‘Apprendre à voir’: The quest for insight in George Sand’s novels

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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SHORT ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the novels of George Sand (1804-1876) and analyses representative examples from her entire œuvre. Its overall aim is to re-evaluate Sand’s standing as a writer of intellectual interest and importance by demonstrating that she is engaging with a cultural and intellectual phenomenon of particular relevance to the nineteenth century: the link between different ways of seeing and knowledge or understanding, which I term ‘insight’.

The visual dimension of Sand’s novels has so far been overlooked or reduced to a rose-tinted view of the world, and my study is the first to examine vision in her work. I argue that Sand demonstrates a continuous commitment to ways of engaging with the world in visual terms, incorporating conceptual seeing, prophetic vision, as well as physical eyesight. Contesting the prevailing critical view of Sand’s œuvre as one which declines into blandness and irrelevance after the 1850s, this thesis uncovers a model of expansion in her writing, as she moves from her focus on the personal in her early novels, privileging internal vision, to wider social concerns in her middle period in which she aims to reconfigure reality, to her final period in which she advocates the physical observation of the natural world.

Rejecting the perception of Sand as a writer of sentiment at the expense of thought, this study argues that her writing constitutes a continuous quest for understanding, both of the physical world and the more abstract, eternal ‘vérité’. I show that Sand transcends binary divisions between science and art, the detail and the whole, the material and the abstract, and that she ultimately promotes a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the world. This also enables me to reassess Sand’s poetics by arguing that her rejection of the mimetic model is founded on her conception of the world as multiple and constantly evolving.

LONG ABSTRACT

‘Apprendre à voir’: The quest for insight in George Sand’s novels

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This study positions the novelist George Sand (1804-1876) within her literary, philosophical and ideological context by identifying a series of turning points in her writing which valorise different means of experiencing and knowing the world. The thesis as a whole aims to re-assess Sand’s contribution to the nineteenth-century novel as a writer of intellectual standing and importance, demonstrating that she engages with an issue of key relevance to nineteenth-century thinking, which is the relation between different ways of looking and understanding or knowing the world, which I term ‘insight’.

My investigation is set apart from existing scholarship in that it is the first to take vision as the focus of a study on Sand’s work. Despite the fact that the nineteenth-century novel is often considered as a ‘visual’ form, from Hugo’s transcendent visions to Zola’s empirical observation, the visual dimension of George Sand’s work has been either overlooked or reduced to a rose-tinted view of the world and other analogies of flawed or defective vision. I argue that Sand demonstrates a continuous commitment to different means of engaging with the world in visual terms, and that this incorporates conceptual seeing, prophetic vision, and physical eyesight. I demonstrate that this operates both on the level of plot and on a metapoetic level, in the sense that Sand’s distance from Realism is founded on her espousal of multiple approaches to understanding and representing the world.

Distinguishing itself from previous monographs on Sand through its focus on her epistemological and intellectual development throughout her literary career, this study takes representative examples from Sand’s entire œuvre as its corpus. This decision is based on the study’s aim of carrying out a sustained analysis of the ways in which Sand’s writing is engaged in the quest for insight. Throughout the thesis my close readings of the texts are complemented by examinations of Sand’s ‘vie intellectuelle’ in the sense of her diverse political and philosophical reflections, her views on art, and her studies in the natural sciences, and the way in which these interests reflect and engage with contemporaneous cultural and intellectual trends.

The Introduction outlines the parameters and the methodology of the thesis. I firstly position Sand in her commercial, critical and literary context before introducing the central topic of the thesis, which is the link between the novel and different ways of seeing and understanding. I demonstrate that visual metaphors are often used to describe Sand’s writing but that a study of vision in her work is lacking. In the final part of this Introduction I elaborate on the structure of the thesis and account for the methodological decisions taken in this study.

Chapter One, 'Early visual models', examines Sand's early visual education as recounted in *Histoire de ma vie* (1855). I highlight the fact that Sand engages with reality on several different levels from a young age, as her vivid imagination, her tendency towards prophetic visions, and physical examination of the natural world all emerge as key aspects of her childhood. Since these different faculties are initially in conflict with each other, I argue that it is the imagination, or the inner eye, which dominates in the first period of her writing. The second section of this chapter is an analysis of *Indiana* (1832) and *Lélia* (1833) as examples of this. I demonstrate that the tension between Sand's different visual capacities is reflected in the conflicting aesthetic codes of *Indiana*, in which the heroine's inner visions contest with the more prosaic and historically grounded realism of the rest of the model. I then show that the internal mode of experiencing the world takes over in *Lélia*. Although the imagination enables these characters to glimpse the ideal, I demonstrate that the retreat from the external world into the world of the inner eye does not lead to social and personal solutions. The final section in this chapter considers the transformation which takes place in Sand's position towards the end of the 1830s, analysing the indications in Sand's early novels and prefaces that the internal model of vision will develop into a constructive faculty through increased engagement with the present an through the projection of the vision outwards into the future.

In Chapter Two, 'George Sand and the visionary', I investigate the shift in Sand's writing towards a more constructive and engaged model of vision by showing that Sand's inner eye model develops into the visionary. After demonstrating that Sand's intellectual and philosophical evolution in the late 1830s and her engagement with socialist doctrines leads to a more positive outlook, I examine the representation of visionary characters in her novels, focusing my analysis on *Mauprat* (1837), *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840), *Consuelo* (1842-3), *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845) and *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* (1847). I identify the main characteristics of Sand's visionaries before considering the way in which these characters reach a position of insight. This enables me to demonstrate that Sand favours a cooperative and equal approach to learning, in alignment with her novels which offer multiple possibilities rather than a dogmatic, monolithic discourse to be forced on the reader.

In the next sections of this chapter, I show that the visionary characters transcend their present circumstances through their rejection of social practices, unorthodox and syncretic beliefs, and liberation from gender expectations. This leads into an analysis of Sand's flexible understanding of time, demonstrated both in the visionary characters and in her novels which are prophetic narratives. I show that Sand rejects contemporary literary practices by refusing to conform to the mimetic model in her novels and privileging instead a visionary poetics which depicts the way in which French society will be configured in the future rather than reflecting the present. Finally, this chapter also demonstrates that an exclusive commitment to the ideal and the abstract is insufficient for Sand's aims by this point in her writing, and that she now advocates double vision: an awareness of the present in combination with the envisioning of the future. This operates both in the representation of her visionary characters, who only succeed through a combination of vision and pragmatism, and on the level of plot, as Sand's visionary or prophetic novels become increasingly grounded in a recognisable contemporary world.

Chapter Three, 'The function of the visual arts in the 1840s novels', is an exploration of Sand's literary engagement with the visual arts. My readings in this chapter are primarily focused on a representative selection of texts which illustrate Sand's manipulation of painterly techniques in the service of her moral vision, examining an autobiographical text

(*Un Hiver à Majorque*, 1841), two pastoral novels (*Le Meunier d'Angibault*, 1845, *La Mare au diable*, 1846), and an adventure novel (*Le Piccinino*, 1847). I begin by providing an account of Sand's experiences of artworks, drawing on *Histoire de ma vie* to show that her response to visual images is primarily creative and interactive, suggesting that her interaction with visual arts in her novels will be inventive rather than imitative.

This chapter then reveals two important ways in which Sand employs the model of painting in her novels. Firstly, I demonstrate that she uses the painterly model as a creative template for refashioning current reality in the mind. I develop the previous chapter's examination of Sand's 1840s novels by arguing that, in addition to reconfiguring reality through her visions of the future, Sand also puts into practice a process which I term 'repainting'. I show that Sand creates virtual paintings which aim towards the depiction of a more socially progressive and purposeful reality, in contrast with the original.

Secondly, I show that Sand uses painterly techniques to describe landscapes from specific character viewpoints in order to demonstrate the acquisition of 'le sens pittoresque', which I interpret as a form of aesthetic insight. I show that, in her focus on the perspective from which the painterly impressions are viewed and created, Sand draws attention to the fact that this aesthetic insight is acquired only by those characters who have reached a true understanding and acceptance of themselves and their place in the world. The final section of this chapter is an examination of Sand's critical writings on painting, arguing that these provide further evidence of Sand's creative rather than transcriptive approach to the visual. Despite her repeated insistence on the inadequacy of words in conveying visual phenomena, Sand continues to describe landscapes and natural vistas in her novels since her descriptions of the natural world play a central role in the moral and ideological aims of her writing. The chapter therefore contests the critical assumption that Sand uses the painterly model in order to create an illusion of accuracy and veracity. Rather than using the model of painting in this way, in alignment with Barthes' theory of 'le modèle de la peinture' which claims that painting is a means of bolstering the mimetic thrust of the literary text, Sand, I argue, uses painting in order to appeal to an understanding of her work as a direct, 'natural' form of communication, whilst also allowing her to put forward complex messages which have the potential to undermine the contemporary social order.

Chapter Four, ' "L'artiste naturaliste": contemplating the natural world in the later novels', looks at the final stage in the Sandian quest for insight from the mid-1850s to the 1870s. I identify a shift in Sand's attitude during this period, as she now considers an aesthetic appreciation of the world to be inadequate in truly understanding its workings. Rather, I demonstrate that Sand's later works privilege scientific knowledge and the physical observation of nature as a means of apprehending the world. Setting this thesis apart from other surveys of Sand's interest in the natural sciences, I then interlink Sand's scientific learning with the poetics of her later novels.

This first section in this chapter examines Sand's studies in the natural sciences by situating her interest in geology and botany in the context of her work and in the wider intellectual context. Looking in particular at *L'Homme de neige* (1859), *Valvèdre* (1861), *Laura* (1865) and the *Contes d'une grand-mère* (1874-1876), I then proceed in the next sections by examining the representation of nature in her works. I demonstrate that, although Sand encourages the detailed observation of nature, she rejects an overly narrow and exploitative method. I reveal that Sand puts forward an approach which takes into account not only the microscopic details of nature, but also its inherent vitality, beauty and multiplicity. This is

demonstrated through examples of interactive engagement between man and nature in her novels and short stories.

Further, I consider Sand's engagement with the question of apprehending the natural world on a broader level. I argue that Sand's later works constitute investigations into the different possible means of learning about the world. This I demonstrate by examining the characters in these novels, which embody various epistemological approaches. I show that Sand rejects both the self-absorbed artist and the overly narrow scientist, and that her ideal figure is the 'artiste naturaliste' from the title of this chapter. Through these characters, I argue, Sand advocates a combination of science and art and attention to both the details of nature and a great appreciation of the natural world as a whole. The final section of this chapter demonstrates that Sand's espousal of what I term a multidisciplinary approach to knowing the world forms a major part of her distance from Realism. Rejecting what she views as a narrow and monolithic approach to reality, Sand advocates instead a poetics which takes all facets of the world into consideration. The final chapter thus re-evaluates the last period of Sand's writing as a corpus of works which merit further study, not only as part of Sand's œuvre but as an important contribution to the French novel and its interaction with a central question at this point in French intellectual history: the rivalry between different epistemic models and the consolidation of separate disciplines.

The Conclusion considers excerpts from Sand's writings at the very end of her career in order to reaffirm the central thesis that Sand's conception of vision is of a process which operates on several levels. I show that Sand's understanding of the world as multiple and constantly evolving leads her to advocate an approach to reality which transcends binary systems of thought, culminating in a reconciliatory position which combines three elements: the material and physical; the infinite and visionary; and the personal and imaginary.

The study as a whole therefore challenges the prevailing critical perception of Sand's œuvre as one which follows a pattern of decline and contraction after the 1850s, as I reveal a model of expansion in her writing. I demonstrate that Sand moves from her focus on the personal in her early novels which privilege internal vision, to wider social concerns in her novels of the 1840s in which she aims to reconfigure reality through the process of repainting and through prophetic insights, through to the final period of her writing when her studies in the natural sciences lead her to advocate the physical observation of nature as fundamental to our understanding of the world. Rejecting the perception of Sand as a writer of sentiment at the expense of thought, I argue that Sand's work constitutes a continuous quest for understanding, both of the physical world and of the abstract 'vérité', and show that she ultimately promotes a syncretic approach to comprehending the world, in her aim to open her readers' own literal and figurative visual faculties. Through this examination, I not only posit that Sand's work provides us with an insight into nineteenth-century perceptions of vision and knowledge, but also reveal the dynamism of her idealism, as her conception of the world as multiple and constantly evolving results in novels which combine the physical, the visionary and the imaginary.

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Table of contents

Introduction

This introduction falls into three parts. The first provides an overview of George Sand's commercial, critical and aesthetic positioning in nineteenth-century France, and considers her recent reception. It is crucial to position Sand in this way before I go on in the following chapters to examine a particular aspect of her contribution to the novel, since one of the aims of this thesis is to re-evaluate Sand's status as a novelist engaging with the ideas of her century. In the second part of this introduction, I situate the central topic of the thesis, the interaction between the novel and ways of seeing, with regards to other nineteenth-century French authors and in the context of literary criticism on Sand. The final part of the introduction provides an explanation of the methodological approach adopted in this thesis.

Positioning Sand

George Sand (1804-1876) was one of the most celebrated writers of nineteenth-century France, both in terms of critical acclaim and commercial success, and only Balzac and Hugo are comparable to her in stature. Indeed, Sand was one of the highest-earning authors of her time. She was a highly adept businesswoman who understood the literary market and directed her own affairs, often shrewdly playing editors against each other in order to obtain the best price for her work.[1] Cultural historian Donald Sassoon highlights her atypical standing: 'In France a promising author could receive between 800-1,300 francs for a first novel. One of France's top-earning writers, George Sand, could make 10,000 francs for one of her shorter

[1] See Jacinta Wright, 'George Sand and the literary marketplace (1844-1847): *de la nécessité de penser sérieusement au prix matériel du travail de l'art*', *George Sand Studies*, 23 (2004), 32-43; Martine Reid, 'George Sand: l'art et le métier', *Travaux de Littérature*, 15 (2002), 57-75.

novels. But Sand was an exception.'[2] Very few authors were able to live exclusively from their pen. Stendhal's works, for example, did not enjoy a wide readership until after his death.[3] After the great success of *Madame Bovary* (bought for 800 francs), Flaubert managed to secure 16,000 francs for *L'Éducation sentimentale*,[4] but his works had fewer readers than Sand or Hugo, and he received much financial assistance from his mother.[5] Balzac was also aided by his mistress, Madame Hanska. Sand, in contrast, depended entirely on her literary production. In his article of 1880, 'L'argent dans la littérature', Zola develops the concept of writing as a profession, and it is Victor Hugo and George Sand that he singles out as exemplary figures.[6] Henry James also refers to Sand as 'the great writer who shared with Victor Hugo the honour of literary pre-eminence in France.'[7]

Hugo and Sand also shared a similar readership, one which was close to that of sensationalist authors such as Eugène Sue, whose *Mystères de Paris* in 1843 was one of the most popular 'feuilleton' novels of the time. These writers are often considered as 'social authors' in that they genuinely hoped to inspire change in society through their writing, and their novels also had a wide appeal. Sand's novels, particularly her socialist works in the 1840s, were directed towards the 'peuple' and were read by them.[8] In fact, during the 1830s

[2] Donald Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans: From 1800 to the Present* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), p.448. See also Marie-Ève Thérenty, *Mosaïques: Être écrivain entre presse et roman, 1829-1838* (Paris: Champion 2003), p.32, where she identifies George Sand as one of the few writers able to demand large sums for her work.

[3] See, for example, Christoper Prendergast, who states: 'The response of [Stendhal's] contemporary public appears to have been for the most part either bewildered or hostile', *The Order of Mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.119.

[4] See Philip Spencer, 'Writing for Profit under the Second Empire', *French Studies*, V, no. 1 (January 1951), 223-232 (p.225).

[5] See Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, p.443.

[6] This article was originally published in *Vestnik Evropy* (St Petersburg) in March 1880 then in *Le Voltaire* in July1880. Now available in Zola, *L'encre et le sang* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1989), pp.34-86 (See p.62 for the references to Sand and Hugo).

[7] Henry James, 'George Sand', in *French Poets and Novelists* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1919 [1878]), pp.149-185 (p.149).

[8] Much work remains to be done on the reception of Sand's novels in contemporaneous France. Most of the research in this area has focused on her socialist novels, esp. *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840). See, for example, Martine Watrelot, 'La réception du roman *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* dans les milieux compagnonniques du XIXe siècle', in *Le Compagnon du tour de France de George Sand*, ed. by Michèle Hecquet and Martine Watrelot (Lille: Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille III, 2009), pp.155-167.

and 1840s, Sand was more popular and more widely read than both Hugo and Balzac, and was considered by some to be the greatest contemporary French author.[9]

In addition to her commercial success, Sand also achieved a high degree of critical esteem. The possibility of being both a respected and popular author emerged at this point in French history since, by the 1830s and 1840s, the divisions between highbrow and lowbrow culture were becoming increasingly blurred. Balzac, Hugo and Sand were all regarded as serious as well as popular authors. Sand's works, for example, earned the respect of key contemporary critics such as Sainte-Beuve, Gustave Planche and Jules Janin, and were admired by authors around the world. Dostoevsky, for instance, was particularly influenced by Sand.[10] Further indications of Sand's status are the labels used to identify her. Women writers were at this time often referred to by the somewhat derogatory term 'femme auteur'. Sand, however, was one of the few authors to be referred to as an 'écrivain' and, apart from Mme de Staël, she was the only female writer to receive the most dignified title of 'grand écrivain'.[11]

Sand occupied a different position from other women writers. Her predecessor, Mme de Staël, certainly rivals her in terms of critical recognition, but since Staël belonged to an earlier generation of writers, she never achieved the same public renown as Sand, as the conditions of literary fame had been so utterly transformed in the period between their two careers. Sand started writing at the point when literary fame was developing in earnest, thanks to the growth of journalism and the proliferation of inexpensive publications on famous figures and the increased dissemination of images. This was also a time of great interest in the

[9] See Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, p.452.
[10] See, for example, Isabelle Naginski, 'The Serenity of Influence: The Literary Relationship of George Sand and Dostoevsky', in *George Sand: Collected Essays*, ed. by Janis Glasgow (Troy, New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1985), pp.110-125, and Françoise Genevray, *George Sand et ses contemporains russes: audience, échos, réécritures* (Paris: Harmattan, 2000).
[11] For more on the perception of Sand in French culture, see Michael Garval, *'A Dream of Stone': Fame, Vision and Monumentality in Nineteenth-Century French Literary Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) and Christine Planté, 'Elle n'eut d'ailleurs rien de la femme auteur', in *George Sand lue à l'étranger. Recherches nouvelles 3*, ed. by Suzan van Dijk (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp.36-48.

figure of the female writer. Although women had written and published before, it was during the nineteenth century that there was a great rise in the number of women who sought public recognition as authors.[12] It has been shown that between 1800 and 1830, women dominated in the production of the novel.[13] Even when the novel rose in status from around 1830 onwards, there continued to be many female authors, such as Angélique Arnaud, Jenny Bastide, Louise Colet, and Delphine de Girardin. However, although there were other serious and respected female novelists, Sand dominated in terms of popularity and critical esteem. As Margaret Cohen states, 'George Sand was universally recognised as the most important female novelist of the time. Indeed, for many readers, professionals and amateurs alike, she was quite simply the period's most important novelist.'[14] This is clear from the frequency with which Sand was discussed in the press, and the attitudes expressed towards her, both linguistically and visually. Baudelaire, for example, one of Sand's most vociferous detractors, states in 1852, whilst deploring women's tendency to write in an emotional style: 'un très grand et très justement illustre écrivain, George Sand elle-même, n'a pas tout à fait, malgré sa supériorité, échappé à cette loi du tempérament'.[15] Even when she is being criticised for a specifically 'female' trait, therefore, Sand is still considered to be in some way exceptional and superior. Indeed, the extreme nature of the hostile remarks on Sand highlights and contributes towards her stature within the literary sphere.[16]

Despite the fact that Sand was equal to the main authors of her day in popular, literary and financial terms, however, it would be inaccurate to state that her gender was overlooked.

[12] I agree with Elaine Showalter that it was only from the nineteenth century onwards that women regarded writing as a career. See *A Literature of Their Own* (London: Virago, 2009 [1977]), esp. p.xxi.
[13] See, for example, Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), Tim Farrant, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2007).
[14] Margaret Cohen, 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel. From 1800 to the present*, ed. by Timothy Unwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.54-72 (p.61).
[15] Baudelaire, 'Études sur Poe', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) [1852], III, pp.247-337 (p.283).
[16] See also Michael Garval's assessment of Nadar's 'Panthéon', a lithograph published in 1854, which is a visual manifestation of Sand's uniqueness and prominence, in *'A Dream of Stone'*, pp.141-142.

Those who criticised her works often characterised her writing as being somehow 'feminine'. Isabelle Naginski traces the various 'derogatory feminine images of creativity' associated with Sand's writing, identifying three main elements: the liquidity of her writing, the dubious nature of this liquid, and the uncontrollable nature of the writing which emerges.[17] I would add that a further constant in the criticism levelled at Sand, and one which I address in this thesis, is her alleged inability to see and represent reality correctly, a defect that is also yoked with her gender. Zola, for example, highlights this weakness in Sand, and notes that 'il lui manquait simplement d'être un homme'.[18] Conversely, those who held her work in high regard also, at times, defined her poetics by linking it with her gender. Balzac, for example, who recognised Sand's merit, advised her to create 'feminine' literature: 'Idéalisez dans le joli et dans le beau, c'est un ouvrage de femme.'[19]

This leads us into the aesthetic differences between Sand and her peers. On the one hand, Sand was considered as a key practitioner of the novel in the 1830s and 1840s. 1830 is often regarded as an important turning point for the development of the novel, not least since it is around this time that many of the novels now considered as classics were published: Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830), many key works from Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, and Sand's *Indiana* (1832). It is after the July Revolution of 1830 that the parameters of the novel are redefined and that the cultural perception of the form undergoes a profound shift. In addition to becoming increasingly popular with readers, it is at this point that the genre starts to be taken seriously for its aesthetic and social potential. [20] Sand takes an active part in this new conception of the novel as an exemplary form for making social and political

[17] See Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp.221-223 (p.221).
[18] Zola, 'George Sand', in *Documents littéraires. Œuvres complètes*, 66 vols (Paris: François Bernouard, 1928) XLII, pp.153-186 (p.166). Henry James also considers Sand's 'want of veracity' to be determined by her gender, *French Poets and Novelists*, p.155.
[19] Reported by Sand in *Histoire de ma vie*. See *OA*, II, p.162.
[20] See Sandy Petrey, *In the Court of the Pear King: French Culture and the Rise of Realism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005) for more on the importance of the July revolution in 1830 as a turning point for cultural innovations.

commentary and for coming to grips with a rapidly transforming world. Sand considers the novel form to be intrinsically linked with its contemporary context,[21] and her entire production is opposed to the idea of art for art's sake, which she regards as a form of writing which severs all connections with readers and the outside world.[22] After a meeting with Sand in 1838, Balzac recounts in a letter that they discussed contemporary problems such as marriage and liberty at length, and quotes the following statement made by Sand: 'par nos écrits nous préparons une révolution pour les mœurs futures'.[23] This vision of a shared goal illustrates Sand's commitment to the same quest as her colleagues: addressing current social and political issues through the novel form.

However, Sand is not now generally included in the usual grouping of major nineteenth-century novelists, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola. This is, in large part, due to the fact that she does not fall under the banner of the emerging literary aesthetic that would come to dominate the novel, Realism. One of the first to divide the nineteenth-century novel into realist and non-realist works (variously termed romantic, idealist, sentimental, visionary), is Zola, who establishes an oppositional structure: 'la lutte du vrai et du rêve.'[24] Within this struggle, Zola identifies Balzac and Sand as representative examples of the two tendencies, noting that 'depuis bientôt un demi-siècle, le réel et le rêve se battent, partagent le public en deux camps, sont représentés par deux formidables champions qui ont tâché de s'écraser

[21] See, for example, Sand's angry response to Buloz's requests that she tone down her representation of life in Paris in *Horace* (1841): 'Vous voulez tout bonnement que je vous parle d'une époque sans y faire participer mes personnages, […] enfin que je ne me permette pas d'avoir un sentiment et une manière de voir sur les faits que je retrace et le milieu où j'établis ma scène.' (*Corr*., V, p.421). See also her statements in her general preface of 1851 such as the following: 'Quel est donc l'artiste qui peut s'abstraire des choses divines et humaines, se passer du reflet des croyances de son époque, et vivre étranger au milieu où il respire?', 'Préface générale, 1851', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.155-159 (p.157). Sand is included by Henry James as part of the "generation of 1830." In 1875, he refers to 'the few that remain – Victor Hugo and George Sand', 'Alphonse Daudet', in *Literary Criticism*, ed. by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson, 2 vols (New York; Cambridge: The Library of America, 1984), I, pp.205-257 (p.205).

[22] Sand refers to 'l'absurde théorie de l'art pour l'art', and she states that 'l'art pour l'art est un mot creux, absolument faux', in 'Préface générale, 1851', p.157. She also notes in a letter that 'l'art pour l'art est un vain mot' (*Corr*., XXIII, p.39, 19 April 1872).

[23] Balzac, *Lettres à Mme Hanska*, ed. by Roger Pierrot, 2 vols (Paris: Laffont, 1990) I, p.442.

[24] Zola, 'George Sand', in *Documents littéraires*, p.185.

réciproquement.'[25] The upshot of this categorisation system is to validate and justify the Naturalist project at the expense of Sand's works, condemned by Zola as the representation of 'une formule morte'.[26] Even a cursory glance at the exchanges which took place between Sand and Balzac clearly invalidates the assertion that these two writers were pitted against each other. Further, reading their works makes a clear-cut distinction between Balzac the accurate, empirical observer and Sand the fanciful, sentimental dreamer untenable, since many of Balzac's novels are imbued with mystical elements, and Sand's works often feature lower-class heroes, contemporary social problems, and an awareness of the influence of history on individuals.

Conversely, there are other elements of Sand's writing which prevent her from being considered as a realist. Sand's championing of subjectivity, her focus on truths beyond the material, and her search for solutions, combined with her personal belief in progress, mark her out as a Romantic. Perhaps the best way of considering Sand's relation to realism is to note that she makes use of realist techniques[27] and is concerned with realist issues,[28] but that she differs from many of her contemporaries in her overarching aims. Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola, in their divergent and original ways, are aiming to present a convincing portrayal of the world in which they live. Sand, on the other hand, is not aiming for an accurate reproduction of reality, but expresses different means of experiencing, and at times, rejecting, this reality. Closer to Hugo and Eugène Sue, Sand's work possesses a strong humanitarian and ethical drive, as she writes in order to motivate and inspire her readers to incite change.[29]

[25] Ibid., p.156.
[26] Ibid., p.186.
[27] Several of her works include physical descriptions (particularly of the countryside), most of her novels include clear links between plot, character and socio-political context, and there are plenty of Sandian antiheroes.
[28] Some of these include social organisation, political and cultural change, technology and the natural world.
[29] This dimension of her writing, which is precisely what Hippolyte Taine and Naomi Schor celebrate in Sand's works (See *George Sand and Idealism*, esp. p.40), is denounced by other critics. See, for example, Harry Levin: 'If we rated authors by their humanitarian sympathies, rather than by their comprehension of human beings, we should rate George Sand and Victor Hugo above the authors on our list [Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola,

Her works respond to the present, but then focus on potentialities, as she moves from denouncing the actual to portraying the possible.

Whilst critics disagree on the exact dating and definition of the term 'realism', what is clear is that the novel as 'a transcription of social reality', a literature that attempts to portray a world that closely resembles the readers' environment, is a form of writing which comes to dominate after 1850.[30] This aesthetic triumph partly explains the decline in Sand's reputation, as Naomi Schor argues.[31] Although several studies have now been published on Sand since Schor and Naginski's key works in the early 1990s, Sand continues to be a slightly marginal figure in the landscape of the nineteenth-century novel. Her works feature on very few university courses and many of her novels are still unavailable in affordable and accessible modern editions. Only her *Œuvres autobiographiques* have been published as part of the prestigious Pléiade collection.[32] Further, despite the fact that there are increasing numbers of dedicated Sandistes, it is rare for Sand's work to feature as part of the corpus for major studies on the nineteenth-century novel, with the result that she is still not part of the mainstream.

In my view, this is due to a combination of factors. In addition to her gender and the fact that her work does not fit into the categories of realism or naturalism, the critical sidelining of Sand's work is also linked to the fact that many of her novels are set in the countryside and not in Paris. For this reason, Sand's works are not considered as a contribution towards the tradition of the novel as a means of exploring and addressing 'modern' concerns such as urbanism, the bourgeoisie, speed and technology.[33] A further

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Proust].' *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966 [1963]), p.82.

[30] Tim Farrant, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, p.109.

[31] See Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and also Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life* for insightful summaries of Sand's reception until the early 1990s. See also David Powell, 'Bibliography of works on Sand, 1990-1999', in *George Sand: écritures et représentations*, ed. by Éric Bordas (Paris: Eurédit 2004), pp.241-344.

[32] *Œuvres Autobiographiques*, ed. by Georges Lubin, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). All references to *Histoire de ma Vie* are to this edition.

[33] See, for example, Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), for the importance of Paris as a focal point in nineteenth-century culture. He refers, for instance, to this city's

obstacle is the fact that Sand is shrouded in reductive (and paradoxical) myths, such as the trouser-dressing nymphomaniac, and the author of militant tracts and simplistic pastoral tales. These images obfuscate the entry points to her rich and varied œuvre. Perhaps a further, less well acknowledged problem is the fact that she continued to write after 1848. Most of her later novels are less radical than her earlier works in political terms, and as a result, they are often considered to be less incisive and rather insipid. Linked to this is the gradual transformation in Sand's public image, from an amorphous, scandalous, and slightly threatening creature in the 1830s to the tame, motherly 'bonne dame de Nohant' from the 1850s onwards. This thesis challenges these presumptions which have combined to lower the stature of a respected and influential figure in the development of the French novel.

Vision

In this study I address in particular the charges of sentimentality and nostalgia levelled at Sand's works, demonstrating instead that she is in fact engaging with a phenomenon of particular relevance to the nineteenth century, which is the link between different ways of seeing and knowledge or understanding. Within the history of vision, the beginning of the nineteenth century constitutes an important turning point. Firstly, it marks a change within the history of optics, the scientific study of sight. More emphasis is now placed on the eye's physiology rather than the classical abstract models of reasoning through physics and mathematics.[34] In addition to this, the century as a whole will witness important changes in the cultural history of vision. The period pursues the Enlightenment's obsession with the eye, and nineteenth-century advances such as the proliferation of images through mass production,

'crucial place in the emerging social and cultural forms of modernity' (p.6). Sand, on the other hand, is placed by Prendergast in the group of writers who represent a 'nineteenth-century rejection of the urban' (p.12).

[34] See, for example, Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1990).

the development of photography, and the increasing dominance of positivism as a philosophy, lead to heightened interest in, and even obsession with the image.[35] Finally, this is also a time when literature becomes increasingly concerned with the visual, and this thesis brings Sand's works into the scholarly debate on the relationship between the nineteenth-century novel and visual models. It is often the case that forms of writing from this period are formulated in visual terms, as Andrea Goulet highlights:

> Commonplace distinctions between romantic and realist fiction in the nineteenth century have figured literary practice as a visual matter, invoking an apparent relation between narrative form and authorial vision: the poetic thrust of the romantic novel implies a visionary eye, [...] while the descriptive logic of the realist or naturalist novel implies a scientific eye.[36]

Realism, in this sense, is repeatedly regarded as a 'visual' form of writing. William Berg, for example, states that 'the nineteenth-century novel is, in many respects, a visual art form'.[37] Christopher Prendergast rightly asserts in *The Order of Mimesis* that the 'ocular metaphor' is something of a red herring in discussions of realism and argues for moving the discussion away from this fixation with the visual.[38] In the case of George Sand, however, her works have never been the focus of such a study, and I would agree with Naomi Schor's point that 'recent writings on realism have done much to demystify the mimetic and mechanical pretences of realism, but they have done little to dismantle realism's aesthetic hegemony.'[39]

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[35] See, for example, Philippe Hamon, who notes: 'Le dix-neuvième siècle semble s'inaugurer sur une véritable pulsion vers l'image, sur une "poussé du regard" (J. Starobinski) vers un monde considéré comme un inépuisable réservoir d'images et de tableaux pour l'œil', *Imageries: littérature et image au XIXe siècle* (Paris: José, 2001), p.7.

[36] Andrea Goulet, *Optiques: The Science of the Eye and the Birth of Modern French Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p.19.

[37] William Berg, *The Visual Novel: Émile Zola and the Art of his Times* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), p.1. Aimée Israel-Pelletier also maintains that in Flaubert's work, 'the visual asserts itself as the single most reliable carrier of signification', 'Flaubert and the visual', in *The Cambridge Companion to Flaubert*, ed. by Timothy Unwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.180-195 (p.180). Christopher Prendergast notes: 'Realism invites us above all to *look* at the world', 'Introduction', in *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre*, ed. by Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp.1-10 (p.5, original emphasis).

[38] Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis*, pp.59-61.

[39] Schor, 'Introduction', in *Indiana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1994]), trans. by Sylvie Raphael, pp.vii-xxii (p.xxii).

The opposition set up by Zola between 'le vrai et le rêve' is also applied by other writers such as Balzac and Henry James. Under this logic, realism is presented as the unfiltered observation of reality, and idealism is considered to soften and blur the truth. Within this generally hierarchical structure, Sand is placed in the latter camp. References to seeing with regards to Sand are thus typically linked with her so-called rose-tinted approach to life or other analogies for flawed or defective vision.[40] More recent investigations of realism also apply such a model. Harry Levin, for example, takes the Homeric analogy of the opaque gate of ivory 'through which pass fictitious dreams' and the transparent gate of horn 'which lets out nothing but truth' as the starting point for his study of French realists.[41] In his companion to French literature, David Coward also refers to Sand's 'rose-tinted *romans champêtres*'.[42] Revisionist studies which reclaim Sand's eminence by casting realism as the usurper of an already-existing mode of writing, termed by Cohen as the 'sentimental social novel', and identified by Schor as 'the idealist novel', also divide the nineteenth-century novel into two camps in this way.[43] Schor makes an important point when discussing the way in which this other form of writing is gendered as feminine: 'What is at stake here is, finally, woman's relationship to truth, which is always also a relationship to vision, observation, seeing.'[44] The association between truth and forms of seeing has now become a commonplace in discussions of Sand's writing. Martine Reid, for example, states that

[40] See, for example, Henry James, who refers to the 'coat of rose-colour' applied in Sand's writing, in contrast with Balzac's 'omnivorous observation of the great human spectacle', in *French Poets and Novelists*, pp.185, 148. Flaubert also states that Sand sees the world 'à travers une couleur d'or', in *Correspondance George Sand-Gustave Flaubert*, ed. by Alphonse Jacobs (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), p.348. Sand herself refers to the frequent criticism of her 'aveugle bienveillance' in *Promenades autour d'un village* (1857), p.65.
[41] Levin, *The Gates of Horn*, p.49.
[42] David Coward, *A History of French Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p.488.
[43] Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*; Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*.
[44] *George Sand and Idealism*, p.44. The importance of vision as a category in itself is not developed by Schor.

> Quand elle raconte, [George Sand] crée son héroïne en fonction d'une démonstration; n'accorde pas beaucoup d'importance au réel et à ses effets; se soucie en revanche de rendre explicite une leçon. On peut appeler idéalisme cette façon singulière d'exposer en littérature non un problème mais une solution, romanesque *cette manière de voir les choses comme elles pourraient être* et non comme elles sont.[45]

Sand herself also uses visual terminology to position herself aesthetically. She states of Balzac, for example: 'tout en étant lié d'amitié avec cet homme illustre, je voyais les choses humaines sous tout autre aspect [que lui], et je me souviens de lui avoir dit, à peu près à l'époque où j'écrivais *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*: […] vous voulez et savez peindre l'homme tel qu'il est sous vos yeux' (*Compagnon*, pp.31-32).

Despite the prevalence of visual metaphors in critical analyses of Sand's *ars poetica*, however, a sustained investigation of different ways of seeing in Sand's novels, and their relationship with her writing style, is lacking. Some critics highlight the oral dimension of Sand's writing at the expense of the visual, suggesting that visuality is not a preoccupation in her work.[46] These arguments, however, apply only to the 'visual codes of realism', conceptualised as reflection, reproduction and transparency.[47] For Sand, however, the most prevalent ocular metaphor, the mirror, does not entail straightforward reflection. Two instances in her autobiography indicate the fact that the mirror is the source of improvisation and creation for Sand.[48] Mirrors also famously lead to confusion in *Indiana* (1832), as the mirrors in the heroine's bedroom reflect each other into infinity, leading Raymond to confuse

[45] Martine Reid, 'Préface', in *Mademoiselle Merquem* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1996), pp.7-19 (p.12, original emphasis underlined, added emphasis italicised).
[46] See, for example, Nigel Harkness, who highlights the vocality of Sand's texts in *Men of Their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction* (Leeds: Legenda, 2007), p.56. See also Damien Zanone: 'ce n'est pas tant comme observatrice qu'elle présente son rôle, mais comme conteuse,' 'Un idéalisme critique', *Magazine littéraire*, 431 (May 2004), 46-49 (p.49).
[47] Harkness, *Men of Their Words*, p.56.
[48] See the description of the table setting lined with a mirror which gives rise to 'un monde enchanté' (*OA*, I, p.555), and the young Auore's improvised performances in front of a mirror in the Spanish apartment (*OA*, I, pp.567-572).

the blurred image of Noun with the new object of his passion, Indiana herself.[49] We can already see, therefore, that the visual does not necessarily involve exact reproduction and reflection for Sand.

In my analysis, I demonstrate that an awareness of 'les choses [...] comme elles sont', to use Reid's phrase, or the ability to 'voir la vérité vraie', in Zola's words, is in fact a central concern in Sand's writing, but that the visual does not signify a process of replication for this writer.[50] Rather, her novels, both on the level of plot and poetics, investigate creative and imaginative means of experiencing and understanding the world.[51] Linked with this, I argue that Sand's distance from the realist aesthetic is founded not on her refusal of the visual or her inability to contemplate reality, but on her constantly evolving understanding of vision. Insisting on the multiplicity, vitality, and constantly changing nature of the world, Sand advocates a variety of different approaches in the quest for insight. In this sense, realism, regarded by Sand as monolithic and static, cannot serve her aims. I would therefore agree with Naginski that '[Sand's] form of "making real" was not so much being "realistic" as it was "making visible" ', since, for Sand, truly experiencing the world is opening one's eyes to the multiple levels of reality.[52] This is what I set out to investigate in this thesis.

Structure and methodology

My investigation of the ways in which insight is figured in Sand's novels proceeds on two levels. Firstly, I consider the ways in which Sandian heroines and heroes reach an

[49] 'Les deux panneaux de glace qui se renvoyaient l'un à l'autre l'image de Noun jusqu'à l'infini semblaient se peupler de mille fantômes. Il épiait dans la profondeur de cette double réverbération une forme plus déliée, et il lui semblait saisir, dans la dernière ombre vaporeuse et confuse que Noun y reflétait, la taille fine et souple de Mme Delmare.' (*Indiana*, p.104).
[50] Zola refers to Sand's 'tempérament idéaliste qui lui défendait de voir la vérité vraie et surtout de la reproduire', 'George Sand' in *Nos auteurs dramatiques. Œuvres complètes*, 66 vols (Paris: François Bernouard, 1928), XLV, pp.291- 296 (p.292).
[51] In my use of the term 'poetics' I refer to the distinctive features of Sand's writing.
[52] *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.51.

understanding of the world around them. I argue that, through these portrayals, Sand valorises and promotes a variety of different approaches to knowing and experiencing the world and that all these comprise a visual dimension. Secondly, I propose that the epistemological examples presented by Sand in her novels (that is, the means by which characters reach insight), offer a model for reading the novels themselves. By creating heroes who learn to see and understand, Sand also strives to inspire a similar awareness in her readers: 'ce que je vois, tout le monde peut le voir'.[53] Exemplarity is therefore at work in her novels, as she practises the models she advocates. The prophetic form of vision demonstrated by some of the characters in Sand's 1840s works, for example, is also practised by Sand herself in that the novels from this period are examples of visionary writing. 'L'obsession didactique et démonstrative de Sand',[54] one of the main reasons given for her alleged 'unreadability'[55] for today's readers, is thus the very subject of this thesis, as I illustrate that Sand's preoccupation with knowledge, understanding and insight makes her writing 'a worthy conceptual object'.[56]

I have chosen the term 'insight' for its association with different forms of vision in addition to its connotations of understanding and intelligence, since I show that these two meanings are interlinked in Sand's writing. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the earliest uses of the word refer to 'internal sight, mental vision or perception', and this is a sense which I wish to retain, since Sand at times favours a conceptual form of seeing, both in the sense of introspection and in the sense of a visionary dynamic.[57] Further, 'insight' initially comprised the sense of seeing with the bodily eyes, of looking or inspecting.[58] This is also significant in my investigation, since physical eyesight is privileged by Sand at a later point

[53] 'Préface générale, 1851', p.156.
[54] Éric Bordas, 'Présentation', in *George Sand: écritures et représentations*, pp.7-11 (p.10). See also Henry James, who refers to '[Sand]'s constant tendency to edification and didacticism', in *French Poets and Novelists*, p.153.
[55] See Naomi Schor, 'Afterword', in *George Sand and Idealism*, pp.213-216 on the 'unreadability' of Sand's writing.
[56] Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, p.216.
[57] See 'insight', VII (Second edition) *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) pp.1026-1027 (p.1026).
[58] Ibid., p.1027.

in her career. Finally, 'insight' signifies a form of knowledge deeper than the mere assimilation of facts, and refers to an understanding of the inner structures or character of things.[59] This brings together the different strands of the thesis, since I argue that the overall aim of Sand's different ways of looking at the world is to reach a position where one truly sees, and thus understands. I therefore identify 'voir' in the quotation from the thesis title with this last definition of 'insight', and the idea of seeing as a form of understanding runs throughout the thesis.

The quest for understanding, be it an understanding of the physical environment or a more abstract 'soif du vrai' (*Œuvres Autobiographiques*, II, p.127), is, I argue, a unifying thread which extends throughout Sand's work. According to Sand, the desire to search or quest is one of the elements which make humans superior to other beings: 'L'instinct ne lui a pas dit comme aux animaux: *Trouve ce qu'il te faut*; il lui a dit: *Cherche ce que tu rêves*, et l'homme a cherché, il cherchera toujours'.[60] The recent collection of articles, *George Sand: Une écriture expérimentale*, highlights that Sand's literary career does not give rise to a 'theory', but is, rather, a form of experimentation and exploration, as she searches for the Truth.[61] Sand herself states in December 1842: 'Je n'ai jamais eu la prétention d'écrire une solution de quoi que ce soit. […]. Ma vie entière se consumera peut-être à chercher la vérité' (*Correspondance*, V, pp.826-827). This is reaffirmed in August 1853 when she refers to her novels: 'ils n'ont d'autre but que de pousser à la recherche des hautes vérités.' (*Corr.*, XII, p.65). It is this sense of a search and an exploration, both on the level of content and form, which I wish to retain in the term 'quest'. In this thesis, I examine the Sandian quest for

[59] 'The fact of penetrating with the eyes of the understanding into the inner character or hidden nature of things; a glimpse or view beneath the surface; the faculty or power of thus seeing', ibid., p.1027.
[60] Letter to Manceau written in Nohant, 25 April, 1864. Published in *Laura, Voyages et impressions* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1865), pp.263-323, p.316, original emphasis. First published in *Revue des deux mondes*, LI (15 May 1864), pp.257-280.
[61] See also the introduction to this volume, which refers to 'la recherche sandienne' in terms of the content, genesis and aesthetic diversity of Sand's novels. *George Sand: Une écriture expérimentale*, ed. by Nathalie Buchet-Ritchey and others (New Orleans: Presses Universitaires du Nouveau Monde, 2006), p.vii-xv (p.vii). Isabelle Naginski also notes: 'Sand, like Balzac, was essentially a creator, a *searcher* after forms and meanings, not a group leader or a founder of literary coteries', *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.113, added emphasis.

insight, which is, variously, an imaginative, philosophical, aesthetic or scientific understanding of the world.

Chapter one traces Sand's early visual education as related in her memoirs, *Histoire de ma vie* (1855). I identify three tendencies in these early experiences which will prove central to the writer's epistemological development. Firstly, her early impulse to observe her surroundings is strongly encouraged, as she is urged to look and appreciate the world and its inherent beauty. Secondly, her intensely vivid imagination is developed and nurtured, and she demonstrates a strong capacity to create reality in the mind's eye. Finally, she demonstrates a propensity towards visions of a future reality, and shows a keen interest in temporality. At this point, external and internal reality are in tension with each other for Aurore, and she is torn between her different visual capacities. She experiences her observation of external, physical reality as an onslaught. As a result it is the internal, protective model which is at the centre of her early novels. By focusing on *Indiana* (1832) and *Lélia* (1833), I examine this period of Sand's writing as one which privileges internal vision as a means of experiencing the world. I demonstrate, however, that these heroines' withdrawal from external, physical reality ultimately leads to failure, and that the interior mode of vision can only become more constructive through social engagement and through the projection of the vision into the future.

The second chapter considers the development of this internal vision into a more positive approach to reality in Sand's work in the late 1830s and 1840s. I demonstrate that Sand's intellectual development leads her to become more socially and politically engaged, and that this enables her to develop prophetic insights about the future of France. Whereas the first chapter demonstrates Sand's early incapacity to form a connection between her inner hopes and visions on the one hand, and the reality she perceives around her on the other, this chapter shows how this difficulty is now overcome, as she succeeds in combining the visual

and the visionary. I argue that Sand's works from this period demonstrate a commitment to double vision, in the sense of observation and engagement with the present in addition to envisioning the future. This operates on the level of content, in that the visionary characters must cooperate with pragmatic individuals, and on the level of her poetics, as her novels present visions which are increasingly grounded in a prosaic and physical reality. I indicate that Sand thus performs a metaliterary critique of contemporary novelistic practices fixated solely on the present, in comparison with her own novels which combine a contemplation of the present with visions of the future. Finally, I identify the nature of the vision put forward as a syncretic one which combines politics, religion, morality and philosophy.

The focus on a conceptual form of vision is maintained in the third chapter, where I examine Sand's creation of mental images and 'tableaux' through the model of painting. Her capacities of conceptual vision are now engaged in reconfiguring reality, not only through visions of the future (as demonstrated in chapter two), but also through what I term the procedure of 'repainting'. I show that Sand's engagement with the visual arts does not entail a desire to fix or replicate, but rather, that her response to this medium is imaginative and creative. Secondly, I argue that Sand's painterly representations of reality highlight the gulf between those who are gifted with true insight into the beauty of the natural world and those who are blinded to it. In these novels from the 1840s, this insight is attained through 'le sens pittoresque', a form of aesthetic awareness.

Since Sand's interest in social interaction and organisation changes after 1848, chapters 2 and 3 do not go beyond this point. After the failure of the 1848 revolution, Sand's novelistic output wanes, and she writes very few novels between 1848 and 1855. Many critics have maintained that Sand is thoroughly disillusioned with politics and the contemporary

world from the 1850s onwards.[62] However, as has been argued by Annabelle Rea, it is inaccurate to consider the few works Sand composed in this period (such as *La Filleule*, 1853 and *Mont-Revêche*, 1853) as 'apolitical', since Sand retains an interest in social relations, and I do not endorse the critical view that Sand remains disheartened for the rest of her literary career.[63] However, after 1848, Sand no longer regards political solutions as the key to progress, and the novels she writes after this point are less focused on reconfiguring reality and in guiding society towards the future.

My fourth chapter identifies the mid-1850s as the final turning point for this investigation of insight in Sand's works, as Sand's attitude towards humankind's knowledge and understanding of the world changes around this period. Whereas the novels in the early 1830s privilege innate and internal understanding, and those in the late 1830s and 1840s foreground the thinker and the artist, Sand's works from the late 1850s onwards promote the figure of the 'savant' and argue for the importance of scientific knowledge in appreciating the external world. However, although Sand now advocates the physical observation of the natural world, I show that she rejects the conception of nature as an inert object to be inspected and exploited by humankind. I examine the portrayals of nature in her novels and short stories and reveal an interactive model at work between the human observer and the natural phenomenon. Whereas looking and seeing were previously considered in Sand's works as aesthetic operations (as examined in chapter three), these activities are now combined with a scientific understanding of nature's processes in order to fully apprehend and appreciate the natural environment. Further, I extend this point to Sand's investigations of epistemological approaches on a wider level, as I show that novels such as *L'Homme de neige* (1858) and *Valvèdre* (1861) engage with the contemporary questioning of the

[62] See, for example, Michèle Hecquet, 'Sand: du socialisme à son abandon', in *Le Siècle de George Sand*, ed. by David Powell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp.55-62. Ève Sourian also notes: 'Après le 18 mai 1848 George Sand se replie à Nohant qui devient son refuge. Elle fuit la politique et la société du second Empire'. See 'Préface', in *Novelles Lettres d'un voyageur* (Paris: Des Femmes, 2005), pp.7-34 (p.13).
[63] Annabelle Rea, '*La Filleule*: An A-political Sand?', in *Le Siècle de George Sand*, pp.45-54.

delineation of knowledge into separate disciplines. Sand's works, I argue, reveal an epistemological eclecticism which takes into account artistic, philosophical and scientific forms of knowledge and understanding. In her later novels, combining these is presented as the only means of truly accessing insight. I show that the ability to develop what I term this multidisciplinary outlook is not sex-specific in Sand's works, as she presents both female and male 'artistes' who are also 'naturalistes'. Finally, I link Sand's 'double vision', now defined as the ability to combine science and art, the detail and the whole, with her rejection of Realism as a narrow, one-sided view of the world which fails to take into account its vitality and multiplicity.

This final chapter therefore challenges the widely-held belief that Sand's later works are unworthy of critical attention. Robert Godwin-Jones's view of Sand's writing after 1848 is typical of critical attitudes towards this period in her output: 'The general decline in the quality of Sand's novels after mid-century is largely a reflection of growing timidity in expressing her views in writing.'[64] Isabelle Naginski's helpful division of Sand's œuvre into four 'moments', an important reference point to all Sandistes, ends with the 'période verte', 'immediately preceding and following the events of 1848, and comprising the pastoral novels'.[65] The last work included in this green period is *Les Maîtres sonneurs* (1853). The entirety of Sand's production from 1855-1875 is therefore omitted from this system. My last chapter rehabilitates this later period in Sand's writing as a corpus of works which deserve further study, not only as part of Sand's œuvre but as an important contribution to the French novel and its expanding parameters. In this chapter I show that Naginski's 'période verte' can in fact be extended beyond 1853, not because Sand continues to write novels associated with

[64] Robert Godwin Jones, *Romantic Vision. The Novels of George Sand* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa, 1995), p.293.
[65] *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.5.

the pastoral, but because her writing is now preoccupied with relations between humankind and nature, and the forms of engagement between the two.[66]

The thesis is therefore loosely chronological in structure, and identifies a growth model in Sand's position. Conceptually, it would seem logical to begin with sight in the most precise and specific sense, the physiological use of the eyes, before following on to more sophisticated visual models. However, the material is the starting point for my analysis, not the other way around. It is for this reason that I begin in my first chapter with the subjective model which dominates in Sand's early works before examining the ways in which her middle period is motivated by a desire for change, both by reshaping reality and envisioning future possibilities. The chapter on Sand's interest in the physical observation of nature necessarily focuses on her later works, since it is at this point that a preoccupation with looking at the intricacies of the world comes to the fore in her writing. There is a degree of overlap between the different chapters, since it is impossible to separate completely the different means of reaching insight into distinct categories. Further, Sand ultimately transcends such divisions, combining the different positions to form her own, syncretic model, as I demonstrate in my conclusion. I therefore identify an evolution in Sand's attitude towards looking at and interacting with the world, both in the sense of the external physical world, and the immaterial, atemporal 'vérité' towards which she strives. I regard the model as one of growth, since Sand does not reject her early intuitive and aesthetic means of apprehending the world. Rather, she assimilates different approaches in order to transcend differences and reach a unified position. Sand's focus on the individual and the personal in her earliest works is followed by a wider preoccupation with the social and the moral in her middle period, before she moves out to the external physical world. Whereas Sand's œuvre is

[66] Naginski's logic behind using the colour green is 'to contest the notion that the pastoral imagination is necessarily associated with what critics have often thought to be Sand's sentimental *rose-coloured* view of life'. Further, she wishes to highlight Sand's ' "vegetal imagination", exemplified in her *ultima verba* on her deathbed: "Laissez verdure" ', *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, note 7, p.243, original emphasis. This emphasis on the 'vegetal' is closer to my own focus in this fourth chapter.

often regarded as one which contracts after 1848, as she retreats into the countryside and to a life of political apathy, intellectual obscurity, and resulting literary blandness and irrelevance, this study challenges these assumptions and reverses this model, demonstrating instead an expansion in Sand's writing, moving from the individual to the universe as a whole.

The corpus for this study is broad, considering representative examples from the entirety of Sand's œuvre from 1832 to 1876. This decision is based on the study's aim of carrying out a sustained analysis of the ways in which Sand's writing is engaged in different means of accessing insight. Understanding this dimension of Sand's work, which runs throughout her œuvre, requires an overview of her entire corpus, and also responds to Sand's own call: 'lisez-moi en entier et ne me jugez pas sur des fragments détachés'.[67] However, this is not a survey of Sand's works, and my aim is not to provide a comprehensive review of all the possible ways in which Sand's work interacts with vision. Rather, my corpus has been chosen through extensive reading of Sand's novels, and I have selected those works which exemplify my argument, that Sand demonstrates a continued commitment to varying means of engaging with the world in visual terms, and that these include conceptual seeing, prophetic vision and physical sight.

By examining Sand's vast corpus in terms of her evolving epistemological outlook, I uncover new ways of appreciating this œuvre. Responding to Naginski's call for investigation into Sand's 'vie intellectuelle', this thesis diverges from previous studies which have confronted the difficulty of categorising Sand's work by focusing on her idealism (Schor), her exploration of gender (Massardier-Kenney, Harkness), her sense of identity (Reid), or her political fidelities (Hécquet, Hamon).[68] My approach is situated most closely to that of

[67] 'Réponse à un ami, 1871, août, Nohant', in *Impressions et souvenirs* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1873), p.62. Quoted by Debra Linowitz Wentz, *Fait et fiction: Les formules pédagogiques des contes d'une grand-mère de George Sand* (Paris: Nizet, 1985), p.13. See also Sand's assertion in June 1861: 'je ne suis pas un écrivain qu'on puisse donner par extraits', *Corr.*, XVI, p.450.

[68] Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand mythographe* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007), p.101; Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*; Françoise Massardier-Kenney, *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand*

Naginski's recent *George Sand mythographe*, in which she examines Sand's developing philosophical attitude, but I examine Sand's intellectual trajectory rather than focusing on a particular period in her work, and analyse her engagement with forms of vision rather than her status as a creator of myths. I consider Sand's 'vie intellectuelle' in the sense of her diverse political, philosophical and spiritual interests, her views on art, and her studies in the natural sciences. I establish a series of turning points in Sand's writing which privilege different means of experiencing reality, demonstrating that her inquisitive and experimental approach to looking at and knowing the world is constantly evolving. I therefore argue that Sand's work is fundamentally concerned with vision, but that an alternative understanding of this term is required in order to fully appreciate this aspect of her œuvre.

One of the main contributions which this thesis hopes to make to scholarship is to re-evaluate Sand's standing as a writer of intellectual interest and importance. Throughout her career, I argue, Sand regards literature as a means of unlocking her readers' internal and physical visual faculties in the quest for aesthetic, intellectual and moral understanding of the world. I reveal that this is a writer concerned with issues of intellectual authority, types of knowledge, and the human experience of the world. This is at odds with the commonly held perception of Sand as a writer of sentiment at the expense of thought. Anatole France, for example, a champion of Sand, admires her only as a creature of feeling.[69] Sand's interrogation of philosophical and social ideas is dismissed by this thinker as the mere imitation of others: 'Elle laisse ses amis penser pour elle; elle reçoit leurs idées toutes faites et

(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Harkness, M*en of Their Words*; Reid, *Signer Sand: l'œuvre et le nom* (Paris: Belin, 2003); Michèle Hecquet, *Poétique de la parabole: les romans socialistes de George Sand, 1840-1845* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992); Bernard Hamon, *George Sand et la politique:* "*Cette vilaine chose*" (Paris: Harmattan, 2001).

[69] Anatole France states: 'Les idées sont peu de chose chez Madame Sand; le sentiment, au contraire, est tout. […] Ne lui demandez pas ce qu'elle pense: la pensée suppose la réflexion, et elle ne réfléchit pas', 'George Sand et l'idéalisme dans l'art', in *La vie littéraire* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1899), pp.339-347 (pp.341-342).

elle aime mieux les répéter que de les comprendre'.[70] Gustave Lanson also notes that Sand possesses 'une intelligence […] plus apte à réfléchir qu'à produire des idées, toute soumise aux impulsions de la sympathie et de l'imagination.'[71] As Elaine Showalter makes clear in *A Literature of Their Own*, Sand is known for her 'novels of passion' and not for her cerebral qualities.[72] Showalter explains that, within literary history, there has been a tendency to 'polarize the female literary tradition into what we can call the Austen and the Sand lines'.[73] Whereas George Eliot is 'a woman in the Austen tradition, studied, intellectual, cultivated', those authors who are 'daughters of George' focus on 'the turbulence of womanly suffering'.[74] Whilst the simplistic matching of Brontë and Eliot with Sand and Austen may have been more thoroughly investigated and nuanced by modern critics, the reduction of Sand to a writer of feeling has yet to be overcome.

