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SAND'S AND DOSTOEVSKY'S ETHICAL QUEST:  
THE FIGURE OF THE MEEK ONE IN *SPIRIDION*,  
*BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*, *JEANNE* AND  
*KROTKAIA*

**In June of 1876 Dostoevsky** wrote two necrological articles about George Sand for his *Diary of a Writer*, in which he celebrated the French writer who had enchanted his years as a young intellectual. These articles tell us much about the qualities he admired in her work. On the one hand, he highlighted Sand's liberal political thought as a form of socialist idealism which exerted an enormous impact on the Russian intelligentsia of the 1830s and 1840s. On the other hand, he reflected with great emotion upon one of Sand's heroines, Jeanne, who, as he wrote, was an "honest but inexperienced young feminine character possessing that proud chastity which has no fear and cannot be sullied by contact with vice, even if suddenly this creature should accidentally find herself in the den of vice".<sup>1</sup>

I wish to examine further these two strands of Dostoevsky's analysis. In the first part of my article, I will look at the ways in which Sand figured as a political theorist, as an "inspirer of the Ideal"<sup>2</sup>, as a thinker on the side of Light<sup>3</sup>. In the articles, he defined her as "one of the most lucid precursors ... of a happy future awaiting humankind"<sup>4</sup>. Sand had magnanimously believed all her life that those ideals would come to pass – this was because, as he explained, she herself was able to conceive this ideal in her

<sup>1</sup> F. Dostoevsky, 'Neskolko slov o George Sand,' *Dnevnik pisatel'ia za 1876 god*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, (Complete Works in Thirty Volumes), Leningrad 1981, vol. 23, p. 36. Readers can find an English version of the passage in *The Diary of a Writer*, translated by Boris Brasol, Santa Barbara, Peregrine Smith, 1979, p. 348. All translations from the Russian are mine.

<sup>2</sup> J. Catteau, *La Création littéraire chez Dostoïevski*, Paris 1978, p. 506.

<sup>3</sup> G.M. Fridlender, *Dostoïevski i mirovaia literatura, Khudozhestvennaia Literatura*, 1979, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 36; 'A Few Words about George Sand,' *Diary of a Writer*, p. 349.

soul. Dostoevsky praised her universal humanism and her belief in the free individual personality. I will look at the expression of this ideal as it is expressed in *Spiridion*, and show how Sand's novel of 1839 impacted Dostoevsky's last novel, *Brothers Karamazov*.

In the second half of my paper, I will look at the ways in which Sand helped Dostoevsky invent unique fictional personalities. Of course, both writers are known for their highly intellectual characters. Sand's hallmark was to create heroines with rich intellectual lives, such as Lélia, Yseult de Villepreux, Myrza and even Isidora, the "intelligent courtesan." Dostoevsky's intellectuals are famous: Raskolnikov, Ippolit and Ivan Karamazov have all provoked rich commentaries. But the two writers also created major characters who are best described as non-intellectual and meek. Dostoevsky's meek characters have been examined before, but never in the light of Sand's figures. The eponymous Jeanne and Angel in *Spiridion* occupy a unique position in Sand's fictional universe for their meek or humble participation in the world and as embodiments of a just world view. They impacted Dostoevsky's cast of characters. Angel anticipates Aliosha in *Brothers Karamazov*. Jeanne helps us to better understand the main characters in *The Meek One (Krotkaia)*, a short story published in *Diary of a Writer* in November 1876, just a few months after the necrology on Sand.

### Dostoevsky reading Sand

Dostoevsky was well versed in his knowledge of Sand's works. If we consult his correspondence, the *Diary of a Writer*, the lists established by various critics, and the two volumes of *Literary Heritage* – volume 83 (*Unpublished Documents*) and volume 86 (*New Documents*) – we can surmise that Dostoevsky had read the following: *La Marquise*, *Leone Leoni*, *André*, *Les Maîtres mosaïstes*, *Mauprat*, *La Dernière Aldini* <sup>5</sup>, *L'Uscoque*, *Jeanne*, *Teverino*, *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, *Lucrezia Floriani*, *L'Homme de neige*, *Les Dames vertes*, *La Confession d'une jeune fille*, *Césarine Dietrich*, *Journal d'un voyageur pendant la guerre*, *Flamarande* and *Les Deux frères*. But in addition to these attested texts, it is difficult to believe that he had not also read the Sand novels that the intelligentsia read in the 1840s: *Jacques* and *Horace* (these two novels had been particularly influential among Russian novelists of the period, inspiring novels on the "superfluous man"), *Lélia*, *Consuelo* and *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*. Moreover, it is inconceivable that Dostoevsky had not read *Spiridion*. As the eminent specialist Leonid Grossman affirms:

<sup>5</sup> Dostoevsky started a translation of this novel, then stopped when he realized that another translation was ongoing.

«George Sands' original and exciting novel, *Spiridion*, was very popular in the early 1840s, when Dostoevsky belonged to Belinsky's circle». <sup>6</sup> And he makes the following supposition:

It is very likely that he read the novel at the time [in his youth] and even then perceived it to be a new, original and bold genre, combining contemporary politics with religious and philosophical subjects (*problematika*). It might even then have stirred his own dormant literary inclinations. He had appreciated this experiment in writing an ideological epic of contemporary times and turned to it at the time when he was planning his own book about atheism, and again, ten years after that, when he was planning his last novel, *Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>7</sup>

This supposition on Grossman's part is all the more likely when one realizes that *L'Uscoque*, a novel Dostoevsky had adored and mentions several times in the necrology, was published in *La Revue des deux mondes* in 1838 (in four installments: 15 May, 1<sup>st</sup> June, 15 June, 1<sup>st</sup> July) and that *Spiridion* began to appear in the same journal the same year (in five installments: 15 October, 1<sup>st</sup> November, 15 November 1838; 1<sup>st</sup> January, 15 January 1839). Grossman carefully focuses on the reasons why Dostoevsky could have been enthralled by his reading of Sand's novel:

The intellectual peregrinations of a Catholic monk who has read all the volumes of the monastery's big library anticipate as it were, the conflict of Dostoevsky's great sinner [...] Dostoevsky was strongly attracted by George Sand's main design, which had given rise to her peculiar creative method. According to her own explanations, the Abbé Spiridion is the embodiment of humanity passing through all the religious creeds. It was something like this artistic *encyclopedia of beliefs* that Dostoevsky dreamt of producing in his *Atheism*.<sup>8</sup>

