

KATJA MIHURKO PONIŽ  
(University of Nova Gorica)

PRIMOŽ MLAČNIK  
(University of Nova Gorica)

## A FOR AURORE AND AMBIGUITY: THE RECEPTION OF GEORGE SAND IN THE SLOVENIAN LITERARY FIELD\*

**The first part of the title** of the article is borrowed from the afterword *A for Aurora, A for Autobiography* in the Slovenian translation of George Sand's seminal work *Histoire de ma vie*, published by the feminist publishing house Delta, marking the bicentenary of French writer's birth.<sup>1</sup> Analyzing the discourse on George Sand in the Slovenian literary field, we have observed a unique ambiguity compared to the discourse on other canonized authors and their Slovene reception. We argue that George Sand is a site of ambiguous discourse. Departing from the approaches of the renowned American historian Joan Wallach Scott, herself inspired by the Foucauldian epistemology, we are interested in how and why this discourse came into being, how the representations of George Sand were discursively established, and what contradictions are inherent in this debate.

### **What is in the name of a female author or the discursive power of gendered pseudonyms**

According to Wallach Scott, the significant postulate of feminist history is a critical understanding of „how history [actively] operates as a site of the production of gender knowledge”<sup>2</sup> or that historiography is not neutral and objective documentation of historical representations of the social organization of gender. Gender, the binary cultural organization of the biological

\* The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency for the project “Historical Interpretations of the 20th Century” (P6-0347).

<sup>1</sup> G. Sand, *Zgodba mojega življenja*, Ljubljana 2004.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York 1999, p. 10.

difference between men and women, is constructed along the lines of culturally specific norms, values, ideas, and identifications. Her thought is epistemologically based on Michel Foucault's quintessential understanding of discourse (as defined and elaborated in the majority of his writing) as a set of linguistic statements on a particular subject, producing culturally specific and legitimate knowledge, which supports the social power relations, the organization of social life, and the production of suitable subjective positions and identities.

While discursive objects, such as 'male' or 'female gender,' have a historically particular complex set of external non-linguistic discursive relations (institutions, norms, values, practices, events), conditioning the existence of systems statements about gender,<sup>3</sup> we will not explore the discursive relations of the Slovenian historical collection of statements about George Sand. Following Foucault<sup>4</sup> and Wallach Scott,<sup>5</sup> we argue that George Sand is a historical site of an ambiguous Slovenian discourse on the female gender. George Sand and her literature functioned as a discursive phenomenon in the Slovenian public sphere from the 19th century to the 21st century. Namely, it presented an ambiguous (counter)hegemonic semantic field that was used to affirm and oppose the conservative and liberal discourse on gender difference.

As explained in the lecture *What is an author?*, which Foucault held at the University of Sorbonne in 1969, an author's name can designate a discourse function, consecrating the discourse with an aura of legitimacy. Suppose canonical authors become "initiators of discursive practices." In that case, an author's name can "characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society,"<sup>6</sup> but it "does not operate uniformly in all discourses."<sup>7</sup> It seems that Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin and many other female writers in the past were intensely aware of the author's function, using male literary pseudonyms to achieve gender-equal literary consecration.

In the female historical tradition of using male pen names or pseudonyms, such practices have authorized the literary text as more legitimate than signing it with their female names. They imbued it with the aura of solemnity, increased its chance of male readership and consumption, and opened wom-

<sup>3</sup> M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London 2002, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> J. Wallach Scott, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, New York 1980, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> M. Foucault *Archaeology...*, p. 130.

en's writing to a man-to-man criticism instead of "meaningless flattery."<sup>8</sup> Writing under male pseudonyms, the female writers of the 19th century often used this principle to separate the public self from the private self to keep the feminine identity pure and free from tarnished by the market.<sup>9</sup> Conforming to the patriarchal literary standard, the male authorization of literature empowered women writers, symbolically and literary, inhabiting a dominant, omniscient, or confident male position. Many women used a male pseudonym either for its imaginative capacity and the plurality of voices inherent to the institution of the author/narrator or, performatively, to strengthen their feminine or queer identities. Female writers authorized their literature by using a male pseudonym according to the historical symbolic power attributed to male names and the symbolic power of the literary imagination of female writers. However, from a historical perspective, dual names or identities of writers such as George Sand paradoxically became signifiers, simultaneously liberated from original authorizing functions and meanings and linked with the authorization of different developing discourses.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare posed a pulsating question: "What's in a name?" and answered it: "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."<sup>10</sup> In the context of George Sand and her work expressing the legitimizing function of the Slovenian conservative and liberal discourses on the female gender, we can hardly agree with Shakespeare's conviction that the name is irrelevant in light of the thing's essence. Literature from male or female authors does 'not smell just as sweet' under a different name. Names are imbued by the author's alter-egos, cultural history, and readers' projections. The evidence of other receptions and the discursive usage of George Sand's name suggests that her name (and literature) did not radiate the same fragrance for all Slovenians in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. In the continuation, we will present our findings of the historical uses of the name, persona, and literature of George Sand concerning the authorization of the Slovenian conservative and liberal discourses on gender.

