

RAYYAN DABBOUS

(University of Toronto)

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE:
GEORGE SAND AND LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ**Introduction**

Regarding George Sand's relationship to Eastern Europe, one would not automatically bring up Lou Andreas-Salomé. Though obvious similarities come to mind when we evaluate the lives of both women, such as their independent lifestyles, provocative writings, or famous lovers, it is unclear whether Andreas-Salomé possessed more than a superficial knowledge of Sand's work. There were certainly several occasions for the Russian-born novelist-turned-psychoanalyst to learn about Sand: at the tongue of Friedrich Nietzsche or Leo Tolstoy, both of whom had strong negative feelings about the French author,¹ during her stay in Paris in 1894, and within Freud's circle, when Helene Deutsch presented about the prolific novelist.²

If Sand occupied only the margins of Andreas-Salomé's thinking, it would suit my identification of an *epistemology of the countryside* in their works. I mean by that phrase a search of knowledge from the margins: if the city or urban hubs like London or Paris claim to be the center of knowledge, the ideal place for research and inquiry, we would according to that epistemology have to move to the countryside. The center sees everything around it – except itself.

George Sand's later works, as we know, are often wrongly lumped together as her rustic or pastoral novels, a grouping which, so is said, succeeded her earlier romantic and socialist periods (1830s–1840s). Though one is normally skeptical about seeing Sand's life as a trilogy, where her renewed interest in nature and the natural sciences emerged last and victorious, it

¹ For Sand–Tolstoy, see H. McLean, 'A Woman's Place... The Young Tolstoy and the *Woman Question*' in *In Quest of Tolstoy*, Boston 2008, pp. 105–16. For Sand–Nietzsche, see R.P. Rosenberg, 'Nietzsche and George Sand,' *Germanic Review* 10, (1935), pp. 260–6.

² See H. Deutsch, 'Ein Frauenschicksal: George Sand' in: *Imago: Zeitschrift für psychoanalytische Psychologie, ihre Grenzgebiete und Anwendungen* 1928, pp. 334–57.

benefits my assessment of Lou Andreas-Salomé whose romantic and feminist periods (1880s–1890s) also seemed to end with her commitment to another arguable science, psychoanalysis. Is psychoanalysis a wide gaze from the countryside? Is the countryside an ideal place to psychoanalyze?

My paper stems from the suspicion that Sand and Andreas-Salomé, in the last phase of their lives, stepped into the countryside – literally and metaphorically – to procure a more rigorous epistemological or scientific toolkit. I am not fully invested in that claim yet. For the time being, I will only identify three epistemological benefits present in Sand’s and Andreas-Salomé’s descriptions of the French and Russian countryside: “how happy the man of the fields”³ whose sense of observation is empowering, aversive to presumptions, and holistic.

1. – How happy the man of the fields... who can see but still act!

Knowledge is not power; Lélia answered. To re-learn is not to move forward; to see is not to live. Who will restore for us the power to act and especially the art of embracing and conserving?⁴

The claim of George Sand’s character is a fitting starting point to our discussion of epistemology: who better to begin refuting than Francis Bacon, regarded as an early theorizer of the experimental method,⁵ the pillar of which is observation, and to whom we credit the view that knowledge is power? Stephen Jay Gould, paleontologist and science writer, thought psychoanalysis challenged the Baconian doctrine: “as Freud observed, our relationship with science must be paradoxical because we are forced to pay an almost intolerable price for each major gain in knowledge and power.”⁶ Due to the associative process of information-processing and storage, every new piece of knowledge gained is immediately tied to a whole new unknown set of conscious and unconscious content. Upon opening one door we may find ourselves in a maze: gained knowledge may paradoxically result in a kind of loss, an epistemological disorientation. “Perhaps the rich-

³ G. Sand, *La Mare au Diable*, Paris 1889, p. 10. My translation: «O heureux l’homme des champs, s’il connaissait son bonheur!»