It is very likely that Dostoevsky read the first version – the one that was published in *La Revue des deux mondes* in 1838-1839. He must have come back to the text in its second version – the one that was published in 1842 and whose conclusion is radically changed – when he contemplated writing his epic novel, *Atheism*, at the end of 1868; he consulted it once again, in 1870, when he had renamed his work “The Life of a Great Sinner”; finally, he turned to it when he was preparing to write *Brothers Karamazov*. The biographer Joseph Frank reminds us that at the time he composed his last novel, Dostoevsky reread French texts of the 1830s and 1840s, notably those by Hugo, Balzac, and George Sand<sup>9</sup>. It is then highly possible

<sup>6</sup> L.Grossman, *Dostoïevski*, Paris 2003, p. 390.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 391.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*. Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> “He [Dostoevsky] read a good bit of Sand again in the summer of 1876, along

that Dostoevsky rediscovered in *Spiridion* certain ideas which were dear to him and that he found in the substance of the novel strong affinities, both ideological and literary. As Olga Kafanova has rightly suggested, Dostoevsky was the only one among the Russian intellectuals who understood that a religious sub-text permeated the entire ethical, philosophical, and political system of Sand's writings.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore not farfetched to suppose that Dostoevsky's return to Sand was crucial to him at the time he was getting to work on his last novel.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Spiridion*, a work of inspiration**

The philosophical and religious issues examined in *Spiridion* have a striking resemblance to Dostoevsky's own preoccupations. The correlations between it and *Brothers Karamazov* are remarkable. Joseph Frank notes the clear connections:

Both stress that true religions should depend only on free moral choice, not on the tyranny of dogma or institutions; both contain as central characters an old and dying monk... and an ardent young disciple inspired by his doctrines and his experience; both dramatize the struggle between skeptical reason and true faith. In

with his wife, who remarked that 'I gradually read all of their novels [Balzac and George Sand] as part of an impromptu course to acquaint [me] with French literature ... At this time, he was also working at an article (now lost) on Belinsky and reviving his memories of the literary-cultural atmosphere of the early 1840s, when the novels of George Sand stood at the center of all the ideological discussions in intelligentsia circles" (J. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881*, Princeton 2002, p. 398).

<sup>10</sup> O. Kafanova, *George Sand i ruskaia literatura XIX veka. Mify i realnosti*, Tomsk, 1998, p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> Dostoevsky's relationship with the West is complex. In his youth he wholeheartedly adopted some of the ideas of contemporary Western philosophers, but his attitude changed after his years in Siberia. His disdain for the West can be ascertained in his *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863). In the 1870s Dostoevsky, while harboring extreme feelings of anti-Westernism, found that French Utopian thought was still operational in his worldview. That his writing was still informed by Utopian Socialist ideas from the 1840s is revealed especially in his last novel and in his "Pushkin Speech." As Joseph Frank reminds us throughout the fifth and last volume of his intellectual biography, Dostoevsky never rejected the heritage of the 1840s entirely. Thus, repeatedly, ideas culled from the French authors of his youth reemerged in his late writings: "The notion of a utopian transformation of earthly life into what would be, in effect, a realization of the Christian ideal of Paradise as a realm of mutual love never ceased to haunt his imagination" (J. Frank, *op. cit.*, p. 7).

both novels, the struggle is resolved through a mystical vision that restores a selfless love for all of God's creation and revives belief in the existence of conscience and the immortality of the soul; in each, the dying guardian of the tradition sends his young follower into the world to apply the doctrine of Christian love to the ills of social life<sup>12</sup>.

The two writers insist on the all-powerful role of ideas; they denounce the ravages of materialist philosophies; they criticize the shortcomings of monastic life; and they present characters in search for religious truth. In terms of formal devices, they use inserted narratives to highlight the wisdom of the sages; and they often opt for a dialogic structure which sets the stage for verbal exchanges between an older wise monk and his young disciple. Finally, they examine the urgent question of the viability of the various religions of the century. The main hero, the monk Alexis, presents the spiritual biography of his master Spiridion as well as his own to the novice Angel. This narration of an intellectual trajectory which takes as its point of departure traditional faith to evolve into philosophical doubt and then into spiritual despair, to end up with a form of humanitarian deism, which is both pro-revolutionary and positioned toward the future, constitutes a veritable "encyclopedia of beliefs," comparable to what Dostoevsky had intended to produce in "The Life of a Great Sinner" and in *Atheism*. In a letter to Maikov, describing "The Life of a Great Sinner," Dostoevsky insisted on the ideological and spiritual mutability of his hero who was "at times, an atheist, at times, a believer, at times a fanatic, then a sectarian and once again an atheist"<sup>13</sup>. In a similar way, Alexis in *Spiridion* was a firm believer, then an agnostic philosopher, then an atheist, then again, a believer in an evolved post-Christian world.

Moreover, *Spiridion* is an experimental novel which posits the invention of a new novelistic genre, incorporating autobiographical details, elements of a philosophical treatise, devices of the gothic tradition, and aspects of a novel of initiation. Sand's quest for new hybrid novelistic forms was likely to appeal to Dostoevsky. He also sought to redefine the novel as a melting pot, in which various fictional forms could be combined: the feuilleton, the detective novel, the journalistic news item, the psychological case-study and the philosophical parable.<sup>14</sup> His insistence on envisioning the novel as the

<sup>12</sup> J. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849*, Princeton 1977, p. 130.

<sup>13</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Pis'ma*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 29 (I), p. 117.

<sup>14</sup> For an examination of the various genres of *Brothers Karamazov* – the uncanny, the fantastic, the melodramatic, the gothic, and the metaphysical – see Chapter 7, 'Evocations and Revocations of Anxiety in the Metaphysical Novel: Read-

perfect vehicle for what he called “ideas” led him to appreciate the multi-genred novel invented by Sand.

But the essential link between the two is what Dostoevsky called “the metamorphosis of ideas”, “ideas” understood in the large sense of ideology or vision of the world. Indeed, in his notes for Sand’s necrology, Dostoevsky declared: “A scholarly study on the manner in which certain writers [such as] Schiller [or] George Sand have influenced Russia and to what an extent, this would be a serious and extraordinary enterprise. But we will have to wait a long time to see that. The history of the metamorphosis (*perevoploshchenie*) of an idea into another idea”<sup>15</sup>. This remark gives us Dostoevsky’s definition of literary influence – it is the metamorphosis of a literary idea into another. Elsewhere in his notes for Sand’s necrology, he gives us an insight into what such a metamorphosis might entail: “It is not,” he writes, “humanity that we must learn from the Western poets, but *the expansion (or widening) of the ideas and the expansion of what is beautiful and wholesome in their writings*”<sup>16</sup>. What then are the “ideas” that Dostoevsky found in *Spiridion* and that he expanded or widened in *Brothers Karamazov*?

