friendship with Mme. Dorval, someone she held near to her heart for over a decade. While a sexual relationship between the two women has never been historically confirmed, it is widely believed that one existed (Barry xxxi). Biographer Noel Bertram Gerson insists that this was only one of several lesbian love affairs, others including another actress and an aristocrat who also published her writing under a man's name (6). Whether or not Sand and Dorval truly experienced physical intimacy, it was certain that they possessed a deep emotional intimacy and that Sand's love for Dorval was great. In a letter Sand wrote to this dear friend, she declared "I feel that I love you with a heart made young and fresh again by you" (Barry 330). Later in 1833, Sand engaged in a weeklong affair with author Prosper Mérimée, which proved unsatisfactory and left her in tears (Doumic 100-101). In the August of 1833, her relationship with Alfred de Musset began. Infatuated with each other, the two travelled to Venice for vacation the next year. Here, however, Musset became ill and required the assistance of a doctor Pietro Pagello, who in turn became a lover of Sand (Barry xxxii).

While she had been almost completely independent from her husband for several years, Sand did not finalize their separation until 1835. Earlier that year she met and fell in love with a republican lawyer Michel de Bourges, with whom she engaged in yet

another affair (Barry xxxii). Michel would later represent her in the trial over her separation. Shortly after their affair began, Casimir had a violent episode against Sand in Nohant. According to Sand, the outburst was completely unprompted, and involved him first trying to strike her, and then attempting to get his gun and shoot her (Doumic 156). Fortunately, Sand was unharmed by either of these actions, but they were certainly the last straw. Immediately following them, she moved out of the chateau completely and filed for a legal separation. The separation was finalized the next year after a public trial in Bourges, where Michel represented her (Barry xxxii-xxxiii). Possession of the chateau at Nohant and custody of the children were also granted to Sand, to Casimir's chagrin. He plotted to take Maurice away from her, but instead took Solange from Nohant in 1837 when he found out that Maurice was not there. Sand had to get the police involved in order to retrieve her kidnapped daughter, but after peacefully handing her back over, Casimir finally left Sand alone (Doumic 159-160).

### *The Successful Romantic*

During her remaining years, Sand had two more significant relationships. The first was her famous affair with Frédéric Chopin, which lasted roughly nine years. They were introduced by a mutual friend, and Sand was immediately infatuated with Chopin and Chopin immediately intimidated by Sand. His genius overwhelmed her for years while she was captivated by the way he could make "a single instrument speak the language of infinity" (Sand, *Story* 1092). The author made the first move on the reserved composer, eager to again have someone to take care of (Doumic 175). Sand and Chopin soon departed for Majorca with Sand's children to benefit the health of both Chopin and Maurice, and the little group continued to live together after their return to France in 1839

(Barry xxxiii). The rest of the 1830s and much of the 1840s was filled with the ups and downs of her relationship with Chopin and an incredibly successful period in her writing career.

The 1840s also marked the point when Sand began to engage in politics, publishing a number of political writings. Earlier in her career, she frequently insisted that her novels which often seemed anti-marriage or even anti-men were not inspired by her own experiences or indicative of her views on these issues, but were rather stories that just came to her. Now, however, she began to write novels which were clearly politically-driven (Barry xxxiv). She was a republican and a revolutionary who would refer to herself as a “socialist” before the term was even popularized (Barry 371). While she was a baroness thanks to her marriage and had Polish royalty on her father’s side, Sand identified with the common people and rejected her own upper-class status. In 1844, she founded a progressive newspaper for her region, and after the Revolution of 1848, she began to be much more deliberate about sharing her political views, publishing a number of political bulletins (Barry xxxvi).

The remainder of Sand’s life contained less scandal than her earlier years. She continued writing until she was too sick to continue, publishing books until her death in 1876 (Barry xliii). She had one last long romantic relationship with her son’s friend Alexandre Manceau, which lasted from 1850 until his death in 1865. Her last lover was the painter Charles Marchal, although this affair was brief (Barry xli). Towards the end of her life, she began to write her rustic novels which were set in the countryside in which she grew up and spent many of her happiest years. These novels, including her final novel *Marianne*, featured romances which triumphed over issues of class and societal

expectations. Sand passed away a month before what would have been her seventy-second birthday due to an intestinal occlusion. Her final works were published shortly after her death, leaving her with around eighty published works in total.

Discussing his fellow author, Victor Hugo stated, “George Sand cannot determine whether she is male or female. I entertain a high regard for all my colleagues, but it is not my place to decide whether she is my sister or my brother” (as cited by Gerson). Sand did not possess an ounce of conformity, and certainly never allowed herself to conform to gender roles. In the public space, she frequently appeared as a man. When writing, she published her works under a man’s name, leaving critics to speculate about her gender in the early days of her career. Most importantly, Sand did not allow her marriage, society’s expectations, or gender traditions to limit her freedom. Despite her husband’s wishes, she chose where to live, with whom she was in a relationship, and where her children were educated. Her writing career did not start out of necessity, but Sand’s own choice and passion for the art. Her crossdressing and her writing allowed her to run in circles of impressive and influential men, many of whom she took as her lovers, frequently taking the initiative to start these relationships. These men, who were famous writers, artists, lawyers, diplomats, and thinkers, were time and again impressed with Sand’s brain—both her wit which could keep up with theirs and the words which flowed from her pen. Sand rejected conventionality in every area of her life, never settling for ordinary, but constantly pushing to be the most successful woman—and man—that she could be.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Indiana: The Disempowered Revolutionary*

The first novel George Sand wrote on her own and published under her nom de plume would become one of her most well-known, both during her life and afterwards (Massardier-Kenney 15). *Indiana*, published in 1832 in the middle of the French Romantic Period, was striking for many reasons. While other popular novels from the time focused on idealized romances, imagination, passionate expressions of feelings, and beauty (Ferber 10), *Indiana* placed the victimhood of its heroine on display. The reader is in no way spared from reading the details of the miserable state of the novel's protagonist, a young but frail woman trapped in a loveless and occasionally abusive marriage to an older man with no capacity to understand her. Disempowered by the limits society places on her and enslaved to her husband, Indiana believes her only hope is for another man to save her.

Sand's raw depiction of Indiana's misery is not the only thing that sets the novel apart, however. The character of Indiana stands out from the female love interests of the Romantic works and from Sand's other heroines. Like many of these heroines, such as the eponymous *Marianne*, *Gabriel*, and *Lélia*, Indiana possesses revolutionary ideals and a strong desire for her own personal liberty. The difference between Indiana and Sand's later heroines, however, is that she has no opportunity to act on her ideals. Sand published the novel as a piece of Romantic literature, taking the themes crucial to Romanticism—detachment from and rebellion against society, journey to self-discovery, pursuit of romantic relationships, etc.—and manipulating them to demonstrate the

injustice of Indiana's situation. She allows a male voice to narrate the novel, one who frequently appears to be sexist toward the heroine and her kind. Meanwhile, Indiana has many of the traits of the Romantic hero, but her disempowerment denies her the opportunity to act on them. By utilizing the themes and narrative strategies which her readers would expect from a Romantic novel in ways they would not, Sand establishes Indiana as an enslaved would-be revolutionary and condemns the society that allowed her fate.

### *Indiana as a Romantic Novel*

*Indiana* was published in the midst of French Romanticism, with Sand's peers and friends including Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, and Alexandre Dumas fils, among many others. The Romantic novel, though difficult to summarize as a single movement, featured stories of romances and men embarking on long pilgrimages with a primary focus on what was happening to the inward self (Moore and Strachan 3). Emotions were explored and praised, relationships were examined intensely, and themes of imagination and one's ability to perceive the world around them were expounded upon. The theme of nature and one's spiritual relationship with it also played a major role. Michael Ferber attempts to summarize Romanticism as a movement,

Which found in a symbolic and internalized romance plot a vehicle for exploring one's self and its relationship to others and to nature, [and] which privileged the imagination as a faculty higher and more inclusive than reason,...and which rebelled against...social and political norms in favor of values more individual, inward, and emotional. (10-11)

While the novels of this movement frequently explored romantic relationships between a man and a woman, the focus was typically male as the novels were written by men.