### **The discourse of the 19th Century. A taboo breaker and a role model**

Since George Sand was on the index of forbidden books in the Habsburg monarchy in the Vormärz period,<sup>11</sup> it is pretty logical that we have no trace of her reception in this period. The first mention of the name George Sand

<sup>8</sup> M. Thain, *'Michael Field.' Poetry, Aestheticism and the Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge 2009, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, San Diego, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> N. Bachleitner, *Die literarische Zensur in Österreich von 1751 bis 1848*, Wien-

in the Slovenian press dates back to 1876, when an obituary written by the Slovenian writer Pavlina Pajk was published in the journal *Zora*. The name George Sand was not unknown to the readers of this magazine, as newspapers and magazines in German were also posted on the territory of present-day Slovenia (then the Habsburg monarchy). The first mention in a German newspaper published in Ljubljana dates from 1840; there, we read the regular reports about the writer smoking cigars and wearing men's clothes. These first texts about Sand are short articles, also in the form of anecdotes. Only Pavlina Pajk's obituary is a longer text, which, at the same time, gives a different view of the French writer.<sup>12</sup>

Pavlina Pajk writes that George Sand's literary works are full of philosophical reflections, wit, fierce energy, and high idealism. Pajk also uses Sand's example to explain the differences between the works of male and female writers and concludes that genius is not defined by gender or class.<sup>13</sup> In the 19th century, Slovenian male writers also wrote about Sand's literary work. Janko Kersnik wrote that a new period in French literature began with her.<sup>14</sup> The reflections on Sand by Josip Jurčič, the most famous Slovenian representative of realism, also introduce Sand as a groundbreaking author. In 1868, Jurčič wrote some thoughts on George Sand's heroines in his notebook. He described them as female Don Juans, who "throw men like squeezed oranges away and fly like bees from flower to flower, never satisfied."<sup>15</sup> He said that Slovenians didn't like that because they have morals embedded in their systems, and in this regard, they differ from the French.<sup>16</sup>

George Sand is also mentioned in the works of other respected late 19th-century writers. Her books can be found (mainly in German) in various lending library catalogs. Thus, we can conclude that she was well-known to the reading public in Ljubljana then.<sup>17</sup> The first translation of Sand's novel dated from 1875 and was called *Valentine* (1875), but it was never published. This is probably because the publication of this translation was not desired at that time.<sup>18</sup>

Weimar-Köln 2017, pp. 347, 379–80. The author states that 17 of her novels and her play *Les Missisipiens* (1840) were forbidden.

<sup>12</sup> T. Badalič, *Reception of European women writers in Slovenian multicultural territory of the 19th Century until the end of the First World War: dissertation*, Nova Gorica 2014, pp. 50–2.

<sup>13</sup> P. Pajk, 'George Sand,' *Zora*, 17 (1876), p. 276.

<sup>14</sup> J. Kersnik, "Razvoj svetovne poezije," *Slovenski narod* 11/7 (1878), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> J. Jurčič, *Zbrano delo* (Ljubljana, DZS, 1953), p. 338.

<sup>16</sup> J. Jurčič, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

<sup>17</sup> T. Badalič, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 141.

At the end of the 19th century, we record a Slovene contribution to the so-called Georgesandism. Writer Zofka Kveder walked around Trieste in a man's suit and smoked cigarettes.<sup>19</sup> How provocative this was for middle-class society is revealed in the letter to Kveder by her friend Marica Nadlišek. Nadlišek asks Kveder not to come to her house in the man's suit.

The reception of George Sand in the 19th century shows how, on the one hand, she was appropriated by the emerging feminist discourse, which saw her as a transgressive and successful author. In the Catholic-influenced Slovenian society of the 19th century, however, any transcendence of femininity, as defined by conservatism, still strongly influenced by the national-constructionist ideology, also meant a decisive rejection of the author who portrayed female figures who opposed this ideology.