Resistance towards considering Sand as a thinker has become axiomatic and is illustrated, for example, in the continued assumption that her socialist ideas, explored in works such as *Consuelo* and *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, were uncritically absorbed from Pierre Leroux.[75] Christopher Robinson goes so far as to say that Sand is a 'congenitally feeble' writer, whose politically engaged works are 'compounded from a jumble of absurd utopian and spiritualist theories.'[76] More recently, Peter Dayan also stated: 'La George Sand raisonneuse ne m'intéresse guère plus que ses personnages raisonneurs; ce n'est pas pour apprendre ce qu'elle pense que je la lis.' Justifying this opinion, he notes that 'elle a soin, comme pour nous mettre en garde contre ses propres raisonnements, de répéter que le

[70] Anatole France, *La vie littéraire*, p.342. See also G. H. Lewes, who notes that Sand's philosophy is 'only a reflex of some man whose ideas she has adopted', in 'The Lady Novelists', *Westminster Review* (1852), 129-141 (p.136), quoted by Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p.72.
[71] Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Hachette, 1952), p.996.
[72] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p.84.
[73] Ibid., p.85.
[74] Ibid.
[75] For more details on this, and for a persuasive refutation of this assumption, see Naginski, *George Sand mythographe*, esp. pp.236-237.
[76] Christopher Robinson, *French Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1978), p.105.

raisonnement est un genre qui ne lui convient pas, pour lequel elle a peu de talent.'[77] This argument is invalidated by the fact that Sand's self-deprecation is legendary in all fields. Her claims regarding her hastily-written novels and lack of reflection and revision of her works, for example, have been widely discredited by various studies.[78] One of the few critics to have recognised Sand's capacity for thought is Henry James, who notes, in his misogynistic but admiring portrait of Sand, that 'George Sand's real history, the more interesting one, is the history of her mind.'[79] This thesis pursues this insight, in the hope of providing an alternative to the critical view, held by many of Sand's admirers as well as her detractors, that she is incapable of abstraction.

The thesis also rejects analyses of the nineteenth-century novel's preoccupation with the ocular as an indication of a (male) desire to dissect, to penetrate and to appropriate, as formulated by Peter Brooks: 'in modern narrative [...] vision is typically a male prerogative, and its object of fascination is the woman's body, in a cultural model so persuasive that many women novelists don't reverse its vectors.'[80] Rather, this study shifts attention away from women as examined, scrutinised objects to seeing, envisioning subjects. My aim, however, is not to study Sand exclusively as a representative of the female experience, and I do not make Sand's gender a determining factor in my analysis. Feminist critics have rightly highlighted the position of women writers within the 'women's tradition', as outlined in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal study on the woman writer in the nineteenth century.[81] However, to relate Sand exclusively to her consœurs (synchronically, with Delphine de

[77] Peter Dayan, *Lautréamont et Sand* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997), p.69.
[78] See, for example, the articles collected in *George Sand: écritures du romantisme II*, ed. by Béatrice Didier and Jacques Neefs (Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1989) and Françoise Massardier-Kenney's recent study of the *Valvèdre* manuscript: '*Valvedre*: Étude du manuscrit', in *George Sand, pratiques et imaginaires de l'écriture*, ed. by Brigitte Diaz and Isabelle Naginski (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2006), pp.85-94.
[79] Henry James, *French Poets and Novelists*, p.166.
[80] Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.88.
[81] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1979), p.xi.

Giardin and Daniel Stern, for example, or diachronically, from Mme de Staël to Rachilde, Colette and so on), is to paint an incomplete picture of her genealogy, and to reduce her significance within the nineteenth-century prose landscape. In addition to the links between Sand's writing and that of female novelists, Sand is also greatly inspired by the works of Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and, as she herself explains, she is actively engaging with the works of her male contemporaries such as Balzac and Hugo.[82] Moreover, Sand's œuvre cannot be limited to the emancipation of women. Texts written by women are considered by feminist critics to offer a privileged 'source of knowledge of women's situation in a sexist world'.[83] However, although Sand exposes the limitations placed on women in the nineteenth century, she is primarily concerned with liberation in a much wider sense. Indeed, I would argue that Sand's main aspiration is the construction of a new society based on freedom and equality rather than the insertion of women into the current order. The feminist critic, Naomi Schor, also highlights the need for wider contextualisation:

> Feminist critics or gynocritics have traditionally emphasized transhistorical, transnational, transclass, etc., specificities of women's writing, but I would argue that female specificity in writing is (also) contextual, local, a microspecificity that shifts opportunistically in response to changing macrohistorical and literary historical circumstances.[84]

Issues of gender do have a bearing on the topic of this thesis, however, since different means of looking at and knowing the world have been, and continue to be, linked with gender differences. I therefore take gender into account when relevant to the discussion, but do not take this as the starting point of my investigation. Rather, I consider Sand as a novelist *tout*

[82] See *OA*, II, pp.157-159.
[83] Toril Moi, 'What Can Literature Do? Simone de Beauvoir as a Literary Theorist'. http://royalholloway.com/modern-languages/Research/Conferences/What_Can_Literature_Do__PMLA_v.2.pdf. [Accessed 5 January 2010]. Lecture delivered 14 July 2008, Royal Holloway, University of London.
[84] *George Sand and Idealism*, p.48.

court, demonstrating that she is a key nineteenth-century writer in her own right rather than as a representative of a subjugated identity.

In my analysis, in addition to undertaking close readings of the texts themselves, I proceed by examining Sand's political and literary articles, her correspondence and her *Histoire de ma vie*, to build up a picture of her state of mind and intellectual attitude when writing her novels. This examination is situated in the historical and intellectual context of nineteenth-century France. I bring these aspects together to reveal a new dimension of Sand's work, which is her engagement with varying conceptions of vision. My methodological approach is therefore intentionalist and historicist. This approach is at odds with those methodologies developed over the last fifty years of literary criticism which deny the centrality, and even the existence, of the author or indeed any other elements beyond the text itself, promoting instead an examination of the text as 'a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash', and in which Language alone speaks.[85] As David Wakefield argues:

> In place of [the] old-fashioned 'histoire littéraire', criticism has virtually monopolised the study of literature, basing itself exclusively on the internal evidence of the book or poem, on its rhythm, style, imagery, conscious or unconscious themes or forms of repetition. As a result – until recently at any rate – external factors such as biography, historical circumstances, the intellectual climate, and so on have been largely ignored. In the hands of its most radical structuralist critics like Roland Barthes and the most recent phenomenon 'deconstruction', literature has been virtually reduced to an object studied in a void.[86]

Although I do not wholeheartedly agree with this rather dismissive formulation, I would assert that it is possible to develop a certain conception of authorship which makes a consideration of the author's readings, opinions, and intellectual influences illuminating.

[85] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.221-224 (p.223).
[86] David Wakefield, *The French Romantics: Literature and the Visual Arts, 1800-1840* (London: Chaucer Press, 2007), p.vii.

My decision to take the author into account is not, therefore, based on an unreflective dismissal of what we might term 'the author problem', but rather, I do not align myself with anti-auteurist and anti-intentionalist approaches since these are opposed to a very specific idea of the author which critics exaggerate or even construct for their own polemical ends. Wimsatt and Beardsley, for example, in their famous essay on the so-called 'intentional fallacy', refer to the author as 'the oracle' in a bid to raise the author to a position of total and unassailable authority, making the notion of this figure's 'intentions' seem tyrannical and overbearing.[87] Barthes goes further still in his seminal essay, 'The Death of the Author', elevating the author to the highest status by referring to him as a God and referring to the oppressive control and restriction caused by the presence of this figure. By creating such an extreme image of the author, Barthes is clearing the way for his case, making his new conception of reading and writing which 'liberates' the text and its 'variety of meanings' appear all the more attractive.[88] Although the aim of such critics is to open up literary works to new possibilities of meaning, this enterprise is problematic. Not only is there a danger of exposing the texts to other deterministic approaches such as Russian Formalism, but the attempt to abolish the author is, I would argue, unfeasible. That so much criticism and debate revolves around the author and the fact that no-one has succeeded in removing this figure highlights and perhaps perpetuates the irrepressible fascination with and necessary presence of the authorial figure.

Whereas in the logic of anti-auteurist discourse, only one type of author is envisaged, that of a magisterial, theological entity, I maintain that it is possible to conceive of the author in way that does not reduce this figure to a suffocating univocal presence. This is part of the wider issue of the relationship between literature and biography, and, as Ann Jefferson

[87] W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', in *The Verbal Icon* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp.3-18 (p.18).
[88] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p.223.

argues, 'biography is not a single and self-identical phenomenon'.[89] Rather, there are different ways of conceptualising this entity. The relationship between the two spheres of literature and biography is highly fraught, as explained by Seán Burke:

> Work and life are maintained in a strange and supposedly impermeable opposition, particularly by textualist critics who proceed as though life somehow pollutes the work, as though the bad biographicist practices of the past have somehow erased the connections between *bios* and *graphé*, as though the possibility of work and life interpenetrating simply *disappears* on that account.[90]

The form of scholarship under attack by anti-biographical critics is, specifically, one which considers the life at the expense of the work, and which reduces the literary output to the direct expression of the life. This highly maligned approach is of particular relevance to this thesis, since so many critics have focused exclusively on Sand's notoriously eventful life. As Isabelle Naginski highlights, the 'biographical obsession' displayed by scholars has led to many non-literary approaches to Sand.[91] As a result, Sand's literary works have either been neglected or have suffered heavily from the 'autobiographical fallacy', according to which a writer only and repeatedly tells his or her own story.[92] The efforts of Sandian critics in the past two decades have rightly been focused on diverting attention away from Sand's life and onto her literary production.

However, that excessive attention has been devoted to Sand's life does not eradicate the crucial links between her life and work. I refer again to Burke: 'The grounding assumption of theoretical objections to "life" is that through appealing to the biographical

[89] Ann Jefferson, *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.16.
[90] Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008 [1992]) p.180, original emphasis.
[91] Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.11. See also p.244, notes 18, 19 and 20 for references to biographies on Sand and studies of her relationships.
[92] See Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.10. Also highly revealing is Anne-Marie Baron's recent research on film adaptations of nineteenth-century novels. She points out that in the last thirty years, not a single one of Sand's novels has been adapted for the cinema, whereas four films have been dedicated to her life. Baron sets out to investigate this in her chapter on Sand, pointedly entitled 'Sand. L'empire du biographique'. See *Romans français du XIXe siècle à l'écran: problèmes de l'adaptation* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2008), esp. pp.53-70.

referent, we are importing phenomena from one realm into another where it is alien, improper, incongruous.'[93] It is my claim that life and work cannot be conceived of in these hermetic terms, especially in the case of Sand. Her life and work are so intrinsically connected that to deny this connection, and to regard the life as 'alien' to the work, is to be blinded to the text. The key distinction to be made here is between different conceptions of the biographical. In my examination of Sand's life, I refer not to her love life and relationships, but to her creative and cerebral experiences. In my investigation, I consider her birth as an artist, her scholarly studies, and the turning points in her philosophical development. In my references to *Histoire de ma vie*, generally regarded as Sand's 'autobiography', I consider this work, not as a confessional text in which Aurore Dudevant recounts her personal and sexual life (indeed, it frustrated many of her contemporaries since so little mention is made of her lovers), but rather, as a reflection on the way in which Aurore Dudevant became George Sand.[94] I regard *Histoire de ma vie* as a summary of Sand's contemplations on her identity, intellectual and creative life up until the early 1850s, and it is in this sense that this text is relevant to my analysis. I therefore align myself with José-Luis Diaz who considers the text as the story of 'la vie d'une *artiste*', and with Martine Reid, who asserts that 'dans *Histoire de ma vie*, c'est *l'artiste* qui parle.'[95] As Pierre Macherey also asserts in his essay on Sand's *Spiridion* (1839): 'les confidences personnelles rassemblées par Sand dans son *Histoire de ma vie* […] éclairent particulièrement les conditions dans lesquelles s'est développée sa vocation d'écrivain.'[96] Sand's own view of her memoirs aligns

[93] Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, p.180.
[94] Indeed, some critics have even questioned whether this text is in fact an autobiography at all. See, for example, Pierre Laforgue, who highlights the generic ambiguity of this text in 'Le Je dans *Histoire de ma vie*', in *Lire Histoire de ma vie de George Sand*, ed. by Simone Bernard-Griffiths and José-Luis Diaz (Clermont-Ferrand, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2006), pp.335-349 (p.336).
[95] José-Luis Diaz, 'La vie comme œuvre', in *Lire Histoire de ma vie de George Sand*, pp.363-381 (p.377, original emphasis). Diaz notes the frequency with which Sand uses the term 'artiste' in *Histoire de ma vie*, see p.377; Martine Reid, 'Une femme qui écrit', in *Histoire de ma vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), pp.7-31 (p.18, original emphasis).
[96] Pierre Macherey, *À quoi pense la littérature? Exercices de philosophie littéraire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), p.48.

with my interpretation, as she refers to them as 'ces voyages ou ces essais de voyage dans le monde abstrait de l'intelligence' (*OA*, I, p.9), and she regards this work as an opportunity to 'raconter ma vie morale (*d'artiste*) et intellectuelle' (*Corr*., VIII, p.209, December 1847).

Further, the links I examine between Sand's life and works are not one-way. Rather than tracing a direct line from the life to the work, I argue that Sand practises in life what she puts forward in her writing, as one influences the other. My aim is not to search for real-life counterparts to every element in Sand's texts, and neither do I wish to 'prove' that my interpretation of Sand's works, tracking her authorial intentions, is the only 'valid' one. Rather, I allow the texts themselves to offer their own tools of analysis. I do not apply a particular interpretation or theory to the novels, but regard the texts themselves as offering interpretative paradigms. I argue that there is a parallel in Sand's works between the ideas explored on the level of plot and character development, and the poetics of her novels. Seán Burke suggests that the alternative between ignoring the authorial figure and making the life-and-blood persona the centre of analysis is to 'remain realistically suspended between the poles of the transcendental and the empirical'.[97] This strikingly Sandian statement[98] is of particular relevance to an author who maintained a constant balance in her conception of authorship between inspiration and labour.[99] It is crucial to respect Sand as a creative voice whilst also taking into account her biographical self grounded in the particular world of nineteenth-century France. We cannot consider Sand's intellectual and epistemological trajectory without considering the historical context, since, as Ann Jefferson outlines, 'the history of literature is *inter alia* a history of the concepts and discourses through which, and by means of which, literature is thought.'[100] This is particularly relevant to this thesis, since

[97] Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, p.211.
[98] I am thinking, for example, of the following formulation in *Laura* (1865): 'je serais malheureuse de passer toujours avec toi de l'empyrée à la cuisine. N'y a-t-il pas une limite possible entre ces deux extrêmes?' (*Laura*, p.117).
[99] See, for example, Martine Reid's study which highlights this duality: 'George Sand: l'art et le métier'.
[100] *Biography and the Question of Literature in France*, p.10.

my aim is to reveal an aspect of Sand's writing inherently to do with intellectual and cultural currents and the perception of Sand as an active agent in these developments.

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The overall aim of this thesis, therefore, is to bring to light a new aspect of Sand's work, which is the centrality of vision to her writing. In this way, the study provides a corrective to the perception of Sand either as a writer uninterested in the visual, or as one who possesses an indistinct, rose-tainted view of the world. The following chapters each explore a different facet of Sand's understanding of vision, demonstrating that this is a writer deeply engaged in visual means of understanding and experiencing reality, but that her understanding of insight, or 'bien voir' (*Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur*, p.101) as she herself puts it, is multiple and constantly evolving.

Chapter 1

Early visual models

Introduction

This chapter will examine George Sand's early visual experiences and will demonstrate that, from a young age, the young Aurore develops various means of engaging with reality.[1] In my first section, I identify three tendencies in Sand's childhood experiences which will prove central to her development as a writer, in particular her different means of engaging with the world in a visual sense. Firstly, I will demonstrate that the acuity of her physical visual capacities is nurtured by her mother, who encourages her to look at and appreciate her environment. Secondly, her intensely vivid imagination will be considered, examining the way in which she reworks reality in her mind. Finally, I will examine Aurore's tendency towards prophetic visions. In the first section of this chapter, therefore, I will demonstrate that the various forms of vision which I examine in later chapters are all present in Sand from an early age in their embryonic form. During these early years, however, the different levels of experience are in tension with each other, since Aurore experiences her ability to observe external reality as a burden and an onslaught. As a result, I will argue that it is Sand's imaginative faculty, or inner eye, which is at work in her early novels, and in my second section, I will examine *Indiana* (1832) and *Lélia* (1833) as examples of this. In the final section of this chapter, I will begin to demonstrate the transformation which takes place in Sand's position towards the end of the 1830s, and in the rest of the thesis I will show how Sand overcomes her initial difficulties and ultimately reconciles her different faculties.

[1] I use 'Aurore' to refer to her as a child, and 'Sand' to refer to the writer's retrospective viewpoint.

My evidence for the first part of this chapter will be drawn from Sand's *Histoire de ma vie*, written between 1847 and 1852. This text is written by the author herself and thus cannot be taken at face value, particularly since Sand's statements about herself in articles, prefaces and letters are frequently contradictory and unreliable. The importance of this work, however, lies not in its factual accuracy – indeed, it is known that Sand's account of her life is highly selective and at times fanciful – but rather, in the way in which Sand decides to relate her experiences. She describes the work as 'l'histoire de ma vie intellectuelle'[2], and it is her life as a creative artist which is under scrutiny here, as we see from her stated intention to 'raconter de ma vie morale (*d'artiste*) et intellectuelle' (*Corr*., VIII, p.207, 24 December 1847, original emphasis). The centrality of certain concepts and the way in which these are examined thus provide us with a privileged insight into her intellectual and creative formation. In this respect, different ways of engaging with reality, and ways of looking at the world, are clearly paramount for Sand.

Histoire de ma vie: early visual models

Sand's very first memory is highly visual in a sensory and corporeal sense. She describes in *Histoire de ma vie* how, at two years of age, she was dropped on the floor by her nurse, and notes that 'cette commotion, cet ébranlement du système nerveux ouvrirent mon esprit au sentiment de la vie, et je vis nettement, je vois encore, le marbre rougeâtre de la cheminée, mon sang qui coulais, la figure égarée de ma bonne.' (*OA*, I, p.530.) Whether or not this actually happened is irrelevant. What is important is the fact that Sand portrays this accident as one which triggered a strong visual response to the material world around her, and from this point to her third birthday, she remembers only long hours in bed 'remplies de la

[2] Sand, '*Lélia*, Notice, 1854', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.216-218 (p.218).

contemplation de quelque pli de rideau ou de quelque fleur au papier des chambres' (*OA*, I, p.530).

This strong visual sense and attention to detail is developed by her mother, who guides her in looking at the world and appreciating its beauty. Sophie-Victoire commands her daughter to look whenever an aspect of the world strikes her as beautiful. This beauty is presented as inherent; however, individuals need to be trained in order to see it. Sand states, for example: 'ma mère *m'ouvrait* instinctivement et tout naïvement le monde du beau' (*OA*, I, p.556, added emphasis), and as a result, 'ces objets que je n'eusse peut-être pas remarqués de moi-même, me *révélaient* leur beauté' (*OA*, I, p.557, added emphasis). Her mother thus acts as a guide, directing her gaze and helping her to see the world in a different light. In this respect, Sand considers her mother to possess 'une clef magique pour ouvrir mon esprit' (*OA*, I, p.557). This emphasis on opening, or unlocking, another's faculties in this way will prove to be central in Sand's literary project.

Further to Aurore's shrewd observation of the physical world, she also possesses a highly developed imaginative faculty, or 'inner eye'. Cam-Thi Poisson goes so far as to state that 'le monde où vit Aurore pendant les premières années de sa vie, est plutôt fictif que réel.'[3] Indeed, Sand's recounting of her early years abounds with examples of the way in which she reworked reality in her own mind. Children generally have active imaginations, but it seems that this was particularly the case for Aurore. This propensity for daydreaming creates an impression of idiocy: 'L'habitude contractée, presque dès le berceau, d'une rêverie dont il me serait impossible de me rendre compte à moi-même, me donna de bonne heure l'*air bête*.' (*OA*, I, p.467, original emphasis).[4] Several instances described in *Histoire de ma vie* demonstrate the way in which she is inspired by her contemplation of the world, which

[3] Cam-Thi Doan Poisson, *Poétique de la mobilité: les lieux dans Histoire de ma vie de George Sand* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), p.70.
[4] This idea returns at a later point: 'Il paraît que je restais des heures entières assise sur un tabouret aux pieds de ma mère […] ne disant mot, les bras pendant, les yeux fixes, la bouche entrouverte, et que je paraissais idiote par moments' (*OA*, I, p.599).

leads her to create images in her mind. One example is her description of the wallpaper in her childhood bedroom which features 'une Flore dansante' and 'une bacchante grave' (*OA*, I, p.619). At night, the bacchante breaks free and attempts to rip the nymph out of the wallpaper. The nymph and the young Aurore are attacked by the bacchante and her 'thyrse', transformed into a sword. This event has been analysed according to Freudian theories, but my interest in this incident lies in what it tells us about Sand's relationship with reality.[5] According to Poisson, for Aurore, 'l'invisible l'emporte toujours sur le visible.'[6] I would argue, however, that these are to be considered as two different forms of vision, rather than the visible pitted against the invisible. Aurore experiences both of these phenomena in a visual sense, shifting between the real (that which is seen by the physical eye) and the imaginary (that which is seen in the mind), to the extent that the line between the two is blurred: 'Le réel et le chimérique étaient simultanément devant mes yeux' (*OA*, I, p.620).

A further intriguing example is her experience with the green screen. As her mother reads Madame de Genlis's *Veillées du chanvreur* to her one evening, she begins to see all manner of fantastical landscapes appearing on this screen. She begins by providing a detailed example of the material objects which she sees in front of her: 'J'étais assise aux pieds de ma mère, devant le feu, et il y avait entre le feu et moi un vieux écran à pieds garni de taffetas vert.' (*OA*, I, p.630). Initially, she alters this reality by using her physical eyes: 'Je voyais un peu le feu à travers ce taffetas usé, et il y produisait de petites étoiles *dont j'augmentais le rayonnement en clignant les yeux*.' (*OA*, I, p.630, added emphasis). Soon, however, she begins to see other images which do not exist in empirical reality:

[5] Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women*, 2 vols (New York, Grune and Stratton, 1944), I, p.289, pp.297-315.
[6] Poisson, *Poétique de la mobilité*, p.70.

> Des images se dessinaient devant moi et venaient se fixer sur l'écran vert. C'étaient des bois, des prairies, des rivières, des villes d'une architecture bizarre et grotesque, comme j'en vois encore souvent en songe; des palais enchantés avec des jardins comme il n'y en a pas […]. Il y avait des roses vertes, noires, violettes, des roses bleues surtout. […] Je voyais aussi des bosquets illuminés, des jets d'eau, des profondeurs mystérieuses, des ponts chinois, des arbres couverts de fruits d'or et de pierreries. (*OA*, I, p.630).

What is striking about this passage is that the conceptual is tightly linked with the physical reality. Although these images are being created by her own mind, they are projected onto a physical object, the screen. This is reminiscent of the previous scene with the bacchante, where Aurore projected her inner thoughts – full of fairytales and myths – onto the physical world of her bedroom. It is highlighted that, during the green screen incident, it is her mind's eye that is creating these images: 'je fermais les yeux et je le voyais [le monde fantastique] encore.' (*OA*, I, p.630). Once again, the dividing line between the real and the imaginary is extremely permeable for Aurore, as the imaginary world begins to take on more solid qualities: 'tout le monde fantastique de mes contes devenait sensible, évident, et je m'y perdais avec délices.' (*OA*, I, p.630). At this point in her life, she is unable to control her visions, and the way in which they cross over into the realm of the real frightens her: 'un jour ces apparitions devinrent si complètes que j'en fus comme effrayée et que je demandais à ma mère si elle ne les voyait pas.' (*OA*, I, p.631). She is not yet capable of controlling the transition from one world to the other.

This develops into a tension between the two levels of experience. When describing her playing sessions with other children, for example, she states that 'l'appartement avait disparu à nos yeux, et nous étions véritablement dans un sombre paysage à l'entrée de la nuit.' (*OA*, I, p.543). The departure from this imaginary world is experienced as a shock: 'Ma mère vint me prendre dans ses bras pour me porter à table, et je me rappellerai toujours l'étonnement où je fus en voyant les lumières, la table et les objets réels qui m'environnaient. Je sortais positivement d'une hallucination complète' (*OA*, I, p.543). At another point, she

and her half-brother Hippolyte create an imaginary river in her mother's bedroom. Sand retrospectively notes that, for children in general, such games are 'tout un drame, toute une fiction scénique, […] qu'ils miment et rêvent durant des heures entières.' (*OA*, I, p.611). She herself, however, responds exceptionally quickly and strongly to these experiences: 'Pour mon compte, il ne me fallait pas cinq minutes pour m'y plonger de si bonne foi, que je perdais la notion de la réalité, et je croyais voir les arbres, les eaux, les rochers.' (*OA*, I, p.611). Once again using the term 'hallucination' to describe her state, she refers to the return to the real world as 'une des plus pénibles commotions que j'aie ressenties' (*OA*, I, p.613), and notes that 'ces sortes de réveils me causaient toujours un ébranlement moral très dououreux.' (*OA*, I, p.613). Later in the text, she notes again that 'je souffrais réellement quand on s'efforçait de m'ôter une illusion' (*OA*, I, p.634). The main concepts which arise in her descriptions of this shifting from one form of vision to another thus revolve around distress and suffering, particularly with regards to the external world, which suggests that the visions are a means of escaping from her painful reality.

The clash between the two levels of vision (the internal, imaginary visions, and the contemplation of external, physical reality) is closely linked with Sand's birth as an artist. She initially links artistic creation with conceptual vision, noting that 'l'artiste […] porte en lui le don de poétiser les moindres choses' (*OA*, I, p.666). However, she soon begins to realise that art is also a form of physical observation: 'J'étais déjà très artiste sans le savoir, artiste dans ma spécialité, qui est l'observation des personnes et des choses.' (*OA*, I, p.672). This leads to tension between the two capacities:

> Bien longtemps avant de savoir que ma vocation serait de peindre bien ou mal des caractères et de décrire des intérieurs, je subissais avec tristesse et lassitude les instincts de cette destinée. Je commençais à ne pouvoir plus m'abstraire dans mes rêveries, et malgré moi, le monde extérieur, la réalité, venait me presser de tout son poids et m'arracher aux chimères dont je m'étais nourrie dans la liberté de ma première existence. (*OA*, I, pp.672-673).

Physical reality is experienced as a harsh, painful onslaught, and her observational skills seem to be imposed on her, as she states: 'ma nature scrutatrice *me forçait* à regarder' (*OA*, I, p.673, added emphasis). The claustrophobic materiality of the world she lives in is highlighted through the reference to its weight ('de tout son poids'), contrasted with the freedom of her existence when she was able to escape into her 'rêveries'. In this case, then, she does not seem to be inspired by her surroundings, but rather, tries to escape from them.

A particularly striking example of Aurore's capacities of creation, and the link between these and her development into an artist, is the extraordinary figure of Corambé. This asexual quasi-religious being which she invents and worships is closely linked with her creativity, as she refers to this figure as her 'roman' (*OA*, I, p.812). Further, Corambé is a manifestation of her need for an internal world, as she explains: 'Dès ma première enfance, j'avais besoin de me faire un monde intérieur à ma guise.' (*OA*, I, p.809). Corambé operates as a reassuring private space to which she can escape from her difficult reality ('j'arrangeais cela très secrètement en moi-même', *OA*, I, p.810), and I would agree with Martine Reid's comment: '*Corambé* fonctionne comme une protection contre le chagrin. Espace imaginaire, machine à rêves, il permet de tenir à distance une réalité perçue comme insupportable'.[7] Prefiguring some of Sand's fictional characters, and indeed Sand's own ambitions as a writer, Corambé is generous and consoling: 'Corambé consolait et réparait sans cesse' (*OA*, I, p.813). Importantly, Aurore experiences this 'rêverie' as a means of coping with her environment: 'Le rêve arriva à une sorte d'hallucination douce, […] j'en étais comme ravie hors du monde réel' (*OA*, I, p.814). The tenderness of the hallucination contrasts with her physical surroundings which, as we have seen, are associated with pain and sharpness ('le monde extérieur [...] venait [...] m'*arracher* aux chimères'). Through Corambé, Aurore is capable of reconfiguring reality and populating it with her own amiable figures:

[7] Martine Reid, 'Une femme qui écrit', in *Histoire de ma vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), pp.7-31 (pp.22-23).

> Le monde réel se plia bientôt à ma fantaisie. Il s'arrangea à mon usage. […] Le verger où je passais une partie de ma journée était charmant […], et c'est là que mon roman venait en plein me trouver. Quoique ce verger fût bien assez joli par lui-même, je ne l'y voyais pas précisément tel qu'il était. Mon imagination faisait d'une butte de trois pieds une montagne, de quelques arbres une forêt, du sentier qui allait de la maison à la prairie le chemin qui mène au bout du monde […]; et je voyais mes personnages agir, courir ensemble, […] ou danser en chantant dans ce paradis de mes songes. (*OA*, I, pp.814-815).

Once again, the line between the real and the imaginary is blurred, as the landscape before her bends ('se plia') and reorganises itself ('s'arrangea') so that she sees it in enlarged form. She projects her thoughts and dreams of a cohesive community onto the physical landscape, so that what she sees is conditioned by her own visions. That this internal space operates as a form of escape is highlighted through its identification with paradise ('ce paradis de mes songes'). It is only by relinquishing Corambé, however, that Aurore can develop into George Sand. Her spiritual creation gradually disappears once she starts writing *Indiana*, and the mature Sand, writing in 1855, regards the 'chères visions' experienced with Corambé as 'les précurseurs de l'inspiration' (*OA*, II, p.165). The 'roman' of her youth is thus replaced by her actual novel. Although Aurore is a keen observer of her physical surroundings, then, physical reality at times overwhelms her, and it is this which leads to her flight into her imaginary world. Her internal eye can thus be regarded as a defence mechanism for coping with external reality.

In addition to imagining other worlds, predominantly involving wondrous landscapes, Aurore also experiences visions in which she herself takes part. These I will refer to as her 'Napoleonic visions'. Aurore's childhood takes place during the later years of the Napoleonic Empire, and she is surrounded by talk of this 'grand homme' (*OA*, I, p.503). His campaign against Russia in 1812 is the topic of several conversations, and this expedition takes on particular importance for Aurore. When no news is heard of the campaign for two weeks, she begins to experience 'des rêves bizarres' (*OA*, I, p.737). In these visions, she sees herself

flying across the Russian landscape and leading the French army home: 'je planais, je m'orientais dans les airs, je découvrais enfin les colonnes errantes de nos malheureuses légions; je les guidais vers la France, je leur montrais le chemin' (*OA*, I, p.738). The subject of five verbs in this sentence, Aurore is clearly active in these visions, and she functions as a guide and saviour of her nation. In another version of this dream, she brandishes 'une épée flamboyante, comme celle que j'avais vue à l'Opéra' (*OA*, I, p.746). Sand indicates in a footnote that the opera mentioned is *La Mort d'Abel* (1758). This religious elegy was written by the Swiss poet, Salomon Gessner (1730-1788), whose pastoral idylls enjoyed great success in Europe.[8] In addition to prefiguring Sand's inclination towards the pastoral and the idyll, this reference to Gessner also indicates the potential for this aspect of her creativity to be combined with the notion of a spiritual saviour. In the opera, this sword is used by the 'ange exterminateur' (*OA*, I, p.746), and this reference to an angel figure highlights the fact that Aurore considers herself here almost as a supernatural being, 'une sorte de génie tout-puissant, l'ange du Seigneur, la destinée, la fée de la France' (*OA*, I, p.784). She feels great pride in her role: 'j'éprouvais une grande joie d'avoir sauvé l'armée française et son empereur.' (*OA*, I, p.738). In all these visions, she therefore functions as a guide and rescue figure, leading others to safety.

On one level, these Napoleonic visions operate similarly to her other 'rêveries', in that they provide a form of escape from contemporary reality. When she feels unsettled about the lack of information on the campaign, for instance, she notes that 'cette vision me soulageait un peu.' (*OA*, I, p.746). During the Hundred Days, she also becomes extremely agitated and unsettled due to the lack of order in France: 'Il me semblait que tout le monde était fou, et je revenais à mon rêve de la campagne de Russie et de la campagne de France. Je retrouvais

[8] The French translation of this work was reissued twenty times between 1800 and 1811. See Gabrielle Bersier, 'Arcadia Revitalized: The International Appeal of Gessner's Idylls in the 18th Century', in *From the Greeks to the Greens: Images of the Simple Life*, ed. by Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Wisconsin: Published for Monatshefte by the University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp.34-47 (p.36).

mes ailes […]' (*OA*, I, p.783). The mature Sand refuses to regard these visions as anything more than 'un fait physiologique' (*OA*, I, p.784), and explicitly refuses to recognise this as the blossoming of a political consciousness. However, the fact that she portrays herself as a guiding light in these visions suggests that these visions perform an additional function, enabling Aurore to act on her clear, if unacknowledged, desire to 'montr[er] le chemin', to show others the way to truth. In addition to the religious and patriotic dimensions of these visions is a reference to a higher order, as she considers herself as 'la destinée'. These 'rêves d'omnipotence', as Gisela Schlientz refers to them, thus reveal the young Aurore's desire to act and to implement change.[9]

In these visions, she projects herself not only into space but also into a future time when she will be able to reward the good and punish the bad. In an imaginary conversation with Napoleon, for example, she claims: ' "si […] tu es ce que j'ai cru, le bon, le grand, le juste empereur, le père des Français, je te reporterai sur ton trône, et avec mon épée de feu je te défendrai de tes ennemis. " ' (*OA*, I, p.783). The image of her soaring across the continent can also be regarded as a form of prophecy. Isabelle Naginski has highlighted the young Aurore's exceptional awareness of temporality, and it is also to be noted that *Histoire de ma vie* itself bears witness to a flexible conception of time, with Sand's own birth occurring no less than five hundred pages into the work.[10] Further, temporality is often conceptualised in spatial terms in Sand's writing.[11] Referring to Leroux, for instance, Sand states that 'il faisait apparaître le passé dans une si vive lumière, et il en promenait une si belle sur tous *les chemins de l'avenir*, qu'on se sentait arracher le bandeau des yeux comme avec la main' (*OA*,

[9] Gisela Schlientz, 'Préface', in *Histoire de ma vie*, 10 vols (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: C. Pirot, 1993-2003), V, pp.9-43 (p.42).
[10] Isabelle Naginski, 'George Sand et le temps expérimental', in *George Sand. Une écriture expérimentale*, ed. by Nathalie Buchet-Ritchey and others (New Orleans: Presses Universitaires du Nouveau Monde, 2006), pp.135-157.
[11] See, for example, Simone Vierne's chapter on the centrality of 'le chemin' as a metaphor for life in Sand's writing in *George Sand, la femme qui écrivait la nuit* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), pp.303-319.

II, p.356).[12] The visions which Aurore experiences of saving Napoleon and his army show her soaring into space: 'Je me figurais […] que j'avais des ailes, que je franchissais l'espace, et que, *ma vue plongeant sur les abîmes de l'horizon*, je découvrais les vastes neiges, les steppes sans fin de la Russie blanche' (*OA*, I, pp.737-738, added emphasis). The passage highlights the idea of going beyond the present through the use of the verb 'franchir', and the image of mining the depths with her eyes. Her Napoleonic visions, in which she appears as 'l'ange du Seigneur', coupled with her awareness of temporality and foreseeing the future, suggest a more positive and constructive model of inner vision. This will also play an important role in her authorial project.

'La vie de l'imagination'[13] and Sand's early works

In his article on Sand in 1876, Émile Zola uses Sand's career as a pretext to defend and justify his own authorial project of Naturalism, opposing a 'healthy' form of writing (realism, objectivity, truth), with 'l'invention et l'idéalisation', a literature which leads people astray by creating 'un beau mensonge.'[14] Despite the fact that his intention is to devalorise Sand's writing as representing 'une formule morte', Zola's article makes some intriguing statements, one of which is to state that 'la vue, chez elle [George Sand], était intérieure.'[15] Sand's œuvre is considered here as static and unchanging, whereas in fact, her authorial practice is constantly adapting to contemporary concerns. With regards to Sand's early novels, however, it is indeed predominantly the imagination, or her 'inner eye' which is at work, as Sand

[12] This conflation of time and space is also articulated in *Le Marquis de Villemer* (1861), for example: '[Caroline] croyait qu'il fallait voir le passé comme on regarde la peinture, à la distance voulue par l'œil de chacun pour embrasser l'ensemble' (*Le Marquis de Villemer*, p.141).
[13] *OA*, I, p.575.
[14] Zola, 'George Sand', in *Documents littéraires. Œuvres complètes*, 66 vols (Paris: François Bernouard, 1928), XLII, pp.153-186, (pp.159, 180).
[15] Zola, 'George Sand', in *Documents littéraires*, pp.186, 168.

searches for a form of writing which can express abstract concerns. In this section, I will consider the way in which this operates in *Indiana* and *Lélia*.

Ocular metaphors have been used for the mind since Plato, and interest in this issue was given particular impetus in the eighteenth century through the various enquiries into mind-body relations. At this point, the metaphor of the mind's eye was secularised and applied to the imagination. Diderot, for example, refers to the imagination as 'l'œil intérieur' in his *Éléments de physiologie* in his chapter on '[les] phénomènes du cerveau'.[16] Drawing on these debates, the concept of the inner eye as an alternative to physical sight was further developed by Romantic writers. In France in the first half of the nineteenth century, ocular metaphors were frequently used to refer to the mind, both in the sense of a psycho-physiological exploration of the mechanisms of perception and of memory, and also in a philosophical sense of 'second sight'.[17] In Sand's early novels, this faculty predominantly functions as a means of escape from external reality rather than as a means of reaching mystical revelations.

In his study of the inner eye in Romantic writing, Paolo Tortonese identifies two main models. Firstly, the individual robbed of physical eyesight, who is then initiated into true sight or 'voyance', is a strong Romantic topos. In order to access a higher, superior form of reality, one must renounce physical eyesight. Victor Hugo, for example, succinctly conveys this idea in his poem, 'À un poète aveugle': 'Quand l'œil du corps s'éteint, l'œil de l'esprit s'allume.'[18] In the logic of this model, the two types of vision – here, physical sight and spiritual sight – are pitted against each other. This model of two conflicting forms of vision is at work in Sand's writing. In her *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1837), for example, she refers to the

[16] *Éléments de physiologie*, ed. by Paolo Quintili (Paris: Champion, 2004), p.303. Diderot considers the imagination to be a physiological faculty.
[17] See Paolo Tortonese, *L'Œil de Platon et le regard romantique* (Paris: Kimé, 2006), pp.166-167. See also Andrea Goulet, *Optiques* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), for more on this notion of second sight.
[18] Victor Hugo, 'À un poète aveugle', *Les Contemplations*, in *Œuvres poétiques de Victor Hugo*, ed. by Pierre Albouy, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), II, p.521.

region of Tyrol, a place which she has never seen, but which appears to her in her mind 'comme une terre enchantée' (*Lettres d'un voyageur* p.48). Whilst travelling in a carriage, she mentally travels to this place:

> *Je fermais les yeux pour ne plus voir* le paysage que je venais d'admirer, et qui désormais m'inspirait tout le dédain qu'on a pour la réalité, à vingt ans. *Je vis* alors passer devant moi, comme dans un panorama immense, les lacs, les montagnes vertes, les pâturages, les forêts alpestres, les troupeaux et les torrents du Tyrol. (*LDV*, pp.48-49, added emphasis).

It is only by closing off the physical observation of the external world, now disdained, that she succeeds in accessing this internal vision of Tyrol.[19] In this case, the inner eye is considered to be superior to physical eyesight.

The other means of conceptualising the links between the two forms of vision is as a continuum. In this case, the internal visions are inspired by the contemplation of nature.[20] This model of continuity is also at work in Sand's writing. Describing Venice at dusk in her *Lettres d'un voyageur*, for example, she relates an experience where the view inspires her to form fantastical landscapes in the mind:

> Quand les formes s'effacent, quand les objets semblent trembler dans la brume, quand mon imagination peut s'élancer dans un champ immense de conjectures et de caprices, quand je peux, en clignant un peu la paupière, renverser et bouleverser une cité, en faire une forêt, un camp ou un cimetière; […] alors je jouis vraiment de la nature, j'en dispose à mon gré, je règne sur elle, je la traverse d'un regard, je la peuple de mes fantaisies. (*LDV*, p.73).

Sand projects her thoughts and fantasies, the stuff of her imagination, onto the landscape, as we see from the fact that her imagination launches itself (s'élancer) across this space, and

[19] See also the following passage where Sand describes her walk in the Italian Alps: 'Je fermai les yeux au pied d'une roche, et mon esprit se mit à divaguer. En un quart d'heure je fis le tour du monde' (*LDV*, p.62).
[20] We might consider Rousseau as an exemplar of this tendency. André Charrak explains, for example: 'la rêverie peut être comprise chez Rousseau comme un état de bonheur […] que l'âme éprouve lorsqu'elle se laisse aller [...] au spectacle d'une nature calme et régulière.' *Le Vocabulaire de Rousseau* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), p.51. It is true that some of the 'rêveries' described in the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* are inspired by the natural setting (see, for example, p.135). At other points, however, it is clear that it is not the view of nature itself which inspires Rousseau, but the fact that he is isolated from the distractions and problems of society, see Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), I, p.1048.

takes it over with her creations ('je la peuple'). The empirical, physical reality is substantially changed, and Sand is the one in control here, as highlighted through the list of verbs of which she is the subject: 'je jouis de la nature', 'j'en dispose' 'je règne sur elle', 'je la peuple'. This is a highly subjective means of engaging with the world, as Sand herself acknowledges in a further letter in this collection: 'Ne lis jamais mes lettres avec l'intention d'y apprendre la moindre chose certaine sur les objets extérieurs; je vois tout au travers des impressions personnelles' (*LDV*, p.271). The fact that she sees external reality through ('au travers de') her own impressions echoes the earlier reference: 'je la traverse d'un regard'. It is as if the external physical landscape is a first level through which she must pass before entering her own visions. What we have seen from these two brief examples from Sand's work is that she therefore oscillates between the rejection of physical eyesight on the one hand, and the use of physical observation to inspire inner visions on the other, but that both models ultimately privilege internal vision.

Indiana

In *Histoire de ma vie*, the 'œil intérieur' functions for Sand as an escape from material reality. This is also the case in her first novel, *Indiana*. I would like to argue that the difficult transition experienced by the young Aurore between the internal, imaginary world, and the painful external reality, is precisely what is manifested in this novel, a strange combination of realism and utopianism which has baffled critics since its publication.[21] On one hand, *Indiana* is clearly grounded in historical and political context, and reviewers in 1832 praised Sand for her 'talent d'observation'.[22] Sand herself also insisted that she had no ulterior motive in

[21] See, for example, Kate Bonin, who refers to the novel's 'puzzling conclusion', in 'The Edifying Spectacle of a Drowned Woman: Sympathy and Irony in *Indiana*', *George Sand Studies*, 28 (2009), 1-13 (p.6).
[22] Musset, article published in *Le Temps*, 14 June 1832, quoted by Éric Bordas, *Éric Bordas présente Indiana de George Sand* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p.172. For further details on the reception of *Indiana*, see Pierre Salomon's 'Introduction', in *Indiana* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), pp.i-lii (pp.xlviii-li), and Béatrice Didier's 'Notice', in *Indiana* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp.356-372 (pp.358-363).

writing *Indiana*, and that the novel was intended as a true representation of life as it is, not how it should be.[23] On the other hand, however, the focus on social and historical reality, and the clear links between characters, plot, and a recognisable contemporary setting, are suddenly replaced in the last chapter by the recounting of an unidentified individual's experiences on a deserted part of the *Île Bourbon* (now *Réunion*). As Janet Hiddleston argues, 'from the Balzacian realism of the first part of the novel [...], Sand has led us [...] to a conclusion whose Utopian idealism could not be further removed from the expectations set up by the beginning'.[24] The opening tone of the last chapter immediately highlights the fact that a shift has taken place. This conclusion is in epistolary form, and is thus written by an intradiegetic first-person narrator, separating it from the rest of the novel and its third person narrative. We are told that the narrator has not gone to the island for a practical purpose, but 'pour aller rêver' (*Indiana*, p.331), and this is indeed what he does. The volcanic landscape is described in terms which give an insight into his own thoughts, which he projects onto the scene, surmising, for example, that the chaotic natural landscape has been created by demonic spirits: 'Les esprits de l'air et du feu présidèrent sans doute à cette diabolique opération; eux seuls purent donner à leurs essais ce caractère terrible.' (*Indiana*, p.332). This narrator then meets Indiana and Ralph, who live in conjugal bliss and solitude. In *Indiana*, therefore, Sand suddenly switches between different literary practises. Why should this section of the novel, set on the *Île Bourbon*, be so different from the rest of *Indiana*?

This is in fact not the first time that the island figures in the novel, and I will demonstrate that this is in fact a privileged locus for the exploration of inner visions. In addition to being referred to as the place where Indiana and Ralph spent their childhood, the *Île Bourbon* also appears when Indiana and her husband move here as a result of the colonel's

[23] See Sand's 1832 preface, where the narrator is compared to a mirror, *Indiana*, p.37. See also her letters from this period, for example, *Corr*., II, pp.389-90.
[24] Janet Hiddleston, *George Sand, Indiana, Mauprat* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), p.35.

failing business. Following the tumultuous events in Paris when Indiana escapes from her husband only to be humiliatingly rejected by her lover, this is a quieter part of the novel. Significantly, this section is also less involved with external events, and focuses on Indiana's inner life, which we have only seen glimpses of up to this point.[25] As Françoise Massardier-Kenney points out, there is little description of the natural world in *Indiana* until the sections of the novel set in the *Île Bourbon*.[26] Massardier-Kenney considers this last section to demonstrate the unique relationship which women enjoy with 'l'extérieur authentique', a form of nature that is as opposed to 'le faux extérieur', controlled and manipulated by man through cultivation and artistic practices.[27] I agree that the *Île Bourbon* is key for the portrayal of the heroine; however, I would argue that, as we have seen in the *Lettres d'un voyageur*, at this stage in Sand's writing, natural landscape functions as a form of screen through which the individual passes to reach her own internalised images, in a development of her experience with 'l'écran vert' as recounted in *Histoire de ma vie*. I therefore consider the *Île Bourbon* to offer the heroine a privileged space through which to employ her inner eye. As Sand explains in her reference to this setting, this is not an attempt to represent faithfully a place she knew well, but rather, an opportunity to create 'un autre site de mon infini fantastique' (*OA*, II, p.167).

Indeed, it is on the *Île Bourbon* that Indiana experiences intense inner visions, as she projects her own thoughts and desires onto her surroundings. Demonstrating her continuing preoccupation with the events in France, she looks at the island's landscape but refashions it so that what she sees are the landscapes of her mind:

[25] The only time that we have been privy to Indiana's visions is during her dreamlike state by the Seine after being rejected by Raymon. It is highlighted here, however, that Indiana is not conscious of her own thoughts and movements, as she is 'absorbée dans une rêverie stupide, dans une méditation sans idées' (*Indiana*, p.226-227).
[26] Françoise Massardier-Kenney, '*Indiana*: Lieux et personnages féminins', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* (1990), 65-71 (p.66).
[27] Ibid.

> Elle allait […] *regarder* le soleil couchant qui embrasait la vapeur rouge de l'atmosphère, […]. Rarement elle descendait dans les gorges de la rivière Saint-Gilles, parce que *la vue de la mer*, tout en lui faisant mal, l'avait fascinée de son mirage magnétique. Il lui semblait qu'au delà de ces vagues et de ces brumes lointaines *la magique apparition* d'une autre terre allait *se révéler à ses regards*. […] tantôt *elle vit* une lame blanche s'élever sur les flots et décrire une ligne gigantesque qu'elle prit pour la façade du Louvre. […] d'autres fois c'étaient des flocons de nuées roses qui, dans leurs formes changeantes, présentaient tous les caprices d'architecture d'une ville immense. (*Indiana*, pp.253-254, original emphasis underlined, added emphasis italicised).

Although Indiana is engaged in the act of looking at a real, external landscape here, what she sees is not this reality, but rather, her internal visions: 'elle se prenait à palpiter de joie *à la vue de* ce Paris imaginaire' (*Indiana*, p.254, emphasis added). Gradually, the external reality disappears completely, and she enters fully into her internal world, in an echo of her childhood experiences: '*voyant fuir sous ses yeux* les gorges qui la séparaient de l'Océan, il lui semblait être lancée dans cet espace par un mouvement rapide, et cheminer dans l'air vers la ville prestigieuse de son imagination.' (*Indiana*, p.254, added emphasis). Indiana's visions enable her to escape from her unhappy existence with her husband: 'c'étaient […] là ses heures de plaisir et les seuls moments de bien-être vers lesquels se dirigeaient les espérances de sa journée.' (*Indiana*, p.254). The spatial break from France and the separation from contemporary society and external concerns leads to a distancing from the realism of previous chapters in addition to representing a break from the observation of the outside world, as Indiana escapes into the world of her imagination.[28]

In this sense, I would argue that Indiana prefigures Lélia, the ultimate tormented and isolated soul in Sand's œuvre.[29] *Lélia* is traditionally grouped with Sand's 'metaphysical fictions', distinct from her earlier personal works such as *Indiana* or *Valentine*. Isabelle Naginski, for example, notes with regards to *Lélia*: 'It is as if the author of *Indiana* had

[28] My references to 'the external' and 'the outside world' are to social and cultural concerns.
[29] I only consider the 1833 version of *Lélia*. The major changes in Sand's attitude towards reality, to be discussed in the next chapter, lead her to fundamentally change this work for the 1839 edition.

undergone a metamorphosis'.[30] Sand herself also refers to *Lélia* as one of her 'mystical' works in her discussions with Buloz in 1839.[31] It is clearly true that *Lélia* represents an exception in Sand's œuvre, and is indeed set apart from most nineteenth-century novels.[32] Gone are the believable characters, the spatial and historical grounding, the sequential structures and narratorial guidance which featured in her previous novels. I would maintain, however, that it is possible to identify clear links between Indiana and Lélia, and these links are to do with their wish to disengage themselves from the external world and to take refuge in their internal visions.[33] Indiana and Lélia have little involvement with society and the outside world, and the supremacy of the inner life over external and social roles, highlighted in *Indiana* and *Valentine*, is taken to the extreme in *Lélia* where 'la vie intérieure' (*Lélia*, p.138) takes centre stage. Indiana's solitary distress drew critics' attention when the novel was first published in 1832. An anonymous reviewer in *Le Figaro* notes, for example: '*Indiana*, [...] c'est l'histoire du profond isolement.'[34] During her time on the island, Indiana is constantly detached from others, living 'presque toujours seule' (*Indiana*, p.252), and regularly taking '[d]es promenades solitaires' (*Indiana*, p.254). Hippolyte Fortoul noted in his review of *Lélia* in 1833 that Sand's first novel had also been dominated by 'un type de femme solitaire et retranchée', and he asserts that 'cela annonçait Lélia.'[35] Lélia also repeatedly distances herself from society, and even when in others' company, is always alone: 'la majesté pleine de tristesse qui entourait Lélia comme d'une auréole l'isolait presque toujours au milieu du monde.' (*Lélia*, p.47).

[30] Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life* (New Brunswick, N.J; London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.106.
[31] See *Corr*., IV, pp.606-608, 612-614 and 637-638.
[32] *Lélia* is referred to in the *Journal général de la littérature française* as a work that is 'en dehors de tout ce qui a été publié jusqu'ici', quoted by Pierre Reboul, 'Accueil de *Lélia* en 1833', in *Lélia* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), pp.585-596 (p.586).
[33] See also Sand's preface, 'Romans et nouvelles', published in the *Revue des deux mondes*, April 1834. Reprinted in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.39-45. Here, Sand refers to *Lélia* as a continuation of her project in her first two novels.
[34] *Le Figaro*, 31 May, 1832, quoted by Salomon, 'Introduction', *Indiana*, p.xlvii.
[35] Hippolyte Fortoul, 'De l'art actuel', *Revue encyclopédique*, LIX (July-September 1833), 107-153 (p.143).

Drawing on Obermann and René, heroes who exemplify the Romantic solitary figure, Sand presents Lélia leaving the world behind to go and live in the wilderness, an attitude reflected in the titles of the two central chapters which describe this period: 'Dans le désert' and 'Solitude'. The island sections in *Indiana* are also full of references to escape and isolation. Towards the end of the novel, Ralph suggests that he and Indiana return to the island by stating 'Retournons […] au désert', as they reject 'cette contrée pullulante d'hommes et de vices' (*Indiana*, p.307). This motif of flight also figures earlier when Indiana writes to Raymon from the *Île Bourbon*: 'Si j'écoutais la voix que Dieu a mise au fond de mon cœur, […] je fuirais au désert' (*Indiana*, p.250). The colonel's attack on Indiana further intensifies her desire for escape: 'elle ne rêva plus que de fuite, de solitude' (*Indiana*, p.273). This need for escape is addressed by her inner visions: 'elle oubliait ses maux présents, elle se faisait un monde à part qui la consolait de celui où elle était forcée de vivre' (*Indiana*, pp.273-4). In this respect, I would agree with James Vest's assertion that 'reverie and fantasy' in *Indiana* are a means of withstanding 'society's persistent assaults'.[36]

I would go further and argue that the way in which Sand depicts Indiana's rejection of the outside world is by establishing a contrast between different visual models. The following passage describes Indiana's activity on the *Île Bourbon*:

> Bourbon n'est, à vrai dire, qu'un cône immense […]. De presque tous les points de cette masse imposante, *l'œil découvre* au loin […] l'horizon uni que la mer embrasse de sa ceinture bleue. Des fenêtres de sa chambre, Indiana *apercevait*, entre deux pointes de roches, […] les voiles blanches qui croisaient sur l'océan Indien. Durant les heures silencieuses de la journée, *ce spectacle attirait ses regards* et donnait à sa mélancolie une teinte de désespoir uniforme et fixe. Cette *vue* splendide, loin de jeter sa poétique influence dans ses rêveries, les rendait amères et sombres; alors elle *baissait le store* de pagne de raphia qui garnissait sa croisée, et *fuyait* le jour même, pour répandre dans le secret de son cœur des larmes âcres et brûlantes. (*Indiana*, p.253, added emphasis).

[36] James M. Vest, 'Dreams and the Romance tradition in George Sand's *Indiana*', *French Forum*, 3 (1978), 35-47 (p.36).

This excerpt follows a similar pattern to the passage when Indiana watches the sunset. Attention is drawn to the physical act of looking through the visual vocabulary, and through the use of the window to frame the view and to highlight the viewer's perspective. This activity is suddenly rejected, however, through the lowering of the blind, evoking a closing eye, and the use of the verb 'fuir', highlighting a withdrawal from this observation of the external world.

Indiana, however, as we have seen, presents a rather awkward combination of the observation of external reality and the retreat into the world of the internal eye, an awkwardness that also figures on an aesthetic level in the novel's conclusion. Despite the important links which have been teased out by critics between the scenes in contemporary France and the world of the *Île Bourbon*,[37] the lack of cohesiveness between these parts of the novel led to criticism when it was first published, and continues to be discussed.[38] As Béatrice Didier states, 'on peut dire sans exagération que la réalité économique et sociale de la Réunion est complètement gommée […] ce qui n'est pas sans contribuer au sentiment d'irréalité et d'invraisemblance qui plane sur toute la partie du roman située à la Réunion.'[39] Some critics regard this in a negative light, considering the ending as evidence of Sand's inability to 'contain' her imagination. Pierre Salomon, for example, notes: 'le réel finit par se pénétrer d'éléments imaginaires.'[40] I would argue, however, that the non-realist aspect of the ending is deliberate, as Sand valorises her inner eye and is in fact searching in *Indiana* for a means of combining this imaginative way of seeing with her powers of observation. In this

[37] See Janet Hiddleston for the symbolism of the scenes in France and the realism of Bourbon, for example, *Indiana, Mauprat*, pp.35-41. See also James M. Vest, who draws out the symbolism of water throughout the novel, in 'Fluid Nomenclature, Imagery and Themes in George Sand's *Indiana*', *South Atlantic Review*, 46, volume 2, (1981), 43-54.
[38] See Sainte-Beuve's review, for example, in *Le National*, 5 October 1832, which declares that, in the second half of *Indiana*, 'la fantaisie s'efforce de continuer la réalité, l'imagination s'est chargée de couronner l'aventure'. Quoted by Salomon, p.xlviii.
[39] Didier, 'Préface', in *Indiana*, pp.7-32 (p.24).
[40] Salomon, p.xvi. See also Naomi Schor, who expresses dismay at critics' perception of idealism as something that needs to be curbed, citing, for example, Marielle Caors' introduction to Sand's *Le Meunier d'Angibault*: 'George Sand is capable of restraining her idealism', quoted by Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.109.

way, I align myself with Nigel Harkness, who recognises the conclusion's difference from the rest of the novel, but suggests that Sand's move away from realism should be read as intentional and positive.[41] I agree with Harkness's claim, expressed here and in his writings on *Lélia,* that the rejection of realism in *Indiana* and *Lélia* is intentional.[42] I argue, however, that Sand has not yet found a satisfying means of expressing her resistance to the realist code. Due to the tension Sand experiences in mediating between her different visual capacities, her first novel constitutes a search for balance between different literary forms.