Literary history up until and even after Romanticism was dominated by men (Gilbert and



Gubar 46-47). Thus, the Romantic novel featured men engaging with their own emotions in light of a romantic relationship, men having spiritual experiences in nature, and men rebelling against their own political landscape. Although she made use of these overarching themes of Romanticism, Sand applied them to her female characters to create a contrast with the Romantic hero. Through doing so, she was able to demonstrate the injustice that was the female condition.

While expressing emotions, performing self-discovery, and articulating one's thoughts are at the core of the Romantic genre (Bishop 2, 5), *Indiana* demonstrates how women were not allowed to do so. Indiana is prohibited from expressing her emotions to her husband, as she is not allowed to shed a tear in front of him (Sand, *Indiana* 19). Later, her emotions for her love interest Raymon are manipulated by his falsehoods, depriving her of the ability to be in control of her own feelings, so unlike the Romantic hero. While Raymon and Indiana might profess their love in similar language to that found in the romance novels of the genre, the reader understands that the two are never actually in love. Indiana falls for a lie and a false hope, and Raymon becomes infatuated with a new plaything to control. Further, while Indiana possesses her own revolutionary thoughts, not only is there no one to listen to them, but she would also be punished if she ever tried to express them. One of the few times she does attempt to speak up for herself and express these feelings, her husband responds by gripping her hand in anger until he bruises her (Sand, *Indiana* 177).

Sand further emphasizes this point by giving Indiana certain traits of the Romantic hero in order to demonstrate that a woman could not be a hero. Her cousin Ralph, who proves to be her true love interest and rescuer, also shares these qualities.

Unlike Indiana, however, as a man Ralph is allowed to be a true Romantic hero. Like the Romantic hero, as described by Lloyd Bishop, Indiana had a tragic upbringing, first raised by a violent father, then somehow orphaned and left with no one but her cousin. The Romantic hero's difficult childhood set him up for melancholy later in life, and Indiana clearly follows suit (Bishop 58). Indiana shares the Romantic hero's same desperate desire to find a lover and to find one now, as a way to mitigate his identity crisis and satisfy his longings (Bishop 7). Bishop continues to explain that the Romantic hero often gives up the hope that happiness is attainable (5), and that his "intense individualism and hypersensitivity often result in morbid or pathological tendencies" (17). Indiana and Ralph similarly give up any hope that they can achieve happiness in life, agreeing to a suicide pact at the end of the novel. The Romantic hero also finds himself connected to a remote setting deep in nature, whether he is exiled there or chooses to exile himself there (Bishop 16-17). Here he is able to be introspective and connect with nature, as do Ralph and Indiana when they return to the cliffs on Bourbon Island, and ultimately move to a secluded cottage there. Most like the Romantic hero, perhaps, is the sense of self-pity which both Ralph and Indiana possess (Bishop 65). While she shares the traits and history of the Romantic hero, Indiana is not allowed to become the hero of her own novel because she is a woman. She must instead wait for Ralph to save her, even if she must give up her autonomy as a result.

Thus, Sand demonstrates that the idealized romances of the Romantic novel and their focus on the internalized being fail women in general. Women in Indiana's state could not express themselves as the heroes of the Romantic novel did. No one cared to listen to their stories of discovering spirituality in nature or overcoming inner turmoil

through self-reflection. Only after Indiana is freed from her masters does she have her spiritual experience in nature so crucial to the Romantic narrative, as she shares an eternally binding kiss with her cousin Ralph before they attempt suicide at the end of the novel. Only Ralph, although far from the perfect rescuer, gives her the opportunity to turn inward and share her thoughts. Yes, Sand uses the romance plot in *Indiana*—or rather, both of them—as a vehicle to examine something more than just a relationship between a man and a woman, but she does so on a wider scale than her peers. By using similar themes as other Romantic authors, but turning them on their head, she forces the reader to recognize how the genre and the society that popularized it do not allow women to flourish.

### *Indiana the Suppressed Revolutionary*

At a glance, it is difficult to see how Indiana is any more than a weak woman controlled by the various men in her life, even up to her attempted suicide. Further examination, past her actions and into her words and motivation, demonstrates that she would have rebelled against the system if she had had the opportunity. Nineteen-years-old when the novel begins, she is a young Creole woman who has been a victim of male control her entire life. When realizing that Indiana was enslaved first to her father in childhood, then in adolescence to her husband, and then emotionally to her first love interest Raymon, readers can understand her inability to act out. Thus, the ways she expresses her rebellious spirit are normally on a smaller scale than the ways Sand's other heroines do. Raymon first realizes that Indiana's spirit is not that of other women when he sees her transform from a "frail, timid woman" to one with "masculine courage" during a hunt (Sand, *Indiana* 113). Galloping on her horse and following the men as they

hunt ignites something in Indiana, allowing her to physically express herself with a determination and boldness the reader has not seen before.

While she is a slave to several men, Indiana refuses to become their ideal woman. She never allows herself to be molded into the wife Delmare wants her to be, or even into the lover Raymon wants her to be. Her ability to find some freedom with Ralph is due in great part to the fact that he loves Indiana for Indiana and never expects her to change for him. There is one moment in particular which reveals Indiana's revolutionary ideals and her ability to be bold. After Raymon sends her away during an attempt to convince him to take her in so she would not have to move to Bourbon Island with her husband, Indiana returns home to find Delmare irate. He demands to know where she has been, and she refuses to tell him, demonstrating her rebellious spirit:

I know I'm the slave and you're the lord. The law of the land has made you my master. You can tie up my body, bind my hands, control my actions. You have the right of the stronger, and society confirms you in it. But over my will, Monsieur, you have no power...You can impose silence on me, but you can't stop me thinking. (Sand, *Indiana* 176-177)

While her actions cannot always match her ideals due to the immense constraint men have placed on her, she still performs a small rebellion by refusing to let her personality be molded.

Indiana, therefore, is not weak in spirit. She is inhibited because the men in her life, society as a whole, and the very genre within which the narrator tells her story prevent her from being her true revolutionary self. She believes that her only way out of her marriage is through another man, and allows herself to fall for Raymon too easily out of this desperation. However, her innate values, and the fact that she only finds true happiness at the very end of the novel by removing herself from society completely,

demonstrate that this is not a woman willing to conform. Before she moves to her little cottage with Ralph, society and the men in her life constrain her until she is not allowed to be a revolutionary, or even her own person. Scholar Peter Dayan explains that the relationship between Ralph and Indiana that allows her liberty and expression needed more than just a different sort of society than one they experienced in France. Their love and the role it allowed Indiana to take could not exist within any society at all. Thus, Sand demonstrates that they could not achieve happiness by changing society; they had to escape it (Dayan, 61).

This idea is emphasized by the Indiana's own identity as a Creole woman born on Bourbon Island. The fact that she is Creole is repeated unnecessarily frequently throughout the novel, and both the narrator and several male characters make comments which stereotype Creole women and imply that they are somehow different from French women. This seems to demonstrate that Indiana is an exotic creature of sorts, born on the very periphery of the French-speaking world. There is a sense in the novel, therefore, that Indiana is not truly French and is therefore incapable of being herself as long as she lives in France. She cannot conform to the ideals set forth by French society because her identity is not French. Her return to Bourbon Island at the end of the novel represents a return to herself. Ralph and Indiana had to both escape the society which oppressed them and give up their identity as French in order to enjoy their life together in the epilogue.

