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Claire Marrone

GEORGE SAND AND CRISTINA DI BELGIOJOSO'S LITERARY DIALOGUE

Did the relationship between two nineteenth-century writers, George Sand and Italian Princess Cristina di Belgiojoso,¹ inspire a literary dialogue?² Sand's extensive corpus is, of course, well known, while Belgiojoso's writings—most of which are in French—have begun to attract greater critical attention over the past fifteen years.³ This article hopes to continue the scholarly analysis of Belgiojoso's writings in an effort to situate them better in relation to Sand's works. It also strives to identify the influence these two authors had on one another. These women, who shared literary friends, feminist beliefs, progressive politics, and common interests, seem to communicate with one another via their texts—either through their character portrayals or the thematization of injustice toward women. Both Sand and Belgiojoso denounce female oppression and challenge existing marriage laws in their writings. Their heroines are often strong-willed, intelligent, and unafraid in their defiance of social conventions. Although the correspondence between Sand and Belgiojoso no longer exists, textual comparisons imply a profound bond between the two authors.

Although they may not have met until the mid-1830s,⁴ Sand would have heard about the princess, who arrived in Paris at the beginning of the decade, much earlier from such mutual acquaintances as Heine, Didier, and Musset (Poli 156). Later, their social circles overlapped, including such figures as Balzac, Liszt, and Charles d'Aragon (Belgiojoso's brother-in-law). Both au-

1. One also sees her name spelled Belgiojoso.

2. An earlier version of this study was presented at the conference: "Women in French at the Threshold of the XXIst Century: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," Saint Paul, MN, April 2000.

3. See, for example, Mirella Scriboni's "Il viaggio al femminile," Paula Giuli's "Cristina di Belgiojoso's Orient," and my chapters "Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso's *Souvenirs dans l'exil*: The Journey Home" and "Belgiojoso's Western Feminism: The Poetics of a Nineteenth-Century Nomad" in *Female Journeys*. Several biographies of Belgiojoso's life, however, as opposed to critical studies of her works, have appeared over the past thirty-five years, including: Charles Neilson Gattey's *A Bird of Curious Plumage*, Bern Archer Brombert's *Cristina: Portraits of a Princess*, and Arrigo Petacco's *La principessa del nord*. Prior to these studies one of the significant sources on the princess was Aldobrandino Malvezzi's three-volume biography, *La Principessa Cristina di Belgiojoso* (1936–1937).

4. Lubin suspects that they met between 1836 and 1837 (Sand, *Correspondance*, XII, 383).

thors frequented salons—Belgiojoso initiated her own in 1835 at her home on the rue d'Anjou; Sand graced Marie d'Agoult's at the Hôtel de France in 1836. Felizia Seyd, who calls the latter the Sand-d'Agoult salon, notes that of the women who attended the salon, "the most brilliant and original was the Princess Belgiojoso" (132). In addition, both writers were admired and criticized by artistic women of the day. For example, Sand and Belgiojoso were considered for the presidency of the 1843 Academy of Women in France.⁵ When Sand resisted the nomination, an honor eagerly sought by Delphine de Girardin, Belgiojoso was proposed as a compromise. Although the princess did not accept the offer, Girardin's anger may have contributed to some of the biting satires of Belgiojoso published later in the century. These include the portrait of "la marquise romantique" in *La Croix de Berny*.⁶

Both Sand and Belgiojoso were also involved in progressive politics, and their common desires for greater social justice would have undoubtedly brought them together. Both women expressed their longing for social and political reform not only in their writings but in their actions—working with political leaders, launching journals, and influencing public opinion. Arsène Houssaye affirms Sand's influence over Belgiojoso, stating that "George Sand qui, en France, n'avait émancipé qu'elle-même, sonnait à la princesse la rage d'émanciper l'Italie" (II, 16). While Houssaye's claim about Sand is certainly limited—her liberating influence reached far beyond herself—he correctly represents the princess, who took the cause of Italian unification to heart. At the time of Belgiojoso's arrival in Paris, Italy was divided into several city-states and under Austrian domination in the North. Her salon welcomed not only artists and intellectuals but also politicians and Italian expatriates as well.⁷