Lélia

In contrast with *Indiana,* which shifts between the internal world and external reality, *Lélia* gives free reign to the inner life, as Sand now regards a focus on the internal and the abstract as the only means of addressing contemporary concerns, and considers the contemplation of external reality to be irrelevant. This move towards an exclusive emphasis on the internal is suggested in Sand's article on Senancour's *Obermann* in 1833. Here, she comments on the contemporary preoccupation with external action and events, claiming that, in contrast with these trends, the most important and most valuable writing is that which reveals the intimate sufferings of the human soul, 'dégagées de l'éclat et de la variété des événements extérieurs.'[43] Sand's article is centred on the dialectic between the 'facultés intérieures' and the external world. According to Sand, the depiction of the latter, 'la peinture de traits visibles', or 'la littérature *réelle*', is no longer appropriate for the concerns of the age. Instead of this model, she claims that 'une autre littérature se prépare et s'avance à grands pas, idéale,

[41] See Nigel Harkness, 'Writing under the sign of difference: the conclusion of *Indiana*', *Forum for Modern Languages Studies*, 33, (1997), 115-128.
[42] See, for example, Nigel Harkness, 'Resisting Realist Petrification in George Sand's *Lélia* and Balzac's *Sarrasine*', *French Studies*, LIX, no.2 (April 2005), 159-172
[43] Sand, 'Obermann', in *Questions d'art et de literature*, ed. by D. J. Colwell (Egham: Runnymede Books, 1992), pp.25-40 (p.29). Sand published this in the *Revue des Deux mondes* on 15 May 1833, pp.677-690.

intérieure'.[44] Isabelle Naginski considers this 'autre littérature' to be exemplified in *Lélia*, which she terms a 'novel of the invisible', a novel which reacts against the 'visible' poetics of realism, with its plot-driven narratives, recognisable settings and credible characters.[45] Given that Sand's article was published very closely to *Lélia*, and the fact that she was reading *Obermann* at this time, we can indeed consider her comments as an allusion to the kind of writing she develops in *Lélia*.[46] This is suggested when we read Sand's novel, which shows little regard for external events, rejecting political or historical context in favour of a narrative which focuses exclusively on the abstract and the conceptual. This is also noted in contemporary reviews: 'La vie extérieure y tient peu de place.'[47] My purpose here, then, is not to take issue with Isabelle Naginski's analysis, but rather, to focus more specifically on vision, which enables us to draw new links between *Indiana* and *Lélia*.

Naginski states: 'We may marvel at Sand's precipitous transformation from a "writer of images" (as apparent in *Histoire du rêveur*, *Indiana* and *Valentine*) to a "writer of ideas", as manifest in *Lélia*.'[48] Indeed, Sand's description of the new, internal literature that she has in mind suggests a model which rejects vision on every level, particularly since she states that this model 's'avance à grand pas, [...] *parlant peu aux yeux*, mais à l'âme constamment' (added emphasis).[49] However, Sand further explains that this new form of writing will have great difficulty in introducing into traditional narratives 'les mystérieuses tragédies *que la pensée aperçoit et que l'œil ne voit point*' (added emphasis).[50] The material for this new form of writing is one which is perceived, but not by the physical eye; rather, it is seen by the mind: 'que la pensée aperçoit'. What we have here, therefore, is not a rejection of vision, but

[44] Sand, 'Obermann', pp.37, 39.
[45] Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, chapter 5.
[46] It is likely that Sand first read *Obermann* in 1825-1826, and she then reread it in 1831 and 1832. See Béatrice Didier, 'George Sand et Senancour', *Revue des sciences humaines* (Oct-Dec 1959), 423-440.
[47] Commentary by the editorial team of the *Revue des deux mondes* to accompany a fragment of the novel published in the journal. 15 May, 1833. Quoted by Pierre Reboul, 'Introduction', in *Lélia*, pp.iii-lxvii (p.xxxix).
[48] Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.112.
[49] Sand, 'Obermann', p.39.
[50] Ibid.

two conflicting forms, the conceptual and the physical, and it is the former which is exemplified in *Lélia*. Interestingly, Sand refers to the meeting of these types of vision in literature as a clash, which suggests that she might be aware of the conflicting models at work in *Indiana*.[51] I will argue that Lélia's withdrawal from society and external reality can be regarded as a continuation of the visions which Indiana experiences on the *Île Bourbon*.

The main interest of Sand's most abstract novel lies in its ideas, as Pierre Reboul notes: 'une étude sur *Lélia* pourrait être intitulée: *La Pensée de George Sand en 1833*.'[52] This novel reflects Sand's intellectual state at this time; more specifically, her existential angst and her sense of hopelessness and despair. In August 1832, whilst writing the work, she notes in a letter: 'Je suis malade et malheureuse […]. Dans ce moment je voudrais fermer l'accès de ma chambre au jour et à l'air.' (*Corr*., II, p.144). This statement is typical of this stage in Sand's intellectual formation for two reasons. Firstly, this pathological language pervades her articles and letters during this time, as an expression of the contemporary *mal du siècle*.[53] Secondly, a further important aspect of her state of mind whilst writing *Lélia*, an aspect which has received less attention from critics, is the desire to break contact with the external world. Sand recounts in *Histoire de ma vie*, for example: 'j'éloignais de moi, à dessein, la préoccupation du public, éprouvant une sorte de soulagement triste à céder à l'imprévu de ma rêverie, et m'isolant même de la réalité du monde actuel' (*OA*, II, p.196). A rejection of the external and the actual in favour of the internal and the possible is thus a central facet of her creative life at this point.

[51] 'Elle [cette littérature] […] aura de nombreuses *batailles* à livrer pour introduire, dans les récits de la vie familière, dans l'expression scénique des passions éternelles les mystérieuses tragédies que la pensée aperçoit et que l'œil ne voit point', Sand, 'Obermann', p.39, added emphasis.
[52] Sand, 'Introduction', in *Lélia*, iii-lxviii p.iii.
[53] This has been attested by several critics. See, for example, Naginski, *George Sand mythographe* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007), p.41, and Simone Vierne, 'De la difficulté d'être ... *Lélia*', in *Difficulté d'être et mal du siècle dans les correspondances et journaux intimes de la première moitié du XIX^e^ siècle* (Clermont-Ferrand: Centre de recherches révolutionnaires et romantiques de l'Université Blaise Pascal, 1998), pp.159-170.

A particular aspect of Sand's rejection of reality is the gulf perceived between this world and the aspirations towards the infinite, frequently expressed in *Lélia*, for example: 'O vie, ô tourment! tout aspirer et ne rien saisir, tout comprendre et ne rien posséder!' (*Lélia*, p.100). This develops an idea that has been suggested in *Indiana*, a novel which is also about 'la volonté aux prises avec la nécessité' (1832 preface, p.40), and whose heroine is driven by 'une ardente *aspiration* vers un point qui n'était ni le souvenir, ni l'attente, ni l'espoir, ni le regret, mais *le désir dans toute son intensité dévorante*' (*Indiana*, p.254, added emphasis). The disjunction between reality and the ideal is a Romantic commonplace, with which Sand would have been familiar from her readings of Senancour and Chateaubriand, for example. This idea is also expressed in Musset's *Namouna*, published shortly before *Lélia*. Sand quotes part of this poem as an epigraph to one of her chapters:

> Pourquoi promenez-vous ces spectres de lumière
> Devant le rideau noir de nos nuits sans sommeil,
> Puisqu'il faut qu'ici-bas tout songe ait son réveil,
> Et puisque le désir se sent cloué sur terre,
> Comme un aigle blessé qui meurt dans la poussière,
> L'aile ouverte et les yeux fixés sur le soleil? (*Lélia*, p.162)

Reality is portrayed here as constrictive and earthbound, highlighted through the materiality of the rhyming 'terre' and 'poussière'. Musset uses the image of a bird, symbol of freedom, but inverts this image as the bird is injured, and thus constrained ('cloué' being linked with 'blessé'). The gulf between the yearning and the reality is suggested by the distance between the earth ('ici-bas'), and 'le soleil', not reached until the end of the stanza. The aspiration towards the infinite remains strong, however, represented by the 'aile ouverte' and the upwards direction of the gaze. This idea echoes in Sand's text, as Lélia cries: 'pourquoi Dieu s'est-il plu à mettre une telle disproportion entre les illusions de l'homme et la réalité? Pourquoi faut-il souffrir toujours d'un désir de bien-être qui se révèle sous la forme du beau et qui plane dans tous nos rêves, sans se poser jamais à terre?' (*Lélia*, p.109). What is

interesting here is the contrast created between the material, the earthly on one hand, and the ideal on the other, which is abstract and associated with freedom through the soaring image.

This contrast also applies to the forms of vision required to access these different levels of experience. The disparity between the ideal, experienced through the imagination, and the sensory experience of physical reality, is a form of mind-body split. It is suggested that Lélia is in fact incapable of physical vision: 'Il me semble que […] de magiques apparitions m'ont gâté la nature réelle avant qu'à mes yeux se fût révélé le sens de la vue.' (*Lélia*, p.165). Her inner vision, however, is presented as superior to physical eyesight:

> Que d'univers j'ai parcourus dans ces voyages de l'âme! […] *J'ai jeté mon rapide regard* sur les savanes parfumées où la lune s'élève si belle et si blanche. […] *J'ai*, dans l'espace d'une heure, *vu* le soleil se lever aux rivages de la Grèce et se coucher derrière les montagnes bleues du Nouveau Monde. *J'ai vu* sous mes pieds les peuples et les empires. *J'ai contemplé* de près la face rouge des astres errants dans les solitudes de l'air et dans les plaines du ciel. […] à quoi m'a servi de voyager? *Ai-je jamais rien vu* qui ressemblât à mes fantaisies? Oh! que la nature m'a semblé pauvre, le ciel terne et la mer étroite, au prix des terres, des cieux et des mers que j'ai franchis dans mon vol immatériel! (*Lélia*, pp.129-130, added emphasis).

The two different forms of vision are in opposition to each other here, with the physical vision grasping the reality which is wretched, dull and narrow, in comparison with the visions of the inner eye, associated with movement and flight ('ces voyages', 'mon vol'). The experience of the imaginary voyage is primarily ocular in nature, as is later highlighted: 'traînée à la suite d'une ombre à travers les écueils, les déserts, les enchantements et les abîmes de la vie, *j'ai tout vu*' (*Lélia*, p.130, added emphasis). Far from rejecting vision, therefore, this novel explores a different kind of visuality, an internal one.

In contrast with the physical observation of the external world, Lélia's internal vision is presented as an alternative and superior faculty: 'La poésie m'avait créé d'autres facultés, immenses, magnifiques et que rien sur la terre ne devait assouvir.' (*Lélia*, p.167). These 'facultés supérieures' (*Lélia*, p.203) might seem to suggest visionary capabilities such as

those reached by Balzac's 'voyant', Louis Lambert. Lélia's visions, however, are unhealthy and are not part of a programme for change. Sand states in 1834: 'l'isolement silencieux et désert de la pensée repliée sur elle-même peut donner la sérénité, mais non pas le bonheur.'[54] Sand demonstrates her awareness here that the isolation from reality is in fact not conducive to happiness or to the discovery of truth. Lélia refers to her mind as a 'cerveau malade' (*Lélia*, p.203) and her sister warns her of 'le travail incessant et rongeur de votre imagination' (*Lélia*, p.208). Indiana's visions are also unproductive: 'Elle vécut ainsi des semaines et des mois sous le ciel des tropiques, n'aimant, ne connaissant, ne caressant qu'une ombre, ne creusant qu'une chimère.' (*Indiana*, p.254). The repetition of 'ne que' draws attention to the sterility of this action.

Both Indiana and Lélia sense a gulf between their hopes and dreams on the one hand, and their surroundings, on the other, as we see from Indiana's assertion: 'voilà mes rêves; ils sont tous d'une *autre* vie, d'un *autre* monde' (*Indiana*, p.250, added emphasis). Lélia notes that the physical world is 'si froid, si pauvre, si déplorable au prix des doux rêves qu'elle [la poésie] enfante.' (*Lélia*, p.167). Her sense of powerlessness is highlighted in her reversal of Bacon's statement: '*Savoir*, ce n'est pas *pouvoir*',[55] which she then links with vision: 'voir, ce n'est pas vivre' (*Lélia*, p.120, original emphasis). This form of internal vision is not a viable way of life. These women are capable of seeing beyond current, external reality, but are incapable of acting. Their internal vision is therefore a paralysing force at this stage.

Although, as we have seen, the disjunction between desire and reality is a commonplace in Romantic writing, Sand's originality is to show the yearning for the absolute, 'cette soif de l'*irréalisabl*e' (original emphasis), from a feminine perspective.[56] Sand creates heroines who are dreaming subjects, in contrast with many other writers at this

[54] Sand, 'A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*, 1834', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.39-45 (p.43).
[55] See also Sand's similar statement in 'A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*', where knowledge is rejected, p.45.
[56] 'Combien je me suis laissée dévorer par cette soif de l'*irréalisabl*e que n'ont pas encore daigné éteindre les saintes rosées du Ciel!', Sand, 'À F. Rollinat', 15 June 1833, in *Œuvres Autobiographiques*, ed. by Georges Lubin, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-71), II, pp.614-616 (p.616, original emphasis).

time who portray them as examined objects.[57] Lélia is on one level a universal figure, an emblem of the age's doubt, despair and apathy.[58] Her questioning is to do with the age as a whole: 'où en-sommes nous? Où en est le siècle?' (*Lélia*, p.67), 'l'inertie, Sténio! c'est le mal de nos cœurs, c'est le grand fléau de cet âge du monde' (*Lélia*, p.103). On the other hand, however, she embodies the specificity of the female experience. Her status as a woman means that she is doubly cursed, since, in addition to her keen awareness of society's moral disorder, she is helpless to change this due to the lack of intellectual agency granted to women. Lélia's aversion to physical reality, then, in particular the role ascribed to women in this system, is all the more intense.

Whereas *Lélia* is regarded by many readers as a predominantly pessimistic and nihilistic work, many have read the ending of *Indiana* as a positive outcome. Harkness, for example, regards the conclusion as a constructive and forceful statement which 'works to subvert the masculine nature and discourse of the novel by its difference, its resistance to unity, its fluidity, its rejection of hierarchies, its open nature, and its disruption of the telos of the masculine narrative.'[59] I would argue, however, that both *Lélia* and *Indiana* ultimately present failed models of engaging with the world. In an acknowledgement of the fact that the introspective model and the retreat from external reality put forward in these novels does not lead to solutions but, rather, to an impasse, Sand states, with reference to her own children: 'Que leur répondrai-je, s'ils viennent me dire: – Oui, la vie est insupportable dans un monde ainsi fait; mourons ensemble! Montrez-nous le chemin de Bernica, ou le lac de Sténio, ou les

[57] See, for example, the study, *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre*, ed. by Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), which features several articles in which 'the naked female body [...] figure[s] [...] frequently as object of display or "spectacle" ', Christopher Prendergast, 'Introduction', pp.1-10 (p.6). As Prendergast notes: 'realism is best understood as an economy of positions and drives based on the relation of actual or imaginary looking, an economy where there is, typically, or stereotypically, a male looker [...] and one of the privileged objects of vision is the body of a woman', in 'Introduction', p.5.

[58] That Sand is to be regarded as an 'enfant du siècle' has been noted by many critics, and, as Naginski observes, Sand uses the term in *Lélia* before Musset's famous novel. *George Sand mythographe*, p.47.

[59] Harkness, 'Writing under the sign of difference', p.126.

glaciers de Jacques!' (*LDV*, p.133).[60] That Sand links the endings of these novels with death shows her awareness of the fact that her early heroes fail to reach a satisfying relationship with the external world. As Richard B. Grant states: '[Jacques'] very act of fleeing society's evil leads, ironically, to the destruction of his marriage [...] and he finally commits suicide by falling to his death in the crevasse of an Alpine glacier'.[61] These characters' introspection and lack of engagement with external reality leads to their ruin. I therefore diverge from James Vest, who posits that dreaming is always a positive activity in *Indiana*.[62] Vest notes that 'the dreams in *Indiana* [...] relate the dreamer to basic forces of the universe, thus leading to peace, harmony and reintegration'.[63] The ending of the novel, however, highlights Ralph and Indiana's complete isolation (from France and from the other inhabitants on the island), rather than integration and harmony.[64] Indiana, in particular, is completely cut off from society: 'sa retraite avait été si absolue, que son existence était encore une chose problématique pour beaucoup d'habitants.' (*Indiana*, p.334). The narrator notes of the heroine that 'ses manières ont gardé quelque chose de lent et de triste', and her eyes seem to betray 'une vie de souffrances' (*Indiana*, p.337). Referring to Indiana's dreams of an equal world free of hierarchies, slavery and injustice, Harkness also considers the conclusion to be 'the fulfilment of this imaginary project which Indiana had nurtured in her own suffering oppression'.[65] I would argue, however, that Indiana's dreams are hardly realised. Only a very

[60] Indiana and Ralph almost commit suicide in the valley of Bernica, Sténio drowns himself in a lake in *Lélia*, and the hero of *Jacques* (1834) also takes his own life by throwing himself into a glacier.
[61] Richard B. Grant, 'George Sand's *Lélia* and the Tragedy of Dualism', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 19, no.4 (Summer 1991), 499-516 (p.514). See also Anna Szabó: 'L'échec [de Jacques] suggère [...] que ceux qui refusent de partager les misères de la condition humaine et ne consentent à "plier devant aucune des réalités de la vie" sont condamnés à mourir ou à vivre dans les froides régions éthérées de la solitude.' *Le Personnage sandien: constantes et variations* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudomanyegyetem, 1991), p.117.
[62] See Vest, 'Dreams and the Romance tradition in George Sand's *Indiana*', p.43.
[63] Ibid., p.46.
[64] See, for example, the reference to the pair as 'les deux promeneurs solitaires' in the preceding chapter (*Indiana*, p.313), and the repeated references to their separation from the rest of society in the last chapter (*Indiana*, pp.334, 335).
[65] Harkness, 'Writing under the sign of difference', p.122.

brief mention is made of their involvement with the emancipation of slaves[66], and Ralph's outcry makes it clear that their efforts are hardly sufficient to address the problem: 'Que ne sommes-nous assez riches pour délivrer tous ceux qui vivent dans l'esclavage!' (*Indiana*, p.342). Moreover, Indiana herself is entirely submissive, following Ralph in all things: 'elle le suivait en silence comme un bon génie chargé de l'enlever à la terre et de la délivrer de ses tourments.' (*Indiana*, p.312).[67] Her desire to be spirited away from the earth has led to her domination rather than her liberation. Indiana's silence in the last part of the novel, and the fact that we are no longer privy to her thoughts and visions, but rather, to Ralph's recounting of his own 'vie intérieure' and the thoughts and impressions of a male narrator, suggest a form of death. Indiana and Lélia's 'quest for a new world view' therefore fails.[68]

The late 1830s: 'comment on recouvre l'espoir et la force.'[69]

Despite the apparent unproductive or indeed harmful nature of the internal visual model, it is suggested that the unhealthy recourse to the inner eye can in fact develop into a more constructive faculty. This alternative, internal means of engaging with reality is valorised by Sand, as we see from her reference to realist writers 'qui s'arrangent de la réalité sans la blâmer', in contrast with other writers who are able to 's'élancer au-delà du présent'.[70] We recall that Indiana is capable of envisioning a better world. She states, for example: 'Un jour viendra où tout sera changé dans ma vie, où je ferai du bien aux autres' (*Indiana*, p.89).

[66] Ralph explains: 'La majeure portion de nos revenus est consacrée à racheter de pauvres noirs infirmes. C'est la principale cause du mal que les colons disent de nous. […] Nos serviteurs sont nos amis; ils partagent nos joies, nous soignons leurs maux.' (*Indiana*, p.342).
[67] Ralph's feelings for Indiana are founded on a desire for possession and control, as he explains what he would have done had he been loved by Indiana: 'je vous aurais arrachée à la société pour vous posséder à moi seul, […]. J'eusse souffert de voir un autre homme vous donner une parcelle de bien-être, un instant de satisfaction, c'eût été un vol que l'on m'eût fait; car votre bonheur eût été ma tâche, ma propriété, mon existence, mon honneur!' (*Indiana*, p.327).
[68] Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.137
[69] Sand, *LDV*, p.47.
[70] Sand, 'A propos de *Lélia* et de *Valentine*', p.45.

Despite the fact that Lélia's visions are primarily apocalyptic[71], her capabilities in going beyond the present are highlighted: 'En vain, j'essayais [...] de vivre dans le présent. Je ne sais quel vague fantôme d'avenir flottait dans tous mes rêves' (*Lélia*, p.193). At present, as we have seen, Sand's heroines are incapable of enacting change. However, the prefaces to the *Lettres d'un voyageur* demonstrate a turning point in Sand's thinking. The preface included in all book editions of the *Lettres d'un voyageur* was written in 1842, but Sand also wrote a short draft in 1836, and this first version suggests the change that is to come. The preface ends on a hopeful note:

> Ceux qui errent encore dans l'orage et dans la nuit […] verront que j'ai été aussi perdue, aussi épouvantée, aussi fatiguée qu'ils le sont, et le cri d'une voix amie qui les appelle du haut de la première colline, en commençant à gravir la montagne immense, leur donnera, je l'espère, un peu de confiance et de soulagement.[72]

Sand now identifies a separation between 'ceux qui errent' and herself, highlighted through the difference in tense: '*j'ai été* aussi perdue, [...] qu'*ils le sont*'. But she is not yet quite ready to show others the way and become 'l'ange du Seigneur, [...] la fée de la France' (*OA*, I, p.784). We sense that she is on the cusp of great change: '*commençant* à gravir la montagne *immense*'. At this point, therefore, in the middle of 1836, the possibility of a more optimistic and constructive outcome is palpable in Sand's writing, but has not yet been fully developed.

The second preface firmly places her introspective phase in the past: '*je connaissais* bien […] les plaies qui rongent les hommes de mon temps, et le besoin qu'ils ont tous de se connaître, de s'étudier, de sonder leurs consciences, de s'éclairer sur eux-mêmes' (*LDV*, p.39, added emphasis). This emphasis on the self, conveyed through the reflexive verbs and the vivid image of probing one's consciousness, is now identified with 'ils', and is set apart from

[71] See, for example, Lélia's remark to Sténio: 'vous grandissez, […] sans prévoir la vie qui s'avance et qui va vous engloutir sous le poids de ses erreurs, […]. Attendez, attendez quelques années, et vous direz comme nous: "Tout s'en va!" ' (*Lélia*, p.119).

[72] First preface for *Lettres d'un voyageur* published in RDM 1 June 1836. *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.46-47 (p.47).

Sand. In contrast with the distressed questioning of the *Lettres d'un voyageur* themselves,[73] the 1842 preface makes confident statements: 'Un peu plus de connaissance nous sauvera. Examinons donc encore, apprenons toujours, arrivons à la connaissance.' (*LDV*, p.40). The doubt and despair have given way to faith in the power of knowledge and truth, in contrast with Lélia's assertion ('savoir, ce n'est pas pouvoir'). The interrogative is now replaced by a series of increasingly affirmative imperatives: 'examinons', 'apprenons', 'arrivons'. Further, the future tense replaces the past: 'Quand nous avons nié la vérité (moi tout le premier), nous n'avons fait que proclamer notre aveuglement, et les générations qui nous survivront tireront de notre âge de cécité d'utiles enseignements.' (*LDV*, p.40). Her previous state is now represented in negative ocular metaphors ('aveuglement', 'âge de cécité'), as she realises that this is not the means of reaching insight. She becomes aware of the fact that she needs to go beyond the introspection of her first narratives. This is made clear, for example, in another important preface in 1842, the second preface to *Indiana*: 'aujourd'hui qu'après avoir marché dans la vie j'ai vu l'horizon s'élargir autour de moi'. (*Indiana*, p.42). This 'élargissement' is crucial for the development of her vision.

A further statement from the 1842 preface to the *Lettres d'un voyageur* indicates how the evasive and protective visual model will give way to a more powerful visionary drive. Sand refers here to Napoleon's campaign in Russia:

[73] See, for example, letter IV, composed in September 1834: 'Qui m'écoutera, qui me croira? Qui vivra de ma pensée? Qui, à ma parole, se lèvera pour marcher dans la voie droite et superbe où je voudrais voir aller le monde?' (*LDV*, p.132).

> Au retour de la campagne de Russie, on voyait courir sur les neiges des spectres effarés qui s'efforçaient, en gémissant et en blasphémant, de *retrouver le chemin* de la patrie. D'autres, qui semblaient calmes et résignés, se couchaient sur la glace et restaient là engourdies par la mort. Malheur aux résignés d'aujourd'hui! Malheur à ceux qui acceptent l'injustice, l'erreur, l'ignorance, le sophisme et le doute avec un visage serein! Ceux-là mourront, ceux-là sont morts déjà, ensevelis dans la glace et dans la neige. Mais ceux qui errent avec des pieds sanglants et qui appellent avec des plaintes amères, *retrouveront le chemin* de la terre promise, et *ils verront luire le soleil*. (*LDV*, p.40, added emphasis).

I would argue that this description maps onto what I have termed Sand's Napoleonic visions as described in *Histoire de ma vie*, where she sees herself as a guardian angel and guide. The vision described here in the *Lettres d'un voyageur* culminates in affirmative verbs in the future tense, and finding one's way ('retrouver le chemin') is now clearly linked with being able to see ('ils verront luire le soleil'). Sand thus demonstrates a more constructive and prophetic form of vision here, projecting outwards into the future rather than inwards.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I demonstrated that the visual models to be examined in my later chapters are all present in Sand from an early age. The first of these is physical eyesight and appreciation of the physical world, which is an ability that she regards as a faculty that needs to be opened or unlocked in others. Secondly, she demonstrates a strong tendency to form images in the mind, both in terms of inner visions which are inspired by observation of the external world, and in the sense of rejecting the physical and external for the internal. The final visual model is prophetic vision, which shows Sand's aspiration towards change and her desire to transcend the present. Sand initially experiences tension between these different faculties and this is in evidence in *Indiana*. I have argued that it is the difficulty Sand experiences in traversing the gulf between internal and external reality which explains the uneasy co-existence of literary codes in this novel. The inner eye operates for Sand as a

defence mechanism for coping with external reality, and I have shown that Sand formulates the rejection of the external through contrasting visual models. In this sense, I have argued that the retreat from external concerns in *Indiana* prefigures *Lélia*, as I uncovered a network of images and concepts which interlink these two novels: solitude, isolation, escape from society, and a rejection of the formal conventions of realism (plausibility and referentiality). Whereas *Indiana* shifts between literary modes, however, *Lélia* focuses on the inner life and refuses the structures of realism completely. This distancing from realism is linked with the withdrawal from the external world which can be perceived with the physical eye, and a move towards a conceptual form of vision. Whilst the inner vision is capable of glimpsing the ideal, physical eyesight is locked into the physical, material reality. The inner eye is thus posited as a potentially superior faculty. However, despite the valorising of the internal world in these novels, Indiana and Lélia's *mal du siècle* prevents them from drawing links between their imaginary worlds and their surroundings, and they are both powerless to effect any change, particularly due to their status as women. Sand's own statements also demonstrate an awareness of the fact that an exclusive focus on the abstract is unproductive. The possibility that this inner eye will develop into a more constructive faculty, however, by engaging with contemporary issues and projecting the vision of a better world into the future, is suggested in *Indiana* and *Lélia*, and is more fully elaborated in her prefaces. It is this shift towards a visionary model, both for her heroines and on the level of her writing, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

George Sand and the visionary

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined a conceptual, internal form of vision in Sand's early novels. I argued that this model of engaging with the world is unproductive in terms of reaching insight into reality due to its exclusive focus on the internal and the personal. This chapter will consider the shift which takes place in Sand's writing in the late 1830s, leading to a form of vision which is more constructive, in the sense of being engaged with the external world in a social and political sense. I will argue that Sand's early inner eye model, examined in the previous chapter, now develops into the visionary, defined by Tim Farrant as 'the power of perceiving vivid mental images, of seeing, often prophesying, an absolute mystical truth.'[1] I will be focusing in particular on this prophetic dimension, as the Sandian ideal of a better world is now projected into the future. Firstly, I will examine the characters who possess the visionary faculty, and will show that Sand's work is fundamentally preoccupied with bridging the gap between these characters, who can envision a more egalitarian social order, and those who are blind to such possibilities. Secondly, I will consider Sand's novels as examples of visionary writing in themselves, in the sense that they offer visions of the way in which society will function in future.

Sand's aim in her writing is to go beyond contemporary reality and to depict a potential rather than an actual world. This attempt to transcend surface reality is a constant of Romanticism; Balzac, Nerval and Baudelaire all demonstrate this tendency in their work. More specifically, certain writers are concerned with reaching a better society which is

[1] Tim Farrant, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2007), p.60.

founded on equality and justice, in contrast with the present. These writers, including Sand, Hugo and Nerval, are engaging with some of the new ideologies which surface at the beginning of the nineteenth century in France. After the Revolution, faith in the state and in conventional Christianity are destabilised, leading to a questioning of the way in which concepts such as power, authority and religion should be defined. Further, the country undergoes profound socio-economic and cultural changes as it gradually moves from the rural, agricultural, aristocratic society of the *Ancien Régime* to a society that is increasingly urban, industrial, and bourgeois. Nerval's novella, *Sylvie* (1853), sums up the period in its first few lines:

> Nous vivions alors dans une époque étrange, […] c'était un mélange d'activité, d'hésitation et de paresse, d'utopies brillantes, d'aspirations philosophiques ou religieuses, d'enthousiasmes vagues, mêlés de certains instincts de renaissance; d'ennui des discordes passées, d'espoirs incertains, quelque chose comme l'époque de Pérégrinus et d'Apulée.[2]

As Nerval outlines, this time of doubt and uncertainty is also one of great hope, as various thinkers, from the extreme Left to the extreme Right, engage in a quest for a new ideological synthesis to fill the void left by the Revolution and its consequences. D. G. Charlton's study of early nineteenth-century French philosophies notes that 'one cannot but be impressed and even astonished at the unusual richness and diversity of the systems propounded during these years'.[3] The works of all major French Romantic writers are informed by these ambitious and utopian visions. Sand's position within the plethora of new ideologies is closest to those ideas concerned with social regeneration, as she engages with the writings of such thinkers as Saint-Simon, Fourier, Cabet, Lamennais and Leroux. In this, she joins writers such as Lamartine, Michelet, Nerval and Hugo in their fundamental belief in progress and the

[2] Quoted by Kari Lokke, *Gérard de Nerval: The Poet as Social Visionary* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1987), p.13.
[3] D. G. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France, 1850-1870* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.viii.

necessity of social change. Unlike Balzac and Stendhal, the other major novelists of this period, whose Romanticism manifests itself in mystical tendencies and explorations of subjectivity respectively, Sand's œuvre is specifically concerned with the 'peuple', and with devising potential solutions for a more just future.

As a result of Sand's engagement with contemporary social doctrines and her personal progressive position, her novels from the end of the 1830s onwards are driven by a utopian force. Many critics have noted this development in Sand's writing from the anguished narratives of the early 1830s (such as *Valentine*, 1832, *Lélia*, 1833, and *Jacques*, 1834) to her more hopeful creations. Isabelle Naginski, for example, was one of the first to articulate this by referring to Sand's transition from her 'période noire', 'in which the somber novels of despair and suicide such as *Lélia* and *Spiridion* echo to some extent Sand's own inner crises', to the 'période blanche', which aims to formulate 'a now hopeful moral universe.'[4] Michelle Perrot also acknowledges this, as does Martine Reid, who asserts that, whereas Sand's early novels present 'le stade de l'interrogation angoissée', the later novels offer solutions.[5] I will examine two specific facets of this shift in Sand's writing. Firstly, I will consider the importance of Sand's understanding of temporality and the role this plays in the development of her writing, an aspect which has received little critical attention.[6] Secondly, I will investigate the visual dimension of Sand's socially engaged novels in the 1840s. Isabelle Naginski proposes that, after 1839, Sand's works are less concerned with the distressed questioning of the present, and offer instead a depiction of 'une réalité en train de s'accomplir mais encore invisible'.[7] I will demonstrate that Sand's writing in this period reveals a

[4] *George Sand: Writing for her Life* (New Brunwick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.5. *George Sand mythographe* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007) is an elaboration of this theory.
[5] Michelle Perrot, 'George Sand et l'idée du progrès', in *Genèses du roman: Balzac et Sand*, ed. by Lucienne Frappier-Mazur (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2004), pp.233-244; Martine Reid, *Signer Sand: L'œuvre et le nom* (Paris: Belin, 2003), p.145.
[6] Temporality in Sand's novels has received much less critical interest than space.
[7] *George Sand mythographe*, p.177.

commitment to what I term double vision: that is, a consideration of the present combined with the envisioning of the future. In this way, I will further develop my central thesis, that Sand's œuvre is consistently committed to alternative ways of seeing and engaging with the world, and that this is at the basis of her poetics.

Firstly, I will consider the implications of Sand's intellectual and philosophical evolution in the late 1830s for her understanding of vision, showing that Sand's engagement with socialist doctrines leads to a more positive outlook. I will then trace the representation of visionary characters in her novels. This will be followed by an examination of the way in which these characters reach their enlightened position. I will argue that the egalitarian model of exchange established between these characters mirrors Sand's own writing which offers multiple possibilities rather than a dogmatic, monolithic discourse to be forced on the reader. I will then examine the composite, or what I will define as the syncretic, vision they put forward, and I will reveal that their non-conformist attitudes enable them to free themselves from the present. This will lead into an analysis of Sand's flexible conception of time. I will demonstrate that Sand's novels are prophetic narratives which depict the way in which French society will be configured in the future. Finally, I will argue that, despite highlighting the need to go beyond an obsessive preoccupation with the present, Sand advocates double vision, in which both the contemplation of the present and the envisioning of the future are combined in order to reach a constructive engagement with the world. This I will trace both in the representation of the visionary characters and in the way in which the novels evolve from mythical works to more concretely grounded novels.

Whereas Isabelle Naginski's analysis of Sand's 'réalisme prophétique' focuses primarily on *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840), I will begin my analysis with

Mauprat (1837), as I consider Patience to be Sand's first visionary figure.[8] I will also consider *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* and *Consuelo* (1842-3), since these novels are central to understanding the visionary in Sand's writing.[9] I will then extend my analysis to *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845) and *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* (1847). By analysing these novels written between 1835 and 1845, I demonstrate the evolution of the visionary dimension of Sand's writing, as I argue that she combines the visionary with a keen awareness of, and attention to, the present.

From 'découragement' to 'la certitude'

Towards the end of the 1830s, Sand moves away from the reductive and escapist inner eye of her early novels towards a more constructive, prophetic model of vision. Referring to her 'période du doute et du découragement' in the early 1830s, Sand notes in an article in 1863 that 'je voyais mal parce que je ne voyais pas assez' (*NLV*, p.154). The late 1830s and the 1840s constitutes an intense period of intellectual development for Sand. Béatrice Didier describes this period in Sand's life as a time of 'bouillonnement intellectuel où elle subit des influences diverses', and Isabelle Naginski affirms that this period saw Sand's 'entrée triomphante dans un monde romanesque plus large, plus intellectualisé, nourri de philosophie sociale et de métaphysique, et certainement hautement poétique'.[10] Sand's letters at this time testify to an expansion in the number of prominent correspondents (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Delacroix, Lamennais), and her reading ranges from literary works to philosophical,

[8] Myrza, the 'sibylle' (*Le Poème de Myrza*, 1835, p.234) is also a prophet. However, despite the fact that this text provides great insight into Sand's unorthodox ideas on the origins of the world, this short work (30 pages long), does not provide a detailed representation of the heroine and her pathway to becoming a visionary. Most of the piece consists of Myrza's 'poem', which is framed by a brief introduction and conclusion by a third-person narrator. Patience is therefore the first visionary figure to receive full treatment by the author.

[9] All references to *Consuelo* are to the Garnier edition, which includes three volumes. Volumes I and II consist of *Consuelo*, and the third volume is the sequel, *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*. In my subsequent references to '*Consuelo*', I am referring to all three volumes unless specifically stated otherwise.

[10] Béatrice Didier, 'Introduction', in *Lélia*, 2 vols (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1987), I, pp.5-50 (p.6); Naginski, *George Sand mythographe*, p.21.

religious, and political writings.[11] Georges Lubin points to 1837 as the year which witnessed Sand's conversion to ideas of progress.[12] Naginski, however, considers the shift to take place earlier, in 1836.[13] What is certain is that by the early 1840s, Sand's attitude towards reality is much more constructive and positive: 'je n'ai plus à chercher mes idées, elles sont éclaircies dans mon cerveau, je n'ai plus à combattre mes doutes, ils se sont dissipés comme de vains nuages devant la lumière de la conviction.' (*Corr.*, V, p.535, December 1841). To be noted here is the emphasis on intellectual matters ('idées', 'cerveau'), and also the images of light ('éclaircies', 'lumière'). This is in contrast with the focus on darkness in her early novels, particularly in the scenes on the *Île Bourbon* in Indiana, and during Lélia's time in the wilderness.[14]

I will demonstrate the implications of this shift for Sand's conception of vision by examining two public letters. The first is a letter of support Sand wrote to the founders of the socialist provincial journal, *L'Éclaireur de l'Indre*, in September 1844.[15] Here, Sand praises the founders for their perseverance in creating 'un journal qui devienne l'expression d'une sincère et libre opinion publique dans nos provinces centrales' (*Corr*., VI, p.614). Her letter is thus written against a political background, and the emphasis she places here on the power and importance of 'le rêve' is to be understood as a political, as well as a philosophical, statement. Towards the end of the text, she speaks of her personal convictions by stating: 'Vous savez que je rêve une autre société. […] Je crois que le rêve d'une société meilleure est

[11] Some examples include Hoffmann's *Contes*, Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *L Vision d'Hébal* (1831) and *La Ville des expiations* (1832), Jacques Matter *L'Histoire critique du Gnosticisme* (1828) and Pierre Leroux's *Encyclopédie nouvelle* which began to appear in 1834.
[12] See *Corr*., V, p.547.
[13] See *George Sand mythographe*, especially pp.17-19.
[14] See, for example, Indiana's night-time wanderings, *Indiana*, pp.253-254, 258 and the assertion that 'la nuit avait pour cette femme rêveuse et triste un langage tout de mystères et de fantômes' (*Indiana*, p.59.) See also the 'nuits terribles' (*Lélia*, p.186) which Lélia spends in the wilderness surrounded by 'des masses grises' and 'la plaine noire [qui] rassemblait à un immense linceul' (*Lélia*, p.182).
[15] Sand writes this letter in September and it is published in the journal this same month. *L'Éclaireur de l'Indre* was founded in 1843 as a result of Sand's difficulties in publishing *Fanchette* (1843), where she denounces the practises of religious authorities and also argues against the centralisation of power in Paris. See George Sand, *Politique et polémiques: 1843-1850*, ed. by Michelle Perrot (Paris: Imprimerie nationale éd., 1997), pp.61-105 for more on *Fanchette*, and pp.107-218 for more on *L'Éclaireur de l'Indre*.

fondé sur des principes très différents de ceux qui régissent la société actuelle' (*Corr*., VI, pp.614-615). The gulf between those who partake in this 'plus doux songe', and those who respond to the dream with mockery and contempt, is understood by Sand in visual terms: 'Il est impossible qu'un myope et un presbyte s'entendent sur la distance. Tous deux voient mal peut-être, mais, à coup sûr, aucun des deux ne persuadera l'autre' (*Corr*., VI, p.615), suggesting the need for cooperation rather than conflict between these different forms of vision. Sand then provides a definition of visionaries as those individuals, 'dont la vue, usée par le faux éclat des choses présentes, cherche au loin, bien loin peut-être, une lueur dont ils portent la certitude en eux-mêmes' *Corr*., VI, p.615). Following this, she reformulates Descartes' famous maxim by stating: 'les rêveurs de mon espèce pourraient dire aujourd'hui: "Je rêve donc je vois" ' (*Corr*., VI, p.615). Up until now, critics such as Isabelle Naginski and Anne E. McCall have mistakenly traced this statement, 'Je rêve donc je vois', back to Sand's early private journal, 'Sketches and hints'.[16] Naginski notes that this statement is 'reiterated' 'years later', but this information is included in an endnote and the emphasis in her study is on 'Sketches and hints'.[17] I wish to point out, however, that Sand makes this statement, not in her journal written in the early 1830s, but in her 1844 article addressed to the *Éclaireur* journal. Placing the statement in its correct context, in the 1840s, rather than in the early 1830s, changes the import of the statement in three ways. Firstly, we can see from the rest of the letter that Sand's position is the result of her keen analysis of contemporary reality, 'la société actuelle', which she observes but wishes to refashion: 'je crois de moins en moins à la politique comme l'entendent aujourd'hui les partis' (*Corr*., VI, p.614). Secondly, the act of dreaming is here to be understood as a prophetic rather than an introspective process, as Sand attributes this statement only to 'les rêveurs de mon espèce', that is, those who foresee 'une

[16] See Isballe Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.45, and Anne E. McCall's reference to this quotation in *De l'être en lettres: l'autobiographie épistolaire de George Sand* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), p.114. The reference given in *George Sand: Writing for her Life* is *Œuvres Autobiographiques*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-71) II, p.630.
[17] See *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.249, note 30.

autre société'. Finally, there is a strong visual dimension to this prophetic quality, with the ability to dream and to envision linked to seeing. As Jean-Claude Sandrier notes in his dedication to George Sand with reference to this statement: 'Ce rêve […], selon George Sand, permet de voir et de voir un autre monde.'[18]

A further important text in understanding Sand's elaboration of a visionary model of engaging with the world is an earlier letter she wrote in 1841. This text, entitled 'Quelques réflexions sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau', is ostensibly a response to Jules Néraud's letter describing his visit to Rousseau's country retreat, Charmettes.[19] Sand's letter offers more than this, however, presenting a valuable insight into her philosophical position in 1841.[20] Despite Sand's great admiration and respect for Rousseau's aspirations towards equality, tolerance, and independence, she goes beyond his ideas in this article, as she takes issue with his attitude towards the present.[21] Despite his 'soif du progrès', Rousseau is considered by Sand to be 'aveuglé' in the sense that he lacks 'la foi en l'avenir'.[22] Apostrophising her precursor, Sand states: 'Au lieu de placer votre idéal devant vous, vous vous retournâtes douloureusement pour le trouver dans le passé […], au fond de cette forêt primitive que vous alliez chercher toujours […] et qui vous fuyait toujours, parce que *votre royaume n'était pas de ce monde*' (*QR*, pp.266-267, added emphasis). This statement demonstrates the fact that, by this point, Sand considers it essential to take account of the present in order to elaborate a realisable vision, rather than fleeing into an impossible internal world. Rousseau's flaw,

[18] Jean-Claude Sandrier, *George Sand. Le parti du peuple* (Sury-en-Vaux: A à Z patrimoine, 2004), p.173.
[19] Jules Néraud was a botanist and a close family friend. See Georges Lubin's note on Néraud in *Corr.*, II, p.929.
[20] As Michèle Hecquet states: 'sous l'allure d'une lettre à un ami, Sand traite bien de ses préoccupations les plus hautes et les plus abstraites, cette voie d'accès en facilite l'expression', in *Poétique de la parabole: les romans socialistes de George Sand, 1840-1845* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992).
[21] For details on references to Rousseau in Sand's writing, see Béatrice Didier, 'L'image de Voltaire et de Rousseau chez George Sand', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* (March-June 1979), 251-64; Raymond Trousson, 'George Sand et Jean-Jacques Rousseau', *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 40 (1992), 83-113; and Christine Planté, 'Sand et Rousseau: importance et difficultés d'une filiation', in *George Sand. Littérature et politique*, ed. by Martine Reid and Michèle Riot-Sarcey (Nantes: Éditions Pleins Feux, 2007), pp.45-61.
[22] Sand, 'Quelques réflexions sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau', originally published in the *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 June 1841. Quotations, henceforth indicated by *QR*, are taken from the article as printed in *L'Uscoque* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1861), pp.249-267 (p.266).

according to Sand, is that he is too despairing of the present to conceive of the possibility that this may transform into a more equal future. I regard this as evidence of Sand's move away from the inner eye of her early novels.

Sand's new position is further explained in 'Quelques réflexions sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau' when she divides influential members of society into two camps who embody two different ways of engaging with reality. The first are termed 'hommes d'action': warriors, industrialists, and 'tous les hommes à succès immédiat' (*QR*, pp.255-254). These are individuals who are capable of great acts, but who are condemned by Sand for being 'attachés au temps présent' (*QR*, p.254). They are highly practical individuals, but, crucially, 'ils ne sont point créateurs' (*QR*, p.256), since they are so closely bound to the present. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the 'hommes de méditation', consisting of poets, artists, and 'tous les hommes *à vues profondes*' (*QR*, p.255, added emphasis). Sand therefore considers individuals who are capable of liberating themselves from the present to possess a deeper form of vision. They are referred to as '[des] flambeaux divins envoyés ici-bas pour nous éclairer au-delà de l'étroit horizon qui enferme notre existence passagère' (*QR*, p.255). Focusing on their abilities to enlighten ('éclairer') others, Sand portrays these figures as ones who transcend the narrow, constrictive and ephemeral present, and, similarly to her letter to *L'Éclaireur* in 1844, Sand presents the visionary figure as one who brings light, and who possesses superior seeing qualities.[23]

The representation of visionary characters

Taking this idea of two opposing types as my starting point, in this section, I will show how Sand's visionary novels in the 1840s are centred on bringing these two types together, and

[23] See Sand's statements in *L'Éclaireur* in 1844: '[La] lueur dont ils portent la certitude en eux-mêmes', 'je rêve donc je vois', (*Corr.*, VI, p.615).

will demonstrate that Sand ultimately advocates a combination of both approaches. I will begin by providing an overview of the visionaries' main characteristics, arguing that the 'vue profonde' of the 'homme de méditation' and his ability to liberate himself from the present is central to the portrayal of this individual.

It has been noted by critics that Sand's works frequently feature a form of guide who shows the other characters the way to truth, and, in doing so, represents the overall message of the novel. In her study on Sand's characters, Anna Szabó, for example, states:

> [Les romans de George Sand] proposent surtout au lecteur des histoires de destinée ou de quelques parcours "exemplaire", illustrant, dans la plupart des cas, une quête et une conquête: l'acquisition d'un bien, l'accomplissement d'un être. Les personnages […] remplissent ainsi une importante fonction dans le déroulement de l'intrigue et deviennent tout particulièrement indispensables à la structuration du message narratif.[24]

In this respect, Szabó refers to certain characters who are 'exceptionnels, doués de quelque talent hors du commun, prophètes de toutes sortes'.[25] Jean-Pierre Lacassagne has also noted that a constant in Sand's novels is the figure of the 'révélateur', that is, '[le] chercheur de vérité religieuse, entendons de *vérité sociale*'.[26] Isabelle Naginski has proposed, more specifically, that Sand's novels from 1839 onwards feature characters who are 'des annonciateurs d'une vérité à venir'. [27] Although Lacassagne rightly refers to earlier characters such as Indiana and Simon as individuals in search of a better world, I agree with Naginski that a change takes place in Sand's novels. Her characters now begin to search for a better society that is located in the future rather than in the fantastical world of the imagination. To my knowledge, however, a detailed study of this visionary faculty and the way in which Sandian characters reach this position has not been undertaken by critics.

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[24] Anna Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien: constantes et variations* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudomanyegyetem, 1991), p.16.
[25] Ibid., p.26.
[26] Jean-Pierre Lacassagne, 'Les révélateurs dans les romans de George Sand', *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, 23 (1985), 79-91 (p.79, original emphasis).
[27] *George Sand mythographe*, p.19.

Sand's first visionary figure is Patience in *Mauprat*.[28] This 'philosophe rustique' (*Mauprat*, p.59) has a special gift, in that he can foresee the changes to come in social organisation, telling Bernard, for example: 'Quand vous serez vieux, il n'y aura peut-être plus de titres ni de seigneuries.' (*Mauprat*, p.207). Highlighting his ability to see into the future, Patience notes: 'on peut *connaître l'avenir* sans s'être donné au diable' (*Mauprat*, p.207, added emphasis). He foresees the French Revolution:

> Avant cent ans, avant moins peut-être, il y aura bien des changements sur la terre. Croyez-en un homme qui pense à la vérité et qui ne se laisse pas égarer par les grands airs des forts. Le pauvre a assez souffert; il se tournera contre le riche, et les châteaux tomberont, et les terres seront dépecées. Je ne verrai pas cela, mais vous le verrez; il y aura dix chaumières à la place de ce parc, et dix familles vivront de son revenu. Il n'aura plus ni valets, ni maîtres, ni vilains, ni seigneurs. (*Mauprat*, p.178).

Patience does not let himself be led astray by 'les grands airs des forts', prefiguring Sand's reference to 'les hommes forts' in her 1841 article. In his declamation, he moves from the current situation ('le pauvre a assez souffert') to a torrent of verbs in the future tense, and during this prophecy, 'son regard brillait comme la flamme' (*Mauprat*, p.179). Highlighting his prophetic status, it is stated that 'il y avait en lui quelque chose de puissant comme la parole des vieux prophètes' (*Mauprat*, p.179). The figure of the prophet frequently appears in Sand's writing in the guise of a philosopher, and Patience is often referred as 'un sage' (*Mauprat*, p.178). For Sand, a 'philosophe' is one who is able to see into the future. In 1839, for example, she refers to 'la philosophie, c'est-à-dire […] la religion de l'avenir',[29] and in a letter in January 1844, she refers to the philosopher as '[celui qui] voit au-dessus de ces maux et de ces tempêtes, les dessins providentiels de Dieu, l'avenir dans ses promesses, la vertu dans son germe, l'idéal dans sa propre aspiration.' (*Corr*., VI, p.411).

[28] This novel was originally conceived as a short story, with Patience as its protagonist, hinting at the importance of this character. See Janet Hiddleston, *George Sand, Indiana, Mauprat* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), p.69.
[29] 'Essai sur le drame fantastique' [1839], in *Souvenirs et impressions littéraires* (Paris: Hetzel et Lacroix, 1862), pp.3-98, (p.12).

The emphasis on sight is also a central aspect of Sand's portrayal of the visionary figure in her novels. It is known that Sand took great interest in physiognomy and that she greatly admired Lavater.[30] She therefore believed in the links between physical attributes and mental capacities and aspects of character. Patience possesses 'un œil rond, et enfoncé profondément dans l'orbite' (*Mauprat*, p.70) and reference is made to '[son] regard profond qui rendait sa physionomie si remarquable' (*Mauprat*, p.82). A further visionary character is Pierre Huguenin in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*. Pierre is deeply troubled by the unjust distribution of wealth in society and refuses to accept that this will never change: 'les choses changeront! […] le riche n'exploitera pas toujours le pauvre.' (*Compagnon*, p.366). The first description of Pierre, 'le prolétaire philosophe' (*Compagnon*, p.147), also draws attention to 'ses grands yeux bleus' (*Compagnon*, p.47). *Consuelo* features many visionary characters, notably Albert de Rudolstadt. From the beginning of the novel, he is referred to as 'un [...] visionnaire' (*Consuelo*, I, p.244), and whereas those around him exist 'dans un monde de préjugés', Albert is capable of envisioning a higher truth, as he states: 'le ciel m'a donné accès dans une sphère de lumière et de vérité' (*Consuelo*, I, p.246). Endowed with 'une faculté particulière et vraiment inouïe […], la seconde vue' (*Consuelo*, I, p.251), Albert experiences visions of the past but also envisions the future: 'il pressentait et voyait prophétiquement une prochaine dissolution de la société humaine, devant faire place à une ère de rénovation sublime' (*Comtesse*, pp.195-196). Before pronouncing his vision to the two young apprentices at the end of the novel, we are told that Albert enters into 'une sorte de transport divin' during which 'ses yeux rayonnaient comme des astres' (*Comtesse*, p.460). As his vision wanes, it is noted that 'ses yeux perdaient leur éclat' (*Comtesse*, p.462). The eponymous Consuelo is also a prophet, a Joan of Arc figure (*Consuelo*, I, p.268, *Comtesse*, p.491) who is to become a 'prêtresse, sibylle et initiatrice' (*Consuelo*, I, p.388). She also

[30] See Sand's seventh letter in *Lettres d'un voyageur* which focuses heavily on Lavater, particularly pp.214-215, and her reference to his work in *Histoire de ma vie*, *OA*, I, p.622.

possesses the characteristics of a deep thinker[31] and has striking eyes: 'ses yeux […] semblaient lire dans le ciel entrouvert pour eux seuls.' (*Consuelo,* I, p.364). Finally, Albert's mother, Wanda, is also 'inspirée' (*Comtesse,* p.405). She foresees a revolution in the concept of marriage and in social relations, stating that when there is equality between the sexes, and when 'les unions seront librement consenties et librement maintenues', then 'la femme fidèle ne sera plus la fleur solitaire […], le frère ne sera plus forcé de venger sa sœur, […]; la mère ne tremblera plus pour sa fille, […] la fille ne rougira plus de sa mère; […] surtout l'époux ne sera plus ni soupçonneux ni despote' (*Comtesse*, pp.409-410). Wanda's aspirations are the result of her vision, her capacity to reach deeper insights due to her 'profond regard' (*Comtesse,* p.322). Émile Cardonnet also possesses '[un] rêve de [l]'avenir' (*Antoine*, p.146), and it is stated that 'quoiqu'il appartînt à une génération de myopes, [Émile Cardonnet] avait la vue excellente' (*Antoine*, p.65). All of the visionary characters therefore have the deep, striking eyes of the philosopher, and this feature is indicative of their prophetic capabilities.

The transmission of insight

I will now examine the means through which these characters reach their visionary status. This will enable me to show the impact Sand wishes her works to have on her readers. As Robert Godwin Jones states, much work remains to be done on Sand's readership:

> There is unfortunately no effective way to ascertain who Sand's real readers were and precisely what strata of the population actually read her novels. It may be possible to make conjectures based on comments in reviews and letters and on the readership of French journals in which the novels first appeared. Such a study would be helpful in evaluating the evolution of Sand's approach to fiction.[32]

[31] 'Son large front semblait nager dans un fluide céleste, [...]. Son regard calme n'exprimait aucune de ces petites passions qui cherchent et convoitent les succès ordinaires. Il y avait en elle quelque chose de grave, de mystérieux et de profond' (*Consuelo,* I, p.100).
[32] *Romantic Vision. The Novels of George Sand* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa, 1995), p.316.

We do know, however, that Sand was certainly aiming at a wide readership. In her general preface to her illustrated works in 1851, for example, she highlights the fact that a high percentage of her works were written for 'la classe pauvre ou malaisée'.[33] At one point in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, she addresses a double readership: 'Maintenant, beaux lecteurs et vous, bon compagnons' (*Compagnon*, p.115). Further, more recent research has shown that *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* did reach a wide audience.[34] Sand therefore addresses, and at times manages to reach, both the leisured bourgeois classes of Paris and the workers of the provinces, as she attempts to engage all strata of society and guide them towards a new awareness of the different possible ways of engaging with the world.

Most of the novels discussed in this chapter appear to present a master-apprentice narrative, as young visionaries are guided by others from partial insight to full acquisition of visionary powers. With respect to the issue of leadership and learning in Sand's novels, Anna Szabó notes: 'ceux qui possèdent la vérité l'enseignent à ceux qui ne la possèdent pas et sont dans l'erreur; ce qui revient à des rapports de maître à élève.'[35] Consuelo's transition from divine singer to 'jeune prêtresse' (*Comtesse*, p.316), could be regarded as an example of this, as she is guided by Wanda, Albert's mother. Émile is also guided by the Marquis de Boisguilbault. He is struck by the Marquis's socialist declarations, and is compared to 'de[s] jeunes adeptes' listenting to 'la réponse de l'oracle dans l'obscurité des chênes sacrés.' (*Antoine*, p.189). By creating these characters, who undergo profound transformations, Sand provides a paradigm for the effect which she hopes her novels will have on her readers.

[33] 'Préface générale', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.155-159 (p.155).
[34] See Martine Watrelot, 'La réception du roman *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France de George Sand*, ed. by Michèle Hecquet and Martine Watrelot (Lille: Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille III, 2009), pp.155-167, and Jean-François Chanet, 'L'éducation politique du peuple dans *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France de George Sand*, pp.169-181.
[35] Szabó quotes Bakhtin's statement on Dostoïevski's work here, noting that it can be applied to Sand's novels also. *Le personnage sandien*, p.18.

Rather than presenting a monolithic authoritarian model, however, the transmission of insight in these novels is a symbiotic process of exchange. Visionary guidance is not provided by a dominant father figure, or indeed by a biological father, in Sand's novels. Émile's father, the rapacious industrialist, is replaced in *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* by two adoptive fathers who guide him to true insight.[36] Rather than presenting a single source of all knowledge, therefore, this novel depicts paternal power as fragmented. Nigel Harkness notes, with respect to multiple father figures in Sand's novels, that whereas Balzac harnesses the father's authority, 'thus claiming control (albeit illusory) over signification through the fantasy of a single authoritative discourse', Sand's multiple fathers reveal 'a fragmenting of the symbolic authority of the father, and to a multiplication of the endoxal discourses available to authorize new meanings and new social realities.'[37] Henri de Lémor in *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, for example, gives away his father's wealth in a symbolic rejection of his capitalist and exploitative principles, and Albert must leave his father and uncle who are incapable of understanding his genius and potential for visionary abilities. Consuelo, who is orphaned at a young age, is initially 'adopted' by the singing teacher, Porpora, who guides her in professional terms, but fails to appreciate the importance of fulfilment in other spheres. Prefiguring Sand's fairytale, 'Le Château de Pictordu' (1874), it is the mother who ultimately becomes Consuelo's initiator, as Wanda takes her daughter-in-law under her wing, allowing for the proclamation of radical principles which diverge from the patriarchal and repressive doxa.

