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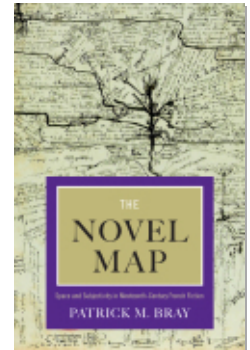
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CHAPTER FIVE

Drowning in the Text: Space and *Indiana*

When *Indiana* was first published under the pseudonym G. Sand in 1832, the first reviewers proclaimed the new male writer a profound analyst of contemporary society, but at the same time one whose novel undoubtedly benefited from revisions by a woman's pen; according to Sand's *Histoire de ma vie*: "Les journaux parlèrent tous de M. G. Sand avec éloge, insinuant que la main d'une femme avait dû se glisser çà et là pour révéler à l'auteur certaines délicatesses du coeur et de l'esprit, mais déclarant que le style et les appréciations avaient trop de virilité pour n'être pas d'un homme" (*Histoire de ma vie II*, 380).¹ If some readers were led to believe that the author was a man, others more in the know at first thought that *Indiana* was another collaboration between George Sand and Jules Sandeau under the name Jules Sand, after their previous novel *Rose et Blanche* from 1831. The blatant misogyny of the male narrator (who at one point exclaims "la femme est imbécile par nature"—"woman is an imbecile by nature"; *Indiana*, 251) and the mastery of realist codes clearly indicated to the supposedly savvy reader that this novel could only have been composed by a man, albeit a sensitive one capable of understanding the plight of women caught in the chains of marriage. If Sand's cross-dressing were enough to befuddle men about her gender despite her tiny stature, writing as a man came even easier—all that was necessary was a change in grammatical gender and a suitably paternalistic tone.

Soon enough, however, in the small world of Parisian letters Sand's authorship was quickly recognized and *Indiana* suddenly became unmistakably the work of a woman. As Béatrice Didier writes, once the gender of the author was discovered, any perceived fault in the novel became attributable to Sand the woman and any quality such as the flaunting of social convention became scandalous (Didier, preface to Sand's *Indiana*, 11). In his very favorable review in the *Journal des Débats* of July 21, 1832, C (whom Didier identifies in a note as Victor Charlier, *Indiana*, 375) proclaims astonishment that such a brilliant work of fiction

has as its creator a young woman: “Après l’avoir lu et relu, on demeure confondu d’étonnement, quand on songe qu’une femme en est l’auteur, qu’une femme délicate et frêle possède cet admirable don d’écrire” (“After having read and reread it, we remain confused and astonished, when we think that a woman is the author, that a delicate and frail woman possess such an admirable gift for writing”), concluding that the reader is compelled to reread about the awful character of Raymon described in these “pages idéales et vraies, tout à la fois, qu’une femme seule pouvait écrire” (“at once ideal and true pages which only a woman could write.”) The critic, while applauding the novel’s realistic social portraiture and critique, seeks desperately to place Sand’s gendered body back into the text to the point of suggesting that the vivid description of Indiana’s tortured and torturing love interest has to be a representation by a woman, presumably drawn from her own personal experience.

The weak yet passionate *créole* Indiana can hardly be mistaken for the cross-dressing, liberated woman George Sand and so what a critic insinuates to be inspired by personal experience in a woman’s text, he might call keen observation in a Balzac or a Stendhal. In *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand attempts to escape the double bind of literature written by women by proclaiming that her personal life is not the subject of her novels:

On n’a pas manqué de dire qu’*Indiana* était ma personne et mon histoire. Il n’en est rien. J’ai présenté beaucoup de types de femmes, et je crois que quand on aura lu cet exposé des impressions et des réflexions de ma vie, on verra bien que je ne me suis jamais mise en scène sous des traits féminins. Je suis trop romanesque pour avoir vu une héroïne de roman dans mon miroir.² (*Histoire de ma vie II*, 364–65).

Her truthful autobiography, she claims, will finally prove that her novels are entirely fiction. Moreover, actual women do not fit fictional types, and even less so a woman as extraordinary as Sand. Yet a novel’s shifting context determines the various and contradictory ways it can be read, and its author’s gender above all else orients the reader’s expectations. The misogyny of the narrator in *Indiana* convinces the unsuspecting reader of the masculine gender of the author and predisposes him to the validity of the novel’s argument for greater social freedom. At the same time, this gap between narrator and narrative demonstrates how social prejudice is constructed along gender lines. As Sandy Petrey argues, *Indiana* is Sand’s only truly realist novel, a pure product of the destabilizing July Revolution of 1830; the duality of *Indiana*’s misogynistic narrator and feminist narrative convincingly performs a brutal sexism, all the better to expose its workings (*In the Court of the Pear King*, 92).