### **The Discourse of the 20th Century: Feminisation of the Name George Sand, Masculinisation of her Literary Talent and Cultural Polarisation**

A similar reception continued at the beginning of the 20th century; several articles were published that emphasized her love life during the centenary of Sand's birth. In the Catholic magazine *Dom in svet*, it was written that her works were harmful to society.<sup>20</sup> The paper titled *Review of the Main Representatives of French Women's Literature* was published in 1912. The author praises her *roman champêtre*, as he states that she wrote masterpieces in the "idyllic genre" and then lists all three *romans champêtres*.<sup>21</sup>

There is also an exciting reception about the Slovenian use of her surname. Around the turn of the century, the suffix *-ovka* (*Sandovka*) is occasionally found in articles about Sand. The suffix *-ovka* connotes that the person belongs to someone; it is used to express the status of a wife or a daughter. Such an addition to the surname was common in the rural regions. Still, it was also used in the discourse on German writer Eugenie John Marlitt (*Marlittovka*) and the already mentioned Pavlina Pajk (*Pajkovka*). Both women writers were mocked for their sentimentality, and using this suffix was undoubtedly intended to devalue their writings. Therefore, we can assume that Sand was perceived similarly by those who named her *Sandovka*. In the 1920s and 30s, the suffix *-ova* was often added to female surnames in Slovenian (*Sandova*), but in the case of George Sand, we still

<sup>19</sup> K. Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna: Zofka Kveder in podobe ženskosti*, Ljubljana 2003, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> 'George Sand,' *Dom in svet* 17/8 (1904), p. 510.

<sup>21</sup> A. Debeljak, 'Pregled glavnih zastopnic francoskega slovstva,' *Slovenska žena* 1/1 (1912), p. 55.

find the suffix *-ovka*.<sup>22</sup> The use of this form has clear performative and connotative aims. A significant aspect of the suffix *-ovka* is the feminization of a male-sounding surname, George Sand. It is as if the authors who named her this way wanted to subdue and expose the female subject under the male pseudonym to the male-sounding surname from which the female subject originates only as a suffix, as an addition to the fictional or absent male subject. The suffix is absurd since there are no male subjects or carriers of the name chosen by the female subject.

Interestingly, only the surname is used in one of the articles written on the fiftieth anniversary of her death, which is rare in Slovenian even today.<sup>23</sup> Usually, women in Slovenian are addressed by their first and last names or, if only the surname is used, the suffix *-ova* is added. Slovenian's use of only the surname is understood as a feminist act and is rejected by many as something strange and unnatural in the Slovenian language. Perhaps the female writer Sand and her literary talent could only be praised using the female derivative *Sandova* for the above reasoning.

As our research showed, in the interwar period, George Sand's name frequently appeared in short anecdotes and review articles on French literature. Still, there are also longer articles that mention her. In the article from 1926, George Sand is described as a great fighter of French literature who has a high status in French culture, being one of those rare women who crossed borders and left a unique stamp of the era in her work and influenced other writers. Miran Jarc, the article's author, writes more extensively about *Indiana* and *Lelia* while only mentioning the *romans champêtres*.<sup>24</sup> However, he adds that they were her "most enduring and powerful works." Two more portraits of George Sand were published in the interwar period. In 1925, the women's magazine *Ženski svet* published a lengthy article by Marica Nadlišek Bartol, one of the first Slovenian women writers and the founding editor of the first women's magazine *Slovenka*. Sand is presented as an extraordinary personality and an influential writer who enriched French literature.<sup>25</sup> On

<sup>22</sup> In the Slovenian language, the suffix *-ovka* (possibly non-coincidentally) is etymologically close to *psovka* (swear word), while *psovka* is close to *psica* (bitch). *-ovka* also carries a connotative and associative trait of *lovka* (female hunter) or even *lovača* (whore). In general, the suffix *-ovka* as the male version *-ovec* is oriented towards classifying types and mapping territories of belonging. However, it can have a condescending and demeaning undertone, rendering the subject a member of a (un)desired group of people. For example, female fans of George Sand could be signified as *sandovke* by a disapproving speaker.

<sup>23</sup> M. Jarc, 'George Sand,' *Jutro* 1926, June 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 136, 11.