Sand thus destabilises the traditional pattern of the hero's search for a master who is the source of all knowledge, as the apparent mentor-apprentice relationship established in these novels is not a straightforward case of absorption of wisdom from a superior individual.

[36] The relationship between Boisguilbault and Émile develops into a paternal bond, as Émile promises 'un dévouement filial' (*Antoine*, p.189) to the Marquis. In addition, Émile is increasingly drawn to Gilberte's tolerant and liberal father.

[37] Nigel Harkness, *Men of Their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction* (Leeds: Legenda, 2007), p.117.

Rather, the characters share and partake of convictions and principles. Consuelo brings Albert the divine consolation he needs, for example, but she is also guided by Albert's prophecies. No single figure dominates as the source of all authority in *Le Meunier d'Angibualt* either, as Marcelle learns from both Henri and Louis, but also becomes a mentor figure herself as she guides Rose Bricolin.

This critique of the form of learning whereby wisdom is transmitted from an omniscient, dominant, master to the subservient pupil points towards Sand's reconfiguration of the monologic 'roman à thèse'. This is defined by Susan Suleiman as a novel with an uncompromising ideological message: 'The "roman à these" is essentially an authoritarian genre: [...] it affirms absolute truths, absolute values. If, in this process, it infantilises the reader [...], it offers in exchange a paternal assurance.'[38] Sand's visionary novels share many features with the 'roman à thèse' as defined by Suleiman: they are ideological and fictional, they are a response to a historical moment of social and ideological conflict, and they seek to provide the reader with a form of guidance. However, unlike the 'roman à these', it cannot be said of Sand's novels that 'the "correct" interpretation of the story told is inscribed in capital letters' or that they seek to persuade their readers of 'the "correctness" of a particular way of interpreting the world.'[39] Rather, Sand articulates a spectrum of potential solutions to social problems, thus preventing her work from becoming prescriptive. Whereas *Mauprat*, for example, presents an enlightened aristocracy guiding the people, *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* claims that it is the people themselves who will lead society into the future. *Consuelo* advocates a socialist and fundamentally humanitarian philosophy, but does not present a clear–cut model for achieving this. By the end of the narrative, Consuelo and Albert have in essence failed in their attempts to change society, wandering through various countries in

[38] Susan Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions. The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp.10-11.
[39] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, pp.10, 1.

hiding. What *Consuelo* proffers is an underlying hope rather than an authoritarian message that must be thoroughly and uncritically absorbed by the reader.

The visionaries' ideas and contemporary thought

In this section, I will consider the vision offered by the prophetic characters. In line with my argument that Sand's visionary novels cannot be regarded as authoritarian and monolithic 'romans à thèse', the most striking feature of the visionaries' thinking is that they combine different domains of thought, bringing together philosophy, politics and religion. Uniting different disciplines is a strong tendency in early nineteenth-century thought in France, as thinkers attempt to redefine their values and search for 'une synthèse'.[40] The most obvious example of this trend is Victor Cousin and his system of 'eclecticism'. As Paul Bénichou succinctly explains, however: 'l'éclectisme se tient pour politique, distincte de la religion, et destinée à lui succéder dans l'âge adulte de l'humanité, l'humanitarisme, au contraire, se proclame lui-même religion en même temps que philosophie.'[41] The utopian socialist, Pierre Leroux, advocates the latter approach, and it is known that his ideas proved to be a key starting point in Sand's personal philosophy.[42] A central facet of Leroux's thinking is its combination of conventionally separate disciplines, as political solutions are elaborated through philosophical and religious speculation. Indeed, he regularly states that 'la philosophie et la religion sont au fond une seule et même chose'.[43] Sand is also attracted to the ideas of the socialist priest, Lamennais, specifically for the way in which he links

[40] Jean-Pierre Lacassagne, *Histoire d'une amitié. Pierre Leroux et George Sand* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), p.8.
[41] Paul Bénichou, *Le Temps des prophètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p.350. There are very few references to Cousin or to his writings in Sand's correspondence, and not one of his works is included in her library catalogue. Her few comments on this thinker are disparaging. See *Corr*., VI pp.418-9 and, *Le Poème de Myrza*, p.206.
[42] See Lacassagne, *Histoire d'une amitié*, for details on this relationship.
[43] Pierre Leroux, 'Préface' in *Réfutation de l'éclectisme* (Paris: Libraire de Charles Gosselin, 1841), pp.vii-xviii, p.ix.

religious and moral ideas with the social and the political.[44] The method of bringing different doctrines together is known as syncretism, defined in the Larousse dictionary in the following terms: 'au sens philosophique, *syncrétisme* veut dire mélange, accouplement forcé de doctrines complètement étrangères l'une à l'autre.'[45] This dictionary and many other philosophical reference works deride syncretism for its alleged lack of rigour.[46] The lack of coherence and exactitude associated with syncretism might seem to correspond to Sand's supposed lack of cerebral qualities. However, I reject this notion of an 'accouplement forcé' and would argue that the freedom of syncretism and its refusal of absolute doctrines align well with Sand's flexible philosophical attitude and her ability to see beyond divisions. I will return to this discussion in my Conclusion where I examine further Sand's successful combination of apparently contradictory positions.

Sand's syncretism is made clear in statements such as the following where she defines her aim in the late 1830s as a search for 'la vérité religieuse et la vérité sociale dans une seule et même vérité' (*OA*, II, p.349). This is the vision put forward by her prophetic figures. *Consuelo*, for example, demonstrates a diverse approach to social problems. The vision that is offered in this novel is primarily religious and moral, a universal dream whose aim it is to improve the conditions of Humanity. Neither Naomi Schor nor Michèle Hécquet consider *Consuelo* as part of Sand's socialist fiction, and Linda Lewis also argues that political specificity is missing from the *Consuelo* sequence.[47] It is, however, more difficult to separate politics from other domains in Sand's works than it may seem. *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, for example, 'un roman socialiste' (*Antoine* p.32), comprises a strong religious

[44] See Sand's admiration of Lamennais in the third *Lettre d'un Voyageur*.
[45] Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*, 17 vols (Paris: Slatkine, 1982 [1866-1879), XIV, deuxième partie, 'Syncrétisme', p.1326.
[46] See, for example, the *Dictionnaire de la langue philosophique*, ed. by Paul Foulquié and Raymond Saint-Jean (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), which defines syncretism as '[un] mélange plus ou moins confus de doctrines différentes reçues sans esprit critique et, à plus forte raison, ne constituant pas un système cohérent' 'Syncrétisme', p.706.
[47] Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Michèle Hecquet, *Poétique de la parabole*; Linda Lewis, *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist* (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 2003), p.14.

dimension. Political and social solutions must always incorporate religious and moral values for Sand: 'il ne s'agirait pas seulement d'avoir un plan d'organisation simple et applicable au présent, il faudrait encore des formules religieuses et morales' (*Antoine*, p.19). Indeed, it is explicitly stated in this novel that 'la vérité communiste est tout aussi respectable que la vérité évangélique; puisqu'au fond c'est la même vérité' (*Antoine*, p.188). For this reason, Marcelle de Blanchemont in *Le Meunier d'Angibault* rejects contemporary political solutions: 'je n'en vois encore aucun où la liberté morale se trouve respectée, où l'athéisme et l'ambition de dominer ne se montrent par quelque endroit.' (*Meunier*, p.190). Although she does not entirely refute Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism, Marcelle finds fault with these in that 'ce sont là des systèmes encore sans religion et sans amour' (*Meunier*, p.190-1). Patience also combines his strong religious beliefs with a predilection for philosophical works, and he possesses '[un] esprit synthétique' (*Mauprat*, p.159). The political domain cannot, in itself, therefore, offer solutions, and the visionary's prophecies are political, social, moral and religious.

'Religion' is not referred to here in the sense of orthodox Christianity. Although Patience's convictions are founded on his belief in '[le] Seigneur' (*Mauprat*, p.179), he does not align himself with conventional Catholicism, professing rather '[une] religion poétique' (*Mauprat*, p.66) founded on the innate principles of justice and virtue.[48] Myrza, Consuelo, Albert and Wanda are more explicitly heretical. Myrza, for example, is condemned by the elders for devising her own original version of genesis.[49] Consuelo's reading brings together a wide range of different disciplines,[50] and in her initiation to become a 'prêtresse' (*Comtesse*, p.314), the 'invisibles' explain to her that theirs is a heterogeneous system:

[48] Patience's abilities are primarily intuitive and innate: 'ces idées abstraites étaient en lui, on les pressentait en le voyant' (*Mauprat*, p.61).
[49] See *Myrza*, p.234.
[50] When locked in the palace, Consuelo undertakes a prolonged period of study, reading philosophical tracts, the history of Christianity, and the persecution of religious sects in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (see *Comtesse*, pp.278, 301). This is an important part of her preparation to become a member of the 'invisibles'. She

> Nous comptons parmi nous beaucoup d'autres exaltés, des mystiques, des poètes, des hommes du peuple, des philosophes, des artistes, d'ardents sectaires groupés sous les bannières de divers chefs; des bohémistes, des théosophes, des moraves, des herrnhuters, des quakers, même des panthéistes, des pythagoriciens, des xérophagistes, des illuminés, des johannites, des templiers, des millénaires, des joachimites, etc. (*Comtesse*, p.309).

The movement brings together all these different philosophical and religious ideas with the ultimate aim of creating 'la religion de l'avenir' (*Comtesse*, p.310). Albert also stresses the importance of syncretic thinking, dismissing what he views as the narrowly specific doctrines of Descartes, Locke, and German thinkers with their exclusive focus on reason, sensation and sentiment respectively, in favour of Leibniz, 'le plus grand de tous, [qui] a commencé à comprendre que l'homme était tout cela en un, tout cela indivisiblement.' (*Comtesse*, p.457). The unison of these three elements creates the human variation of the divine Trinity, 'la Tétrade humain', which necessitates the union of different pathways: 'il n'y a qu'une route certaine vers la vérité: c'est celle qui répond à la nature humaine complète, à la nature humaine développée sous tous les aspects.' (*Comtesse*, p.458). Albert himself is an example of this. By combining art, religion and philosophy, he becomes 'l'homme complet, en qui toutes les facultés sont à l'unisson' (*Comtesse*, p.559).

The fullest elaboration of the syncretic visionary is the Marquis de Boisguilbault. His readings of new social doctrines initially overwhelm him, and he feels lost in 'ce labyrinthe' (*Antoine*, p.187). However, he then begins to read the history of different religions, feeling 'la nécessité de [s]e reporter aux enseignements de l'histoire et à la tradition du genre humain.' (*Antoine*, p.187). It is by returning to the past in this way that he is able to understand and prepare for the future: 'Depuis ce moment, je ne me suis plus étonné que d'une chose, c'est qu'au temps où nous vivons, […] le monde soit encore plongé dans une si profonde

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tells the senior members of this group that 'vous avez daigné m'ouvrir les yeux à de hautes vérités en m'apprenant à lire dans vos livres secrets' (*Comtesse*, p.378).

ignorance de la logique des faits et des idées qui le forcent à se transformer' (*Antoine*, p.187). A clear contrast is established by Boisguilbault between those who are overwhelmed by the present, and those who are able to free themselves from this force, individuals who are referred to as 'les initiés à la loi de l'avenir' (*Antoine*, p.187). Boisguilbault reaches this position by becoming aware of the eternal truth to be discovered in a wide range of doctrines, ultimately becoming '[un] prophète' (*Antoine*, p.199) himself:

> Un jour enfin, les grands hommes, les saints, les prophètes, les poètes, les martyrs, les hérétiques, les savants, les orthodoxes éclairés, les novateurs, les artistes, les réformateurs de tous les temps, de tous les pays, de toutes les révolutions et de tous les cultes m'apparurent d'accord, proclamant, sous toutes les formes, et jusque par leurs contradictions apparentes, une vérité éternelle, une logique aussi claire que la lumière du jour: savoir, l'égalité des droits et la nécessité inévitable de l'égalité des jouissances, comme conséquence rigoureuse de la première. (*Antoine*, p.187).

Boisguilbault's gift is his ability to draw parallels between even the most apparently contradictory seams of thought, regarding people of all countries, periods, disciplines and religious orders, as united in the awareness of eternal truth. Émile also possesses this ability, reproaching his father for his narrowly specialist approach ('[les] travaux de spécialité'), in favour of a combination of disciplines: 'au début de mes études générales, je vous ai dit que toutes les connaissances humaines m'apparaissaient comme solidaires les unes des autres, […] en un mot, que le détail ne pouvait se passer de la synthèse.' (*Antoine*, p.280). This reflects Sand's own trajectory through modern philosophy. She begins with Leibniz, then Lamennais, then Lessing, followed by Herder through Quinet, then Pierre Leroux, then Jean Reynaud, before returning to Leibniz. She explains this approach in *Histoire de ma vie*:

> Voilà les principaux repères qui m'ont empêchée de trop flotter dans ma route à travers les diverses tentatives de la philosophie moderne. De ces grandes lumières, je n'ai pas tout absorbé en moi à dose égale, et je n'ai pas même gardé tout ce que j'avais absorbé à un moment donné. Ce qui le prouve, c'est *la fusion* que […] j'ai pu faire en moi de ces grandes sources de vérité, cherchant sans cesse, et m'imaginant parfois trouver *le lien qui les unit, en dépit des lacunes qui les séparent*. (*OA*, II, p.460, added emphasis).

Sand therefore refuses to adhere strictly to any one specific doctrine, preferring to combine different approaches as she is inspired by these ideas to reach her own vision.

The visionaries and eccentricity

A further distinguishing feature of these visionary characters is the fact that they are set apart from other members of society. In her article on Rousseau, Sand highlights the fact that the 'hommes de méditation' are often persecuted and misunderstood by their contemporaries. In her novels, these individuals are often considered as 'abnormal' by others. Albert de Rudolstadt's refusal to adopt the practices expected of him as an aristocrat, for example, and his 'conduite étrange' (*Consuelo*, I, p.186), isolate him from the social world. Patience's 'allure excentrique' (*Mauprat*, p.61) also frightens local inhabitants. As a result, these characters are regarded as eccentric or even insane.[51] Émile Cardonnet's father, for example, dismisses his son's ideological aspirations as 'folie' (*Antoine*, p.286). After listening to Marcelle de Blanchemont's vision of 'l'avenir qu'[elle] conçoit', Rose Bricolin wonders, 'est-ce qu'elle ne serait pas *dérangée* aussi?' (*Le Meunier d'Angibault*, p.167, original emphasis). Many also believe that the Marquis de Boisguilbault, the socialist prophet, 'avait la cervelle détraquée' (*Antoine*, p.124), whilst Pierre is also considered to be 'un fou, […] une tête dérangée' (*Compagnon* pp.292-3) for his socialist vision.[52] Sand perceives a link between such states and divinatory qualities, as highlighted in one of her diary entries in 1839:

[51] These characters are also eccentric in a more literal sense, in that they live apart from others. Patience's hermit lifestyle is repeatedly referred to in *Mauprat*, and Albert often disappears to his cave in *Consuelo*.
[52] Sand designates *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* as 'archisocialiste et communiste' in a letter written in 1845 (*Corr*., VII, p.50). In the 1851 preface, she refers to the work as 'un roman socialiste' (*Antoine*, p.32), but refers to 'le communisme de M. de Boisguilbault' (*Antoine*, p.33). For Sand, 'socialiste' and 'communiste' are very close in meaning. In the 1840s, these epithets did not carry the same specific meanings as they do today. Sand's understanding of socialism is loosely based on the notion of associations and a religion of fraternity.

> Entre la raison et la folie il y a un état de l'esprit qui n'a jamais été ni bien observé ni bien qualifié, et où les croyances religieuses de tous les temps et de tous les peuples ont supposé l'homme en contact direct avec l'esprit de Dieu. Cela s'est appelé esprit divinatoire ou prophétique, oracle, révélation, vision, descente de l'Esprit saint, conjuration, illuminisme, convulsionnisme et je crois du moins que ces faits rentrent dans le même fait, celui de l'extase.[53]

This association between the visionary and an abnormal cerebral makeup is celebrated by Sand, who considers such unusual mindsets to be conducive to genius: 'quand on ne trouble pas par de vains efforts et de cruelles moqueries cette abstraction de l'intelligence, elle peut devenir une faculté exceptionnelle du genre le plus poétiquement divin.' (*Comtesse,* 452). This ability is presented as an alternative kind of reasoning, as Albert refers to 'ma raison, qu'ils appellent ma folie' (*Consuelo*, II, p.364).[54] Gottlieb, 'un fou' (*Comtesse*, p.179) and Zdenko, 'l'insensée' (*Comtesse,* p.350), both ultimately become part of the elite 'invisibles' organisation, with Gottlieb considered as 'un de nos adeptes les plus purs et les plus fervents' (*Comtesse*, p.374) and Zdenko as 'un maître vénérable' (*Comtesse*, p.446).[55] Consuelo sees in Gottlieb 'un rayon de haute divination religieuse et l'inspiration d'une généreuse poésie' (*Consuelo*, II, p.195), and Zdenko possesses 'la divination céleste, la certitude angélique de la vérité' (*Comtesse*, p.350). The importance of this facet of the visionary figures is that their minds diverge from the norm, which means that they are not constrained by the practices and the preconceptions of the present. We are told of Zdenko, for instance, that 'il a les yeux ouverts sur l'éternité' (*Comtesse*, p.452). Without this capability, these individuals would remain closed off from this possibility. Sand therefore creates characters who go beyond the normative and the acceptable, and it is through their unusual mental capacity that these

[53] *Journal intime*, 1839, quoted by Léon Cellier in 'L'occultisme dans *Consuelo*', *Romantisme,* 16 (1977), 7-19 (p.12).
[54] Sand expresses a similar belief elsewhere: 'l'hallucination est compatible avec le plein exercice de la raison', (*Les Visions de la nuit dans les campagnes*, 1846, p.241).
[55] The 'invisibles' is an underground political and religious movement whose conventions are loosely based on freemasonry, and whose aim is liberty, equality and fraternity.

individuals reach visionary powers. Total submission to the present and current perceptions of reality is thus considered by Sand as the central obstruction to visionary insights.

Gender and asexuality

A final means through which Sand breaks with contemporary norms in her representation of visionary characters is through her manipulation of gender.[56] One of the archetypes Sand employs in her development of visionaries is that of the classical philosopher: the deep-eyed, bearded old sage. The iconographic image of the thinker referred to in *Consuelo*, Rembrandt's *Scholar in a Room with Winding Stair* (1633), resonates throughout Sand's narratives.[57] By the eighteenth century, this painting had come to be known as *Le philosophe en contemplation* in France, a title which places particular emphasis on the figure (the male thinker), and also on his occupation (deep meditation). Many of Sand's visionaries will bear a resemblance with this individual. Patience, for example, possesses 'une nature éminemment contemplative' (*Mauprat*, p.60) and the frame of reference for this character is Greek philosophy.[58] Patience possesses the typical physical characteristics of the wise old philosopher: 'sa barbe brillait comme de l'argent. Son crâne chauve était luisant' (*Mauprat*, p.174). A further example of this model is Albert de Rudolstadt. Although Albert is thirty at the beginning of *Consuelo*, by the end of *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, he has also transmuted into a 'divin vieillard' (*Comtesse*, p.559) possessing '[d]es traits socratiques' (*Comtesse*,

[56] I use the term 'gender' as a category which can be used to explore ideas of maleness and femaleness, femininity and masculinity, and the way in which these concepts affect the identity of individuals in physical, psychological, intellectual and emotional terms. My understanding of femininity and masculinity aligns with Françoise Massardier-Kenney's definition, which incorporates physical, symbolic and cultural dimensions. See *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p.6.
[57] See *Consuelo*, II, p.281.
[58] Patience is referred to as a 'philosophe stoïcien' (*Mauprat*, p.114) and he is compared with Socrates (*Mauprat*, p.70), Diogenes (*Mauprat*, p.61), and Pythagoras (*Mauprat*, p.65).

p.437), and he is repeatedly alluded to as a 'philosophe' (*Comtesse*, p.440). The Marquis de Boisguilbault in *Antoine* is also 'un vieillard [...] éclairé' (*Antoine*, p.200).

Sand also creates female prophetesses in her works, drawing on the tradition of Woman as Wisdom.[59] The Pythian, or Sibyl, was appropriated by many Romantics to create a figure of female power, as highlighted by Marie-Jacques Hoog.[60] Unlike the other, exclusively male models of intellectual and artistic genius provided by classical myth and Christianity, the Sibyl provides a specifically female ideal, allowing Sand to replace the exclusively male philosopher with a strong female counterpart. The 1839 Lélia develops into a prophetic figure by the end of this text, albeit a failed example, as she names herself a 'sibylle désolée' and a 'muette pythie' (*Lélia*, II, p.159).[61] Yseult de Villepreux, a fervent defender of socialist ideas, is described as 'une pythie prête à répandre ses oracles' (*Compagnon*, p.368),[62] and Sand in fact rewrites Rembrandt's masculine portrayal of the thinker in *Consuelo* through the creation of Wanda and Consuelo. These two women, who possess a vision of a more just future, are both ultimately referred to as 'sibylles' (*Consuelo*, I, p.388, *Comtesse*, p.321).

However, there are other female figures who seem to suggest an incongruity between the female condition and visionary faculties. Gilberte de Châteaubrun in *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, for example, dare not consider herself as a thinker: 'je ne suis pas philosophe, moi, je suis trop ignorante!' (*Antoine*, p.332). Marcelle de Blanchemeont also professes that 'je ne suis qu'une femme ignorante' (*Meunier*, p.166). It would seem that those women who do become prophets in Sand's novels must renounce their femininity. Lélia,

[59] See Lewis, *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist*, p.18 for more on this tradition. Lewis focuses her analysis on Sand's *Consuelo*.
[60] Marie-Jacques Hoog, 'George Sand and the Romantic Sybil', in *The World of George Sand*, ed. by Natalie Datlof and others (New York; London: Greenwood, 1991), pp.95-106 (p.98).
[61] This reference to the 1839 version of *Lélia* is to Béatrice Didier's edition, which includes 2 volumes. See bibliography. References withou volume numbers are to Reboul's edition.
[62] Yseult believes in a future time when she and Pierre will be united, as she states in the conclusion added to the novel: 'l'avenir est à nous' (*Compagnon*, p.385).

Consuelo and Marcelle all reject the modes of existence open to women in contemporary society.[63]

Rather than a negative renunciation of femininity, however, I would argue that what Sand proposes in her representation of visionary characters are individuals who go beyond gender. In her *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur*, Sand assimilates her writing self with the figure of a male hermit: 'Aujourd'hui, en 1868, il y a bien un vieux ermite qui se promène à travers mes romans; mais il n'a pas de barbe, il n'est pas stoïcien, et certes il n'est pas un philosophe bien profond, car c'est moi.' (*NLV*, p.155). This passage, where Sand succeeds in speaking of herself as a form of thinker (albeit 'pas bien profond'), highlights the crossing of gender boundaries. Crucially, this is achieved through the representation of the same bearded figure that we initially identified as characteristically male.

This blurring of traditional gender categories is in fact a central feature of Sand's elaboration of the visionary. The general consensus amongst critics is that, in her narrative strategies, her characters, and in her own correspondence and other writings, Sand combines the masculine and the feminine, resulting in an androgynous position.[64] Nigel Harkness's recent study, on the other hand, has argued that Sand's writing presents a specific alignment between writing, power, and masculinity.[65] If we focus on the visionary figure, however, we see that this is an attempt made by Sand to transcend gender altogether. This is demonstrated in the depiction of one of the strongest visionaries, Wanda de Prachatitz. Isabelle Naginski identifies Wanda as Sand's solution to the problem of talented women as represented in

[63] This is also true for Sand herself, who received a 'male' education: 'je voyais bien qu'une éducation rendue un peu différente de celle des autres femmes […] avait modifié mon être. […]. Je n'étais donc pas tout à fait une femme comme celles que censurent et raillent les moralistes; j'avais dans l'âme l'enthousiasme du beau, la soif du vrai' (*OA*, II, pp.126-127). Her predecessor, Mme de Staël, also received the personalised education which Rousseau advocated for boys alone in *Émile* (1762). Mme de Staël had already stated in *De la littérature* (1800) that talented women are always solitary, existing in a form of limbo: not equal to men, but excluded from other women by their superiority and exceptional status. See Staël, *De la littérature* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), pp.341-2.

[64] The most sustained analysis of this position is Isabelle Naginski's *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, especially pp.16-34.

[65] Harkness explicitly refutes the idea of 'folding the masculine and feminine into androgyny'. See *Men of Their Words*, p.7.

Madame de Staël's novel, *Corinne*.[66] Although Wanda can indeed be interpreted as a corrective to previous models of female genius, I would argue that Sand's character is portrayed as an asexual figure. More specifically, this is achieved through her age. In this sense, I view Wanda as part of a wider Sandian strategy with regards to the creation of the visionary figure, which is the overcoming of traditional gender categories through mature characters.[67] Wanda, Patience, Boisguilbault, and Albert, are all, (by the end of the novels, at least), older individuals who have reached a position of wisdom. The issue of gender has become increasingly irrelevant to these characters, as gender differences recede with age, with maturity signifying a shift to a position of asexuality or neutrality.[68] Rather than viewing Sand's use of a double heritage in her elaboration of the visionary figure – the female prophetess and the male philosopher — as evidence of a desire to advocate both male and female visionaries, we should recognise that these categories are extended, merged, and in fact overcome in Sand's novels, in keeping with her flexible understanding of gender.

Wanda initially appears to Consuelo disguised as a man, a 'père spirituel' regarded as 'le frêle vieillard' (*Comtesse*, p.318). But when she reveals her true identity, Wanda specifically refers to herself as a being beyond gender, 'cet être accablé et souffrant, dont la voix éteinte n'a plus de sexe' (*Comtesse*, p.321). The asexuality of old age is highlighted: 'l'âge nous ôte notre sexe.' (*Comtesse*, p.332). This is valorised by Sand, since, rather than attempting to escape old age, Wanda views it as a transcendent mode of existence: 'c'est le moment de nous élever à une sorte d'état angélique' (*Comtesse*, p.332). Further, she notes

[66] See *George Sand mythographe*, especially p.234.
[67] In this respect, I diverge from Jean-Pierre Lacassagne's reference to those Sandian characters who lead others: 'l'âge n'est pas […] un critère unificateur. La plupart de ces héros sont jeunes.' See 'Les révélateurs dans les romans de George Sand', *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, 23 (1985), 79-91 (p.81).
[68] This applies in particular to women. One of the most important twentieth-century examinations of the female condition also raises this issue: Simone de Beauvoir reflects on the implications of becoming 'un être différent, asexué mais achevé: une femme âgée'. Although she notes that 'c'est dans son automne, dans son hiver que la femme s'affranchit de ses chaînes', Beauvoir stresses that by this point, the woman is rendered useless and powerless both within the family unit and within society. See 'De la maturité à la vieillesse', in *Le deuxième sexe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976 [1949]), pp.456-482 (p.467). This shared interest in aging by these two very different feminist writers demonstrates the complexity of this issue, with both writers taking radically different views on the subject.

that old age removes the passionate storms of youth: '[Dieu] prend soin d'apaiser nos passions et de les changer en amitiés paisibles' (*Comtesse*, p.332). Sand frequently reflects on the condition of old age in her letters, no longer viewing herself as a woman by the age of sixty-two.[69] She refers to old age as a period which she enters 'avec une sérénité rare' (*Corr.*, IX, p.725, October 1850), especially since it signifies the liberation from the expectations placed on her as a woman. Maturity is an emancipating force in her novels also. Boisguilbault states, for example: 'depuis que la vieillesse m'a délivré de toute prétention au bonheur et de toute espèce de regret ou d'intérêt particulier, j'ai senti le besoin de me rendre compte de la vie générale des êtres, et, par conséquent, du sens des lois divines appliquées à l'humanité.' (*Antoine*, p.186). The Marquis de Boisguilbault was for a long time indoctrinated with the principles of the patriarchal and patrician order ('j'ai eu longtemps les opinions et les préjugés dont on m'avait nourri', *Antoine*, p.186), but his old age provides him with the opportunity to step outside of the roles expected of him.

Sand states in an early work that 'le génie n'a pas de sexe' ('La Fille d'Albano', 1831, p.287), and this is made clear in the creation of her visionaries, who are exceptional individuals and almost non-human. The opening voice of *Lélia*, for example, says of the eponymous heroine: 'tu es un ange ou un démon, mais tu n'es pas une créature humaine.' (*Lélia*, I, p.61). Albert is considered by Consuelo to be 'un être supérieur à la nature humaine' (*Comtesse*, p.62). Pierre is also 'un être supérieur' (*Compagnon*, 321); although he belongs to the proletariat, his 'supériorité intellectuelle' separates him from others. These individuals are almost beyond the realm of the human, referred to as spirits, angels, and 'êtres'.[70] What I have therefore shown so far is that Sand's visionaries go beyond current societal norms and

[69] Sand states: 'À présent que je ne suis plus une femme' in *Gustave Flaubert-George Sand: Correspondance* ed. by Alphonse Jacobs (Paris: Flamarion, 1981), p.84.
[70] Wanda, for example, is 'un être mystérieux' (*Comtesse*, p.405). Pierre is 'un être mystérieux et singulier' (*Compagnon*, p.132).

limits, in their alternative forms of reasoning, their transcendence of gender categories, and through their syncretic vision.

Temporality

The importance of the visionary characters' ability to reject contemporary norms and practices is that it is only by liberating themselves from these practices that they can transcend the present, enabling them to contemplate the possibility of change. As stated in *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*: 'qui ne la rêve pas [l'immortelle] telle qu'elle peut être demain ne la voit nullement telle qu'elle doit être aujourd'hui.' (*Comtesse*, p.402). This idea that we should not be constrained by the present sees its first appearance on the level of nomenclature in *Mauprat*. Patience is baptised after his constant refrain that we be patient, for progress will come in time. This name is echoed ten years later when Boisguilbault states: 'encore quelque temps, Émile, pour que l'idée éclose se répande: ce ne sera pas si long qu'on le croit; je ne le verrai pas, mais vous le verrez. Patience donc!' (*Antoine*, p.218).[71] Between writing these two novels, Sand engages in contemporary intellectual enquiries into history and its relation to the present and future, enquiries which lead to what Bowman terms 'an organic sense of time'.[72] Within this model, history is viewed in terms of organic change rather than as a distinct entity from the present. Temporality is therefore considered as a fluid concept.

In an article on memory, Malcolm Bowie states that 'in desire-driven works of art [...] the new work emerges from memories', and thus 'its looking back is a looking forward.'[73] Although this statement is made in the context of interart relations, this dynamic

[71] Boisguilbault's statement also echoes Patience's vision, where he states: 'Je ne verrai pas cela, mais vous le verrez' (*Mauprat*, pp.178-9).
[72] Frank Bowman, 'Illuminism, Utopia, Mythology', in *The French Romantics*, ed. by D. G. Charlton, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), I, pp.76-112 (p.86).
[73] Malcolm Bowie, 'Remembering the Future', in *Memory – an Anthology*, ed. by A. S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp.13-27 (p.26).

concept of temporality is suggestive for the phenomenon that takes place in nineteenth-century thought. Pierre Leroux, whom Sand greatly admired,[74] terms his belief in continuous progress 'la tradition', since, for this thinker, looking into the past is a means of preparing for the present and the future.[75] Gérard de Nerval is also influenced by such thinking: 'À l'âme poétique, Dieu a donné […] la science et la divination du passé, qui leur découvre la loi providentielle de l'avenir.'[76] This awareness of the past as a means of seeing into the future is also a feature of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), in that the Revolution of 1789 is located in the future in relation to the narrated time of 1482, but in the recent past for the author and reader, resulting in a 'bidirectional perspective', as Victor Brombert terms it.[77] It is precisely for his ability to see beyond the present that Sand praises Hugo, whom she refers to as 'un homme qui voit au-delà de l'horizon et qui, sans égard pour les empêchements visibles aux autres, proclame la loi des siècles à venir'.[78] The importance of the past in understanding what is yet to come is also in evidence in Sand's novels, inspired by the works of historians Henri Martin, Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet, whom she commends in *Histoire de ma vie*: 'vous ne touchez point au passé sans nous faire embrasser les pensées qui doivent nous guider dans l'avenir' (*OA*, pp.456-457).[79]

[74] Volumes III to VI of Sand's correspondence (spanning 1835-1845) are full of praise for Leroux's works, reflections on his ideas, and letters to Leroux himself. Sand takes a passionate interest in Leroux's *Encyclopédie*, for example, reading every new entry as soon as it becomes available, and basing her children's education on this work (see *Corr*., IV, pp. 469,677 and *Corr*., V, p.618). Leroux is for Sand 'un nouveau Christ' (*Corr*., IV p.590) and she refers to him as 'ce sauveur' (*Corr*., V, p.76) who provided her with hope 'au temps de mon scepticisme' (*Corr*., V, p.547).

[75] See Paul Bénichou, *Le Temps des prophètes: doctrines de l'âge romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp.336-337.

[76] Quoted by Lokke, *Gérard de Nerval*, p.105.

[77] Victor H. Brombert, *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.70.

[78] 'À Charles Edmond', 12 July 1872, in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.435-436 (p.435).

[79] See also Isabelle Naginski's article on Sand's perception of time, 'George Sand et le temps expérimental', in *George Sand. Une écriture expérimentale*, ed. by Nathalie Buchet-Ritchey and others (New Orleans: Presses Universitaires du Nouveau Monde, 2006), pp.135-157.

The trial at the end of *Mauprat* has been highlighted by Kathryn Crecelius as 'emblematic of the events of 1789'.[80] Indeed, Sand's novel rewrites the Revolution by demonstrating another way in which events could have turned out. When Patience punishes Bernard after the boy has killed his owl, for example, he immediately puts an end to Bernard's misery once he realises that he is in pain, since he does not believe in violence as a solution.[81] The success at the trial is also achieved through peaceful means and through the combined strength and intellect of Edmée, Patience and Arthur, representing women, the people, and democracy respectively. Cooperation between subjugated identities and non-violent action could have led to a better outcome. Yet in another sense, this in itself could be regarded as a means of looking forward, as Sand also anticipates a new revolution that is yet to come in 1848. The ending of *Consuelo* also gestures towards the French Revolution. The backward-looking narrator asserts of the eighteenth-century thinkers: 'ils se croyaient à la veille d'une république évangélique […] comme les disciples de Jésus s'étaient crus à la veille du royaume de Dieu sur la terre' (*Comtesse*, p.401). These exemplary figures can now provide the present readers with hope for the future, since, it is stated, 'sans cette confiance insensée, où seraient les grands dévouements, et sans les grandes folies où serait les grands résultats?' (*Comtesse*, p.401). In this way, Sand therefore assesses and interrogates social ideas by taking the past, present and future into consideration, demonstrating a flexible conception of temporality.

Sand's understanding of time as a fluid concept is key in her development of visionary characters and their opposites. She states in *Histoire de ma vie*: 'Celui qui vit dans l'éternité ne compte pas le temps, et vous qui avez une faible notion de l'éternité, vous vous laissez écraser par la sensation poignante du temps.' (*OA*, II, p.453). This is reminiscent of the young Aurore's sensation of being crushed by the materiality of existence ('le monde

[80] Kathryn J. Crecelius, *Family Romances: George Sand's Early Novels* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.153.
[81] See *Mauprat*, pp.73, 153.

extérieur, la réalité, venait me presser de tout son poids', *OA*, I, pp.672-673). By the 1840s, however, Sand condemns those who allow themselves to be defeated by the physicality and closed-in nature of the terrestrial which leads to a fixed and closed understanding of time. She considers individuals of this disposition to be blinded, unable to access the vision of a better future, which is beyond current, physical reality: 'la certitude est et sera toujours en dehors des faits du monde où l'on vit, et [...] la foi à l'avenir ne doit pas s'embarasser du spectacle des choses présentes.' (*OA*, II, p.521). Victor Cardonnet in *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, for example, is incapable of envisioning the future, and might be regarded as an exemplar of Sand's 'homme d'action' (*QR*, p.254). An industrialist who makes great changes in the Gargilesse area, Victor is totally opposed to Émile's visions of a better future society. He is 'une âme absolument vide d'idéal' (*Antoine*, p.150) and is thus portrayed as suffering from 'incurable aveuglement' (*Antoine*, p.151). Albert also refers to his family's inability to share his vision as 'aveuglement' (*Consuelo*, I, p.247), and Pierre Huguenin's efforts to share his vision are described as the attempt to 'agiter le flambeau de la vérité devant des aveugles' (*Compagnon*, p.149). Those who are 'esclaves de la réalité présente' (*Comtesse*, p.402) are thus blinded, unable to adopt a flexible conception of time which takes into account both the present and the possibility of change.

In contrast with these blinded individuals who are chained to the present (manifestations of the so-called 'hommes d'action'), Sand creates characters who are able to perceive of time as non-fixed or even non-existent. As a result of this ability, they do not despair at the sight of the present, but rather, they combine their understanding of this reality with the vision of the future reality. Marcelle de Blanchemont, for example, possesses a flexible understanding of time: '[Marcelle] savait […] bien […] que ce présent engourdi et malade est aux prises avec le passé qui le retient et l'avenir qui l'appelle.' (*Meunier*, p.44). This leads to her awareness of a potential world beyond the present: 'Elle voyait de grands

éclairs se croiser sur sa tête, elle pouvait pressentir une grande lutte plus ou moins éloignée.' (*Meunier*, p.44). The Marquis de Boisguilbault is also able to 'subir le présent avec patience en vue d'un avenir certain' (*Antoine*, p.199). For Albert de Rudolstadt, 'le temps n'existe pas' (*Comtesse*, p.440), since, he states, 'j'ai vu à la fois le passé, le présent et l'avenir' (*Consuelo*, II, p.364). He possesses an understanding of time which transcends its categorisation into the three unities: 'le passé, l'avenir, le présent! quelles vaines subtilités! […] l'homme ne les porte-t-il pas tous les trois dans son coeur, et son existence n'est-elle pas tout entière de ce triple milieu?' (*Comtesse*, p.448). This enables him to grasp the fact that progress is not merely desirable, but inevitable: 'tout ce que l'homme a rêvé et désiré de sublime est possible *et certain* dans l'avenir, par cette seule raison que la vérité est éternelle et absolue' (*Comtesse*, p.461, added emphasis). Those who are locked into 'la forme actuelle du monde' (*Comtesse*, p.464), on the other hand, cannot conceive of this possibility. The 'vérité' which Boisguilbault perceives, (that is, a vision of a more equal society), is 'positive', 'évidente', and 'incontestable' (*Antoine*, p.187). Sand disagrees with thinkers such as Arago, Lamennais, Béranger and Lamartine, who claim that an egalitarian social order is 'une folle et dangereuse utopie' since she believes that 'ce n'est point une utopie' (*Corr.*, VI, p.410, January 1844), but something which is waiting to happen. Sand's understanding of time therefore has a profound impact on her conception of vision and the mans of reaching insight, as the vision reached in a conceptual sense is no less real than that which is perceived by the physical eye: 'Je crois que le rêve d'une société meilleure […] a une sorte de réalité. N'y aurait-il de réalité absolue que dans les faits matériels?' (*Corr.*, VI, pp.614-615, September 1844). This question of where reality lies will be pursued in the next section, where I consider the consequences of Sand's evolved awareness of vision on her poetics of the novel.

Sand as visionary

Sand is well-known for her divergence from the realist paradigm, as she herself outlines, for example: 'je fais dans l'art des types populaires tels que je ne les vois plus, mais tels qu'ils devraient et pourraient être.' (*Corr*., IX, p.709, September 1850). Naomi Schor's *George Sand and Idealism* highlights the fact that Sand's aim is not to create worlds which are accurate representations of contemporary France, but rather, ones which represent her desired reality. This leads Sand to ponder on whether she is 'incapable de voir la vie réelle, et condamné à caresser tout seul des illusions trop douces pour être vraies'.[82] She therefore seems to confirm her reputation for flawed or defective vision here.[83] As I have shown, however, in many of her writings, Sand considers the vision contemplated by the mind to be no less real than the physical reality observed with the eyes. Rather than regarding her works as mere wish fulfilments, therefore, and labelling Sand as incapable of seeing reality, we should realise that her novels are in fact an attempt to write about 'la société future' (*Comtesse*, p.445), as she predicts the way in which French citizens will ultimately act.

The inability to break free from the present, as represented through some of her characters, is precisely the problem which Sand identifies in the contemporary mindset:

> On nous a si longtemps élevés dans la coutume de juger ce qui se doit par ce qui se fait, et ce qui se peut par ce qui est, qu'à tout instant nous tombons dans le découragement en voyant le présent donner tant de démentis à nos espérances. C'est que nous ne comprenons pas encore suffisamment les lois de la vie dans l'humanité. (*Compagnon*, p.147).

Sand's writing is specifically directed against the practice of assessing the world by taking the present alone into account, as she asks in *Compagnon*, 'pourquoi le présent nous ferait-il

[82] '*Maître Favilla*, Préface', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.386-387 (p.386).
[83] See my references to such statements in my Introduction, such as Henry James's assertion that Sand insisted on applying a 'coat of rose-colour' over reality. See James, 'George Sand', in *French Poets and Novelists* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1919 [1878]), pp.149-185 (p.185).

renoncer à notre idéal?' (*Compagnon*, p.147). This cry, which acts to justify the belief in socialist visions, also validates Sand's own literary practices. In addition to creating visionary heroes, Sand herself is also a form of prophet, refusing to comply with the realist preoccupation with the present.[84] My intention in drawing a parallel between Sand and her characters is not to identify her creations as mere projections of the author,[85] but rather, to consider Sand's novels as 'visions' in themselves.[86] Rather than compare the heroes' amorous or everyday experiences with Sand's own, I would like to point out the fact that the initiation of Consuelo, Albert and Boisguilbault to '[la] vérité éternelle' (*Antoine*, p.142) mirrors Sand's own intellectual trajectory.[87] In addition to the correspondence, which bears witness to a worldview in flux and a gradual move towards '[la] certitude' (*Corr*., III, p.712, February 1837), Sand's prefaces also provide great insights into the developments in her thinking. In the second preface to *Indiana* in 1842, for example, she describes the time which has passed since she wrote the novel as 'ces dix années de noviciat', during which she has been

> initié [sic] enfin à des idées plus larges, que j'ai puisées […] dans les progrès philosophiques qui se sont opérés autour de moi (en particulier dans quelques vastes intelligences que j'ai religieusement interrogées, et, en général, dans le spectacle des souffrances de mes semblables).[88]

Responding to what she sees in contemporary society ('le spectacle des souffrances de mes semblables'), Sand then goes beyond this reality, and it is this widening of her horizons which leads to the evolution of her understanding of time: 'j'avais du respect et de la

[84] Sand considers the poet (a term she uses to refer to writers in general) to be a form of prophet. See Flora Tristan's letter to Sand, March 1844, which indicates that Sand rejected the distinction Tristan drew between these two figures, in *Flora Tristan, la paria et son rêve: correspondance*, ed. by Stéphane Michaud (Fontenay/Saint Cloud: E.N.S. Editions, 1995), p.202.
[85] This is a long tradition in much criticism of works by women. A famous example in the case of Sand is André Maurois's biography, *Lélia, ou la vie de George Sand* (Paris: Hachette, 1952).
[86] 'Visions' are not taken here to mean fantastic or supernatural appearances, but rather, an appearance of a prophetic character, a conception of what will be achieved in future.
[87] I align myself here with 'autopsychological' rather than autobiographical criticism, to use Lidia Ginzburg's term as referred to by Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.31, note 26.
[88] '*Indiana*, Préface, 1842', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.90-95 (p.92).

sympathie pour le passé et pour l'avenir, et, dans le combat, je n'ai trouvé de calme pour mon esprit que le jour où j'ai bien compris que l'un ne devait pas être la violation et l'anéantissement, mais la continuation et le développement de l'autre.'[89]

As Naginski has recently asserted, Sand's novels should be considered not as a mirror of the present but rather, as 'un phare qui montrerait [la société] "telle qu'elle devait être", c'est-à-dire, "telle qu'elle serait bientôt" '.[90] During her lifetime, Sand was celebrated for her visionary qualities, especially by Russian writers and thinkers. The Russian revolutionary, Mikhail Bakunin, for example, refers to Sand as 'the Joan of Arc of our times, the guiding star, the prophetess of a great future'.[91] The union of the utopian and the prophetic is an element which Frank Bowman highlights in his discussion of the Romantic period, during which the location of hope in time also needed to be combined with a measure of transcendence, 'kept up there as well as out there'. He argues that 'this Victor Hugo could manage, confounding ocean and sky; others failed.'[92] I would argue that Sand also succeeded in developing her own complex notion of the visionary, as she combines her desire for the infinite and the ideal with her 'esprit prophétique' (*Corr.*, XII, p.500, July 1854).

Naginski focuses her analysis on Pierre Huguenin of *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, which she sees as 'l'illustration la plus éloquente' of this prophetic realism. Many of Sand's other novels, however, have not been examined in this way. I consider Pierre Huguenin as a development of Patience from *Mauprat*. As a proud member of the 'canaille' (*Mauprat,* p.113), Patience, demonstrates what the 'peuple' will ultimately achieve. Patience is naturally gifted but also undergoes a course of study, reading great philosophical and poetic works. His horizons widen as a result:

[89] Ibid.
[90] *George Sand mythographe*, pp.176, 178.
[91] Quoted by Francine Mallet, *George Sand* (Paris: Grasset, 1995 [1976]), p.419.
[92] Bowman, 'Illuminism, Utopia, Mythology', p.110.

> Depuis que je sais qu'il est permis à l'homme […] de peupler l'univers et de l'expliquer avec ses rêves, je vis tout entier dans la contemplation de l'univers; et, quand la vue des misères et des forfaits de la société brise mon cœur et soulève ma raison, […] je me dis que, puisque tous les hommes se sont entendus pour aimer l'œuvre divine, ils s'entendront aussi, un jour, pour s'aimer les uns les autres. (*Mauprat*, p.158).

Patience does not allow himself to be discouraged by 'la vue des misères et des forfaits de la société', persisting in his certainty that a day will come when class barriers will be overthrown. His support of Bernard in the trial represents a challenge to the Church and the Law, as he rises up against the units of social power, but achieves this through non-violent means. 'Joignez-vous à moi' he entreats the jury, 'embrassez la défense de la vérité' (*Mauprat*, p.387), indicating the fact that he serves a higher moral cause.

In a development of Patience, Sand creates Pierre, whom critics denounced as wholly unrealistic.[93] Even Marie d'Agoult, a former friend of Sand's and one who shared some of her ideas, affirmed that 'Pierre Huguenin est un caractère de fantaisie [...]. Pourquoi […] tout cet échafaudage d'invraisemblances pour ne nous initier en aucune façon à la vie réelle du prolétaire?'[94] Sand, however, writes in a note in the 1842 edition of this novel: 'j'écrivais ceci en 1841. Deux ans ne se sont pas encore écoulés, et déjà ces faits que j'attestais sont devenus évidents et nombreux' (*Compagnon*, p.111). The main criticism of Pierre was the fact that he is '[un] prolétaire *philosophe*' (*Compagnon*, p.147, added emphasis), a type of proletariat which Sand's detractors affirmed could never exist. But despite the cynicism shown towards this figure, Sand asserts that 'la régénération de l'intelligence est virtuellement dans le peuple, et […] les efforts encore très incomplets de cette intelligence pour se manifester sont

[93] For more detail on the reception of this work, see René Bourgeois, 'Introduction', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, pp.5-27; Naginski, *George Sand mythographe*, pp.165-171; Martine Watrelot, 'La récéption du roman *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* dans les milieux compagnonniques du XIX^{e} siècle', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France de George Sand*, pp.155-167.

[94] Article published 9 January, 1841 in *La Presse*, quoted by René Bourgeois, 'Introduction', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de la France*, pp.5-27 (pp.13-14).

le signal d'une vie nouvelle que l'on peut *prophétiser* à coup sûr' (added emphasis).[95] In this sense, Patience, the intuitive rustic genius, prefigures the more educated and engaged Pierre. Sand's predictions are realised in the revolutions which follow, as the people show increasing discontent and make efforts to rise against the ruling classes. In 1871, following the Commune uprising, Sand states:

> Je vous le disais, mes amis, et vous ne m'écoutiez pas. Vous me traitiez de rêveur et de poète. Pourtant les hommes de bien avaient eu leur moment d'action sur le peuple. Le bonhomme *Patience* et *Pierre Huguenin* étaient des portraits flattés, disiez-vous. L'art me semblait le vouloir ainsi, et pourtant ces portraits n'étaient pas des pures chimères.[96]

This echoes Hugo's portrayal of the writer as prophet, expressed, for example, in his 'Fonction du poète':

> Il voit, quand les peuples végètent!
> Ses rêves, toujours pleins d'amour,
> Sont faits des ombres que lui jettent
> Les choses qui seront un jour.
> On le raille. Qu'importe! il pense.[97]

Despite the public's disdain, writers must continue the task of enlightening their readers of 'les choses qui seront un jour.' Rather than indicating escapist or apolitical tendencies, therefore, Sand's rejection of the mimetic model is a means of asserting progressive values, in the same way as her visionary figures offer alternative social models. This links in with her criticism of the 'hommes d'action' in 'Quelques Réflexions sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau'. Sand highlights the difference between her two 'types' by noting that 'l'une […] arrange le présent, et l'autre […] prépare l'avenir.' (*QR,* p.255). Sand clearly aligns herself with the latter group, criticising the former by noting: 'Ce ne sont que d'habiles arrangeurs; ils ne

[95] 'Dialogues familiers sur la poésie des prolétaires, 1842', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.338-341 (p.341).
[96] 'A Charles Edmond, II', 1871, in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.420-423 (p.422, original emphasis).
[97] 'Fonction du poète', *Les Rayons et les Ombres,* in *Œuvres poétiques de Victor Hugo*, ed. by Pierre Albouy, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1964-74), I, pp.1023-1031 (p.1025).

créent rien' (*QR*, p.258). Therefore, the 'hommes d'action' or 'grands hommes', who focus exclusively on the present, are condemned by Sand for their lack of productivity and creativity. This damning indictment suggests a powerful reasoning behind Sand's rejection of the realist aesthetic, which is concerned with the present rather than constructing solutions for the future. As she asserts in an early preface to *Consuelo*: 'Des juges sérieux […] me disent souvent: Il n'y a pas de gens comme ceux que vous faites. Vos héros ou vos héroïnes de prédilection sont de vaines chimères. Je réponds: […] le but n'est pas de montrer seulement ce qui est, mais aussi ce qui doit être, ce qui sera.'[98]

Whilst one could argue that the unity and equality between individuals which Sand foresees does not emerge in her lifetime, the absolute accuracy of the vision is not the central point. Sand does not claim to possess supernatural powers, as she states: 'je ne suis pas illuminée du rayon prophétique' (*OA*, II, p.455).[99] Reflecting on *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* in 1845, she writes to Charles Poncy:

> Vous savez que je me souviens fort peu de la forme et du détail de mes compositions. Mais *ce que je me rappelle c'est la conviction qui les a fait naître*; c'est que *j'ai regardé comme certain* la possibilité d'un prolétaire égal par l'intelligence aux homes des classes privilégiées. [...] Pierre Huguenin est resté parmi les fictions, mais l'idée qui m'a fait rencontrer le type de Pierre Huguenin n'en était pas moins *une conception de la vérité*. […] Voilà comment les utopies se réalisent. C'est toujours *autrement et mieux*. (*Corr*., VII, pp.186-187, November 1845, added emphasis).

Therefore, when the vision does ultimately materialise, it may well differ from the original 'utopie'. However, what is important is the original 'conviction' which leads to 'la certitude que le progrès est la loi vitale de l'humanité.'[100] The Marquis de Boisguilbault argues in a similar way in *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*: 'qu'importe qu'on dise que c'est inapplicable?

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[98] '*Consuelo*, Préface-dédicace inédite, 1842', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.70-71 (p.71).
[99] She also notes in her correspondence, speaking on behalf of those who believe in social regeneration: 'nous ne lisons pas dans l'avenir et ne savons pas quelle forme matérielle devra prendre la pensée humaine à un moment donné.' (*Corr*., V, p.542, Decmber 1841).
[100] 'Préface générale, 1851', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.155-159 (p.156).

De ce que la plupart des hommes ne connaissent et ne pratiquent encore que l'erreur et le mensonge, s'ensuit-il que l'homme clairvoyant soit forcé de suivre les aveugles dans le précipice?' (*Antoine,* p.188). In *Consuelo* also, it is stated that even the wisest visionaries do not predict accurately, for if they did, they might in fact have be discouraged: 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau eût renié son œuvre, si la Montagne lui était apparue en rêve, surmontée de la guillotine'. (*Comtesse,* p.402). What is important is the very act of engaging in this form of thinking, since, it is stated: 'sans les visions contagieuses de l'extatique Jeanne-d'Arc, serions-nous encore Français? Sans les nobles chimères du dix-huitième siècle, aurions-nous conquis les premiers éléments de l'égalité?' (*Comtesse*, pp.401-402). Sand here highlights the fact that alternative models of vision ('visions', 'chimères') allow the individual to prepare for the future. In the next section, I will examine further Sand's commitment to this alternative form of vision, and will argue that her position is a composite one.

Double vision

We have seen that Sand denounces those who are fixated on the present at the expense of the future. However, this does not mean that the present must be ignored in favour of the prophetic vision. Rather, Sand shows that the flexible conception of temporality and awareness of eternity should lead to the observation of all temporal realities. This is particularly manifest in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*. Unlike Émile or Consuelo, who are guided by Boisguilbault and Wanda respectively, Pierre Huguenin does not have a mentor to initiate him to this understanding of time, and thus he allows himself to be discouraged by the present.[101] Pierre is greatly discouraged when the 'compagnons' fight against each other, and feels bitterly aware of the lack of social progress. He allows himself to be disheartened

[101] Pierre's father is incapable of seeing the future: 'il ne croyait pas à un meilleur avenir' (*Compagnon,* p.48). Despite his general espousal of egalitarian principles, Yseult's father, the comte de Villepreux, also has no notion of the future, his system being to 'supporter ce qui se fait ici-bas.' (*Compagnon,* p.267).

by present reality and, as a result, tries to escape into his dreams, as the narrator states: 'Que ne devait pas souffrir, en effet, cette organisation *toujours portée vers l'idéal*, et rejetée sans cesse dans la plus brutale réalité!' (*Compagnon*, p.145, added emphasis). Although this protagonist has progressed from Indiana and Lélia, in that he is hopeful that the new society is possible, he remains too distrustful of the present. The means of overcoming this is suggested in the novel:

> Si Pierre Huguenin avait pu se rendre bien compte du passé et de l'avenir du peuple, il ne se fût pas tant effrayé du présent où il le voyait engagé. Il se serait dit que le principe de fraternité et d'égalité, toujours en travail dans l'âme des opprimés, subissait en ce moment-là une crise nécessaire. (*Compagnon*, p.147).

The vision of the future must therefore be combined with the awareness of the present. Sand highlights the difficulty of this process of adapting one's viewpoint: 'Rien n'est plus difficile que de se placer à un point de vue tout à fait différent de celui d'où l'on regarde' (*Compagnon*, p.268). Pierre despairs at the comte de Villepreux's lack of tolerance towards him, but the narrator notes: 'Si Pierre eût connu la société, non telle qu'elle doit être, mais *telle qu'elle est*, il eût [...] conservé quelque respect [...] pour ce vieillard.' (*Compagnon*, p.268, added emphasis). In this sense, I regard Pierre as a representation of Sand's attitude towards Rousseau at this point. As Olivier Bara notes, both Rousseau and Pierre Huguenin are considered by Sand as 'ces hommes pensifs, *impuissants à faire aujourd'hui l'histoire*, mais chargés de nous dire que l'Histoire est, malgré tous les démentis offerts par le temps présent, en marche'.[102] Bara's intriguing remark on this issue is only one of many strands developed in this article, and the subject does not receive further attention. I would like to develop this idea by showing that this *rapprochement* between Pierre and the image of Rousseau created by Sand in her 1841 article offers the key to Sand's philosophical position

[102] Olivier Bara, ' "L'artisan philosophe" dans *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* de George Sand, ou du bon usage de Jean-Jacques Rousseau en 1840', in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France de George Sand*, pp.41-52 (p.52, added emphasis).

at this point. Unlike later visionaries such as Albert and Boisguilbault, Pierre has not yet learnt how to navigate between the observation of the present and the envisioning of a better future, and it is this navigation between different visual positions which is crucial in becoming a true visionary.