That gender, politics, and history influence the “truth” of a text, that a text itself can multiply meanings and disintegrate the unity of the self is the structuring principle of *Indiana*. The different prefaces and the novel itself warn again and again of the dangers of writing and of interpretation, notably for women. Whether a love letter by a manipulative chauvinist or a disingenuous review in a literary journal, the written word distorts the truth and misleads a naive reader. Women who themselves try to write in order to convince men inevitably fail in the novel, as their gender already determines how men read their texts. This powerlessness to control meaning manifests itself in the novel through the wandering, hallucinations, madness, and the suicidal impulse of the female characters, Noun and Indiana. Haunted by yet drawn to the dissolution of body and self that accompanies her forays into both textual and physical space, Indiana repeatedly holds herself back, literally and figuratively, from taking the plunge.

Manipulations

The two “Préfaces” (an original from 1832 and one from 1842) and one “Notice” (1852) that introduce the novel denounce repeatedly any manipulation of the truth by texts, without apparent irony even as they maintain the fiction of the masculinity of the author. The role of the novel and of writing in general would not be to interpret facts to fit an argument but only to reflect reality; in a decidedly Stendhalian turn of phrase, Sand remarks, “L’écrivain n’est qu’un miroir” (“The writer is only a mirror”) (Préface de 1832, *Indiana*, 37). The writer and his/her novel cannot be held accountable for representing the truth, since only society is to blame for its own corruption. Sand’s novel claims to influence public opinion while respecting the sacred institutions it implicitly critiques (39).

In her second preface ten years later, Sand admits that an unmediated representation of society in the hopes of persuading the public cannot have an impact without reforming laws and institutions. She writes that it had been her intention not to undermine or even critique society when she wrote *Indiana*: “Longtemps après avoir écrit la préface d’*Indiana* sous l’empire d’un reste de respect pour la société constituée, je cherchais encore à résoudre cet insoluble problème: *le moyen de concilier le bonheur et la dignité des individus opprimés par cette même société, sans modifier la société elle-même*” (44).³ Sand, or her masculinized author, seems to anticipate Lampedusa’s aristocrat Tancredi in *Il gattopardo*, who exclaims, “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com’è bisogna che tutto cambi” (50) (“If we want everything to stay the same, everything must change”); yet in

the topsy-turvy world after the July Revolution, everything must stay the same in order for everything to change. Words must keep their meaning, referents must remain stable, if representations of the social order are to be accurate and politically effective. Moreover, as a female author usurping a masculine writing position, it was a clever maneuver to recall how the system is supposed to work in order to accuse the hypocrisy of those who unjustly benefit from it.

Along with this desire for transparent writing and truthful representation, the novel's prefaces try to guard against and then eventually attack readers, journalists, and politicians who put words in the mouth of the author, bending the meaning of a "simple" novel to fit an ideological agenda. In the original preface, the author warns against all the possible misinterpretations of "his" work, a novel "sans importance" ("without importance") (37), rehearsing a familiar trope in nineteenth-century prefaces which often display a false modesty. Indeed, the author expects his readers not to agree with him: "le narrateur s'attend à des reproches" ("the narrateur expects criticism") (40); "l'auteur s'abandonne tout entier à la critique" ("the author gives himself entirely over to the critics") (41). Yet here Sand seems to be anticipating more than an average succès de scandale; as we have seen, the first reviews were rather positive and not terribly concerned with any immorality displayed in the novel.

The real scandal, the trap set by Sand, is of course the not-so-secret gender of the author. In her preface from 1842, Sand reveals how journalists overinterpreted her novel, which is to say read it as a woman's novel with a specific agenda: "Certains journalistes qui s'érigent de nos jours en représentants et en gardiens de la morale publique . . . se prononcèrent avec rigueur contre les tendances de mon pauvre conte, et lui donnèrent, en le présentant comme un plaidoyer contre l'ordre social, une importance et une sorte de retentissement auxquels il ne serait point arrivé sans cela" (43).⁴ Her "Notice" from 1852 is even more blunt when it reiterates that *Indiana* was Sand's first novel, that it was written without any theory or ambition, and so those critics who refuse to read "naively" what was written "naively," who denounce works as immoral, betray their own talent and betray the writing profession (35). It is the critic's own intelligence that does him in: "La critique a beaucoup trop d'esprit, c'est ce qui la fera mourir" (35) ("Critics have too much wit, it will be the death of them").

The novel's plot mirrors the textual strategies of its "Prefaces" and "Notice." The unflattering portrait of the critic in Sand's "Notice" corresponds exactly to that of *Indiana*'s roguish aristocrat Raymon de Ramière, who not coincidentally earns his reputation in society as a brilliant

essayist. Raymon's wit, like that of the critic, does ultimately lead to his demise, but a symbolic one in the form of a castration and silencing by his new wife, the former Mlle de Nangy, who is the only woman in the novel not to fall for his eloquent lies (298). As a young, handsome, and well-spoken member of the Restoration's ruling class, Raymon possesses all the qualities needed to secure a bright future as well as to seduce women. He differs from the stereotype of the suave seducer in one very important respect according to the narrator in another observation reminiscent of Stendhal: "Un homme qui parle d'amour avec esprit est médiocrement amoureux. Raymon était une exception; il exprimait la passion avec art, et il la ressentait avec chaleur. Seulement, ce n'était pas la passion qui le rendait éloquent, c'était l'éloquence qui le rendait passionné" (83).⁵ In romance and also in politics, Raymon falls in love with his own eloquence. For the sake of a beautiful phrase or a well-wrought argument, he abandons the truth and deceives himself. His narcissism is such that when he gazes at a woman he only sees the image projected by his own romantic discourse. As soon as the love affair loses his interest or becomes inconvenient, he writes a new woman into his life.