⁴ G. Sand, *Lélia*, P. Reboul (éd.), Paris 1960, p. 120. My translation: «Savoir, ce n’est pas pouvoir, répondit Lélia. Rapprendre, ce n’est pas avancer; voir, ce n’est pas vivre. Qui nous rendra la puissance d’agir, et surtout l’art de jouir et de conserver?»

⁵ See D. Jalobeanu, *The art of experimental natural history: Francis Bacon in context*, Ocala 2015.

⁶ S.J. Gould, *Wonderful life: the Burgess Shale and the nature of history*, London 1990, p. 44.

er, the broader one's personal disposition," Andreas-Salomé thought, "the more guilt there is, and the more pain."⁷ Likewise, Lélia, in an unpublished fragment, had also found pain and powerlessness amid the maze of knowledge: "We suffer a pain and misery that is reserved for generations who are yet to take out the spikes and extract the poison from the uncultivated fields of the truth."⁸

Is the man of the countryside, bothered by another kind of uncultivated fields, still capable of the power to "move forward," "see," "act and especially the art of embracing and conserving"? The Janus-faced attitude Lélia described requires a more nuanced understanding of action, sight, power, and conservatism. A key text to recruit is Hannah Arendt's *Between Past and Future*, where power and action, in the Roman view, are defined as a collective tribute to the founding of Rome.⁹ Power is conservative in a literal sense for Arendt: its actions obey the past. Only the historian dwelling in the future, in Arendt's view, can judge whether these actions are genuinely rooted in a past chain of events.

Sand had bestowed a great political honor to "the peasant [who] is thus, if you will, the only historian remaining of prehistoric times."¹⁰ If we bring Sand and Andreas-Salomé in conversation with Arendt, the historian or peasant in his synthesis of various pieces of knowledge is empowered only when he is forbidden from judging about the future.¹¹ In Andreas-Salomé's response to Nietzsche's letter,¹² where he had been listing their common traits, she warned him that whereas he sought in knowledge the ingredients of a stronger, newer self; the basis for whom he may become; she only sought in them a *confirmation* of whom she had always been. Andreas-Salomé-Nietzsche here are Janus-faced too: his gaze is forward, hers backward. Yet "to re-learn is not to move forward" advised Lélia, a paralysis Sand later diagnosed in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*:

⁷ L. Andreas-Salomé, 'Anal and Sexual,' trans. S. Pearl Brilmyer and F. Trentin in *Psychoanalysis and History* 2022, p. 26.

⁸ G. Sand, *Lélia*, p. 550. My translation: «Nous subissons la douleur et la misère, réservées aux générations qui n'ont encore servi qu'à arracher les épines et à extraire les poisons du champ inculte de la vérité.»

⁹ H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York 1961, p. 98.

¹⁰ G. Sand, *Légendes Rustiques*, Paris 1980, p. 3. My translation: «Le paysan est donc, si l'on peut ainsi dire, le seul historien qui nous reste des temps antéhistoriques.»

¹¹ H. Arendt, 'The Difficulties of Understanding' in *The Journal of Continental Philosophy* 2020, pp. 51–2.

¹² See E. Pfeiffer, *Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Rée, Lou von Salomé: correspondence*, Paris 1979.

In those moments [when (re)learning] Pierre Huguenin felt himself king of the world; but when he found upon his pensive brow, upon his dry and bruised hands, the eternal marks of his slave's chains, burning tears fell from his eyes.¹³

Should Pierre Huguenin have been true to his rural up-bringing and elected himself a historian, rather than a "prophet turned backward"¹⁴ as Arendt put it? Would his "nobility of nature" and "nature in a manner princely"¹⁵ lingered with him longer had he set out to *confirm* these past elements, rather than abandon them upon setting his sight forward?

