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## ASPECTS OF GEORGE SAND'S SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN THE RECEPTION OF POLISH POSITIVIST AUTHORS

**The importance attached by George Sand** to education in view of social development was rooted in her sociopolitical beliefs, whose background is the troubled time of the French Revolution. This momentous event triggered powerful repercussions in the history of political thought, impacting the subsequent generations—not only in France but also in the countries affected by the wars of the Revolution, the Consulate, and the Empire. No surprise, then, that “writers, lawyers, columnists and philosophers had, of necessity, to consider the Revolution”<sup>1</sup>; they could not avoid considering the methods of educating the society so as to put its ideals into practice”. At the background of the debates on the education system, which was to “reflect and address the different tiers of social hierarchy”<sup>2</sup>—taking care of a “religious education of children”<sup>3</sup> whilst in parallel ensure common education in obligatory free-of-charge secular public schools, a political and ideological debate went on. These solutions gave the rhythm on, and clarified the contexts of, the formation of educational represented in George Sand’s works.

This particular aspect is emphasised in a number of elaborations and studies on these works, the following excelling among them: Pierre Vermeylen’s *Les Idées politiques et sociales de George Sand*<sup>4</sup>; Lucien Buis’s *Les théories sociales de George Sand*<sup>5</sup>; Jean Briquet’s *Agricol Perdiguiet. Corre-*

<sup>1</sup> J. Touchard, *Histoire des idées politiques*, Paris 1959, p. 477.

<sup>2</sup> A. Léon, P. Roche, *Histoire de l’enseignement en France*, Paris 2003, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> J.M. Gilig, *Histoire de l’école laïque en France*, Paris 2014, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> P. Vermeylen, *Les Idées politiques et sociales de George Sand*, Bruxelles 1984.

<sup>5</sup> L. Buis, *Les théories sociales de George Sand*, with an introduction by R. Doumic, Paris 1910, p. 210.

*spondance inédite avec George Sand et ses amis, lettres choisies et commentées avec une introduction de Jean Briquet*<sup>6</sup>; Amélie Calderone's *George Sand et le théâtre d'éducation*<sup>7</sup>, *L'Éducation des filles au temps de George Sand*<sup>8</sup>—thereof, especially Isabelle Hoog Naginski's essay *George Sand. L'éducation d'une enfant du siècle*; and more. Of interest is also the 2014 study by Alain Vergnioux entitled *George Sand et l'éducation populaire, Leroux, Nadaud, Perdigier* (referred to hereinafter). Education issues and their social importance were addressed, among others, in Sand's novels *Valentine* (1832), *Lélia* (1833), *Mauprat* (1837), *Les Sept Cordes de la lyre* (1839), *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1841), *Lettres à Marcie* (1843), and in her autobiography *Histoire de ma vie* (1855).

Whereas Sand's sociopolitical involvement is basically well known, and has been discussed by a number of scholars (the above list being, of necessity, incomplete), her education-related thought has not been much of a focus among scholars. She devoted much attention to education issues, emphasising the importance of education of girls and boys, women and men forming a democratic and social society. She passionately expressed her opinions on education and teaching, identifying herself with a schoolmaster: "Le maître d'école, c'est moi".<sup>9</sup> Below follow our remarks on aspects of the education thought present in Sand's novels. This concise discussion on the educational aspect of this author's interest aims at explaining her thinking in this respect in a way so as to demonstrate its coincidence with, and similarity to Positivist educational ideas—despite a stereotypical reception of this French writer among Polish readers as a scandaliser, in the first place. Facts prove, at least indirectly, that Sand was one of the Positivist sources, however unappreciated or unrecognised. This remark is all the more legitimate that Sand's works were well known to Polish audiences of the time, even if not directly discussed. The issues in questions are discussed in recent Polish studies on G. Sand.<sup>10</sup> Let us try and trace this me-

<sup>6</sup> J. Briquet, *Agricol Perdigier. Correspondance inédite avec George Sand et ses amis, lettres choisies et commentées avec une introduction de Jean Briquet*, Paris 1966.

<sup>7</sup> A. Calderone, *George Sand et le Théâtre d'éducation: les voies d'une appropriation de «ces choses qu'on déprécie tout haut»*, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01545342/document>.

<sup>8</sup> J. Goldin, 'De Félicité de Genlis à George Sand', in M. Hecquert (ed.), *L'éducation des filles au temps de George Sand*, Arras 1998, pp. 163–77.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted after I. Hoog Naginski, 'George Sand. L'éducation d'une enfant du siècle', in Hecquert (ed.), *L'éducation des filles*, p. 189.