### *The Men in Indiana's Life*

The story of *Indiana* can best be understood by examining the relationships she has with the three male influences in her life—her husband, her suitor, and her cousin—and the way these men victimize her. Colonel Delmare, Indiana's husband, is the first

person the narrator introduces in the novel—“a retired army officer...an excellent master who made everyone tremble, wife, servants, horses, and dogs” (Sand, *Indiana* 15). It should be noted that as the narrator describes Delmare’s ability to effectively control all living things he has ownership of, his wife is listed along with his dogs, showing no hierarchical relationship between the woman of the house and its animals (Dayan 54). Two of Delmare’s character traits are revealed in the first few pages of the book. First, his violent nature, as shown in his discussion with Indiana regarding her spaniel which he killed in a rage during a hunt. Second, his disdain for female emotions, revealed when he insists that his wife not cry in front of him (Sand, *Indiana* 19). These traits are in stark contrast to Indiana’s own, as she is a quiet, emotional, submissive woman, whose depression has left her physically unwell.

Meanwhile, Indiana’s husband treats her little better than a slave. The fact that Indiana is not truly in a marriage but rather in a state of slavery to her husband is openly stated by both the narrator and several characters throughout the novel. When asked about his wife’s opinion regarding a major decision about their household, Delmare replies that “women are made to obey and not to give advice” (Sand, *Indiana* 151). Still, the narrator defends Delmare despite his inability to understand or sympathize with his wife:

But slavery had undoubtedly made [Indiana] feel a kind of dumb, virtuous aversion for him which was not always fair...He was not naturally nasty; he had moments of pity which made him repentant, and when he repented he was almost sensitive...But Indiana was disheartened by her lot; she made no effort to make it better. (Sand, *Indiana* 89)

Having gone from slavery to a violent father to slavery to a violent husband, Indiana perhaps considers her situation worse than it is, as unable to understand her husband as he

is to understand her. Indiana will certainly try to make her own situation better, but according to the narrator, she should have first tried to improve her marriage.

The abusive nature of Indiana's marriage left her desperate for new love and vulnerable to the control of a new man. Here enters the charming Raymon de Ramière. He first encounters Indiana after being injured by her husband who caught him sneaking onto their property. Raymon had been engaging in an affair with Indiana's maid Noun, whom he had impregnated, and was attempting a rendezvous. After healing from this injury, however, he and Indiana have a proper introduction at a ball, where he forgets Noun completely and falls for Indiana's beauty and helplessness. The narrator explains that it is only due to Indiana's "lack of freedom and her suffering" (Sand, *Indiana* 63), that Raymon is more attracted to Indiana than her maid, revealing that Raymon becomes infatuated with Indiana because she is a powerless victim he can easily control. Raymon seduces Indiana with no great effort, and understandably so, as the narrator explains. The young woman had never been in love before, and her heart was desperate for it. Thus, she was blind to Raymon's true nature, and allowed herself to romanticize his character until she had formed him into her perfect rescuer in her mind (Sand, *Indiana* 52).

By the time Raymon commits a massive crime against Indiana, she has already been so taken in by his deceit that she has relinquished any ability to resist him. Sneaking onto the property in an attempt to seduce Indiana, Raymon encounters Noun and sleeps with her one last time. Noun soon discovers his true intentions, and realizing that Raymon's love for her is no more, commits suicide. Conveniently, her death frees Raymon of his obligations to her and their unborn child. Her death would nevertheless ultimately be the thing that destroys the relationship between Raymon and Indiana. In

the meantime, he spends months pursuing and seducing her. Indiana resists him physically, but not with her heart. Thus, when the true cause of Noun's death is finally revealed to her by her cousin Ralph, she does confront Raymon, but forgives him far too easily. Being reminded of Noun and the crimes he has committed against these two women changes something in Raymon's heart, however, and his feelings for Indiana dissolve (Sand, *Indiana* 141).

Raymon has Indiana so deeply under the control of his emotional manipulation that she wants to choose him over everything else even when he begins to lose interest in her. Shortly after the Noun incident, Colonel Delmare reveals to his wife that his business has collapsed and they must move back to Bourbon Island. Desperate to avoid a life alone with her husband and convinced she needs a man to rescue her, Indiana surprises Raymon at his home and begs him to rescue her from this fate. At first, he allows himself to become excited, making promises he knows he will not keep—that she will become his companion and that he will physically defend her from her husband. Of course, Indiana allows herself, in her desperation, to be taken in by this deceit. Suddenly, Raymon recovers himself, calls her a child, and sends her abruptly away (Sand, *Indiana* 167). Indiana is thus forced to leave her home and set off on the voyage to Bourbon Island with her husband.

If only Raymon might have stopped leading the young woman on here, but his nature steps in and leads him to commit his last and greatest crime against this woman he has emotionally enslaved. Growing dissatisfied with his life, he sends a letter to her on Bourbon island, hoping to manipulate her into crossing the seas back to him to become his dutiful mistress whom he can hide from the public eye. He explains his unhappiness,



his longing for her, and implies that he is waiting for her (Sand, *Indiana* 206). The arrival of his letter could not have been more opportune, as it comes on the heels of the Colonel's most violent action against Indiana. He discovers her box of letters from Raymon and her diary detailing her feelings for him. In a rage he throws her to the ground and kicks her forehead so hard that blood begins to run down her face (Sand, *Indiana* 207). When the letter arrives, she is desperate for any chance to escape. Thus, she departs Bourbon Island, sacrificing all her jewelry, her emotional well-being, and her physical health in the process.

Raymon, on the other hand, forgot about the letter almost as soon as he had sent it. In fact, in the months following, he had met the new inhabitant of Indiana's former home, fallen for her, and married her. Indiana finally arrives, thinking Raymon has purchased her old home for her, only to have the truth suddenly and harshly revealed to her when Raymon's new wife shows up. Here it finally becomes clear to Indiana that Raymon never truly cared about her, but rather used her as he used Noun to satisfy his desire to have power over a helpless woman. In her desperation to escape one master, Indiana flung herself into the arms of another. Now another man steps into the picture, but this one has no intention of enslaving her.

Until now, Indiana's cousin Sir Ralph has hovered mostly in the background. The reader knows that he had essentially raised Indiana as a child, and that the two have shared an emotional intimacy ever since. Ralph had befriended the Colonel, perhaps to stay close to Indiana, and never leaves her side during any trouble. He even moves to Bourbon Island with her and her husband, so as to protect her from the marriage she was stuck in. Raymon has always been jealous of the closeness Indiana and Ralph shared, but

to Indiana their relationship was only familial. At this point in the novel, however, he reveals himself as Indiana's third and greatest romantic interest. He rescues her from the hotel where her heartbreak and exhaustion have left her horribly ill and reveals that her husband passed away before ever discovering her departure. Ralph spoils Indiana, nursing her back to physical and mental health and helping her through her grief.

However, both parties soon realize that their misery cannot be cured in this life, so Ralph suggests what he believes to be the only remaining option: suicide. Thus, the two agree to kill themselves together, back in Bourbon Island where they grew up. Their return journey to Bourbon Island is spent in spiritual reflection, and Indiana ends the trip in her healthiest state so far in the novel. Ralph's heart is softened during the journey, and the two get to know each other wholly and completely, both feeling at peace for one of the first times in their lives (Sand, *Indiana* 242-243). When they finally arrive and are preparing for the suicide, Ralph confesses his love for Indiana in a speech that takes up almost the entire last chapter of the novel. Finally, Indiana truly sees the man standing in front of her, who has loved her the entire duration of her life, and she realizes that her love should have been for him all along. The couple share a kiss which binds them in a spiritual marriage for all eternity, one they will share in heaven after they fling themselves from the cliff. Then Ralph scoops his wife into his arms and jumps.

The reader discovers in the conclusion, however, that the couple did not succeed in killing themselves. The narrator, now a person who exists in the novel's universe, finds Indiana and her husband (while they might not have a legal marriage, the novel makes it clear that their spiritual one binds them more strongly than a wedding performed by mortals would) living on their own in a small cottage on Bourbon Island, separated

from the rest of society. Here they have finally found peace, no longer forced to care about what society asks of either one of them, with Indiana no longer bound as a slave to any man. In fact, the two use their resources to buy and free slaves on the island (Sand, *Indiana* 270), further clarifying that this is not a novel about romance, but about slavery. Indiana's condition is more than that of a wife stuck in an unhappy marriage. She is a slave to society and to men—while she was physically a slave to her husband, she was emotionally a slave to Raymon. Her freedom, and the freedom of other slaves as a result, is only achieved when she removes herself from society completely by running away with Ralph.