The first epistemological benefit of the countryside: how happy the man of the fields, who can evaluate past data and act based on his observations. Notice how Sand is not anti-Baconian even if her character rejected his motto. In *Antonia*, Sand recognized how the men of the Enlightenment had rightly "brought astronomy out of astrology, chemistry out of alchemy, and, in every domain of human knowledge, experimental analysis from blind prejudice."¹⁶ Observation based on the past is critical and beneficial for Sand – until the observer is taken by a "vertigo of the future."¹⁷ Likewise, "the more he is entwined with the old," Andreas-Salomé wrote about Nietzsche, "the more forceful is his leap into the new."¹⁸ Yet force is not synonymous with power according to Hannah Arendt, who had also qualified thinking without judging as a kind of vertigo.¹⁹

Thus the man of the fields, a historian, therefore a judge, would not feel "a complete uprooting from familiar soil"²⁰ as Nietzsche experienced whenever he came to think. The countryside becomes a fertile soil from which to observe: individuals seeking knowledge there are not uprooted but like "plants remain in the earth, despite their contrary growth toward the light."²¹ Practically speaking, one can learn and judge what one has learned, while

¹³ G. Sand, *The Journeyman Joiner; or, The Compagnon of Tour of France*, trans. F.G. Shaw, New York 1976, p. 38. «Dans ces moments-là Pierre Huguenin se sentait le roi du monde; mais lorsqu'il retrouvait sur son front pensif, sur ses mains sèches et meurtries, les éternels stigmates de sa chaîne d'esclave, des larmes brûlantes coulaient de ses yeux.»

¹⁴ H. Arendt, "The Difficulties of Understanding," p. 51.

¹⁵ G. Sand, *The Journeyman Joiner; or, The Compagnon of Tour of France*, p. 38.

¹⁶ G. Sand, 'Antonia.' in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1862, vol. 42, p. 110.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ L. Andreas-Salomé, *Nietzsche*, trans. S. Mandel, Black Swan Books 1988, p. 59.

¹⁹ See H. Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, New York 1978.

²⁰ L. Andreas-Salomé, *Nietzsche*, p. 59.

²¹ L. Andreas-Salomé, 'The Dual Orientation of Narcissism,' *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 1962, vol. 31, p. 4.

moving forward without stumbling into scientific error at the hands of the vertigo that any thinking without judging may cause.

Psychoanalysis is as much a thinking exercise as a judgement:²² precisely by erring in judgement may the psychoanalyst and the patient work together with the fertile associations brought about by that error. Hence Sand's retort to her friend Juliette Lamber that science inflamed her rather than cooled her down:²³ a cooling would mark the death of science, the end of knowledge with or without error, rather than their relentless verification.

2. – How happy the man of the fields... who presumes less!

This Russian God does not reign as a strange abstract authority... He cannot prevent or improve all things; he can only represent closeness and intimacy for all time... This all-pervasive sense of security, this omnipresence, leads to a confidence in the surroundings.²⁴

There is an epistemological benefit in a Russian God that is all-pervasive: by existing everywhere, an equality in perception pervades with his omnipresence. When all objects become affected by the divine, none of them stands out; the observer will not presume that any of them carries more scientific promise than the other. Sand once defined her faith as a "mix of spiritualism and pantheism"²⁵ and the visual function of the latter is clear in Michelet's confusion toward Sand's "skeptical facility to admire everything, to love everything."²⁶ Though Michelet was faulting Sand's political judgement for "only seldom feeling the difference"²⁷ between the 1851 Coup d'Etat stakeholders, we can also identify a similar tendency in her perception of the physical world.

Let us consider Sand's love for rocks, who are spontaneously alive according to one local countryside legend that interested Sand.²⁸ Sand herself thought that "to feel like an animal, a plant, a mineral and to dive into that

²² For the connection between the psychoanalyst and the political judge, see R. Dabous, 'The Banality of Narcissism: The Freudian Insight of Hannah Arendt,' *Arendt Studies* 2022, vol. 7.

²³ G. Sand, 'Lettres d'un Voyageur à propos de Botanique,' *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1868, vol. 75, p. 562.

²⁴ L. Andreas-Salomé, *You Alone Are Real to Me*, Rochester 2003, p. 38.

²⁵ G. Sand, *Correspondance*, vol. 21, G. Lubin (ed.), Paris 1964–1991, p. 13.