The two women were also drawn to each other's native lands: Sand enjoyed travel in Italy and incorporated her foreign experiences into fictional works and travel texts, notably the *Lettres d'un voyageur*. Belgiojoso's exile in France, necessitated because of her subversive political views, lasted for several years. Her exilic experiences also included many years in the Middle East—a region Sand had dreamed of visiting. The princess's *Souvenirs dans l'exil* documents her voyage from Europe to the Middle East and *La Vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient* portrays her travels through Turkey and as far as Jerusalem.

The Sand-Belgiojoso connection has often been discussed in the context of a love triangle with Musset. The Frenchman caroused with Belgiojoso's estranged husband, Emilio, and fell in love with the princess after his affair with

5. See Brombert 76–80 and Gattey 81.

6. The epistolary novel was jointly authored by Girardin, Théophile Gautier, Jules Sandeau, and Méry. See pages 29–34 for a portrait of "la marquise romantique."

7. Much to Belgiojoso's disappointment, Napoleon III would refuse to assist Italy in its quest for unification. The dream of Italian unity would eventually be realized with the culminating events of the *Risorgimento* between 1859 and 1870.

Sand. Indeed, Houssaye claims that for Musset the two were “les deux femmes les plus aimées” (II, 15). One alleged incident revolves around Musset’s visit to Belgiojoso’s country home in Versailles in 1842. The princess, said to have inspired such heroines as Balzac’s Féodora, Stendhal’s Duchess of Sanseverina, and Musset’s Marianne, had apparently rebuffed Musset’s advances on several occasions, but with subtle flirtation continued to spark his interest. Biographer Charles Neilson Gattey quotes Musset regarding the Versailles visit: “when [Belgiojoso] saw that she was making me miserable, she gave me that irresistible smile of hers . . . which made me feel as if I had been beaten over the head with a stick” (65). Louise Colet also offers a fictionalized version of the incident in *Lui: Roman contemporain* (80–82). Houssaye quotes Musset’s description of the final separation:

Un soir . . . je suis allé chez une princesse . . . je déclare que j’ai trop soupiré. Je parle haut, je maltraite la dame . . . Savez-vous ce que fait la princesse? Elle éclate de rire en me disant: “Venez avec moi.” Elle me prend bien doucement la main. Je suis presque effrayé de mon triomphe . . . Voilà que dans la chambre à coucher, loin de se jeter dans mes bras, elle me jette dans les bras d’une ancienne maîtresse, qui ne voulait pas plus de moi que je ne voulais d’elle . . . (I, 285–86)

According to various sources, this woman was no other than George Sand.⁸ It is clear that the Sand-Belgiojoso-Musset triangle certainly stirred the curiosity of their contemporaries.

Since the friendship between Sand and Belgiojoso is documented in literary texts of the time, one wonders why scarcely a trace of correspondence between the two remains.⁹ In her *Correspondance*, however, Sand does mention Belgiojoso on occasion and makes reference to events that may have taken place at the princess’s home (III, 63, 65; XII, 383; XXII, 61). Georges Lubin notes that one of Sand’s short letters of 1852, addressed only “[à] Christine,” might have been destined for Belgiojoso, but that Christine Buloz was the more likely addressee (Sand, *Correspondance* XXV, 806). Direct and indirect exchanges between the two women have been documented elsewhere, however. Annarosa Poli establishes that Belgiojoso sent Sand a copy of her *Réflexions sur l’état actuel de l’Italie et sur son avenir*, “un ouvrage sérieux que George Sand dut