Despite Sand's admiration of the 'hommes de méditation', particularly in contrast with the 'hommes d'action', she also criticises the former by stating that individuals such as Rousseau are 'injustes ou insensés, ne connaissant point assez les hommes de leur époque *faute de pouvoir les étudier* en paix et en liberté, présumant ou désespérant trop d'eux, *se faisant de trop riantes illusions* ou se livrant à de trop sombres découragements […]' (*QR*, p.258, added emphasis). Without examining contemporary society adequately, therefore, the visionaries will be trapped in their own internal visions. The tragic outcome of this is that they will remain '[des] astres presque toujours voilés! flambeaux tourmentés par le vent, qui presque tous s'éteignent dans l'orage sans avoir éclairé au-delà d'un certain point de la route, malgré de rapides éclairs et de brillantes lueurs.' (*QR*, p.258). The illuminating power of these figures, so crucial to Sand's understanding of the visionary, will therefore be cloaked in darkness. Although Bara briefly mentions Pierre's lack of action, it is the hope offered by the figure of Pierre which is highlighted in his article. Naginski also considers Pierre to be an exemplary prophet figure.[103] I would argue, however, that Sand's *criticism* of Pierre's incapacity to put his principles into action is crucial in understanding the thrust of her 1840s novels. The fact that Pierre is incapable of taking the present into account reveals him as a failed visionary, in the same way as Sand condemns Rousseau for being 'aveuglé' (*QR*, 266) to the present. *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* ends as Pierre is offered the opportunity to marry Yseult and thus to possess the wealth and power to realise his ideals. Lacking the flexible understanding of time, however, 'il ne trouva en lui qu'incertitude et perplexité'

[103] Naginski considers Pierre, along with Wanda, and Alexis from *Spiridion*, to be 'des personnages qui annoncent un nouvel âge et une nouvelle société', *George Sand mythographe*, p.179.

(*Compagnon*, p.378). He cannot understand that the problem of good and evil is '[une] distinction fictive dans l'ordre abstrait, en présence de l'idée éternelle; vraie seulement dans l'ordre des choses créées dans la manifestation temporaire.' (*Compagnon*, p.147).

My interpretation of Sand's visionary enables us to see that the most successful Sandian visionaries are those who *combine* prophetic insights with the observation of the present. Sand begins developing this principle during the 1830s, as she moves away from the introspective visual model of her early works. Admiring the principles of the socialist lawyer, Michel de Bourges, for example, she finds his position too idealistic, reminding him that 'on ne peut pas rêver toujours' (*OA*, II, p.333). In *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand quotes a statement she made to Michel de Bourges in 1835:

> Tant que durera le monde, il y aura des fous occupés à regarder par terre sans se douter qu'il y a un ciel sur leurs têtes, et des fous qui, regardant trop le ciel, ne tiendront pas assez de compte de ceux qui ne voient qu'à leurs pieds. Il y a donc une sagesse qui manque à tous les hommes, une sagesse qui doit embrasser la vue de l'infini et celle du monde fini où nous sommes. (*OA*, II, p.334).[104]

Here, Sand expresses the need for a balance of different visual models, contrasting two extreme positions. She does not, therefore, advocate a wholesale rejection of 'la vue […] du monde fini où nous sommes.' Even Pierre Leroux is criticised by Sand for his 'excès de l'abstraction' (*Corr*., XI, p.184, May 1852). This is further developed in the 1841 article on Rousseau. In this piece which sets up two contrasting models of engaging with the world, she speaks at length of her predecessors and argues that, not only is the 'homme d'action' erroneous, but 'l'homme de méditation' also:

> Jean-Jacques d'une part; Jean-Jacques le penseur, l'homme de génie et de méditation, *l'homme misérable, injuste et désespéré*. De l'autre, Voltaire, Diderot et les holbachiens, les hommes du jour, les critiques pleins d'action et de succès, applicateurs de la philosophie du dix-huitième siècle, *désorganisant la société sans songer sérieusement au lendemain*. (*QR*, p.259, added emphasis).

[104] I intepret 'hommes' here as referring to the human race, not the masculine.

Whereas Rousseau is too discouraged by contemporary reality, the other thinkers are too much 'les hommes du jour', without considering the future. Applying this problem to contemporary France, Sand explains that 'nous sommes pour Voltaire ou pour Rousseau, [...] lorsque nous devrions reconnaître que nous avons été engendrés spirituellement par les uns et par les autres.' (*QR*, p.262). Sand thus creates a genealogy for her position here, fashioning a clear-cut division between the two camps as a means of highlighting her own position promoting unity and reconciliation. Rather than the current battle between 'le présent et l'avenir' (*QR*, p.258), what Sand advocates is the combination of the observation of the present with the vision of the future.

Whereas lack of faith in progress and in the perfectibility of man currently prevents this from happening, Sand foresees the day when the distinction between the two visual models will vanish:

> Le jour où la notion du progrès sera consacrée comme principe fondamental de toute législation sur la terre, […] ce jour-là les institutions seront revêtues d'un caractère durable parce que l'essence même de la foi sera le renouvellement perpétuel des formes. […] Quand ce jour, dont nous saluons l'aube dans notre pensée, sera venu pour nos descendants, cette vaine distinction des hommes forts et des grands hommes, de penseurs et des réalisateurs, des philosophes et des administrateurs, s'effacera comme un rêve des ténèbres. (*QR*, pp.256-257).

By making this prediction, Sand once again distinguishes herself from those who can see only 'le jour présent', producing no more than 'des faits éphémères sans valeur et sans effet le lendemain.' (*QR*, p.258). However, she also goes beyond this, transcending the distinction between the the thinker (the visionary) and the 'réalisateur' (the man of the present). Sand aims for a reconciliatory position which brings together the two different means of engaging with reality. She reasserts this point in November 1844. In an article entitled 'La politique et le socialisme', Sand criticises politicians for insufficient reflection on the one hand, and

socialists for insufficient action and engagement with reality on the other. She concludes that it is no good thing to be 'socialistes' or 'politiques' 'si ces mots signifient que nous sommes fatalement des illuminés ou des aveugles'.[105] Once again using visual analogies as part of her rhetoric on knowledge and understanding, Sand shows that being entrenched in either of these mindsets is fatal. What is needed is a dialogue between individuals, in order to bring an end to the divorce between visionary principles and blind action.

This double vision which I have revealed at work in her thinking is crucial for our understanding of Sand's conception of literature and its aims at this point in her career. Although it is true that Sand advocates the dream of a better future in her novels, she also combines this with the observation of the present. Whereas her early novels focus on the inner world, she now considers it crucial for the writer to possess a dual awareness: both of the eternal, conceptual world and of the present, external reality. Writing to Charles Poncy, for example, in January 1844, she establishes a contrast between reality and what she terms 'la vérité': 'La réalité, c'est le spectacle des choses matérielles, c'est changeant, mobile, transitoire, transformable, éphémère comme elles. Ce n'est donc pas la vérité. La vérité est immuable et éternelle.' (*Corr*., VI, p.411). She considers Poncy to be capable of perceiving both these levels of existence, since he is both 'le poète de réalité' and 'le poète de vérité':

> Voilà pourquoi quand vous écrivez en prose [...] et quand vous regardez la misère et la dépravation avec les yeux du corps, vous vous désolez au spectacle de la réalité. Mais quand vous saisissez la lyre, vos yeux ne regardent plus la terre, vous vous levez jusqu'à Dieu, vous avez le besoin des choses célestes, le sentiment de l'éternelle justice, la révélation de l'éternelle beauté. C'est alors que, vous rappelant les souffrances de la *réalité*, et pressée par la vision sublime de la *vérité*, vous faites cette pièce admirable de *l'aspiration* qui peint si bien l'une et l'autre. (*Corr*., VI, pp.411-12, original emphasis).

[105] Sand, 'La politique et le socialisme', in *Questions politiques et sociales* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1879), pp.63-92 (p.88).

Sand insists that present reality, seen 'avec les yeux du corps', must be combined with the transcendent 'vérité', seen with the eyes of the mind. In order to create the work of art, *both* conceptions of vision must be incorporated into the artist's project: '*Voyez* donc la réalité pour souffrir et pleurer sur les maux de la terre. *Voyez* la vérité pour avoir confiance en Dieu et lire dans l'avenir du monde.' (*Corr*., VI, p.412, added emphasis). Sand positions her own writerly eye between the two forms of vision, in conjunction with her fluid sense of time, as she expresses in a preface in 1842:

> Il y a des types qui existent dans le fait. Il en est qui n'ont reçu encore leur manifestation que dans l'idée. Cette manifestation-là précède toujours l'autre; elle en est le signe certain, l'avant-coureur infaillible. Je vois le mal et je rêve le bien, preuve que le mal est derrière moi, le bien en avant, *mon regard entre les deux*. (added emphasis).[106]

Whereas Sand finds it difficult to navigate between her internal visions and external reality in her early novels, she now integrates the two orders of experience.

This notion of combining the observation of reality with aspiration towards the infinite figures in Sand's writing on two levels. Firstly, the visionary characters who do not unite with more pragmatically minded individuals fail. Patience exists in a state of 'rêverie continuelle' (*Mauprat*, p.63) and Pierre is described as 'cette organisation toujours portée vers l'idéal' (*Compagnon*, p.145). Since they have no practical counterpart, they do not succeed in making great changes in society. As we have seen, it is this which leads to Pierre's failure. Meditating on the possibility of inheriting Yseult de Villepreux's great wealth through marriage, he wonders whether he would be capable of applying his ideas. He realises, however, that 'sa nature, toute mystique, toute tournée à la contemplation méditative, excluait cette activité pratique, cette habileté spéciale […] qui seraient nécessaires

[106] '*Consuelo*, Préface-dédicace inédite, 1842', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.70-71 (p.71). This is also reminiscent of Sand's 1841 article on Rousseau, where she refers to the two different types: 'je divise les hommes éminents en deux parts, l'une qui arrange le présent, et l'autre qui prépare l'avenir. *L'une succède toujours à l'autre*. Après les penseurs […], viennent des hommes forts qui réalisent le rêve des grands hommes et l'appliquent à leur époque' (*QR*, pp.255-256, added emphasis).

[…] pour pratiquer le bien dans une société livrée au mal.' (*Compagnon*, p.378).[107] Since he is exclusively devoted to 'la contemplation méditative', he cannot be 'l'homme de son temps' (*Compagnon*, p.378) and engage with the present. The novel closes with an image of resignation and despair rather than aspiration: 'Pierre Huguenin, pâle comme un linceul, amaigri, vieilli de dix années en un jour, travaillait d'un air calme, et répondait avec douceur aux caresses et aux questions de son père.' (*Compagnon*, p.382). Pierre's failure is highlighted by Sand four years later. In a letter to the worker-poet, Charles Poncy, she asserts that Poncy is the realisation of her vision, Pierre, noting: 'vous voyez aussi loin que lui.' However, she also stresses: 'vous puisez vos joies, vos émotions, votre force *dans un milieu plus réel et plus sain*.' (*Corr*., VII, p.187, November 1845, added emphasis). Engaging with reality in this way is thus considered to be healthier and more constructive in that it leads to outcomes.[108]

Pierre Huguenin's lack of pragmatism also applies to Albert, 'un esprit essentiellement métaphysique' (*Comtesse*, p.357), Henri Lémor, 'un rêveur obstiné et incorrigible' (*Meunier*, p.39), Boisguilbault, 'l'homme le moins capable du monde d'organiser et de réaliser' (*Antoine*, p.372), amd to Consuelo, 'bien plus portée à la poésie de l'âme qu'à la sèche appréciation des tristes réalités de la vie présente' (*Consuelo*, p.276). However, the difference is that these individuals receive the help of others to aid them in their mission. Émile, for example, provides Boisguilbault with the practical application of his theories, and Louis the miller is the antidote to Marcelle and Henri's exaggerated visions in *Le Meunier d'Angibault*.

[107] In this sense of being aware of the problems of society but being unable to act, Simon can be regarded as a precursor for Pierre: 'Il souffrait, mais non pas comme la plupart de ceux qui se lamentent de leur impuissance; il subissait en silence le mal des grandes âmes. […] "Quand donc te produirai-je au jour, dragon? s'écriait-il dans son délire; quand donc te lancerai-je devant moi à travers le monde pour m'y frayer une route […]?"' *Simon* (1836), p.8.

[108] Sand notes in *Histoire de ma vie*: 'Après les désespérances de ma jeunesse, trop d'illusions me gouvernèrent. Au scepticisme maladif succéda trop de bienveillance et d'ingénuité.' (*OA*, II, p.439).

Secondly, the need for observation of the present in addition to internal vision also operates on a metapoetic level, as Sand moves on from the depiction of highly idealised, mythological visionaries to prophets who are more grounded in the contemporary and the concrete. Pierre, Consuelo and Albert are sublime, even godly figures. Pierre is 'rempli de l'esprit du Seigneur' (*Compagnon*, p.132), Consuelo is 'éclairée d'une auréole céleste' (*Comtesse*, p.402), and Albert is 'l'image de l'âme universelle que nous appelons Dieu' (*Comtesse*, p.357). *Consuelo* is set in a mystical, spiritual and mythological framework, and there is an epic dimension to this work, in which the heroes' aim is to save humanity at large.[109] This is not the case for the later novels, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* and *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, where the visionary is less idealised.

Whereas *Consuelo* is marked by philosophy, mythology and illuminism, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* is explicitly anchored in a contemporaneous reality: 'ceci se passait tout récemment, peut-être l'année dernière' (*Meunier*, p.45), and particular emphasis is placed on the fact that events take place 'au jour d'aujourd'hui.'[110] Although Marcelle de Blanchemont can, in a sense, be regarded as a continuation of the pythic figure, there is no mythological dimension to this character, unlike Myrza, Lélia, Consuelo and Wanda. The locality is also very specific, and the novel is grounded in a clearly delineated social and economic framework. In this respect, Béatrice Didier asserts that the socialism of *Meunier* is to be found in its denunciation of the present rather than in the utopia it offers.[111] Naomi Schor, on the other hand, deplores this tendency to draw out the work's realism at the expense of its idealism, highlighting instead the novel's idealisation of the destitute but spiritually elevated and scrupulously clean lower classes.[112] My interpretation of this work as a visionary novel,

[109] The 'invisibles' tell Consuelo, for example: 'Va donc, comme les jeunes héros de l'antiquité, chercher l'initiation à travers les épreuves des mystères sacrés.' (*Comtesse*, p.380).
[110] See, for example, *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, pp.121, 123, 124, 125, 128, 151. As Didier notes, Sand considered this phrase as a possible title for the novel. See p.121, footnote 1.
[111] Didier, 'Préface', in *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1985), pp.7-21 (p.12).
[112] Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, pp.109-111.

however, shows that it is the reconciliation of theory and practice – hitherto unseen in *Mauprat*, *Compagnon* or *Consuelo* – which makes this work stand out in Sand's œuvre, as Marcelle and Henri's 'utopies' (*Meunier*, pp.37, 242) and 'beaux rêves' (*Meunier*, p.190) are combined with the more pragmatic attitude of the miller of the title, 'un homme de bon conseil' (*Meunier*, p.229). These characters succeed in founding a small colony of their own, in contrast with Pierre and Albert, who are incapable of acting on their ideals.

Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine is also firmly rooted in the France of the 1840s. A clear social framework is delineated in this novel, comprising the avaricious and industrialist bourgeoisie, the impoverished nobility, and the artisan. The novel depicts the physical, moral and economic destruction wrought on the local community by ruthless industry, embodied in Victor Cardonnet. This novel goes even further than *Le Meunier d'Angibault* in its realisation of the ideal, as plans are drawn up for a commune which will bring together varied members of the community at large. Thanks to Émile, Boisguilbault's vision will go beyond the theoretical: 'après avoir bien réfléchi, et bien *étudié* la réalité, lui qui a toujours *rêvé* le salut de la nature humaine dans l'organisation et le développement de la science agricole, *il trouve les moyens de transition* qui empêchent la chaîne du passé à l'avenir d'être déplorablement brisée.' (*Antoine*, p.373, added emphasis). Thus the close study of reality ('bien étudiér la réalité') must be linked with the ideal, 'le rêve'. Whereas Pierre Huguenin's vision of a 'jardin universel' (*Compagnon*, p.256) manifests itself only as a dream sequence, *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* ends with plans being made for 'le jardin de la commune' (*Antoine*, p.373) to be put into place, as the ideas developed in *Mauprat*, *Compagnon and Consuelo* are combined here with planning and practical application. In this sense, I would argue that *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* is Sand's most far-reaching vision. Although the aristocratic visionary, the Marquis de Boisguilbault, might appear as a regression from the morally and intellectually elevated lower-class heroes of *Mauprat* and *Compagnon*, *Antoine* in fact

features three visionaries: the learned aristocrat (Boisguilbault), the practical bourgeois (Émile) and the intuitive peasant (Jean).[113] In this novel, examining the present is joined with the envisioning the future and, echoing Albert's call for 'la Tétrade humaine' (*Comtesse*, p.458), the novel presents an ambitious vision which brings together three visionaries from different social classes, articulating Sand's belief in social solidarity as '[la] seule voie de salut ouverte à la société future'.[114]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have interpreted Sand's writings between 1837 and 1847 as examples of her ability to reconcile different and apparently contradictory approaches to reality. I have argued that Sand's novels aim to bridge the gap between the 'seers' and the blinded, those who are open to the possibility of change and those who are blinded to it. In doing so, I have maintained that Sand's uvre is fundamentally concerned with different means of looking at the world. By examining her later visionary works, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* and *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, in addition to novels such as *Compagnon* and *Consuelo*, I have shown that Sand not only develops the conceptual faculty of inner vision into a more constructive, prophetic capacity, but also combines the envisioning of 'la vérité étérnelle' (*Antoine*, p.142) with the contemplation of the physical, earth-bound present. This is demonstrated both through the characters, who join with practical counterparts, and on a metapoetic level, as Sand anchors her utopian visions in a more concrete reality. This investigation has therefore highlighted Sand's syncretism, in that she rejects a monolithic means of engaging with and representing reality. In line with this intellectual flexibility, her visionaries are a mixture of

[113] Jean Jappeloup possesses a vision of a more egalitarian future, and predicts Victor Cardonnet's downfall. Attention is drawn to his eyes: 'le feu de la pénétration jaillissait de ses yeux clairs' (*Antoine*, p.61), and 'ses yeux noirs brillaient si fort' (*Antoine*, p.261).
[114] Sand, 'Notice, 1851', in *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, pp.31-33, (p.33).

intellectuals, philosophers, diverse religious figures, artists, aristocrats and also intuitive, uneducated peasants, travellers, and manual workers. Through these characters, with their fluid conception of temporality and ability to liberate themselves from contemporary practices, Sand proposes a vision which applies spiritual and moral truths to political and social problems. The means through which this understanding is reached is a cooperative and egalitarian process whereby gifted prophets and pragmatic individuals, men and women, young and old, work together, as Sand rejects the patriarchal master-apprentice model, and a monologic, didactic form of writing. Rejecting what she regards as the age's imprisonment in the present and the obsession with 'ce qui se fait, et […] ce qui est' (*Compagnon*, p.147), Sand promotes an unorthodox, multiple conception of time, liberating the individual from the present through an awareness of eternity which enables the envisioning of progress. Sand thus also performs an implicit metaliterary critique of those novelists she considers as 'habiles arrangeurs' (*QR*, p.258), fixated on the present but incapable of creating a new world, in contrast with her own works which proclaim 'la société future' (*Comtesse*, p.445). Sand defines the artist's project by asserting that to create art is to 'incarner un monde idéal dans un monde réel' (*Corr*., VI, p.108, April 1843). It is this ability to combine the observation of present reality with the envisioning of an eternal, transcendent and metaphysical truth which is at work in her visionary creations. In my next chapter, I will consider a further form of conceptual vision, as I examine Sand's creative engagement with the visual arts and the creation of mental 'tableaux' in her novels.

Chapter 3

The function of the visual arts in the 1840s novels

Introduction

Describing her discovery of books in *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand makes a revealing statement which attests to her early attraction to images: 'l'amour du roman s'empara de moi passionnément avant que j'eusse fini d'apprendre à lire […]. Je ne cherchais dans les livres que les images.' (*OA*, I, p.541). In this chapter I will consider Sand's interaction with images by examining her literary engagement with painting. I will argue that many of her novels are inspired by paintings, that her works are painterly in style, and that she hopes to inspire artistic insight in her readers. I will consider two important ways in which Sand uses the painterly model in her writing. Firstly, I examine how she uses the model of painting as a creative template for refashioning current reality in the mind. I develop the previous chapter's examination of Sand's 1840s novels by arguing that, in addition to reconfiguring reality through her visions of the future, Sand also puts into practice a process which I will term 'repainting'. Secondly, I show that Sand uses painterly techniques to describe landscapes from specific character viewpoints in order to demonstrate the acquisition of aesthetic insight.

Given how much the function of painting has been studied in the works of other nineteenth-century writers, it is surprising to note the corresponding lack of such studies on Sand.[1] The topic has too often been limited to studies of her personal relationships with

[1] See, for example, Olivier Bonard, *La Peinture dans la création balzacienne* (Geneva: Droz, 1969); Diana Knight, *Balzac and the Model of Painting* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007); William J. Berg, *The Visual Novel: Émile Zola and the Art of his Times* (University Parks: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Adrianne Tooke, *Flaubert and the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The collection of essays, *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. by Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994) includes no mention of George Sand.

famous artists and her alleged attempts to reproduce visual sources in her novels.[2] The recent collection of studies on Sand and the arts brings together several contributions on the intersections between her writing and music, the theatre and the opera, but includes only one article under the rubric 'Sand et la peinture', which studies Sand's reaction to her two portraits by Delacroix.[3] Sand's interaction with painting through her writing has been analysed by very few critics. Isabelle Naginski makes an intriguing suggestion in her study of Sand's early works, stating that Sand 'started to write as if she were drawing', and referring to the 'decidedly pictorial style' of her early prose. [4] However, this line of enquiry is not fully developed in Naginski's study. Sophie Martin-Dehaye's *George Sand et la peinture* is written from the perspective of art history. The section entitled 'Entre littérature et peinture' provides a useful guide to some of the references made to painting and painters in Sand's works, but the study does not go beyond the assertion that Sand often approaches writing 'en peintre', with no explanation of what this might mean, or any investigation of the implications of such an argument.[5] I will examine the role that the visual arts play in the Sandian novel, arguing that Sand employs the model of painting as a means of furthering her socialist ideal, both through the imaginative process of what I will define as 'repainting' reality, and through the focalisation of character viewpoints.

Marie-Cécile Levet's study, *Le Paysage dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand*, provides an insightful overview of the various forms and symbolic importance of landscape in Sand's works, and also considers the impact of historical and cultural factors in the interpretation of landscape as a social and political space. Whereas Levet's main aim,

[2] See, for example, Christine Chambaz-Bertrand, 'George Sand et Delacroix', *Présence de George Sand*, 27 (October 1986), 29-34; Bernadette Chovelon, 'Un ami de George Sand, le peintre Eugène Lambert', *Présence de George Sand*, 27 (October 1986), 35-39; Marie-Sylvie Poli, ' "Une peinture des mots" (À propos des paysages d'*Un Hiver en Majorque*)', *Présence de George Sand*, 27 (October 1986), 56-60.
[3] Claude Moins, 'George Sand et Delacroix', in *George Sand et les arts*, ed. by Marielle Caors (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 2004), pp.215-225.
[4] Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life* (New Brunwick; London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.45.
[5] Sophie Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture* (Paris: Royer, 2006), p.71.

however, is to 'analyser le caractère du paysage', my interest lies in Sand's continued concern throughout her œuvre with the different means of learning about the world, and how this interacts with her aesthetic positioning.[6] Rather than taking a survey approach to Sand's writing, I focus on specific works in order to trace an evolution in her conception of vision and the means of reaching insight.

I will focus my readings on a selection of texts in which Sand represents both her local area and more far-flung regions, in a combination of pastoral novels (*Le Meunier d'Angibault*, 1845, *La Mare au diable*, 1846), an autobiographical text (*Un Hiver à Majorque*, 1841), and an adventure novel (*Le Piccinino*, 1847).[7] Other works could have been considered, such as *Les Maîtres mosaïstes* (1838), *Consuelo* (1842-3) and *Teverino* (1846), but time and space have necessitated a selective approach. I have chosen a representative sample of works which illustrate Sand's manipulation of painterly techniques in the service of her moral vision. Sand's writing becomes increasingly focused on the visual arts and the figure of the artist from the late 1830s onwards, and, similarly to writers such as Balzac and Hugo, she displays a tendency towards the pictorial in her writing. More specifically, many of her works in the 1840s are situated in her home region of the Berry, and assign particular attention to the depiction of landscape. This concern with landscape immediately offers itself to painting, the medium most suited to visual phenomena and spatial dimensions. As Michel Collot states, 'le paysage est lié, dans notre histoire, à la peinture.'[8] However, as I shall demonstrate, Sand's works go beyond the generic links between landscape and painting. The period to be examined constitutes Sand's most engaged period in political terms, and it is also from the late 1830s onwards that she takes an increasing interest

[6] Marie-Cécile Levet, *Le Paysage dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand* (Lille: Atelier national de reproduction des thèses, 2006), p.191.
[7] Sand's writing continues to display fruitful interaction with the visual arts in the 1850s and 1860s; however, it performs a different function in these novels, acting as an alternative to the scientific view of the world, which I will consider in my next chapter.
[8] Michel Collot, *Paysage et poésie du romantisme à nos jours* (Paris: Corti, 2005), p.178.

in art, inspired in particular by Delacroix, with whom she corresponds most frequently between 1838 and 1848.

Sand's interactive responses to art

Sand's response to images as a child and as a young woman in Paris reveals a keen awareness of this medium's imaginative and creative potential. *Histoire de ma vie* shows that visual images are not considered by Sand as a straightforward means of expressing reality; rather, they are viewed as a source of creative inspiration for reworking that reality. As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, Sand's fascination with stories and with escaping to other worlds develops before she can read, and is inspired by the illustrations accompanying texts rather than the words themselves. Speaking on the Greek myths, for example, she states that, 'sans lire le texte, j'appris bien vite, grâce aux images, les principales données de la fabulation antique, et cela m'intéressait prodigieusement.' (*OA*, I, p.540). These pictures are not passively absorbed; rather, her mind immediately sets to work in experimenting with them and developing them: 'tout ce que j'apprenais par les yeux […] entrait en ébullition dans ma petite tête, et j'y rêvais au point de perdre souvent la notion de la réalité et du milieu où je me trouvais […]. […] je composais à haute voix d'interminables contes que ma mère appelait mes romans' (*OA*, I, pp.541-542).

Unusual visual objects often capture her attention; a favourite toy as a child, for example, is a table centrepiece decorated with a porcelain Venus and a mirror set in the bottom. This mirror becomes 'un bassin d'eau vive' (*OA*, I, p.555) in Aurore's mind and the reflections of the candlelight set off her imagination. The object becomes 'tout un monde enchanté' for her, where she creates 'des paysages ou des jardins magiques' (*OA*, I, p.555) reflected in the 'lake'. This attraction to images and reflections prefigures another experience

with a mirror in Spain. Left alone in her family apartment, she relishes the opportunity to experiment with a looking glass. Taking images which she has seen 'soit sur la scène, soit dans une gravure' (*OA*, I, p.571) as her source, she performs a sacrificial scene in front of the mirror using a white rabbit and robes as props. So engrossed is she in this other world accessed through her imagination that she forgets that the dancing figure in front of her is in fact her own reflection. Rather than taking visual images at face value, therefore, the child who will become George Sand employs these as starting points for her own creativity, and the mirror, the central mimetic metaphor within artistic creation, is associated by Sand with innovation and inspiration.

Her creative reaction to the visual arts is also illustrated in one of her earliest experiences of painting. In *Histoire de ma vie*, she describes a Titian painting hanging in the church at the convent she attends in Paris. What is interesting about this incident is the fact that she can barely see the artwork, as she states: 'placé trop loin des regards et dans un coin privé de lumière, comme il était très noir par lui-même, on ne distinguait que des masses d'une couleur chaude sur un fond obscur.' (*OA*, I, p.948). Aurore appreciates this piece by filling in the details which she cannot make out: 'à force de le regarder je l'avais deviné' (*OA*, I, p.948). By the winter the painting is not even momentarily illuminated, but she affirms that 'l'objet contemplé n'était plus aussi nécessaire à ma vue qu'à ma pensée.' (*OA*, I, p.948). The visual artwork therefore serves as a springboard for reflection and even creation, as she develops her own painting in her mind based on what she has seen.[9]

[9] Given Sand's keen interest in eighteenth-century philosophy (see, for example, *OA*, I, p.1053), she might well have inherited this tendency to rework what she sees from her readings. The belief that sight is the most powerful sense in providing inspiration for the imagination held currency then also. See, for example, Voltaire's assertion: '[l']immense étendue [de la vue] enrichit plus l'*imagination* que tous les autres sens ensemble.' 'Imagination, imaginer' in *L'Encyclopédie*, ed. by Diderot and d'Alembert, 29 vols (Paris: Briasson et al, 1751-1772) VIII, pp.560-564 (p.561, original emphasis). Sand owned a copy of this work. See Georges Lubin, 'Les auteurs du XVIII^{e} siècle dans la bibliothèque de George Sand', *Présence de George Sand*, 23 (June 1985), 4-8.

Sand takes this imaginative response to painting further when she visits art galleries in Paris in 1831, just before writing her first novel. Having visited the Louvre and the royal museum of Luxembourg several times, she now realises that she had not truly appreciated the artworks there: 'j'avais toujours regardé sans voir' (*OA*, II, p.106). She now begins to experience the works in a different way: 'j'étais comme enivrée, comme clouée devant les Titien, les Tintoret, les Rubens' (*OA*, II, p.106), 'j'étais dominée, j'étais transportée dans un monde nouveau […] l'univers se révélait à moi' (*OA*, II, pp.106-107). Finally, she revisits the artworks in her mind at night, and they inspire acts of re-creation, as she comes to realise the potential of art as a means of creating 'la poésie dans la réalité' (*OA*, II, p.106). It is at this point that she states, 'je me sentais artiste' (*OA*, II, p.105), and 'il me semblait avoir conquis je ne sais quel trésor d'infini dont j'avais ignoré l'existence.' (*OA*, II, p.107). Thus, not dissimilarly from her childhood tendency to create stories inspired by pictures, Sand's discovery of this 'trésor d'infini', her vocation as a creator of art, coincides not with an awareness of her writing ability, but with the realisation of her sensitivity to visual artworks.[10] In this sense, we can begin to appreciate how visual images operate as a powerful source of inspiration for Sand as a creative artist and which she will later use as a model for artistic insight in her novels.

It should also be noted that Sand's first artistic productions were paintings and not novels, as she supported herself during her early days in Paris through painting.[11] This was not very lucrative, however, and she turned to writing, with the success of *Indiana* in 1832 leading her firmly into the world of literature and the renunciation of painting as a career. Yet Sand continued to paint on a small scale throughout her life, and maintained an interest in the

[10] Naginski also notes that 'the visual arts unleashed her dormant writing talents', *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.47.

[11] Emmanuel Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays*, ed. by J. Busse (Paris: Gründ, 1999) lists Sand as an 'écrivain, peintre, dessinatrice et décoratrice', see Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture*, p.71. See also *George Sand: une nature d'artiste*, ed. by Catherine de Bourgoing and others (Paris: Paris musées, 2004) and Christian Bernadac, *George Sand: dessins et aquarelles* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1992) for more on Sand's paintings.

visual arts. Similarly to her tendency to use painterly techniques in her novels to describe natural views, her artworks are also primarily landscapes. An evolution can be traced throughout these paintings, moving from her copies of other works to her own watercolours, as Martin-Dehaye outlines: 'elle se détache […] de plus en plus des modèles de copie ou visuels pour chercher l'ailleurs et la précision dans sa propre imagination.'[12] Sand's greatest originality in this medium lies in her development of what she terms her 'dendrites' during the 1870s. She describes this process: 'vous savez comment Maurice me prépare mes dendrites: il écrase entre deux cartons bristol des couleurs à l'aquarelle. Cet écrasement produit des nervures parfois curieuses. Mon imagination aidant, j'y vois des bois, des forêts ou des lacs, et j'accentue ces formes vagues produites par le hasard.'[13] This method, which can be compared to Hugo's use of inkblot drawings in terms of their abstract quality, places individual interpretation and imagination at the centre of the artistic process, demonstrating the extent to which Sand's response to visual images is primarily creative and inventive. In the next section I will show that it is this creativity which is revealed in Sand's engagement with the pictorial in her writing.

Repainting reality

This section will examine the ways in which Sand uses the model of painting in her novels to recreate external reality. In *Un Hiver à Majorque*, the account of her stay in Majorca in the winter of 1837-1838, the contemplation of architectural ruins on this island leads Sand to perform two imaginative acts of re-creation. Firstly, the ruins of a monastery inspire her to write a short story within her text recounting a discussion between an old monk and a young artist. The discussion which ensues is centred on the role of the artist in society. The young

[12] Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture*, p.59.
[13] Quoted in Henri Amic, *George Sand, Mes Souvenirs* (Calmann-Lévy, 1891), p.47.

man's initial attitude: 'je ne crois qu'à l'art' (*Majorque*, p.1290), is revealed by the monk to be a selfish, narrow-minded and sterile conception of the creative process. The latter's relation of his decade of torture in the monastery under the Spanish Inquisition brings about an awareness in the young painter that works of art (here, the monastery), should not be separated from their social and cultural contexts. Rather than lament the destruction wrought on the monastery, the monk explains that this was a positive act, before describing the artwork which he would have created: 'Si j'avais été peintre, moi, j'aurais fait un beau tableau consacré à retracer le jour de ma délivrance; j'aurais représenté des hommes hardis et robustes, le marteau dans une main et le flambeau dans l'autre, pénétrant dans ces limbes de l'Inquisition que je viens de te montrer' (*Majorque*, p.1295). This imaginary painting created by the monk is, therefore, both a reaction and an alternative to the original work of art, the monastery, which represents his years of torture. The locus of suffering under a dominating, repressive religion is replaced by a vision of health, freedom and hope. In addition to being judged on aesthetic criteria, the monk's virtual work also possesses a powerful moral drive:

> C'eût été un sujet aussi beau, aussi approprié à mon temps que le Jugement dernier de Michel-Ange le fut au sien: car ces hommes du peuple, qui te semblent si grossiers et si méprisables dans l'œuvre de la destruction, m'apparurent plus beaux et plus nobles que tous les anges du ciel. (*Majorque*, p.1295).

I draw attention to this aspect of *Un Hiver à Majorque* as it highlights the way in which Sand uses painting as a model for reworking reality and for offering alternatives. In this respect, I diverge from Martin-Dehaye's analysis of Sand's use of painting: 'Peindre avec des phrases ce qui est vu, […], avec l'idée qu'il faut trouver des équivalents littéraires à la mise en forme visuelle, c'est considérer qu'on peut transposer un procédé esthétique dans un autre.'[14] In fact, Sand denies that it is possible to transpose one art form into another ('les arts ne se traduisent pas les uns par les autres', *OA*, II, p.255); rather, painting inspires her abilities as a

[14] Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture*, p.86.

creator of new realities. This example from *Majorque* also highlights the ideological dimension of Sand's engagement with painting. Her conviction of the artist's duty to inspire and guide her public is a constant throughout her career, and it is this moral power of art that she discovers by contemplating the paintings in the Louvre: 'ces grandes figures qui, sous la main des maîtres, ont pris un cachet de puissance morale' (*OA*, II, p.106).[15]

A further example of this procedure occurs later in *Un Hiver à Majorque*. Contemplating the Chartreuse monastery reminds Sand of Lamennais' impressions of a monastery and its inhabitants in Tivoli. Sand quotes Lamennais' words from his *Affaires de Rome*, where he depicts the monks as old, immobile and almost deathly figures, leading to his conclusion that man is not destined to such a life; rather, 'il est né pour l'action, il a sa tâche qu'il doit accomplir' (*Majorque*, p.1320). Sand states of this passage: 'je suis certain qu'un jour [cette courte page] fournira à quelque grand peintre le sujet d'un tableau' (*Majorque*, p.1320). She then proceeds to create this virtual painting in her text:

> D'un côté, les camaldules en prières, moines obscurs, paisibles, à jamais inutiles, à jamais impuissants, spectres affaissés, dernières manifestations d'un culte près de rentrer dans la nuit du passé, agenouillés sur la pierre du tombeau, froids et mornes comme elle; de l'autre, l'homme de l'avenir, le dernier prêtre, animé de la dernière étincelle du génie de l'Église, méditant sur le sort de ces moines, les regardant en artiste, les jugeant en philosophe. Ici, les lévites de la mort immobiles sous leurs suaires; là, l'apôtre de la vie, voyageur infatigable dans les champs infinis de la pensée. (*Majorque*, p.1320).

This image is structured around the central dialectic between the moribund monks, 'spectres affaissés' who are lifeless, cold and passive, and the figure of the artist-philosopher, 'l'homme de l'avenir', 'voyageur infatigable dans les champs infinis de la pensée' (*Majorque*, p.1320).[16] Similarly to the monk's vision, it is through the medium of painting that Sand is able to suggest her alternative and her ideal. In both examples given here from

[15] See, for example, Sand's statement in a letter written in March 1851: 'j'ai fait tout ce qui m'était possible pour instruire et moraliser les diverses classes de la Société.' (*Corr.*, X, p.143).
[16] These designations also remind us of Sand's conception of the writer as a visionary.

Majorque, Sand is not describing an actual work of art nor an experienced physical reality; rather, she is repainting reality, that is, she aims towards the depiction of a more socially progressive and purposeful reality, in contrast with the original.

The use of antithetical structures is singled out by William J. Berg as one of the main ways in which artists express ideology.[17] Nicos Hadjinicolaou, in his study of the interaction between the production of pictures and class struggle, defines ideology as 'the relatively coherent system of ideas, values and beliefs' that people develop, and he also asserts that 'people express in their ideology not their actual relation to their situation in life, but the way in which they see this relation – which implies a dual relation to reality, one real and one imagined.'[18] As a result, ideology is always, on some level, an illusion, in that it does not describe reality, but rather, 'expresses a will (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary)'.[19] Hadjinicolaou then divides this into 'positive ideology', which works to perpetuate the dominant ideology, and 'critical ideology', which is opposed to certain class practices and views. Although this is a specifically Marxist definition of ideology, drawing on Nicos Poulantzas' *Political Power and Social Classes* (1973) and Louis Althusser's *For Marx* (1969), this concept of a 'critical ideology' is a helpful way of considering Sand's position, as it acknowledges the fact that it does not equate with reality, and it also incorporates her reformist attitude. The term does, however, imply a certain fixity which is undesirable in the case of Sand, since her goal is not to present a rigid doctrine that her

[17] 'The expression of ideology, whether in painting or literature, invariably involves the depiction of difference, thereby favoring the painterly techniques of contrast and juxtaposition, and the literary figures of antithesis and irony.' William J. Berg, *Imagery and Ideology: Fiction and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p.20. From her earliest experiences, Sand analyses visual information in terms of contrast, as we see from the distinction created in *Histoire de ma vie* between the nymph and the Bacchante on her wallpaper: 'dans mon cerveau, ils offraient le contraste bien tranché de la gaieté et de la tristesse, de la bienveillance et de la sévérité.' (*OA*, I, p.619).

[18] Nicos Hadjinicolaou, *Art History and Class Struggle*, transl. by Louise Asmal (London: Pluto Press, 1977 [1973]), p.9.

[19] Ibid.

readers should 'adopt'. Rather than putting forward a prescriptive system, Sand offers a set of values.[20]

Sand's political position is one that is constantly reacting against the prevailing social order, and it is in this context that painting becomes an enabling device for her rather than a cause for frustration, since it allows her to repaint reality. It is true that she does also advocate this principle of reworking the original in music and drama.[21] However, this differs from repainting, in that the relationship between the original and the alternative work is less apparent in music and the theatre. The emphasis in novels such as *Le Château des désertes* (1853) is on the freedom, spontaneity and genius of the artist. Père Bastien in *Les Maîtres sonneurs* (1853), for example, explains that Joseph is a true musician due to his improvisatory abilities.[22] Conversely, the emphasis within adaptations of visual sources, whilst also viewed by Sand as a sign of the artist's autonomy, is placed on the contrast achieved through the alterations. Sand's textual paintings consistently present a reaction to and rejection of what is considered as 'reality'.

La Mare au diable provides a further example of the way in which Sand uses painterly techniques to reconfigure the social order. One of the most well-known uses of pictorial description in Sand's work is to be found in the second chapter of this novel ('Le labour') in which Sand responds to Holbein's engraving of the labourer in his *Simulacres de la mort* (1538) collection. In this engraving, the labourer is tormented by a whip-cracking skeleton, symbolising death, and Sand criticises the work for its bleakness and pessimism. In contrast with Holbein's work, Sand describes a young, strong labourer with healthy cattle, and the overall impact is one of energy and hope. This contrast is underlined: 'Il se trouvait

[20] This problem of terminology is part of a wider issue for nineteenth-century thought. See, for example, Paul Bénichou, *Les Mages romantiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp.13-14, on the difficulties of finding appropriate terms when discussing 'la pensée' in the context of French Romantic literature.
[21] *Consuelo* and *Les Maîtres sonneurs* (1853), for example, advocate improvisation in music, and *Le Château des désertes* (1853) celebrates inventiveness within theatrical performances.
[22] See *Les Maîtres sonneurs*, p.364.

donc que j'avais sous les yeux un tableau qui contrastait avec celui d'Holbein, quoique ce fût une scène pareille' (*Mare,* p.42). Sand thus 'paints' a new 'picture' here. This novel also features a further repainting sequence which has gone unnoticed by most critics. In her discussion of Holbein's engraving, Sand puts forward her own conception of art: 'au lieu de la piteuse et affreuse mort, marchant dans son sillon, le fouet à la main, le peintre d'allégories pourrait placer à ses côtés un ange radieux, semant à pleines mains le blé béni' (*Mare,* pp.36-7). William Berg claims that Sand uses the conditional 'pourrait' here since no painterly model is available to her, and he also points out that the appendix at the end of the work closes not with a painting but with a song.[23] Sylvie Charron-Witkin, on the other hand, highlights the fact that there is a further reference to Holbein in the appendix, where the heroine, Marie, is compared to Holbein's virgin.[24] I would like to focus, however, on the ending of the story proper, which can only be interpreted as a further reworking of the Holbein engraving from *Simulacres de la mort*.

Following Marie's declaration of love, we are told that the hero, Germain, 'serait devenu fou, si son fils qui le cherchait et qui entra dans la chaumière au grand galop sur un bâton, avec sa petite sœur en croupe qui fouettait avec une branche d'osier ce coursier imaginaire, ne l'eût rappelé à lui-même.' (*Mare,* p.152). One is immediately struck by the brevity of this description, intensified by the fact that it is written in parenthesis. Due to the frame of reference which the readers have at their disposal after the previous 'repainting' in the second chapter ('Le Labour'), Sand can present this next image in a highly condensed form. The main elements from Holbein's engraving are maintained, but with a few key modifications. Instead of Holbein's group of horses which is 'maigre' and 'exténué' (*Mare,* p.29), Pierre is riding a 'bâton' which functions as a horse. The reference to this object is superimposed onto many other images in the novel. The stick first appears as the farmer of

[23] Berg considers music to be the main model at work in this novel. See *Imagery and Ideology,* p.127.
[24] Sylvie Charron-Witkin, 'Holbein et Sand', *George Sand Studies,* 8, no.1-2 (1986-7), 10-15 (p.10).

Ormeaux turns on Marie 'en levant son bâton d'un air de menace' (*Mare*, p.134) when she accuses him of misconduct. We later learn that this farmer had also intended to use this stick against Pierre, as the child explains to Germain: 'il a levé son bâton pour me battre' (*Mare*, p.138). Finally, Germain is also threatened with the same instrument: 'le fermier [...] voulut frapper de son bâton les mains du laboureur' (*Mare*, p.134). Vindication is achieved through Germain's reaction: 'il ramassa le bâton de houx du fermier, le brisa sur son genou pour lui montrer la force de ses poignets, et en jeta les morceaux au loin avec mépris' (*Mare*, p.135). Germain's breaking of the stick renders him more attractive to Marie as her protector, symbolises the peasant breaking free from the master, and also suggests a rejection of death in favour of life, since the master, with his dark clothes and black horse is associated with the figure of death from the engraving.[25] Thus the fact that the young Pierre now rides a 'bâton' in this final scene implies a reversal of the original power structures and a valorisation of life in opposition with violence and death.

Further, in Holbein's engraving, it is the skeleton, the death figure, who is 'armé d'un fouet' (*Mare*, p.29), whereas in Sand's alternative at the end of the novel, it is the little girl who performs the whipping (but using only a branch), and her youthfulness and gender symbolise life and fecundity. The original engraving includes only male figures, but the final image incorporates two males (Pierre and his father), and two females (Germain's daughter and Marie), thus suggesting unity and equilibrium. Therefore, this final scene is inspired by the Holbein engraving and reverses it. In this sense, although I would agree with Tom Conley's assertion that, 'in the vituperation aimed at Holbein, Sand's rage [...] seems to be directed against an unnamed coalition of "realism", the masculine ethos, capitalism, and agencies that use visibility to fix the ego into space', I would argue that, for Sand, 'visibility' need not necessarily be a means of fixing and petrifying, as she shows in her creation of this

[25] I agree with Charron-Witkin's identification of the farmer as the skeleton in Holbein's engraving. See 'Holbein et Sand', p.12.

image in the final chapter.[26] As we recall, the 'peintre d'allégories' (*Mare*, p.34) at the beginning of the novel aimed to place 'un ange radieux' at Germain's side. This is fulfilled in this last chapter, as Germain's son is repeatedly referred to as an angel in the text (pp.39, 40, 69, 94). The writer (the 'peintre'), has therefore created her positive allegory here, with this final painting depicting youth, fecundity and hope, and also equality, as Marie reaches her own decision to accept Germain as her husband.

Yet the fact that the final description draws on Holbein's engraving rather than dismissing it entirely from the text also means that the original oppositions present at the beginning of the novel remain present on one level. The presence of the 'bâton' and the whip in the final painting are a reminder of the master's power over the labourer, which, although challenged by Germain, has not been abolished. The painterly model therefore enables Sand to present an alternative whilst also retaining the original tensions in the readers' mind, thus highlighting the fact that the more positive outcome is yet to be achieved in reality.

We can therefore see that, despite Sand's assertions on the direct and instantaneous nature of painting, the way in which she employs this model in her own writing indicates that she is aware of its more subtle potential. This is already suggested in her first novel, *Indiana* (1832). Sand employs the visual arts in this early work mainly as a means of reflecting on and exploring her own aesthetics.[27] But there is clearly also an awareness of the complexity of painting here which is illuminating for Sand's employment of this model in her later works. A portrait of Ralph Brown hanging in Indiana's room, for example, is described in detail, referring to his 'costume de chasse', Ophélia the dog, chosen for 'le beau ton gris-argent de ses soies et la pureté de sa race écossaise', and 'un magnifique cheval anglais, gris pommelé'

[26] Tom Conley, 'The Wit of the Letter: Holbein's Lacan', in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, ed. by Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York; London: Routledge, 1996), pp.45-61 (p.54).

[27] I am thinking of the references to Rembrandt in the first chapter and the fantastic atmosphere created in this scene through the use of light, the engravings of Paul and Virginie in Indiana's bedroom and their aesthetic implications, and Laure de Langy's pastiches of pastoral scenes.

(*Indiana*, p.107). The description therefore begins as a classic case of ekphrasis (a written description of a painting). However, the narrator continues: 'C'était une peinture admirablement exécutée, un vrai tableau de famille avec toutes *ses perfections de détails*, toutes ses *puérilités de ressemblance*, toutes ses *minuties bourgeoises*.' (*Indiana*, p.107, added emphasis). The description of the painting thus develops into an attack on realist representation. Whilst ostensibly conforming to this literary mode, providing a detailed description of the painting which is itself a realist depiction, Sand carries out a critique of this aesthetic system, which she classifies in her 1869 article on Flaubert as '[la] science des détails'.[28] Behind this attack is a criticism of the bourgeois ideology to which this code adheres, thus suggesting the social and ideological dimension of artistic representation. Sand's choice of painting as a model in her novels thus simultaneously appeals to an understanding of her work as a direct, 'natural' form of communication, whilst also allowing her to put forward complex messages which have the potential to undermine the contemporary social order.[29]

Painting and 'le sens du beau'[30]

In addition to the descriptions analysed in the last section, which we might refer to as Sand's virtual paintings, the author also mobilises painterly descriptions of natural landscapes in her

[28] George Sand, '*L'Éducation Sentimentale* par Gustave Flaubert', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, ed. by D. J. Colwell (Egham: Runnymede Books, 1992), pp.399-409 (p.405).
[29] Studies of visual art have shown that images are not innocent or impartial, with even the most apparently straightforward image capable of smuggling ideological messages through to the viewer. W. J. T. Mitchell states, for example: 'Instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparence concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification'. See *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.8. Some further examples might be Roland Barthes's article on the Panzani advert, 'La rhétorique de l'image', in *L'Obvie et l'obtus* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), pp.25-42, and Timothy Raser's study on Victor Hugo and the language of images, where he asserts that 'the postulation of a "message without a code" is scandalous', *The Simplest of Signs: Victor Hugo and the Language of Images in France 1850-1950* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), p.17.
[30] *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, p.48.

novels. In this section, I will show that these painterly descriptions are Sand's way of demonstrating the means through which the individual can reach a true appreciation of the landscape. According to Sand, such an appreciation carries a moral significance, since 'le sentiment du beau et du poétique [...] est la première manifestation du bon et du vrai.' (*OA*, I, p.536). I argue, therefore, that through her descriptions, Sand's aim is to enlighten and raise the awareness of her readers.

This link between the depiction of landscape and the moral dimension of Sand's work is suggested by a text which is spatially removed from the author's native Berry. *Le Piccinino* (1847), set in Sicily, would seem to diverge from Sand's more familiar pastoral novels. Rather than the labourer in his field, we are presented with bandits, a princess and a volcano. This novel is established from the beginning as a work which engages with the visual arts, not least due to the fact that it also is inspired by engravings, this time from Gigault de la Salle's *Voyage pittoresque en Sicile* (1822-1826). The opening pages designate the novel as 'une étude de couleur' (*Le Piccinino*, I, p.21), and the Etna volcano is referred to as 'le plus grand spectacle que la nature puisse offrir à un peintre' (*Le Piccinino*, I, p.36). There are many pictorial references in the text, but perhaps the most striking is the description of Etna:

> Tandis que l'aube, reflétée par la mer, glissait en lueurs pâles et confuses sur le bas du tableau, la cime du mont dessinait avec netteté ses déchirures grandioses et ses neiges immaculées sur l'air transparent de la nuit, qui restait bleu et semé d'étoiles sur la tête du géant. [...] À mesure que le jour augmenta, les cimes pâlirent encore, et la splendide banderole de fumée rougeâtre qui avait traversé le ciel bleu, devint bleue elle-même et se déroula comme un serpent d'azur sur un fond d'opale. Alors, le tableau changea d'aspect. (*Le Piccinino*, I, p.164).

This passage is highlighted by Isabelle Naginski as proof of Sand's 'allegiance to the visual'.[31] The responsiveness to colour and the use of terms such as 'tableau' and 'dessinait' do illustrate an affinity with painting. However, it is also illuminating to consider the passage

[31] Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p.46.

immediately preceding this one, in order to understand what prompted this description. As in many of her painterly descriptions, Sand specifically draws attention here to the perspective of the viewer. In this instance, there are two observers: Michelangelo Lavoratori, the artist hero, and Magnani, the artisan. They have decided to watch the sunrise, and we are told that 'ils s'assirent sur un rocher pittoresque, ayant à leur droite la villa Palmarosa, […]; de l'autre, la fière pyramide du volcan' (*Le Piccinino*, I, p.163). The description which follows establishes a contrast between these two locations, but as we see from the extract quoted above, the eye is drawn towards the volcano rather than the villa. We are then told that 'Michel-Ange Lavoratori était absorbé par la vue du volcan', whereas 'Magnani avait plus souvent les yeux fixés sur la villa.' (*Le Piccinino*, I, p.165). Sand thus subtly indicates that it is Michel who creates this painting in his mind out of the landscape before him, whereas Magnani's focus is on the villa and the people within it.[32]

Yet despite Michel's aesthetic appreciation of the awe-inspiring volcano, he is unable to value the simpler beauties of his family home. This is described as 'infiniment pittoresque' (*Le Piccinino*, II, p.45), but Michel is unaware of this: 'quoique ce tableau eût, dans sa pauvreté et dans son désordre, une poésie réelle, Michel ne l'avait pas encore apprécié' (*Le Piccinino*, II, p.46). We therefore realise that it is the extradiegetic narrator who has highlighted the beauty of this location, rather than Michel himself.[33] The discovery of his noble lineage, however, leads to a transformation in Michel. As a result of his newfound wealth and power, he aspires to change society for the better, since he now has the ability to make a difference. This change in his understanding of himself and his capabilities, and the alteration in his relation to others, results in a new awareness of the physical objects which surround him: 'Il regardait tous les objets qui frappaient sa vue comme des objets nouveaux.'

[32] This character is generally referred to in the novel as Michel.
[33] This technique, whereby the omniscient narrator describes the landscape as a painting before contrasting this with the way in which characters view it, is often used by Sand. See, for example, *Jeanne*, p.130 and *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, p.102.

(*Le Piccinino*, II, p.197). This leads to his recognition of contrast between the luxurious palace and the ordinary people's wretched homes. The change in his attitude leads to his position of insight with regards to his appreciation of his physical environment, as is made explicit in an echo of the previous statement on his home: 'Il entra dans sa maison, et pour la première fois il la trouva pittoresque' (*Le Piccinino*, II, p.199). A similar transformation takes place in Lady Sabina in *Teverino* (1846), and this is also expressed through descriptions of landscape drawing on pictorial references.[34] The only lengthy spatial descriptions in *Elle et Lui* (1859), despite the fact that the two protagonists are painters, are of Porto-Venere.[35] Significantly, this is also a period during which Thérèse is undergoing a process of reflection and a rebuilding of the self.

By highlighting the viewer's perspective, therefore, Sand indicates not only the spatial relation between the subject and the object of his/her gaze, but also the more abstract sense of a point of view, a way of perceiving and conceiving our surroundings. The work of phenomenologists in the twentieth century has demonstrated the extent to which the world is dependent on the individual observing it, as Merleau-Ponty states: 'il ne faut [...] pas se demander si nous percevons vraiment un monde, il faut dire au contraire: le monde est cela que nous percevons.'[36] Marie-Cécile Levet has already undertaken a phenomenological study of Sand's representation of landscape.[37] Rather than following Levet and using this discipline as a theoretical framework, what I would like to highlight is that Sand, in her analysis of perception, perspective and awareness or consciousness, is already putting into practise some of the precepts of phenomenology.[38] In *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine* (1847), for example, Sand frequently indicates that it is Émile Cardonnet's point of view that is being related, and that this influences what is perceived. For instance, we are told that, after returning from Paris

[34] *Teverino*, pp.149-150.
[35] *Elle et lui*, p.225.
[36] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p.xi.
[37] See Levet, *Le Paysage dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand*.
[38] The genealogy of phenomenology is an interesting area but space does not allow me to examine this further.

to the Vallée noire, '[Émile] sentait vivement le charme de cette nature agreste où il se trouvait maintenant' (*Antoine*, p.262). His understanding of equality and freedom within nature, where all forms of vegetation proudly display themselves, enables him to conceive of the countryside before him as a splendid 'tableau' (*Antoine*, p.262). For Émile, 'les chemins […] offrent mille accidents *pittoresques*' (*Antoine*, p.262, emphasis added). This is in contrast with the gauche and narrow-minded bourgeois figure, Galuchet, who is incapable of such appreciation: 'Quelle horreur, Monsieur! Peut-on voir un plus triste pays [...]?' (*Antoine*, p.231). In her focus on the perspective from which the painterly impressions are viewed and created, Sand draws attention to the fact that the true poetic beauty of the world is appreciated only by those individuals who have reached an understanding of themselves.

The pictorial term, 'pittoresque', features frequently in Sand's landscape descriptions. This term initially brings connotations of sentimentality and quaintness, labels which have done much to damage the reception of Sand's works. Georges Pellissier writes, for example, in 1889: 'Ce qui restera de George Sand, ce sont ses pastorales, […] quelques simples et touchantes histoires d'amour auxquelles la nature sert de cadre. [...] Elle est par excellence le peintre des champs.'[39] However, Sand's understanding of the 'pittoresque' goes beyond these associations. Andreas Wetzel interprets the use of this term in *Un Hiver à Majorque* as an allusion to Sand's failed attempts to represent the Majorcan landscape. [40] Marie-Cécile Levet, on the other hand, highlights William Gilpin's definition of the term as that which includes '[une] recherche de l'effet de surprise', and 'animation'.[41] I view Sand's use of the term 'pittoresque' as a means of designating views that deserve pictorial representation, and the ability to decide what is picturesque is a subjective aesthetic ability which, as I will

[39] Georges Pellissier, *Le mouvement littéraire au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1893), pp.243-244.
[40] Andreas Wetzel, 'Entre la vie "factice" et la vie "primitive": Le lieu pittoresque de l'écriture sandienne dans *Un Hiver à Majorque*', in *George Sand Today*, ed. by David Powell (New York: University Press of America, 1992), pp.121-129 (p.125).
[41] Levet, *Le Paysage dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand*, p.194.

demonstrate, Sand shows to be the result of an increased awareness and acceptance of the self. [42]

Similarly to *Le Piccinino* and *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (1845) often presents descriptions of external reality through the eyes of a particular character. This novel, which reacts against the social divides and mercenary attitude of contemporary French society, presents Marcelle de Blanchemont as an agent of change, aspiring towards a society in which 'la liberté morale' (*Le Meunier d'Angibault*, p.190) will be respected and equality will reign. During her journey from Paris to the Berry towards the beginning of the novel, Marcelle momentarily glimpses the landscape of the Vallée noire, and the narrative pauses to allow for description. Martin-Dehaye comments on this novel by referring to its painterly quality, and she considers this section to be 'un véritable tableau, construit en successions de plans'.[43] I agree with this assessment; however, the significance and function of this passage within the novel remains unexplored. The passage opens as follows:

> Aux lisières de ce plateau stérile, madame de Blanchemont avait admiré l'immense et admirable paysage qui se déroulait sous ses pieds pour se relever jusqu'aux cieux en plusieurs zones d'horizons boisés d'un violet pâle, coupé de bandes d'or par les rayons du couchant. Il n'est guère de plus beaux sites en France. (*Meunier*, p.61).