²⁶ A.-M. Gossez, 'Alcanter de Brahm – Michelet inconnu' in *La Révolution de 1848 et les révolutions du XIXe siècle* 1937, p. 175.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ G. Sand, *Légendes Rustiques*, p. 15. My translation.

sensation is not a degrading matter.”²⁹ Animal, plant, mineral: here too is an absence of special weight in Sand’s perception. What matters, epistemologically, is not to ascertain or question the fundamental differences between the non-living and the living-world: rather, in maintaining that all is alive, the observer is empowered to move along with the same ‘confidence in the surroundings’ conferred by the Russian God, a confidence necessary for scientific investigation. In suspending the sight of differences between man and the rock, one can begin to see their similarities, which, clear in *Évenor and Leucippe* (1856), Sand’s fictional exploration of the origins of the first man, “born from the rocks,”³⁰ predisposed the novelist to accept Darwinism before most French scientists.³¹

Hans Jonas, the German philosopher, explained how the Copernican revolution and our discovery of space and planets brought about a belief that much of the universe was dead³² and that life on Earth was therefore strange. In older times, Jonas remarked, the opposite belief was held: *death* was *strange* and everything was alive. We cannot know for sure the trajectory of the modern sciences had scientists retained a kind of pantheism in their vision. But we can verify across history the epistemological benefit of an aversion to presumption, a refusal to ascertain information beyond one’s mandate. Psychoanalytically speaking, I have said that judgement is useful – the same goes with suspension of judgement. The terms ‘maybe’ and ‘perhaps’ are not only grammatical tools: they are also psychical allies according to Andreas-Salomé, who believed a “considerable arrogance”³³ was the motor of neurosis. When one says ‘maybe’ about their interpretation of the world or their own life, they would be open to the full psychical consequences of that single judgment without rendering it “a cruel fate.”³⁴

Sand’s Socratic attitude comes to mind: the expression ‘what do I know?’ [que sais-je?] pervaded in her correspondence and novels as well as the rhetorical device of accumulation. We have mentioned the usefulness of a may-

²⁹ G. Sand, *Œuvres autobiographiques*, G. Lubin (ed.), Paris 1971, p. 627. My translation: «Se sentir animal, végétal et minéral et se plonger dans cette sensation n’est pas une chose dégradante.»

³⁰ G. Sand, *Les amours de l’âge d’or: Evenor et Leucippe*, Paris 1889, p. 137. My translation.

³¹ See F. Genevray, ‘George Sand sur les traces de Charles Darwin: Assentiment, résistances, accommodements’ in *George Sand et les sciences de la Vie de la Terre*, M. Watrelot (ed.), Clermont-Ferrand 2020.

³² See H. Jonas. *The phenomenon of life: towards a philosophical biology*, New York 1966.

³³ L. Andreas-Salomé, ‘Anal and Sexual,’ p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

be in psychoanalytic terms: scientifically, too, it can be fertile. Here is a good example from *Les visions de la nuit dans les campagnes* where Sand's *que sais-je* and her accumulations, as stylistic tools, become epistemological weapons:

Hallucination is by the way not the only reason for my leaning to admit, to a certain extent, nocturnal visions. I believe there is a range of small nocturnal phenomena, explosions or incandescence, steam condensation, underground noises, celestial specters, small aeroliths, unobserved bizarre habits, aberrations even among animals, what do I know?, mysterious affinities and brusque perturbations of the habits of nature, which the savants observe by chance and the peasants, in their perpetual contact with the elements, signal at every instant without the power to explain them.³⁵

For the longest time, scholars have regarded Sand's *que sais-je?* as ultimately keeping the vision of the world uncertain.³⁶ But there is a *function* to that skepticism. Sand's list of explanations for night visions is not so much her own as the ones signaled by usually-ridiculed peasants. Sand is familiar with François Arago's work to debunk the widespread belief in the countryside of the influence of aeroliths and meteorites upon agriculture and other aspects of peasant life.³⁷ Her decision to include 'small aeroliths' among more or less dubious explanations for night visions is part of her strategy to find benefit from popular belief, as Freud did in his *Interpretation of Dreams*.³⁸ It was precisely her bridge-like *que sais-je?* that synthe-

