

'LES AMANTS DE VENISE': A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

'LES AMANTS DE VENISE': A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE PRIVATE  
PROBLEMS AND LOVE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PLAYS OF  
ALFRED DE MUSSET, 1830-1835.

by

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A Thesis

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To Christopher

I am only one  
But I am one .  
I cannot do everything  
But I can do something .  
What I can do  
I ought to do  
And what I ought to do  
I will do.

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this paper will be to  
analyse the motivating force of George Sand upon the life  
and works of Alfred de Musset during the years 1833 - 1835.  
Chapter I will examine the biographical aspects of their  
lives and Chapters II and III will relate the results of  
this analysis to the dramatic work of the author.

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## CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT DATES

- 1804 Birth of George Sand on July first.  
Birth of Paul de Musset.
- 1810 Birth of Alfred de Musset on December eleventh.
- 1819 - 22 Musset attended the famous Collège Henri IV.
- 1822 Marriage of George Sand and Casimir Dudevant.
- 1827 Musset introduced to the Cénacle by Paul Foucher.
- 1830 December: Failure of La Nuit Vénitienne.
- 1832 Death of Musset's father as a result of a cholera outbreak.
- Appearance of Un Spectacle dans un Fauteuil: La Coupe et Les Lèvres, À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles, Namouna.
- 1833 April: André del Sarto.  
May: Les Caprices de Marianne.  
Musset introduced to George Sand.  
August: Rolla.  
December: Depart for Italy with George Sand.
- 1834 January: Arrival in Venice.  
Fantasio.  
February: Musset fell ill; beginning of George Sand's liaison with Pietro Pagello.  
March: Musset left Venice and returned to Paris.  
June: Arrival of George Sand and Pagello in Paris.  
July: On ne Badine pas avec l'amour.  
August: Lorenzaccio.  
September: Musset's trip to Baden-Baden.

- November: George left for Nohant with Pagello.
- 1835 January: Break with George Sand.  
March: Definitive break with George Sand.  
August: Barberine.  
November: Le Chandelier.
- 1836 Confession d'un enfant du siècle.
- 1837 Un Caprice.
- 1847 November: Successful staging of Un Caprice at Comédie-Française.
- 1852 Death of Musset on May second.
- 1876 Death of George Sand at Nohant on June eighth.
- 1877 Paul de Musset's Biographie published by Charpentier.

THE FOLLOWING ABBREVIATIONS HAVE BEEN USED THROUGHOUT THIS  
PAPER:

A.L.M.	<u>Archives des Lettres Modernes.</u>
A.U.M.L.A.	<u>Journal of the Australasian Universities and Literature Association.</u>
E.C.	<u>Esprit Créateur</u>
F.R.	<u>French Review</u>
I.L.	<u>l'Information Littéraire</u>
N.F.S.	<u>Nottingham French Studies</u>
N.L.	<u>Nouvelles Littéraires</u>
R.C.C.	<u>Revue des Cours et des Conférences</u>
R.H.L.	<u>Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France</u>
R.P.	<u>Revue de Paris</u>
R.R.	<u>Romanic Review</u>
R.S.H.	<u>Revue des Sciences Humaines</u>
R.U.S.	<u>Rice University Studies</u>

## INTRODUCTION

The reputation of Alfred de Musset as a dramatist rose sharply during the post-war years when Lorenzaccio, which until that point had seldom been performed, was added as a regular feature to the repertoire of the Théâtre Français. Gaston Baty's production in 1945, and Jean Vilar's more impressive and long-run revival of the play by the Théâtre National Populaire, established the author as one of the outstanding Romantic playwrights.

It is the intention of this dissertation to discuss the early dramatic works of Alfred de Musset, and more particularly those written while his relationship was at its height with George Sand. An attempt will be made to examine various aspects of the liaison of the 'amants de Venise', and their transposition within the dramatic works. The personalities of the two lovers, together with their similarities and differences, form the background for Musset's literary work. It is the plays composed during the period when Musset was deeply involved with his mistress, that reveal the author at his dramatic best. In the three later plays, Fantasio (1833), On ne Badine pas avec l'amour (1834), and Lorenzaccio (1834), Musset relied almost entirely on his affair to furnish intrigues. He used the resources of the theatre as a means of poetic



communication into which he injected his own problems.