#### *The Narrator*

A unique strategy Sand used in *Indiana* was turning the narrator into a key player in the story. Throughout the novel, he feels to the reader like a fifth major character because he does more than narrate. He interjects his own opinions throughout the novel, showing sympathy or support for some characters and criticism of others, even commenting on the political views of the male characters. Then, in the conclusion of the novel, he reveals himself as a character interested in the lives of Ralph and Indiana who visits them and interviews Ralph about their story. His significance lies in the fact that Sand wrote *Indiana* as a feminist novel that challenged the female condition and the socio-political ideals that ensured it, while not only making the narrator a man, but a fairly sexist one at that.

Throughout the novel, he interjects statements about French women, creole women, and women in general, often negative ones. He repeatedly refers to Indiana and Noun's naivety and ignorance: "Indiana, in her ignorance" (Sand, *Indiana* 46), "[Noun's]

totally ignorant mind” (63), “Madame Delmare, ignorant as real Creoles are” (124), “a woman who was so naïve” (143), “Indiana is ignorant” (266), to name just a few instances. He clearly states to the reader that “woman is naturally foolish” (Sand, *Indiana* 192), in order to explain Indiana’s naïve behavior. Therefore, he demonstrates that like the male characters in the novel, he considers women the weaker sex, physically, emotionally, and mentally. He might agree that Indiana’s state is unjust because she is treated poorly by her husband and deceived by Raymon, but he would likely not agree that society has failed women in general by constraining their gender roles. In his mind, a woman trapped in cruel slavery to her husband is a tragedy, but a woman’s general subservience to man ought to be expected because of their nature. This contradiction between the narrator’s attitudes towards women and Indiana’s rebellious spirit emphasize the clear feminist motivations behind Sand’s writing the novel.

Scholars have theorized the narrator might not just be a new character introduced in the conclusion, but in fact Ralph himself, choosing to tell his story as if he were an interested third party watching from a distance (Boutin 105). Ralph’s occasional comments about female ignorance throughout the book provide evidence for this theory. He seems to share the narrator’s opinions about women and his distaste for Raymon. Further evidence is the fact that examination of the text reveals that the novel truly describes Ralph’s story, as well as that of the other two important men in Indiana’s life. The narrator’s decision to hold back the intimate details of Ralph’s story until the end of the novel support this idea: Ralph has narrative control and shares himself with the reader when prudent to tell his story (Boutin 103). If we accept this theory, we must realize that Indiana, then, has not found a perfect hero to save her from sexism and patriarchal gender

constraints. Whether or not Ralph is the true narrator, the conclusion makes clear the fact that Ralph controls the household, and Indiana often takes on a role of silence. It is Ralph, not Indiana, who converses with the narrator and explains their situation. She has not achieved a perfect freedom then, showing the reader that true liberty was never attainable for Indiana. This fact also reveals, however, that Indiana's current happy state—not perfect but better than any she has ever had—is not due entirely to Ralph's stepping in to save her, but rather to their mutual decision to abandon society. The limited freedom she achieves, then, arises out of her rejection of the society that constrained her, not as the result of a man saving her.

### *Conclusion*

*Indiana* was clearly written as a social commentary about the disempowerment of women, but Sand utilized unique and revolutionary strategies to do so. By manipulating the key themes of Romanticism and providing the last narrator one would expect to encounter in a feminist work, Sand reveals the injustice of the female condition in a way others had not done before her. The constant contradiction throughout the novel—the sexist narrator being used to denounce sexism, the protagonist as a revolutionary who could not act in a revolutionary way, and the Romantic novel manipulated to decry idealized romances—leaves the reader pondering the female condition longer than a direct denunciation of the patriarchy might.

Indiana as a heroine shares many traits with Sand's other heroines explored in this thesis, and even Sand herself. Unlike her fellow revolutionaries, however, Indiana's opportunities are limited to waiting on a man to save her. For her entire life, she has been passed from one version of captivity to another. Her only hope of escaping her miserable

marriage is to find another man to run away with, one who will ultimately treat her just as horribly. The more Indiana readies herself to fight back against the male control in her life, the more these men tighten their grip on her slavery. After a perilous journey to pursue one of these men which requires her to sacrifice everything, Indiana finally finds freedom with a third man, the only one to never betray her. With him, she is able to escape the society that has enslaved her and at last find a glimpse of joy at the end of a novel dedicated to her misery. It is because she did not draft Indiana's tale as a typical feminist one of a woman rejecting the patriarchy, but rather as one that utilizes contradictions and a constrained revolutionary that this first novel of Sand's became her most well-known and influential work.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Marquise: The Un-Libertine Heroine*

The majority of George Sand's works demonstrate either the pain suffered by women deprived of freedom or the happiness that women achieve from seizing liberty in spite of society. Her novella *The Marquise* does the latter, depicting a woman who found fleeting bliss through playing the traditional male role of pursuer in a passionate but brief love affair. In this novella, Sand demonstrates the contentment achieved by a woman who acted freely by engaging in behavior normally limited to men: taking control of her own love life, choosing to stay unmarried, and pursuing an affair with someone of lower social status. Drawing from the themes found in the novels of the French Libertine movement, such as sexual liberty and lust, Sand drafted a novel that parodied this narrative with two major differences: the woman is in control, desiring the man and pursuing him; and this lust ends not in a tawdry sexual affair but in a chaste romance that lasts but a night.

### *The Libertine Novel*

This love affair, which culminated in chastity and lost romance, seems starkly different from the stories of the Libertine heroes. The Libertine novels, written primarily in the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the time in which the Marquise's story took place, were partially autobiographical and partially fiction (DeJean 33). Initially, the protagonists of the Libertine novels were academics who took pride in their Biblical knowledge and their familiarity with the great Greek and Roman works (Goulemot and Greenspan 136). Over

time, however, their interests in philosophy and science gave way to a sense of victimization, as both the authors and heroes of these novels decided they had been persecuted by society (DeJean xi). They developed anti-establishment attitudes and found triumph in a kind of lawlessness as they sought liberation from the society which they believed persecuted them. This liberation primarily manifested itself in sexual liberty as the Libertines prided themselves in their ability to seduce women and have their way with them. The works of the Libertines stopped just short of pornographic, being filled with erotic scenes and orgies. According to Goulemot and Greenspan, “libertinage took the form of multiple amorous adventures featuring scenes of seduction, an appetite for pleasure and a total disregard for the social rules governing love affairs” (136). These were men who rejected society’s traditions, choosing a life of freedom for themselves instead. This freedom, however, primarily meant that they were sexually promiscuous, not actively challenging the issues within society.

In *The Marquise*, Sand seizes this Libertine narrative and flips it upside down by stripping the power from the male heroes of these novels and giving it to a single woman moved by ideas of heroism. The power of narration belongs to a woman as she tells her own story to an eager listener—a young man likely close in age to the heroes of the Libertine novels. The Libertine novels, on the other hand, utilize a male voice as the hero narrates his own tales of lawlessness. Giving the Marquise the power of narration gives her the control in the story, creating a strong difference in tone from other works of Sand which featured a sexist male narrator or the works of Libertines whose narrators were equally sexist. Not only does she tell a story in which she seized power for herself, she continues to have power over her own story by being the one to tell it, decades later. Sand



took the power of romantic and sexual pursuit right out of the hands of the Libertines and placed it in those of a young noblewoman with a passion for theatre.

