Introduction

Many famous novelists have written plays. Without going beyond the bounds of the English language, a list could include George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy,* Trollope's *The Noble Jilt,* Hardy's *The Dynasts,* Joyce's *Exiles,* Hemingway's *The Fifth Column,* Saul Bellow's *The Last Analysis,* the various dramatic works of Dickens, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, and Graham Greene; even, perhaps, the adaptation of *Sir Charles Grandison* attributed to Jane Austen. Similar lists could be compiled for other languages. Balzac and Zola, Gide and Mauriac, Manzoni and Verga all wrote plays.

Nobody, then, will be surprised to discover that George Sand wrote plays; and many readers, being familiar with the dramaturgic strengths and weaknesses of other celebrated novelists, will already know what to expect. Her plays will be the idle amusements of an active and talented writer—doodles scrawled during the hours when she wearied of her true vocation. They will interest us in the way that the secondary activities of distinguished minds always interest us—in the way that Michelangelo's sonnets and Tolstoy's chess games and Mendelssohn's paintings interest us. They will not display any profound dramatic gift, any true feel for the stage—how could they? But the author's talent, however misguided and misapplied, will still be there, and the works will still be worth an occasional visit for that reason.

The truth is different.

George Sand was a rare phenomenon among playwriting novelists—perhaps a unique one. She did not dash off two or three semiplayable dramas in her spare time. She wrote dozens of dramatic works, twenty-one of which (twenty-six, if we count adaptations written by other hands but more or less supervised by her) were produced in the major Parisian theaters. Many were commercial successes, and one, *Le Marquis de Villemer,* was among the

greatest stage hits of its era. Moreover, she worked hard, not only at writing scripts, but at every other aspect of theatrical life. She acted in her own plays and other people's. She directed actors at every possible level of the profession, from Sarah Bernhardt to the enthusiastic but utterly incompetent amateur. She designed sets and made costumes. She was familiar with the practicalities of stage lighting and scene changes. She collaborated. She adapted. She improvised and experimented. Surely no other novelist in history was so thoroughly steeped in the theatrical profession, or made such a success of it.

This becomes all the more notable when we reflect how few women, at any time and in any country, have succeeded as dramatists. Playwriting has always been a far more male-dominated occupation than poem writing or novel writing. Has any other female dramatist ever had twenty-one plays staged in the major public theaters of her country? Lady Gregory perhaps comes closest—but of course her plays were staged by her own theatrical company in an environment specially created by herself and her friends, which was hardly a major public theater in the same sense as the Comédie Française, Gymnase, and Odéon for which Sand wrote.

George Sand, then, had a theatrical career without parallel either among playwriting novelists or among playwriting women. In this respect, as in so many others, her activities stand apart: there is no one to compare with her.

Amandine-Aurore-Lucie Dupin was born in Paris on 1 July 1804. On her father's side she was descended from royalty, on her mother's side from peasantry—as she loved to point out. Her father died when she was four years old, and the dominant figure in her upbringing became her paternal grandmother, who eventually bequeathed to her the family estate of Nohant, in Berry. Between 1817 and 1820 she was educated at a Parisian convent, where, she tells us,[1] she wrote and acted in plays based on her recollections of the Molière comedies she had read. At the age of eighteen she married Casimir Dudevant, the superficially appealing son of a recently created baron; her two children, Maurice (who was to exert a major influence on his mother's theatrical career) and Solange, were born in 1823 and 1828 respectively. But Casimir proved to be a heavy-drinking womanizer with no interest in any pursuit more profound than hunting, and in 1831 she left for Paris, planning to earn her living as a writer. Initially her

energies went into drama as much as fiction: her first independent play, *Une Conspiration en 1537 (A Conspiracy in 1537),* antedated her first independent novel, *Indiana*, by almost a year. But the play was neither performed nor (till 1921) published, whereas the novel, published under the pseudonym "George Sand" in May 1832, became an immediate popular success. For the next few years, therefore, she concentrated on prose fiction, writing the series of novels that made her reputation. All the same, *Une Conspiration en 1537* did exert an immediate, and highly significant, influence on nineteenth-century French drama: Alfred de Musset borrowed most of its situations, and even substantial chunks of its dialogue, for his 1834 *Lorenzaccio,* which is now widely regarded as the finest play of the French Romantic era.