### **Aliosha in *Brothers Karamazov* and Angel in *Spiridion***

Aliosha in *Brothers Karamazov* is a character who is passionately attached to the old monk, Zosima. In fact, he is his spokesman. As a humble character he is content to be Zosima’s mouthpiece, not his interpreter. That is why he gives us verbatim Zosima’s testament.<sup>17</sup> Aliosha is willing to transmit Zosima’s message, modestly, without any expression of his own ego. Like Angel in *Spiridion*, then, Aliosha is the meek character, subservient to the great man, who does not hesitate to put himself totally at the service of the master. Yuri Corrigan, in his study of personality formation in *Brothers Karamazov*, has argued that the novel can be seen as “a series of parallel apprenticeships in which the pupil is subsumed into the personality of the master”<sup>18</sup>. And the relationship between Aliosha and Zosima fits this pattern very well. It is true that their relationship conforms to the edicts of the Russian Orthodox system of elders, where the pupil is compelled to “renounce [his]

ing the *Brothers Karamazov* through the lens of *Melmoth the Wanderer*,’ of R. Feuer Miller’s *Dostoevsky’s Unfinished Journey* (Yale 2007).

<sup>15</sup> ‘Neizdannii Dostoievskii’, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 1971, vol. 83, p. 628.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 546. Emphasis is in the text.

<sup>17</sup> “Notes of the Life in God of the Deceased Priest and Monk, the Elder Zosima, taken from his own words by Alexey Fyodorovich Karamazov”.

<sup>18</sup> Y. Corrigan, *Dostoevsky and the Riddle of the Self*, Evanston, III, Northwestern University Press 2017, p. 9.

own will and to offer it in complete obedience” to his elder who wields “limitless and inconceivable power” over his pupil.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, there is a kind of excess in Aliosha’s attachment to his elder. Aliosha’s “impassioned reverence to the point of adoration” for Zosima is a “quasi-idolatrous worship”.<sup>20</sup> When he remarks to Lise: “If only you knew how I am bound, how I am welded in my soul with this person”,<sup>21</sup> he freely admits that he is in a position of complete subservience to the monk. Angel’s case is comparable. His allegiance to his master Alexis is absolute and he never wavers from his role as the meek inheritor of the master’s truth. This can lead to what Corrigan calls the phenomenon of porosity between characters.

As examples of this porosity of mind, I will look at two scenes. In *Spiridion*, there is a dream sequence in which a strange voice is heard in Alexis’s dream. Sleeping next door to the old monk’s bedchamber, Angel is awakened “by the sound of a powerful voice which did not resemble Alexis’s voice.”<sup>22</sup> Inexplicably, this voice seems not to be the creation of the dreamer, but the intrusion of a phantom. Angel hears the entire dream, not just Alexis talking to the phantom voice but the phantom’s answers as well. The unknown voice severely chastises Alexis: “Be quiet, cowardly blasphemator... It is your thirst for glory that is causing your regret, it is your pride that is propelling you to despair.”<sup>23</sup> This phenomenon might seem to be part of the supernatural events of the novel. But another possibility is even more likely. How is Angel capable of overhearing an entire conversation between a phantom and the old monk which takes place in the latter’s head? The reader can imagine that Alexis is speaking out loud while dreaming, but this would only explain why Angel can hear his voice and half of the dream conversation. But since he also hears the phantom voice, which turns out to be Spiridion, it is difficult to explain how Angel is able to hear Spiridion’s voice which is shouting in the old monk’s head. How does Angel enter his master’s dream so as to be able to grasp the entirety of the dialogue? This is an indication of Angel’s concentration on his master which is so intense that he can overhear – through his *porosity of mind* with Alexis – what is taking place in

<sup>19</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol 14, pp. 26–7. *Brothers Karamazov*, Translated by R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, New York 1992, pp. 27–8.

<sup>20</sup> Y. Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 201. *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 221.

<sup>22</sup> Angel wakes to the sound of «une voix puissante qui ne ressemblait point à la sienne» (G. Sand, *Spiridion*, *Œuvres complètes [Complete Works]*, I. Naginski (éd.), Paris 2018, p. 167). All translations from the French are mine.

<sup>23</sup> «Tais-toi, lâche blasphémateur ... c’est ta soif de gloire qui cause tes regrets, c’est ton orgueil qui te pousse au désespoir», *Spiridion*, p. 168.

the latter's dreams. In fact, the scene ends with Angel running into the old monk's room only to find that there is no third person there, thus proving that the mysterious voice was entirely in Alexis's dream: "[Angel] had listened to this dialogue with a terrible sense of anguish ... [he] came close to [Alexis's] bed. There was no one else besides the two of them in the bedroom."<sup>24</sup> Yuri Corrigan speaks of a similar phenomenon of porosity that takes place in Dostoevsky's fictional world. According to him, in this world, "the boundaries between selves appear strangely fluid and non-binding."<sup>25</sup> And he gives examples of these "feverishly intersecting personalities:" a young man can hear the heart of an orphan girl he has saved from ruin, beating from several feet away (*The Insulted and the Injured*); a young intellectual feels the presence of his father's servant taking up residence within him (*Brothers Karamazov*), etc. One can posit that the relationship between the meek hero and his wise monk participates in this kind of porosity of beings.

In *Brothers Karamazov* there is a scene at the end of book seven which points to this very phenomenon. Zosima has just died and Aliosha finds himself in a state of heightened emotion. He throws himself down on the ground and embraces the earth. He hears echoes in his soul: "Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears"; then he hears more echoes: "And others are praying for me too". This event represents a moment of triumphant epiphany which Aliosha describes afterwards thus: "Someone visited my soul in that hour."<sup>26</sup> I suggest that that "someone" is Zosima and that these were his parting words of advice which allowed Aliosha to let go of the monastery and to go out into the world. The porosity of selves between the young disciple and his master is here again evident.