<sup>25</sup> M. Nadlišek Bartol, 'George Sand,' *Ženski svet* 3/5 (1925), pp. 113-7.

the other hand, in the magazine *Domači prijatelj*, which was intended for a more comprehensive reading public, she is described as a strange, strong, authoritarian, wild, and rampant woman, but also as “good, incapable of hostility and evil, endowed with maternal inclination.”<sup>26</sup>

We do not note any significant changes in Sand’s reception in the first years of the communist regime. In the 1950s, the traditional discourse still dominated the articles about Sand. For example, the title of an article about George Sand reads *George Sand smoked cigars*,<sup>27</sup> but there are deviations in how Sand was described in this period. In the book *Orthography of the Slovene Language* (1950),<sup>28</sup> for which the term dictionary would be more appropriate, we also find an entry on George Sand. There is an interesting word that I have not found in any article related to George Sand. Researching the entire digitized corpus of Slovenian journals and books also yielded no results. The word *sandovka* appears in this entry, written with a small initial letter and with the following meaning: “*sandovka* is a story, a tale along the lines of George Sand,” which presents minor discursive progress toward the acknowledgment of her literary talent or innovation, in light of the harmful use of the term *Sandovka* in the past. In the 1962 edition, the word *feuilleton* was added: “story, *feuilleton*, a narrative along the lines of Sand,”<sup>29</sup> which means that when the editors revised the dictionary for the new publication, the word *sandovka* did not seem unusual. This word refers to a genre known in French as *roman champêtre*, but as mentioned above, we could not find out who included this word in the dictionary and why.<sup>30</sup>

In 1951, the first translation of George Sand into Slovenian – *La Petite Fadette* – was finally published, and three reviews appeared in Slovenian newspapers soon after. In the daily *Ljudska pravica*, the critic writes that it is a work from the cycle of *roman champêtre* and adds that *La Petite Fadette* is a naive but amiable and warmly told story in which the social idea resonates.<sup>31</sup>

A more detailed review appeared in the cultural journal *Nova obzorja*.

<sup>26</sup> G. Sandova, *Domači prijatelj* 14/8 (1940), p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> ‘George Sand je kadila cigare,’ *Primorski dnevnik* 1957, No. 34, February, 8, 3.

<sup>28</sup> F. Ramovš, *Slovenski pravopis*, Ljubljana 1950.

<sup>29</sup> A. Bajec, *Slovenski pravopis*, Ljubljana 1962), p. 766.

<sup>30</sup> We sought the opinion of Dr. Helena Dobrovoljc from the Fran Ramovš Institute ZRC SAZU, who reviewed the archive of cards with the words in the dictionary. The word’s etymology can also be seen from these cards, but the card with this entry has not been preserved. We also consulted Dr. Miran Hladnik, who has explored Slovenian *roman champêtre*, and he wrote that he had never come upon this word in his research.

<sup>31</sup> M. Gliha, ‘George Sand: *Mala Fadette*,’ *Ljudska pravica* 1951, No. 152, June 30, p. 3.



The reviewer summarised George Sand's life without focusing on her love life, wrote about her literary works, and concentrated on the *roman champêtre*. He mentions *La Mare au diable* as Sand's best work and adds that the *romans champêtres* are the most beautiful works George Sand wrote. The reviewer also states that her works are characterized by great ingenuity, vivid imagination, kindness, love for people, desire for their welfare, and realistic descriptions. Furthermore, the critic points out the novel's weaknesses and the translation, arguing that the translator has added a sentence here and there that is not in the original. The three-page critique is the first detailed literary-critical response focusing on George Sand's literary work rather than her personal life. A third review singles out George Sand as a student of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The reviewer writes that George Sand portrayed eccentric people. This is evident in *La Petite Fadette*, which he believes is a brilliantly constructed and even better-written story.<sup>32</sup>

It looks pretty likely that the translation also encouraged *La Petite Fadette*'s inclusion in the 7th-grade syllabus, for it is found in the curriculum that was in effect between 1959 and 1975.