The reader is first introduced to Raymon when M. Delmare, Indiana's husband, takes him for a burglar and shoots at him on his property (63). The novel's first of many cases of mistaken identity is resolved when Raymon's elegant hunting outfit proves his social rank. Unlike the female characters, his gender and class repeatedly protect him from harm. Raymon is caught trespassing on Delmare's estate because of a rendezvous with his first love interest in the novel, Noun—Indiana's Creole maid and childhood friend. Noun's natural beauty attracts Raymon, but he cannot or will not overlook the enormous gap in their social positions and so rejects as ludicrous Noun's desire to be his wife. Once Raymon sees Noun's mistress Indiana, he falls in love with her more graceful beauty, even though the narrator insists that Noun is the more stunning of the two. Noun, increasingly desperate after she discovers she is pregnant, attempts in vain to borrow Indiana's class markers (she writes on Indiana's stationery, she uses her bedroom, and she wears her clothes), though Raymon only sees the unbridgeable distance between Indiana's refined elegance and Noun's vulgar beauty. After Noun commits suicide, Raymon pursues Indiana, hoping to have an affair, but counts on Indiana's sense of decency, as well as her husband's vigilance, to guarantee that he will not be burdened by a serious, and potentially socially disastrous, relationship.

Raymon misguidedly depends upon Indiana to act according to Parisian social conventions by staying with her husband and accepting to be Raymon's mistress; at the same time, he seems to trust Indiana to

understand that his lover's discourse is rhetoric for its own sake, meant to incite passion and not inspire everlasting devotion. Noun and Indiana both foolishly take Raymon's statements and promises at face value, and not as part of an elaborate game of seduction. For them, Raymon should be bound by his words, and the narrator agrees: "L'amour est un contrat aussi bien que le mariage" (76) ("Love is a contract just as much as marriage is"). In the end, he woos Indiana back from the far-off Île Bourbon in another deceitfully passionate letter and then promptly forgets about her when he marries Mlle de Nangy. His new wife proves that the marriage contract can, when properly exploited, be empowering for women when she uses Indiana's pathetic return as the pretext to subordinate her husband, delighting in "la position d'infériorité et de dépendance où cet incident venait de placer son mari vis-à-vis d'elle" (298) ("the position of inferiority and dependence which this incident placed her husband toward her").

Raymon's wife can turn the tables on her husband because his fame as a loyal and vocal supporter of the old regime puts him in danger after Louis-Philippe comes to power. Before 1830, Raymon seduced public opinion in favor of the conservative government with the same skill he used to seduce women: "[Il] est un des hommes qui ont eu sur vos pensées le plus d'empire ou d'influence, quelle que soit aujourd'hui votre opinion. Vous avez dévoré ses brochures politiques, et souvent vous avez été entraîné, en lisant les journaux du temps, par le charme irrésistible de son style, et les grâces de sa logique courtoise et mondaine" (128).⁶ The narrator introduces a rare second person, "vous," which equates the (male) reader of the novel and of Raymon's newspaper articles with the apparently equally gullible women readers of Raymon's love letters. The language of nineteenth-century political punditry resembles that of romantic lovemaking: "empire," "entraîné," "charme irrésistible," "grâces."

Raymon and his conservative colleagues wrote in defense of the "Charte," Louis XVIII's quickly outdated constitution, fooling themselves into believing they were communicating to the public the letter of the law and not their own self-interested ideological interpretations: "ce [la Charte] n'était plus qu'un texte sur lequel chacun s'exerçait à l'éloquence, sans qu'un discours tirât plus à conséquence qu'un sermon" (128) ("it [la Charte] was nothing but a text on which everyone would practice his eloquence, without reasoning having any more consequence than a sermon").

Just as Raymon falls in love with his own eloquence, he manages to indoctrinate himself through his own political rhetoric. His ability to distort reality is recognized and rewarded by the Restoration government:

“Cette rare faculté qu’il possédait, de réfuter par le talent la vérité positive, en avait fait un homme précieux au ministère” (130) (“this rare ability that he possessed, of refuting positive truth through talent, made him a precious man for the ministry”). But when the political winds begin to shift in 1829 and the government takes a radical move to the right, Raymon finds himself caught between his loyalty to the king and his own better judgment. Worse for a narcissist like Raymon, the new political turn reveals that all of his previous tracts were ridiculous (261). When revolution finally happens and the bourgeois king Louis-Philippe takes the throne, Raymon finds himself without political allies, and thus without a future. His calculated marriage to the wealthy aristocrat Mlle de Nangy guarantees him a comfortable, if forever dull, future.