What is also striking is the situation of the two novices in the two novels. Both have been instructed by the Elder that they must go out into the world and preach the new word. When Sand's story ends, Alexis is struck down in front of the altar in the monastery's church. Angel is presumably the witness of the barbaric slaughter of his master, but the reader has no further information about him. *Spiridion* ends with Alexis's demise and with Angel in the shadows. In *Brother Karamazov*, however, Zosima dies at the end of Part Two, about a third of the way into the novel and the rest of the novel amply displays Aliosha's entrance into the world. The novel ends with Iliusha's funeral, and the celebration of Aliosha by the band of boys whom

<sup>24</sup> Angel «avait écouté ce dialogue avec une affreuse angoisse ... je m'approchai de son lit. Il n'y avait personne autre que lui et moi dans la chambre», *Spiridion*, p. 168.

<sup>25</sup> Y. Corrigan, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 328. *Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 362-3.



he has learned to foster and to love. When they exclaim “Hurrah for Karamazov”, the reader understands that Aliosha has successfully made his way into the world where he has made a difference. The “Hurrah” is also an exclamation on the part of the author who ascertains that his hero has obeyed Zosima’s wish and has been fully successful in his mission.<sup>27</sup> There is no such ending in *Spiridion* where Angel is left dangling in the conclusion. In other words, *Spiridion* ends with a question mark, while *Brothers Karamazov* ends with a conclusive resolution of Aliosha’s venture into the world.

Now if we go back to Dostoevsky’s remark about the transference of one literature into another, we will remember that he called it “the expansion” or “the widening” “of what is beautiful and wholesome in their writings.” In other words, foreign literature proposes, and Russian literature amplifies. Foreign literature presents an “idea,” an event or a character to Russia, and Russian literature widens its significance or its presence in the text. This concrete transformation seems to me exemplary of the way in which French novels influenced Russian fiction in the nineteenth century. Russia borrows an event in a foreign text, such as Angel’s duty of going out into the world in *Spiridion* and takes it one step further by amplifying and widening it in the Russian text. This is one way that we can understand Sand’s novel to have been a concrete source for Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*.

### **The Precepts of the wise man and the religion of the future**

As I have just suggested, the disciples and their mentors tend to meld into one another, so that the ideas and impressions of the masters become identical to the ideas and impressions of the disciples. I will also propose some of the ways in which the ideas of the wise men seem to coalesce, which makes of *Spiridion* a true precursor text of *Brothers Karamazov*.

In an article which dates from May 1848 entitled “The Religion of France”, Sand proposes that if Catholicism is the religion of the bourgeoisie, “the Gospel is the religion of the people”,<sup>28</sup> and Jesus “the first and immortal apostle of equality”<sup>29</sup>. The Gospel, she claims, “takes refuge in the hearts of the poor”<sup>30</sup>. It is in this way that the Gospel, reinterpreted, becomes the

<sup>27</sup> For a thorough discussion of this scene, see R.L. Jackson, ‘Alyosha’s Speech at the Stone,’ in *A New Word on the Brothers Karamazov*, R.L. Jackson (ed.), Northwestern University Press 2004.

<sup>28</sup> G. Sand, «La Religion de la France», *George Sand. Politique et polémiques*, M. Perrot (éd.), Paris 1997, p. 454.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 456.

<sup>30</sup> The Gospel «se réfugie dans le cœur du pauvre ... et y fonde un dogme et un culte nouveaux», *ibidem*, p. 459.

“great discovery of the law of equality and brotherhood”<sup>31</sup>. This polemic text develops ideas Sand had already proposed in *Spiridion*. Dostoevsky could not have read this revolutionary article, of course, as it is highly unlikely that this seditious tract could have made it into Russia. The fact that he was arrested a year later also made it close to impossible for him to have had access to texts of this sort. That is why it is all the more remarkable to find similar opinions expressed in *Brothers Karamazov*. “The salvation of Russia will come from the people”<sup>32</sup>, for the peasant is “theophore”, that is, has God in his heart<sup>33</sup>, affirms Zosima. Like Sand, Dostoevsky sees in the people the source of future progress and the condition for the future brotherhood. While Dostoevsky certainly had access to other texts than Sand that glorified the people, my point here is not so much to claim literary influence as to insist on the phenomenon of intertextuality. Sand’s own vision finds itself reflected forty years later in Dostoevsky.

What unites the two writers most fundamentally here is their common vision of a prophetic or utopian realism which anticipates reality as it is being played out. “Truth is not in pure realism,” Dostoevsky affirmed once again in his notes.<sup>34</sup> A true realism, according to him, is an enhanced realism which incorporates a vision of the future. This is very much in accord with Sand’s understanding. When Sand finished *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* in 1842, readers and critics alike criticized her for having created in Pierre Huguenin an impossible working-class hero. But, as she herself explained in her « Notice » of 1851, Huguenin was simply a prophetic character: “Approximately ten years ago, my type of Pierre Huguenin [the master carpenter] could have seemed embellished in the eyes of the upper classes ... everything that did not exist then ... could come into existence and *was in fact soon to be.*”<sup>35</sup> Sand’s prophetic realism, this utopian realism, anticipates on a reality that is in the process of being accomplished but is still invisible. With the noble figure of Huguenin, Sand illustrated the dynamic nature of society in which she evolved and wrote. And this vision coincides in a remarkable fashion with Dostoevsky’s. As the critic Jackson has remarked, the artist according to the Russian novelist must be « an

<sup>31</sup> «La Religion de la France», p. 459.

<sup>32</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 314. *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 285.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 315/p. 285.

<sup>34</sup> *Nezdannii Dostoievskii*, p. 628.

<sup>35</sup> «Il y a une dizaine d’années, mon type de Pierre Huguenin pouvait paraître embelli pour les gens du monde ... Enfin tout ce qui n’existait pas alors ... pouvait être et devait être bientôt», G. Sand, “Notice”, *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*, Grenoble 1988, p. 32. Emphasis mine.

historian of the future ».<sup>36</sup> Dostoevsky will underscore this conviction in the *Brothers Karamazov* when he has Zosima write these words: « And how many ideas there have been on earth in the history of humankind that were unthinkable ten years before they appeared? Yet when their destined hour had come, they came forth and spread over the whole earth»<sup>37</sup>. It is the realism of the present, that realism through a magnifying glass, which is condemned by Dostoevsky. As he affirms in the notebooks for *The Possessed*: “The whole of reality is not exhausted by everyday life, for a huge part of it is present in it in the form of a still latent, unexpressed, future Word”<sup>38</sup>. What he and Sand both claim is that a true vision of reality must always incorporate the future.