Although the novel dominated her literary activities for the next decade, Sand continued to write plays, or at least works in dramatic form. The first of these to appear in print was *Aldo le rimeur,* published in the *Revue des deux mondes* in September 1833; the first to be staged was *Cosima*, acted at the Comédie Française in April 1840 and highly praised by no less a critic than Théophile Gautier despite hisses from the audience (at least on the opening night). But the real turning point came during the second half of 1846, at Nohant, when the Sand family and friends began dabbling with amateur theatricals. This activity, at first so lightly undertaken, became more and more intense as the years went by. On the ground floor of the château a little theater was constructed, and in it dozens of plays—some of them more or less improvised, others fully scripted—were rehearsed, polished, and staged before local audiences. There was also a puppet theater run principally by Maurice. The live theater at Nohant remained active till 1863; the puppet theater was still operating less than a month before George Sand's death in 1876.

In parallel with this semi-private activity, the little theater's leading spirit began writing more actively for the Parisian stage. Some of the plays were adaptations of works already performed at Nohant, but many were specially designed for the public theaters. First came a dramatization of her 1847 novel *François le champi,* staged with immense success at the Odéon in November 1849: it ran for a hundred and forty performances. *Claudie* and *Le Mariage de Victorine* followed in 1851; both, again, were highly successful. From this time onward, George Sand was accepted not as a

playwriting novelist but as a leading dramatist in her own right, and fifteen further Parisian premières followed during the next twenty years, the last being *Un Bienfait n'est jamais perdu* in November 1872.

The theater had a relatively low status in that predominantly novel-oriented literary world. Even so, during much of the nineteenth century the Parisian stage was perhaps the most richly diverse, and therefore the most tolerant of dramatic inventiveness, in Europe. Where else, for instance, could Alfred Jarry's anarchic *Ubu Roi* (1895) have gained a hearing? There were highly literary, imaginative plays written by poets (Hugo, Vigny, Musset, Maeterlinck, Claudel), some of which, notably Hugo's *Hernani* (1830) and *Ruy Blas* (1838), were immediate stage successes, while others, such as the early plays of Musset and Claudel, were discovered to be eminently stageworthy long after they were written. There were the immaculately crafted "well-made plays" of Eugène Scribe (*Adrienne Lecouvreur,* 1849) and Victorien Sardou (*Tosca,* 1887), with their emphasis on plot and suspense. There was what S. B. John has described as "the drama of money and class," "the play about social life . . . that reflects the prosaic concerns of the age,"[2] epitomized by the work of Alexandre Dumas *fils* (though his best-known work, *La Dame aux camélias,* 1852, is hardly typical of his output) and Émile Augier (*Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier,* 1854). There were thriving traditions of melodrama (especially after Frédérick Lemaître's success in *L'Auberge des Adrets,* 1823, and *Robert Macaire,* 1834) and farce (the works of Eugène Labiche and Georges Feydeau are perhaps the most familiar examples). Music-drama also flourished, and George Sand, with her various musical connections, was an attentive observer of it; Paris was widely regarded as Europe's leading purveyor of both grand opera (Gounod's *Faust,* 1859; Berlioz's *Les Troyens,* 1863; Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine,* 1865) and operetta (Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers,* 1858, and *La Belle Hélène,* 1864; Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot,* 1872). Finally, there was a rich subsoil of amateur theatricals in private homes, which generated, for instance, the much-loved family-and-friends operettas by Viardot and Turgenev. Sand's dramatic work drew, to a greater or lesser extent, on all of these traditions; and if it had its own individual touch, a theatrical world tolerant of so many different styles could easily find room for one more.

How naturally the dramatic form came to her may be seen from the fact that, even when she wrote novels, she tended to drift

into passages of dialogue with speech prefixes, stage directions, and all the external trappings of drama: the conversation between the *fossoyeur* and the *chanvreur* near the end of *La Mare au diable* is a familiar example.[3] Indeed, some of her works, although designed to be read as novels rather than staged, are cast from beginning to end in dramatic shape, even to the point of being divided into acts rather than chapters. In a few of these cases the sense of theater is so strong that it is scarcely possible to tell whether the work was written solely for the reader (like Byron's "mental theater" and Musset's *spectacle dans un fauteuil*) or whether Sand might have had some thought of staging it. Take the 1869 *Lupo Liverani,* for instance. It is subtitled *A Play in Three Acts,* and it is adapted from the classic Spanish stage play *El condendado por desconfiado* (usually attributed to Tirso de Molina), to which it stands in approximately the relation that Sand's 1856 comedy *Comme il vous plaira* bears to Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* Yet *Comme il vous plaira* was offered on the Parisian stage, whereas *Lupo Liverani* was presented only to the reading public. The distinction between stage play and storybook, in Sand's work, is sometimes an extremely tenuous one.