We can only speculate whether the first Slovenian translation and its associated reviews and inclusion in the syllabus led Dušan Pirjevec, an eminent professor of comparative literature at the University of Ljubljana, to label George Sand as an author with little artistic potential. In his research of Ivan Cankar, the central representative of Slovenian modernism, he wanted to show that the existence of realistic, even socialist elements in his work did not influence the artistic value of his works. He justified this with the following argument: "It is well known that Marx and Engels greatly appreciated the art of Balzac. However, the author of *The Human Comedy* was anything but a progressive thinker. And it is known that George Sand sympathized with socialism for a while. However, her novels gained nothing in artistic power. Minna Kautsky was even a convinced socialist. She wrote a socialist novel, but it is still bad, and Engels criticized it sharply".<sup>33</sup>

One could reasonably argue that Pirjevec initially attempted to justify the universal thesis (without its obvious gendering) that there is no rectilinear relationship between the quality of literature and the author's political convictions. However, the exemplary analogy becomes partial and gendered because it lacks the fourth binary element. Besides Balzac (male, "good" writer, reactionary social thought), Sand (female, "bad" writer, progressive social thought), and Kautsky (female, "bad," progressive social thought), the fourth example of his binarism should have been rounded off

<sup>32</sup> J. Stabej, 'George Sand: *Mala Fadette*,' *Nova obzorja* 1951, No. 3, pp. 684–6.

<sup>33</sup> D. Pirjevec, 'Boj za Cankarjevo podobo,' *Naša sodobnost* 1954, No. 10, p. 1115.



by a “bad” male writer of progressive social thought. Because Pirjevec did not name a bad socialist male writer, his analogy proves to be aimed more toward a gendered view of female writers than toward a successful formulation of a literary-political universality. The incomplete polarisation, the semantic omission or repression, then starts functioning as the inner lever of a conservative patriarchal discourse on gender, or as Foucault wrote: „Silence itself – the thing one declines to say or is forbidden to name [...] is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which a strict boundary separates it than an element that functions alongside the things said. [...] There is not one but many silences, which are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, instead of the argument of independence between “good” literature and “good” politics, Pirjevec writes between the lines that a “good” male writer is “good” regardless of his ideological orientation, while sympathy for a particular option does not help a lousy writer. However, one man is an example of a good writer, and two women present examples of less artistically appreciated writers. The final and most general ideological formula is then: male writers are more remarkable than female writers.

The name George Sand also appears in the 1958 production of Polish playwright Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz’s *The Summer in Nohant* (1936), in which George Sand is one of the main characters. One reviewer of the Slovenian performance wrote that the Polish playwright had misunderstood the relationship between George Sand and Fryderyk Chopin since it was not a struggle between two artists – a Pole and a Frenchwoman – but between a man and a woman. The central conflict arises, according to the critic, “from the efforts of a masculine, intelligent woman to exercise guardianship over the more feminine, emotional mistress, on the one hand, and from the constant attempts of this beloved artist to break out of this guardianship.”<sup>35</sup> These words show that even though the translation of *La Petite Fadette* opened up the space for a more profound reception of George Sand as an author, her image of a dominant lover of younger men still prevails in the Slovenian discourse on her.

In 1958, a Slovenian translation of the biography by André Maurois, *Lélia ou La vie de George Sand*, was published, bringing the life of George Sand to a broader audience. As early as 1959, *Romani* published the complete novel *Indiana* in sixteen installments. The novel was published in the book in 1966 (and reprinted in 1981). The translation of *Indiana* did not find much

<sup>34</sup> M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, New York 1978, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> V. Kralj, ‘Gledališče – Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Poletje v Nohantu*,’ *Naša sodobnost* 1958, 60/5, p. 477.

resonance in the press. Only in the magazine *Knjiga* is there short notice about publishing the novel. In the sixth decade of the 20th century, the name of George Sand appears in an article about the Slovenian writer Ivan Tavčar, with the remark that the latter did not have a reasonable opinion of her.<sup>36</sup>

In 1970, Jordan Tomšič's dramatic text *Napoleon in srečni morilec* (*Napoleon and the Happy Assassin*) was published in the prestigious literary magazine *Problemi*, subtitled as a pretentious detective play. Ionesco's absurdist theatre inspired the author. In the play, Luddism echoes. George Sand is one of the *dramatis personae*. Napoleon is assigned the role of the chief magistrate, which he finds himself in after his failures. At the beginning of the play, it is said, "Any resemblance of one person to another is purely accidental."<sup>37</sup> But still, in the *Didascalia*, we read that George Sand, a kind of a scribe in the play, and the female secretary are in mini-skirts. George Sand is also in charge of making coffee. From her comments, it appears that she wants to be Napoleon's wife so that, as she says, he would always be clean, pressed, and perfumed. While at work, she writes a novel about Fadette. During the play, she has sexual intercourse with the following characters that appear in the play: assassin, guards, and Napoleon. Her promiscuity is often addressed. Her lack of empathy towards women is particularly striking. When it comes to a woman who refuses to consent to sexual intercourse without love, George Sand calls her "a depraved, hysterical, introverted intellectual! A sick, neurotic, unrelaxed creature!"<sup>38</sup>