8. Hastier asserts that Houssaye may have embellished the event (302), but it is a frequently cited anecdote.

9. See Brombert 297–99 and Petacco 127–31 on the mysterious relationship between the two women.

lire avec beaucoup d'intérêt" (363).¹⁰ This French translation of Belgiojoso's 1868 text appeared in 1869. If the two women indeed met in the mid-thirties, Belgiojoso's gift to Sand would attest to a relationship of over thirty years. We know, too, via an 1835 letter from Henri Heine to Belgiojoso, that Heine sent the princess "a copy of Sand's novel" (qtd. in Brombert 251). Might it have been the popular *Lélia*, first published in 1833, the Hoffmannesque tale *Le secrétaire intime*, published in 1834, or a novel set in Italy, such as *Leone Leoni*, also published in 1834? Critics continue to speculate about the lack of direct correspondence between the two women. Louis Hastier notes that many of Belgiojoso's archives, which had been housed in an abandoned château outside of Locate, near Milan, after her death, were stolen (281–81). Many significant letters have not been found since, including missives from Musset, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Manzoni, Balzac, Liszt, and others (281). Hence, it is not impossible that correspondence between Belgiojoso and Sand might have been pilfered as well. Biographer Beth Archer Brombert posits that Sand and Belgiojoso were surely more than society friends, but that letters between them were likely destroyed, perhaps at the request of Belgiojoso's longtime lover François Mignet. Was the Sand-Belgiojoso friendship more than platonic, as critics have asserted, and were the letters discarded in order to erase this "scandalous" relationship? Houssaye states that the two artists were lovers (*Les confessions* II, 1–18). However, Brombert counters that Houssaye's findings stemmed from gossip rampant in the 1830s (297). Others, such as Lubin and Poli, find no proof of a sexual liaison.¹¹ Although the Sand-Belgiojoso relationship remains shrouded in secrecy—what Brombert calls "the greatest mystery yet unsolved" (79)—one can turn to their texts to learn more of their association.

Sand and Belgiojoso's writings suggest their mutual influence on one another. Sand indeed inspired Belgiojoso in her literary efforts. Consider, for example, Sand's frequent use of paired female characters in such texts as *Indiana* (1832), *Valentine* (1832), and *Lélia* (1833, 1839). This is echoed in two of Belgiojoso's novellas, *Les deux femmes d'Ismail Bey* and *Emina*, both originally published in 1856 and set in the Middle East. In these texts, two female characters often form a triangle with a man. A comparison of *Indiana* and *Les deux femmes d'Ismail Bey* serves as an example. In *Indiana*, we have the pale, innocent Indiana alongside the dark, exotic Noun, both drawn to the suave Raymon. He has already seduced Noun at the opening of the story, while Indiana resists adultery. In *Les deux femmes d'Ismail Bey*, we find the elder, first wife Maleka juxtaposed to her rival, the younger, second wife Anifé. Both are

10. Poli refers to the translation of Belgiojoso's *Osservazioni sullo stato attuale dell'Italia e sul suo avvenire* (1868).

11. On Lubin, see Brombert 79. See Poli 363.

married to Ismaïl Bey. Yet the comparison between these two texts can be developed beyond the use of paired female characters and triangular relationships. In both stories, mismatched spouses and unfair marriage practices are at issue. In *Indiana*, the nineteen-year-old Indiana is miserable with the elderly, tyrannical Delmare. Sand's conclusion, which unites Indiana with her equal, Sir Ralph, albeit on the Bourbon Island beyond the confines of conventional society, serves as an appeal for marriage reform. Naomi Schor finds that Sand's text presents the "rejection of women's subordination to the patriarchal exchange system by undermining the sexual and reproductive obligations entailed by the marriage contract" (xiv). In *Les deux femmes d'Ismaïl Bey*, marriage alliances are not contracted out of mutual love, but rather for either financial gain or personal revenge. As such, the unions are unhappy ones. At the conclusion of this text, Ismaïl Bey is in prison and in debt to both of his wives. Belgiojoso, although in a condescending manner, portrays Maleka and Anifé as victims of an unhealthy harem environment. She writes: "Ni Anifé ni Maleka n'étaient nées irrévocablement mauvaises; mais l'éducation du harem avait eu chez l'une et chez l'autre ses résultats ordinaires: les bons instincts avaient sommeillé dans l'inaction, les mauvais s'étaient épanouis à l'aise" (375).¹² We recall that Sand, too, had touched on issues of polygamy and harem life in her novella *Mattea* (1835). Ultimately, both Maleka and Anifé find suitable relationships outside of marriage. Anifé and her mate Osman, in particular, seem to enjoy mutual love and respect. As in *Indiana*, Belgiojoso's story underscores the need for revised marriage laws. The princess calls for unions based on love rather than money, conventions, or self-interest. Further, by portraying an extreme example of gender prejudice in *Les deux femmes d'Ismaïl Bey*, that of polygamous marriage, Belgiojoso indirectly comments on problems of female oppression in Europe. One might argue that in writing *Les deux femmes d'Ismaïl Bey*, Belgiojoso was not so much responding directly to Sand's *Indiana*, but to pressing issues of the day—concerns regarding social change and women's rights explored by several female authors of the time, such as d'Agoult and Flora Tristan. Yet additional connections between the two women's works suggest that their bond was more significant.