It is now possible to understand, at least partly, why her theatrical career was so much more substantial than, say, Henry James's or Zola's. In the first place, she was inherently, and temperamentally, as much a dramatist as a novelist. She wrote more novels than plays simply because she lived in a culture that preferred prose fiction to drama; had the society around her been different, so would the main thrust of her literary activities. And in the second place, her experience at Nohant gave her an all-round practical grasp of the theater which no other novelist in history has had. She knew intimately what could and couldn't be done on the stage, not only in the major theaters of Paris, but also, and even more importantly, in amateur situations where severe constraints were imposed by the limited sets, costumes, and acting abilities available.

Her plays suffered, in miniature, the fate of her novels. The first generation of reviewers thought highly of them. Critics as various—and as hard to please—as Saint-Beuve, Gustave Planche, and Hippolyte Taine all praised them (Taine, indeed, compared her to the ancient Greek dramatists). Gautier, as we have seen, was a still earlier admirer. Even Jules Janin, whose political antipathy to Sand

might have been expected to disqualify him altogether from appreciating her work, recognized that she had exceptional dramatic talents. In the English-speaking world they attracted no significant attention, but that was to be expected. No theatrical management in either Britain or America would have attempted to produce a play written by anyone so scandalous; indeed, in Britain the Lord Chamberlain would certainly not have given the necessary licence for public performance.[4] (Even so, her plays were repeatedly quarried for source material—usually without acknowledgement—by the English dramatists of the day.[5])

The second generation, while still respectful, was less enthusiastic. Literary fashions were changing; in a world increasingly intent on what it called "realism," Sand's plays, like her novels, were losing their attraction. Jules Lemaître, in his 1887 review of *Le Marquis de Villemer*,[6] shows the beginnings of the change. He admires the play, but he finds it "a very beautiful lie, almost entirely a fantasy—one of the most perfect examples of its type." What bothers him is the "goodness" of nearly all the characters. "To be sure," he concedes, "there is the Baroness d'Arglade. She is the wolf in this sheepfold; but she is such a tiny wolf, so far from being dangerous, and even her little touches of malice work out so naturally to the flock's advantage. Ah, what a big-hearted group they are! What a band of fine souls!" He prefers Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* because it contains "two or three truths which may not be new, but which have rarely been expressed with such poignancy: 'All men are liars, unfaithful, unreliable, chatterers, hypocrites, stuck-up and cowardly, despicable and sensual; all women are fickle, crafty, vain, inquisitive and depraved; the whole world is nothing but a bottomless sewer where shapeless monsters crawl and wriggle on piles of slime; but in that world there is one thing sublime and sacred, and that's the union of two of these so imperfect, so horrible creatures. People are often deceived in love, often wounded, often unhappy; but they do love, and when they're on the brink of the grave, they turn and look back and say: "I've often suffered, I've sometimes made mistakes, but I've loved. I am the one who has lived—I, and not some artificial being created by my own pride and frustration." ' "[7]

To someone of Lemaître's generation, a play that depicted "all men" and "all women" as evil seemed self-evidently more truthful than one that depicted "fine souls." The name that was repeat-

edly invoked by writers of his generation, to show how Sand *ought* to have portrayed the human race, was the name of Zola; and Zola himself, though he found "an immense charm" in George Sand's plays, complained that they were "not based on exact observation."[8] No real-life peasants ever did, or ever could, talk and think like the peasants in *François le champi*. Zola did not dismiss the plays entirely; while he found the stage version of *Mauprat* "altogether mediocre," he had high praise for the dramatized *Le Marquis de Villemer* and one or two other works; but he was already on the path that would lead to the dismissal of Sand's artistry by the next generation.