Raymon and the literary critics mocked in the novel’s prefaces share the same talent for molding reality through language in order to fit their worldview and the same fatal flaw of believing their own falsifications. As long as facts remain hidden, such as the tendency of monarchies to turn absolutist or the inconvenient difference between narrative voice and authorial gender, manipulators of language can take advantage of textual ambiguity to promote their interests. For women, structurally disempowered in such a system, the best tactic is to force a confrontation between word and referent, between the letter of the law and social reality. Sand’s “masculine” narrative possesses all the stylistic virtues of a text written by a man, but the gender of the author renders the novel scandalous; if virtue as well as masculinity are performative, then they are societal constructions and not naturally determined. Similarly, Mlle de Nangy obliges Raymon to confess his marriage to her in front of Indiana; she thus humiliates him both by taking command of the situation and by showing Indiana that Raymon’s passionate letters were nothing but an illusion. The lesson for Raymon and for Sand’s literary critics is that writers of shifty texts may eventually be targets themselves.

Lost in Space

Indiana’s main women characters, Noun and Indiana, do not have Sand’s mastery of writing or Mlle de Nangy’s dispassionate, calculating mind. They take Raymon at his word, and when they do try to influence others through writing or in their actions, they tend to mistake signs for reality. Trapped in what they imagine to be a transparent world, they lose their bearings whenever their surroundings change. Near the beginning of the novel, the narrator presents the reader with a tableau of domestic

boredom and stability, a fantasy of harmony endangered by the slightest movement: “On eût dit, à voir l’immobilité des deux personnages en relief devant le foyer, qu’ils craignaient de déranger l’immobilité de la scène; fixes et pétrifiés comme les héros d’un conte de fées, on eût dit que la moindre parole, le plus léger mouvement allait faire écrouler sur eux les murs d’une cité fantastique” (53).⁷ For Indiana’s husband, the moral is even clearer, since, as the narrator writes, the only social contract he recognizes is the dictum “*Chacun chez soi*” with the ambiguous meaning of “to each his own” or “everyone is master in their own home” (132). Bourgeois order depends not only upon the fiction of stable linguistic meaning, but also upon the immobility of people and things, who must respect each other’s borders.

Indiana is a novel about the dangers of and desires for exposing oneself to polyvalent texts and open spaces, especially for women. When Indiana leaves the comfort of her home, her own identity and sense of self is undone in the confusing jumble of images confronting her. Whether the countryside of the Brie, the streets of Paris, or the sublime volcanic landscape of the Île Bourbon, the novel’s spaces contain a richness of signs and possible meanings that always invite the characters to superimpose the image of their own desires onto what they see: Raymon projects an image of Indiana onto the body of Noun; Indiana sees Noun’s form on the quays of the Seine; the narrator imagines all of art history emerging from the rock formations on the island. These rare moments of truth, instead of being seen as epiphanies, are described, in Indiana’s case especially, as hallucinations or madness. Unable to seize a chance at real freedom, Indiana repeatedly surrenders control of meaning and of her own narrative.

Marked by her presumed race and class as Indiana’s ill-fated mirror image, Noun serves as the novel’s paradigm of a woman’s inability to command her own fate, to write her own text. Noun’s indeterminate identity is reflected in how literary critics have described her; Pratima Prasad shows how scholars have tended to see only Noun’s class difference with Indiana or, conversely, have classified her as a woman of color (“Espace colonial et vérité historique dans *Indiana*”). As Adlai Murdoch convincingly argues, the novel itself labels both Noun and Indiana “créoles,” playing on the ambiguity of the word meaning person born in the colonies of European stock, person of mixed race, or person of African blood, and so paradoxically, either colonizer or colonized (Murdoch, 3). Nevertheless Noun’s traits suggest, without ever affirming, mixed-raced ancestry (black eyes, curly hair, orientalized name) and Indiana’s those of a woman of Spanish descent from the colonies (passionate, noble, pallid) (Murdoch, 18). Noun’s fluid identity in the text allows her to attract Raymon

with her “exotic” beauty and yet still attempt to impersonate Indiana, passing for a different class or a different race. Her eventual suicide serves as a narrative end point toward or away from which Indiana will move throughout the novel.