One finds similarities between Sand's *La petite Fadette* (1848) and Belgiojoso's *Emina*. Fadette, like Emina, is gifted in the natural sciences and familiar with the healing powers of plants and herbs. The medical prowess of these two heroines emerges in parallel scenes. For example, Fadette cures Sylvinet's fever by placing her hands on his hand and forehead, believing that "l'amitié et la volonté d'une personne en bonne santé, et l'attouchement d'une main pure et bien vivante, peuvent écartier le mal" (220). Similarly, Emina places her hand on her husband's forehead to assuage his delirium. When Hamid,

12. Quotations from *Les deux femmes d'Ismaïl Bey* and *Emina* are taken from the 1858 edition of *Scènes de la vie turque*.

Emina's husband, cries that he feels the weight of a rock on his aching head, Emina, "par un mouvement involontaire, [pose] sa main sur cette tête endolorie" (87). In response, Hamid murmurs: "C'est bien" (87). At the end of *La petite Fadette*, inner virtues triumph. The once homely Fadette marries Landry, founds a school for the needy children of the commune, and revels in her good fortune. Belgiojoso's protagonist, though equally virtuous, cannot survive the harem environment and dies before she can find happiness with her beloved. However, in her life Belgiojoso practiced the same type of social reform as does Sand's Fadette. Belgiojoso, too, founded schools and agricultural communities to help the poor in both Italy and the Middle East. It is the narrator of *Emina*—a European traveler in Turkey, spokesperson for the author—who lives on to preach the importance of love and monogamy in marriage. Thus, the similarities between *La petite Fadette* and *Emina* again point to Sand as a likely source for Belgiojoso's text. It is also important to note that Belgiojoso was pressed for political reasons to set sail for the Middle East in 1849. Since *La petite Fadette* had just appeared in 1848, it might have been one of the last texts the princess acquired in Europe before her lengthy exile.

Not only did Sand inspire the princess, but Belgiojoso, too, was instrumental in Sand's literary efforts. For example, the princess influenced Sand in her creation of specific female characters. Sand's Princess Quintilia Cavalcanti, in *Le Secrétaire intime*, recalls Belgiojoso.¹³ The writing of Sand's tale, which Lucy M. Schwartz speculates to have been between October 1833 and January 1834, may have overlapped with Sand's residence in Italy with Musset. After Musset's departure, Sand remained in Italy and worked on other texts which thematized her attraction to things Italian (*Leone Leoni*) and her intrigue with travel and the foreign (*Lettres d'un voyageur*).¹⁴ It seems fitting that the direction of Sand's interests at the time would have welcomed a character inspired, in part, by the Italian Princess Belgiojoso. Indeed, Sand continued to work on *Le Secrétaire intime*, with a new edition appearing in 1837. Interestingly, subsequent to the publication of Sand's text, Belgiojoso engaged a young, male research assistant named Gaetano Stelzi. It is said that her relationship with him, not unlike that of Cavalcanti and her younger, private secretary Julien in *Le Secrétaire intime*, was so intense (intimate, some critics assert) that after his untimely death Belgiojoso had Stelzi's body embalmed and hidden on her property outside of Milan.