<sup>10</sup> K. Nadana-Sokołowska, *George Sand – polskie spojrzenia*, Warszawa 2022; C. Fournier Kiss, *Germaine de Staël et George Sand en dialogue avec leurs consœurs*

diation based on an insight into the output of Polish Positivists, especially those who address questions of importance for Sand, such as education of children or young women. The issue of lack of appropriate education, which is otherwise key as regards the development of one's ability to live on her own, is shown most completely in Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel *Marta*. Contrary (once again) to the stereotype that contrasts the model of Polish 'lionesses', related to the 'appropriate' emancipation of women—as apparently resulting from Sand's 'influence' and postulated by Orzeszkowa herself, among others—the said novel appears to be convergent with Sand's educational thought.

Tracing the evolution of educational thought in France, it is worth noticing that the nineteenth century was for education and the educational system a period of development of ideological influences that have informed its modern character. The school policy pursued in the Restoration period (1814–30) extensively preserved the organisation of the system that prevailed under the Napoleonic Empire. During the fifteen-year-long reign of Louis XVIII and Charles X, disputes on education and teaching mainly revolved around the position of religious instruction. From the standpoint of social needs, taking into account the fast progress of capitalism, the so-called mutual teaching (*enseignement mutuel*)—supported by industrial owners who realised how significant common education was for the economy and the society—was of quite an importance.

The optimistic attitude associated, in Philip's view, with the socialist ideas was apparently characteristic of acceptance for the transformation and self-determination in line with the changes for which one strove: "Not only did the socialists accept the change brought about by the Revolution, since it turned down the entire society, but they expected a new transformation which would lead to a better social organisation".<sup>11</sup> Confining these ideals in the framework of the political thought of Sand's time, Loïc Philip specifies three currents within it—namely, traditionalism, liberalism, and socialism, along with three different visions of solving social problems, described as "pessimistic, pragmatic, and optimistic".<sup>12</sup>

The life and works of George Sand, together with her political and social beliefs, are identifiable with the latter of these currents. It is in the

*polonaises*, Clermont-Ferrand 2020 (Polish version: *eadem*, *Literatura, pleć i naród w XIX wieku. Germaine de Staël i George Sand w dialogu ze swymi polskimi siostrami*, trans. B. Głowacka, Warszawa 2022).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> L. Philip, 'Histoire de la pensée politique en France: de 1789 à nos jours', *Economica*, 1 Jan. 1998 (Aix-Marseille Université [2<sup>nd</sup> electronic ed.]).

perspective of her involvement in familial and social life as well as in political affairs that we will review Sand's views on education and their possible (due to the lack of direct references) reception among Polish Positivists.

### **Sand's views on education: intellectual emancipation**

It certainly cannot be denied that, apart from moral issues, Sand was vividly interested in social affairs, political changes, and power wielding methods practiced by the consecutive French authorities. Of high importance for her were the reflections on the ways in which the society was being prepared for constructing fair political systems and living in a balance to be ensured by the developmental dynamism of economy, politics and education. With her convictions regarding education, the position of women in the social system, socialism as a social arrangement (even if it deserved the term 'utopian'), endeavoured—also by means of her activity as a novelist—to provide the answers, with her social-oriented views coming to the fore. The so-called utopian socialism which was formed in the nineteenth century and turned into a political doctrine in the subsequent century, was founded upon generosity and altruism that was expected to lead to sacrifices for an uncertain, if not entirely utopian, future.

There is a number of reasons for associating George Sand's name with some of the popular educational projects emerging and unfolding in the former half of the nineteenth century. As a social activist, she co-worked and made herself acquainted with the work of the most emblematic exponents of the humanitarian democracy (*démocratie humanitaire*) spirit—including Agricole Perdiguier, Martin Nadaud and, in particular, Pierre Leroux, whom she first met on the occasion of the 1835 demonstrations in Paris and Lyon. Leroux perceived the French Revolution as an event that had created a new society, seeing the slogan 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité' as the leading motto of his own activity. "He stressed the need for promoting equality over liberty and attached great attention to the press, which was meant to promote it. Thus, Leroux made an essential contribution to the political and social formation of Sand as an involved writer".<sup>13</sup> It was him who introduced her in 1840 to Perdiguier, whose works she used in writing her *Le Compagnon de Tour de France (The Journeyman Joiner; or the Companion of the Tour of France)*, a novel which addressed, among other things,

<sup>13</sup> B. Hamon, 'George Sand, une révolutionnaire obstinée', in Michel Winock (ed.), *Les figures de proue de la gauche depuis 1789*, Paris: Perrin, 2019, pp. 163–77; <https://www.cairn.info/les-figures-de-proue-de-la-gauche-depuis-1789---page-163.htm> [accessed: 2022–09–10].