Much critical attention has been focused on one passage in particular, when Noun tries to win back Raymon by dressing as Indiana and inviting him to sleep in her mistress’s bedroom. Noun leads a mystified Raymon into a brightly lit room where she has placed exotic flowers and which is decorated with furniture from far-off lands as well as engravings of Paul and Virginie and the Île Bourbon. Raymon begins to imagine that the “fantôme d’une femme” (“phantom of a woman”) who led him to Indiana’s room was Indiana herself, but then he unflatteringly contrasts Noun with Indiana (101). When he temporarily comes to his senses, he is bewildered to be in such an intimate place belonging to the woman he really loves, exclaiming to Noun: “Sortons de cette chambre, nous ne sommes pas à notre place” (102) (“Let us leave this room, we are not in our place”). Ultimately, he succumbs to Noun’s “volupté tout orientale” (“very oriental voluptuousness”) (104), but only to see, entranced, the image of Indiana in the reflections of Noun between two mirrors: “Les deux panneaux de glace qui se renvoyaient l’un à l’autre l’image de Noun jusqu’à l’infini semblaient se peupler de mille fantômes. Il épiait dans la profondeur de cette double réverbération une forme plus déliée, et il lui semblait saisir, dans la dernière ombre vaporeuse et confuse que Noun y reflétait, la taille fine et souple de madame Delmare” (104).⁸ Twice in this passage Raymon’s vision of Indiana is that of a phantom, one who presumably haunts the space of the bedroom and takes over Noun’s body. After their night of lust, Raymon wakes up to find Noun once again a maid and Indiana’s room unremarkable, with its air of “decency” (105). But after Noun slowly realizes that Raymon has used her body to make love to another woman, she quietly wanders off and drowns herself in the river, where Indiana eventually faints upon finding her. Noun trades places with Indiana, becoming herself a phantom to haunt Indiana and the text.

As Béatrice Didier has argued, the novel’s many references to Ophelia (even Indiana’s dog, who also drowns, is named Ophélie), to drowning and the theme of water, underline the repressed desire on the part of the novel’s heroines for absolute passivity (Didier, *Sade*, 154), a passivity, I would argue, that extends to the vicissitudes of textual meaning. Noun dies less than a third of the way into the novel, but her presence is felt throughout since the characters are drawn back to where she drowned and Indiana and Ralph, her unlikely final love interest, repeatedly con-

template suicide. By giving herself over to the constant motion of the river, Noun ensures the dissolution of her self (in the text), but also decides the flow of the narrative—"Noun" becomes a subject. If Indiana is drawn again and again to water, if she sees the ghost of Noun every time she manages to break free from the influence of a man, it may, of course, be because she wants to lose herself completely, as she had tried to do in her relations with men. And yet by imagining that she can abandon her identity and her body to chance by wandering through space, as an author does over her writing, Indiana may be trying to envision the dangers and the joys of composing an alternative narrative of her life.

The first time Indiana considers suicide, she had just been forced to leave Raymon's Parisian *hôtel* by his mother and wanders the foggy streets of the city in a daze. Because she tried to leave her husband for Raymon, Indiana believes herself to be a damned woman, "une femme perdue dans l'opinion publique" ("a fallen woman according to public opinion") (218). Picturing her husband's hand shoving her into the stream of the gutter, she keeps walking, eventually becoming emboldened by the din of the streets. Indiana is unconsciously attracted to the water:

Elle descendit le quai depuis l'Institut jusqu'au Corps Législatif; mais elle oublia de traverser le pont, et continua à longer la rivière, absorbée dans une rêverie stupide, dans une méditation sans idées, et poursuivant l'action sans but de marcher devant elle.

Insensiblement elle se trouva au bord de l'eau, qui charriait des glaçons à ses pieds et les brisait avec un bruit sec et froid sur les pierres de la rive. Cette eau verdâtre exerçait une force attractive sur les sens d'Indiana. On s'accoutume aux idées terribles; à force de les admettre, on s'y plaît. Il y avait si longtemps que l'exemple du suicide de Noun apaisait les heures de son désespoir, qu'elle s'était fait du suicide une sorte de volupté tentatrice. . . . Quand elle sentit le froid cuisant de l'eau qui baignait déjà sa chaussure, elle s'éveilla comme d'un état de somnambulisme, et, cherchant des yeux où elle était, elle vit Paris derrière elle, et la Seine qui fuyait sous ses pieds, emportant dans sa masse huileuse le reflet blanc des maisons et le bleu grisâtre du ciel. Ce mouvement continu de l'eau et l'immobilité du sol se confondirent dans ses perceptions troublées, et il lui sembla que l'eau dormait et que la terre fuyait. Dans ce moment de vertige, elle s'appuya contre un mur, et se pencha, fascinée, vers ce qu'elle prenait pour une masse solide . . .⁹ (226–27)

This passage confounds the reader as much as Indiana; objects trade places with their reflections, and screens with their projections. Indiana

herself is portrayed as being void of any ideas or motivation, save for the drive to continue walking straight ahead. Yet she is entirely free for the first time in the novel, having earlier escaped out the window from her husband's reach and then being left by her lover. Moreover, her dream-like stupor leads to a superimposition of images onto the spaces of Paris and a free association of place and memory quite the contrary of a "meditation without ideas."