Marcelle's spatial position is identified at the outset. By clearly establishing the character's vantage point in this way, the author frames the view and creates a picture, and this framing procedure is echoed at the end of the description when the view is summed up as 'un accord et un ensemble remarquables [...] que du haut des chaumières de Labreuil ou de Corlay on embrasse d'un seul regard.' (*Meunier*, pp.61-62). Whereas Barthes regards the pictorial code as an essential characteristic of literary mimesis, the purpose of this description, I would

[42] See 'le pittoresque': 'le génie pittoresque a des rapports avec le génie poétique.' Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Slatkine, 1982), XII, p.1090.
[43] Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture*, p.88.

argue, is to highlight this character's ability to create this mental picture out of the landscape before her.[44] Jean Starobinski states that 'le regard constitue le lien vivant entre la personne et le monde.'[45] Painting, due to the centrality of sight in its creation, is the ideal model for expressing this 'lien vivant'. In describing landscapes as if they were paintings, Sand highlights the angle from which they are viewed, and therefore, the person creating them.

That Marcelle is not given very long to enjoy this view of the Vallée noire is stressed by the abrupt return of the narrative: 'mais notre voyageuse eut bientôt perdu de vue ce magnifique panorama.' (*Meunier*, p.62). The swift alternation between description and narrative demonstrates the tension between Marcelle's desires and her destiny, which compels her onwards towards the reality of her situation at Blanchemont. Before she reaches her destination, she experiences a further visual phenomenon. The description of the Vallée noire above is complemented by a description of the land neighbouring Louis's mill. The terms 'accidents heureux' and 'la beauté du décor' (*Meunier*, p.77) encourage the reader to visualise this scene as a painting, and although it appears to be a decorative and 'innocent' description, the subtext is a valorisation of unrestrained nature, which transcends the barriers and obstacles created by society. The sheer power and physical presence of the trees and the river is highlighted through the demarcation of the view into separate masses and textures such as the 'ronces vigoureuses' and 'des trembles magnifiques' (*Meunier*, p.77), and the view is dominated by a sense of abundant richness and freedom created through the accumulation of various specimens of vegetation.

Marcelle's journey to the Vallée noire has a practical purpose (to take care of her deceased husband's debts and to inspect her inherited property), but it also symbolises her desire for independence as she breaks free from her previous life in search of a better existence. The real force of the two highly positive painterly descriptions of nature is felt

[44] See Barthes, 'Le modèle de la peinture', in *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), pp.61-62.
[45] Jean Starobinski, *L'Œil vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p.17.

when Marcelle arrives at her destination. The first object of her gaze is the so-called 'château neuf' (*Meunier*, p.102). This is the property of Monsieur Bricolin, the personification of materialism and rapaciousness in the novel. The focus is drawn to the courtyard, 'fermée d'un côté par un mur crénelé, de l'autre par une haie et un fossé plein d'eau bourbeuse' (*Meunier*, p.102). This extremely confined space immediately brings to mind the vastness and freedom of the previous views ('l'immense et admirable paysage', p.61, 'ce magnifique panorama', p.62, 'les vastes bosquets', p.77). Further, the oppressive presence of filth on Bricolin's estate is repeatedly evoked; for example, 'd'énormes monceaux de fumier […] laissaient échapper des ruisseaux immondes' (*Meunier*, p.103). The narrator concludes: 'cette enceinte [...] enfermait les regards et la pensée dans un espace triste, prosaïque et d'une saleté repoussante' (*Meunier*, p.103). By stressing both the squalor and the restrictive nature of the Bricolin property, the text implicitly evokes the previous descriptions of the Vallée noire and Louis' home. The dominant impression of the Vallée noire was that of abundant diversity ('la variété des formes et des nuances' p.61) within an overarching unity ('un accord et un ensemble remarquables' p.61), highlighted through the successive layering of foreground and background. The Bricolin household, on the other hand, stands for the prevailing materialistic and ruthlessly self-promoting attitude, and it is this reality which is refashioned by Sand through the earlier portrayals of the landscape. This contrast created between the painterly descriptions prefigures the opposing world views which will become the central axis of *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, as the open-minded and egalitarian beliefs held by the two leading couples are pitted against the circumscribed social values and divisive attitudes which dominate society and are epitomised in Monsieur Bricolin. Therefore, Sand once again employs an antithetical structure through the use of painterly images in order to mobilise the reader in the creation of a new society. This proleptic 'repainting' enables the author to maintain current reality in the reader's mind whilst simultaneously suggesting the possibility

of an alternative, thus highlighting the fact that action needs to be taken to move from one to the other.

Béatrice Didier comments on the difference in register between the first chapter of *Le Meunier d'Angibault* and the rest of the work, and suggests that this is due to Sand's uncertainty as to how the novel will develop.[46] I view this shift in tone as a deliberate attempt on the author's behalf to highlight the changes which take place in Marcelle. Having been rejected by her lover on the grounds that she is too wealthy to marry him, Marcelle reflects on the organisation of society and her position within it, and, 'éclairée tout à coup' (*Meunier*, p.44), she resolves to change her way of life. This psychological awakening changes the way in which she perceives the physical objects around her: 'jetant un regard rêveur sur l'intérieur de son appartement, elle fut frappée pour la première fois du luxe inutile et dispendieux déployé autour d'elle' (*Meunier*, p.48). The painterly descriptions of the landscape in this novel are thus a result of Marcelle's enlightened moral position. In this way, Sand demonstrates her understanding of the fact that an individual's consciousness of her own condition changes her perception of exterior surroundings and her relationship with external reality. This continues to be a preoccupation for Sand throughout her œuvre. Her last exploration of the artist figure, 'Le Château de Pictordu' (1873) from *Contes d'une grand-mère*, is a form of artistic credo, where true art is contrasted with mechanical and imitative artistic production. In this tale, the young Diane Flochardet, the authentic artist, receives the gift of the artistic eye only when she fully accepts her identity and vocation. What follows is a revelation to the colour and richness of her surroundings:

[46] Béatrice Didier, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (Paris: Libraire Générale Française, 1985), note 2, p.31.

> Pour la première fois, Diane sentit l'ivresse de la couleur. […] elle se rendit compte de cette vie magique de la lumière plus ou moins répandue et plus ou moins reflétée, passant de l'éclat à la douceur et des tons embrasés aux tons froids, à travers des harmonies indescriptibles. […] Puis elle […] but à loisir cette révélation qui lui venait du ciel et de la terre, du feuillage et des eaux, des herbes et du rocher. ('Le Château de Pictordu', p.85).

Reminiscent of Sand's own 'ivresse' as she experiences the brilliance of line and colour,[47] Diane's awakening to the glorious beauty of the earth and the establishment of an intimate relation with her environment is described as the acquisition of '[une] faculté nouvelle'. Importantly, Diane acquires this faculty only as a result of her inner development, as she states: 'la lumière est entrée dans mes yeux, aussitôt que la volonté rentrait dans ma conscience.' ('Pictordu', p.86).

The examples given thus far present the acquisition of the 'sens pittoresque' (*Consuelo*, II, p.280) in aristocratic or bourgeois heroes. However, Sand also expresses the hope that the common labourer will, one day, be capable of such insights. The peasant is typically aware of the land only as a means of production: 'pour lui […] les champs dorés, les belles prairies, les animaux superbes, représentent des sacs d'écus dont il n'aura qu'une faible part' (*Mare*, p.36). The need to exploit the productivity of the land is not necessarily a negative outlook according to Sand.[48] However, this is not enough in itself. The labourer also needs to be aware of the beauty and not only the utility of the earth. This is one of Sand's main aspirations, which she formulates by employing the model of the artist, not in a strict sense, but according to her own definition: 'un jour viendra où le laboureur pourra être aussi un artiste, sinon pour exprimer [...], du moins pour sentir le beau.' (*Mare*, p.37). This concept of the artist as one who is capable of sensing and appreciating aesthetic beauty is echoed in many of Sand's novels. Teverino, for example, affirms that 'le véritable artiste est celui qui

[47] 'J'étais comme *enivrée*, comme clouée devant les Titien, les Tintoret, les Rubens' (*OA*, II, p.106, added emphasis).

[48] *Nanon* (1872), for example, valorises a productive relationship with the land: 'Une terre qui, pour le bourgeois […], n'est qu'un placement d'agrément est, pour le paysan, une vraie richesse. Il y vit et il en vit.' (*Nanon*, p.268).

[…] jouit de toutes choses, […], et qui aime tout ce qui est beau sans faire de catégories' (*Teverino*, p.165). Further, Émile, admiring the Marquis de Boisguilbault's garden – highlighted for its 'pittoresque' beauty – comments that 'il suffit de le voir pour être certain que vous êtes un grand poète' (*Antoine*, p.183).[49] This conception of the artist thus places vision, in the sense of physical eyesight but also true aesthetic awareness, at the centre of the artistic enterprise.

Yet this is also a form of looking at the world which Sand hopes to inspire in her readers, particularly the peasant class. Whilst, on the one hand, Sand admires the peasant's intuitive nature and wishes to approximate this experience,[50] on the other hand, her aim is to elevate the peasant so that he, also, is capable of '[l]a méditation' (*Champi*, 'Avant-propos', p.38) and an appreciation of nature which goes beyond the instinctive. The paintings created of the Majorcan landscape in *Un Hiver à Majorque*, for example, are an illustration of the way in which the island can, and should be appreciated. This is contrasted with the Majorcan people who fail to do so. Wetzel asserts that Sand's attempt to leave the harsh political realities of late 1830s France behind in favour of 'la vie primitive' in Majorca is a failure.[51] I regard Sand's disappointment and disillusionment less as a failure and more as an (unacknowledged) unwillingness on her behalf to separate the aesthetic from the political. *Un Hiver à Majorque*, on the surface an autobiographical text tracing personal memories and an aesthetic appreciation of the island, raises important questions on the organisation of society, and the role of the artist within this debate. Sand immediately discerns the lack of social progress on the island and instead of the contented and industrious labourers she was hoping to meet, she notes of the Majorcan peasant: 'Il n'y a rien de si triste et de si pauvre au monde que ce paysan qui ne sait que prier, chanter, travailler, et qui ne pense jamais.' (*Majorque*,

[49] Sand uses 'poète' to refer to artists in general.
[50] We think, for example, of the regret felt by the writer at the divergence between herself and the labourer in the 'Avant-propos' to *François le Champi*.
[51] Wetzel, 'Entre la vie "factice" et la vie "primitive" ', p.123.

p.1252). This prefigures her comments in *La Mare au diable*, where she reflects on the peasant's lack of awareness of his condition: 'Il manque à cet homme une partie des jouissances que je possède, […]. Il lui manque la connaissance de son sentiment. Ceux qui l'ont condamné à la servitude […] lui ont ôté la réflexion.' (*Mare*, p.43). Patience's awareness of his natural surroundings in *Mauprat* (1837) is presented as an anomaly: 'ses regards se perdaient vers le ciel, et il interrompait sa conversation pour dire en montrant la voûte étoilée "Voyez cela, voyez comme c'est beau!" C'est le seul paysan que j'aie vu admirer le ciel, ou tout au moins c'est le seul que j'aie vu se rendre compte de son admiration.' (*Mauprat*, 174).[52] This is also a subject of reflection in *Le Compagnon du tour de France* (1840):

> [Le] sens du beau [...] a besoin d'être développé […]. La vie libre et cultivée des gens aisés les met sans cesse en présence des chefs-d'œuvre de l'art […]. Leur jugement se forme ainsi; et […] *ils ouvrent les yeux* sans effort à un monde idéal, au seuil duquel le génie comprimé du pauvre se heurte longtemps, et trop souvent se brise sans pouvoir pénétrer. (*Compagnon*, p.48, added emphasis).[53]

The ability to reach 'le sens du beau' is thus again presented by Sand as a social issue. The succession of glorious 'tableaux' in *Majorque* is interspersed with sarcastic comments by the narrator on the local people's unenlightened state.[54] Sand therefore wishes to raise the peasant's awareness, and it is her hope that her descriptions of landscapes will encourage her readers to appreciate the world around them in this way. In this sense, a rhetorical question asked by the narrator of *Horace* (1840) might be directed to those who are opposed to Sand's

[52] This also follows Patience's discovery of poetry and his readings in philosophy.
[53] Pierre's awareness of his environment changes as a result of his reading: 'Un monde nouveau s'était révélé à lui depuis ses dernières lectures. Il comprenait [...] la grâce d'une branche, la richesse de la couleur et la beauté des lignes d'un paysage. Il pouvait se rendre compte de ce qu'il avait senti jusqu'alors que confusément.' (*Compagnon*, pp.84-85).
[54] There are many allusions, for example, to the Majorcans' obsession with pigs.

pictorial depictions: 'avec vos yeux nus, auriez-vous distingué quelque chose?' (*Horace*, p.46).[55]

Not all critics consider Sand to be an exemplary practitioner of such descriptions. According to Denise Brahimi, the true appreciation of landscape is achieved through the kind of 'contemplation' exemplified in Eugène Fromentin's *Dominique* (1863) with its many long descriptions.[56] Brahimi distinguishes between Fromentin and the author to whom *Dominique* is dedicated – George Sand – by stating that Fromentin employs description at the expense of action, whereas

> même dans ses romans champêtres la Dame de Nohant remplit l'espace de péripéties et d'événements, en sorte qu'on n'y trouve guère de longues descriptions des sites […]. Le paysage […] a besoin de contemplation, or les personnages de G. Sand ne sont pas des contemplatifs, pas plus qu'elle ne l'est elle-même.[57]

It is true that, in comparison with Fromentin, descriptions are sparse in Sand's pastoral novels, which certainly do not subordinate action to description (as we saw in *Le Meunier d'Angibault*). However, the frequency with which Sand employs painterly descriptions across her novels is undeniable, and the fact that each specific novel is not saturated with these textual paintings does not reduce their significance. The paucity of painterly description after Marcelle's first impressions in *Le Meunier d'Angibault* and after the first repainting performed by the narrator in *La Mare au diable* is precisely due to the fact that the heroes of these novels have not acquired this visual appreciation of their environment. The focus of *Le Meunier d'Angibault* gradually shifts from Marcelle de Blanchemont to Louis the miller, and this coincides with the decline of impressions of the landscape. As Brahimi points out, 'contemplation' is needed for the appreciation of landscape. Sand demonstrates that only

[55] Discussing Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, the narrator expresses his admiration for the 'lunettes aux couleurs bigarrées' placed by Hugo on his readers. He suggests that 'les ingrats' who claim that these are 'd'étranges lunettes' would have been incapable of seeing anything without them. *Horace*, p.46.
[56] Denise Brahimi, 'Du regard à la contemplation: l'alchimie du paysage', in *Le Paysage et ses grilles*, ed. by Françoise Chenet (Paris: L'Haramttan, 1996), pp.101-108 (p.107).
[57] Ibid., p.108.

certain characters are capable of this by limiting the 'longues descriptions des sites' to those instances when the gifted characters have fully developed.

According to Sand, it is possible for the labourer to develop into an 'artiste' through the reconciliation of 'l'esprit, le cœur et les bras' (*Mare*, p.36). These represent society and the market, sensitivity to beauty, and finally, the labourer and physical work. These elements can be united if the 'peuple', without rejecting their origins and identity, become their own masters, and, in doing so, become 'artistes', with the time and leisure to appreciate the world. This is what takes place in *Nanon* (1872). In this later work, in which Sand returns to the pastoral novel, it is the peasant heroine who experiences the awakening to one's surroundings, as she succeeds in bringing the three categories together. We see that this is suggested at the beginning of the novel. As a result of her lessons with Émilien, Nanon starts to become aware of the aesthetic beauty of her environment:

> Le soleil se couchait sur notre droite, les bois de châtaigniers et de hêtres étaient comme en feu. Les prés en étaient rouges, et, quand nous découvrîmes la vue de la rivière, elle paraissait tout en or. C'était la première fois que je faisais attention à ces choses […]. [...] ça n'était pas comme ça les autres fois. (*Nanon*, p.68).

This is the beginning of Nanon's intellectual and aesthetic transformation. By the end of the novel, she has established a lucrative agrarian empire, but she never loses sight of this essential beauty of the natural world. Only at this point in the development of society, when different social strata unite, will it be possible for '[des] jardins agrestes' to be cultivated 'en vue du beau en même temps qu'en vue de l'utile' (*Promenades*, pp.82-83).[58] In this new society, where both the productivity and the beauty of nature will be respected, 'les idées s'élèveront' and '*le sentiment du pittoresque* deviendra un besoin, une jouissance, une ivresse pour le laboureur, aussi bien que pour le poète.' (*Promenades*, p.83, added emphasis).

[58] These 'jardins' echo the socialist vision of 'le jardin de la commune' (*Antoine*, p.373) put forward at the end of *Le Péché de Monsieur Antoine*.

Through the textual paintings in her novels and the representation of characters gifted with this faculty, Sand emphasises the need for self-understanding and acceptance in attaining this ability, with the ultimate aim of inspiring her readers so that they too will ultimately be capable of truly seeing the world.

Painting: a superior art form?

Having examined Sand's use of pictorial techniques in her novels, I will now consider her writings on painting as an art form, arguing that these provide further evidence of Sand's constructive rather than transcriptive approach to the visual.

Critics note that there is little critical reflection on the visual arts in Sand's writings.[59] It is true that she rarely engages in purely technical discussions on art, and there are few discussions of actual paintings in her works. However, I would argue that this is primarily due to Sand's reluctance to engage in esoteric reflections, and not on her ignorance of artistic technicalities. Sand does not believe in the distinctions between 'high' and 'low' art, and, as highlighted by Nathalie Abdelaziz, her concept of 'l'artiste' brings together engravers, joiners, painters, artisans, amateur and professional musicians.[60] Although she was not an art critic in the same way as Stendhal or Baudelaire, Sand did write three articles on engravings of paintings (written in 1837, 1858 and 1863).[61] All consider the engraver to be equal to the painter, and this notion is also expressed through her novel, *Les Maîtres mosaïstes* (1837). Sand's articles demonstrate her considerable knowledge and understanding of the visual arts,

[59] See, for example, Bertrand Tillier, 'George Sand et les peintres de son temps: un rendez-vous manqué?', *Les Amis de George Sand*, 26 (2004) 15- 33 (p.15); Françoise Alexandre, 'Introduction', in *Sand Delacroix Correspondance: Le rendez-vous manqué* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Amateur, 2005), pp.11-85.
[60] Nathalie Abdelaziz, *Le Personnage de l'artiste dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand avant 1848* (Villeneuve: Presses Universitaires du septentrion, 1996).
[61] 'Ingres et Calamatta', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.69-77, '*La Vierge à la chaise* de Raphaël', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.307-312; '*La Joconde* de Léonard de Vinci gravée par M. Louis Calamatta', in *Autour de la table* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1876), pp.369-376.

and as Henriette Bessis notes: 'George Sand sait parler de la composition d'une œuvre, de la couleur, de l'ombre et de la lumière, du style: par son érudition, par son imagination, […], elle fait des comparaisons, des parallèles, […] et nous confie aussi […] son sentiment et ses propres idées.'[62] Further, Sand wrote a preface to Zacharie Astuc's *Quatorze stations du Salon de 1859*. In this preface, she explains that, whether the critic, Astuc, is delighted or outraged by the painter's works, 'il lui arrache sans façon sa palette, et le voilà de peindre [sic] à sa place. C'est-à-dire qu'à l'aide d'un autre art, la parole, il explique ou refait à sa guise le sujet traité par le pinceau.[63] Thus art criticism is a form of creation for Sand, following Diderot's conception of the discipline as much more than a description or reproduction of the original work.[64] Françoise Alexandre asserts that, for Sand, 'la vocation de la critique est donc d'aider [le public] à sentir [l'effet produit], non de lui expliquer comment il est produit'.[65] This is an accurate assessment, but the reason for Sand's eschewal of explanation is the fact that she prefers to stress the moral dimension of art. This, again, links her with Diderot's understanding of art criticism, as she herself makes explicit: 'Les seuls ouvrages d'art sur l'art qui aient de l'importance et qui puissent être utiles sont ceux qui s'attachent à développer les qualités de sentiment des grandes choses et qui par là élèvent et élargissent le sentiment des lecteurs. Sous ce point de vue, Diderot a été grand critique.' (*OA*, II, p.256).[66] Sand's belief that the critic's task is not to explain the artwork is also motivated by her conviction that art in fact cannot be explained through words. *Histoire de ma vie*

[62] Henriette Bessis, 'George Sand critique d'art', *George Sand Studies*, 12, number 1-2 (Spring 1993), 65-72 (p.66).
[63] George Sand, 'Préface aux *Quatorze stations du Salon de 1859* par Zacharie Astruc', in *Souvenirs de 1848* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1880), pp.371-373 (p.373).
[64] See Anita Brookner's reference to Diderot's 'habit of repainting pictures which do not quite satisfy him or re-sculpting statues which he finds lacking in expression', and her assertion that, 'for Diderot, criticism is an empathetic exercise: the painter's imagination will inspire the philosopher-critic to take the image one stage further', *The Genius of the Future: Essays in French Art Criticism: Diderot, Stendhal, Baudelaire, Zola, the Brothers Goncourt, Huysmans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp.15, 20.
[65] Alexandre, 'Introduction', in *Sand Delacroix Correspondance*, p.67.
[66] See also Sand's further statement on art criticism: 'Si la critique est ce qu'*elle doit être, un enseignement*, elle doit se montrer généreuse, afin d'être persuasive. […] une critique élevée, désintéressée, noble de sentiments et de formes, doit nous être toujours utile […]. Elle soulève en nous-mêmes un examen nouveau et une discussion approfondie qui ne peuvent nous être que salutaires. Elle doit donc nous trouver reconnaissants quand son but est bien visiblement d'instruire le public et nous-mêmes.' (*OA*, II, p.282, original emphasis).

includes a lengthy passage dedicated to Delacroix, but Sand acknowledges: 'je ne parle pas de la couleur de Delacroix.' (*OA*, II, p.254). I would argue that Sand's refusal to 'parler de la couleur' is based on her conviction that 'les arts ne se traduisent pas les uns par les autres' (*OA*, II, p.255). This statement, and the comments which follow, are the result of Sand's epistolary discussion with Delacroix ten years earlier on Baudelaire's *Salon de 1845*. Baudelaire's method of art criticism becomes increasingly experimental, as he uses the artworks as a basis for his own reflections on art.[67] Delacroix himself disapproves of Baudelaire's method and his alleged transgression of the limits of each art medium, but Baudelaire's art criticism in fact corresponds to Sand's own belief that different art forms cannot be accurately translated or transposed; rather, they should inspire new works of art.

So large is the gulf between different art forms in Sand's view that she makes frequent pronouncements in her writings on the inferiority of literature in comparison with painting. In the *Promenades autour d'un village* (1857), for example, she states: 'les peintres […] saisissent tout à la fois, ensemble et détails, et résument en cinq minutes ce que l'écrivain dit en beaucoup de pages' (*Promenades*, p.103).[68] In *Histoire de ma vie*, she asserts that 'c'est dans la belle peinture qu'on sent ce que c'est que la vie: c'est comme un résumé splendide de la forme et de l'expression des êtres et des choses, trop souvent voilées ou flottantes dans le mouvement de la réalité.' (*OA*, II, p.106). Sand therefore considers painting to be a faster and more direct means of capturing elements of the world which otherwise remain fleeting or veiled to the viewer.

However, despite Sand's repeated references to 'l'impuissance des mots pour traduire l'infini du beau' (*NLV*, p.78), she attempts to depict this visual phenomenon – the beauty of the natural world – through language. *Les Promenades autour d'un village* (1857), for

[67] See Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), II, pp.351-496, for his 'salons'.
[68] Further examples are to be found in *Consuelo* (1842), II, pp.281-282 and in a letter to Delacroix in 1862 in *Sand Delacroix Correspondance*, p.221.

example, is a collection of articles written to celebrate the village of Gargilesse and its beauty, and painting dominates this work as a model. There are countless examples of pictorial vocabulary in this text, such as 'cadre' (pp.16, 50, 66) and 'tableau' (pp.26, 33, 42, 50, 53, 66), and many references are made to the effects of light, for example: 'la verdure était dans toute sa puissance […]. C'était l'*heure de l'effet*' (*Promenades*, p.42, original emphasis). That Sand should persist in describing the richness of the natural world despite her protestations on the inadequacy of language might seem paradoxical. As Peter Dayan argues in his analysis of writings on music, the use of words to express a different order of experience inevitably leads to the 'betrayal of the subject'.[69] Why, then, does Sand persist in this enterprise? Is it simply the case that, 'il faut encore essayer' (*Champi*, p.46), as she states in the preface to *François le Champi*?[70]

Critics have argued that Sand solves the problems of representing visual phenomena through words by employing the model of the visual arts, and that this explains her use of pictorial descriptions. Bertrand Tillier, for example, states that 'pour Sand, la force de la peinture ou de la gravure réside principalement dans sa capacité à être un équivalent du réel représenté', and Martin-Dehaye argues that 'George Sand pensait que la force de la peinture résidait dans son aptitude à être similaire au réel représenté, ce que l'on retrouve également dans son œuvre littéraire.'[71] Futher, Anna Szabó asserts that '[la tendance picturale] est un procédé qui fait partie du mythe réaliste et qui consiste à créer l'illusion de la véracité, tant par la simple référence à tel ou tel artiste ou tableau connus que par l'aveu de l'impuissance de décrire qui expliquerait à son tour la nécessité de recourir au pictural.'[72]

Un Hiver à Majorque is often referred to by critics as an example of Sand's recourse to 'le pictural' in order to overcome the inadequacy of words. In this text, Sand employs

[69] Peter Dayan, *Music Writing Literature, From Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.2.
[70] This preface is a discussion on the problems of linguistic expression.
[71] Tillier, 'George Sand et les peintres de son temps', p.25; Martin-Dehaye, *George Sand et la peinture*, p.214.
[72] Anna Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien: constantes et variations* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudomanyegyetem, 1991), p.64.

painterly motifs and techniques to describe her impressions of the island. Take, for example, the description of the view from the Chartreuse monastery, designated as a 'tableau sublime' which is framed ('encadré') by dark rocks, hills and mountains. Pictorial vocabulary is used to divide the view into the 'premier, 'second', 'troisième' and 'quatrième plan', and the sense of distance is intensified through a reference to 'la silhouette microscopique des arbres' (*Majorque*, p.1305) and the accumulation of clauses in one lengthy sentence. The description closes with the designation of the view as 'cette perspective éblouissante' (*Majorque*, p.1305). Béatrice Didier claims that the difficulty Sand experiences in representing this area through her writing is solved 'avec une grande aisance', since, by transforming the landscape into a virtual painting, which is then described through words, 'le problème de la représentation se trouve en quelque sorte résolu au second degré'.[73] This transformation of landscape into the pictorial code before conveying it through words aligns with Barthes' theory of realist description as a process which frames every view before reproducing it: 'ce fameux réel, comme sous l'effet d'une peur qui interdirait de le toucher directement, est *remis plus loin*, différé, ou du moins saisi à travers la gangue picturale dont on l'enduit avant de le soumettre à la parole: code sur code, dit le réalisme.'[74] Didier's hypothesis, which seems to consider Sand's pictorial references as an illustration of Barthes's 'modèle de la peinture', is supported by Marie-Sylvie Poli, who considers Sand's main aim in *Majorque* to be 'une peinture des mots'.[75] Marie-Cécile Levet also refers to the pictorial nature of Sand's landscape descriptions, and suggests that this is an attempt to 'pallier l'insuffisance langagière.'[76] Given Sand's remarks on the superiority of the visual arts as a more direct and instantaneous means of communication, it would seem logical that she would enlist painterly

[73] Béatrice Didier, *George Sand écrivain,* "*Un Grand fleuve d'Amérique*" (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), pp.333, 334.
[74] Barthes, 'Le modèle de la peinture', p.61, original emphasis.
[75] Poli, ' "Une peinture des mots" ', p.58.
[76] Levet, *Le Paysage dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand*, p.195.

descriptions to reinforce her writing and to allow her to communicate more directly with her readers.

However, as I have shown in this chapter, Sand's use of the model of painting in her works is not driven by a desire to accurately represent the world she sees. She is clearly in thrall to the image and its power in conveying reality with speed and concision, but the way in which she responds to paintings in her writings and the inspiration which this medium provides reveals a creative and imaginative engagement. Sand's persistence in representing the natural world is explained by the fact that her descriptions are not merely decorative backdrops which function as a means of enhancing the sense of realism; rather, they play a central role in the moral and ideological aims of her writing.

Sand's response to paintings and visual objects and her aesthetic reflections show that, despite her admiration for the way in which the visual arts capture reality, her reaction to this medium is creative and experimental, and her use of the painterly model within her own fiction is correspondingly imaginative and anti-mimetic. Diderot and Baudelaire's 'salons' display great freedom in their appreciation of artworks and they consider themselves as much more than mere translators of paintings. Yet their works remain within the domain of art criticism, and despite the fact that their writing may incorporate a moral dimension, the act of reconfiguring the original is motivated by aesthetic concerns, as they are specifically writing about art. Sand, on the other hand, responds to paintings on an aesthetic level but uses this response in the service of her moral and social concerns.

The pictorial passages in Sand's novels have led many to consider her as a 'paysagiste en prose', with Théophile Thoré, for example, referring to Sand as 'elle qui a peint avec la parole mieux que Claude ou Hobbema'.[77] Henry James makes a particularly suggestive statement for an understanding of Sand's approach to painting, noting that 'if Turner had

[77] Colette Becker and Jean-Louis Cabanès, *Le roman au XIX^e siècle: l'explosion du genre* (Rosny-sous-Bois: Bréal, 2001), p.74. Thoré's statement is quoted by Jean Bouret, *École de Barbizon et le paysage français au 19^e siècle* (Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1972), pp.134-5.

written his landscapes rather than painted them he might have written as George Sand has done.'[78] Not only is Turner celebrated for his landscape paintings, but this painter also regarded landscape as a means of expressing a moral truth. Turner's paintings are known for their indeterminacy and transcendent nature rather than for their exactitude. Indeed, many of his contemporaries could not fathom his artworks, regarding them as too 'indistinct'.[79] James's comparison with this painter appositely draws out the non-mimetic nature of Sand's pictorial descriptions which I have been tracing throughout this chapter, and highlights her status as an artist who creates new forms of reality.[80]

Conclusion

I have considered several different examples of Sand's work in this chapter, ranging from her pastoral and socialist novels to her works set in more exotic locations, from autobiographical writings to children's tales and art criticism. What I hope to have shown is that, within the diversity of these writings is a fundamental coherence, in that all the works I have studied interlink aesthetic and moral questions. Sand's use of painting in the service of her moral vision receives its fullest elaboration in her novels written between 1840 and 1848, when she is most engaged in political action and most committed to the socialist cause.

In an assessment of Sand's work, Zola asserts that this writer 'déformait toutes les réalités qu'elle touchait', which is intended as a criticism of her output.[81] But if we refrain from judging Sand's work on mimetic criteria, we can see that Zola's remark highlights

[78] James, 'George Sand', in *French Poets and Novelists* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1919 [1878]), pp.149-185 (p.185).
[79] See Peter Ackroyd, *J.M.W. Turner* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), p.24.
[80] Turner's ability to '[move] effortlessly between the past and the present, in that enchanted space where his vision could encompass alternative realities' (Ackroyd, p.135), coupled with the visionary dimension of his painting, also draws a parallel with Sand's prophetic narratives and her flexible conception of time.
[81] Zola, 'George Sand', in *Documents littéraires. Œuvres complètes*, 66 vols (Paris: François Bernouard, 1928), XLII, pp.153-186 (p.155).

Sand's transformative approach to reality. Rather than appealing to the representative power of painting (in line with Barthes' association of the pictorial code with realism), she employs this medium as a stimulus for her imagination. For Sand, the ability to truly see phenomena ('voir' rather than simply 'regarder'), and to respond to it creatively, is to be an artist. In a letter to Lucien Anatole Prévost-Paradol where she praises this essayist's condemnation of the realist aesthetic, she identifies the novel as 'un bon cadre pour peindre la nature' for the following reasons: 'le roman a la permission de faire voyager le lecteur dans un pays déterminé et s'il peut être un itinéraire attachant, *il ouvre chez le lecteur la faculté de bien voir* et de jouer de ce qu'il a vu ou de ce qu'il verra.' (*Corr.*, XVI, p.152, October 1860, added emphasis).[82] This, I have argued, she does through the model of painting.

Sand's interest in nature diverges from the way in which other nineteenth-century writers, such as Flaubert, deal with the notion of the 'image' and its infiltration of everyday life, and her focus on the countryside rather than cityscapes like Balzac and Victor Hugo might suggest that she is immersed in nostalgia and is lamentably out of date.[83] Yet, not dissimilarly to the Barbizon painters, Sand employs the contemplation of landscape in a polemical way, highlighting the importance of admiring and respecting our environment, and making it a subject worthy of attention in its own right.[84]

What I have shown in this chapter is that Sand's work engages with the visual arts on several levels: it is often inspired by visual artworks, employs pictorial techniques, and ultimately hopes to endow her readers with '[le] sens pittoresque', making them more capable of seeing and appreciating the world around them. In dealing with the interaction between

[82] Prévost-Paradol notes in his article (published in the *Journal des Débats*, 5 October 1860): 'S'il est aussi légitime et aussi nécessaire pour le romancier que pour le peintre de prendre ses modèles dans la nature, […] il faut […] être fidèle aux lois de l'art et reproduire seulement ce qui mérite d'être conservé, soit en bien, soit en mal, par une certain grandeur et une certaine beauté. C'est la chimère des écrivains réalistes que de prétendre tout reproduire.' Extract quoted by Georges Lubin, *Corr.*, XVI, pp.151-152.

[83] See Philippe Hamon, *Imageries: littérature et image au XIX^e^ siècle* (Paris: José, 2001) for more on the rise of the image.

[84] See *George Sand: une nature d'artiste* for details on Sand's admiration for landscape painters and her relations with specific artists.

writing and the visual, Pierre-Marc de Biasi defines Flaubert's writing in *Les Trois contes* as '[une] écriture du visuel', a type of writing which involves 'un vrai travail de réécriture et d'intégration'.[85] Although Biasi uses this term to draw out parallels between Flaubert's writing and cinematic techniques, the concept of 'une écriture du visuel' rather than 'une écriture visuelle' is suggestive for Sand's work, since, triggered by the act of contemplating visual artworks and landscape views, it borrows procedures from painting, but does not attempt to compete against this sister art. What can be considered as the aporia of representing visual phenomena and experiences through language is never resolved in Sand's work, and this is due to the fact that her aim is not to reproduce the original. Rather, her work presents a dynamic exchange between text and image with the aim of reconfiguring reality and opening up the reader's own visual appreciation of the world, as she explains in a preface in 1851:

> Tout ce que l'artiste peut espérer de mieux, c'est d'engager ceux qui ont des yeux à regarder aussi. Voyez donc la simplicité, vous autres, voyez le ciel et les champs, et les arbres, et les paysans surtout dans ce qu'ils ont de bon et de vrai: vous les verrez un peu dans mon livre, vous les verrez beaucoup mieux dans la nature.[86]

This imperative to look at the world will be further examined in the next chapter, where I consider the expansion of Sand's appreciation of the natural environment, and the impact of this on her poetics.

[85] Pierre-Marc de Biasi, 'Postface', in *Trois Contes* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), pp.209-269 (pp.267, 260).
[86] '*La Mare au diable*, Notice, 1851', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.164-165 (p.165).

Chapter 4

'L'artiste naturaliste'[1]: contemplating the natural world in the later novels

Introduction

This chapter will consider the final stage in the Sandian quest for insight. I identify the mid-1850s as a turning point in Sand's conception of vision, as she advocates the physical examination of nature's intricate details as a means of understanding the world rather than appreciating landscapes exclusively as mental 'tableaux'. Although Sand encourages the detailed observation of nature, I argue, however, that the overly narrow and controlling approach adopted by what she terms '[la] science exacte' (*OA*, II, p.251) is rejected in her works. Rather, Sand puts forward an approach which takes into account not only the microscopic details of nature, but also its inherent vitality, beauty and multiplicity. Further, I demonstrate that Sand engages with the question of apprehending the natural world on a broader level, as she considers the relations between the increasingly disparate disciplines of the arts and the sciences. I show that Sand advocates a combination of both approaches, and argue that this forms a major part of her distance from realism. What I am particularly interested in bringing to the fore in this chapter, therefore, is the expansion of Sand's understanding of vision and her re-examination of how individuals interact with and learn about the world.

I begin by situating Sand's interest in the study of nature within her own literary career and also in the wider intellectual context. I then analyse the representation of nature in Sand's novels, showing that she promotes an interactive model of engagement between humankind and nature. This is followed by an examination of the different types of individual

[1] *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur* (1877), p.75.

represented in her works, considering the controlling 'savant', the exalted, self-absorbed artist, and finally, the 'artiste naturaliste', the ideal individual which Sand shows can be represented by either gender. Finally, I demonstrate that Sand's multidisciplinary approach is part of her wider rejection of binaries and argue that her refusal of a monolithic approach to the world intersects with her rejection of realism as a literary aesthetic.

My corpus consists of key works published between 1853 and 1876 which exemplify the development of Sand's engagement with nature and her expanding conception of vision.[2] I primarily focus on *L'Homme de neige* (1859), *Valvèdre* (1861), *Laura, Voyage dans le cristal* (1865) and the *Contes d'une grand-mère* (1874-1876). The accepted critical view is that Sand ceases to develop after the late 1840s. As Éric Bordas states:

> L'idée reçue est que le massif de *Consuelo-La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* aurait épuisé tout l'imaginaire de l'auteur en une synthèse indépassable, que seule la trilogie berrichonne de 1846-1848, *La Mare au diable*, *François le Champi*, *La Petite Fadette*, aurait eu le pouvoir de renouveler par les saines vertus vivifiantes d'un retour à la campagne.[3]

Bordas quotes Henry James and André Maurois as examples of this view that the quality of Sand's production dramtically decreases after 1848.[4] I would add that this belief continues to prevail, with Diana Holmes, for instance, claiming that 'the last period of [Sand's] writing is her least admired, and it is not hard to see why.'[5] Although isolated works such as *Nanon* (1872) and the *Contes d'une grand-mère* have attracted recent critical attention, the period as a whole is greatly understudied.[6] I will consider an aspect of Sand's writing which I consider

[2] The confines of this study do not allow me to take more novels into consideration. However, my analysis could be extended to further works such as *Jean de la Roche* (1860), *La Famille de Germandre* (1862) and *Mademoiselle Merquem* (1868).
[3] Éric Bordas, 'Les romans du Second Empire', in *George Sand. Littérature et Politique*, ed. by Martine Reid and Michèle Riot-Sarcey (Nantes: Pleins feux, 2007), pp.113-126 (p.113).
[4] Maurois states, for example: 'Les livres qu'elle écrit alors ne sont pas très bons et elle le sait.' André Maurois, *Lélia ou la vie de George Sand*, p.602, quoted by Bordas, 'Les romans du Second Empire', p.113.
[5] Diana Holmes, 'George Sand and the problem of authority', in *French Women's Writing, 1848-1994* (London: Athlone, 1996), pp.26-46 (p.40).
[6] See, for example, the following studies on *Nanon*: Janet Beizer, 'History's Life Story: *Nanon* as l'*Histoire de ma vie*', in *George Sand et l'Empire des lettres*, ed. by Anne E. McCall-Saint-Saens (New Orleans, LA: Presses

to be specific to this period in her career, arguing that her later works deal with a central question at this point in French intellectual history, the rivalry between different epistemic models, or means of understanding the world. Whereas the pedagogical dimension of the *Contes* has been identified by many,[7] much less attention has been devoted to the novels from Sand's later period, specifically their concern with intellectual development, learning and knowledge.[8]

Situating Sand's interest in the natural sciences

From the late 1850s onwards, Sand takes an increasing interest in the natural sciences, and it is this which leads her to place increasing value on the physical observation of the world.[9] It is well known that nature is a central aspect of Sand's life and work from an early point.[10] Her countryside upbringing and regular contact with nature awakens her interest in observing her natural surroundings. For example, referring to her aunt's garden at Chaillot, she states in *Histoire de ma vie* that '*c'est là que j'ai vu* les premiers fils de la Vierge, tout blancs et brillants au soleil d'automne […]. *C'est là aussi que j'ai vu des papillons* pour la première

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Universitaires du Nouveau Monde, 2004), pp.275-83; Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'A Question of Silence: George Sand's *Nanon*', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 21 (1993), 357-65; Nancy Rogers, '*Nanon*: Novel of Revolution or Revolutionary Novel?', in *The World of George Sand*, ed. by Natalie Datlof and others (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp.137-44. *Laura* has also been the object of recent studies, primarily in terms of its dialogue with Jules Verne. See, for example, Piero Gondolo della Riva, 'George Sand inspiratrice de Jules Verne', in *George Sand et son temps*, ed. by Elio Mosele, 3 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1994), III, pp.1109-1116.

[7] See, for example, Debra Linowitz Wentz, *Fait et fiction. Les formules pédagogiques dans les Contes d'une grand-mère de George Sand* (Paris: Nizet, 1985); Luce Czyba, 'Le merveilleux dans les *Contes d'une grand'mère* de George Sand', in *Écrire au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 1998), pp.259-271.

[8] The exception in this case is *Nanon*. Nicole Mozet's introduction to this text considers the importance of reading in this novel, see 'Introduction', in *Nanon* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1987), pp.5-28 (pp.20-22), as does Nicole Savy's introduction, 'Préface', in *Nanon* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2005), pp.7-22 (pp.18-19).

[9] I refer to natural sciences in the sense of those fields of knowledge which investigate the natural world. See 'Natural Science', in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'The branch of knowledge that deals with the natural or physical world', http://www.oed.com/ [accessed 19.7.2010].

[10] See, for example, *Ville, campagne et nature dans l'œuvre de George Sand*, ed. by Simone Bernard-Griffiths (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2002); Simone Vierne's section on 'la nature' in *George Sand, la femme qui écrivait la nuit* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), pp.79-135; and Gilles Clément and Christine Sand, *Le Jardin romantique de George Sand* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

fois et de grandes fleurs de tournesol qui me paraissaient avoir cent pieds de haut.' (*OA*, II, p.545, added emphasis). This personal inclination is further developed by her discovery, at twenty, of Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Her *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1837) and early novels bear the traces of her affinity with these writers and their passion for nature. At this point, however, Sand's enthusiasm is not matched with an interest in the scholarly study of nature. She rejects botany, for example, as she states with reference to her lessons: 'la botanique se réduisait […] pour moi à des classifications purement arbitraires […]. Cette botanique à noms barbares me semblait la fantaisie des pédants' (*OA*, I, 774). Speaking with hindsight in the early 1850s, she now realises that her hostile reaction to botany was due to the fact that she misunderstood it: 'je n'en saisissais pas les lois cachées' (*OA*, I, 774). She therefore testifies to a change in her position on scientific study as a means of engaging with nature. Since her early appreciation of plants and flowers was not founded on an understanding of their 'lois cachées', she senses that this prevented her from truly seeing, and thus understanding them. 'J'avais toujours remis au lendemain *l'épélage* de cet alphabet nécessaire dont on espère en vain pouvoir se passer pour bien voir et réellement comprendre' (*NLV*, p.101, original emphasis), she states in 1868. I would argue that Sand's serious interest in 'l'étude de la nature' (*Corr*., XII, p.458, June 1854) begins in the early 1850s. More precisely, we can identify Jules Néraud's death on the 9th of May 1855 as the decisive event which galvanizes her, and leads her to begin her botanical studies in earnest: 'Je ne me suis occupé [sic] un peu sérieusement de botanique que depuis la mort de mon pauvre ami' (*NLV*, p.15).[11]

Sand's comment is confirmed by her letters and *Agendas*, which demonstrate a surge in her reading of scientific works from 1855 onwards. Her first interest in botany is combined with enquiries into geology and zoology, and mineralogy and entomology more specifically.

[11] Sand describes her close friend and botanist as 'un vrai savant, artiste jusqu'au bout des ongles dans la science, […] un initiateur admirable.' (*OA*, II, p.107).

Her reading includes works of popular science such as Jules Michelet's *L'Oiseau* (1856) and *La Mer* (1861), Louis Figuier's *La terre avant le déluge* (1863), and Grimard's spiritual volume, *La Plante* (1865). In addition to this, she reads books by professional scientists, including the classificatory work of Grenier and Godron, *La Flore de France* (1848-1856), Decaisne's *La Flore élémentaire des jardins et des champs* (1855), Archiac's *Histoire des progrès de la géologie* (1856-57) and *Géos, ou Histoire de la Terre* (1861) by Méray.[12] The seriousness of her engagement with botany and geology is demonstrated by the fact that she asks for the most recent studies in these disciplines and receives the *Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France*.[13] Further, she recruits a personal geology tutor, insisting that he must be 'au courant de la marche de la science' (*Corr*., XV, p.796, May 1860). She also owns a copy of Dufrénoy and Élie de Beaumont's *Carte géologique de la France* (1841), the first complete geological map of France.[14] Sand clearly, therefore, keeps herself updated on the latest scientific developments. This has a clear impact on her philosophical outlook. Whilst her letters from the early 1850s express despair and disillusionment, especially regarding contemporary politics, those from 1855 onwards reveal a growing optimism, as science is now regarded by Sand as the key to progress. She states, for example, in February 1862:

> J'en suis à ce point dans mes […] études d'histoire naturelle, de sentir que je ne crois plus seulement comme dans ma jeunesse par le cœur et l'imagination, mais encore par la raison. Je vois une logique suprême que brisent à tout instant les faits secondaires, comme pour confirmer la grande loi d'équité que nous pressentons et que nous sentons absolument nécessaire. […] En étudiant la nature, on devient toujours plus convaincu que rien ne se perd. L'âme, bien autrement précieuse que la matière ne se perd donc pas. (*Corr*., XVI, p.816).

[12] It is impossible to mention all the scientific books Sand read in this period, but details are to be found in the *Agendas*, ed. by Anne Chevereau, 5 vols (Paris: J. Touzot, 1990-1993) and in the index of the *Correspondance* from 1855 onwards. Moreover, it is noted by Marie-Louis Vincent that the catalogue of Sand's Nohant library (sold in 1890) included 700 volumes on science, without including several uncatalogued works which were sold in batches. See *George Sand et le Berry* (Paris: Champion, 1919), p.465.
[13] See *Corr*., XV, p.796, May 1860 and *Corr*., XVI, p.47, August 1860.
[14] See Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France* (London: Picador, 2007), pp.210-211 for more on the significance of this map.

Her studies provide her with a new faith in the world and its workings, as she asserts in a preface in 1875: 'la science est progrès par elle-même et quiconque la rejette ou l'entrave retourne aux ténèbres du passé'.[15]

As we saw in Chapter Two, the transition which takes place in Sand's writing from her early melancholic narratives of the thirties to her utopian novels of the forties has been noted by critics. However, the later ideological shift that I identify in Sand's work in 1855, from the privileging of art and politics in the 1840s to science and observation in the 1850s and 60s, remains largely unrecognised and certainly unexplored.[16] Further, whereas the importance of nature in Sand's early work has received much critical attention, the importance of her scholarly understanding of the natural world in understanding her later novels has not been undertaken by any critics. The most thorough account of Sand's studies in the natural sciences is J.J. Walling's article, 'L'Histoire naturelle dans l'œuvre de George Sand'.[17] This article provides a valuable guide to references to the natural sciences in Sand's writing, but does not examine the significance of these references beyond an assertion that 'dès 1852 elle revient à la passion de ses jeunes années […]. Il n'est guère surprenant que ses romans soient désormais pleins d'histoire naturelle.'[18] What I would like to show in this chapter is that Sand's explorations into botany, geology and mineralogy are in fact central in her development of a multidisciplinary approach to apprehending the natural world. I use the

[15] Sand, 'Préface générale, 1875', in *Préfaces de George Sand* ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.275-280 (pp.277-278). In April 1862 Sand also praises Élie Margollé for his scientific work, *Les Phénomènes de la mer* (1862), noting: 'vous avez pris le bon chemin dans la vie. Il n'y en a pas d'autre; toute cette agitation politique qui règne ici est inféconde. Instruisons-le [le peuple] sous toutes les formes. Le résultat de nos efforts est peut-être fort éloigné, mais au moins il est sûr, et tout le reste est inutile.' (*Corr*., XVII, p.18).

[16] Anna Szabó notes that 'dans les derniers romans, les clefs de la sagesse ne sont plus détenues ni par des artistes extatiques, ni par des apôtres paysans ou ouvriers, mais par les savants', in 'La figure du savant dans les romans de George Sand', in *Figures et images de la condition humaine dans la littérature française du dix-neuvième siècle* (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1986), pp.105-112 (p.111). This repeats J.J. Walling's similar statements in 'L'Histoire naturelle dans l'œuvre de George Sand', *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, II (1967), 79-119, (pp.84, 105). Neither of these articles considers the implications of this change.

[17] See previous footnote.

[18] Walling, pp.83-84. See also Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, 'George Sand et Jules Néraud, botanistes', in *Fleurs et jardins dans l'œuvre de George Sand*, ed. by Simone Bernard-Griffiths and Marie-Cecile Levet (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2006), pp.301-311, which provides a useful outline of Sand's botanical interests but does not consider the significance of this for interpreting her novels.

term ‘multidisciplinary’ in the sense of combining different disciplines in order to understand or address an intellectual problem. I prefer ‘multidisciplinary’ to ‘interdisciplinary’, since the latter is laden with distinct modern connotations and is also specifically linked with academia. ‘Multidisciplinary’ is also appropriate for my purposes since the term suggests a holistic and plural approach to knowledge rather than a restrictive one.

Sand’s keen interest in the latest scientific developments is situated in the larger context of the increasing dissemination of scientific ideas in Second Empire France. The eighteenth-century move towards a greater awareness of the natural environment gains even greater currency in the nineteenth century, and scientific knowledge is widely disseminated, accessible, and popular. The number of periodicals dedicated to popularising science proliferates from the mid-1850s onwards, and scientific works and advances are also described in journals such as *La Presse*.[19] Moreover, this is a period of increasing engagement between science and literature, with Zola, for example, positing himself as a form of scientist in his Rougon-Macquart series, and Flaubert displaying his grasp of an astonishing number of scientific disciplines in his farcical work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.[20] Sand, with her interest is in the natural sciences as opposed to mathematics, medicine or physics, is closer to writers such as Michelet and Jules Verne. More specifically, Sand engages with these sciences in a pedagogical vein. Not dissimilarly to Verne’s *Voyages extraordinaires* (1863-1905), Sand’s writings in the second half of the century become increasingly preoccupied with introducing her readers to new developments in the understanding of nature. An important aspect of this initiation is its visual dimension, as both

[19] The development of scientific journals was greatly influenced by the first international exhibition in Paris in 1855. For more on the popularisation of science in nineteenth-century France, see *La Science pour tous. Sur la vulgarisation scientifique en France,* ed. by Bruno Béguet (Paris: Bibliothèque du CNAM, 1990).
[20] See Allen Thiher, *Fiction Rivals Science. The French Novel from Balzac to Proust* (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 2001) for more on the relations between the novel and science.

writers urge their readers to look at the world.[21] This aligns with the emphasis in Sand's pedagogical philosophy on the individual's contact with nature, as her preferred means of learning about the world is direct observation through outdoor exploration, although this is supported by reading and studying samples at home.[22] In this sense, Sand follows on from those eighteenth-century thinkers who led the move away from the mechanistic, abstract study of nature towards a more experimental and empirical methodology. The result of this 'veritable explosion of scientific observation' is that greater emphasis than ever before is now placed on looking at nature rather than reasoning and theorising about it.[23] Sand's professed 'enthousiasme pour les sciences naturelles' (*Corr*., XIV, p.560, December 1857) thus forms part of an intellectual trend that places increasing importance on looking at and examining nature. In the next section we will consider the way in which Sand adapts this model for her own literary ends.

Relations between humankind and the natural world: an interactive model

For Sand, looking at the world should lead to admiration: 'je m'occupe à voir et je me contente d'admirer' (*NLV*, p.75). I have shown that the preoccupation with looking at the natural world manifests itself in Sand's novels of the 1840s as an aesthetic awareness that is conditioned by the viewer's subjective relations with reality. In this chapter, I examine the development of this concern into a multidisciplinary approach, as Sand develops an

[21] For more on this aspect of Jules Verne, see Tim Unwin, ' "Regarde de tous tes yeux, regarde!": Voracious Visuality in Jules Verne', in *Sublimely Visual: The Art of the Text*, ed. by Susan Harrow (in preparation).
[22] In this respect, Sand joins Mme de Genlis, who believed that 'la nature et le regard que chacun porte sur elle […] est un facteur essentiel de formation de l'individu'. See Isabelle Brouard-Arends, 'Du spectacle à l'édification: la relation à la nature dans le roman d'éducation au dix-huitième siècle', in *Écrire la nature au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. by Françoise Gevrey and others (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006), pp.253-261 (p.253).
[23] D.G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.70.

awareness of the natural world as an objective reality that needs to be understood scientifically before it can be appreciated for its beauty.

Sand's later works are full of references to the importance of directly examining nature. In the preface to her son's work on lepidopterology, for example, she addresses artists and poets by stating that 'avant de voir, et […] avant d'avoir examiné, au moyen de la classification, les espèces et les variétés d'individus, vous n'aviez qu'une vue confuse des différences de formes et de nuances qui caractérisent chaque genre de beauté'.[24] She also notes in 1868: 'il est presque impossible de voir avec netteté tout ce que renferme un mètre carré de jardin naturel, si on l'examine sans notion de classement.' (*NLV,* p.73). These statements place strong emphasis on the classification of nature and on the visual dimension of scientific study. This suggests that a scientific approach to the world, and more specifically, physical observation, is now considered by Sand as a means of reaching insight, that is, a true understanding of the world. Sand states, for example, with reference to geology that 'il y a toujours du nouveau à regarder […] et à tâcher de comprendre' (*Corr*., XIV, p.289, March 1857). Her reactions to other writers in this period highlight further the value which she places on this visual engagement with nature. In her commendation of Michelet's *L'Oiseau*, for example, she points out his ability to make the reader see the landscape: 'La description des lieux […] est faite de main de maître, et devrait servir d'idéal à tous les romanciers *dont c'est l'état*. Il y a là tout ce qu'il faut pour nous faire voir la physionomie complète des contrées et des êtres observés, le fond et la forme.' (*Autour de la table*, p.62, original emphasis). This idea resurfaces in her admiration of Eugène Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahara* (1857), as she tells him: 'vous faites voir [la nature] […] comme si on l'avait devant les yeux' (*Corr*., XIV, p.270, March 1857). In her literary advice to Anna Devoisin, she recommends Fromentin's book as 'un chef d'œuvre', stating that 'ce livre apprend à voir

[24] Sand's preface to Maurice Sand's *Le monde des papillons* (Paris: J. Rothschild, 1867). Her preface is reprinted under 'Le Monde des papillons', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, ed. by D. J. Colwell (Egham: Runnymede Books, 1992), pp.259-268 (p.265).

et à rendre. Pour moi je l'étudie comme un modèle' (*Corr*., XIV, p.287, March 1857).[25] Sand does, however, express one criticism of Fromentin's work, and this is its lack of geological detail:

> Il faut que vous appreniez un peu de géologie et de minéralogie élémentaire […], il faut avoir pour votre lecteur, la complaisance de dire si vous êtes dans un terrain volcanique, calcaire, granitique, etc. […] *il est nécessaire* quand on se promène avec vous dans ces espaces et dans ces rochers, *que l'on voie* sur quel terrain on marche. Tout ce sol dont vous dites si bien la couleur et la forme, on a besoin de savoir sa nature. Je crois aussi que les peintres doivent savoir cela. (*Corr*., XIV, p.289, March 1857, added emphasis).

Sand therefore asserts that one must possess scientific knowledge in order to 'see' nature in a true sense. Those who have not been trained in this way are categorised by Sand in 1868 as 'des personnes qui voient mal' (*NLV*, p.78), since she considers the idea that it is possible to '*voir* sans *savoir*' as '[une] erreur' (*Corr*., XVI, p.54, August 1860, original emphasis). As we saw in Chapter Three, in her novels of the 1840s, Sand posits the artist as the privileged observer of the natural world. In the 1860s, on the other hand, the aesthetic capability (what we referred to as the 'sens pittoresque') is now considered to be insufficient for truly appreciating and understanding the environment: 'une éducation exclusivement artistique n'est pas un moyen infaillible de développer dans l'homme le sentiment du beau et du vrai.'[26]

I have therefore identified a turning point in Sand's epistemic positioning, as she now appreciates and values scientific methods for understanding nature. However, despite her espousal of empirical observation, Sand disapproves of the conclusions reached by some scientists as a result of this. More specifically, she rejects the understanding of the vegetal world as cold and lifeless. She refers to the individuals who reach this position as '[les] bons

[25] Sand also greatly admires Fromentin's *Un été dans le Sahel* (published in 1858 in the *Revue des deux mondes*): 'Votre œil est si bien doué, et le style est une forme que vous maniez avec tant de *maestria* […], que je vois ce que vous voyez. […] Continuez, je vous en supplie, voyez et décrivez, n'importe quoi. On se console, en vous lisant, d'être attaché où il faut que l'on broute, on voyage, on vit et on *voit*, jouissance suprême qui, entre vos mains, est la source du beau.' (*Corr*., XV, pp.210-211, December 1858, original emphasis).
[26] George Sand, *Impressions et Souvenirs* (Paris: M. Lévy, 1873) p.325.

et graves savants qui voient la nature froide en ses opérations brûlantes' (*NLV*, p.60), and counters this by insisting on the vitality of nature: 'rien n'est froid, tout est feu dans la production de la vie' (*NLV*, p.60). Sand's understanding of nature therefore approaches a vitalist position, vitalism being 'the doctrine or theory that the origin and phenomena of life are due to or produced by a vital principle, as distinct from a purely chemical or physical force.'[27] This doctrine envisages life as 'a kind of fiery fluid', electricity or force, which aligns well with Sand's conception of all living things as being in some way animated with 'la force vitale inhérente à la matière' (*NLV*, p.86).[28] This proves to be central in her elaboration of a visual model which rejects the perception of nature as an inert substance to be inspected and dissected by the controlling eye of humankind.