Although the play is written like Luddism and absurdist theatre, no other character is so much subject to ridicule. Napoleon acts like someone seeking the attention of anyone who crosses his path. His replicas are laconic. From them springs the boredom of life. George Sand's replicas accumulate a contempt for another woman that, at some points, seems like hate speech. She and the other woman in question are subject to ridicule. Even if we have to read and interpret the play with the genre in which it was written, it is undeniable that the following qualities are projected into a woman named George Sand: sexual insatiability, desire to please a man, submissiveness to a man, instability and ridiculous attitude towards another woman.

<sup>36</sup> B. Berčič, 'Mladostni lik Ivana Tavčarja,' *Loški razgledi* 1965, 12/1, p. 48.

<sup>37</sup> J. Tomšič, 'Napoleon ali srečni morilec. Kriminalna zgodba brez pretenzij,' *Problemi* 1970, 8/88, pp. 47-57.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

### 21st century: the feminist legacy of George Sand

In 2000, a lengthy article appeared in *Glamur* fashion magazine in which Sand is described in the title as “a romantic warrior.”<sup>39</sup> The article continues with the presentation of her literary works. In 2004, with the translation of *Histoire de ma vie* and especially with the afterword by the editor and renowned philosopher Prof. Eva D. Bahovec, Sand was introduced to the Slovenian readership as one of the significant figures of the feminist tradition. The translation was published by the feminist publishing house, which had already published Simone de Beauvoir, Christine de Pisan, and Marie de France. Eva D. Bahovec sees *Histoire de ma vie* as an autobiographical work representing a precious, even privileged, dimension of writing for the feminist tradition. Why is George Sand so important to feminist writing? Bahovec says that Sand writes about the articulation of female desire, which is all too often silenced, distorted, described as hysterical, or forced into a too narrow framework of heterosexual marriage under the conditions of patriarchy. Sand’s articulation of female desire brings her closer to feminist demands. For Eva D. Bahovec, Aurore is not only George Sand’s real name but also symbolically represents the dawn, one of the starting points of the feminist legacy.<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately, neither the translation of *Histoire de ma vie* nor the study published in the book led to a radical change in the reception of George Sand in the Slovenian cultural field. In 2012, an article called *TOP Ten Naughty Girls of the Literary World* was published on the web portal with broad coverage. Nothing is missing in the short article that would not have appeared so often within the conservative discourse: the pseudonym, men’s clothes, smoking, and love affairs all find a place in the short article.<sup>41</sup>

In 2013, the last translation was published, *La Mare au diable*, a text celebrating rural life – a strong connection with rural life that characterizes Slovenian society even in the 20th century – and heterosexual marriage. At the time of publication, only one lengthy review was published, summarising a biography with familiar emphases at the beginning of the evaluation: male pseudonym, the success of her works, earning money with writing, and many love affairs.<sup>42</sup>

In 2018, Sand is mentioned in an article that satirically criticizes attempts to make the Slovenian language more inclusive regarding gender identity.

<sup>39</sup> A. Ažber, ‘George Sand: romantična bojevnica,’ *Glamur* 2000, 46, November, p. 245.

<sup>40</sup> E.D. Bahovec, ‘Spremna beseda’ in G. Sand, *Zgodba...*, pp. 291–301.

<sup>41</sup> I.J., *TOP 10 porednih deklet literarnega sveta*, (2012), <https://siol.net/trendi/top-deset/top-10-porednih-deklet-literarnega-sveta-121075> (acc. 2023–09–09).

<sup>42</sup> I. Gedrih, ‘Literarni oris francoskih podeželskih šeg: George Sand – Hudičeva mlaka,’ *Zvon* 2014, vol. 17, No. 3/4, pp. 63–4.