The twentieth century, with its predilection for waste lands and endgames, was of course generally out of sympathy with George Sand's literary work in any medium. The plays were not staged, as the novels were not read, and none of the leading critics of the century showed any sign of firsthand acquaintance with them.

Recently, hand in hand with the revival of interest in her other writings, there has naturally been a revival of interest in the plays. English-language readers have already been given an excellent full-length survey, Gay Manifold's *George Sand's Theatre Career* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), and a valuable translation of the drama-for-reading *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre*.[9] To some extent this is part of a broader reawakening of interest in the pre-Ibsenite theater throughout Europe. Pinero's early comedies have more appeal to present-day audiences than his Ibsenite dramas; Boucicault's Irish plays are being revived with success; we no longer make fun of Verdi's middle-period operas. In Sand's case the new interest is all the more noteworthy, since—for reasons which we have already discussed—her plays had never established themselves on the English stage even in the nineteenth century, as they had on the French.

The future vicissitudes of those plays, of course, cannot be predicted. No theatrical reputation, not even Shakespeare's, remains static from generation to generation; and even within a single generation, no two people will have identical tastes and preferences. All we can do here, therefore, is to report how Sand's work appears to a few readers at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Perhaps the most striking feature, to our eyes, is the Scott-like (indeed Shakespeare-like) empathy with which Sand's characters—*all* her characters—are presented. Almost uniquely among

mid-nineteenth-century stage works, her plays contain no double-dyed villains. The very worst troublemakers in them, such as the gossipy Baroness in *Le Marquis de Villemer* or the excruciating Dubuissons in *Françoise*, are viewed with affection and warmth—even with relish. Moreover, the author seems no more at ease with any one social group than with any other. The Marquise de Villemer is a *grande dame* who could not even extend her friendship to you without chilling your blood; the Louise of *Le Pavé* is an illegitimate peasant girl who has been a social outcast from her earliest childhood; yet the former is depicted without the slightest hint of insecurity, and the latter without the slightest hint of patronization; George Sand looks them both straight in the eye. Here we reflect what strength she drew from her peculiar ancestry—in contrast to the majority of nineteenth-century writers, nearly all of whom came from the middle classes. Dickens, for instance, has to look up to study the Tite Barnacles, and down to study Little Emily; he seems less comfortable with them than with characters of his own social standing; he does not seem to view them from within. But George Sand knows that she has in her veins both the peasant blood of Louise, and the aristocratic blood of the Marquise; and she instinctively feels them both to be her social equals.

She draws another, similar, strength from her peculiar position as (roughly speaking) a woman leading a man's life. The entrenched sexual segregation of nineteenth-century civilization interfered with most male writers' capacity to depict female characters, and most female writers' capacity to depict male ones. Look at the heroines of Dickens, or the heroes of Charlotte Brontë. George Sand, almost uniquely, is at home on both sides of this social barrier. Her Caroline de Saint-Geneix is no Agnes Wickfield, and her Marquis de Villemer is no Mr. Rochester; the former is seen as much from within as Jane Eyre, the latter as Arthur Clennam.

Like all authors, Sand writes mainly about characters who are temperamentally similar to herself. They tend to be exceptionally generous minded, with an exceptionally broad range of interests and sympathies, because that is the kind of person she herself is. This, of course, is what caused Lemaître to deplore the predominant goodness of her characters, and the complaint is still sometimes heard: even Gay Manifold, with *Le Marquis de Villemer* particularly in view, objects to Sand's "overly idealized and virtuous heroines."[10] But the awkwardness of the phrasing here is re-

vealing. "Idealized" and "virtuous" can scarcely be treated as coordinate terms; and the addition of "overly" looks like an attempt to bolster a criticism which the critic herself senses to be in need of support. Idealized, as Gautier pointed out in his pioneering review, is precisely what Sand's heroines (and other characters) are not. The adverse reception of *Cosima* was due in part, he said, to the fact that its characters were *not* the purely good or purely bad creatures with whom audiences then (as now) felt most comfortable: "The public, which has been wrong before and is wrong now, can accept only demons and angels on the stage"; Sand's characters are drawn with "subtleties of nuance" which theater audiences are unaccustomed to see.[11] As we have observed, the heroine of *Le Marquis de Villemer* (Caroline de Saint-Geneix) seems as real as Jane Eyre—and for the same reason: most of her inner fiber comes directly from her creator's own temperament and life experience. George Sand has no need to draw generosity, tenacity of purpose, self-abnegation, and other such qualities from the realm of the ideal, because they lie so readily to hand in her own personal character (as her correspondence and other private documents show). Here again the temperamental similarity to Scott becomes relevant. Virtuous a figure like Jeanie Deans (in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*) may be, but there is nothing of the ideal about her: what heroine in fiction seems more real? The reason becomes evident when we look across at Scott's *Journal* and see his own private responses to bereavement, bankruptcy, and public humiliation. The heroine's virtues are deeply rooted in her creator's own personality.