As we turn our attention to the two novels once again, it is obvious that the dialogues between Aliosha and the Starets are comparable to those between Angel and Alexis. Like Zosima, Sand's monk lives a solitary and scholarly life in the monastery; like Zosima, he lives according to his own intellectual predilections without conforming to the rules. And although the two wise men embody two different forms of Christianity, byzantine and roman, because they both transcend the narrow limits of Christianity, their ideological and theological positions are extraordinarily similar in that they distance themselves from strict theological precepts. Both challenge religious dogmatism and denounce the need for a hierarchical church. They base their cult on the intuitive realm rather than the values of pure intellect. Their credos are similar: “I am and I love,” says Zosima.<sup>39</sup> « I love, I believe and I hope », proclaims Alexis<sup>40</sup>. Both give pride of place to the value of brotherhood. And it is this ideal of fraternity that nourishes the minds of the two novices, Angel and Aliosha. The latter character takes it even further by showing the reader how that very ideal was able to develop thanks to the ailing character of the young Iliusha and the band of boys that surrounded him, an ideal that was actively encouraged by Aliosha.

According to the two wise men, certain monks have conserved the truth and are awaiting the future in order to reveal it. Zosima declares: “how many *meek and humble* monks there are, (*smirennie i krotkie*) yearning for solitude and fervent prayer in peace [...] For they are in truth made ready

<sup>36</sup> R.L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form. A Study of His Philosophy of Art*, Yale 1978, p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 288. *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 317.

<sup>38</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Notebooks for the Possessed*, E. Wasiolek (ed.), Chicago 1968, p. 375. *Besy*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 11, p. 237.

<sup>39</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 322. *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 322.

<sup>40</sup> G. Sand, *Spiridion*, p. 301.

in peace and quiet 'for the day and the hour, the month and the year.' Meanwhile in their solitude, they keep the image of Christ fair and undefiled ... And when the time comes, they will reveal it to the tottering creeds of the world."<sup>41</sup> In the same way, Alexis revives the great mystics of the past who have glimpsed the future:

Oh, monks; you, sublime race of yesteryear ... you who have given birth through your spirit to so many doctors and prophets that the Church has persecuted and condemned to the flames! You who have understood the Gospel and who tried valiantly to put it into practice. You who have understood equality, fraternity, community, charity, and liberty! Monks who have proclaimed the eternal truths that the future age must explicate and put into practice.<sup>42</sup>

The two passages show admirably well that certain monks – “obscure” for Sand; “meek and humble” for Dostoevsky – are the source of future revelations. All these elements concur to make of Sand and Dostoevsky thinkers whose understanding of Christianity is profoundly original and heterodoxical.

### *Jeanne and The Meek One*

I turn now to the second aspect of my article on Dostoevsky's admiration for certain feminine personalities in Sand's cast of characters. The novel of Sand's he most praised was *Jeanne*, “a work of genius,” he claimed, which embodied “the pure ideal of the innocent young girl.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, he continued, “many ... of her [Sand's] heroines represented a type of such elevated moral purity that it could not have been conceived without an immense ethical quest in the soul of the poet herself”<sup>44</sup>. Dostoevsky sensed in Sand's characters like Jeanne an extraordinary alliance of virtues. The heroines, at first glance, seemed to behave according to the principles of mercy, patience, and the obligation of duty. But also present in their personalities was an “extraordinary pride of the quest and of protest”<sup>45</sup>, which exhorted

<sup>41</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Bratia Karamazovy*, vol. 14, p. 284. *Brothers Karamazov*, p. 313.

<sup>42</sup> «O moines ; vous, race jadis sublime ... vous qui avez engendré par l'esprit tant de docteurs et de prophètes que l'Eglise a persécutés et condamnés aux flammes! Vous qui avez compris l'Évangile et qui avez tenté courageusement de le pratiquer ... moines qui avez compris l'égalité, la fraternité, la communauté, la charité et la liberté! moines qui avez proclamé les éternelles vérités que l'avenir doit expliquer et mettre en pratique», *Spiridion*, pp. 312-3.

<sup>43</sup> F. Dostoevsky, 'Neskolko slov o George Sand,' *Dnevnik pisatelja*, vol. 23, p. 35. 'A Few Words about George Sand,' *The Diary of a Writer*, p. 348.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35/p. 347.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35/p. 347.

them to heroic exploits. Dostoevsky was careful here to define this particular kind of pride. It “sprang from the most sublime truth,” he explained, “without which humankind could never have retained its place on so lofty a moral height.”<sup>46</sup> Not pride as aggression or hostility, but as “a feeling of the most chaste impossibility of compromise with untruth (*nepravda*) and vice.”<sup>47</sup> This comment is in keeping with Sand’s affirmation that she created ideal characters because she herself had felt fervently that such personalities existed: “I have been reproached for idealizing my characters too much,” she wrote, “They appeared to me as I have depicted them, I have perhaps lived with them in an overly paradisiac world ... Therefore, there are still souls made as I imagine, for if there were no more such souls, the world would perish.”<sup>48</sup> The heroine’s refusal to compromise with evil or simply with the mundane is of great importance in the understanding of some of Sand’s and Dostoevsky’s female characters. Indeed, it is this very refusal that constitutes the crux of the drama in both *Jeanne*, Sand’s novel of 1844, and *The Meek One* (*Krotkaia*), published by Dostoevsky in November 1876, that is five months after Sand’s necrology. In both texts what is involved is the heroine’s refusal of being tainted and the absolute denial of any accommodation with evil.

At the conclusion of *Jeanne*, the eponymous character is imprisoned in Marsillat’s castle, Montbrat. The young and amoral lawyer has lured Jeanne to his home in the hope that he may seduce her, for his understanding of ordinary peasant girls is that they are beings of little virtue. But Jeanne is not an ordinary peasant girl, and this is not simply a novel of seduction. From the beginning of the text, Sand has bestowed upon her heroine untold gifts of popular wisdom and identified in her qualities that are most unusual. Jeanne is a character of mythic stature. She embodies the legendary Golden Age which has long been forgotten. Her mythological representation aligns her with the figure of Astrea, goddess of the Golden Age, the last divinity to have lived among humans, shepherds, and shepherdesses for the most part, in a pastoral setting, who knew neither war nor evil.