The first chapter of the dissertation will focus on the personal difficulties of the two personalities of Alfred de Musset and George Sand, in an attempt to give an insight into their respective characters. This endeavour to cast some light on the lovers' backgrounds will be undertaken in two stages. The first part will deal with an examination of the two lovers prior to their meeting in the Spring of 1833. Musset's own awareness of his instability, plus certain extraneous events that come to play a greater part in his dramatic works, will form the basic material of the first section. In the second part, the meeting of George and Alfred, and the subsequent difficulties experienced by the Venetian lovers will form the basis for the study.

The second chapter consists of a critical study of the first three plays of 'Un Spectacle dans un Fauteuil'. André del Sarto and Les Caprices de Marianne, the first two plays to be discussed, antedate the author's affair with George Sand. In each of these plays the protagonist, or protagonists, as is the case with Les Caprices de Marianne, are a projection of the author's own personality. The same is true of Fantasio, the light, yet melancholy play, that was conceived and written during the early stages of the relationship.

The third chapter will continue the study begun by the second chapter, by referring to the last two plays of the first volume, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour and Lorenzaccio. The evolution in the author's treatment of many of the themes relevant to the second chapter constitutes a large part of this chapter. As the essence of these later plays was written after the trip to Venice, it is easy to trace the progression of such pertinent themes as duality and self-identity. The differences and similarities between these plays and the three earlier ones will also be pointed out, for it was with these later plays that Musset reached the apogee of his literary career.

Various methods of interpretation were considered during the composition of this study. Those based largely on political or existential points of view, as could be the case with Fantasio and Lorenzaccio, were rejected in favour of a more psychological analysis, since this was found to be more rewarding for our subject.

It is hoped that a reading of this dissertation will allow the reader to delve into the dramatic works of the author with more penetration and awareness, permitting him to explore further the recesses of Musset's mind, and to recognize in each of the protagonists a portrait of the dramatist himself.

## CHAPTER I

### ALFRED DE MUSSET AND GEORGE SAND: LITERARY AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

An early parallel presents itself between the backgrounds of Alfred de Musset and George Sand. Both belonged to old and distinguished families, and in Musset's case particularly, one can trace such important people as Joan of Arc, Cassandra Salviati, the long-time beloved of Ronsard, and du Bellay.<sup>1</sup>

Musset was born in Paris on December eleventh, 1810, at the precise epoch when Napoleon was at the height of his power. For the older generation, the glory of war and the honour of the victorious nation, determined the spirit of the times. In contrast, Musset's generation suffered from idleness, apathy and a distinct lack of motivation, referred to as "le mal du siècle".

Remaining Parisian throughout his lifetime, the author is commonly referred to as "avec Boileau, le plus Parisien de nos poètes".<sup>2</sup> An exceptionally gifted and ambitious scholar at the Lycée Henri IV, Musset received a regular classical education, excelling in both Latin and Greek verse composition.

George Sand, however, had a different upbringing. Born nine years before Musset, Aurore Dupin received her

training almost exclusively at a country estate, Nohant, in Berry. After the early death of her father, a soldier in Napoleon's army, Aurore was sent to live with her paternal grandmother, the Baroness Dupin. It was under her grandmother's direction that the boyish and domineering trait, which was to play so great a part in her later life, began to take root.

Feeling that Aurore should have been a boy, the Abbé Deschartres, her father's old tutor, decided to do everything within his power to develop her masculine characteristics. Having been taught to ride and shoot, Aurore soon was able to keep up with the best of the boys in the neighbourhood. During all these expeditions, it was not hard to persuade her to adopt men's clothing, a distinction that she retained throughout her lifetime.

Paradoxically, juxtaposed to this relatively free and liberal training, was Aurore's formal education. At fourteen she was placed in the convent of the Dames Augustines Anglaises in Paris, founded by English nuns who had fled from Puritan England to Catholic France. There she received all of her academic training, emerging four years later, saturated with the convent's moral atmosphere. It was his appreciation of life in this particular convent that was to furnish Musset with the necessary background material for his character Camille, in On ne Badine pas avec

l'amour.