To further demonstrate the novella's connection to the Libertine novels, the Marquise demonstrates clear distaste for the Libertine ideals, despite sharing elements of their behavior. When first describing her late husband, the Marquise derogatorily calls him a "jaded old libertine" (Sand, *Marquise* 35). She also rejects the Libertine idea of male superiority which considers women's primary purpose to be sexual pleasure. Arguably, the Marquise went fully in the opposite direction, believing men to be inferior due to their lewd behavior. According to the Marquise herself, "I saw men as scoundrels who acted like slaves in order to become tyrants. I vowed eternal resentment and hatred towards them" (Sand, *Marquise* 36). In fact, the only time she ever fell in love, she did so with the heroism that L elio represented on the stage, not with the man himself (Sand, *Marquise* 64). Therefore, every major Libertine theme is either parodied or turned on its head in the Marquise's narrative.

#### *Sand's Novella*

The entirety of the novella takes place within a single conversation between the Marquise and a young man whose identity is never revealed, seemingly inconsequential both to Sand and the purpose of the novella. For a reason not entirely clear to this man, the Marquise decides to confess her entire romantic history to him. Married at sixteen to a man thirty-six years her senior, she was subject to the tyranny of men as soon as she completed her education. She was widowed six months later, freeing her from a miserable marriage in which her husband was only ever intimate with her out of lust over her beauty rather than romantic affection (Sand, *Marquise* 35). Although young and

vulnerable, the Marquise swore off ever marrying again, having lost her trust in men. She eventually engaged half-heartedly in a friendship-turned-sexual relationship with the Viscount of Larrieux (Sand, *Marquise* 42), whose death in the beginning of the novella prompted her soliloquy to her young male listener in the first place. However, like her late husband, this man too never truly loved her and obsessively sought to use her body without real thought for her.

Only one man ever secured her love, and he did so unwittingly. She fell in love with the actor L elio from the first time she saw him perform. She fell for his voice, his forehead, his acting prowess, and his charm, knowing nothing about him but the power he had over her from the stage (Sand, *Marquise* 51). The Marquise was in love with the idea of him and the distorted image of him which she perceived from the audience, and yet her love was passionate, uncontrollable, and obsessive. Desperately, she would disguise herself as a working girl or a schoolboy in order to sneak into the theatre without calling attention to herself so that she could see him perform as often as possible. And while she was pining over a man she had never met, she was experiencing, perhaps for the first time, something that made her feel alive. Never before had she felt passionately for a man, and according to the Marquise herself, this period of time made her a woman (Sand, *Marquise* 53).

However, she only physically pursued L elio once, following him from a distance into a seedy caf e after his performance one night. Finally seeing him up close, she perceived not the hero he portrayed on the stage, but the weary middle-aged man that he truly was (Sand, *Marquise* 60). Instead of love, his image filled her with disgust; for a few brief days the spell was broken. Then the turning point: begrudgingly, the Marquise

returned to the theatre with a friend to see L elio again, this time as herself, sitting in her box. Despite her perception of him in the cafe, L elio again overwhelmed her with his ability to personify the heroic values that allured her. This time, he noticed her from the stage and was as taken with her as she was with him (Sand, *Marquise* 63). Again, she was hooked, and started attending the theatre every night to see him perform, openly and without disguise. As her love for him grew, so did his love for her, these two strangers staring at each other from opposite ends of the theatre.

The Marquise's story reaches its climax when she tells her young listener that soon after falling for her, L elio learned that he had to move away to perform elsewhere. Before his departure, he wrote to her, begging to see her just once, even if only for a moment (Sand, *Marquise* 71). She gave in to his request, but got herself so worked up beforehand that she became sick and had to be bled by her surgeon (Sand, *Marquise* 72). When she finally met him that night, L elio was again everything she had fallen in love with, and their rendezvous was so passionate and her body so weak from the bleeding she had endured prior, that the Marquise fainted in his arms. Coming to, she decided she wanted to end the night having loved L elio with her "heart alone" (Sand, *Marquise* 80), and begged him to understand why she would not be intimate with him.

#### *The Marquise as a Libertine*

Like the Libertine heroes, the Marquise is a victim of society. Unlike them, however, her oppression has been due to her sex and the restraints the patriarchy places on it. Her marriage, like so many of the time, resulted in her being all but a slave to an older and cruel man who valued her primarily for sex. When she was free from it after her husband's death, she decided to reject traditional marriage entirely and only pursue

romantic endeavors outside of marriage. Also like the Libertines, one of the ways she manifests her liberty is by pursuing someone out of sexual desire. While her pursuit does not end in a graphically erotic scene, her desire for L elio is driven primarily out of lust and obsession. The Marquise is a woman who possesses the sexual liberty of the Libertine hero, and even her decision not to act on her lust and become physical with L elio demonstrates her control over the situation and her refusal to give in to male desire.

Continuing to follow in the Libertine footsteps, the Marquise chose and continued to secure her own independence, a value as important in this novella as it was in the Libertine novels which inspired it. Neither marriage nor life-long commitment of any sort interested her. The death of her husband granted the Marquise her freedom, and she never could have achieved even the fleeting happiness L elio provided her if it were not for his passing. The Marquise made the conscious decision to continue clinging to this freedom as well as her fortune by never considering another marriage, despite the superior social life with which a husband might provide her. While the Marquise would periodically sacrifice pieces of her independence to the Viscount of Larrieux, she also held this man at a distance. She admits that she only kept him around because he provided her with protection and improved her social life (Sand, *Marquise* 43). The control in their relationship always belonged to her, and she never fully gave herself over to the Viscount emotionally or shared her deepest self with him. Even when completely consumed by passion for L elio, the Marquise remained the one who possessed control over their situation, not the actor. She initiated the romantic pursuit and she decided when to end it by walking out his door.

However, the Marquise's liberties were limited within the constraints of society. As a woman of status, she could not be caught pursuing a common actor in public. Thus, she had to disguise herself and sit with the commoners when attending the theatre in order to keep her affection for L lio a secret from her peers and to hide the entire thing from the jealous Larrieux who never left her alone (Sand, *Marquise* 52). While the Libertines only believed themselves to be persecuted by the same society which allowed them to be educated, financially independent, and in control of their own romantic affairs, the Marquise was truly a victim of society. She could watch L lio from a distance, she could follow him into a caf , she could even approach him once, but she could never truly be with a man of a status so much lower than her own while a member of high society. If her husband had not passed away, she likely would have led a miserable life forced to put on the fa ade of good wife and member of his upper social circles. And yet, just as the Libertines decided to fight back against their persecution through lawless behavior and sexual pursuits, the Marquise rejected her own victimhood by engaging in a love affair of her own, although one of a far less sexual nature than those of the Libertines.

The Marquise's narrative is really that of a woman driven by desire over a man she does not know personally in any way. She lusted after L lio's personification of heroism on the stage, obsessing over this stage persona until she was so physically worked up over his performance that she had to be calmed down by those around her (Sand, *Marquise* 62). However, she possessed no true physical attraction to L lio, and was almost disgusted by him the first time she saw him off the stage (Sand, *Marquise* 59-60). Any arousal she experienced over the actor resulted from his portrayal of the great

heroes of the theater, not L lio’s actual self. The Marquise herself refers to the entire affair as platonic (Sand, *Marquise* 47), and in the end she chose not to be intimate with him, preferring that their romance remain untainted in her mind. The Libertine heroes, on the other hand, only pursued sex, choosing not to care about romance or a relationship with a woman. Their tales were nearly pornographic, describing scene after scene of intimacy that never reached beyond physical (Goulemot and Greenspan 136). Like the Marquise, the Libertines pursue the objects of their attraction, but they do so through careless seduction and countless sexual exploits. The Marquise’s pursuit was careful, restrained, and never culminated in sex. While much of Sand’s novella is profoundly sensual, the narrative ends with her decision to keep L lio “pure in [her] heart and in [her] memory” (Sand, *Marquise* 80).