But questions of theatrical characterization must really be considered not in isolation, but in relation to the practicalities of performance. As every actor knows, almost any role can be made to seem either realistic or unrealistic, depending on how it is played. It is astonishing to see, on the page, the bareness and mediocrity of the *film noir* scripts which Humphrey Bogart invested with such specificity and reality in performance; on the other hand, Hamlet himself was made to seem an idealized nonentity in at least one twentieth-century movie. We may readily grant that a few of Sand's theatrical roles demand very special acting skills if they are to be brought to life. The Marquis de Villemer—surely one of the most complex and ambiguous heroes to stand on the mid-nineteenth-century stage—is perhaps the most

striking example; and we might say of him what T. S. Eliot said of Harry in his own *Family Reunion:* "If he isn't haunted then he is insufferable."[12] Nineteen players in twenty would make nothing of the part; the twentieth would give it the inwardness—the hauntedness—it demands, and the character would instantly spring to life.

Looking back from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, it is not evident that the nineteenth-century "realists" whom Lemaître admired were any more realistic than the so-called idealists who had preceded them. Who nowadays would maintain that Zola's *La Terre,* with its two rapes in the same field in the same afternoon, is grounded in more "exact observation" of rural life (to use its author's own term) than Sand's *François le champi*? Both writers are stylizing the world around them for the purposes of their art; they are simply doing so in different ways. Sand chooses mainly noble-minded characters, Zola mainly mean-spirited ones; and why should either choice be judged inherently more legitimate, or likely to generate better artistic results, than the other? The truth is that drama never was and never will be a matter of "exact observation." Stylizations are to be found in the stagecraft of all ages. The audiences who first flocked to the plays of Shakespeare did not utter blank verse soliloquies when they were alone; few of George Bernard Shaw's early spectators delivered five-minute monologues in daily conversation with their friends and family. To critics of Lemaître's generation and the next half century, it may indeed have seemed that the best plays of their own day were more truthful than those of any previous era; in English, this position was most forcibly defended by William Archer.[13] But to us, looking back, it seems that Lemaître and Archer were simply preferring one set of conventions ("lies" or "fantasies," in Lemaître's own terminology) to another.

"To judge of *Shakespear* by *Aristotle's* rules," wrote Pope in a famous passage, "is like trying a man by the Laws of one Country, who acted under those of another."[14] Most of the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century critics had learned this lesson where Shakespeare was concerned, but they failed to apply it to their own immediate predecessors: they berated Sand and Ostrovsky and Verdi for failing to write like Ibsen and Chekhov and Richard Strauss.

Lemaître's contrast between the "lies" of George Sand and the "truths" of Alfred de Musset makes a neat piece of critical

writing. But the reality is more complex, as the critic unwittingly revealed when he quoted a passage of Musset to show what was missing from Sand's dramatic universe. More than half of the alleged Musset speech was actually written by Sand herself. Not, to be sure, its opening sentences. The statements that "all men are liars, unfaithful, unreliable," and so forth; that "all women are fickle, crafty, vain, inquisitive and depraved"; and that "the whole world is nothing but a bottomless sewer"—those are indeed Musset's own work, and if they express perennial "truths" (which we today may be less quick to concede than the contemporaries of Zola were), the credit lies with Musset and no one else. But all of the richer and more complex material that follows—from "people are often deceived in love" to the end of the scene—is taken verbatim from one of George Sand's letters to Musset.[15] Thus most of the contrast that Lemaître devised was not between Sand and Musset, but between Sand and herself: her writings were more multiform, and contained a greater diversity of viewpoints, than the famous critic consciously realized. He was willing enough to praise the profundity of her work, and to find truth in it—but only when it had some other writer's signature attached to it.