For the reader, the text indicates Indiana's trajectory very precisely, from the Institut on the Quai Malaquais heading west toward the Corps Législatif on the Quai d'Orsay by way of the Quai Voltaire; from there she neglects to cross the bridge (the Pont Louis XVI) to return home, instead following the river until she has left the city. The many references to water, to the morning gloom, and of course to Noun's suicide suggest that in her trance Indiana imagines she is back on her property in the Brie, near the river where Noun drowns. Strangely though, after the passage describes her waking up from the sensation of cold water leaking into her shoe and she leaves behind her "state of somnambulism," she becomes more, not less, susceptible to hallucination. She seems able to recognize the stone buildings and blue-gray sky of Paris behind her, but only as they are reflected in the quickly moving flow of the Seine. The contrast of the steady river current and the unmoving ground of the quay provoke a sense of vertigo; Indiana mistakes the river for a reflection of land and leans over to step on it. Earlier, the passage depicted the extreme cold of the river water as hardening into ice, but at the same time Indiana's shoes are bathed in the water rolling over the riverbank. Water and land have exchanged places, like Elstir's marine landscapes in Proust's *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, confounding Indiana's already fatigued senses and once again juxtaposing immobility and movement.

Indiana's cousin Sir Ralph, led by her dog Ophélie, prevents her from jumping at the last minute and slowly shakes her out of her reverie. Still out of her mind, she asks him if he met Noun on the "chemin" ("path"), pointing at the river, then asks him to "cherchez mes pieds" ("go fetch my feet"), which she claims to have left on the rocks (228). Later, as she recovers and tries to remember what happened, Ralph insists to her that she tried to commit suicide and makes her promise to him, not that she will never try to kill herself again, but that she will discuss it with him beforehand! At first Indiana denies she ever thought about suicide: "Pourquoi me parlez-vous de suicide? . . . Je n'ai jamais voulu attenter à ma vie" (229) ("Why do you talk to me about suicide? . . . I never wanted to take my own life"). Eventually she gives in to Ralph's interpretation and then returns to her husband; but a close reading of the passage shows

that Indiana, while attracted by the “sensual pleasure” of Noun’s suicide, made an effort to regain what she took for solid ground and so did not consciously try to kill herself. Ralph did in fact rescue her, but in the process ensured that she was bound to him and to her husband.

Indiana experiences a similar vision when she returns to her native Île Bourbon with her husband Delmare and Sir Ralph. Left to herself most of the time, she wanders the mountains outside her home in the evenings, gazing out at the sunset, but averting her eyes from the “magnetic” sight of the ocean in the far distance—presumably the pull of the water is too much for her. Beyond the waves, in the strange cloud forms above the horizon, her mind wanders off to distant lands:

Quelquefois les nuages de la côte prirent pour elle des formes singulières: tantôt elle vit une lame blanche s’élever sur les flots et décrire une ligne gigantesque qu’elle prit pour la façade du Louvre; tantôt ce furent deux voiles carrées qui, sortant tout à coup de la brume, offraient le souvenir des tours Notre-Dame de Paris, quand la Seine exhale un brouillard compact qui embrasse leur base et les fait paraître comme suspendues dans le ciel; d’autres fois c’étaient des flocons de nuées roses qui, dans leur formes changeantes, présentaient tous les caprices d’architecture d’une ville immense. L’esprit de cette femme s’endormait dans les illusions du passé, et elle se prenait à palpiter de joie à la vue de ce Paris imaginaire dont les réalités avaient signalé le temps le plus malheureux de sa vie. Un étrange vertige s’emparait alors de sa tête. Suspendue à une grande élévation au-dessus du sol de la côte, et voyant fuir sous ses yeux les gorges qui la séparaient de l’Océan, il lui semblait être lancée dans cet espace par un mouvement rapide, et cheminer dans l’air vers la ville prestigieuse de son imagination. Dans ce rêve, elle se cramponnait au rocher qui lui servait d’appui; et pour qui eût observé alors ses yeux avides, son sein haletant d’impatience et l’effrayante expression de joie répandue sur ses traits, elle eût offert tous les symptômes de la folie. C’étaient pourtant là ses heures de plaisir et les seuls moments de bien-être vers lesquels se dirigeaient les espérances de sa journée. Si le caprice de son mari eût supprimé ces promenades solitaires, je ne sais de quelle pensée elle eût vécu; car, chez elle, tout se rapportait à une certaine faculté d’illusions, à une ardente aspiration vers un point qui n’était ni le souvenir, ni l’attente, ni l’espoir, ni le regret, mais le désir dans toute son intensité dévorante.¹⁰ (253–54)