the role of education in social life and emphasised “the importance of access to culture and the role of worker poets”.<sup>14</sup> In her *Notice* to the novel, Sand mentions the “moral significance of the subject-matter”, remarking that she wrote it “in a sincere spirit of progress”.<sup>15</sup> She thereby desired to show the potential of workers, which might develop owing to the effort of their intellect—that of those “wretched workmen like ourselves, without money, almost without bread, without education (it is thus he [i.e. Christ] has been represented to us)”.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, *Le Compagnon* emphasises the need to educate children whilst taking note of women’s poor economic ability to satisfy such needs of their children by themselves. Quoting an excerpt from a conversation of the moribund innkeeper Savinien with his wife:

[...] you are not very strong, and what a woman can earn is so small a thing, that you would not have enough to give an education to our little ones. Still you know that my whole idea was to have them well taught to read, to write, and to keep accounts; without these, one is not good for anything, and I can see you from here, all three, sink into poverty.<sup>17</sup>

In her analysis of the novel, Rebecca Powers points to Sand’s interest in the theories of Jean Joseph Jacotot, a self-taught author who convincingly argued for intellectual emancipation of individuals and societies through universal teaching—the purpose of the such education being intellectual emancipation rather knowledge as such. As Powers remarks, the method proposed by Jacotot was based on three fundamental principles: strong will to learn, self-sufficiency of printed books, and belief in a radical equality.<sup>18</sup> Albeit this theory is not directly evoked in Sand’s novel, its influence seems clearly identifiable in the way the protagonist, a carpenter by profession, acquires philosophical and political knowledge, dedicating himself to reading books, his fundamental incentive being affection for a woman of aristocratic background. As I. Hoog Naginski observes, Pierre could read but it

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup> G. Sand, ‘Notice’, in *eadem*, *Le Compagnon de tour de France*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1885, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> G. Sand, *Le Compagnon*, p. 131; quoted after the English version: *eadem*, *The Journeyman Joiner; or the Companion of the Tour of France*, trans. Francis Geo. Shaw [1<sup>st</sup> publ. 1847], New York 1976, p. 110. The reference to Christ is as one who was represented as wandering upon the earth and talking to such wretched workmen”, himself “poor, obscure”.

<sup>17</sup> G. Sand, *The Journeyman Joiner*, p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> R. Powers, ‘From explication to emancipation: the radical pedagogy of George Sand’s *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 41 (2019), pp. 173–84.

was Yseult who introduced him into her beloved authors: “c’est au cours de séances nocturnes dans la tourelle qu’il accèdera à la lecture de Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Platon, des Encyclopédistes, entrant par ce biais dans le monde de la spéculation méditative”.<sup>19</sup>

Sand treated her own works in a way basically similar to the approach prevalent among Polish Positivist authors—namely, as a social activist’s obligation and a means to promote education, emphasising the latter’s importance to the development of every individual and whole communities. Sand approached education in an optimistic spirit, believing that it is never too late to get educated and be taught, or to complement one’s education and learning; the novel *Mauprat* from 1838 is a case in point. All the more so that education was decisive in the quality of management of one’s entrusted manor or estate and the of the lives of those working thereat. Bernard, the protagonist in *Mauprat*, saved from a deviant branch of an aristocratic family, receives a chance to regain his dignity of noble-born family member provided that he start studying: “At the same time [...] the whole estate, lands and produce, should be secured to me by his will on one condition, namely, that I would consent to receive an education suitable to my position.”<sup>20</sup>

According to Jacotet’s recommendations, Sand’s characters display reading skills and the skill of mastering their knowledge of the world through reading books. The major thing was education, as it paved all the other doors open. The educational propositions promoted by George Sand were partly based on criticising the traditional education, where the students’ memory was filled with loads of knowledge they could never deeply comprehend and which completely ignored moral education. This caused that both young men and women were not prepared to face the actual problems of life. In her compilation of a peculiar syllabus, Sand took advantage of her own experience, analysing teaching methods she had encountered as a student—if there were any at all. The reflections in this respect, expressed in her autobiographic volume *Histoire de ma vie*, were collected in Alphonse Ponroy’s *Extraits éducatifs*, published in 1902. According to the educational concept advocated by Sand, of essence is the formation of students’ personalities in a way that enabled them to develop strong will and resoluteness,

<sup>19</sup> I. Hoog Naginski, ‘George Sand: l’éducation d’une enfant du siècle’, in Hecquert (ed.), *L’éducation des filles*, p. 191.

<sup>20</sup> G. Sand, *Mauprat*, Paris 1869, p. 106; quoted after the English version: eadem, *Mauprat*, trans. S. Young, released 26 March 2006 (most recently updated 27 Jan. 2021), eBook #2194, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2194/pg2194-images.html>; Chap. IX.

and of such traits of character that enable one to liberate himself or herself from alienations, restrictions and obstacles weighing heavily on them.