³⁵ G. Sand, 'Les Visions de la nuit dans les campagnes' in *Œuvres illustrées de George Sand*, vol. 7, Paris 1854, pp. 59–64. My translation : «L'hallucination n'est d'ailleurs pas la seule cause de mon penchant à admettre, jusqu'à un certain point, les visions de la nuit. Je crois qu'il y a une foule de petits phénomènes nocturnes, explosions ou incandescences de gaz, condensations de vapeurs, bruits souterrains, spectres célestes, petits aérolithes, habitudes bizarres et inobservées, aberrations même chez les animaux, que sais-je ? des affinités mystérieuses ou des perturbations brusques des habitudes de la nature, que les savants observent par hasard et que les paysans, dans leur contact perpétuel avec les éléments, signalent à chaque instant sans pouvoir les expliquer.»

³⁶ See P. Toldo, 'George Sand et ses romans (wird fortgesetzt),' *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 1915, vol. 43.

³⁷ See T. Levitt, *The Shadow of Enlightenment: Optical and Political Transparency in France, 1798–1848*, Oxford 2009. Besides her relationship to all three Aragos, Sand owned several of François's books on astronomy. See *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de Mme George Sand et de M. Maurice Sand*, Paris 1890, p. 86.

³⁸ "I have been forced to admit that here once more we have one of those not infrequent cases where an ancient and stubbornly retained popular belief seems to have come nearer to the truth of the matter than the judgment of the sci-

sized her previous mosaic of explanations into more a definitive observation: what savants attribute to chance and what peasants attribute to celestial bodies are differences only in degree, not in kind.

Sand's wavering between declarations of total skepticism and definitive statements turns presumption on its head. Even on age-old mysteries like time she has employed the same rhetorical strategy of contradiction-filled accumulations to grasp a glimmer of scientific truth: "Time is short, time is relative, time does not exist."³⁹ Until savants succeed in taming chance, which even Einstein couldn't,⁴⁰ it is useful to yield to the advice of a man from the countryside whom Sand quoted: "Man cannot explain everything. Perhaps it is better for him to be without reproach than without faith."⁴¹

Notice how Sand is ready to give up faith, if it would lead to superstition. More important is not reproaching because, psychoanalytically speaking, reproach influences the data collected from the external world. Believing in something can be delusional but reproaching it is obsessive. Throughout their correspondence, Andreas-Salomé faulted Rilke for reproaching himself and the world around him.⁴² It was only his time in the Russian countryside, faced with the Russian God, that "made possible the return to a kind of familiar divinity in mankind, as if Rilke were suddenly presented with the gift of the primal home and childhood he had been deprived of."⁴³ Andreas-Salomé meant that the 'confidence in the surroundings' offered to Rilke by the Russian God equalized everything in his eyes: his vision, for-

ence which prevails to-day" (S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill, New York 2015, p. 75).

³⁹ G. Sand. *Nouvelles lettres d'un voyageur*, Paris 1877, pp. 12–28.

⁴⁰ Faced with the unpredictable nature of quantum mechanics, Einstein is known to have said God did not play dice with the universe. For the relationship between chance and psychoanalysis, as well as how Sand's view on scientific explanation intersects with probabilistic theories of the mind, see R. Dabbous, 'Is desire a matter of probability?', *Psychoanal Cult Soc* 2023.

⁴¹ G. Sand, *Légendes Rustiques*, p. 26.