We have briefly referred to Sand's affinities with Rousseau, who was drawn to botany later in life and also placed value on direct contact with the natural world. Rousseau states, for example: 'dans cette Science là [l'Histoire naturelle], il vaut mieux voir, et raisonner sur ce qu'on voit, que de lire'.[29] His idea that the natural world is full of 'des merveilles' is taken on by Sand, who also believes that we should marvel at the riches of nature.[30] Behind this attitude is the theological approach to nature exemplified in the work of abbé Pluche, which I will examine in more detail later in this chapter. However, Sand differs from Rousseau's pedagogical approach to the natural world in an important way. As Ruth Capasso has stated, in his letters on botany to Madame Delessert, Rousseau encourages his reader to adopt 'an active, searching gaze'.[31] The observation of nature is discussed in these letters in terms of 'l'inspection attentive' and is considered as 'un examen'. The verbs 'arracher' and

[27] 'Vitalism', in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 20 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), IX, p.702.
[28] 'Vitalism', in the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. by Simon Blackburn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.383-384 (p.383). See, for example, Sand's reference to 'la force vitale inhérente à la matière' (*NLV*, p.86).
[29] Rousseau, 'Mémoire présenté à Monsieur de Mably sur l'éducation de M. son fils', [1740, published 1782], in *Œuvres complètes*, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), IV, p.30.
[30] Rousseau, 'Lettres sur la botanique', in *Œuvres complètes*, IV, p.1188.
[31] Ruth Carver Capasso, 'Traduction libre: Science in *Les Contes d'une grand-mère*', *George Sand Studies*, XVI (1997), 57-68 (p.64).

'disséquer' frequently appear in the text, and many sentences open with the structure 'si vous y regardez de bien près, vous trouverez […]', indicating that it is the human gaze which searches out and unveils the intricacies of the plant.[32] This is in contrast with Sand, whose protagonists, according to Capasso, 'remain almost uniformly passive while the wonders of nature are displayed for them'.[33] This contrast between the two writers is more difficult to maintain when comparing Sand's works with Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, for example, and I disagree with the claim that Sand's protagonists are 'passive'. However, Capasso's point about Sand's rejection of the scrutinising gaze is key to understanding her divergence from those writers who objectify nature. Sand spurns the subjugating model of inspection, stating that 'disséquer n'est pas comprendre; analyser n'est pas voir' (*Corr*., XVI, p.54, August 1860). Sand advocates a dynamic visual relationship between man and nature where nature takes on agency and performs its wondrous beauty, and the man or woman contemplates the scene.

One of the novels which demonstrates this most clearly is *L'Homme de neige* (1859), a work which has incited very limited interest in critics.[34] I consider this work along with *Valvèdre* (1861) and *Laura* (1865) to be important explorations of ways of learning about the world. These are forms of 'Bildungsromane' in which the protagonists face a choice between different ways of apprehending reality. Broadly speaking, this is a choice between being a 'savant' and an 'artiste', a choice which I will examine in more detail in my later section. *L'Homme de neige* includes several examples of a form of contact between hero and

[32] See 'Lettres sur la botanique', in *Œuvres complètes*, IV, pp. 1154, 1156, 1167, 1168, 1180, 1161, 1157, 1163.
[33] Capasso, 'Traduction libre', p.64.
[34] To my knowledge, only three articles have been written on this novel, and it is not included in the corpus of any major study on Sand. Pascale Auraix-Jonchière considers the importance of the castle and of marionette theatre in 'Le "Château des étoiles", théâtre de l'intériorité', in *George Sand et les arts* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 2004), ed. by Marielle Caors, pp.125-35. Auraix-Jonchière also focuses on the representation of the castle and the search for identity in 'Du "château neuf" au "château vieux", imaginaire et identité dans *L'Homme de neige* de George Sand', in "*O Saisons o châteaux*": *Châteaux et littérature des Lumières à l'aube de la modernité (1764-1914)*, ed. by Pascale Auraix-Jonchière (Clermont- Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), pp.367-380. Olivier Bara (see next footnote) examines the theatre as intertext. None of these studies examine the epistemological eclecticism of *L'Homme de neige*.

environment where nature takes on an active role. It has been noted by Olivier Bara that the theatre is an important intertext for this work, written during Sand's most fruitful period of theatrical production.[35] However, the links between Sand's theatrical practices and her interest in the natural sciences have not been explored. *L'Homme de neige* is set in Sweden and the reader's attention is often drawn to the strange and striking icy landscape. Like many of Sand's later works, this is a novel of initiation which presents nature as a means of learning about the world and about the self. As a result, although it is on one level an eventful detective story (involving the hero's quest to discover his origins), the narrative often pauses to allow for long descriptions from the hero's viewpoint. Let us take an example from the first half of the novel. Here, Christian is standing outside the Stollborg castle, and we are told that 'le jeune aventurier était retenu par un spectacle admirable.' (*L'Homme de neige*, I, p.73). After describing the quality of the light and the layout of the landscape, the narrator provides the kind of geological details which Sand felt were missing from Fromentin's work. We hear of 'les masses du paysage' and 'des montagnes granitiques à formes anguleuses', and are told that the Stollborg castle 'se trouvait planté sur un tertre rocailleux' (*HDN*, I, p.74). The area is then described as:

> un paysage tourmenté qui […] brillait comme un assemblage de forteresses de cristal jetées sur des points inégaux […]; des granits glacés enfermant les trois quarts de l'horizon, des micaschistes glacés se déchirant en formes moins grandioses et plus bizarres sur les plans moins élevés; enfin mille cascatelles glacées suspendues en aiguilles de diamant le long des roches. (*HDN*, I, p.74).

Rather than focusing on Christian's gaze, the text gives full play to what is perceived. The immensity and grandeur of the natural phenomena is suggested through the vivid vocabulary ('brillait', 'se déchirant', 'bizarres', 'suspendues') and the piling up and listing of geological

[35] Olivier Bara, 'Prolongements romanesques des pratiques théâtrales de George Sand: *Le Château des Désertes, L'Homme de neige*, *Pierre qui roule*, ou le théâtre au miroir du roman', in *George Sand, pratiques et imaginaires de l'écriture*, ed. by Brigitte Diaz and Isabelle Naginski (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2006), pp.225-237.

masses in one long sentence with its myriad clauses and sub-clauses. Only after describing the scene does the narrator provide us with Christian's reaction: 'On me l'avait bien dit, pensa Cristiano, que les dures nuits du Nord avaient, pour les yeux et pour l'imagination, des splendeurs inouïes' (*HDN*, I, pp.74-75). Both the term 'splendeurs' and a further reference to 'des merveilles' (*HDN*, I, p.75) echo the first reference to the scene as 'un spectacle' (*HDN*, I, p.73).[36] This term has theatrical connotations and is also specifically scopic, as it is etymologically derived from the Latin verb 'spectare' = to look. If nature is a 'spectacle' then man is a 'spectateur', defined in the Larousse dictionary as '[le] témoin oculaire d'une action, d'un événement'.[37] Man is not passive in this role, since he observes the spectacle. However, he does not dominate or try to exert control over what he sees, and this conceptualisation of nature as an active performer shows us, therefore, that although Sand advocates the physical study and observation of nature, this does not equate to a method which considers nature as a mere object.

This concept of nature as a spectacle only surfaces in Sand's novels in the late 1850s.[38] In *Indiana* (1832), for example, the instances of the term 'spectacle' refer mostly to personal dramas. The only use of the term 'spectacle' with reference to a natural phenomenon (the sea) is a means of describing Indiana's own melancholic state: 'Des fenêtres de sa chambre, Indiana apercevait [...] les voiles blanches qui croisaient sur l'océan Indien. Durant les heures silencieuses de la journée, ce spectacle attirait ses regards et donnait à sa mélancolie une teinte de désespoir uniforme et fixe.' (*Indiana*, p.253). The expression

[36] In *L'Homme de neige* alone, we come across the term 'spectacle' at least seven times with reference to the various natural phenomena which Christian witnesses during his time in Délacarlie (see *HDN*, I, pp.117, 195, and *HDN*, II, pp.40, 63, 73, 188). In *Valvèdre* (1861), man is also identified as '[le] spectateur privilégié [de la création]' (*Valvèdre* p.138). Sand also asserts in *Histoire de ma vie*: 'L'enfant qui étudie a déjà tous les besoins de l'artiste qui crée. […] La nature lui est un spectacle continuel' (*OA*, I, p.875).

[37] 'Spectateur', P. Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*, 17 vols (Paris: Slatkine, 1982), XIV, deuxième partie, p.985.

[38] So prevalent is the occurrence of this term in Sand's work that she is quoted in the *Larousse* dictionary under the entry for 'spectacle': 'Les créations de l'art parlent à l'esprit seul, et […] le spectacle de la nature parle à toutes les facultés. (G. Sand)', P. Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, XIV, deuxième partie, p.982. This quotation is from Sand's first letter in the *Lettres d'un voyageur*, p.43.

appears more frequently in *Mauprat* (1837) (fifteen times), but most of these refer to dramatic scenes of emotional intensity involving personal relations. The two references to nature as spectacle are, once again, indications of the characters' emotional and psychical state.[39] A reference from the *Lettres d'un voyageur* is also entirely focused on the the onlooker rather than the view: '[le spectacle de la nature] nous pénètre par tous les pores comme par toutes les idées. Au sentiment tout intellectuel de l'admiration, l'aspect des campagnes ajoute le plaisir sensuel.' (*Lettres d'un voyageur*, p.43). This development in Sand's use of the term 'spectacle' to describe nature corroborates the evolution that I identify in Sand's works from personal concerns (in the early 1830s) to larger social issues (in the late 1830s and 1840s) to the preoccupation with nature and the environment from the 1850s onwards.

Sand's idea of 'le spectacle de la nature' echoes Abbé Pluche's study, *Le Spectacle de la nature* (1737-1750). Despite the fact that this 'encyclopaedic bestseller'[40] is an explicitly didactic text aimed at popularising science, a parallel is clearly to be drawn between Pluche's aims – 'rendre les jeunes gens curieux, et [...] leur former l'esprit' – and Sand's desire to enlighten her readers about the natural world.[41] For Pluche, the spectacle of nature proves God's existence, since, in the model which he puts forward, the onlooker is filled with admiration before this manifestation of God's generosity and skill. Although there are no direct references to Pluche in Sand's works, as an avid reader with a particular interest in eighteenth-century ideas, she would have been familiar with his works, not least through other writers. Rousseau, for example, recommends *Le Spectacle de la nature* in his 'Mémoire à Monsieur de Mably' and in his 'Projet pour l'éducation de Monsieur de Sainte-Marie'.[42]

[39] See, for example, *Mauprat*, p.172.
[40] Denis Trinkle, 'Noël-Antoine Pluche's *Le Spectacle de la nature*: an Encyclopaedic Best Seller', in *SVEC*, n.138 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1997), pp.93-134.
[41] Pluche's intention is laid out in his subtitle: *Le Spectacle de la nature, ou Entretiens sur les particularités de l'histoire naturelle qui ont paru les plus propres à rendre les jeunes gens curieux, et à leur former l'esprit.*
[42] Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, IV, pp.30, 50.

His use of the term 'le spectacle de la nature' often aligns itself with Pluche's religious position. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, for example, the atheist Wolmar is incapable of appreciating the world around him. This is in contrast with Saint-Preux and Julie, as Saint-Preux writes: 'Imaginez Julie à la promenade avec son mari: l'une admirant dans la riche et brillante parure que la terre étale l'ouvrage et les dons de l'Auteur de l'univers; l'autre, ne voyant en tout cela qu'une combinaison fortuite où rien n'est lié que par une force aveugle', and goes on to quote Julie's words: 'Hélas! […] le spectacle de la nature, si vivant, si animé pour nous, est mort aux yeux de l'infortuné Wolmar'.[43] There is a hint of this idea in Sand's works. *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur* (1877), for example, includes references to a divine being behind all things. Sand's attitude towards God, however, is ambiguous, and I do not regard the representation of nature in her works to be primarily driven by a desire to make a religious statement. Further, Pluche's admiration of nature is of a perfectly ordered and static world, which he compares with clockwork.[44] Sand's appreciation of nature, however, is anti-mechanistic and posits a more active and dynamic exchange.

Conceptualising nature as a spectacle is potentially problematic, however, due to the ambiguity surrounding the relative agency of the two elements. On the one hand, as Carpasso argues, nature is active since it creates the spectacle, whereas man is a passive onlooker. On the other hand, the hierarchical relationship can be reversed, so that the onlooker is the active subject, whereas nature is reduced to the object of humankind's gaze. Sand in fact rejects both these possibilities by creating an alternative paradigm, in which both nature and humankind are active agents. In *Laura* (1864), for example, nature is frequently viewed as a spectacle and this is often heightened by the use of an active verb. When Alexis reaches the strange land with Nasias, for instance, he notes of the giant crystals they come across: 'Ces

[43] Rousseau, *Œuvres Complètes*, II, p.591. For more on this, see Jacques Berchtold, '*Le Spectacle de la nature* chez Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *Écrire la nature au XVIIIe siècle*, pp.275-294 (p.284).
[44] In the preface, for example, he speaks of '[l]es machines qui forment le spectacle.'*Le Spectacle de la nature*, 9 vols (Utrecht: É. Neaulme, 1735-36) (1736), I, p.x.

roches brillantes, les unes noires et opaques, les autres transparentes et couleur d'eau de mer, […], toutes finement striées de cannelures délicates, *offraient un spectacle* si étrange et si riche, que je ne songeais plus qu'à les *contempler*.' (*Laura*, p.93, added emphasis). This is echoed at two other moments: '[un] *spectacle* grandiose *se présenta*' (p.36, added emphasis) and 'quel *spectacle* étrange et grandiose *s'offrit* alors à nos regards!' (*Laura*, p.112-113, added emphasis). In all these descriptions, both man and nature are active, with the former presenting a striking spectacle and man performing the task of 'contemplation'. In this sense, the experience can be regarded as an example of the sublime. This is not in the sense in which Naginski employs this term with regards to Sand's earlier heroes.[45] Rather, I use this term to refer to an experience whereby the individual responds to a natural phenomenon that is full of energy and vitality and which invokes the viewer's awe, in contrast with a response to nature as something that is ordered, contained, and lifeless. Indeed, the forms of nature referred to in the descriptions I have given are striking and extraordinary, and natural scenery is often referred to as being 'sublime' in these novels.[46] For Sand, therefore, scientific knowledge such as mineralogical training, for example, inspires awe, marvel and wonder rather than leading to a desire to manipulate and control.

Perhaps those of Sand's works which most strongly advocate the positive model of man as the spectator of an awe-inspiring natural world rather than its subjugating master are her fairytales, the *Contes d'une grand-mère* (1874-1876). These tales are reminiscent of Rousseau's *Lettres élémentaires sur la botanique* in that they recommend the natural sciences as a pedagogical tool for children. For Rousseau, the primary goal of this form of study is acquiring the ability to truly see, as he writes to Madme Delesser: 'sans vouloir faire de votre fille un très grand botaniste, je crois néanmoins qu'il lui sera toujours utile d'apprendre à bien

[45] Naginski states that, in the case of characters such as Lélia, Jacques and Geneviève (*André*, 1834), 'le sublime se présente comme une preuve de ferveur philosophique […]. L'esprit quitte le moi et s'élève en quête de hautes méditations.' *George Sand mythographe* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007), p.61.
[46] See, for example, *HDN*, I, p.75, *HDN*, II, p.73, *Valvèdre*, p.127, *Laura*, p.80.

voir ce qu'elle voit.'[47] This statement bears a striking resemblance to Sand's own definition of the natural sciences: 'Apprendre à voir, voilà tout le secret des études naturelles.' (*NLV*, p.73). Sand's visual model, however, is one which bestows nature with agency, as it displays its own beauty rather than being a mere object of study. The lesson hinted at in *L'Homme de neige*, and more explicitly presented in *Laura*, is at the centre of her fairytales, as formulated in one of the prefaces: 'la nature est une mine de merveilles, [...] et toutes les fois qu'on y met tant soit peu le nez, on est étonné de ce qu'elle vous révèle.'[48] To be noted here is the fact that it is nature which reveals its riches and not the human observer. Like *Laura*, which demonstrates that 'il n'est pas besoin de subir les charmes de l'hallucination pour voir ces merveilles au sein de la terre' (*Laura*, p.40), the fairytales also invite the reader to look at and admire the natural world, since 'le merveilleux est dans la nature.' (*Le Château de Pictordu*, p.53).

Two tales in particular from the *Contes d'une grand-mère* are of interest for our investigation of visual models. *La Fée poussière* and *La Fée aux gros yeux*, both published in the second series of 'contes' in 1876, are specifically preoccupied with ways of looking at the world. The former is the story of a little girl who is taken on a journey to the centre of the earth by a mysterious dust fairy. In this tale, the fairy teaches the child about the wonders of nature and succeeds in doing so through visual demonstrations. She tells the little girl: 'tu as voulu savoir, il faut te résigner à regarder' (*FP*, p.398), establishing a clear link between looking and learning. Indeed, the tale abounds with verbs of perception. The fairy explains to the child that their adventure will primarily involve seeing new things: 'tu vas voir bien autre chose! tu vas voir la vie déjà éclose au milieu de ces pierres', 'tu verras pousser des arbres'

[47] Rousseau, 'Lettres élémentaires sur la botanique', in *Œuvres complètes*, IV, p.1152. Interestingly, the quotation reads 'il lui sera toujours utile d'apprendre à bien voir ce qu'elle *regarde*' in Bernard Gagnebin's edition of *Lettres sur la botanique* Paris: Club des Libraires de France, 1962), p.4. This raises the issue of the important difference between the two actions, to be discussed in my discussion of *La Fée poussière* in the following paragraph.

[48] George Sand, 'À Aurore et Gabrielle Sand', in *Contes d'une grand-mère* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), p.151.

(*FP*, p.400). The child is repeatedly encouraged to look: 'regarde le rivage', (*FP*, p.400), 'regarde les yeux de ce prétendu monstre' (*FP*, p.402), 'vois ce que je te fais voir' (*FP*, p.402). The little girl obeys these commands – 'je regardai, de tous mes yeux' (*FP*, p.403). The verb of perception she most often uses is 'voir' rather than 'regarder', which highlights the fact that nature is active here; for example: 'je vis une végétation arborescente s'élever rapidement' (*FP*, p.400), 'je voyais s'épanouir et surgir un monde nouveau, comme les actes d'une féérie' (*FP*, p.403). The repeated use of 'voir' also shows that the child does not simply look; she sees, and therefore understands.[49] As we saw in Chapter Two, the importance of seeing rather than simply looking is highlighted by Sand when discussing her discovery of artworks in the *Histoire de ma vie*.[50] The application of this idea to the natural world underlines the evolution I have been tracing in Sand's engagement with reality, moving from the personal in the early thirties, to the social and the artistic in the forties, and finally to the natural environment. The little girl's exploration of the subterranean world in *La Fée poussière* does not involve invasive examination and scrutiny; rather, she is the audience for wondrous natural performances, as highlighted by the fairy's choice of words: 'je vais te faire assister à un spectacle' (*FP*, p.395). This is important since the writing draws attention to what is seen rather than the person seeing it, thus drawing attention away from humans to nature. Importantly, the tale concludes as the child realises that the result of her experiences is wonder and admiration rather than a desire to control: 'Je fus émerveillée' (*FP*, p.405). *La Fée poussière* thus demonstrates Sand's continued adherence to an equal and non-invasive model of engagement between man and nature.

This focus on nature rather than its observer is further developed in *La Fée aux gros yeux*, which presents a strong anti-anthropomorphic message. The issue of visual exchanges and abilities is rendered more explicit in this tale, which involves a long-sighted male tutor, a

[49] We remember Sand's linking of 'voir' with 'savoir', *Corr*., XVI, p.54.
[50] See Sand's statement, 'j'avais toujours regardé sans voir' (*OA*, II, p.106), referred to in Chapter Three.

short-sighted governess, and Elsie, 'une petite fille curieuse' (*FG*, p.418) who is intrigued by her governess's incredible ocular abilities. The idea of nature as a spectacle resurfaces in this text when the governess, Miss Barbara, invites Elsie to a ball in her home. Miss Barbara's 'grand ball' (*FG*, p.422) is in fact a reference to the host of microscopic moths which visit her at night. The passage describing these creatures is highly preoccupied with display and spectacle, and great attention is paid to visual details such as shapes and colours:

> Regardez, chère Elsie! admirez cette tunique grenat bordée d'argent. […] Et, à présent, voyez! voyez la foule qui se presse! […] et vous, vous ne saurez laquelle de ces reines du soir admirer le plus pour la splendeur de son costume et le goût exquis de sa toilette. [...] À présent, remarquez la grâce de leurs mouvements, la folle et charmante précipitation de leur vol, […]. N'est-ce pas, Elsie, que c'est là une fête inénarrable […]? (*FG*, p.423).

An appreciative rather than an appropriating visual model is put forward, as Elsie is encouraged to marvel at this display ('voyez!', 'remarquez', 'admirez'). Miss Barbara is uniquely capable of seeing these beings in all their glory due to her exceptional eyes, 'deux lentilles de microscope qui lui révélaient à chaque instant des merveilles inappréciables aux autres' (*FG*, p.416). The possibility that these creatures might be performing for man's entertainment is therefore rejected, as these wonders are beyond the scope of the ordinary person's vision. Elsie's only hope of overcoming 'la débilité de [ses] organes' (*FG*, p.423) is to use a microscope. This, however, proves to be a poor substitute, and provides only a glimpse of the these tiny creatures' striking beauty, since, as Miss Barbara explains: 'avec une loupe, on ne voit qu'un objet à la fois, et, quand cet objet est un être vivant, on ne le voit qu'au repos.' (*FG*, p.425). This echoes the ending of *La fée poussière*, when the child perceives a ferment of life and activity within 'les moindres atomes de [la] poussière' (*FP*, p.405). Sand's pro-vitalist position is thus clearly demonstrated here, in a refusal of the mechanistic conception of nature. Further, the fact that the moths in *La Fée aux gros yeux* are 'à peine saisissables au regard de l'homme' (*FG*, p.424), even with the aid of a microscope,

demonstrates Sand's rejection of the assumption of the majority that 'tout a été créé pour l'homme' and that 'ce qu'il ne voit pas ou ne comprend pas, ne devrait pas exister' (*FG*, p.424).

Through their representations of the two girls' experiences with nature, these two tales raise fundamental philosophical questions on beauty, nature and value. In a further development of the interactive visual models presented in *L'Homme de neige* and *Laura*, the two 'contes' reject the conception of nature as an inert object to be examined, dissected and exploited by mankind.[51] Insisting that experience and observation are a key means of understanding the natural world, Sand adapts this scientific approach and proposes a dynamic model of exchange whereby man interacts with nature as spectator and spectacle.

The controlling gaze and masculinity

The co-operative relationship between man and nature which I have revealed at work in Sand's novels is favourably contrasted in her writing with another visual model, represented in *Laura* by Nasias, the demonic uncle. This character exemplifies the method of interacting with the world which is founded on appropriation and control. Nasias identifies the aim of his journey with Alexis as 'la découverte et [...] la conquête du monde sous-terrestre' (*Laura*, p.67). This controlling stance which links discovery with conquest resurfaces in Nasias's relations with the young protagonist, Alexis. He tells Alexis, for example: 'Tu n'*échapperas* pas à mon *investigation*. […] N'essaye pas de te soustraire à mon *examen*, c'est fort inutile' (*Laura*, p.68, added emphasis). Sand establishes a similar correlation between this investigative gaze and domination in a further text, 'Conchyliologie de l'île de la Réunion', where she refers to the sea: 'C'est là que la nature, échappant à la destruction dont l'homme

[51] Sand also raises this point in her response to Michelet's *L'Oiseau* in July 1856, as she reflects on the purpose of man's role in the world: 'Le royaume de la terre a été donné [à l'homme]; mais pour quelle fin? […] Est-ce pour la modifier et l'arranger à son usage?', *Autour de la table* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1876), p.59.

est l'agent fatal, et *se dérobant à plusieurs égards à son investigation*, enfante sans se lasser des êtres innombrables dont l'existence éphémère se révèle plus tard.' (*NLV*, p.226, added emphasis).[52] This controlling visual model is also represented in *Antonia* (1863) through the figure of the amateur horticulturist, Antoine Thierry. This figure obsessively observes his flowers and showers them with '[des] soins minutieux' (*Antonia*, p.64), as we see from the reference to his most prized possession: 'la mystérieuse liliacée qu'il avait si souvent contemplée, épiée, soignée' (*Antonia*, p.88). His zealous interest in the flowers is shown to originate in his rivalry with his brother, famous for his flower paintings: 'les fleurs que son frère fait sortir de la toile, il les fera, lui, sortir de terre' (*Antonia*, p.59). As with the malevolent Nasias, Antoine's scrupulous gaze springs from his desire for power and control.

Sand's criticism of this rigorous examination of nature might be regarded as the author's means of denouncing a method which poses as neutral and objective whilst in fact subjugating and controlling the natural world. With the rise of science as a discipline, empiricism and exact observation are regarded in France as the most objective and accurate approach to the world. This approach is often associated with masculinity and, as Evelyn Keller explains, there is a 'deeply rooted popular mythology that casts objectivity, reason, and mind as male, and subjectivity, feeling, and nature as female.'[53] Some aspects of Sand's works suggest that she subscribes to this view. In *Le Marquis de Villemer* (1861), for example, the intellectual sphere is characterised as a masculine space through the emphasis placed in the novel on the Marquis de Villemer's academic work. Further, the characters express themselves in specifically 'male' and 'female' styles. Chapters seven and eight consist of letters written by Urbain (the Marquis) and by Caroline, in which they record their responses to the area of Seval. In her own correspondence, Sand highlights the gendered nature of these letters, referring to 'le contraste de cette lettre d'*homme* avec la lettre de

[52] This article was published in the *Revue des deux mondes* on 1 June 1863. Sand started writing *Laura* in 1862.
[53] Evelyn Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp.6-7.

femme qui suit.' (*Corr.*, XV, p.838, June 1860, original emphasis). In these letters in the novel, the visual response to landscape is used by Sand as a privileged means of revealing epistemic differences between the two genders. It is the 'lettre d'*homme*' which displays erudition, detached observation and rationalism, whereas Caroline's letter is much more subjective, with an emphasis on emotion and personal responses. Reading between the lines leads us to realise that the former model is not necessarily advocated. Urbain's response to his environment is that of a superior subject attempting to control and dominate what he sees. He states, for example, that 'c'est ici un pays sans chemins et sans guides, […], et où il faut *conquérir* toutes ses découvertes au prix du danger ou de la fatigue' (*Villemer*, p.84, added emphasis). Caroline, on the other hand, interacts with her environment rather than observing it from a detached position of superiority. Nigel Harkness highlights that Caroline shows a desire for 'communication and exchange with others' in her letters, and notes that 'this is emphasized by the verbs "causer", "échanger" and "parler", which all imply interaction with another person.'[54] Further to this emphasis on communication with people in an oral sense, I would add that this model can also be seen at work in Caroline's visual response to nature. Whereas the Marquis considers the natural world as a phenomenon to be observed, Caroline believes that we can learn from nature, not dissimilarly to the message of the *Contes d'une grand-mère*.[55] Caroline also favours wild, open spaces rather than the strict control and restriction imposed by humankind: 'le parc est assez vaste, pas trop bien tenu, [...] Dieu merci!' (*Villemer*, p.93), 'ah! les beaux prés […]! Comme cela ressemble peu à nos prairies artificielles où l'on voit toujours la même plante sur une terre préparée en plates-bandes régulières.' (*Villemer*, p.94). Further, Caroline responds to her surroundings on a personal level, noting '[je suis] ravie de ce que je vois' (*Villemer*, p.93), and stating that she feels 'un grand besoin de courir' (*Villemer*, p.194), demonstrating her desire for direct contact with the

[54] Nigel Harkness, ' "Le Style homme" and "le style femme": Defining masculinity and femininity in *Le Marquis de Villemer*', *George Sand Studies*, 17, no. 1-2 (1998), 65-77 (p.71).
[55] See *Le Marquis de Villemer*, p.95.

natural world. A clear contrast is therefore established between Caroline and Urbain's responses to the natural environment.

However, this does not in fact result in an acknowledgement on Sand's behalf that femininity must equate to the personal and the subjective, undermining it as a source of knowledge and understanding. Urbain's later comments reveal that he comes to respect Caroline for her 'remarquable netteté de jugement' and 'intelligence supérieure' (*Villemer*, p.140). Her contribution towards Urbain's great work, *Histoire des titres*, is recognised when he admits that 'ce livre est votre ouvrage bien plus que le mien' (*Villemer*, p.146). She is the first to read the completed work, whereas Urbain's brother 'ne la comprendrait pas' (*Villemer*, p.147) according to Urbain himself. Moreover, we see that Caroline's more interactive relationship with nature ultimately has an impact on the Marquis, as he explains:

> Je vivais dans la poussière, dans la mort ou dans les abstractions. […] Depuis que je vous ai vue regarder l'horizon sans rien dire, avec un air de contentement dont rien n'approche, je me suis demandé le secret de vos joies, et, s'il faut tout dire, votre malade égoïste a bien été un peu jaloux de tout ce qui vous charmait. *Il s'est mis à regarder aussi* avec inquiétude. Alors il en a pris son parti, car il a senti qu'il aimait ce que vous aimiez. (*Villemer*, p.145, added emphasis).

Caroline's example is therefore followed by the Marquis, and not only does he now look at nature differently, but he is also capable of seeing its beauties, as his preference for privileged panoramic viewpoints has now been replaced by a realisation that 'la grandeur est partout pour ceux qui portent cette faculté en eux-mêmes, et ce n'est pas une illusion qu'ils nourrissent, c'est une révélation de ce qui est en réalité dans la nature d'une manière plus ou moins exprimée.' (*Villemer*, p.144). Therefore, in addition to nursing the Marquis back to physical health in this novel, Caroline also contributes towards his intellectual and epistemic health. In this work, the 'female' response to the environment and Caroline's mode of apprehending the world is valorised as a legitimate and dependable source of knowledge.

The inability to cultivate this interactive and empathetic relationship with nature is associated with masculinity in Sand's writing. For example, she states in 1872:

> On lit *La création* par Quinet. Du talent, pas de vraie notion de la nature. […] Enfin c'est beau, mais ça n'est pas ça. Il n'a pas pénétré dans le vrai sanctuaire. […] Il veut soumettre [la nature] à lui, elle résiste. N'importe, Michelet et Quinet saisis dans leur vieillesse par la nature et daignant lui adresser leurs hommages maladroits et refroidis mais naïfs – c'est assez curieux, c'est un symptôme. *La mère* va-t-elle enfin être connue et appréciée par ses enfants?[56]

Nature is clearly gendered as feminine here ('elle', 'la mère'), and the male writers' attempts at understanding nature are considered to be misguided and 'refroidis', which aligns with Sand's condemnation of narrow scientists.[57] This masculine engagement with nature is therefore characterised as being both unresponsive to nature's vitality and intent on repressing it ('il veut la soumettre à lui').

This negative observational model is also linked with masculinity in *Laura*. Describing her childhood wanderings in the countryside with Alexis, Laura establishes a clear contrast between their respective attitudes:

> Nous allions toujours chacun de son côté, toi *pillant, cueillant, gâtant* toutes choses, moi faisant de petits jardins où j'aimais à *voir germer, verdir et fleurir*. La campagne était un paradis pour moi, parce que je l'aime tout de bon: quant à toi, c'est ta liberté que tu pleures, et je te plains de ne pas savoir t'occuper pour te consoler. Cela prouve que tu ne comprends rien à la beauté de la nature, et que tu n'étais pas digne de la liberté. (*Laura*, p.25, added emphasis).

The fact that they proceed, 'chacun de son côté', highlights the separation between the two, and the choice of verbs draws attention to the distinctions between their two methods. Laura 'aimai[t] à voir', suggesting that nature is active, whilst she acts as a witness to its actions. Alexis' approach, on the other hand, is invasive and forceful. The three verbs associated with

[56] George Sand, *Agendas*, V, p.2, original emphasis.
[57] Sand states: 'Ne nous croyons pas obligés de conclure avec le savant quand il arrive par l'induction à un système *froid*.' (*NLV*, p.60, original emphasis). The problem with most scientists, according to Sand, is that 'ils se refroidissent dans les classifications' (*Corr*., XVI, p.54, August 1860).

nature (‘germer, verdir et fleurir’) are opposed to his actions: ‘piller, cueillir, gâter’. Man is now the subject of this latter group of verbs, and the dynamic and life-affirming operations of nature are contrasted with appropriation and destruction. Crucially, Alexis’ approach is regarded as proof that he does not understand ‘la beauté de la nature’.

Some of the male ‘savants’ in Sand’s novels also seem to follow this model.[58] The appearance of the ‘savant’ figure in Sand’s novels from the 1850s onwards has been noted in critical studies.[59] However, I would like to draw attention to the more ambivalent portrayals of this figure, which have not yet been examined by critics. One of the first examples of the scientist in Sand’s later writing is the geologist, Édmond Roque, in *La Filleule* (1853). Roque’s approach to nature anticipates Alexis’s method in *Laura*: ‘Il ramassait, brisait, creusait’ (*La Filleule* p.16). This is clearly criticised for the following reasons: ‘Il n’était occupé qu’à fouiller à ses pieds, et […] il oublia bientôt de jouir de l’ensemble des beautés de la nature’ (*La Filleule* p.16). His means of engaging with nature is shown to be defective and inadequate through the use of ‘ne que’ and ‘il oublia’, and this narrow way of examining nature is rejected by the hero, Stéphen de Rivensanges. The male scientist therefore seems to be associated with limitation since he does not combine his detailed examination with an awareness of nature as a whole.

Roque prefigures other negative portrayals of the ‘savant’. The limitations of ‘[le] Scientisme’ and its ‘programme étroitement défini’ are also demonstrated through the

[58] The definition of ‘la science’ moves away from the more general concept of knowledge and emerges as a separate entity in the second half of the nineteenth century, becoming a serious discipline which is distinct from the arts. As a result, the ‘savant’ replaces the figure of the sage as the supreme intellectual model in Second Empire France. By the 1850s, the term ‘savants’ no longer refers only to scholars in general, but is used more specifically to refer to scientists. See ‘Savant’ in the dictionary: ‘Qui a des connaissances étendues sur les matières scientifiques ou sur celles d’érudition’, P. Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, XIV, première partie, p.284.

[59] See Anna Szabó, ‘La figure du savant dans les romans de George Sand’, pp.105-112. See also Éric Bordas’s reference to the characters in Sand’s later works: ‘plus de mystiques théosophes illuminés, mais des scientifiques raisonneurs, géologues ou botanistes’, ‘Les romans du Second Empire’, p.119.

character of Walter in *Laura*.[60] Walter embodies an exploitative approach to nature, regarding its riches solely in terms of their 'utilité' (*Laura*, p.40). He is frequently referred to as an 'homme positif' (p.49).[61] In this sense, he is criticised in the same terms as another 'esprit positif', Antoine Thierry (*Antonia*, p.60), and Stangstadius, a mineralogy professor in *L'Homme de neige*, whose attitude is condemned by Christian as 'une sorte d'exaltation très singulière, et qu'il eût pu définir ainsi: la folie par excès de positivisme' (*HDN*, I, p.102). Positivism, the belief that the only existing reality is that which can be verified by empirical demonstration, is therefore rejected by Sand, as she highlights the deeper awareness reached by a consideration of 'l'ensemble des beautés de la nature' (*La Filleule*, p.16).

Stangstadius is also denounced in that his utter dedication to his subject is completely divorced from any form of aesthetic or moral appreciation of the geological formations he examines. His passion for science is revealed to be founded on self-interest: 'le professeur fit à Cristiano la description minutieuse du monde souterrain, à la surface duquel il ne se souciait que de lui-même, de sa réputation, de ses écrits, enfin du succès de ses observations et découvertes.' (*HDN*, I, p.84). Stangstadius thus shows complete disregard towards other human beings. When the baron Olaüs is injured, for instance, Stangstadius prefers to investigate a strange red rock nearby the 'brouillard sec' emanating from 'un passage d'exhalaisons volcaniques' (*HDN*, II, p.117) rather than tend to him. These masculine characters, with their narrow approach to nature, are thus impugned by Sand. In my next section, I will consider the way in which this figure's opposite is portrayed in Sand's works.

[60] These terms are used by Camille Mortagne in her discussion of this work, '*Laura*, ou cet éveil qui médiatise le rêve', in *George Sand: une oeuvre multiforme. Recherches nouvelles 2*, ed. by Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), pp.57-72 (p.58).
[61] See also *Laura*, pp.32, 51.

'Trop romanesque et trop faible'[62]: The self-absorbed artist

In this section, I will show that those characters who are positioned at the other extreme from the 'excès de positivisme' are also denounced in Sand's novels. I will then go on in the next section to examine Sand's creation of the ideal 'savant' figure.

Francis Valigny in *Valvèdre* is disconnected from external reality and shows a tendency towards abstraction rather than noticing and appreciating the physical beauty of his environment. Francis is a contemporary of Musset's 'enfant du siècle', and he laments the passing of an epoch associated with heroism, grandeur and imagination. Like Musset's Octave, he responds to the perceived materialism and embourgeoisement of his day by retreating into himself. Writing with hindsight at the end of the novel, by which point he is a reformed character, Francis refers to his former self by explaining that he was 'trop absorbé en moi-même' (*Valvèdre*, p.153) and 'trop romanesque et trop faible' (*Valvèdre*, p.327). His lover, Alida, is afflicted with the same 'maladie' (*Valvèdre*, p.221), living in a constant daydream and demonstrating a complete lack of awareness of the world around her. A further example is the landscape painter, Philippe Gaucher, in *Marianne* (1875), whose self-absorption prevents him from truly appreciating the natural landscape.[63] The remedy for these characters, it is claimed, is 'l'étude des choses vraies' (*Valvèdre*, p.221), as the study of nature is crucial for the individual's development. Indeed, it is through the study of the earth's matter that Francis evolves into a fuller and more balanced individual, as he becomes a material scientist responsible for 'd'importants travaux métallurgiques' (*Valvèdre*, p.332).

The main criticism levelled against these individuals is their self-centredness. It is stated of Alida, for example, that 'on ne lui a pas appris à admirer quelque chose à travers la cloche de verre de sa plate-bande. Elle s'est persuadé qu'elle était l'objet admirable par

[62] *Valvèdre*, p.327.
[63] See, for example, *Marianne*, pp.487, 506, 741.

excellence, et qu'une femme ne devait contempler l'univers que dans son propre miroir.' (*Valvèdre*, p.257). Alida practises an entirely subjective and self-absorbed model of engagement with the world, reducing the natural environment to a reflection of herself. This character dies towards the end of the novel, signifying the doomed nature of this reductive and subjective position.

Sand's criticism of introspection is clearly expressed in her preface to *Valvèdre*. She dedicates this preface to her son, Maurice, a dedication which Nigel Harkness views as an indication of 'the importance of filial deference, which Valvèdre will demand of Francis at the end'.[64] What I would like to highlight, however, is the emphasis placed in this prefatory note on Sand's shared passion with Maurice for nature. By dedicating the novel to her son, Sand aligns herself ideologically with his writing, which aims to guide readers towards a new appreciation of nature. This is made clear in her assertion: 'Ce récit est parti d'une idée que nous avons savourée en commun, que nous avons, pour ainsi dire, bue à la même source: l'étude de la nature. Tu l'as formulée le premier dans un travail de science qui va paraître. Je la formule à mon tour et à ma manière dans un roman.' (*Valvèdre*, p.1).[65] This 'idée' ('l'étude de la nature') entails a rejection of the tradition which places man at the centre of the universe: 'Pendant de longs siècles, l'homme s'est pris pour le centre et le but de l'univers. Une notion plus juste et plus vaste nous est enseignée aujourd'hui.' (*Valvèdre*, p.1). In addition to rejecting self-absorption, therefore, Sand offers an alternative, a new 'notion' which she explains in three words: '*sortir de soi*' (*Valvèdre*, p.1, original emphasis). Whereas Sand's early novels express a fatal 'mal du siècle' and are focused on the self and the internal (as we saw in Chapter One), by the mid 1850s, her focus has moved outwards to the external

[64] Nigel Harkness, *Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction* (Leeds: Legenda, 2007), p.84.
[65] This is a reference to Maurice Sand's *Le monde des papillons* (Paris: J. Rothschild, 1867). This study of butterflies was first published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1855 with a preface by Sand, and we can surmise from the *Correspondance* that Sand herself contributed a great deal to the work.

natural world.[66] In the next section, I will examine Sand's representation of this alternative 'notion' through her figure of the polymath.

'L'artiste naturaliste'[67]

Sand states in 1868: 'si ma nature et mon éducation m'eussent permis d'acquérir la science, j'aurais voulu explorer le monde entier en savant et en artiste, deux fonctions intellectuelles dont je sentais en moi […] l'appétence bien vive et le désir bien ardent.' (*NLV*, p.145). Capasso comments on this statement by drawing attention to Sand's reference to art and science 'as calling upon two distinct intellectual functions.'[68] What I would point out, however, is the very fact that Sand brings the two disciplines together, aspiring towards an understanding of both science and art as a means of exploring 'le monde entier'. In this section, I will show how Sand develops this idea in her novels by creating characters, of both genders, who bring together science and art.

I have shown that Sand's later novels feature both narrow-minded 'savants' and self-absorbed artists. A further figure created in her works from the late 1850s onwards is the multifaceted figure, the 'artiste naturaliste.'[69] As we examined in Chapters Two and Three, Sand creates visionary characters in her 1840s novels to exemplify the need for prophetic vision, and 'artistes' to demonstrate the importance of aesthetic awareness, with the aim of inspiring the readers to emulate these approaches. This exemplarity is also at work in her later novels, with the difference that the characters are now polymaths. Sand now presents individuals who embody a multidisciplinary approach to the world. Developing the multitalented figure introduced through Stéphen de Rivensanges in *La Filleule*, for example,

[66] Sand highlights her progress: 'Oh! le temps n'est plus où j'écrivais *Lélia*. Je ne doute plus.' (*Corr.*, XIII, p.311, August 1855).
[67] *NLV*, p.75.
[68] Capasso, 'Traduction libre', p.57.
[69] I use the term 'multifaceted' in the sense of a person who has 'many [...] skills, or qualities'. See 'Multifaceted', in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: http://www.oed.com/ [accessed 29.7.2010].

Sand presents us with characters such as Valvèdre.[70] This character is a 'chimiste, physicien, géologue, astronome' (*Valvèdre*, p.11), but he also believes that one should cultivate 'toutes les facultés de l'esprit, toutes les manifestations du beau et du vrai' (*Valvèdre*, p.135). Francis learns from Valvèdre, ultimately transforming into a material scientist who has an appreciation of all branches of knowledge. The few critics to have examined this novel consider the work as a commentary on gender, either as an exploration of the Romantic ideology of femininity,[71] or as an examination of masculinity.[72] My interest lies in the epistemological eclecticism demonstrated in this novel. Harkness rightly draws attention to the fact that *Valvèdre* is concerned with Francis's progression from childhood to manhood.[73] I would argue, however, that the most important change that enables this character to progress into adulthood is his reconciliation of opposing world views: his ability, ultimately, to retain his 'fonds de poèsie dans l'âme' (*Valvèdre*, p.124) whilst also breaking free from his excessive self-absorption in order to engage with the world around him. This enables him to better understand his environment and to break free from his introspection:

> Aujourd'hui, tout en jouissant en artiste des rayons que la science projette sur moi, je sens que je ne me détacherai plus d'une branche de connaissances qui m'a rendu la faculté de raisonner et de réfléchir: bienfait inappréciable, qui m'a préservé également de l'abus et du dégoût de la vie!' (*Valvèdre*, pp.334-335).

He is now respected and admired for his 'savoir' and 'intelligence' which complement his

[70] Stéphen publishes 'un mémoire philosophico-scientifique', 'un fragment d'oratorio avec chœurs' and 'un petit roman', (*La Filleule*, p.42) to great acclaim. See pp.30-31 for his poetic side and pp.39-41 for his detailed description of a butterfly.
[71] Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Construction et déconstruction du personnage dans *Valvèdre*', *Études Littéraire*s, 35.2-3 (2003), 29-38.
[72] Nigel Harkness interprets Francis's transformation in this novel as his 'construction of a normative masculinity, his negotiation of the ideologies that condition his gender identity, and his ultimate reintegration into a homosocial community.' *Men of their Words*, p.80.
[73] Ibid., pp.79-85. This also applies to Sand's other novels from this period. Alexis is referred to as 'un enfant sans expérience et sans réflexion' (*Laura*, p.35), see also pp.39, 40, 56, 70. Christian in *L'Homme de neige* also asserts that 'hier matin, je n'étais encore qu'un enfant […] Aujourd'hui je suis un homme qui voit où il doit aller' (*HDN*, II, p.66).

'exubérance' and artistic tendencies, enabling him to lead 'une très-honorable et très-heureuse existence.' (*Valvèdre*, pp.334).

Christian Waldo in *L'Homme de neige* is also 'porté vers les sciences naturelles, en même temps que vers les arts et la philosophie' (*HDN*, I, p.134). Christian is a puppeteer and creator of stories, but also wishes to 'observer et [...] étudier la nature sur elle-même' (*HDN*, II, p.65), and he comes into contact with eminent scientists such as Buffon and Jussieu.[74] Christian's openness to different approaches to learning is expressed in this novel through descriptions of the area of Délacarlie in Sweden. He joins characters such as Marcelle de Blanchemont and Émile Cardonnet in his painterly and aesthetic appreciation of natural views.[75] However, these painterly depictions are now complimented by descriptions of a more scientific nature, with geological details highlighted and explained.

Christian is struck, for example, by the beauty of the Stollborg manor: 'il fut frappé de la tournure pittoresque du donjon' (*HDN*, I, p.196), and he soon begins to sketch this tower.[76] He stands back from the view 'pour en mieux saisir l'ensemble.' (*HDN*, I, p.196). This awareness of the view as a whole is complimented by a focus on the detail, since Christian examines the geological structure of the land, as the Stollborg manor is part of the rock itself:

> Il arriva […] à l'entrée de ce qui lui avait paru être une grotte. Ce n'était en réalité qu'un entassement d'énormes blocs de granit, de ceux qu'on appelle, je crois, erratiques, pour signifier qu'on les trouve isolés de leur roche primitive, dans des régions d'une nature différente, où ils n'ont pu se produire. On suppose qu'ils sont le résultat de quelque cataclysme primitif ou moderne, fureur des eaux ou travail des glaces, qui les aurait amenés de très loin dans les sites où on les rencontre. […] Une superposition capricieuse semblait attester que, poussées par des courants impétueux, [ces blocs] s'étaient trouvés arrêtés par la masse micaschisteuse du Stollborg, à laquelle ils servaient désormais d'appui et de contre-fort. (*HDN*, I, p.196).

[74] See *L'Homme de neige*, I, p.168. Christian experiences 'de grands élans vers les sciences naturelles' (*HDN*, I, p.136), but also wishes to savour 'les beautés variés de la création' 'en poète' (*HDN*, I, p.137). He also notes that 'mon rêve me poussait à la minéralogie, à la botanique et à la zoologie, en même temps qu'à l'étude des mœurs et des sociétés.' (*HDN*, I, p.167).
[75] See, for example, *HDN*, I, pp.195-7, and *HDN*, II, p.89.
[76] This aligns with my analysis of the term 'pittoresque' in Chapter Three.

This is written in the narrator's voice, but such descriptions only appear in the novel when Christian is present, suggesting that it is his point of view that is being expressed.[77] The description is preoccupied with explaining how the rocks came to be there, and uses technical terms such as 'erratiques'.[78] By providing these details, Sand demonstrates a deeper appreciation of the landscape, one which accesses the narrative embedded within it, in keeping with her concept of '[le] grand livre de l'univers.' (*Valvèdre*, p.142). According to Valvèdre, '[l]'histoire de la terre' is written in the land 'en caractères profonds et indélébiles' (*Valvèdre*, p.137), which reminds us of Sand's reference to botany as 'cet alphabet nécessaire dont on espère en vain pouvoir se passer pour bien voir et réellement comprendre' (*NLV*, p.101). Sand has therefore reached an understanding of the world as something that needs to be 'read' or deciphered, a form of insight which requires both scientific training and artistic awareness.[79]

Importantly, the geological observations made by Christian precede his attempts to sketch the view. This demonstrates Sand's belief that the knowledge of nature is an important step in becoming an artist. She states in 1855: 'le poète et l'artiste ne peuvent que gagner dans les études naturelles'.[80] This continues to be preoccupation throughout her later writing. In *Marianne* (1875), for example, Pierre states that 'pour voir il faut savoir' (*Marianne*, p.741), referring to scientific knowledge, before noting that 'l'on n'apprend pas à voir parce que l'on est peintre, mais […] on apprend à être peintre parce que l'on sait voir' (*Marianne*, p.742). It is therefore necessary to acquire scientific understanding before becoming an artist. If we restrict ourselves to one form of vision alone, the earth can reveal only one of its 'faces'

[77] See also *HDN*, I, p.74, II, pp.73-4.
[78] Further examples of this preoccupation with geological structures are to be found in *Tamaris* (1861), which is an examination of the Provence coastline. See, for example, *Tamaris*, pp.28, 66-67, 101-103, 119.
[79] Christian wishes to appreciate nature as a scientist but also as '[un] poète, c'est-à-dire en homme qui sent les beautés de la nature' *HDN*, I, p.169.
[80] 'Le Monde des papillons', *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.259-268 (p.265).

(*Valvèdre*, p.138). Rather, we need to combine different approaches in order to 'embrasser sous toutes ses faces la notion du beau dans la nature.' (*Valvèdre*, p.139).

In order to grasp the change that has taken place in Sand's writing, I would like to briefly refer to descriptions of nature provided in Sand's earlier novels. In *Indiana*, for example, she describes the flora and fauna of the *Île Bourbon*, and the narrator dedicates a page of description to the island's geological composition. When read carefully, however, we can see that this passage is a meditation on artistic creation rather than a reflection on the means through which the natural scene is observed. The narrator repeatedly refers to the site as an artistic masterpiece, for example: 'là-bas, une muraille de roches […] s'élève dentelée et brodée à jour comme un édifice moresque; ici, un obélisque de basalte, dont un artiste semble avoir poli et ciselé les flancs, se dresse sur un bastion crénelé' (*Indiana*, p.331-332). Nature is considered as man's competitor here, as the narrator notes that '[ces] créations que l'homme a essayé de copier […] semblent défier l'audace de l'artiste, et lui dire par dérision: "Essayez encore cela." ' (*Indiana*, p.332). Positioned at the beginning of this novel's conclusion, which so clearly breaks from the realism of the preceding chapters, this description operates as a reflection on mankind's inability to reproduce the world around him. In this sense, this description performs a very different function from the descriptions in *L'Homme de neige* or *Laura*, which privilege and celebrate the abilities of mankind to understand the natural world through physical observation.

Not only does Sand portray male 'savants' who succeed in combining scientific understanding and artistic appreciation, but she also creates female representatives of this ideal figure, as she suggests that the association between the two genders and certain methods of observing and appreciating the world is not sex-specific, but is, rather, determined by culture and society. *Valvèdre*, for example, features '[des] femmes savantes' (*Valvèdre*, p.176) such as Paule, a fervent botanist, and Adélaïde, Alida's alter ego. Adélaïde, who has

received little attention by critics, functions in opposition to Alida in many ways.[81] Alida, we remember, is criticised in this novel for her narcissism and her inability to go beyond herself. This negative character is repeatedly associated with the feminine, as she herself states: 'Moi, je suis une femme, une vraie femme, faible, ignorante, sans valeur aucune. Je ne sais qu'aimer' (*Valvèdre*, p.114). This self-assessment, which reduces women to creatures of feeling as opposed to intellect, is confirmed by other characters. Henri's damming account, for example, refers to Alida as 'un cerveau sans étendue' (*Valvèdre*, p.34). Adélaïde, on the other hand, is an intellectual, with Francis acknowledging her intelligence and Henri referring to her as an 'esprit si studieux' (*Valvèdre*, p.358). However, whereas Alida is labelled as characteristically feminine, Adélaïde's status as a woman is under threat. We are told that 'Adélaïde est une femme supérieure, c'est-à-dire une espèce d'homme. […] il lui poussera de la barbe' (*Valvèdre*, p.235). Such statements, however, are made by the young Francis, who is clearly threatened by Adélaïde's intellect: 'Elle sait toutes choses mieux que moi: la poésie, la musique, les langues, les sciences naturelles,... peut-être la métallurgie, qui sait? Elle verrait trop en moi son inférieur' (*Valvèdre*, p.350). The reader has by now identified Francis as an unreliable judge since he runs counter to the model set up in Sand's preface and responds to others purely based on his own prejudices. Adélaïde, as an intellectually superior woman, destroys Francis's belief that women are physical and emotive beings, separate from men, who are authoritative and cerebral. The only way in which Francis can maintain his own sense of identity as a man is to reject Adélaïde's femininity. This he does by turning her into an abnormality, a monstrous being, in contrast with Alida, the true representative of woman: '[Alida] se proclame une vraie femme, et c'est la femme type. L'autre n'est qu'un hybride dénaturé par l'éducation' (*Valvèdre*, p.236). Francis thus claims that Adélaïde's education (which has introduced her to traditionally 'male' subjects) has denaturalised her. However,

[81] Harkness does not examine Adélaïde in *Men of their words*. Françoise Massardier-Kenney focuses primarily on Alida, both in 'Construction et déconstruction du personnage dans *Valvèdre*', and in *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

the novel counters this by showing that it is Alida's education that has proven harmful and not Adélaïde's, since Alida has received the form of education traditionally reserved for women, that is, a superficial one. As a result, she is 'intelligente, mais absolument privée de direction sérieuse et de convictions acquises' (*Valvèdre*, p.241), 'une fleur du ciel qu'une détestable éducation a fait avorter en serre chaude' (*Valvèdre*, p.257). It is this 'détestable éducation', and not Alida's gender, which has led to her inability to appreciate anything beyond herself.[82]

Valvèdre therefore demonstrates that the ostensible links between certain epistemic models and gender are in fact created by social practices rather than being biologically determined. Sand undermines Francis's position through the presentation of the heroine, Adélaïde, whose intellect is certified by all and who is just as capable of combining artistic and scientific knowledge as men.[83] I would argue that it is in this sense that Adélaïde appears as the opposite of Alida. The similarity between Alida and Adélaïde's names is considered by Massardier-Kenney as an indication of the fact that the differences between these two women 'sont en fait d'ordre secondaire'.[84] I interpret this choice in nomenclature as an indication of the central preoccupation of this novel: not gender oppositions, but rather, epistemological divisions. The women's shared name suggests that they are two halves of the same person, or rather, that they represent the two possible results of different types of upbringing: Alida, who receives the limited form of education regarded as suitable for women, and Adélaïde, who has access to the branches of knowledge normally reserved for men. Whereas Alida remains trapped in her own superficial world, Adélaïde is a strong scientist and also a painter, a gifted musician, a poet, and generally an 'artiste *par-dessus le marché*' (*Valvèdre*, p.235,

[82] This echoes *Valentine* (1832) where Sand criticises women's education as superficial and inadequate: 'On veut que nous soyons instruites; mais, du jour où nous deviendrions savantes, nous serions ridicules. [...] sur vingt d'entre nous, il n'en est souvent pas une qui possède à fond une connaissance quelconque' (*Valentine*, p.220).

[83] Adélaïde is referred to as 'une femme de génie' (*Valvèdre*, p.351), for example.

[84] Françoise Massardier-Kenney notes that Alida and Adélaïde essentially share the same name, as Alida is a German variant of Adélaïde. See 'Construction et déconstruction du personnage dans *Valvèdre*', p.32.

original emphasis). She combines the exactitude and knowledge of a scientist with broader aesthetic abilities, possessing '[un] grain de génie qui lui fait idéaliser et poétiser saintement les études les plus arides.' (*Valvèdre*, pp.353-4). Writing the novel from the prejudiced male perspective enables Sand to expose the weaknesses of the reductive view of woman and to deconstruct it through her representation of the female scientist, Adélaïde.