Once her education was terminated, the next logical step was to find a husband. Casimir Dudevant, a rather dull man and the illegitimate son of the Baron Dudevant, offered himself as an eligible suitor. Married at nineteen in September of 1822, Aurore became pregnant in early October. The marriage proved to be a most unsatisfactory match, for there were great differences in tastes between the two. Aurore, who was much more intelligent than her husband, found life at Nohant unbearably boring. Seeking distraction elsewhere, she began to associate with other men and had a series of minor love affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Musset met a similar crisis of boredom and sought escape in a life of debauchery. Drinking, gambling and excursions into the underworld life of brothels, became his way of life. Seeking to put some meaning into his life, Alfred frequently turned night into day. It was in this search for sordid pleasures that the author began to consort with other young dandies, and in particular with Alfred Tattet, another young man of fashion. Tattet was to become one of Alfred's ardent companions in later years.

During this stage of his life, Paul Foucher, Hugo's brother-in-law and one of the author's old school-friends, introduced him to the Cénacle, the acknowledged literary school of the time. Although the exact date of entry has

been lost, it was most likely around July or August of 1827. Musset's entry into what he so characteristically called "la grande boutique romantique"<sup>4</sup> marked the début of his literary career. Gathered around the dominant personality of Victor Hugo on the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, were all the leading literary men of the day, including Alfred de Vigny, Prosper Mérimée and Sainte-Beuve.

Although influenced by the actions and theories of Hugo and some of his other disciples, Musset refused to take any part in the group, preferring to remain an outcast. The Cénacle itself declined to take Musset seriously, viewing him as a dilettante. This opinion was also shared by Hugo who said of the playwright:

C'est un de ces artistes éphémères avec qui la gloire n'a rien à faire et dont la réputation n'est qu'un caprice à la mode."<sup>5</sup>

One member, however, did not fail to recognize the genius present in Musset. This was Sainte-Beuve. After hearing the author recite some of his early poems, he said: "Nous avons parmi nous un enfant de génie".<sup>6</sup>

As well as refusing to accept the dramatist as a peer, the Cénacle regarded him as a philanderer, an opinion that is justified to some extent. Seeking his pleasures in a world completely alien to literature, Alfred associated with young, elegant aristocrats, instead of the writers he came into contact with in the Cénacle. His preference was for men who were "plus occupés de plaisir que d'art, de

toilette que de livres."<sup>7</sup>

In contrast with the preceding view, it is interesting to see how Musset in turn regarded the Cénacle. On the one hand, he regarded the group in much the same way as he did other literary and artistic schools of the time. Reproaching poets who were disciples of Hugo for their social and political preoccupations, the dramatist congratulated the painter Delacroix, who worked solely for himself without any thoughts of trying to start a school. In regard to Musset's open dislike of any form of literary schools, Van Tieghem wrote:

Pour lui, Musset, encore au début de sa carrière, promet bien de ne se rallier au drapeau de personne et de ne jamais faire figure de chef d'école . . . le poète doit être absolument indépendant . . . .<sup>8</sup>

Alfred's gradual break with the Cénacle and with current romantic trends, was a slow, but constant process. Admittedly, at first he tried to follow in the footsteps of his contemporaries. Pierre Gastinel says of his early works:

. . . ces oeuvres de la dix-huitième année sont les plus froides que Musset ait écrites. Son coeur n'y est pas intéressé: Ballade de la Nuit, du Rêve, la Prêtresse de Diane, le Mangeur d'Opium, ce sont des caprices de l'imagination, inspirés par quelques auteurs à la mode . . . . Tous les genres adoptés par le jeune poète lui ont été prescrits par ses compagnons. Ce n'est pas tout, il les utilise sans vrai souci d'innovation ni d'originalité.<sup>9</sup>

In later years, however, the influence of the

Cénacle upon Musset diminished. Remaining essentially an exile from the group, he began to develop an independent mode of thought. Rejecting the dominance asserted by Hugo, he wrote:

Un poète peut parler de lui, de ses amis, des  
vins qu'il boit, de la maîtresse qu'il a ou  
voudrait avoir, du temps qu'il fait, des morts  
ou des vivants, des sages ou des fous;

and he added as a special warning: "mais il ne doit pas faire de politique."<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to Vigny, Hugo and Lamartine, Musset took no interest in biblical themes, nor in the theme of the family and child.<sup>11</sup>