⁴² There are various instances when Andreas-Salomé wondered to Rilke "how to persuade [him] of this confident joy" which he deserved. Rilke's response is telling of his desire of an epistemology of the countryside: "To bind myself more firmly to the reality that so often denies me [...] You feel that I don't want the scholar's sciences [...] I would like, in some place where such a thing is possible, to learn what I would probably already know had I been allowed to grow up in the country and among more basic people, what an impersonal and hurried schooling failed to tell me" (L. Andreas-Salomé, 'Rainer Maria Rilke', trans. E.A. Snow, M. Winkler in *Rainer Maria Rilke and Lou Andreas-Salomé: The Correspondence*, New York 2006, p. 117.

⁴³ L. Andreas-Salomé. *You Alone Are Real to Me*, p. 38.

merly tied to reproach and thus to false childhood-affected interpretations of his surroundings, was finally set free, finally seeing reality as it was. Sand had given Flaubert the same advice when she urged him to not become a “deliberate misanthrope”⁴⁴ [un misanthrope de parti pris]: Aimée L. McKenzie’s decision to translate *parti pris* as “deliberate” is not unsound psychoanalytically: when we deliberately think something, we no longer consider it as we would in an unpressured environment, like the countryside. What Sand and Andreas-Salomé were committed to then was untainted, objective perception.

3. – How happy the man of the fields... who sees the whole picture!

George Sand and Lou Andreas-Salomé have often been qualified as holistic⁴⁵ but there is room to connect their commitment to wholeness with epistemology and the scientific enterprise. Holistic observations and interventions in the natural sciences are increasingly encouraged nowadays⁴⁶ and yet they belong to calls riding against the tide of the scientific ethos. Science and thinking have historically held the mandate to discriminate, to deal with the parts and not the whole.⁴⁷ Psychoanalytically, at least in Freud’s understanding, we must always deal with the specific symptom, the particular slip, not larger archetypes.

There is a reason Andreas-Salomé remained loyal to Freud, rather than follow ship with Jung, with whom she did share a more holistic/ collectivistic vision of the life of the mind. I believe it is the same reason Sand ultimately turned down the opportunity to become the popularizer of Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and his evolutionary theories, despite their holistic vision which she definitely appreciated. Sand and Andreas-Salomé understood that while the scientist ought to stand in the countryside precisely to see the whole picture, the fruits of his labor must ultimately sacrifice the whole – leave the wide gaze – and rely only on its parts, on nar-

⁴⁴ G. Sand, G. Flaubert, *The George Sand – Gustave Flaubert Letters*, trans. A.L. McKenzie, Chicago 1979, p. 266.

⁴⁵ For Sand, see J. Barry, ‘The Wholeness of George Sand,’ *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 1976, vol. 4, pp. 469–87. For Andreas-Salomé, see O. Arnould, ‘Lou Andreas-Salomé, une philosophe mystique du féminin,’ *Recherches germaniques* 2021, vol. 16.

⁴⁶ P.J. Potter, N. Frisch, ‘Holistic Assessment and Care: Presence in the Process,’ *Nursing Clinics of North America* 2007, vol. 42, pp. 213–28.

⁴⁷ For a 19th century text establishing the link between science and the “power to discriminate,” see the introduction to W.S. Jevons, *The Principles of Science: A Treatise on Logic and Scientific Method*, London 1877, pp. 1–23.

row and fragmented perspectives, when (re)joining the agora as a man of science among men. That is the necessary practical development of the life of man and the life of science. “He who says development says suffering,” Sand acknowledged,⁴⁸ and while the moral of one of her children’s tales preached the value of non-development,⁴⁹ it befittingly belonged to the realm of childhood, an inaccessible region not in theory but in fact.

Sand’s interest in the necessary evil of development is continued by Lou Andreas-Salomé, for whom the history narrated by psychoanalysis and that of the oedipal complex necessarily begin with the child’s original feeling of being everything, an un-individuated whole. Upon growing up he “still hesitates to accept the constrictions imposed by a definitely bounded individuality”⁵⁰ and that human struggle between failed and completed development, between part and whole, is for Andreas-Salomé at the root of the origins of art, science, and religion.