### *Conclusion*

The Marquise, decades later and now in her old age, may look back on her pursuit of liberty with contentment, knowing she achieved romantic bliss, even if only for a fleeting evening. Sand does not present her as a shining symbol of feminism. She is merely an old, unassuming woman with a story—a woman who had but one episode of true, raging passion in her life and chose to cling to it decades later. *The Marquise* could be presented as a tragedy about a woman who goes from an unhappy marriage to an unhappy but inescapable relationship to heartbreak over the only man who could have ever brought her joy, never truly given the opportunity to pursue true love. After all, she does not get the man in the end, even if she was allowed to briefly pursue him. But neither Sand nor the Marquise herself in her narration present her story this way. The Marquise reflects back on her past with nostalgia, and while she likely has several regrets from her youth,

her love for L lio is not one of them. The Libertine lifestyle was lawless, free from morals or responsibility, and as a result, rather empty. Their pursuits of passion and freedom would never have resulted in true contentment because the men of those novels were bitter towards their own society and endlessly pursued vapid sexual encounters, rather than trying to find deeper meaning in life. The Marquise, in contrast, pursued a relationship far deeper than physical connection, taking the role society had given her and choosing to change it.

Not only does Sand create a contrast to the Libertine novel in *The Marquise* which parodies the major Libertine themes, but she also tells the story of a woman hindered by the gender roles set by society who chooses to defy them and achieve temporary happiness and lasting contentment. The Marquise chose to defy the roles imposed upon her by never remarrying and dressing as a commoner in public to ease her pursuit of L lio. In this novella, as well as many of her other works, Sand stresses the importance of women choosing to defy gender roles and to seize their own independence in order to achieve happiness or contentment. Without doing so, freedom was not an option for the women of her time. The Marquise's happiness might have been fleeting due to the short nature of her affair with L lio, but the event left her with a lifelong contentment and nostalgia.

*The Marquise* maintains the lawlessness of the Libertine works, but the seduction and promiscuity that filled the pages of the Libertine novels is absent. Sand successfully set up a contrast to the Libertine novel, where every major theme is paralleled or flipped on its head. The female condition is on display in the ways that the Marquise was constrained due to her sex over the course of her life and in her abilities to pursue L lio,

but she mirrors the Libertine heroes in that she overcame these constraints to engage in a love affair. Through the tale of a single old woman recounting the love life of her youth, Sand managed to not only show her disdain for the Libertine narrative through an almost comical level of parody, but to also mirror many of her other works by presenting a heroine who is capable of sexual attraction and pursuit, and who chooses to secure her own liberty.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Gabriel: The Non-Binary Angel*

George Sand adored the theatre, and used it as a theme in many of her novels and novellas, including *The Marquise*, *Pauline*, *Lélia*, *Consuelo* and its sequel, among others. She also wrote over a dozen of her own plays, although they generally proved to be far less successful than her novels. In fact, the first play that Sand published, *Gabriel*, was never staged during her lifetime (Hart xxii). The play's lack of success could likely be attributed to its scandalous subject matter: a woman raised as a man who grows up to determine that s/he does not wholly identify as male or female. The young woman Gabriel(le) does not discover her true sex until the age of seventeen, when she is forced to decide if she will continue to live as a man, begin to live as a woman, or ignore the difference entirely.

Traditionally, the eponymous hero of *Gabriel* has been analyzed as an androgynous character, but I believe that the term “non-binary” is more accurate. Androgyny typically refers to one's physical characteristics and is used to describe someone who appears to have some male features and some female ones. Gabriel, however, either dresses and presents herself as either fully female or fully male. Never does she physically appear as androgynous. However, she does insist, “I do not feel that my soul has a sex” (Sand, *Gabriel* 17). The play was published long before the difference between the terms “sex” and “gender” had been recognized or even discussed, but Sand clearly creates a difference between Gabriel's biological sex and her gender identity as a performance. Over a century later, Judith Butler confirmed this idea that

gender is “performative” (25). A further layer is added to this sense of performativity due to the nature of the theatre and the persistent theme of the masquerade in Acts Two and Five. The concept of gender performativity in this play is somewhat meta then, as the audience would see an actor performing as a biologically female character who sometimes performs as a woman and sometimes performs as a man and in once scene even performs as a man masquerading himself as a woman.

Sand is therefore ahead of her time as she does something particular in *Gabriel* which cannot be seen elsewhere in her novels. The fact that Gabriel is a non-binary character who possesses both male and female traits and performs both of these genders at various points allows Sand to explore the theme of female liberty in a different light. Gabriel is biologically a woman, but she only feels free when she dresses and acts as a man. While she enjoys the freedom that masculinity gives her, she also feels a pull to her female side (Sand, *Gabriel* 20). When both her grandfather and her lover threaten to reveal her biological sex to the public, she becomes trapped. If she can no longer be a man, even just part of the time, she is no longer free. Although she had to sacrifice the success of her work to do so, Sand intentionally scandalized her readers with Gabriel’s complicated gender identity in order to demonstrate the fact that liberty was unattainable for women unless they performed a male role. Furthermore, she penned Gabriel’s male side as a traditional Romantic hero, flouting the themes of the genre to provide the contrast between the state of men versus that of women in order to prove her point.

### *George Sand and the Theatre*

George Sand began pursuing playwriting at an inopportune time, as French women were being discouraged from writing plays and even attending the theatre

following the Napoleonic Wars (Cristafulli and Elam). While her male peers were having success writing for the stage, Sand experienced pushback from a society that believed it was far worse for women to write plays than to pen novels, not that they were encouraged to do either in the first place. Cristafulli and Elam explain the extent to which female playwrights were silenced: “After the 1820s, women’s drama ceased, by and large, to be performed, published, anthologized or even mentioned in histories of the drama.” However, despite knowing that her sex had been kept from the theatre for over a decade and knowing that those who attend the theatre do so to be entertained by romance and adventure, Sand continued to publish plays like *Gabriel*. Not only were her plays written by a woman who fiercely opposed gender roles, but the content of these plays was by no means light. Sand’s plays, such as *Gabriel*, *Cosima*, and *Claudie*, put the female condition on display, clearly opposing the treatment of Sand’s fellow women. Between her own sex and the way that *Gabriel* depicted gender issues, the play was destined to be unsuccessful for many years despite Sand’s best efforts. At least one director refused to stage the play because he was concerned the audience would not understand it, proving that *Gabriel*’s content hindered its own success (Hart xxii).

Simply demonstrating the unfortunate state that many women suffered in her play was not enough for Sand, however. She also carefully gave Gabriel the traits of the Romantic hero in order to subvert the genre through her irony. The basic trait of the Romantic hero, according to scholar Lloyd Bishop, is a sense of self-discovery and self-consciousness (2). The Romantic hero was, or at least believed himself to be, starkly unique and individualistic, conscious that he was different from his peers. Gabriel was starkly different from her peers, in regards to her personality, experience, and biology,

and her story is one of self-discovery on a completely different level from the other heroes of Romanticism.

Bishop goes on to explain that the Romantic hero was not one who embraced traditional values, but rather pushed back against these values that they considered themselves superior to (6). While Gabriel did not possess the same superiority, she certainly did reject societal norms like her fellow heroes. The Romantic hero was “an enigmatic, inscrutable ‘force qui va.’ His heroic otherness is underscored not only by his mysterious origin and catastrophic end but also by the remote settings to which he is attached” (Bishop 16-17). These words could have been written about our heroine Gabriel, whose upbringing was bizarre and convoluted, who spends the first seventeen years of her life hidden away in a castle and many months of her adult life hidden away in a remote cottage, and who finally faces a tragic end in the final act. Moreover, she engages in physical heroism at the first opportunity, engaging in a bar fight to defend her cousin and killing a thug with her pistol (Sand, *Gabriel* 40). Gabriel is the ideal Romantic hero in every aspect except her biological sex.

Sand further positions *Gabriel* within Romanticism by joining her fellow Romantics in an obsession with Italy. Before Sand, Madame de Staël and Lord Byron set influential works in the country and both personified the country as a woman suffering at the hands of men. This inspired later Romantics, especially female ones, to utilize the country in depictions of female suffering. According to Professor Caroline Franklin, “Nineteenth century women were inspired by these texts to identify with a female oppressed Italy asserting her individual identity” (4). Italy was, therefore, an effective setting to describe a subjugated woman fighting back against her oppression. Sand set a

number of her plays in Italy, using the setting to illuminate the tragedy of the female condition on the stage, and tell the stories of women who tried to define their identity despite it.