Although critics have noted that Cavalcanti, with her dark hair and eyes and her penchant for cigars and swords, resembles Sand herself,¹⁵ she also

13. Winegarten suggests as much in *The Double Life of George Sand* (131–32) but does not elaborate why.

14. See Winegarten on Sand's writings during her sojourn in Italy (134–44).

15. See Schwartz's "Présentation" (5–18).

shares numerous traits with Belgiojoso. Where do the resemblances between Cavalcanti and Belgiojoso lie? The fictional heroine, like Belgiojoso, is a princess with Italian roots. In addition, in the 1834 edition of Sand's text, Princess Cavalcanti governs a principality in Lombardy—the region where the Milanese Belgiojoso was born and raised. Further, both are brunette beauties noted for their intelligence and independence, and also for their flirtatiousness. A unique life style led to gossip and criticism about Belgiojoso in real life, and the same is true for Cavalcanti in Sand's text. Could the rumor of the embalmed heart of the mysterious Max in *Le Secrétaire intime* actually have encouraged speculation about an embalmed Stelzi? Additional similarities emerge regarding Belgiojoso's commitment to the plight of the poor. In *Le Secrétaire intime*, Cavalcanti, too, "jetait de l'argent aux pauvres à pleines mains" (29). Furthermore, like Cavalcanti, Belgiojoso was also a smoker, but her opium cigarettes were used to calm her epilepsy rather than simply for pleasure. Finally, Belgiojoso was widely regarded for her medical prowess—a trait that she may have superimposed onto her protagonist in *Emina*. Cavalcanti, too, reveals healing capabilities. For example, when one of her coach drivers falls and is gravely injured, Cavalcanti offers first aid, dressing his wounds "de ses propres mains" (48). These common characteristics and passions, however, are not the only clues that suggest that Belgiojoso was a source for Sand's Cavalcanti.

Sand also employs precise language in *Le Secrétaire intime* that points to Belgiojoso. Early in the text, Cavalcanti is referred to numerous times as "la belle voyageuse," an appellation reminiscent of "la Belle Joyeuse," as Belgiojoso was often called in France. In addition, Sand's descriptions of Cavalcanti's "pâleur, ses joues minces et le demi-cercle bleuâtre creusé sous ses grands yeux noirs" (29), of her "beauté linéaire" which could be compared to "les camées antiques les plus parfaits" (29), and of her "chevelure . . . d'un noir de corbeau" (37), are strikingly similar to nineteenth-century portraits of Belgiojoso. Houssaye depicts the princess as follows: "la princesse de Belgiojoso frappait tout le monde par sa pâleur byzantine, ses cheveux noirs en ailes de corbeau, ses beaux yeux lumineux" (VI, 1).

Intertextual evidence confirming the Cavalcanti-Belgiojoso connection exists as well. In one scene in *Le Secrétaire intime*, a voyager, named Charles de Dortan, recounts to young Julien his encounter with a noble Italian woman, whom he suspects to be Cavalcanti, at a masked ball at the Paris opera house: "je fus agacé par un domino si plein d'extravagance, de gentillesse et de grâce, que j'en fus absolument enivré. Je l'entraînai dans une loge, et elle me montra son visage" (43). It is the woman's flirtatiousness that captures the voyager's interest: "Après m'avoir imposé silence avec autorité pour un mot hasardé, elle disait les choses les plus comiques et les moins chastes du monde" (44). As the mysterious lady leaves Dortan, she whispers, "A demain" (44). The fact that Dortan is later convinced that the woman was Ginetta, Cavalcanti's servant, and not Cavalcanti herself, is of little relevance. First, at this point in the text, the reader believes the woman to be Cavalcanti. Second, even if we assume the woman to be Ginetta, the allusion to Cavalcanti (and by extension to Belgio-