What is remarkable about Sand’s and Andreas-Salomé’s relationship to epistemology and science is their refusal to completely betray the holistic vision, the child’s honest visual mistake. They were not ultra-rationalists who preached the total necessity of social and political individuation and epistemological discrimination, nor did they follow the route of anti-rationalists who promoted a Fichtean or pseudo-Nietzschean aggrandizing notion of the self. Rather, they were simply rationalists who opted to chronicle precisely the ever-renewed fluctuations, the rises and falls of the holistic vision of mankind. In *La Petite Fadette*, George Sand introduced twin boys who did everything in the same way and always together, until the following admonitions molded them into separate individuals:

“You see,” said the haberdasher to the aunt, with a judicious air, “that these children have the same eyesight. If one sees yellow what is red, immediately the other will see red what is yellow, and we must not upset them on that, because it is said that when we want to prevent twins from considering themselves as the two footprints of the same design, they become idiots and do not know at all what they say.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ G. Sand, *Correspondance*, vol.15, G. Lubin (éd.), Paris 1964–1991, p. 334.

⁴⁹ In this children’s book, Sand imagined an aborted path in Christianity in which Jesus did not get crucified. G. Sand, *The mysterious tale of Gentle Jack and Lord Bumblebee*, trans. G. Jacobson, New York 1988.

⁵⁰ L. Andreas-Salomé, ‘Anal and Sexual,’ p. 7.

⁵¹ G. Sand, *La Petite Fadette*, Paris 1926, p. 16. My translation: «Vous voyez bien, dit le mercier à la tante, d’un air judicieux, que ces enfants-là ont la même vue. Si l’un voit jaune ce qui est rouge, aussitôt l’autre verra rouge ce qui est jaune, et il ne faut pas les contrarier là-dessus, car on dit que quand on veut empêch-

Behind Sand's satire is a historical chronicle of a decisive step in the development of the social mores of the countryside: a manifesto against sameness, the encouragement of each man to become a unique and separate self. Andreas-Salomé also chronicled the case of a child whose aggressive process of individuation was only abated via the creation of an imaginary friend, who henceforth stood "as a double, with a fate supplementary to the boy's own."⁵² That double would become the work of art, the scientific discovery, the religious faith – all stemming from "the wish [of men] to give birth to themselves,"⁵³ to perpetuate their very sameness.

Yet this narcissistic imperative for sameness and holistic vision is precisely part of Andreas-Salomé's epistemology of the Russian countryside, where "between the White and the Black seas, from the shores of the Volga in the south to the birch forest in the north, Rilke encountered in some sense the same human being."⁵⁴ It is important to note that Sand's faith in the common basis of humanity is not only on account of her political activism. She lamented the "sectarian spirit" animating the reactionaries during the 1848 French Revolution.⁵⁵ The problem was not merely their different visions for the republic, but their zeal to stand apart, to distinguish themselves from others. Even her response to Flaubert, when he had solicited her thoughts about new research on female hysteria, indicated her commitment to the notion of sameness. She not only thought hysteria must be common to both sexes, but she also disagreed that she herself belonged to the third sex Flaubert wished to assign to her. "There is only one sex," she thought.⁵⁶

It is important to remember that not only did Freud's first appearance in psychoanalysis was to prove hysteria occurred in men, not only women,⁵⁷ but that his work of unifying categories, rather than proliferating them, posthumously ceded to the opposite tendency of over-classification.⁵⁸ Sand's characters had only words of praise for Carl Linnaeus, father of botanical

er les bessons de se considérer comme les deux empreintes d'un même dessin, ils deviennent idiots et ne savent plus du tout ce qu'ils disent.»

⁵² L. Andreas-Salomé, 'The Dual Orientation of Narcissism,' p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ L. Andreas-Salomé, *Ma vie*, Paris 1969, p. 41. My translation.

⁵⁵ G. Sand, *Souvenirs de 1848*, Paris 1882, p. 17. My translation.

⁵⁶ *The George Sand – Gustave Flaubert Letters*, p. 49.

⁵⁷ See S. Freud, 'Pre-Psycho-Analytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 1, J. Strachey (ed.), London 1953.