As early as 1837 George Sand had written to Luc Desages of her fascination for this ideal society of the distant past which she wanted to revive

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35/p. 347.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> «On m’a reproché de trop idéaliser mes personnages ... Ils me sont apparus comme je les ai dépeints, j’ai peut-être vécu avec eux dans un monde trop paradisiaque ... Il y a donc encore des âmes faites comme je les imagine, car s’il n’y en avait plus, le monde périrait» (*Revue de Paris*, 15 janvier 1896 ; in *George Sand, Préfaces*, A. Szabo (ed.), Debrecen 1997, vol. 1, pp. 278–9).

in the person of Jeanne: “The ancient poets ... celebrated the Golden Age and recounted the cataclysm which destroyed that felicity on earth. This Golden Age was the reign of equality”<sup>49</sup>. This period is the one which Jeanne inhabits. The values she holds dear consist in her belief in social equality, in her capacity for forgiveness, in a non-aggressive dissent with the immoral ways of the world, in her unbending convictions, and especially in her belief that human beings are essentially good. Jeanne thus incarnates the wisdom of so-called simple folk. Despite all appearances, she does not really live in contemporary France but is an out-of-place member of the antediluvian period of Astrea’s rule. She is part of these “simple and suffering beings who only receive the light of things through the fever of their imagination.”<sup>50</sup> Her religion is as archaic as her values: “Jeanne was a *pagan radicalist*, without suspecting as much ... She was an exceptional being, connected to ... a rare type which has not been studied, but which exists, and which seems to belong to Astrea’s reign”<sup>51</sup>. It is through this heroine, the inheritor of an entire tradition which cannot be entirely recovered, that Sand strives to invent this disappeared society and to imagine all its humanity.

The stationary psychology of the heroine represents, according to the novelist, a particular ideal. In spite of the death of her mother Tula, a kind of modern druid priestess, whose principles Jeanne has adopted and which she calls “la connaissance” (knowledge), in spite of having been relocated to Boussac where she is a servant, a dairy maid and a shepherdess, the text insists that “Jeanne had remained pretty much what she was at Ep-Nell, dreaming, praying, and loving incessantly, *almost never thinking*.”<sup>52</sup> But this lack of thought does not mean stupidity, far from it, for the shepherdess is the perfect example of the rustic make-up of her distant ancestors. Her genius is expressed in a remark she makes to the lawyer who mocks her simplicity: “You educated people, you have your ideas and we have ours.

<sup>49</sup> «Les anciens poètes ... ont chanté l’âge d’or, et raconté le cataclysme qui détruisit cette félicité sur la terre. Cet âge d’or, ce fut le règne de l’égalité», G. Sand, *Correspondance*, G. Lubin (ed.), Paris 1968, 25 vols., vol. 4, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> «Êtres simples et souffrants, qui ne reçoivent la lumière des choses que par la fièvre de l’imagination», G. Sand, *Jeanne*, S. Vierne (éd.), Meylan 1986, p. 74.

<sup>51</sup> «Jeanne était une *radicaliste païenne*, sans s’en douter davantage [...] C’était un être exceptionnel, se rattachant ... à un type rare qui n’a pas été étudié, mais qui existe, et qui semble appartenir au règne d’Astrée», *Jeanne*, p. 169. Underlined in the text.

<sup>52</sup> «Jeanne était restée, à peu de chose près, ce qu’elle était à Ep-Nell, rêvant, priant, et aimant sans cesse, *ne pensant presque jamais*», *Jeanne*, p. 168. Emphasis mine.

We are simple, I grant you, but we see in the fields where we live day and night, things that you do not see and that you will never know.”<sup>53</sup> She possesses « a poetic soul », and more importantly she embodies “one of those pure types as are still to be found in the fields, admirable and mysterious types who seem to be made for a Golden Age that no longer exists, and *where perfectibility would be useless, as they have already attained perfection.*”<sup>54</sup> It is important to insist in this passage on the reference to perfectibility, a keyword among the left-leaning social thinkers of the day, which here is not operational because it is not necessary. Through Jeanne, Sand presents a world in which perfection has already been attained, accompanied by no intellectuality. While this may seem problematic to the modern reader, it is in keeping with Sand's idealistic agenda and the construction of her heroine. As a naïve, innocent being, devoid of any cerebral life, Jeanne is decidedly an exception in the Sandian corpus of superior women.

When Dostoevsky describes Jeanne briefly in Sand's necrology, he stresses that Russian readers were struck by “the chaste and sublime purity of Sand's characters and of their ideals.”<sup>55</sup> Once again, he focuses on the heroine's personality: “without hesitation, without sparing herself, disinterestedly, self-sacrificingly, and fearlessly, she suddenly takes the most perilous and fatal step. What she sees and encounters does not in the least confuse or intimidate her; on the contrary, it forthwith increases the courage in her youthful heart which, at this juncture, for the first time, realizes the full measure of its strength – the strength of innocence, honesty, and purity”<sup>56</sup>. This description of the character's behavior fits the case of Jeanne to a great degree. For Jeanne avoids being found in a room with Marsillat, by choosing, drastically, to jump out the window of the bedroom (“la chambre du maître”) where he has locked her up. It is perhaps not so much rape that she is avoiding here, for she is quite capable of defending herself, as defamation. What she fears is being accused of having voluntarily accepted to be in the same room as Marsillat and thus put herself in a com-

<sup>53</sup> «Vous autres savants, vous avez vos idées, et nous avons les nôtres. Nous sommes simples, je le veux bien, mais nous voyons aux champs, où nous vivons de jour et de nuit, des choses que vous ne voyez pas et que vous ne connaîtrez jamais», *Jeanne*, p. 189.

<sup>54</sup> «Un de ces types purs comme il s'en trouve encore aux champs, types admirables et mystérieux, qui semblent faits pour un âge d'or qui n'existe pas, et où *la perfectibilité serait inutile, puisqu'on aurait la perfection*», *Jeanne*, p. 168. Emphasis mine.