### Education in the lives of children

In her views on the proper method of educating the society, beginning from the childhood, Sand opted for Jean Jacques Rousseau's views as she claimed that children ought to be treated according to their nature; on the other hand, however, her pragmatic approach made her emphasise the importance of reading skills, as an ability indispensable for unbiased perception of reality. The student's ability to concentrate on his/her work and his/her willingness to work was highly appreciated.

Another object of Sand's appreciation was the role of teacher of children who cares about their education and development of their in-depth interests in the spirit of observance of equal rights and respect of their positions (*les soins de l'inéterior de la famille*). The time devoted to family and education of one's children is one of preparing the children to working to the benefit of the state. Moreover, "En y reféchissant, on trouverait beaucoup d'autres fonctions auxquelles les femmes sont appelées par la nature et la Providence".<sup>21</sup> Sand's observations in respect of her own children focused on respect to the sphere of child's freedom, taking into account his or her interests, rhythm of working and ability to work, putting incentives and positive motivation at work. The French novelist saw a balanced development of child and student who undertook education as the best road to harmony and social peace. As she wrote in *Impressions et souvenirs*,

The first point at which one should pay attention as far as social balance is concerned, is a free and secular schooling system [...]. Social balance will consist in everyone's right to develop his or her personal value, whatever it might be, under the condition that a value, and not inertia, is hereby addressed. Ignorance is not the only obstacle: there is poverty, that is, lack of work or excessive work, whereas a society that can find no means to balance the expenditure of forces and to legitimately gain sound pleasures will be a lost society.<sup>22</sup>

The said balance should be restored by physical exercise, which Sand adhered to or even idolised, recommending it to her Solange, as she saw a source of strength in this exercise. Clearly, this writer did not share the belief that female nature is fragile and weak. In a letter of 26 May 1846 to

<sup>21</sup> G. Sand, *Aux membres du Comité Central*, 1848; <https://www.bmlisieux.com/curiosa/comite.htm> [accessed: 2022-09-10].

<sup>22</sup> George Sand, *Impressions et souvenirs*, p. 254; <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5724436g/f250.texteImage> [accessed 2022-09-10].

Charles Veyret, she says of her daughter, “She blushes of a countryside child, and rides a horse thrice every day [...] she began to develop her muscles”.<sup>23</sup> Educating children, in a holistic dimension, did not appear to her as a simple task: it was a combination of the teacher’s talent and the student’s potential. As the experience with domestic teaching of her own children showed, such education might produce diverse effects, including negative. What it also meant was that she perceived the educational process as seeking the way to develop the child’s potential—*recherche du possible* (searching for the possible)<sup>24</sup> in a student and in an adult member of a community. The prerequisite of a successful outcome of any education venture was, however, the will to agree and mutual respect.

Every man needs to be loved before he can be worth anything; but each in a different way; one with never-failing indulgence, another with unflinching severity. Meanwhile, until some one solves the problem of making education common to all, and yet appropriate to each, try to improve one another.<sup>25</sup>

### Education in the lives of women

Sand appreciated the importance of women’s education, in view of their reinforced position and role in a democratic society. In order to be genuinely free, woman had to be appropriately prepared and educated, her awareness formed in respect of ability to make decisions, such as whether to pursue a professional activity. Hence, the need for an comparable education for girls and boys. However, the education of girls, who—as was customary at the time—were sent to a boarding school, could be reproached in many a respect.

As Georges Lubin reminds in his article on Sand’s vision of women’s education, the writer notices in her partly autobiographical novel *Confession de la jeune fille* (1865) that education of girls ought not to be run only by women.<sup>26</sup> Her opinion pointing to a lack of educational policy targeted at girls, which she noticed in her contemporary schooling system and in the social life overall, was expressed already in her first novels: their author deplored the fact that there was no real intellectual stimulation in girls’ education, which tended to be “overly superficial”<sup>27</sup>, favouring the girls’ “dec-

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in G. Houbre, ‘L’âge des Amazones’, in Hecquert (ed.), *L’éducation des filles*, p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> A. Szabó, ‘Educatrices chez Sand’, in Hecquert (ed.), *L’éducation des filles*, p. 181.

<sup>25</sup> G. Sand, *Mauprat*, quoted after the English version (see fn. 20 above); Chap. XXX.

<sup>26</sup> G. Lubin, ‘George Sand et l’éducation’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 4/4 (1976), pp. 450–68, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44627395> [accessed: 2022-09-10].