Like Stendhal looking out at Rome from on top of the Janiculum, Indiana sees her past projected onto a landscape below. The passage shares many points in common with Indiana’s “suicide” attempt in Paris: at-

mospheric detail which provokes a dream state; one place melting into the space of another; a “vertigo” caused by the difference between her stable position and a moving one; finally, a dissonance between Indiana’s experience and Ralph’s. Whereas the episode in Paris is a singular and unpleasant event in her life, the imperfect tense indicates that Indiana sought out this “vertigo” and “madness” over and over as if compelled to relive the experience, not because it was traumatic but because she finds in it an unexplainable joy. For her, “tout se rapportait à une certaine faculté d’illusions” (“everything was related to a certain power of illusions”), toward a single intense “desire,” but whereas in Paris that desire revolved around Noun, here she imagines the monuments of Paris, the Louvre and Notre Dame. The narrator supposes that Paris is the site of Indiana’s worst traumas, where Raymon had seduced her and left her. Yet nowhere else does the novel make explicit reference either to the Louvre or to Notre Dame. However, during her delirious walk along the river, these two monuments would have been visible through the fog across the water on the opposite bank and perhaps were reflected in the current. Moreover, their very monumentality signifies places of memory, history, and artistic and religious beauty absent elsewhere in Indiana’s life and in the novel.

According to the text, her “joy,” her “pleasure,” and her “desire” in these “illusions” comes from the view of her imaginary Paris and also from the sensation of “rapid movement” as she crosses the ocean and moves through the city. As if to highlight her delusional *flânerie*, the almost sexual pleasure she takes in her virtual walk through Paris, she lives for this “pensée” (“idea”), which would disappear if her husband ever suspended her solitary walks. The narrator implicitly suggests that Delmare has every reason to prevent Indiana from wandering when he insists upon her madness and her lack of ideas. But on the following page, Ralph’s hikes through the gorges of the Île Bourbon and subsequent meditations on his past merit respect as the reflections of a stoic philosopher. Indiana’s daydreams project images of her desire onto changing, mobile, natural forms. Far from just an obsession over Raymon, her evening strolls show that she delights in the creations of her imagination, temporarily freed from her subservience to Delmare, Raymon, and Ralph.

The twists and turns of *Indiana*’s plot in the novel’s fourth part find the heroine lost and wretched twice as she enters urban spaces, exposing the distance between her dreams of mobility and the dangers, especially for a woman, of unaccompanied travel. Indiana makes one final effort at escaping her abusive husband to return to France and Raymon. She bribes a ship’s captain to allow her passage to France (necessary because

any traveler was required by law to announce his or her departure in the local newspaper), and arrives in Bordeaux during the July Revolution. Disoriented by the strange new political reality, symbolized by the revolution's tricolor flag flying on Bordeaux's city hall, Indiana leaves the ship without her money or her identity papers and is stopped as a suspect by the National Guard. With the news of the monarchy's demise, she loses consciousness and wakes up days later in a hospital, where she is registered simply as "inconnue" ("unknown") (293). After two months she is able to leave the hospital, but remains in a feverish daze. She wanders the streets until she ends up once again by the port, eventually sleeping in an abandoned house and begging for food until the ship's captain recognizes her and sends her to Paris.

After her final rejection by Raymon and dismissal by Mlle de Nangy, she is taken in a carriage, again unconscious, and not knowing anyone, dumped in a hotel. The narrator's description of Indiana's hotel room corresponds to what Marc Augé calls a "non-lieu," a transitory place of anonymity that is the polar opposite of places of memory like the Louvre or Notre Dame; according to the novel, "ce local où nul n'a laissé de trace de son passage qu'un nom inconnu, . . . ce cachot de l'esprit et du coeur, voyez Paris, ce beau Paris, que vous aviez rêvé si merveilleux!" (299) ("this place where no one has left a trace of his passing except an unknown name, . . . this dungeon of the mind and of the heart, see Paris, this beautiful Paris, which you have dreamt as being so marvelous!"). This miserable hotel room, where she is even more immobilized than in the Île Bourbon, shatters her dream of the limitless city. Alone, unknown, her imaginary Paris vanished, Indiana wastes away in her room until Ralph once again miraculously arrives to rescue her.

Whether in the wilderness of her volcanic island in the Indian Ocean or in the political wilderness of France during the July Revolution, Indiana finds herself liberated from her ties to society and from her dependence on men, and eventually from her sense of identity. The spaces she traverses present to her a layered landscape where visions of the city compete with projections of her own desires. Indiana's experiences reveal a creative mind that invents metaphors of freedom and movement in order to imagine a world beyond the confinement of society's laws—which become all the more poignant when she is confronted with the harsh reality of institutional misogyny. Ralph's constant surveillance of Indiana, Raymon's cynical manipulation of her desires for recognition and adventure, and Delmare's domineering orders for her subordination all amount to different iterations of the same tactic used by the novel's sexist narrator:

to reinscribe Indiana's search for meaning as a product of madness and to reassert her subservience to men.