<sup>55</sup> F. Dostoyevsky, 'Neskolko slov o George Sand,' *Dnevnik pisatelja*, vol. 23, p. 33; 'A Few Words about George Sand,' *The Diary of a Writer*, p. 345.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36/p. 348.

promised position.<sup>57</sup> When the two other main male characters and would-be suitors, Guillaume and Arthur, find her outside, they estimate that she has fallen twenty-five feet into a ravine. She sits there “pale as a corpse.”<sup>58</sup> She has suffered a severe brain concussion and will not recover. However, in her final days, she expresses no rancor against Marsillat. Rather she sings folk songs, she expresses her conviction of a better and more egalitarian distribution of riches among the people. Minutes before her death, she has a vision: she sees “la grande fade” (her name for the Virgin Mary) as a kind of deity bathed in light, who has come to greet her into another existence.<sup>59</sup> Her last words are “Here I am, I have arrived.”<sup>60</sup> Jeanne has been reunited with Astrea, the legendary figure who has found in Jeanne a human worthy of her. Sand comments on Jeanne and those like her:

Nature has always produced in this milieu certain beings who can learn nothing because they already possess the Ideal in their hearts, and they do not need to improve in order to be directly the children of God... They are quite ready for the coming of the ideal society about which humankind has dreamed, that it seeks and announces.<sup>61</sup>

This ideal type, then, is both modest and attached to her duty, yet fearless when she encounters evil, such as the possibility of rape and defamation.

I will now turn to *The Meek One*. It is important to underscore first of all the unusual narrative structure of this story. *The Meek One* adopts the form of a first-person monologue which takes place during the night following the nameless heroine’s suicide. The narrator is the widowed husband, an educated pawnbroker, who tries to understand what drove his wife to kill herself. The anonymous narrator traces back his acquaintance with the Meek One. He remembers how she first came to him to pawn small objects, how he learned of her desperate circumstances – she was an orphan living like a slave with her aunts who had considered selling her in prostitution but were now planning to sell her off to a 50-year-old shopkeeper. The pawnbroker, at 41, was confident that his proposal of marriage would

<sup>57</sup> See F. Massardier-Kenney, *Gender in the Fiction of George Sand*, Rodopi 2000, pp. 72 and 80.

<sup>58</sup> “Pâle comme une morte”, *Jeanne*, p. 266.

<sup>59</sup> Jeanne’s religion is an amalgam of Christian and pagan concepts.

<sup>60</sup> “M’y voilà arrivée”, *Jeanne*, p. 283.

<sup>61</sup> «La nature produit de tout temps dans ce milieu certains êtres qui ne peuvent rien apprendre, parce que le beau idéal est en eux-mêmes et qu’ils n’ont pas besoin de progresser pour être directement les enfants de Dieu ... Ils sont tout prêts pour la société idéale que le genre humain rêve, cherche et annonce», *Jeanne*, p. 168.



be less repugnant to the 16-year-old girl. The rest of his ruminations concentrate on what went wrong in the relationship. Since their marriage quickly deteriorated and the couple fell into long periods of silence, the reader, like the husband, often wonders "What, precisely, is she now thinking about?"<sup>62</sup> For we never enter the Meek One's mind. How is one to understand a story in which the reader is only given one point of view, the point of view of the pawnbroker, who is, for all intents and purposes, the secondary character, and the person responsible for the young girl's suicide? The Meek One, who has already taken her life when the story begins, remains a complete psychological mystery. Her inner life is never shown in the story, her lamenting husband's analysis of what went wrong obscures not only what happened but fails to explicate the underlying reasons for the two major events in the story which have to do with life and death. The first such event is the Meek One's attempt to murder her husband. He wakes one early morning to feel the barrel of a gun pressed against his temple. Choosing not to confront her, the husband pretends to be asleep. After a long while, the Meek One removes the gun and abruptly leaves the room. No explanation for this drastic gesture is ever given. We are never privy to the intensity of the Meek One's disdain or her repulsion for her husband who, in the text, has trouble elucidating the truth. Indeed, the non-murder will never be explained. The suicide is the second of these major events. The reader gets a glimpse of the Meek One who has climbed up onto the sill, flinging herself out of the window, holding an icon in her hands. She lands and immediately dies of an "internal concussion"<sup>63</sup>. There is no explanation for her desperate gesture; she does not even leave a final note. She leaves behind no letters, no diary or personal confession which might help to elucidate her tragic act. How can the reader make sense of this drastic action without having any access to the character's inner life? Remarkably, the narrative structure completely blocks out the Meek One's persona. With the exception of a few conversations that the pawnbroker remembers and recounts, the reader never hears directly from her. All the reader is given is the husband's version which naturally privileges his own stumbling insights and his self-serving analysis. This text is a rare case where, in order to make full sense of it, one needs intertexts and intratexts – in this case, other texts by Dostoevsky (intratexts) and a text by another writer (intertexts). On the one hand, we have Sand's necrology and Dostoevsky's *feuilleton* en-

<sup>62</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Krotkaia, Dnevnik pisatel'ia*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 24, p. 23. *The Meek One, The Diary of a Writer*, p. 513.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 24, p. 35/p. 526.

titled “Two Suicides”, reflecting on what he calls a meek and humble suicide; on the other hand, we have Sand’s *Jeanne*.

The *feuilleton*, published in October 1876, that is, one month before *The Meek One* and several months after the necrology on Sand, recounts a seemingly banal news item which had a significant impact on Dostoevsky. He writes:

About a month ago there appeared in all Petersburg papers a few short lines, in small type, about a Petersburg suicide: a poor young girl, a seamstress, threw herself out of a window on the fourth floor “because she was utterly unable to find work for her livelihood.” It was added that she jumped and fell to the ground, *holding a holy image (obraz) in her hands*. This holy image in the hands is a strange, as yet unheard-of trait in a suicide! This was a meek and humble suicide (*krotkoe smirennoie samoubiistvo*).<sup>64</sup>

The story of the Meek One has comparable traits to this actual, real-life suicide. Like the young girl in the news item, the Meek One placed advertisements in the newspaper to get work; like her she sewed; and of course, like her she jumped holding an icon in her hands. Dostoevsky obviously wonders what drove the young girl to suicide. But if *The Meek One* is his fictional answer, it does little to elucidate the character’s rationale. I believe *Jeanne* can give us some partial answers.

What is striking about Sand’s novel is its insistence on the main character’s exemplary stature. She is part of a special group of exceptional beings. The author proposes that another “race,” another bloodline than the one descended from Eve exists, and that they avoided the temptation of eating the apple, eluding in this way the wrath of God. If the fruit is symbolic of the tree of knowledge, one understands better why Sand made of her unfallen heroine an uneducated woman. *Jeanne* was not tempted to eat of the tree of knowledge and was therefore spared by God and not expelled from the Garden of Eden. She does not need to have access to modern knowledge. Her archaic “*connaissance*” suffices. Sand’s proposition, in a novel which at first adopts the innocent genre of a fairy tale,<sup>65</sup> has revolutionary resonances and her invention of a new descendance may have provoked outraged reactions among some of her catholic readers at the time. The novel could only displease the Church that had founded its entire misogynistic theology on woman’s first fault. Sand proposes a world without original sin and this supposition would have been anathema to the priests.