joso) remains. Finally, Julien's last vision of Cavalcanti at the end of *Le Secrétaire intime* recalls this mysterious woman who flirted with Dortan at the opera. Julien glimpses at Cavalcanti for the last time as he is leaving the Paris opera. Cavalcanti sees Julien, but coolly has her porters close the doors to her carriage, and she is off. This is, in fact, the final scene of the 1834 edition of the text. Interestingly, Dortan is rebuffed by Cavalcanti in a similar fashion earlier in the text. When, subsequent to the initial opera incident, he sees Cavalcanti and attempts to speak with her, she coldly admonishes him for staring and departs in her carriage. Further, the fact that Dortan reappears at the end of the tale, still in search of his beloved, underscores the significance of the original opera scene and the woman's identity. Is Sand trying to suggest that, although Julien and Dortan are finally persuaded that the mysterious, flirtatious woman was Ginetta, that she might, in the end, actually have been Cavalcanti?

We find a scene markedly similar to Dorton's opera adventure in Marie d'Agoult's *Nélida* (1846). Critics agree that d'Agoult's Italian marquise Zeponi was also inspired, in part, by Belgiojoso. Charles Dupêchez finds that Zeponi embodies many of the women who threatened d'Agout, including la comtesse Samoyloff and Belgiojoso (175), who, we recall, was quite friendly with d'Agoult's lover Liszt. In the scene in question, Zeponi attempts to seduce Guermann during a masked ball—this time at the Milanese opera house, La Scala. When she sheds her mask, Guermann eyes her “chevelure, dont les ondes noires se répandirent jusqu'à terre,” her cheeks “d'une pâleur de marbre,” and her sparkling eyes (232), characteristics that recall Belgiojoso and Cavalcanti. Upon leaving Guermann, Zeponi utters the same “à demain” that we heard the presumed Cavalcanti whisper to her admirer in Sand's tale. Therefore, Sand's version of the opera seduction scene, featuring a mysterious Italian coquette, clearly informs d'Agoult's account. D'Agoult certainly understood that Belgiojoso was one of Sand's sources in the creation of Princess Cavalcanti in *Le Secrétaire intime*.

Sand drew upon Princess Belgiojoso not only in her portrayal of Cavalcanti in *Le Secrétaire intime*. In *Leone Leoni*, written in 1834, we meet another Italian royal, the Princess Zagorolo. Although the connection to Belgiojoso may not be as convincing as that of Cavalcanti, Sand's description of the pale, dark-haired princess in *Leone Leoni* has inspired critics to consider Belgiojoso as a model.¹⁶ Not only does Zagorolo's name echo Belgiojoso's, but she, like Belgiojoso, is Milanese. Both the real woman and the heroine are intelligent, witty, and shrewd. Zagorolo is the victim of the philandering lover Leone, as Belgiojoso was the victim of her unfaithful husband Emilio. In addition, Zagorolo is sickly. Belgiojoso was not just plagued by epilepsy, but she may have acquired venereal disease from Emilio.¹⁷

16. See, for example, Poli 156.

17. See, for example, Petacco 30–31. He suggests that Belgiojoso's aloofness and her rejection of numerous suitors were due, in part, to her affliction.