Although Paul de Musset affirms in his Notice des Oeuvres Posthumes d'Alfred de Musset that his brother did not separate from the romantic trend until 1833, there is evidence to suggest an earlier rupture. Léon Séché, in his monumental work on Alfred de Musset, writes that since July of 1830 "Musset se déhugotisait."<sup>12</sup> Alexandre Dumas also praises the originality of the Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, a volume of works that appeared in January, 1830:

Ces vers avaient une qualité, ils étaient vivants, ce n'était ni du Lamartine, ni de l'Hugo, ni du Vigny; c'était une fleur du même jardin, c'est vrai; un fruit du même verger c'est vrai encore; mais une fleur ayant son odeur à elle, un fruit ayant son goût à lui.<sup>13</sup>

Musset, therefore, just as Hugo had done previously, preached freedom and independence in art, and liberty in the



theatrical domain. He did, however, take everything one step further, proclaiming a theatre free from any form of restraint whatsoever. This "free theatre" was the result of an unfortunate incident that occurred during the production of his play La Nuit Vénitienne. A short time after the July Revolution of 1830, Harel, the enterprising director of the Odéon, forced to fill a void in his repertory, requested the young dramatist to write a play "la plus neuve et la plus hardie possible".<sup>14</sup> Musset, who was only twenty, complied, and the result was the famous Nuit Vénitienne.

The theatre had always attracted Musset. As youngsters, Paul and Alfred had consistently read books, especially the oriental and mystical narratives of the Persians and Arabs: but they were not content simply to read the tales, and with the help of a neighbour, Léon Gobert, they tried to act them out. Already known to the public as the author of the Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie, Alfred was not slow to seize upon this occasion to present his talent as a playwright. The results were disastrous, for the production of the play had consequences that were to change the author's direction for many years.

The performance, which took place on the first of December 1830, was ruined by a bizarre incident. In the second scene of the play, Mademoiselle Bérenger, playing the

lead of Laurette, found the entire front of her white satin dress covered with green, zebra stripes. She had leaned against one of the properties, a bright green trellis, where the paint was not quite dry. From this point in the play the voices of the actors became inaudible, overshadowed by hisses and laughter. Although the trellis was swiftly removed from the scene, the play fared no better the second night. The consequences of this sad mishap, due partly to technical oversights, were incalculable.

Critical reaction to the play was unfavourable, to the point of being cruel and cutting. Printed in the December third issue of Le Corsaire were the words:

l'auteur n'est qu'un farceur romantique . . . on l'a sifflé, sifflé et resifflé.<sup>15</sup>

In another newspaper, le Courier des Théâtres, appeared the comment:

Nous croyons cependant avoir entendu au milieu du bruit le nom d'Alfred de Musset. Voilà un nom qui ne sortira jamais de son obscurité.<sup>16</sup>

Only Loeve-Veimars, a critic from Le Temps, had the courage to reprimand the audience for its vulgar behavior and to take up the author's defence:

Celui-ci se trouve donc dans une sorte de disponibilité. Il hésite à s'engager dans une oeuvre de longue haleine.<sup>17</sup>

Musset's own comments on the fiasco reflect the feelings of bitterness and frustration that marked his abrupt

withdrawal from the theatre. He confides that as for himself:

Je n'aurais jamais cru qu'il se pût trouver  
à Paris de quoi composer un public aussi  
sot que celui-là.<sup>18</sup>

Paul reports in the Biographie that asked the next day by Prosper Mérimée if he intended to let the play be performed again, Musset replied: "Non, je dis adieu à la ménagerie et pour longtemps".<sup>19</sup> Paul's testimony is also corroborated by a passing reference to the theatre in the poem "Namouna": "le Théâtre à coup sûr n'était pas mon affaire".

Unable to bear such humiliation and scathing criticism, it is no wonder that Musset quickly renounced writing for the theatre, a vow he was to adhere to for almost seventeen years. He nevertheless continued to write plays, dedicating himself solely to works designed with the reader in mind. He became a "closet dramatist",<sup>20</sup> with most of his Comédies intended for literary reviews, and in particular La Revue des deux mondes, whose editor, Frédéric Buloz, continued to publish faithfully all of the author's works.