⁵⁸ See P.R. McHugh, 'Striving for Coherence: Psychiatry's Efforts Over Classification,' *JAMA* 2005, pp. 2526–8.

classification.⁵⁹ She herself sought Léon Brothier to teach her about specific categories in geology, but she also thought that the great achievement of that discipline was that “it has been simplified” and that “experiences and new analyses have rejected divisions that were not and names that served only to complicate.”⁶⁰ Likewise, Andreas-Salomé lamented, during her time in Moscow in 1900, that civilization and its mandate to discriminate was stripping the ability of Russian people to unify the objects of their perception, even in architecture. “One has to have lost an original naivety,” she noted in her travel journal, “to distinguish between form in terms of envelope and the subjective content that comes to fill it.”⁶¹

It does not follow from their writings that Sand or Andreas-Salomé thought we should remain in a state of naivety, to refuse any effort to classify or see differences among people. Rather, naivety, the kind the twin boys retained until the last socially permitted moment, is the gift of youth, of new perspectives, and it can be mobilized to see connections between categories that obstruct vision. Both women were thus not unlike Goethe, whose discovery of the intermaxillary bone in humans was due to his belief in an original unity in the physical makeup of all species.⁶² That belief for Sand and Andreas-Salomé is nevertheless only theoretical in nature and, like the God of childhood or its feeling of total unity, requires a passing, a death, an overcoming. They had thus advocated for a science that is perpetually growing up... constantly renewing its oedipal bond... oscillating between the agora of the city and the fields of the countryside. One is well empowered to discover in the countryside... but they cannot stay in it, otherwise generalizations and stereotypes.

Conclusion

The epistemology of the countryside permits the man of the fields to see without losing the power to act upon his observation, to work with the unknown without presuming its qualities, to find connections between differ-

⁵⁹ “... in order to present myself at Stockholm and at Uppsala to the main savants, Linneaus especially” (in G. Sand, *L’homme de neige*, vol. 2, Paris 1883, p. 34) and “I have thought a considerable deal about the life of your great Linnaeus, which is the summary of the lives of today’s savants” (*Ibidem*, vol. 3, p. 12). My translation.

⁶⁰ G. Sand, *Correspondance*, vol. 15, p. 796. My translation.

⁶¹ L. Andreas-Salomé, *En Russie avec Rilke 1900: journal inédit*, Paris 1992, p. 48. My translation.

⁶² G.A. Wells. “Goethe and the Intermaxillary Bone,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 1967, vol. 3, pp. 348–61.

ences without endangering the scientific enterprise. We end up with a difficult scientific methodology, a paradoxically non-partisan school of thought which refuses itself a mantra or running ideology.

Recent scholarship has wondered whether Sand could have been a man of science:⁶³ the answer is a definitive yes, and we must now wonder how could she have balanced science with her poetic vision. The same goes to Andreas-Salomé, who had been crowned by Freud as the poet of psychoanalysis,⁶⁴ the science he attempted to establish. The countryside, after all, is a fertile ground for all types of fruits, arts *and* sciences.



Rayyan Dabbous (University of Toronto)

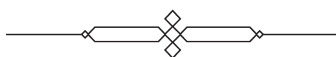
ORCID: 0000-0002-7605-9469, e-mail: rayyandabbous@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The author of this paper identify an epistemology of the countryside in the works of George Sand and Lou Andreas-Salomé. Drawing from their descriptions of the French and Russian countryside, he shows how both thinkers equipped the man of the fields with epistemological advantages: an empowering sense of observation, aversive to presumptions, and holistic in its scope. His argument is part of a wider project to see George Sand's turn to rustic novels and Lou Andreas-Salomé's turn to psychoanalysis at the end of their respective lives as a strategic and helpful move for the pursuit of science.

KEYWORDS

George Sand, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Friedrich Nietzsche, epistemology, psychoanalysis



⁶³ See *George Sand et les sciences de la Vie de la Terre*.

⁶⁴ M.J. Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge 2009, p. 65.