One might argue that an individual such as Adélaïde is no more than a fantasy. Indeed, she is often described in ethereal terms and is twice compared with a heroine of Greek mythology.[85] Although I agree that this enables Sand to construct a character 'qui [...] ne s'inscrit pas dans la trajectoire habituelle des personnages féminins',[86] I would argue that the unusual nature of this character is in fact mirrored by Valvèdre's exceptional status, who is also presented as a superior being, considered to communicate 'le feu sacré' (*Valvèdre*, p.353), for example. Adélaïde's exceptional nature is highlighted not because of her gender, but rather, because of her ability to combine her artistic talents with scientific studies, which makes her an 'artiste naturaliste'. The intellectual parallel between Adélaïde and Valvèdre is also highlighted by the fact that the novel closes with their marriage. Francis's own marriage to Rose is quickly passed over, as discussions on the possible pairing of Valvèdre and Adélaïde take precedence. Their wedding is given centre stage both through Francis's perception of it as the happiest day of his own life and through its positioning in the last sentence of the novel: 'Le jour où, par mes soins et mes encouragements, ils s'entendirent fut le plus beau de leur vie et de la mienne' (*Valvèdre*, p.360). Harkness also draws attention to the precedence given to Valvèdre's wedding, but asserts that this is how Francis repays his figurative debt to Valvèdre, which enables his reintroduction into patriarchal society.[87] In my interpretation of this novel as a commentary on epistemology, the ending highlights the

[85] Francis refers to Adélaïde as 'cette jeune Atalante' (*Valvèdre*, p.177) and Henri later refers to her as 'une [...] mythe', and compares her with 'Andromède' (*Valvèdre*, p.358).
[86] Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Construction et déconstruction du personnage dans *Valvèdre*', p.36.
[87] 'Reintegration into patriarchal masculinity takes place symbolically not only through submission to the father, but also by means of the exchange of women.' Harkness, *Men of their Words*, p.85.

symbolic union of two individuals who embody the idea expounded by Valvèdre: 'un grand esprit qui tiendrait également du savant et de l'artiste me paraîtrait le plus noble représentant du beau et du vrai dans l'humanité.' (*Valvèdre*, p.134).

A further example of the female artistic scientist is the heroine of *Laura*. The reader's original impression is that this is a novel featuring three scientists: Walter, Alexis, and his uncle Tungsténius. However, there is in fact a fourth scientist in this work. This is the heroine, Laura, who ultimately becomes a botanist and whose appreciative engagement with nature I have already examined. After listening to Walter expounding on the different methods of learning, Alexis refers to the 'collection minéralogique' by stating that this collection of gemstones has been 'parcourue un instant auparavant par Laura, et dédaignée à l'unisson par mon oncle, par Walter et par moi' (*Laura*, p.32). Herein lies the key to this novel. Laura, in contrast with the male characters who regard the minerals with contempt, 'venait d'entrer dans la galerie se promener lentement le long de la vitrine qui contenait les gemmes' (*Laura*, p.30). The heroine is therefore the only one to appreciate the importance of the gemstones, which will operate as Alexis's gateway to the crystal world and ultimately lead to his acquisition of insight. By establishing this contrast between Laura's appreciation of the crystals and the male figures' contempt towards them, Sand suggests the epistemological rift between their respective methods of engaging with the world.

The validity of Laura's method is borne out by the narrative, since it is only when Alexis follows Laura's guidance – 'Regarde bien cette contrée charmante, et tu comprendras' (*Laura*, p.35) – that Alexis is capable of combining his scientific knowledge with a deeper appreciation of nature, and is thus saved. Alexis's initial judgement of Laura as 'une sotte petite bourgeoise' (*Laura*, p.28) is thus undermined by her actions, which demonstrate that she is the only one to have truly grasped the means of understanding nature. By the end of the novella, Alexis's assessment of Laura has been overturned, as he explains that Laura (also

described by the first level narrator as 'fort intelligente' p.122 by this point), has become a 'botaniste' (*Laura*, p.121). Thus, her abilities have been recognised as a valid means of understanding the world. She gains this recognition by maintaining her fundamental appreciation of nature in and for itself, as Alexis refers to his wife 'au milieu des fleurs qu'elle aime passionnément.' (*Laura*, p.121). As in *Valvèdre*, both genders are capable of adopting this approach. Alexis frees himself from the models put forward by his various father figures,[88] and by the end of the novella, he states: 'Il ne m'arrivera jamais de dire comme Walter que la forme et la couleur ne signifient rien, et que le beau est un vain mot' (*Laura*, p.116-117). In a true appreciation of the beauty of his physical environment, he renounces the fantastical crystal world in favour of the terrestrial world: 'Je donnerais […] toutes les merveilles que voici autour de nous pour un rayon du matin et le chant d'une fauvette, ou seulement d'une sauterelle, dans notre jardin de Fischhausen' (*Laura*, p.117). The *Contes d'une grand-mère* also portray both boys and girls embarking on explorations of their environment.[89] Here also, scientific 'lessons' are provided, such as the Darwinian explanation of the earth's origins in *La Fée poussière*, but this is always combined with an a sense of wonder at the earth's beauty: 'le seule maître à étudier, c'est la nature' (*FP*, p.404). Through her novels, therefore, Sand demonstrates that both men and women can become 'artistes naturalistes', and characters such as Laura, Adélaïde, Valvèdre, Christian and Francis all reach this position by bringing together scientific knowledge and aesthetic understanding.

[88] These father figures are: Tungsténius with his 'raisonnements froids' (*Laura*, p.33), Walter with his 'théorie de l'utilité directe des trésors de la science' (*Laura*, p.32), and Nasias, who wishes to conquer the natural world.
[89] As Béatrice Didier notes, 'la répartition des deux sexes est équilibrée'. 'Présentation', in *Contes d'une grand-mère*, pp.i-xxvii (pp.xxii-xxiii). Further examples of female scientists include Love Butler in *Jean de la Roche* (1860) and Lucienne Valaugis in *La Confession d'une jeune fille* (1865).

Sand's rejection of binaries

By creating such characters, Sand rejects the alleged 'barrière entre littérature et sciences', as formulated by Jules Michelet.[90] We remember that, in her preface to *Valvèdre*, Sand highlights the fact that her new 'notion', or epistemological position, is not only 'plus juste', but also 'plus vaste' (*Valvèdre*, p.1). She therefore advocates an expansion of one's attitude, since she regards specialisation to be restrictive and partial. Christian Waldo, for example, asserts, when discussing his early education: 'il m'était impossible d'emprisonner ma sensation dans un système, dans une époque, dans une école.' (*HDN*, I, p.135). The use of the term 'emprisonnement' here is crucial in understanding Sand's position, as it shows that she considers the systemisation and categorisation of knowledge to be restrictive. Christian benefits from an enlightened approach to education, as his parents allow him to follow his own interests rather than '[le] doter d'une spécialité qui [l]'eût casé pour toujours dans un coin de l'art ou de la science' (*HDN*, I, p.136). Sand's choice of vocabulary, 'caser' and 'un coin' demonstrate her view that specialisation is repressive and limiting.

I view this rejection of what is viewed by Sand as a 'tendance exagérée aux spécialités' (*Valvèdre*, p.137) as part of her wider rejection of binary oppositions. Naomi Schor asserts that 'it would be absurd to deny that [...] Sand […] enthusiastically and unquestioningly subscribed to such metaphysical oppositions as that between the detail and the whole, and especially between idealism and materialism.'[91] It is true that the example used by Schor, Sand's *Essai sur le drame fantastique* (1839), is underpinned by such oppositions as the 'monde métaphysique' versus 'le monde extérieur' and 'la beauté intelligente de la matière' versus 'la sagesse aimante de Dieu'.[92] Indeed, Sand's early writing regularly features problematic dichotomies, symbolised through the recurring motif of the double (Rose and Blanche, Indiana and Noun, Valentine and Louise, Lélia and Pulchérie).

[90] Jules Michelet, 10 March, 1868, *Journal*, ed. by Paul Viallaneix, 4 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), IV, p.373.
[91] Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.12.
[92] Sand, *Souvenirs et impressions littéraires* (Paris: Hetzel, 1862), pp.8, 18.

However, Schor asserts that the binaries of the spiritual and the material, the detail and the whole, 'constituted the epistemological horizon within which [Sand] and her contemporaries *necessarily* and *inescapably* conceived the world'.[93] As we have seen in the examination of Sand's later works such as *Valvèdre* and *Laura*, however, Sand in fact rejects these binary systems and is ultimately capable of transcending them. Valvèdre asserts that 'la recherche du beau ne se divise pas en études rivales et en manifestations d'antagonisme' (*Valvèdre*, p.254), and this is demonstrated in the novel through the figures of Valvèdre and Adélaïde who bring together the scientific understanding of the detailed workings of nature and a greater awareness of its aesthetic beauty. In line with the image of 'emprisonnement' in *L'Homme de neige*, Sand constantly rejects divisions in the 1860s and 1870s, denouncing antithesis as 'une impasse' (*NLV*, p.182) and '[une] notion [...] qui nous étouffe' (*NLV*, p.187).

Sand's alternative to specialisation is to widen one's perspective so as to embrace both the scientific understanding of the detail and the aesthetic appreciation of the whole. The most skilful and inspired poets and painters are described in *Valvèdre* as follows: 'ceux qui ne se contentent pas de l'aspect des choses, et qui vont chercher la raison d'être du beau au fond des mystères d'où s'épanouit la splendeur de la création.' (*Valvèdre*, p.136). The poetic eye is thus considered to be insufficient on its own, since this can only perceive 'l'aspect des choses'. The painter, in *Marianne*, for example, Philippe Gaucher, can achieve no more than a superficial and clichéd response to the landscape: 'la campagne environnante est belle, et voilà devant nous un joli petit chemin vert… avec des horizons bleus là-bas,… c'est ravissant' (*Marianne*, p.506). Marianne's response to Philipe highlights his ineptitude: 'vous avez la prétention d'apprécier tout mieux que nous […] parce que vous êtes artiste de profession; moi, je dis que […] vous ne voyez rien […]. Vous voyez trop […] et vous voyez mal' (*Marianne*, p.741). By combining the artistic awareness with the more knowledgeable

[93] Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, p.12, added emphasis.

and detailed gaze, however, one can grasp the inner workings of nature also, which is the only means of truly seeing its beauty.

'Voir aussi loin que possible'[94]: Sand and realism

In this final section, I would like to demonstrate that my analysis of Sand's multidisciplinary approach to understanding nature and her rejection of specialisation provide us with a framework for a rereading of her poetics. Sand retains her commitment to idealism throughout her career, both in the humanitarian sense of searching for a higher good, and in the aesthetic sense of depicting the ideal. This commitment, in face of an ever-dominant realism, is a significant factor in Sand's devalorisation.[95] What I have shown, however, in my previous chapters, is that Sand's opposition to a certain conception of 'realism' is not a defect or failing, but is in fact a tactical decision. Her earlier novels distance themselves from realism as a means of rejecting reality on feminist and political grounds. What I would now like to show here is that her later novels reject a conception of realism as the narrow focus on one aspect of reality for philosophical reasons: exact copies of the world are doomed to failure since they do not capture the inherent vitality and multifaceted nature of the world.

Many critics have considered Sand's writing as proof of her inability to represent 'the real'. Even Flaubert, for example, a close acquaintance and admirer of Sand's work, writes to her in 1871: 'Malgré vos grands yeux de sphinx, vous avez vu le monde à travers une couleur d'or. Elle venait du soleil de votre cœur'.[96] Sand herself also affirms that 'j'ai été taxé souvent de bienveillance aveugle et de point de vue trop *florianesque*.' (*Promenades autour d'un village* 1857, p.65, original emphasis). I would like to argue, however, that her aesthetic

[94] *Corr*., XXIV, p.510, January 1876.
[95] See Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, for the most powerful elaboration of this point.
[96] *Gustave Flaubert-George Sand: correspondence*, ed. by Alphonse Jacobs (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), p.348, 8 September, 1871.

position is in fact founded on her alternative understanding of vision, developed through her interest in the natural sciences.

To contextualise this, the mid-1850s is a crucial reference point for responses to and representations of reality. It was at this time that realism emerged as the dominant aesthetic, with Gustave Courbet's exhibition, 'Le Réalisme', in 1855, the founding of the review, *Le Réalisme*, by Duranty in 1856, and the publication of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in 1857. Sand was very much involved in these debates, as she was at this point in dialogue with one of the most vociferous defenders of realism, Champfleury. They corresponded from 1853 to 1857, at which point Champfleury's campaign was at its height.[97]

Although Sand rejects the concept of realism as a 'school', she is opposed to realism in 'the bad sense of realist representation' as termed by Sandy Petrey, or what Sand refers to as '[la] science des détails'.[98] More specifically, Sand denounces the exclusive focus on one aspect of reality, countering this with her own position: 'Dieu nous a mis deux yeux dans la tête: est-ce pour rien? Non pas. Avec un seul œil gros comme deux, nous n'aurions vu qu'un aspect de la vérité et la vérité a deux aspects (si elle n'en a pas cent mille), deux principaux, toujours, l'ombre et la lumière.' (*Corr*., XII, p.484, June 1854). Further, in response to Champfleury's article of 1855 on realism,[99] Sand publishes her own article entitled 'Le Réalisme' in 1857, and once more, she advocates a combination of different approaches rather than a narrow focus on one element:

[97] Their letters and articles on this subject are collected in *Du Réalisme, correspondance de Champfleury et George Sand* (Paris: Garnier, 1991).
[98] Sandy Petrey, *In the Court of the Pear King: French Culture and the Rise of Realism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.145; George Sand, '*L'Éducation sentimentale* par Gustave Flaubert', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.399-407 (p.405).
[99] 'Lettre à Madame Sand', published in *Le Réalisme*, 8 October 1855.

> Quand les réalistes ont proclamé qu'il fallait peindre les choses telles qu'elles sont, ils n'ont rien prouvé pour ou contre la beauté et la bonté des choses de ce monde. S'il leur arrivait de faire avec ensemble, et de parti pris, la peinture d'un monde sans accord et sans lumière, ce ne serait encore qu'un monde de fantaisie, car le monde vrai est sans relâche enveloppé de nuages et de rayons qui l'éclairent ou le ternissent avec une merveilleuse variété d'effets. Qu'il soit donc permis à chacun et à tous de voir avec les yeux qu'ils ont.[100]

Sand thus presents realism as a reductive aesthetic and uses her article on this subject to defend her own position which is inherently opposed to this allegedly monolithic approach. I would therefore agree with Bordas that, 'pour Sand, l'évolution esthétique du roman français dans les années 50 ne fait que renforcer son affirmation irrémédiable de l'idéalisme et sa défiance à l'encontre d'un réalisme de la représentation, sinon de la démonstration.'[101] Further, I endorse Bordas's assertion that Sand's retreat from the political sphere after 1848 and her opposition to realism at this point should be regarded as an alternative form of 'engagement.'[102] Departing from Bordas, however, who regards Sand's idealism as 'intempestif et anachronique', and considers her later novels as nostalgic works of 'déception' and 'résignation', I will demonstrate that Sand's rejection of realism constitutes a powerful and positive response to what she regards as the contemporary obsession with demarcation and specialisation, not only in literature but also in science.[103]

Sand's article, 'Le Réalisme', is part of a series of eight essays or 'feuilletons' that she writes in 1857 on her local area of Gargilesse. These essays are published under the title 'Courrier de village' in the journal, *Le Courrier de Paris*. They are later collated and published as *Promenades autour d'un village*, since they describe walks undertaken by Sand

[100] Published in the *Courrier de Paris*, 29 September 1857. Reprinted in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.277-285 (pp.283-284).
[101] Bordas, 'Les romans du Second Empire', p.122.
[102] Ibid., p.114.
[103] Ibid. See also Margaret Cohen, who does not examine Sand's later works and asserts that Sand's Second Empire novels are 'no longer in the thick of mid nineteenth-century ferment around the genre', 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century', in *The French Novel. From 1800 to the Present*, ed. by Timothy Unwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), pp.54-72 (p.65).

with two companions.[104] Sand agrees for the volume to be published by Michel Lévy in 1866, and it is important to note that the 29 September article on 'Le Réalisme' is removed for this edition. Indeed, even the modern edition of the *Promenades* in 1992 also leaves out this article, and the editor, Georges Lubin, explains that '[cette] dissertation littéraire sur le réalisme n'était guère dans le ton du reste et aurait paru déplacée.'[105] Henri Bonnet also regards the article as 'une digression' and asserts that, by removing this article for the published volume, Sand 'se faisait justice à elle-même, coupant le cou à l'hydre du réalisme'.[106] I will argue, however, that there are many parallels to be drawn between the removed article and the other articles in the published volume, and will demonstrate that, by considering this article alongside the others in this collection, we can uncover the hidden links between Sand's criticism of '[la] science exacte' (*OA*, II, p.251) and her rejection of realism as a narrow 'science des détails'.

The beginning of the first 'feuilleton' in the *Promenades* collection takes the form of a letter to the journal's editor, Félix Mornand.[107] Here, Sand discusses the aims of the collection. This letter is also left out of all volume editions of the *Promenades.* Georges Lubin includes parts of this fragment in his introduction, and does so in order to highlight Sand's decision to focus on Gargilesse rather than Nohant.[108] What interests me in this letter, however, is the importance that Sand places here on forms of representation. She is highly aware of the fact that she is required to 'paint' the area for others: 'ce que vous voulez, c'est de la peinture avant tout et par dessus tout. Je ne sais pas si je suis peintre, mais je ferai de

[104] The date of the collection's first volume edition is uncertain, but is likely to be Hetzel's illustrated edition of Sand's *Romans champêtres* in 1860. The *Promenades* are included in the first volume, after *La Mare au diable* and *François le Champi*. See Georges Lubin, 'Préface', in *Promenades autour d'un village* (Paris: Christian Pirot, 1992), pp.7-9 (p.9).
[105] Lubin, 'Préface', in *Promenades*, p.8.
[106] Henri Bonnet, 'La mythologie sandienne du village dans *les Promenades*', in *Ville, campagne et nature dans l'œuvre de George Sand*, pp.59-73 (pp.61, 72).
[107] First published on 1 September 1857 in the *Courrier de Paris*.
[108] See Lubin, 'Préface', in *Promenades*, pp.7-8.

mon mieux'.[109] Referring to Nohant, she notes that 'je le connais trop, et peut-être serais-je trop prolixe en détails.'[110] In this letter therefore, Sand demonstrates her anxiety regarding her ability in painting a picture of the area without being too detailed. This issue of balance, and the different means in which an area can be represented, is a key concept which runs throughout the collection of articles and links these with Sand's 29 September article, 'Le réalisme'.

Sand takes her walks around Gargilesse with many companions, and these include an artist (Alexandre Manceau) and an entomologist (Monsieur Depuizet). Both of these are admired by Sand for going beyond the narrow demarcation of their disciplines. Manceau the artist is described as a 'naturaliste amateur' (*Promenades*, p.15), and the scientist 'connaît les jouissances de l'artiste' (*Promenades*, p.20). Sand admires 'Chrysalidor', as she calls him, or Monsieur Depuizet, to give him his actual name, for the following reasons: 'tout savant exact et chercheur minutieux qu'il est, il connaît les jouissances de l'artiste, n'a pas l'intelligence atrophiée par l'amour du détail. Il comprend et il aime l'ensemble.' (*Promenades*, p.20-21). The fact that Depuizet's intellect is not 'atrophiée' again demonstrates the fact that Sand regards the exclusive focus on one discipline of knowledge to be restrictive and indeed harmful. Barbara Dimopoulou comments on this passage by noting that 'l'objectif est de tout voir d'un même coup d'œil', and accordingly suggests that there is 'une ambition de totalité' in Sand's descriptions of nature.[111] I would point out the fact that Sand's admiration for Depuizet is in fact founded on his double vision, in the sense of his ability to focus not only on the 'totalité', but also on the detail. I do not use the term 'double vision' in the sense of

[109] The fragment is published in its entirety by Georges Lubin in 'Une page inconnue de George Sand', *Bulletin de liaison des Amis de George Sand*, 1 (1978), 3-4 (p.4).
[110] Ibid.
[111] Barbara Dimopoulou , 'Le monde des végétaux chez Sand et Michelet', in *Fleurs et jardins dans l'œuvre de George Sand*, pp.263-285 (p.281).

'seeing double' or 'diplopia', in which vision is disordered and objects are seen as double.[112] Rather, I use the term to refer to the ability to see on two different levels. Whereas in Chapter Two, I used this term to designate the ability both to observe the physical present and to visualise the future, in this chapter, where I examine Sand's later period, the focus is more specifically on the physical world and the term therefore refers to the two different ways in which this can be examined.

As Sand explains in 'Le Pays des Anémones' where she again refers to the figure of the scientific artist: 'là où l'amateur sans étude ne voit que des masses et des couleurs confuses, *l'artiste naturaliste* voit le détail en même temps que l'ensemble.' (*NLV*, p.75, added emphasis).[113] Here again, therefore, Sand commends an approach which considers 'le détail' and l'ensemble'. Sand's novel of 1857, *La Daniella*, also espouses a conception of vision which is double. The protagonist attempts to paint an exact copy of a beautiful natural scene, noting down every single detail down to the number of leaves on the branches, and soon realises that this exclusive attention to the detail alone results in a painting that is incomplete: 'je perdais, dans le détail, la notion de l'ensemble, sans rendre même le détail, car tout détail est un ensemble par lui-même.' (*La Daniella*, I, p.98). Given that Sand is famous for her alleged aversion to the detail, this duality might seem surprising. Naomi Schor, for example, refers to the 'painful renunciation of the perverse pleasure of the detail' which one must undertake when reading Sand's works.[114] I would argue that, in her later works, Sand espouses an approach to reality which values both the detail and the whole.

Sand's conception of double vision is taken further in the *Promenades* when she states that '[Chrysalidor] *voyait* comme qui dirait *des deux yeux*. Il en avait un pour le grand

[112] It is interesting that this issue should arise given the perception of Sand as a writer whose vision is blurred or defective, as discussed in my Introduction.
[113] This article was written 7 April 1868 and was published in the *Revue des Deux mondes* in June 1868.
[114] Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, p.46. Following on from her study of the feminisation of the detail as a decorative and superfluous concern in *Reading in detail: aesthetics and the feminine* (New York; London: Methuen, 1987), Schor's next book, *George Sand and Idealism*, shows that the detail is conversely valorised when associated with the 'virile' practise of mimesis. See *George Sand and Idealism*, especially p.44.

aspect du temple de la nature, et l'autre pour les pierres précieuses qui en revêtent le sol et les parois.' (*Promenades,* p.21, added emphasis). Sand therefore explicitly presents this ability as double vision. The vocabulary she uses here in her description of Depuizet and his abilities reveals the link between her epistemic position (the need for both a scientific and artistic understanding) and her rejection of a narrow realistic aesthetic, since she refers to his dual understanding of the environment as his ability to 'voir des deux yeux'. This is strikingly similar to her reaction against realism in her letter to Champfleury where she states that 'Dieu nous a mis deux yeux dans la tête.' Further, her admiration for Depuizet's ability to 'voir des deux yeux' aligns with her exasperation towards reductive vision in 'Le Réalisme': 'Quoi? Vous voudriez faire passer toutes les individualités sous la toise? Vous déclarez qu'on ne peut peindre qu'avec un seul ton?'[115]

The question of realism is in fact raised several times in this short collection of articles on Gargilesse.[116] More specifically, it surfaces within discussions on botany and entomology, as Sand seamlessly moves between these discourses and reflections on art and literature. For example, in her eighth chapter,[117] her observation of 'misaschistes' or mica (a type of rock) leads her to reflect on '[les] mystères de la couleur' (*Promenades,* p.69) and the depicition of colour in art. In one of her previous chapters, she admits that, 'si les *réalistes* voient parfois le paysan plus grossier qu'il ne l'est *réellement*, il est certain que les idéalistes l'ont parfois quintessencié' (*Promenades,* p.63, original emphasis). But she then rejects this 'prétention de le *voir sous un jour exclusif* et de le définir comme un échantillon d'histoire naturelle, comme une pierre, comme un insecte' (*Promenades,* p.63, added emphasis). Aesthetic questions are thus discussed using the terms of natural sciences. Sand provides her own definition of what realism should be in her third chapter: 'sentir que tout est du ressort de l'artiste, voilà, quant à moi, tout ce que je peux entendre au mot de réalisme.'

[115] Sand, 'Le Réalisme', p.281.
[116] *Promenades autour d'un village* is under a hundred pages long.
[117] Published on 8 July 1857. The eight 'feuilletons' are divided into twelve chapters in Lubin's edition.

(*Promenades*, p.33). Once again, she defends the plural examination and representation of the world. In a later chapter, her description of a butterfly, 'la zygène du trèfle *aux taches réunies*' (*Promenades*, p.67, original emphasis) is followed by a further statement on her awareness of reality: 'Réalité, tu ne me gênes pas!' (*Promenades*, p.68). In 'Le Réalisme', Sand stresses that 'les [réalistes] seront bien forcés d'avoir leurs jours de pluie, et les [idéalistes] leurs jours de soleil.'[118] The need for both to share the same experience is also a key concern in her eighth chapter in the *Promenades*. Here, Sand expresses her ideal of a science which cooperates with nature 'en vue du beau en même temps qu'en vue de l'utile' (*Promenades*, p.83) as a development which will lead to a world where 'l'idéalisme et le réalisme ne se battront plus' (*Promenades*, p.83). The practical and aesthetic attitudes to nature are thus expressed using the literary terms of idealism and realism. We can therefore see that Sand's article, 'Le Réalisme', shares many concerns with the other articles in the *Promenades*, and that her response to the different means of engaging with nature is closely linked to her poetics of the novel.

Laura provides further evidence of Sand's interlinking of epistemology and artistic representation. Sand's analysis of the Realist writer's depiction of a bleak world as nothing more than 'un monde de fantaisie' in 'Le Réalisme' draws a parallel with the denunciation of Tungsténius and Walter's scientific explanations of reality in *Laura*, denounced by the heroine as being founded on 'la trompeuse notion du réel' (*Laura*, p.35).[119] In the same way as these narrow theories of knowledge (such as 'la science des détails', *Laura*, p.30) prevent the characters from perceiving '[l]es merveilles au sein de la terre' (*Laura*, p.40), Sand regards a realism which considers only one aspect of reality as reductive. This is in contrast

[118] Sand, 'Le Réalisme', p.284.
[119] 'La peinture d'un monde sans accord et sans lumière, ce ne serait encore qu'un monde de fantaisie', 'Le Réalisme', p.283.

with the true artist, who is capable of 'la science de l'ensemble'.[120] This correlation which I have been tracing between Sand's rejection of reductive empirical stances and her resistance towards a narrowly defined realism is confirmed in a letter to Louis Viardot in June 1868, where she states: 'Il me semble qu'en ce moment on va trop loin dans l'affirmation d'un réalisme étroit et un peu grossier dans la science comme dans l'art.' (*Corr*., XXI, p.12).

A further indication of Sand's commitment to double vision rather than reductive realism is demonstrated in her response to photography. Given Sand's interest in different means of looking at and capturing the world, she is strangely reticent on this form of visual technology which makes great progress in the second half of the century. David Powell notes that 'Sand does not discuss photography in any novel nor, to my knowledge, in any text.'[121] There are indeed no references to photography in her novels and there is no essay by Sand on this subject. However, scattered references to photography in her letters reveal a complex and nuanced response. Her reaction to her first photographic portrait, taken in 1852, is uncompromisingly negative.[122] Manceau writes in the *Agenda*: 'c'est si affreusement laid que nous avons tout jeté au feu. Les souvenirs sont plus fidèles que de pareilles réalités.'[123] Almost a decade later, Sand herself writes to Alexandre Dumas fils: 'toutes vos photographies vous font affreux, et décidément la photographie sur nature est ce qu'il y a de plus menteur au monde.' (*Corr*., XVI, p.639, November 1861). Her response to a photograph of Pauline Villot is similarly disapproving: 'c'est vous, mais vous êtes plus jolie que ça. Décidément le réel n'est pas le vrai.' (*Corr*., XVI, p.640, November 1861). According to Sand, then, photography, in its exact reproduction of reality, is less truthful than other

[120] Sand, '*L'Éducation Sentimentale* de Gustave Flaubert', in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, pp.399-407 (p.405).
[121] David Powell, 'Enclosure, Disclosure and Foreclosure in George Sand's *Antonia*', *George Sand Studies*, 20 (2001), 102-128 (p.128).
[122] See *Corr*., XI, p.556, January 1853.
[123] Quoted by Lubin in *Corr*., XI, p.556. Although this is not Sand herself writing, Manceau's use of 'nous' to refer to the disposal of the photograph suggests that the opinion expresses a consensus. Manceau regularly wrote in the *Agendas* on behalf of Sand.

creations which contribute to or interpret this reality. In a letter to Champfleury in June 1854 she draws a clear distinction between the camera – a machine – and the human mind: 'toutes les fois qu'un cerveau humain sera le miroir de la nature, il n'y a pas de danger qu'il s'en acquitte comme une machine' (*Corr*., XII, p.483). This prefigures her statement in 1861: 'Notre cerveau n'est […] pas un appareil à opérations photographiques où les images sont transmises exactement.'[124] The question of photography's status becomes an urgent issue in 1856, when it is declared by the French courts that this medium is no more than a servile imitation of reality and will therefore not be protected by copyright laws. This distinction between photography and art seems to align with Sand's views. Writing to Flaubert in April 1874, for example, she criticises his play, *Le Candidat*, by stating: 'tu le fais *exact*, l'art du théâtre disparaît. C'est cela qui est de la photographie. N'en fait pas qui veut dans la perfection, mais ce n'est plus de l'art. Et toi, si artiste!'[125]

Sand's response to Mathieu Borie's photographs of landscape in 1859, on the other hand, is more enthusiastic. Writing to thank him for his photographs of Corrèze, she notes:

> Je vous remercie beaucoup des intéressantes photographies que vous voulez bien m'envoyer. Je me doute un peu de ce qu'il faut rectifier par la pensée dans ces sortes d'épreuves, et je vois bien que votre pays est pittoresque autant que bien d'autres que l'on va chercher beaucoup plus loin. La vue qui annonce la troisième chute est d'un grand effet théâtral dans le stéréoscope. (*Corr*., XV, p.544).

The device to which Sand refers, the stereoscope, is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as follows: 'an instrument for obtaining, from two pictures (usually photographs) of an object, taken from slightly different points of view (corresponding to the position of the two eyes), a single image giving the impression of solidity or relief, as in ordinary vision of the object itself.'[126] Whereas Sand criticises other photographs for being too exact, these photographs, which are altered by the photographer, gain her admiration. The result is an

[124] George Sand, *Impressions et souvenirs*, p.171.
[125] *Gustave Flaubert-George Sand: Correspondance*, p.462, original emphasis.
[126] 'Stereoscope', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, XVI, p.650.

image which corresponds more closely to the human impression ('corresponding to the position of the two eyes'). Crucially, the way in which these more truthful (as opposed to accurate) photographs are achieved is by combining two 'slightly different points of view', in an application of Sand's principle that 'avec un seul œil gros comme deux, nous n'aurions vu qu'un aspect de la vérité et la vérité a deux aspects.' (*Corr*., XII, p.484, June 1854). Sand's criticism of the camera is thus founded on her belief that the strict copy of reality fails to capture the real since it is unable to convey the multiple different faces which the world presents. Her admiration for the stereoscope, on the other hand, demonstrates her belief in the inherent multiplicity of the world and the need to go beyond a strictly narrow approach, both within our optical models of engagement with the world and in the representation of that engagement, as she asserts: 'l'art est une interprétation multiple, infinie' (*Corr*., XV, p.480, July 1859).

Sand's double focus results in novels which bring together her idealist message with detailed observations of the natural world. The novels from her later period are increasingly distanced from contemporary politics and what is regarded as 'reality'. She turns towards the philosophical tale (*Monsieur Sylvestre*, 1865, the *Contes d'une grand-mère*), the fantastic (*Les Dames vertes*, 1858, *L'homme de neige*, *Laura*)[127] and temporally distanced novels (*La Filleule*, *L'Homme de neige*, *Jean de la Roche*, *Le Marquis de Villemer*, *Valvèdre*, *Antonia* and *La Famille de Germandre*). In these narratives, Sand advocates the physical observation of nature whilst at the same time distancing herself from the controlling, exploitative gaze which some of her contemporaries fixed on the natural world. By situating her works at a temporal and spatial distance and purposefully not reflecting the world in which her readers live, Sand can create a reality which is more truthful, in its combination of detailed physical

[127] *Les Dames vertes*, with its supernatural dimension and female guide, prefigures many aspects of *Laura*.

observation of nature with an appreciation of its magical and poetic beauty.[128] This she confirms in her correspondence:

> Plus je vais, plus je pense qu'il faut faire face à la prétendue doctrine du réalisme en montrant qu'on peut être très exact et très consciencieux sans fouler aux pieds la poésie et l'art. Comment! il y en a qui prétendent que le beau c'est la fantaisie […]! Laissons-les dire et allons. Ils ne savent rien, ils n'ont rien vu, rien regardé, rien compris, ces prétendus amants du fait matériel.' (*Corr*., XVI, pp.32-33, July 1860).

Conclusion

Sand's later writing demonstrates an evolution in her thinking from the conviction that the artist is the privileged beholder of nature to an awareness of the need to understand its inner workings, since 'l'examen attentif de chaque chose est la clef de l'ensemble.' (*Valvèdre*, p.140). Her understanding of vision and the means of reaching insight into the workings of the world therefore expands, as her interest in the natural sciences leads her to adopt what I have termed a multidisciplinary approach. She advocates the scholarly study and observation of nature, but proposes a dynamic model of exchange whereby man interacts with nature as spectator and spectacle. In a clear progression from her early heroes trapped in anguished narratives of introspection, Sand rejects both the self-absorbed artist and the narrow 'savant', creating 'artistes naturalistes' who are capable of looking beyond themselves and of truly understanding the world's natural beauty. In her representation of these individuals, Sand also overcomes the divisions created by society between the two sexes by creating both male and female representatives. In this way, Sand advocates an appreciative gaze which transcends the binaries of science and art, the detail and the whole, in order to access 'la vision nette et complète des choses' (*NLV*, p.75). This refusal of extreme specialisation in favour of

[128] I agree with Simone Vierne that Sand's interest in botany retains a poetic dimension. Vierne's study of botany in Sand's 'création romanesque' focuses primarily on botanical terms in *André* and the *Contes*. Simone Vierne, 'Poésie et botanique', in *Fleurs et jardins dans l'œuvre de George Sand*, pp.313-327.

multidisciplinarity is at the basis of Sand's rejection of realism as an aesthetic category. Refusing to adhere to either extreme of the representational spectrum, Sand combines detailed descriptions of nature with an idealist message and a sense of wonder, putting her ideal of double vision into practice. Sand's aesthetic stance is founded, therefore, not on her refusal of the visual as a basis for art, nor on her inability to 'voir la vérité vraie', as Zola claims, but rather, on her alternative conception of vision as a process which operates on multiple levels.[129] This she explains in a letter to Flaubert dated January 1876, when she provides a definition of the writer's task: 'Ne pas se placer derrière la vitre opaque par laquelle on ne voit rien que le reflet de son nez. Voir aussi loin que possible, le bien, le mal, auprès, autour, là-bas, partout' (*Corr*., XXIV, p.510).

[129] See Zola, 'George Sand', in *Nos auteurs dramatiques. Œuvres complètes*, 66 vols (Paris: François Bernouard, 1928), XLV, pp.291- 296 (p.292).

Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis, I maintained that this study aimed to pursue the suggestion made by Henry James that 'George Sand's real history, the more interesting one, is the history of her mind.'[1] In an article in 1863, Sand describes the history of her mind, or her 'vie intellectuelle' (*NLV*, p.153), as a search for 'un chemin' (*NLV*, p.153) which she has lost and found many times. In alignment with the argument that I have been developing throughout this thesis, this search or quest for the path to insight is depicted by Sand as 'un progrès' involving multiple visual positions: 'j'ai [...] vu peu à peu la destinée humaine avec d'autres yeux, et reconnu que, dans la période du doute et du découragement, je voyais mal parce que je ne voyais pas assez.' (*NLV*, p.154). This study has examined Sand's evolving conception of vision and has revealed that she is constantly engaging with and responding to the cultural and intellectual developments of her century in order to adapt and refine her position on the quest for insight. I have revealed that she advocates a combination of different approaches to apprehending reality, combining conceptual seeing, prophetic vision and physical sight. Furthermore, I have argued that her œuvre demonstrates a fundamental coherence, in that she displays a continued commitment to understanding the world in which we live. Giving advice on life to Anna Devoisin, for example, she notes: 'Instruisez-vous beaucoup et toujours, puisque c'est l'œuvre de toute la vie.' (*Corr.*, XII, pp.65-66, August 1853). This she reaffirms in 'Le Pays des anémones' in 1863: 'Je suis arrivé [sic], moi, à penser que c'était un devoir d'apprendre à étudier' (*NLV*, p.76).

In my first chapter, I demonstrated that Sand engages with reality on several levels from an early age. However, during this period, her different faculties are in tension with each other and thus the model of internal vision takes over and dominates her early works.

[1] Henry James, 'George Sand', in *French Poets and Novelists* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1919 [1878]), pp.149-185 (p.166).

Chapters Two and Three reveal that Sand's conceptual vision develops into a more constructive and politically engaged faculty in the late 1830s and 1840s, both through refashioning the world, which I term 'repainting', and through visionary insight. The final chapter argues that Sand's studies in the natural sciences are central in her development of a multidisciplinary approach to apprehending the world. Throughout the thesis, I have been highlighting the ways in which Sand's evolving understanding of vision and the transmission of insight informs her poetics of the novel. In this way, I have revealed the dynamism of Sand's idealism by linking her rejection of a narrow focus on the present and her opposition to intellectual specialisation with her rejection of Realism as an aesthetic.

Examining representative examples of Sand's entire output has enabled me to uncover a growth model in her works. In her novels of the early 1830s she primarily focuses on personal and individual concerns, and during this period she privileges internal vision. In the 1830s and 1840s, her interests widen and she is mainly concerned with social issues. Her works from this period demonstrate a desire to change and reconfigure reality through visionary insights and social improvements which lead to a deeper understanding of the beauty of the world. Her final period from the mid 1850s to the 1870s bears witness to an even greater expansion as she now considers the place of humankind within the natural universe. This 'notion plus juste et plus vaste' (*Valvèdre*, p.1) of the world and the imperative to '*sortir de soi*' (*Valvèdre*, p.1, original emphasis) lead to an increased focus in her writing on the natural world and on the physical observation of the environment. What I hope to have shown is that this is a model of expansion rather than a linear progression which entails the jettisoning of early ideas to be replaced by new ones. By her later period, Sand espouses a method of engaging with the world which combines different approaches, and her insistence on scientific training and knowledge in no way entails an abandonment of her early predilection for the imagination and the visionary. *In L'Homme de neige* (1859), for example,

it is asserted that 'ce n'est […] pas la raison qui gouverne l'homme, c'est l'imagination, c'est le rêve' (*HDN*, I, p.53). Sand continues to experience prophetic insights and maintains that she has not deserted 'la cause de l'avenir'.[2] This she explains in a letter to Charles-Edmond: 'J'avais rêvé dans un avenir non prochain, mais point trop éloigné, une crise sociale toute pacifique […]. Certes, cette grande chose arrivera [...]. […] Le jour viendra, voilà pourquoi je ne désespère pas.'[3] The eponymous hero of *Monsieur Sylvestre* (1865) is also a form of visionary, since he foresees the day when all doctrines will be united into a syncretic whole: 'Patience! ça viendra. La philosophie de l'avenir sera une.' (*Monsieur Sylvestre*, p.76). Abstract forms of vision and ways of engaging with reality thus continue to prevail in Sand's writing after the 1850s and coalesce with her examinations of the microscopic details of the natural world, since, for Sand, 'l'étude est l'aliment de la rêverie.' (*NLV*, p.76).

Sand therefore ultimately transcends binary divisions between the concrete and the abstract, art and science. This aligns with her rejection of divisions and antitheses, as highlighted in Chapter Four.[4] As an alternative to binary systems of thought, what we discover in Sand's later writings is a preference for tripartite models.[5] Much more research is to be done on Sand's later articles, collated in *Autour de la table* (1862), *Impressions et souvenirs* (1873) and the *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur* (1877). Whereas Sand's *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1837) have recently benefited from several investigations,[6] and her political articles from the 1840s have also received much attention by critics, Sand's articles and

[2] Sand, 'Réponse à un ami' (letter to Gustave Flaubert, 14 September, 1871). This letter was published in *Le Temps*, 3 October 1871. See *Préfaces de George Sand*, ed. by Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1997), pp.423-428 (p.426).
[3] Sand, 'À Charles Edmond, III', *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.420-423 (pp.422-423). The date of this letter is not certain but is likely to be March 1860; see *Préfaces de George Sand*, p.420.
[4] Sand asserts, for example, that 'l'antithèse […] est une impasse' (*NLV*, p.182).
[5] I use 'tripartite' to refer to entities which incorporate three levels or dimensions.
[6] See the following two collections of articles: *The Traveler in the Life and Works of George Sand*, ed. by Tamara Alvarez-Detrell and Michael G. Paulson (Troy, New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1994); *Les Lettres d'un voyageur de George Sand: une poétique romantique*, ed. by Damien Zanone (Grenoble: Ellug, 2007). The former includes several articles on the *Lettres d'un voyageur*, but none on the *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur*.

prefaces from the 1850s to the 1870s have received little critical attention.[7] In order to fully comprehend Sand's development and evolution as a writer, however, similar studies to those carried out on the *Lettres d'un voyageur* need to be undertaken on these later texts, in addition to studying the later novels themselves. What I would like to do here is to briefly suggest one way in which Sand's articles from the 1860s and 1870s shed new light on her later works and her preoccupation with multiple ways of seeing.

In the *Nouvelles Lettres d'un voyageur*, Sand advocates the ability to 'compter jusqu'à trois', which she regards as 'le nombre sacré' and 'la clef de l'homme et celle de l'univers' (*NLV*, p.162). This anticipates her elaboration of tripartite spiritual systems to explain the configuration of humankind. In this respect, Sand is inspired by other thinkers such as Jean Reynaud,[8] and particularly Pierre Leroux, who develops the notion of a triad which makes up all human beings: 'sensation, sentiment, connaissance'.[9] However, Sand goes beyond these systems and devises her own, as she explains: 'Moi, je demande, je cherche une explication plus facile à vulgariser' (*NLV*, p.187). She views all human beings as composed of three elements: 'Il faut trois termes pour spécifier les trois éléments qui concourent à l'existence de tout ce qui est'.[10] This she refers to as her own version of 'la trinité', consisting of 'la matière' (the body), 'la vie organique' (action) and 'l'esprit' (which

[7] See, for example, Michèle Hecquet, *Poétique de la parabole: les romans socialistes de George Sand, 1840-1845* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992); and the recent collection, *George Sand. Littérature et politique*, ed. by Martine Reid and Michèle Riot-Sarcey (Nantes: Éditions Pleins Feux, 2007).
[8] Sand greatly admires Jean Reynaud's *Terre et Ciel* (1854). See, for example, *Corr*., XII, pp.66, 618.
[9] See Pierre Leroux, 'Préface', in *Réfutation de l'éclectisme* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1881 [1839]), pp.v-xviii (p.xvi).
[10] Sand, 'Fragment ou exposé d'une croyance spiritualiste', in *Souvenirs et idées* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1904), pp.271- 281 (p.271). *Souvenirs et idées* is a collection of articles Sand wrote in 1848, 1851, 1855 and 1871. The manuscript of this 'Fragment' has not been discovered and its dating is not known. The subject of the article and Sand's interest in the division between spirit and matter suggest that this was written during her later period, between 1855 and 1876. See also Annie Camenisch, 'Une croyante spiritualiste: George Sand', *Les Amis de George Sand*, 22 (2000), 30-39 (pp.31-32).

organises the two previous categories).[11] When the three elements co-exist, 'l'homme existe complet.'[12]

In addition to elaborating this theory on man's material life, Sand also devises her own 'notion personnelle' (*NLV*, p.181) to explain man's spiritual life. In this she draws on Auguste Laugel's *Problèmes de l'âme* (1868), which she describes as 'un livre de morale et de philosophie écrit par un savant et un libre penseur, car il nous engage à rejeter ces vains termes de spiritualisme et de matérialisme qui nous éloignent de la recherche de la vérité' (*NLV*, p.163). However, Sand goes beyond Laugel's binary model, according to which we have two souls, 'l'une préposée à l'entretien et à la conservation de la vie physique, l'autre au développement de la vie psychique.' (*NLV*, p.159). Rather, Sand develops her own model, which considers the human soul to be divided into 'trois *âmes* bien distinctes, une pour le domaine de la vie spécifique, une autre pour celui de la vie individuelle, une troisième pour celui de la vie universelle.' (*NLV*, p.162, original emphasis). This Sand terms her 'trinalité' (*NLV*, p.170), as she explains: 'J'appelle donc à notre aide une méthode qui fasse entrer l'homme dans la notion de *trinalité*, applicable à l'univers et à lui' (*NLV*, pp.184-185, original emphasis). According to this notion, the 'âme universelle' leads to cohesion: '[l'âme universelle] mettra l'accord et l'équilibre entre cette vie diffuse chez tous les êtres et la vie personnelle exagérée en chacun. Elle sera le vrai lien, la vraie *âme*, la lumière, l'unité.' (*NLV*, p.162, original emphasis). I draw attention to Sand's elaboration of tripartite systems since it illustrates her ability to go beyond an 'accouplement forcé' of two incompatible elements, as we saw in the charges against syncretism in Chapter Two.[13] Rather, Sand enacts a rigorous yoking together of the material, the organic and the spiritual, the specific, the individual and the universal. Sand's neologism, 'trinalité', is particularly striking, since her coining of a new

[11] Sand, 'Fragment ou exposé d'une croyance spiritualiste', pp.271, 272.
[12] Ibid., p.272.
[13] Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*, 17 vols (Paris: Slatkine, 1982 [1866-1879), XIV, deuxième partie, 'Syncrétisme', p.1326.

spiritual term emphasizes her desire to set herself apart from existing doctrines, which she regards as fruitlessly fixed: 'nous ne sortirons d'aucun problème par la notion de dualité, puisque toute dualité représente deux contraires' (*NLV*, p.176).[14] It is in this sense that Sand rejects Pascal's notion that '[l'homme] n'est [...] ni ange ni bête', to which she responds: 'Pascal est resté garrotté ici par la notion de dualité. L'homme est bête, homme et ange.' (*NLV*, p.178). By formulating her own tripartite methods of comprehending humanity, Sand disproves charges of contradiction and incoherence in her thought, demonstrating rather that her 'recherche de la vérité' (*NLV*, pp.164-165) results in profoundly unified ways of thinking.

The Sandian theory of the three souls has been examined by Annie Camenisch and Pierre Salomon.[15] However, what I would like to posit is that the principle of a unified trinity also applies to Sand's ideas on knowledge and understanding, or what I have termed insight. In a letter to Francis Laur in January 1864, for example, Sand asserts that man is incomplete if he is not both 'artiste et savant', and she then continues by stating that there are in fact three sides to humanity: 'l'art, la science, la philosophie' (*Corr*., XVIII, p.205). What I therefore suggest is that Sand's model of reaching insight is also, ultimately, a tripartite one. The protagonist of *L'Homme de neige* can be regarded as an embodiment of this model, as he states: 'dès mon adolescence […], je me sentais porté vers les sciences naturelles, en même temps que vers les arts et la philosophie' (*HDN*, I, p.134). In alignment with her tripartite theories on humankind's material and spiritual life, Sand's understanding of the different means of reaching insight also incorporates and valorises three dimensions: the material and physical; the infinite and visionary; and the personal and imaginary. These are the three forms of vision examined in this thesis. Although Sand does not explicitly theorise her position on vision, her confidence in the number three as 'la clef de l'homme et celle de

[14] 'Trinalité' appears in the *Larousse* dictionary as a term coined by Sand: 'État d'une chose trine: "L'âme de l'univers a aussi sa dualité, pour ne pas dire sa trinalité" (G. Sand). P. Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, 17 vols (Paris: Slatkine, 1982), XV, première partie, p.506.

[15] See Annie Camenisch, 'Une croyante spiritualiste: George Sand'; Pierre Salomon, 'La théorie des trois âmes dans la philosophie de George Sand', *Bulletin de liaison des Amis de George Sand* (Jan 1976), 18-24.

l'univers' (*NLV*, p.162) and her affirmation of 'la nécessité d'une triple vue sur le monde des faits et des idées' (*NLV*, p.187) are highly suggestive, and show that a monolithic or binary concept of vision as the means of comprehending and representing the world is not compatible with Sand's position.

Whereas other critics have referred to Sand's theory of the three souls as distinct from her literary works, with Pierre Salomon, for example, noting that 'pendant les années où elle élabore cette doctrine, […], elle se garde bien de l'étaler dans son œuvre',[16] I have shown in this thesis that Sand's espousal of a tripartite and multiple approach to humanity rather than a binary or polar model is in fact central to her conception of the way in which we learn about the world. This is confirmed in Sand's 'Préface générale' of 1875.[17] Intended as a preface to Michel Lévy's edition of her complete works, this text provides us with a valuable insight into Sand's philosophical position by the end of her career and an overview of her life's work.[18] I agree with Anna Szabó that this preface can be regarded as 'une véritable profession de foi'.[19] Here, Sand states that she wishes to 'exposer [s]a croyance' and explain her 'doctrine personnelle', which she summarises as follows: 'Tout travail de science, de philosophie, ou d'imagination, devait servir la cause du progrès humain'.[20] These are precisely the three strands in Sand's understanding of vision and insight which I have been tracking throughout this thesis. Moreover, these are intrinsic to Sand's conception of the artist's task:

> L'artiste […] doit essayer d'élever le niveau des âmes, après avoir fait son possible pour élever le sien propre […]. […] l'auteur […] ne se propose jamais de soutenir une thèse; mais s'il a quelque fond et si sa morale est vraie en lui, il lui arriva fatalement de soutenir une cause ou de combattre une erreur.[21]

[16] Salomon, 'La théorie des trois âmes dans la philosophie de George Sand', p.24.
[17] This preface is dated 1 May 1875. See *Préfaces de George Sand*, p.279.
[18] This edition of her *Œuvres complètes* never appeared as Lévy died in May 1875.
[19] *Préfaces de George Sand*, p.280.
[20] Sand, 'Préface générale, 1875', in *Préfaces de George Sand*, pp.277-280 (p.277).
[21] Ibid., p.278.

This need to 'élever le niveau des âmes' is therefore Sand's main motivation in writing her novels, and the ways of achieving this progress in humanity is through a combination of scientific, philosophical and imaginative or creative endeavours. As Claire Barel-Moisan shows in her article on Sand's relationship with her readers, Sand's aim in her writing is to change the current order by communicating with her contemporary audience, in comparison with other authors such as Flaubert who are primarily concerned with posterity, and who cultivate a sense of distance from their readers.[22] Discussing two different models for artistic creation, for example, Sand aligns herself with the model which asserts that

> Il faut être compris de tous, parce que, dès que l'on se met en rapport avec la foule, il faut se mettre en communication avec les cœurs et les consciences; ne veut-on être compris que de soi, qu'on chante tout seul au fond des bois! Mais, si un auditoire accourt, fût-il composé de faunes, et que l'on continue à chanter, il faut se résigner à parler à ces génies incultes de façon à les éclairer et à les élever au-dessus d'eux-mêmes par des paraboles claires ou tout au moins pénétrables.[23]

What I have demonstrated in this study is that Sand's means of speaking to the 'génies incultes' and of enlightening and elevating them is to unlock their visual faculties, the physical, the visionary and the conceptual, to enable them to reach a better awareness of the world and their place within it.

In contrast with the perception of Sand as a 'congenitally feeble' writer,[24] I have shown that her writing transcends binaries and demonstrates a profound syncretism which conceives of all elements of human existence as being interlinked and incorporated into 'l'incommensurable puissance de la vie universelle', or 'le grand Tout'.[25] In April 1838, exactly at the moment when Sand is digesting and reflecting on her readings in philosophy

[22] See Claire Barel-Moisan, 'Pour une poétique de l'adresse au lecteur dans les préfaces et les fictions Sandiennes', in *George Sand, pratiques et imaginaires de l'écriture*, ed. by Brigitte Diaz and Isabelle Naginski (Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2006), pp.361-372. Sand's attitude is demonstrated, for example, in the preface to the 1839 edition of *Lélia*: 'La clameur que nous avons élevée ne retombera pas dans le silence de l'éternelle nuit; elle aura éveillé des échos; elle aura soulevé des controverses', quoted by Barel-Moisan, p.370.
[23] Sand, letter to Alexandre Saint-Jean, 19 April 1872. See *Préfaces de George Sand*, p.443.
[24] Christopher Robinson, *French Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1978), p.105.
[25] Sand, 'Préface générale, 1875', p.280.

and political thought, she writes to Adolphe Pictet admiring the assertion made in his 'conte' that truth can only be reached through the reconciliation of opposites, as summarised in his expression: 'la lumière blanche ne résulte que de la réunion des rayons colorés du spectre.'[26] In line with such reasoning, Sand ultimately flies in the face of contemporaneous attempts to separate and divide disciplines through her promotion of a multidisciplinary approach, since, 'le monde vrai est sans relâche enveloppé de nuages et de rayons qui l'éclairent ou le ternissent avec une merveilleuse variété d'effets.'[27]

This, in my opinion, provides the key to explaining why vision has not been the focus of a study on Sand up to this point. I do not believe that an anti-feminist, antagonistic response to Sand's work has been the primary factor in preventing such a study from materialising, although the overshadowing of her work by that of Realist writers and the fascination with vision in relation to Realism have no doubt contributed to this.[28] Rather, I would hypothesize that the complexity, or rather, the multiple and constantly evolving nature of Sand's take on vision has thus far prevented critics from envisaging this subject as a topic for study. What I have revealed in this thesis, however, is that vision is a central concern for Sand throughout her career, and that this provides us with a fruitful way of examining Sand as a writer of intellectual interest and importance. The findings of this thesis could be extended further by comparing Sand's novels with the works of other visionary artists who share her interest in social concerns, such as Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). Furthermore, my analysis of Sand's interaction with the natural sciences merits further investigation, in particular Sand's status as a disseminator or indeed active contributor

[26] Quoted by Georges Lubin, *Corr*., IV, p.397. Pictet's 'conte' is *Une course à Chamounix* (1838). Sand writes that this and other 'réflexions philosophiques' from Pictet's tale struck her greatly, and she notes: '[ces réflexions] me sont restées et me resteront dans l'esprit […]. Elles me plaisent d'autant plus qu'elles m'arrivent dans un moment où je suis plus disposée à les entendre, je suis un peu plus vieille qu'il y a deux ans et je crois que je suis en voie de me réconcilier […]. Je ne crois pas que la nature de mon esprit me porte jamais à mordre assez à la philosophie pour prendre une initiative quelconque. Mais, peut-être arriverai-je à comprendre plusieurs choses que je ne savais pas.' (*Corr*., IV, pp.397-398).

[27] Sand, 'Le Réalisme', published in the *Courrier de Paris*, 29 September 1857. Reprinted in *Questions d'art et de littérature*, ed. by D. J. Colwell (Egham: Runnymede Books, 1992), pp.277-285 (pp.283-284).

[28] See, for example, Peter Brook's study, *Realist Vision* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005).

to scientific ideas.[29] An examination of her intellectual dialogue with Jules Michelet (1798-1874), for example, could provide a valuable means of exploring nineteenth-century interaction with scientific advances from a poetic, spiritual and moral perspective.

This thesis has shown that Sand constantly engaged with and responded to nineteenth-century debates and disputes on the means of understanding and grappling with the changing world. Indeed, we could even claim that Sand's own intellectual and creative trajectory is particularly illuminating in understanding the development of nineteenth-century conceptions of vision and sight, moving as she does from a focus on the abstract and the visionary to investigations of a more physical and scientific kind.[30] However, what I would also like to stress is that Sand was not only a figure of importance in her time, but that her works are still valuable in aesthetic and intellectual terms today. Her political idealism, her visionary ideas and capacities for creative reworkings of reality, and her insatiable 'passion de voir'[31] make her novels relevant to all readers who wish to discover a guide to understanding the novel of life, as suggested in her last preface:

> L'homme deviendra heureux dès ce monde, parce qu'il deviendra sage et bon en devenant de plus en plus instruit de son but, de son devoir et de sa mission. Ceci ressemble à une fin de roman, n'est-ce pas? Eh bien, songez-y, c'est la seule fin logique et vraisemblable du roman de nos destinées.[32]

[29] In addition to her *Contes d'une grand-mère* (1874-1876) and novels featuring scientific characters, Sand's prefaces to scientific works such as Maurice's *Deux jours dans le monde des papillons* (1855), or Pascal Jourdan's *Flore de Vichy* (1872) deserve to be examined as indications of her ideas on nature. The former is in *Questions d'art et de littérature* and the latter is included in Sand's *Dernières pages* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1877).

[30] Éric Bordas notes that 'George Sand *est* le XIX^{e} siècle, dans toutes ses contradictions, ses erreurs, ses échecs et ses triomphes.' See 'Préface', in *Les Dames Vertes* (Paris: AMR, 2002), pp.7-32 (p.10, original emphasis).

[31] George Sand, *Impressions et Souvenirs* (Paris: M. Lévy, 1873), p.164.

[32] Sand, 'Préface générale, 1875', p.280.

Bibliography

For ease of reference, I include all primary and secondary sources referred to in the thesis. In the secondary sources, I give articles as referred to in the thesis and also list the volume separately for ease of consultation; for example, Margaret Cohen's article on 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century' is listed under Cohen and the volume, *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel*, is also listed under Unwin. I include Sand's fictional works in chronological order but her other works are listed in a separate category which I have not listed in chronological order since it was not practical to do so.

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