The importance of the failure of La Nuit Vénitienne and its consequences, must not be overlooked. Writing for an arm-chair audience, Musset chose to run counter to traditional doctrines. A leading critic and highly regarded dramatist in his own right, Jean Sarmant, wrote a very apt comment regarding the author's decision:

Il [Musset] n'est pas allé au Théâtre. Il a amené le Théâtre à lui. Il l'a amené à lui parce qu'il l'a méprisé dans ses servitudes.<sup>21</sup>

Léon Lafoscade, in his study of Musset's theatre, detects the real attraction this kind of situation held for Musset:

C'est du théâtre, sans en être, c'est dramatique et ce n'est pas fait pour être joué. Plus de représentations, plus d'auteurs, plus de spectateurs; il ne reste qu'un auteur et un lecteur. <sup>22</sup>

There are several other important elements present in La Nuit Vénitienne which come into greater prominence in the later plays. The very title of the play underlines Musset's love for Italy. Symbolic of an earthly paradise, and long renowned for its seductive climate, Italy had always been a major attraction for writers. For Musset, however, Italy, and especially Renaissance Italy, became much more than a dream. Italy represented a second home and country for the writer who, according to his brother, "avait le masque et l'âme d'un Italien de la Renaissance."<sup>23</sup>

Certainly Alfred's interest in Italian art and culture can be explained in part by the Italian classes he attended in his school days, during which time such authors as Dante and Petrarch were studied. Another factor that contributes to his enthusiasm for his second country is his love for painting. Alfred possessed a certain talent as an artist and was passionately fond of the Italian Great Masters. The Italian settings of some of the plays of

William Shakespeare provide him with another source of inspiration. That he had read and admired Shakespeare is evident from the following excerpt taken from a letter to Paul Foucher in September, 1827:

Je donnerais vingt-cinq francs pour avoir une pièce de Shakespeare ici en anglais.<sup>24</sup>

Italy and Italian influences were very much in vogue in the intellectual atmosphere of the late 1820s and early 1830s. Several articles dealing exclusively with Italian Literature appeared in the Revue des deux mondes in the early 1830s, including a series of Etudes sur l'Italie by Antoni Deschamps. Musset, a regular contributor to the magazine himself, could not fail to have been aware of these.

At this early stage in his career, many important and recurring themes have already been established. His passion for Italian culture, his disdain for established literary precepts, and his relinquishing of the stage as a means of literary communication will all be discussed in the following chapters.

(ii)

George and Alfred met in early spring 1833. Prior to this meeting George had just broken with "le petit Jules",<sup>25</sup> and had turned down an offer to meet Musset. After her break with Sandeau, Sainte-Beuve, her long-time friend and spiritual adviser, suggested a meeting with Alfred de Musset, known then as the author of the Contes

d'Espagne et d'Italie. George, however, who was aware of Musset's reputation as a fop, refused Sainte-Beuve's offer with the words:

Je ne veux pas que vous m'amenez Alfred de Musset. Il est très dandy, nous ne nous conviendrons pas et j'avais plus de curiosité que d'intérêt à le voir. Je pense qu'il est imprudent de satisfaire toutes ses curiosités, et meilleur d'obéir à ses sympathies.<sup>26</sup>

The fateful meeting of the two did come about, however, and George found herself agreeably surprised that the young dandy was actually an extremely personable and well-mannered young fellow.<sup>27</sup> The occasion for the meeting was a dinner party organized by Euloz to celebrate the second anniversary of the Revue des deux mondes. All regular contributors were invited, among whom were included George and Alfred.

George, who was then twenty-nine (six years older than Musset), was the only woman associate present. Although wearing feminine clothes, she could not resist one small idiosyncrasy - to her belt was fastened a small silver dagger. Compared to George, who at this point was married with two children, Alfred was innocent in the ways of love. Prior to meeting her, he had experienced only two small love affairs: at eighteen he had fallen in love with a woman much older than himself, a certain Madame Beaulieu, and a year later another woman, perhaps Madame de la Carte, had deceived him. The extent of Musset's amorous life upon his meeting with George Sand, revolved, therefore,

around these two unfortunate adventures.