The Narrator's Story

Indiana's unexpected dénouement presents more than a few narrative, stylistic, and ideological problems that have puzzled critics. The novel's fourth part ends with Ralph and Indiana deciding to leap to their deaths into a gorge on the Île Bourbon; in the conclusion, the narrator discovers Indiana and Ralph living happily in the island's interior apparently cured of their suicidal urges. What is perhaps more disquieting for a novel that portrays the suffering of a woman at the hands of patriarchy, Indiana becomes almost voiceless in the conclusion as the narrator and Ralph engage in long emotional conversations and she retires to her quarters. After Indiana's many unsuccessful struggles to write her own fate, the scene of two men chummily discussing the past seems hardly like a satisfying ending. I would argue, however, that the conclusion marks a fundamental shift in the narrator's discourse as he embraces the creative possibilities of fantasy and Indiana and Ralph's dream of building a utopia beyond the tyranny of public opinion.

The narrator reveals himself to be a young man traveling to the Île Bourbon for no concrete purpose except to daydream. While exploring the island's interior and describing its geological peculiarities, he experiences an imaginative leap almost identical to Indiana's vision of Paris in the clouds. Within the confused disorder of volcanic rocks strewn across the "arena" of the volcano's crater, the narrator imagines he sees increasingly complex "architectural" forms; first a wall, then the delicate arabesque design of a Moorish building, followed by an obelisk, a Gothic fortress, and a pagoda (331). These natural ruins evocative of the history of civilization serve as inspiration and a challenge to the artist: "il semble que les génies de tous les siècles et de toutes les nations soient venus puiser leurs inspirations dans cette grande oeuvre du hasard et de la destruction" (332) ("it seems that geniuses of every century and of every nation have come to draw their inspiration from this great work of chance and destruction"). Volcanic forms, like artistic inspiration, are the work of chance, but also the work of destruction as they make way for new creations.

Predisposed to interpretational flights of fancy by the playful rock formations, the narrator stares at what he takes to be an inscription carved

in a gigantic crystallized monument seemingly written by an ageless hand, but in reality formed by chance in the volcano's cauldron:

De ces rencontres fortuites sont résultés des jeux bizarres, des impressions hiéroglyphiques, des caractères mystérieux, qui semblent jetés là comme le seing d'un être surnaturel, écrit en lettres cabalistiques.

Je restai longtemps dominé par la puérole prétention de chercher un sens à ces chiffres inconnus. Ces inutiles recherches me firent tomber dans une méditation profonde pendant laquelle j'oubliai le temps qui fuyait.¹¹ (333)

The narrator loses himself deciphering a text he knows to be imaginary. Though he qualifies his activity as childish and perhaps meaningless, he nonetheless connects the interpretation of these natural "signs" to the mystic art of divination, to ancient civilization, to the earlier rock formations which inspired the history of architecture, and so by extension to his own creative textual practice. As Jacques Rancière has shown in works such as *La Parole muette* or *Politique de la littérature*, one of the characteristics of literature which emerged during what he calls the "aesthetic regime of art" at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a "petrification" of literature, a proliferation of inanimate objects in literary texts which were made to speak: "une parole qui n'est proférée par personne, qui ne répond à aucune volonté de signification mais exprime la vérité des choses à la manière dont les fossiles ou les stries de la pierre portent leur histoire écrite" (Rancière, *Politique de la littérature*, 23) ("a speech which is proffered by no one, which responds to no particular will for meaning but expresses the truth of things just like fossils or striations in stone are marked by a written history"). By giving the meaning of his text over to the "silent speech" of stones, the narrator both abandons his "will to meaning" and taps into the truth of things rather than the vanities of society.¹²

Just as Indiana's joyful vision of Paris led to reverie and "madness," the narrator is caught in a daze. He loses track of time as clouds form, and when a torrential rain begins to fall, he takes refuge in a cave and wanders the island's interior, lost for two days. The downpour overflows the riverbeds, flooding the mountainsides and forming one "immense cascade" (333). The rest of the conclusion abounds in references to water, from the Bernica Falls into which Indiana and Ralph attempt to jump, to the "furious" cataract and overflowing lake below the couple's cabin. In the increasingly unrealistic ending, as the narrator resembles more and more Indiana herself, his strict control over the novel is lost and meaning

overflows its narrative gates. In her Indian Ocean utopia, no longer held back by her fear of society's laws, Indiana finally dove into the water.

George Sand's first novel established her reputation by guarding against the various ways women's writing was misread. She exposes the bias of masculine narrators and realist tropes by parodying it perfectly and undermining it from within. She realistically portrays, in the character Indiana, the struggles of women in dangerous texts and hostile spaces. The narrative's hero, Ralph, vows he will not be the "brute haïssable" ("detestable brute") (340) he had been. Judging by the vocabulary used in the conclusion, where Indiana is only referred to as either Mme Delmare or as Ralph's "compagne" ("companion"), the couple have successfully managed to avoid embracing the oppressive institution of marriage on their island paradise. The utopian conclusion to this, Sand's most realist novel, confirms that for society to change not only must the causes of inequality be laid out, but there must also be a leap of imagination toward a better world.