<sup>64</sup> F. Dostoevsky, “Dva samoubiistva”, *Dnevnik pisatelja, Polnoe Sobranie*, vol. 23, p. 146. “Two Suicides,” *The Diary of a Writer*, p. 470. Emphasis in the text.

<sup>65</sup> See the Prologue which clearly takes on the structure of a fairy tale.

Beings such as Jeanne and her filiation are obviously not evoked in the Genesis of the Old Testament as it has come down to us. But Sand imagines another genesis which would not have been included in the orthodox text and therefore has become lost for posterity. Sand recounts a story which depicts inhabitants still living in the Garden of Eden, a paradise from which they were never cast out. It's a story that is missing in the Bible, of course. But Sand would have them take their place in Genesis:

Incapable of understanding evil, they do not see it. It is as if they lived in a cloud of ignorance; their existence is so to speak latent. Only their hearts feel themselves alive; their minds are as limited as primitive innocence: they slumber in the divine *cycle of Genesis*. It would seem, in a word, that original sin had not corrupted them, and that they were of *another race than the sons of Eve*.<sup>66</sup>

Another bloodline, then. Sand presents us with the invention of a new Genesis. The « cloud of ignorance » makes of its members beings who forgive those who persecute them because they are incapable of understanding evil. But these perfect beings cannot live long in the modern world. These country folk, limited in intelligence, asleep, innocent, and virtuous find their lack of intellectual power to be a sacred gift. But it also places them in a situation of mortal danger.

The profound message of *Jeanne* is both original and subversive. It insists on the primitive vision of an egalitarian society, which is just and devoid of violence, including sexual violence. The novel can be seen as a utopian text wrapped up in a shepherd's tale. The readers of 1844 did not perhaps fully understand the revolutionary scope of this story, recounted as a simple exposition of the archaic beliefs of a young peasant girl. Steeped in folklore, nourished by legends about the "fades" (her name for the fairies), about the "Grande Fade", Jeanne finishes as the sacrificial victim of the novel.

Jeanne's unusual nature – a being out of place and out of time – makes her an easy prey for many of the characters who surround her. Indeed, she is at first exploited by her aunt, La Grand' Gothe, and by her aunt's boyfriend, Raguet, then maligned by her employer, Madame de Boussac, and her employer's friend, Madame de Charmois, then finally assaulted by Mar-

<sup>66</sup> «Incapables de comprendre le mal, ils ne le voient point. Ils vivent comme dans un nuage d'ignorance ; leur existence est pour ainsi dire latente. Leur cœur seul se sent vivre ; leur esprit est borné comme la primitive innocence: il est endormi dans le *cycle divin* de la Genèse. On dirait, en un mot, que le péché originel ne les a pas flétris, et *qu'ils sont d'une autre race que les fils d'Ève*», *Jeanne*, p. 168. First emphasis is in the text; the second is mine.

sillat. As a character whose identity is connected to a perfect race in the past, which for the most part no longer exists – only Jeanne and her mother are left – Jeanne represents all those humble women who go to their deaths without complaint, without leaving a suicide note, sometimes even holding a sacred image or pronouncing words of some kind as a link to their archaic religion. Dostoevsky was very likely thinking of Jeanne when he wrote *The Meek One*<sup>67</sup>. He understood that Jeanne was a character who could not survive in the France of her time. In the same way, the young girl of Dostoevsky's *feuilleton* and the Meek One are figures whose very existence is under threat since they cannot cohabit with evil and are surrounded by evil in Saint Petersburg. Both Sand and Dostoevsky privileged this type of character as the bearer of a more just vision for a better future.

As a conclusion, I will cite a passage from Dostoevsky which comes from an 1862 article announcing the translation into Russian of Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. According to Dostoevsky, the fundamental thought of all 19<sup>th</sup> century art is "the rehabilitation of the humiliated and of all the pariahs rejected by society"<sup>68</sup>. In that light, one can propose that Angel, Aliosha, Jeanne and the Meek One embody all those insulted and marginalized characters that one finds in Sand's works (the unhappily married woman, the prostitute, the peasant, the simple-minded, the vagabond), as well as in Dostoevsky's works (the prostitutes, the peasants, the insane, the hallucinated, those haunted by suicide). And those characters are there to give us hope that someday, there will be a place for them in a future and more just society.



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#### ABSTRACT

George Sand and Dostoevsky are known for their highly intellectual characters. Sand's hallmark was to create heroines with rich intellectual lives, such as Lélia, Yseult de Villepreux, Myrza and even Isidora, the "intelligent courtesan." Dosto-

<sup>67</sup> It is true that Dostoevsky does not mention the novel is his "ot avtora" ("From the author"), where he concentrates on the "fantastic" form of his tale and compares it to Hugo's *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné*. But if Jeanne does not offer a "fantastic" form, its thematic aspects help us to elucidate the more opaque elements of the story.

<sup>68</sup> F. Dostoevsky, 'Predislovie k publikatsii perevoda romana V. Hugo, *Sobor parizhskoi bogomateri*,' in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 20, p. 28. (Preface to the publication of V. Hugo's novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*).

evsky's intellectuals are famous: Raskolnikov, Ippolit and Ivan Karamazov have provoked rich commentaries. But the two writers also created major characters who are best described as non-intellectual and meek. Dostoevsky's meek characters have been examined before, but never in the light of Sand's figures. The eponymous Jeanne and Angel in *Spiridion* occupy a unique position in Sand's fictional universe as embodiments of a just world view. Both novels had a significant impact on Dostoevsky. His version of Jeanne can be seen in *The Meek One*, a novella he published several months after his necrology of Sand in June 1876, in which he spoke of an "honest but inexperienced young feminine character, with that proud chastity which does not fear and cannot be soiled even by contact with vice." As for Sand's Angel, he prefigures Aliosha in *Brothers Karamazov*. What is the purpose of these innocent and non-intellectual characters? I will show that both Sand and Dostoevsky privileged this type of character as the bearer of a hopeful vision of a better future.

KEY WORDS

George Sand, Fiodor Dostoyevsky, character, ethics, woman