<sup>27</sup> J. Goldin ‘De Félicité de Genlis à George Sand’, in Hecquert (ed.), *L’éducation des filles*, p. 170.

orative talents”.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the young female students remained helpless in the face of the society’s requirements. Sand evaluates the educational background of her female characters in resolutely negative terms, describing Indiana as an ignoramus (“ignorante comme une vraie créole”) and Valentine’s education at an English nunnery as inadequate to the actual needs (in the protagonist’s own words):

Meagre is the education we receive; we are given elements of everything, never being allowed in-depth insight into anything. They want us to be educated, but the day we have become so, we will be ridiculous. We are always instructed to be rich, and never to be poor. [...] Amongst twenty girls, there is oftentimes not one person who would have fully possessed any knowledge whatsoever. I only know one condition they are suitable for, and that is—serving as chamber-maids.<sup>29</sup>

When defining the state-of-play in women’s art of writing, Sand observed that societies had missed the role of women’s emancipation in the area of education.<sup>30</sup> Women ought to strive for open access to knowledge, schools for both sexes, on an equality basis. No spectacular achievements among women in the field of intellectual values appeared as “the best evidence of the imbalance between men’s and women’s education; between an enormous progress of the former against the unsatisfactory progress made by the latter”.<sup>31</sup> “In proportion thereto, we observe that female intelligence has been developing, in its eternal helotry, identically to men’s intelligence, in its permanent prevalence”.<sup>32</sup> Keeping up woman’s mind in a state of ignorance proved disastrous to women themselves, as they were deprived of the light of knowledge and banned from professions deemed ‘male’ throughout the nineteenth century—such as physician, scientist, or bookkeeper. What is more, ignorance meant captive minds, a condition that affected children’s education within families, encouraged reproduction of stereotypes concerning girls’ education and their role in society.

Sand emphasised her beliefs on women’s education beginning with her first novel, which highlighted the potential of the female mind and noted

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> G. Sand, *Valentine*, chap. VI, p. 389, in *eadem*, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 2010 [Kindle edition].

<sup>30</sup> *Revue de Paris*, 17 April 1836; comprised in *Question d’art et de littérature*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1877, pp. 53–60, as quoted in G. Lubin, ‘George Sand’, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> G. Sand, *Souvenirs de Madame Merlin*, in *eadem*, *Questions d’art et de littérature* (Paris: des femmes-Antoinette Fouque, 1877), 55, file:///C:/Users/US/Downloads/Questions\_d’art\_et\_de\_litt%C3%A9rature\_[...] Sand\_George\_bpt6k54361608.pdf [accessed: 2022-09-10].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

that the protagonist, Indiana, was ignorant not out of her own negligence or distaste for mental or intellectual work. On the contrary, we find her “eager to learn what the engrossing preoccupations of her life had prevented her from finding out”.<sup>33</sup> In their strife for improvement of their quality of life, women had great allies in the attributes of spirit such as placidity or leniency, wisdom and persuasion skills, as manifestations of a “genuine moral dignity”.<sup>34</sup>

### Education in social life

There was a political dimension to Sand’s educational project: an equality-based society is one that attains an equitable distribution of wealth among the different social classes. Equality moreover extended to freedom of thinking, expression of opinions and participation in political decisions: it should be understood as access to universal election and establishment of a democratic state.<sup>35</sup> Whereas Sand’s personal involvement in the activities of the feminist movement was limited, in the longer run, she would not exclude women’s active participation in political life—an option that called, in her opinion, for a radical social transformation. As she states in a letter to the ‘Central Committee’ of the Left, a body that was responsible for appointing Constitutional Assembly candidates:

Les femmes doivent-elles participer à la vie politique? Oui, un jour, je le crois avec vous, mais ce jour est-il proche ? Non, je ne le crois pas et pour que la condition des femmes soit ainsi transformée, il faut que la société soit transformée radicalement [...].<sup>36</sup>

Equal rights and genuine, knowledge-based, freedom can only be ensured based on an appropriate organisation of schooling, free of charge and ensuring the construction of a society in the spirit of socialist reforms, an idea to which Sand adhered. In such a perspective, education was not only a matter of relevance to women but to men as well, for it extended to the proletariat community in its entirety. Education paved for this community

<sup>33</sup> G. Sand, *Indiana*, p. 343, in *eadem*, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 2010 [Kindle edition]; quoted after the English version: *eadem*, *Indiana*, trans. G. Burnham Yves, (ser. *The Masterpieces of George Sand*), released 12 Oct. 2020, eBook #63445, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/63445/63445-h/63445-h.htm>; ‘Conclusion. To J. Neraud.’

<sup>34</sup> G. Sand, *Souvenirs de Madame Merlin*, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> A. Vergnioux, *G. Sand et l’éducation populaire*, Leroux, Nadaud, *Perdiguier*, Limoges 2014, p. 107.

