

Online Reviews

Naginski, Isabelle Hoog. *George Sand mythographe*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007. Pp. 273. ISBN: 978-2-84516-358-4

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This ground-breaking study redefines Sand's place in the history of ideas by examining the role of mythology in her writing. Outlining the development of Sand's mythological strategy to promote new ideas and social progress, Naginski traces the incorporation of the Promethean myth, the myth of origins, and heretical thought in Sand's social, religious, and political writings between 1833 and 1844. Divided into three parts, this work underscores three types of victims within the mythological framework: the female, the peasant, and the proletariat.

Pivotal to the first part (consisting of two chapters) are the two versions of *Lélia*: 1833 and 1839. Naginski draws upon both to define the feminine expression of the Promethean myth in *Lélia*: a woman who actively liberates herself from her chains. Unwilling to follow the tradition of her counterparts, such as Balzac, Sand's title heroine is not relegated to languish hidden away from society. On the contrary, *Lélia* prepares for a revolution.

The second part of Naginski's work (containing four chapters) explores Sand's retracing of humanity's origins through texts such as *Le Poème de Myrza* (1835), *Jeanne* (1844), and *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840). Sand commences by delineating the origins of woman with the prophetess and poet Myrza. She continues by studying the primitive feminine origins of society in *Jeanne*, whereby she creates an alternative destiny for the female heroine through the myth of the feminine. No longer confined as a descendant of Eve, the title heroine is able to liberate herself from the feminine stereotype through her maternal heritage and the mythological doctrine of her mother, Tula. Sand subsequently attempts to provide the worker and the peasant with a history and genealogy in *Le Compagnon du Tour de France*. Rejecting the nostalgia of the past, Sand develops artistic heritage and brings to the fore the intellectual history of the proletariat. In the last chapter of this section Naginski underscores the role of idealism in Sand's rewriting of the Promethean myth, as well as her distinction from Balzacian realism.

The third part (comprised of two chapters) juxtaposes the two versions of *Spiridion* (1839 and 1842) and the mystical female character Wanda in *Consuelo* to elucidate the role of heresy in Sand's development of religious history. Naginski illuminates the connection between the metaphysical and the revelation of the heretical by women in Sand's writing as the Promethean myth of liberation and regeneration gives way to the heretical revolt against dogmas.

In this seminal work Isabelle Naginski brings to the fore two previously neglected aspects of Sand's writing: the importance of mythology in Sand's representation of the active feminist and its centrality to her narrative strategy. Displaying Sand's originality

by linking the three female characters (Myrza, Lélia, and Wanda), Naginski adeptly weaves together the Promethean myth in Sand's writing to reveal her subversive portrait of humanity: the feminine metaphysical sublime. In addition, she promotes and underscores Sand's crucial role in the history of ideas, thereby redefining the changing landscape of nineteenth-century thought. Eruditely researched, this work represents a definitive source through extensive reference material, a bibliography, and an index. The uniqueness of Naginski's work firmly establishes it as an indispensable resource for Sand scholars and an invaluable contribution to modern nineteenth-century studies.

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