Then, the voices were raised that it was high time to overcome using masculine forms as generic for both genders. The article's author calls the women who have raised their voices "modern Georginas," alluding to George Sand and George Eliot. She also uses George Sand as an example of a woman who, although she fought for equality, conformed to society by flirting in a feminine way. In contrast, modern women campaigners do not want to imitate her. Consequently, the article's author claims their commitment to inclusive language is an "unfortunate experiment."<sup>43</sup> This decade also saw a short article in *Naša žena* introducing George Sand as an essential French writer.<sup>44</sup> Her name also appears in the novel *Razpoložena za Pariz (In the Mood for Paris, 2015)* by the Slovenian writer Vesna Milek, who comes across traces of George Sand in her strolling through the streets of Paris, rendering the French writer once again as the (de) legitimizing author function in the Slovenian literary field.

### Conclusion

In Slovenia, two discourses on the position of women in society have emerged since the nineteenth century: a Catholic discourse, which celebrates women as wives and mothers and sees women's mission and the fulfillment of their desires in heterosexual marriage and motherhood, and a feminist discourse which calls for a different position of women in society, demanding the recognition of their free choice in choosing a partner and in entering the spaces where they can develop their intellectual and artistic potential.

As we have tried to show, George Sand, used as the author function, is precisely where these two discourses intersect. No other female writer is mentioned in the Slovenian press as often as George Sand. Therefore, the role of George Sand in Slovenian cultural space can be understood in the same way as the role of Olympe de Gouges, Jeanne Deroin, Hubertine Auclert, and Madeleine Pelletie, who are, as Joan Wallach Scott argues, "historical locations or markers – where crucial political and cultural struggles are played out."<sup>45</sup>

The Slovenian discourse on George Sand, which could be treated as part of a broader discourse on sexuality, was established by the prohibition of her books in the Habsburg monarchy, which gave rise to short articles and anecdotes in the press of the 18th and 19th centuries, focusing on her gender norms breaking *modus vivendi*. In the second part and at the end of the 19th

<sup>43</sup> P. Malovrh, 'Eksperiment časa,' *Del*, 2018, 3, June, <https://www.delo.si/mnenja/komentarji/dobro-jutro-eksperiment-casa/> (acc. 2023-09-09).

<sup>44</sup> A. Koželj, 'Pisateljica in muza: George Sand,' *Naša žena, Ženska* 2020, No. 1, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> J. Wallach Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

century, when George Sand became an object of literary criticism, which focused on the artistic and intellectual qualities of her work, she became a site of cultural polarisation between liberal Slovenian feminists who saw her as a role model, and the conservative literary critics who used her to discredit the changing perceptions of womanhood. This fundamental discursive opposition continued in the 20th century, leading to a few Slovenian translations, adaptations of her literary work, and, consequently, philosophical feminist investigations. The central contradiction of the discourse on George Sand in the Slovenian literary field is that with the recognition of her literary talent came the rise of gendered and sexist *ad hominem* interpretations and articulations. Even in the 21st century, they focus predominantly on the personal side of George Sand's life and work. From the perspective of gender-biased literary perceptions, they also exhibit the Slovenian literary canon's exclusionary tendencies, shared by other prominent female authors.



Katja Mihurko Poniž (University of Nova Gorica)

ORCID: 0000-0003-4225-0422, e-mail: katja.mihurko.poniz@ung.si

Primož Mlačnik (University of Nova Gorica)

ORCID: 0000-0001-7701-1064, e-mail: primoz.mlacnik@ung.si

#### ABSTRACT

The discourse on Aurora Dupin / George Sand in the Slovenian cultural field of the long 19th century is ambiguous. While in various press articles, we mostly find only mentions and anecdotes about the writer who broke with the conventions of femininity, her work profoundly influenced the literary development of Slovenian women writers, primarily the essential Slovenian female novelist of the 19th century, Pavlina Pajk. Even though much has been written about George Sand in the Slovenian cultural field, the first translation did not appear until 1951. It was a *La Petite Fadette* translation followed by only two other translations. Sand, perceived as a taboo breaker in the 19th century, was introduced to the Slovenian audience in the second half of the 20th century through translations as an author of sentimental prose with a rural love theme. In 2004, however, a turn followed the line of Sand's ambiguous reception in the 19th and 20th centuries. With the translation of *Histoire de ma vie*, and especially with the afterword by the editor and renowned philosopher Prof. Eva D. Bahovec, Sand was introduced to the Slovenian readership as one of the significant figures of the feminist tradition. How is George Sand received today? Is she still present in the Slovenian cultural space, and what lies behind the ambiguity of her reception? This article tries to answer these questions.

#### KEY WORDS

George Sand, Slovenian literature, feminism, translation, reception