<sup>36</sup> As quoted in M.R. Renard, ‘Féminisme et religion dans l’oeuvre de George Sand’, *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses* Yr 84, no. 2, Apr.–June 2004. pp. 163–78; [https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhpr\\_0035-2403\\_2004\\_num\\_84\\_2\\_1072](https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhpr_0035-2403_2004_num_84_2_1072).

the way to take up, in a truly democratic spirit, professions, worker functions and positions previously reserved for the upper classes: “Le premier point par où il faudra aborder la question d'équilibre social, c'est l'instruction laïque et gratuite, c'est-à-dire libérale [...] l'ignorance n'est pas le seul obstacle, il y a aussi la misère”.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, education and elimination of ignorance had a liberatory and emancipatory meaning for the human being himself or herself; as opposed to the bloodstained revolutions it was to bring about peace and social balance. After the 1848 revolution, George Sand developed a pacifistic stance, retaining her belief in social progress implementable through education and grassroots work in a Positivist spirit, with avoidance of wars and violence destructive to the nation. The latter idea was propagated also by Polish Positivist authors. Along these lines, education was the instrument that conditioned the appropriate understanding of the notion of freedom of females and males, namely in terms of the right to determine oneself, master one's skills, and preserve one's singularity based on appreciation rather than depreciation. Referring to Sand's vision of education, G. Lubin cites the once-famous Amherst College reply to the question, “What is education?”; it is, namely, “what we chose to make for the survival of all”.<sup>38</sup>

It has to be admitted that the idea of teaching and educating common people as the indispensable leverage of their sociopolitical emancipation was systematically developed in France until the Second Empire. The design of universal primary-level education no more met with opposition, even in the conservative circles. In reality, the overall increase in the society's living standard, economic development, the urgent need for France to re-establish its position among the nations after the 1871 disaster and to become a ‘modern’ country all caused that educating common people—all the more so that it was a powerful leverage of control over the individuals' consciences, under the Church's aegis. The republican state sought consensus in that it would unite the nation around moral (honesty and fairness, loyalty, and so on), scientific (against beliefs and superstitions), and patriotic values (regaining Alsace and Lorraine, which were both lost in 1871). The point was to support solidarity between generations and social strata, as was illustrated by Léon Bourgeois's solidaristic arguments:

The teaching of ultimately acquired truths, whether in the scientific or moral order, must be given to all individuals without distinction [...]. It is not only during childhood that one learns; one is educated and grows throughout his or her life,

<sup>37</sup> G. Sand, *Souvenirs de Madame Merlin*, pp. 253–4.

<sup>38</sup> G. Lubin, ‘George Sand’.

and it is necessary that at any age the individual should have sufficient leisure to be able to easily complete this education of oneself without which one cannot achieve the full development of one's faculties.<sup>39</sup>

### **Polish Positivists following in the footsteps of G. Sand's thought?**

In the Polish territory, though deprived of a state, the intensive development of exact sciences contributed to the spread of Positivists and anticlerical views, much like in France. The bourgeoisie was growing stronger, but under Central European conditions it was not yet strong enough to trigger a revolution.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the collapse of faith in the possibility of winning the revolution in Western Europe meant that the cult of science began to dominate and was conceived as a means by which the world could be conquered. In the face of the collapse of noble national-liberation slogans in social life, as well as in science and literature, realism and Positivism took hold in Europe, which, in accordance with Auguste Comte's idea, was based solely on facts, rejecting metaphysical and transcendental assumptions. After the year 1848, the romantic approach to the people and the desire to understand 'the spirit of the people' could no longer be sustained, because the people supported the bourgeoisie in the struggle for change; therefore "it was necessary to extend a scientific view of the nation also to the masses of the people and at the same time to pay more attention to the social processes taking place around it".<sup>41</sup> Polish positivists created a program for the overall economic and cultural development of society—with the slogans of organic work, grassroots work, scientism, utilitarianism, practic(al)ism, religious and gender equality, as well as education for the people—replacing the patriotism of military action with the patriotism of peaceful work for the Homeland.

As Janina Kulczycka-Saloni points out, this did not mean the renunciation of independence aspirations, but only a postponement of the liberation issue because of the enormous toll of loss suffered by the Poles as a result of the January Uprising of 1863–1864.<sup>42</sup>

Not only writers of the post-insurgency period but also pedagogues and educators engaged in an extensive discourse on the subject of social education. They expressed their views on education of children, the importance of women's education, or the need to improve the educational condition of

<sup>39</sup> A. Vergnioux, *G. Sand*, p. 113.

<sup>40</sup> M. Żywczyński, *Historia powszechna 1789–1870*, Warszawa 1979, p. 360.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 458.