A brief note must be inserted before the analysis of the text begins. In this chapter, the female pronouns for Gabriel/le will be used throughout. While Gabriel does not truly align herself with either gender and uses both pronouns at various points in the play, it will be simpler to stick with one in this analysis to provide clarity. Because this thesis is focused on the lives of Sand and a selection of her heroines, I will use the female pronouns to align Gabriel with her fellow heroines. However, the name Gabriel will be used in recognition of the title of the play and the spiritual imagery it contains, unless the name Gabrielle is used during the scene being discussed. From the beginning of the play through the end of the second act, the male name Gabriel and male pronouns are used by other characters and in the parentheticals. In Acts Three and Four, however, when the focus of the play is on Gabriel's romantic relationship, the female pronouns and Gabrielle are used. Both spellings of her name are used in the final act, depending on who is speaking about her. However, in the script itself, her name is once again Gabriel.

#### *George Sand's Gabriel*

In the prologue, before Gabriel's true sex is revealed to her, the audience learns that she already refuses to conform to gender norms. The play opens in seventeenth century Italy, where Gabriel's grandfather, Prince Jules de Bramante, arrives at his castle for the first time in a decade. He discusses Gabriel's upbringing with her tutor, confirming that she has not discovered her true sex, that she was educated like a man of her status would be, and that "[s]he has been imbued with the grandeur of man's role and

the lowliness of woman's in nature and society" (Sand, *Gabriel* 12). All her life, Gabriel has been kept from interacting with women and has been taught that they are inferior and weak. However, before meeting her grandfather and discovering the secret, Gabriel tells her tutor of the dream she had the night previously. She dreamt she was a woman with wings, flying upwards—an angel—whose wings suddenly went numb and left her falling. Contemplating this dream, she insists that she does not possess a sex (Sand, *Gabriel* 17). Before she is even told of her biological sex, Gabriel has decided that she is neither male nor female at her core.

When Gabriel does learn the secret in the last scene of the prologue, she becomes determined to fight against her grandfather as a sort of revenge. Although she had begun to suspect the truth, she had not learned why the hoax had been conceived. It was a matter of inheritance, as her grandfather needed a male heir to pass his castle and title to. His youngest son did have a boy of his own, but the Prince detested them both. Thus, he needed to create a male heir for himself, forcing his granddaughter to become a man. Irrate that she was raised with the sole purpose of fulfilling her grandfather's deceit and keeping his estate within his preferred side of the family to preserve his own honor, Gabriel decides to seek out her cousin and return the inheritance to him.

In the first act, Gabriel, still dressed as and acting as a man, succeeds in finding her cousin Astolphe and reveals her identity to him, but not her sex. She and her old servant Marc who helped raise her meet Astolphe in a tavern, where they help defend him in a tavern fight with a group of thugs. In this fight, Gabriel kills someone for the first time in her life, something that haunts her immediately afterwards. She also saves the life of another thug and allows him to escape through a window. At the end of the fight,

Gabriel almost faints, revealing to Astolphe that she is horrified by blood (Sand, *Gabriel* 42), seemingly hinting at her feminine nature. When the two are arrested together, Astolphe learns that she is his cousin, and the two quickly bond. Eventually they agree to a friendship, both to restore the familial closeness that has been lost and to spite their grandfather.

In the second act, Gabriel performs a complicated charade that emphasizes the absurdity of her upbringing. Astolphe invites her to a party and convinces her, while still believing that she is a man, to dress up as a woman. Gabriel agrees to the farce, and dresses herself in all the trappings of an elegant woman. Portraying a woman for the first time in her life, Gabriel quickly becomes frustrated with the corset, sleeves, and fan. She wonders, “Can a woman not be pleasing without these simpering affectations?” (Sand, *Gabriel* 69) Although she finds herself uncomfortable being dressed as a woman, she is also fascinated with her own reflection, realizing for the first time that she is a pretty girl. The other men at the party agree, falling for the charade and becoming enraptured by her. Astolphe thoroughly enjoys watching her fool the men around her, as he believes that there is a man underneath her dress. The scene is ridiculous, as this woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman stumbles about, trying to play the role of female.

However, even Astolphe struggles with attraction towards her, wishing she were truly a woman. In the last scene of Act Two, he accidentally finds Gabriel changing. Realizing she is not in fact a man pretending to be a woman, but in fact actually a woman, he rejoices, and falls for her instantly. Gabriel soon returns his feelings, and they become romantically involved. This leads the audience into the third act, where Gabrielle the woman is introduced.

Starting in Act Three, the remainder of the play details Gabrielle's struggle to fully accept her role as a disempowered woman. The first scene opens with Gabrielle as a woman, sitting with Astolphe's mother Septtima and a female servant, and working on her embroidery. It is revealed that she and Astolphe are living as if they were husband and wife, leaving the audience to believe for a moment that Gabrielle has accepted her role as a woman. As soon as she leaves the room, however, this is proved to be false. Septtima immediately begins to complain that Gabrielle does not act as a woman or wife should. Astolphe's mother's sole purpose in the play, then, is to demonstrate "her hate for Gabriel who, living as a woman under her roof, challenges Septtima's patriarchal notion of women as servants without physical, intellectual, and moral freedom" (Massardier-Kenney 127). Gabrielle is described as stubborn, and Septtima laments that she chooses to spend her time hunting and riding horses. Gabrielle's embroidery is examined, and it is revealed she has not added a single stitch since the day before (Sand, *Gabrielle* 92).

In a later scene, Gabriel/le's true struggle to accept her inferior status as female is exposed in a conversation with Astolphe. He encourages her not to worry about what his mother says. In this conversation, both Astolphe and Gabrielle blame his mother's behavior on her sex, revealing that both characters are at least somewhat sexist. Astolphe attributes her behavior to the jealousy and pride of woman, insisting only Gabrielle has escaped these attributes (Sand, *Gabriel* 108, 110). In turn, Gabrielle insists, "Do not blame her...she is a woman! She cannot overcome her prejudices; she cannot repress her instincts" (Sand, *Gabrielle* 110). Therefore Gabrielle, despite beginning to embrace parts



of her true sex, has still not escaped the sexism with which she was raised. She tells her cousin,

You made me a woman again, but I have not altogether renounced being a man. Even though I have assumed the clothing and occupations of my sex, I have conserved the inner tendency to noble-mindedness, the calm strength a male upbringing developed and cultivated within me. I still feel I am something more than a woman. (Sand, *Gabriel* 111)

While she will continue to use her female name and pronouns in the next act, from this point on in the play it becomes clear that Gabriel/le cannot choose between male and female. Astolphe, meanwhile, tries to be understanding of her inner turmoil and acknowledges the sacrifice she made for him by agreeing to live as a woman. He praises her for being superior to all other women (Sand, *Gabriel* 111). Therefore, Astolphe loves her because she does not act like a woman, and yet his insistence that she act like a woman and wife are what will ultimately force her away.

This becomes apparent in Act Four, when Astolphe's increasing control over her actions and gender presentation finally leave Gabrielle the woman fully disempowered. She may no longer enjoy her passionate romance with her cousin, as his behavior forces their relationship to crumble. Although the audience encounters Gabrielle dressed as a woman, it quickly becomes clear that she has become discontent with femininity. The entire act takes place in a small country house in the mountains where Astolphe has been keeping Gabrielle hidden away from the public and her grandfather. It is revealed that Astolphe's jealousy for her has effectively destroyed the relationship between them. He is so concerned that men who encounter Gabriel, even when dressed as a man, will lust after her the way that he did before her true sex was revealed to him. He has driven himself crazy over his anxieties, forcing Gabrielle to take on a female role more often

than she wants or than he ever promised she would have to. However, he loves her for the masculine traits she possesses, so he becomes discontent both when he is home with her as a woman and when he is in public with her as a man. She accuses him of such: “your greatest compliment is to assign me the qualities of your sex. And yet, how you often would like me to lower myself to the weakness of my own!” (Sand, *Gabriel* 128). The last straw, however, occurs when Astolphe panics when there is a visitor at the door and locks Gabrielle in her room.