Did Belgiojoso's *texts*, as opposed to just her person, also inspire Sand in her literary endeavors? As noted previously, we know that Sand read the princess's political piece, *Réflexions sur l'état actuel de l'Italie et sur son avenir*. Did she read Belgiojoso's literary works, including her novellas *Les deux femmes d'Ismail Bey* and *Emina*? Because these tales, along with others, were published in the prestigious *Revue des Deux Mondes* in the 1850s, we can assume so. Had Sand read Belgiojoso's travel writings, particularly *La Vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient*? Because the 1855 text was popular enough to be reissued in 1858 as *Asie mineure et Syrie, souvenirs de voyage*, we can again assume that Sand at least knew of the work. In fact, we see traces of Belgiojoso's literary efforts in Sand's later writings. For instance, in *La Vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient*, we witness the princess's numerous visits to harems and conversations with women living in polygamous marriages. As demonstrated previously, similar themes emerge in Belgiojoso's novellas that are set in an Oriental context. The princess, in fact, frequently treats issues of women's equality and marriage laws through portrayals of polygamy. We see comparable strategies in Sand's autobiographical novel *Elle et Lui*, published in 1859. Sand's heroine, Thérèse, is the victim of the polygamous comte de ***. In this story, we discover, via the American Dick Palmer's narrative, that when Thérèse met her future husband, a Portuguese landowner, she was unaware that he already had a wife in Havana. Though Thérèse and the count have a son together, they separate when Thérèse learns the truth about him. Later, the count would kidnap their son and flee to America. Allegedly, the hardships of the voyage would take the son's life. In reality, the child would be raised by the count and, reluctantly, his first wife. Although *Elle et Lui* focuses on Thérèse's relationship with Laurent (read: Sand's relationship with Musset), her prior marriage to the polygamous count proves pivotal to the plot. After the count's death and at the end of *Elle et Lui*, Thérèse is reunited with her long lost son—a conclusion that allows the heroine to assume her role as mother and thus finally relinquish her function as Laurent's lover. Hence the problem of polygamy, so crucial in Belgiojoso's literary works, is key to Sand's *Elle et Lui* as well. However, Sand's text also diverges from plot structures dear to the princess. In an interesting reversal to Belgiojoso's typical love triangles featuring two (or more) women vying for one man, in *Elle et Lui*, Thérèse is the woman desired by both Laurent and Palmer. Rather than denouncing multiple partners in favor of monogamy, as Belgiojoso would, Sand denounces passion in favor of maternity. Therefore, although in *Elle et Lui* Sand draws on themes common to Belgiojoso's writings, namely that of the untenable polygamous marriage, the extent to which the princess's literature actually influenced Sand's writings remains unclear. It is certain, however, that the Belgiojoso herself inspired Sand as an author.

Not only do Sand's portraits of Italian royals, particularly that of Princess Cavalcanti in *Le Secrétaire intime*, clearly point to Belgiojoso, but even in Sand's later writings, we see nods to the princess. Toward the end of *Elle et Lui*, for example, Laurent has taken up with a new mistress. He tells Thérèse

that she is “une jolie petite femme du monde . . . blanche et fine comme un brin de muguet. C’est une femme mariée. Je suis l’ami de son amant, que je trompe” (212). Need we recall that Belgiojoso succeeded Sand in Musset’s heart and that the princess never officially divorced Emilio, thus she remained “une femme mariée”? Musset certainly betrayed his friend, Prince Belgiojoso. Although Emilio was the princess’s husband rather than her lover, the allusion to the couple in the previous passage from *Elle et Lui* remains.

It becomes apparent that Sand drew frequently on Belgiojoso’s flamboyant character for her female portraits, thus allowing her to express her intrigue with Belgiojoso as a person and her attraction to Italian culture. In exchange, Sand’s ideas and her texts influenced Belgiojoso’s literary pursuits. The princess’s treatment of gender oppression and unfair marriage laws, particularly apparent in her novellas, owes much to Sand. The textual “conversation” in which Sand and Belgiojoso engaged not only proves the profound bond between them but offers insights into the development of women’s writing far beyond the nineteenth century. The issues these authors tackled via their literary dialogue informed the feminist debates of the time and influenced later female authors. Women writers of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, including Matilde Serao, The Marchesa Colombi, Louise Michel, Sibilla Aleramo, and Colette would continue to question the confines of marriage and women’s roles. Many of them would create determined, innovative heroines, in the spirit of both Sand and Belgiojoso. Such protagonists would continue both to reflect and influence societal change. Although the lack of correspondence between Sand and Belgiojoso still clouds an exact understanding of their relationship, the textual exchange they left behind remains a significant contribution to nineteenth-century literature and the progress of feminism.

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