<sup>42</sup> J. Kulczycka-Saloni, 'Wstęp' [an introduction], in *eadem* (ed.), *Programy i dyskusje literackie okresu pozytywizmu*, Wrocław 1985.

the entire society, in compliance with their contemporary European debate, in the periodicals *Opiekun Domowy* (1865–1878) and *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* (1882–1905). The former's programme expressed the ideas of the worldview and social trends of the so-called youth press, which propagated the cult of science, education, physical and intellectual work for the common good. The magazine was intended to help parents raise their children at home. In addition to educational treatises, the weekly published many literary works; its contributors included, among others: Michał Bałucki, Piotr Chmielowski, Eliza Orzeszkowa, and Bolesław Prus.<sup>43</sup>

In the Polish Positivist circle, it is not very easy to identify any common references to the ideas of George Sand. Among Polish female authors, such as Narcyza Żmichowska, Waleria Marrené-Morzowska, Julia Goczałkowska, Seweryna Duchńska, Maria Sadowska, and Eliza Orzeszkowa, whose names are mentioned in Regina Bochenek-Franczakowa's<sup>44</sup> and Corinne Fournier Kiss's studies on the reception of the French novelist's output in Poland, our attention is attracted by the name of Orzeszkowa, whose abundant output tempts one to make comparisons with that of George Sand.

Orzeszkowa pursued her ideological struggle for the role of women in the family, to free women from the aura of the 'earthly angel' and to grant them the rights and freedoms to which all family members were equally entitled. In her journalistic discourse *Kilka słów o kobietach*, she takes a closer look at the then-in-vogue notion of emancipation. The below-cited fragment of the treatise may invite one to seek an allusion to G. Sand, who was blamed by a number of Polish publicists of the period for propagating an 'improper' emancipative trend.<sup>45</sup>

At the sound of the phrase 'women's emancipation', unpleasant, often ridiculous, and at times very sad images are flashing before the eyes of some. For instance, in a room filled with a thick mist of tobacco smoke, assuming a challenging posture, with cigar or pipe in her hand, with a loud laugh in her mouth, blaspheming the most sacrosanct things in the world, a *lioness* woman reclines. A guardhouse ambience all around her; the cynicism of Parnys [alluding to the Enlightenment poet *Évariste Desiré de Forges, vicomte de Parny*] and Diderots in her words; disorder incarnate in the way she moves. Still, that very woman proudly rises her head, saying: I am emancipated!<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> D. Mucha, 'Poglądy pedagogiczne pozytywistów na wychowanie młodego pokolenia', *Kultura i wychowanie* 201), no. 3.

<sup>44</sup> R. Bochenek-Franczakowa, *Présence de George Sand en Pologne*, Frankfurt am Main 2017.

<sup>45</sup> See K. Nadana-Sokołowska, *George Sand*, pp. 390–416.

<sup>46</sup> E. Orzeszkowa, *Kilka słów o kobietach*, Warszawa 1893, p. 8.

However, a certain ideological kinship can be discerned in the following section: similarly to Sand, Orzeszkowa postulates a greater independence for women, attainable through better education. Its purpose is nonetheless to serve the familial and social life, which also does not stand in opposition to several of Sand's own postulates:

The key that opens the secret behind the phrase 'women's emancipation' rests right there. Women should, and are supposed to, emancipate themselves not from a phantasmal tyranny of men, not from the sacred and happiness-bearing tasks of everyday life, not from decency and simplicity, but from physical weakness, superimposed rather than taken from nature, from lack of moral powers to live an autonomous and logical life, from the curse of perennial bondage and angelicity, from constantly expecting a piece of daily bread from an alien's hand, from the continual closing of the paths of serious and useful work for them.<sup>47</sup>

Corinne Fournier Kiss in her *Germaine de Staël et George Sand en dialogue avec leurs consœurs polonaises* points to the clearly discernible associations between the beliefs regarding women expressed in the theoretical works of E. Orzeszkowa and G. Sand, stressing that the former, knowledgeable of the latter's oeuvre, "does not hesitate to afford Sand a key role in introducing the idea of women's emancipation" in Polish society.

It is worthwhile at this point to revisit Orzeszkowa's novel *Marta*, first published in 1873 by the weekly *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*, whose central protagonist after her husband's death has to provide for herself and her kid on her own. The young widow is not qualified enough to become a teacher of French or music, or a draughtswoman with a publishing house. Another labour-market obstacle is the competition against its male actors, which in advance dooms a woman to failure, and the impossibility to find a job. *Marta's* life is an example of possible tragic consequences of women's unpreparedness to live and function on their own, a situation to which fate may doom them. As Maria Żmigrodzka notes, *Marta* was written in a period of intense debate on women's financial self-reliance, when "the practical requirements of life came ahead of the moral upheaval".<sup>48</sup> Yet, stereotypical convictions as to the nature and vocation of women rendered it difficult for the society to understand this truth; and, the society all too easily accepted that girls cognised nature and the essentials of living in a society "based on romance stories they read overtly or surreptitiously".<sup>49</sup>

While Orzeszkowa's study never directly refers to G. Sand, it does evoke

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> M. Żmigrodzka, 'Wstęp' [an introduction], in E. Orzeszkowa, *Wybór pism*, Warszawa 1952, p. XIV.