If we keep our eye on the content of George Sand's plays, and not on the author's name assigned to them (with all its attendant mythology), we may find that their world, though artistically stylized, is not as simplistic as Lemaître thought. Are the characters of *Le Marquis de Villemer* really models of unmitigated goodness? The Marquis himself is a liar, an adulterer, and, on his own testimony, a killer—in the sense of someone who has been specifically responsible for the death of someone else. (To say this is not to reread his character in an unhistorically modern light; the so-called idealists of Sand's century, or even earlier, were capable of summing up their noble-minded heroes with equal bluntness. Compare Gluck's celebrated evaluation of his *Iphigénie en Tauride* Oreste: "He's lying; he has killed his mother."[16]) The Marquise is a snob whose prejudices wreak most of the havoc that occurs during the play. The Duke is in every respect a broken reed; Diane is a well-meaning fool. It is true that George Sand lavishes on them the empathic generosity that she extends toward every character in her plays, and therefore judgments phrased in so unmitigatedly negative a way seem too harsh; but the same criticisms are made unevasively, though lightly, in the fabric of the

play itself.[17] Only Caroline is free from major faults; yet if she has done little to deserve her sufferings, they are nevertheless (like, say, Cordelia's) largely of her own making. (Had Diane, with all her follies, been placed in the same situation, she would have cut instantly the Gordian knots that hold Caroline helpless for three and a half acts.) To us, then, looking at these dramas from a distance of well over a century, Gautier's account of them seems more accurate than Lemaître's. The characters of *Le Marquis de Villemer* are, as he said, neither "angels" nor "demons" (though the "subtleties of nuance" in their presentation can easily be missed, and therefore it is hardly surprising that Lemaître oversimplified them); and the most nearly faultless of them is dramatized at least as convincingly as the faultiest.

The mid-nineteenth century sorted most of its plays into three categories, which it labeled "tragedies," "comedies," and "dramas" (or "domestic dramas").[18] Recent theatrical experience would suggest that of these, the comedies generally have the greatest appeal to present-day audiences. Boucicault's *London Assurance* and Pinero's *Trelawney of the "Wells"* continue to charm and delight playgoers whenever given the chance to do so; the same authors' *The Octoroon* and *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* are now rarely resuscitated (despite their popularity in their own day) and tend to be seen mainly as museum pieces. Justly or unjustly, Feydeau is revived more often than Becque, and Offenbach than Meyerbeer. Therefore, all the plays chosen for inclusion in the present volume are *comédies,* at least in the broad sense of the term. It must be stressed, however, that some of George Sand's *drames* (such as the 1851 *Claudie*) are impressive examples of their particular genre and deserve more attention than they have yet received.

It must be stressed, too, that Sand's plays cannot be contained within the standard nineteenth-century stereotypes in genre, any more than they can in characterization. Her *comédies* contain what the nineteenth-century theorists would have called "dramatic" situations (the celebrated third-act curtain of *Le Marquis de Villemer,* for instance), her *drames* contain "comic" ones. Looking further afield, her plays grade off insensibly in one direction into unscripted improvisations, and in another direction, as we have seen, into novels. Being less exclusively bound to the theater than the other major playwrights of her day, she was able to see it in a broader perspective, and to be less exclusively constrained by its conventions.

Le Marquis de Villemer (1864) was adapted from the 1860 novel of the same name. The novel is itself an impressive work—generally considered the finest of Sand's final period—but its author was far too experienced a hand to attempt to reproduce it unaltered on stage: the plot is drastically reworked with an eye to theatrical effectiveness, and the last two acts, in particular, are almost totally new. Alexandre Dumas *fils* is said to have added a few small touches to it, but these can no longer be identified—the manuscript is entirely in Sand's handwriting,[19] and the two authors so strongly admired, and were influenced by, each other's work that verbal or stylistic similarities are no proof of authorship. (There are many Dumas-like lines in the novel, to which he certainly did not contribute.) As with the majority of effective stage works by experienced playwrights (think of *Othello* or *King Lear*), the published script has a few inconsequential loose ends and inconsistencies—it is written for the theater, not the printed page. In the theater its power was immediately apparent. Sand's comments after the opening night are worthy of one of her own heroines: "Every scene was received with constant shouts and stampings of feet, even though the whole imperial family was present. In fact the emperor applauded just like everyone else. . . . Now, at night, quiet has been restored, the traffic has resumed, and I'm going to bed."[20]