Gabrielle not only suffers under her cousin’s control in this act however, but under her grandfather’s as well, demonstrating how her decision to partially embrace her womanhood has left her a victim of the patriarchy. Her grandfather becomes concerned that Astolphe will contest Gabrielle’s inheritance in court by proving her true sex. Therefore, in order to force Gabrielle to return to his castle before his death so that he might prevent this, he threatens her by holding the inheritance over her head. Marc comes to Gabrielle and tells her of her grandfather’s desperation to maintain the family honor. He will stop at nothing, including having his own grandchildren murdered. Furthermore, this servant reveals to Gabrielle that Astolphe met with her childhood nanny, asking her to testify that her sex is female if he needs to contest the inheritance in court. While these are likely the lies of the Prince, Gabrielle cannot help but become suspicious that both her husband and her grandfather plan to seize control over her gender identity.

This leads us into the final act, where Gabriel realizes that she can only find agency in isolation and celibacy, as the men in her life have proven to do nothing but constrain her. She has escaped with Marc’s help and fled to Rome, where Astolphe

chases after her. In his desperation to get her back and secure their inheritance, however, he begins to consider forcibly revealing her sex. By doing so, he would strip her of her freedom, and leave her a helpless woman forced to rely on him. Discovering this, Gabriel finally gives up on their relationship. She decides to adopt a life of solitude and abandon Astolphe completely in order to maintain her freedom. This way, she will be free from the control of men and from the constraints of gender roles which try to confine her to either male or female. Unfortunately, she never has the chance. Suddenly, a thug hired by her grandfather approaches and stabs her. With her dying breath, Gabriel rejoices: "I feel...free!...My dream comes back to me. I feel as if I am soaring upward!" (Sand, *Gabriel* 185). As life leaves her body, Gabriel becomes the angel from her dream and finally feels free.

### *Conclusion*

Gabriel's gender identity is complicated, as her upbringing inevitably leaves her confused about who she is. It seems at times that she prefers acting as a man and is more pulled to her male side. After all, when the threat of being forced to womanhood for the rest of her life is imposed on her, she embraces death as a solution. Earlier, she complains about Astolphe forcing her to play a female role so often. She is also discontented whenever she dresses like a woman or partakes in female activities, such as embroidery. However, further examination reveals that what she truly enjoys about masculinity is the freedom. Men were educated, they were encouraged to ride horses and go hunting, they wore unrestrictive clothing, they were allowed to inherit property and titles, and they were free to do as they wished. Women were tightly constrained, so living as a woman is difficult for Gabriel who is used to the freedom which masculinity provides. When

acting as a woman, she is forced to play a strictly-defined role. Simone de Beauvoir explains that the very concept of womanhood is culturally-constructed: “Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being” (26). If Gabriel were able to live in a society without these tightly-restricted gender roles, perhaps she would feel a stronger tie to her female side.

Regardless, Gabriel rejects the binary system which mandates the differences between the sexes completely (Massardier-Kenney 120). While the two still remain lovers, Astolphe declares to Gabriel: “you [are] not half man, half woman, as you believe, but rather an angel in human form” (Sand, *Gabriel* 115). When Gabriel dies at the end of the play, she finally becomes the angel from her dreams, free from gender roles and societal constraints. This leaves the reader to realize that Gabriel’s gender, whether male or female, is completely immaterial. As explained by Astolphe, Gabriel is a genderless angel. Prasad effectively explains Gabriel’s gender identity thus:

Gabriel's actual gender identifications defy the fixity of both sex and gender. The appearance of Gabriel on the scene lays bare a certain fluidity that [her grandfather's] scheme failed to foresee: that anatomical sex is not fixed..., that gender identity may fluctuate ambiguously between different positions; that the relationship between sex and gender may therefore never be constant. (338)

Sand’s portrayal of sex and gender in this play was incredibly progressive, as she explored the idea that gender is not fixed. Indeed, the dichotomy between male and female is a false one, because “female” was a concept created and defined by men of the time (Beauvoir 25-26). Thus, women who choose or are forced to live according to this concept are merely performing the role of female, as described by Butler (24-25).

Ultimately, it was Gabriel's ability to perform as male or female that granted her liberty for much of the play.

In the Author's Foreword to *Gabriel*, which George Sand added several years later, she explains that the story "belongs to pure fantasy" (5). She wrote the play while her children played around her, engaging in their own fantasy, inspiring her to create the world where the events of *Gabriel* could occur. Sand insists that no element of the story takes root in reality, but this forward does prompt the question: is Gabriel's situation the fantasy of a woman discontent with her own sex, or at least the social condition of her sex? While Sand did not ever live as a man, she did engage in many habits which were considered masculine and frequently cross-dressed. Sand knew, therefore, that women could best achieve freedom by embracing elements of masculinity. Through Sand's depiction of Gabriel as a Romantic hero who was also a woman, she clearly demonstrated that freedom did not belong to women in her society. The men who possessed these traits were the ones with true liberty. Gabriel was thus granted the greatest freedom of all—the ability to be a man.

## CONCLUSION

*“In this country whose law is to complete the French Revolution and begin that of the equality of the sexes, being a part of the equality of men, a great woman was needed. It was necessary to prove that a woman could have all the manly gifts without losing any of her angelic qualities, be strong without ceasing to be tender...George Sand proved it.”*

- Victor Hugo, “Éloge Funèbre à George Sand”

In the introductions George Sand would add to many of her works several years after they had first been published, she would insist that the stories she wrote just came to her—that they were not politically motivated. In the introduction to *Indiana*, she asserts that she was surprised at the critics for assigning her “subversive intentions” (3). In the foreword to *Gabriel*, she shrugs the story off as pure fantasy (5). Perhaps her anxieties regarding her male-controlled society crept in and made her hold back, trying to suggest that her writings were not as revolutionary as they appeared. However, her works and the heroines that dominate their pages speak for themselves. No introduction could have reduced the scandal caused by the beliefs and actions of Sand’s heroines, which matched the scandal caused by the beliefs and actions of Sand herself. These were revolutionary women who challenged society with their values, words, and actions.

Into each of her heroines, Sand inserted a small piece of herself or her experiences and desires. Like *Indiana*, she fought to get out of an unhappy, fairly abusive marriage. Like the *Marquise*, she pursued the men she was attracted to, despite their age or status, no matter how inappropriate society considered it to be for a woman to do so. Like *Gabriel*, she dressed as a man and used a man’s name in order to participate freely in society. Also like *Gabriel*, her gender identity and performance was not limited to just

female. Each of these women had been disempowered by the male forces in their lives, and each one of them, whether on a large or small scale, fought back against these forces. Perhaps Indiana did not have the same power as her fellow heroines, and the Marquise acted on a smaller scale than Gabriel. Sand herself might have lived the most overtly scandalous life out of all of them. All four, however, as well as all of Sand's other heroines, were bonded in their oppression and drive to push back against it.

Through her heroines and their response to the female condition, Sand provided a unique social commentary shaped by her own experiences with her patriarchal society. She took the male-dominated Romantic and Libertine movements and flipped them on their heads, manipulating their themes and narrative strategies in order to place women and their unfair treatment on display. She allowed her heroines to resemble the Romantic and Libertine heroes, only to then demonstrate their subjugation by men and reveal that both the genres and society as a whole held women back from becoming the heroes the same genres so highly valued. Tired of the suffering she experienced due to the female condition, Sand decided to fight back against it in her life, and create heroines who fought back against it in theirs. They were not always successful, but they did not need to be. Their stories, which echoed Sand's own, and their suffering, which matched that of Sand and her peers, revealed the injustice of the female condition to the entire modern world. Most of all, the boundary-breaking actions of these women challenged this condition, none more so than those of the author herself.

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