<sup>49</sup> E. Orzeszkowa, *Kilka słów*, p. 162.

women's education issues as broadly addressed by European, including French, thinkers. Sand's own beliefs evidently show through the last lines of Orzeszkowa's essay:

Some European countries—France and England, to be specific—saw in the latter half of the nineteenth century a plethora of voices claiming thorough education for women, possibly similar to that provided to men now-a-days. Mill, Buckle, Bucharett, the two Legouvés, Pelletan, Hardy de Beaulieu, Louis Jourdain, Jules Simon, Daubié, and so many others have embarked on proving to the world that the exclusive flaws and incompetence of which women have normally been blamed, always originally begins with ineffective and erroneous education of women, which is worse-than-none since it is plainly inauspicious.<sup>50</sup>

Among the pedagogic views regarding the rearing of children or the value of education in elevating the position of woman in society as discussed by Polish authors, those convergent with the reflection proposed by George Sand are worth noting.

With regard to the need to allow children freedom of movement and to not use coercion, the novelist and columnist Bolesław Prus recommended that parents should provide children with toys suitable for the child's age and intellectual level (cut-outs, model workshops, tools for simple wood-working), because "with their help the child becomes familiar with shapes, colours and geometric figures, thus learning to observe and awakens in himself or herself the seeds of aesthetic taste".<sup>51</sup> Hence, Prus promoted the idea of creating kindergartens, which, thanks to the children's physical games (ball games, running, gymnastics) in the open air, create favourable conditions for physical and mental development.

The writer, columnist and critic Aleksander Świętochowski pointed to the importance of educational methods reflecting the new socioeconomic relations in the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>52</sup> His article *O średnim wykształceniu dziewcząt* [*On the secondary education of girls*] published in the *Przegląd Tygodniowy* weekly criticised the women's education agenda put in force by the Commission of Public Enlightenment (i.e. Education) in 1826 as compulsory for boarding schools and regular schools for females.<sup>53</sup> A syllabus that recommended teaching languages, religion, history and calligraphy, whilst rejecting exact sciences, could by no means be satisfactory. His critical reflection on education of female youth made Świętochowski formulate

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 178–9.

<sup>51</sup> B. Prus, *Kroniki*, vol. 7, Warszawa 1958; p. 277; (1872), *idem*, 'Sprawy dziecinne', *Opiekun Domowy* 28 (1872), 217–18.

<sup>52</sup> D. Mucha, 'Poglądy pedagogiczne'.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

the following reform-oriented postulates: "1. Afford women, in theory, on a par with men, the right to complete secondary-level education. 2. Give women such education, in practice. 3. Found it upon real grounds. This is the briefest formulation of a reform that is being demanded by the three powers: the general civilisation, our nation, and its circumstances."<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

The literature and journalism of Polish Positivism were sensitive to ideological slogans close to George Sand and her concept of world perception, systems of social justice and social equality. Sand was concerned with education of the people and asserted that the right to education was the fundamental and necessary path to the emancipation of the working classes. The cardinal principles that guided her pedagogical thinking: equality of the sexes, freedom, trust in the nature and in children's initiative, 'proactive' pedagogy, solid but flexible intellectual training, education of the body and openness to the world, to name the major ones, were spread by Polish Positivist authors as well. While it is difficult to testify that any of those writers or columnists ever directly referred to the French author's ideas, there was certainly a pool of shared convictions and an educational vision that was meant to benefit the society.



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### ABSTRACT

George Sand's views on political issues related to women and their education, as well as on the education of society, stem from the thinking of the time that shaped her life and work and her message about the need for social revolution. According to the author, this should be achieved in the spirit of socialism and universal solidarity, towards which suffering humanity should be led. This idea also became popular in Polish society as a result of nineteenth-century European revolutionary movements, to which the Polish libertarian cause was linked. This brings us to the subject of this article, G. Sand's socio-educational thought as expressed in her 'feminist' and 'socialist' novels. The aim of this publication is to trace the emanation

<sup>54</sup> R. Wroczyński (ed.), *Pedagogika pozytywizmu warszawskiego*, Wrocław 1958, p. 89.

ASPECTS OF GEORGE SAND'S SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT...

of G. Sand's thought in Polish literature of the positivist era from a historical and literary perspective.

KEYWORDS

George Sand, social education in the nineteenth century, emancipation, society, Polish Positivism