Yet, as every writer on the subject remarks, there are other plays by the same author that might easily have had a similar reception. In Gay Manifold's words, "The characters [in *Le Marquis de Villemer*] are well drawn, the story line charming, the romantic intrigue engaging; but then these qualities apply equally to many others of Sand's pieces."[21] Among these, the one with the primary claim to the English-speaking world's attention would probably be *Françoise* (1856). This deft and original comedy has always been particularly admired by Sand's critics; indeed, her biographer Wladimir Karénine thought it the most interesting of all her plays.[22] Those who believe that Sand idealizes all her major characters should certainly contemplate Henri, the nonhero of *Françoise;* as Gautier observed, this is a central role without precedent in French (or perhaps any) dramatic literature. An even more striking disruption of theatrical convention occurs in the last act, when the worm turns and the downtrodden heroine finally stands up for herself—a situation reworked, in a very different context but just as effectively, at the end of *Le Marquis de Villemer.*

We have also included three one-act plays that illustrate Sand's ability to write for limited theatrical resources. Naturally these works are less substantial than the four-act plays—as the author herself was well aware: she described *Le Lis du Japon,* for instance, as a "little curtain-raiser," "a trifle" (*une bluette*)[23]—yet they are no less characteristic of their creator.

Le Pavé (The Paving Stone), a "story in dialogue," was published in the *Revue des deux mondes* on 15 August 1861 and staged at Nohant three weeks later. Sand herself stressed that the play was designed for a rural home and "would be less suitable for Parisian drawing rooms, which insist on wit—as well as the somewhat factitious artifices and superficial relationships that exist in polite society—rather than naïvety, and which rarely plumb emotions to any significant extent. In the country, sooner or later everyone becomes more serious and more simple. That isn't such a bad thing, as the good folk themselves say."[24] However, much to its author's surprise, two Parisian theaters promptly expressed an interest in the play, and it was staged professionally at the Gymnase in 1862. For commercial rather than artistic reasons, changes were made for the Paris production, glamorizing and melodramatizing the little piece (the male neighbor, for instance, became a female one); these are generally felt to weaken it, and our translation therefore follows the pre-Parisian recension published in the 1865 *Théâtre de Nohant.*

The other two one-act plays were designed specifically for Paris, and contrast strikingly in tone and style with *Le Pavé. Le Lis du Japon (The Japanese Lily),* like *Le Marquis de Villemer,* is taken from one of George Sand's novels, *Antonia,* published in 1861. Again the adaptation is beautifully crafted and entirely self-sufficient: from beginning to end, not a syllable would suggest that the work had been written for any other medium.

Un Bienfait n'est jamais perdu (A Good Deed Is Never Wasted), the last of Sand's Parisian plays, has a special interest. It is her main work in a genre which Musset had made very much his own: the *proverbe,* the brief comedy designed to illustrate some proverbial saying (usually embodied in the work's title).[25] For a present-day amateur or university dramatic company with limited resources, it might make an excellent companion piece for some of Musset's works in the same genre—or, perhaps, for the other Sand one-act plays in the present volume.

Except for the correction of obvious errors, our translations follow the published texts issued with Sand's approval, which sometimes differ significantly from the manuscript drafts. Where plays were issued in her collected editions, we have used those: for *Françoise* and *Le Marquis de Villemer*, George Sand, *Théâtre complet: quatrième série* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1866), and for *Le Pavé*, as already explained, George Sand, *Théâtre de Nohant* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1865). For the other two plays, which came too late to be included in the collected editions, we have used the first editions: George Sand, *Le Lis du Japon* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1866), and George Sand, *Francia, Un Bienfait n'est jamais perdu* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1872).[26]

Sand, like most French dramatists, employed the so-called Continental method of scene-division: a new scene begins whenever a character enters or exits, and its opening stage direction lists all the characters currently on stage (including those who have remained on stage since the previous scene). Anglophone readers and performers will probably be most familiar with this custom from the plays of Ben Jonson.

In the lists of characters, we have occasionally added some information to clarify relationships; all such additions have been enclosed in square brackets to distinguish them from the author's own work. Elsewhere in the plays, square brackets have been used in the normal way to mark stage directions—all of which are Sand's own work.