Alfred openly declared his love for George on the twenty-ninth of July 1833, the date that is usually given to signify the start of the relationship:

Mon cher George: J'ai quelque chose de bête  
et de ridicule à vous dire . . . je suis amoureux de  
vous. Je le suis depuis le premier jour où  
j'ai été chez vous. 28

Upon receiving such an ardent declaration, George did not know how to reciprocate and wrote: "Je me suis rendue plus par amitié que par amour,"<sup>29</sup> but then she added: "Chaque jour je m'attache à lui, chaque jour je vois s'effacer en lui les petites choses qui me faisaient souffrir . . . ."<sup>30</sup>

It was not long before Musset moved into George's apartment on the Quai Malaquais. In early August, Musset suggested that they should go and have a short holiday, walking among the Franchard woods at Fontainebleau. It was during this trip that the author fell prey to one of his hallucinatory attacks which he himself called "une sorte d'épilepsie intellectuelle".<sup>31</sup>

Hypersensitive and subject to nervous crises,<sup>32</sup> Alfred was a homo duplex. This double personality is mentioned for the first time in a conversation over Alfred's extravagance. When Paul tried to make Alfred realize the consequences of his excesses, the latter replied:

Précisément parce que je suis jeune, j'ai  
besoin de tout connaître, et je veux tout  
apprendre par expérience et non par ouï dire.  
Je sens en moi deux hommes, l'un qui agit,

l'autre qui regarde. Si le premier fait une sottise, le second en profitera . . . .33

The important characteristic of this dédoublement therefore, is the incorporation of two separate beings into one identity, one of which acts while the other watches.<sup>34</sup> This situation of a duality was to play an important part in Musset's work. In his poetry (La Nuit de Mai), as well as in his plays (Les Caprices de Marianne, Fantasio, Lorenzaccio), the author utilizes it as a central intrigue. Plagued by the mystery of this second self, Musset chose to dramatize it in his literary endeavors. Coelio and Octave, representing two different aspects of Musset's personality, are strangely reminiscent of Gaston Baty's comments on the two beings present in Musset:

. . . l'un jouisseur, brillant, débauché,  
ironique, se contentait des amours qui  
passent. L'autre, tendre, ardent,  
mélancolique et douloureux, rêvait de la  
grande passion qui viendrait emplir sa vie.<sup>35</sup>

After the Franchard incident had passed, the young couple resumed their relationship. On August twenty-fifth of the same year, George wrote to Sainte-Beuve telling him of her newly found happiness:

Je me suis enamourée et cette fois très  
sérieusement d'Alfred de Musset. Ceci n'est  
plus un caprice, c'est un attachement senti  
. . . . Je trouve [en lui] une candeur, une  
loyauté, une tendresse qui m'enivrent. . . .  
Je suis heureuse, remerciez Dieu pour moi.<sup>36</sup>

During the late fall of 1833, all went well with



the two lovers. Each believed himself to be exquisitely happy and frequently asserted this contentment in letters, such as the following from George Sand to Sainte-Beuve written in early November:

Je suis heureuse . . .chaque jour je m'attache  
davantage à lui . . . .Chaque jour je vois  
luire et briller les belles choses que j'admirais.<sup>37</sup>

Again on the fourteenth of November she wrote:

Ma vie de coeur est arrangée et ne cherche plus  
rien . . . .Je voudrais que vous fussiez  
aussi heureux que moi.<sup>38</sup>

This stage of supreme contentment that the two lovers enjoyed so much was to be shortlived. Since July they had been planning a trip to Italy with Rome as a final objective. This voyage was designed to give the lovers a chance to get out of Paris, and away from prying eyes, as well as to fulfil their longing to see the Italy of their dreams. The journey, however, ended disastrously, having passed through four distinct phases, the first of which ends with Musset's return from Venice on March twenty-ninth, 1834.

The expedition was plagued with difficulties and ill omens from the start. Paul de Musset writes in La Biographie of the couple's departure on the thirteenth of December:

Par une soirée brumeuse et triste, je conduisis  
les voyageurs jusqu'à la malle-poste, où ils  
montèrent au milieu de circonstances de mauvais  
augure.<sup>39</sup>

A superstitious man by nature, Paul became even more so when he found that their coach was number thirteen in line. From Marseilles to Genoa, Musset suffered from sea-sickness, and George herself fell ill at Genoa with a fever and dysentery. The only high point of the trip was the presence of Henri Beyle (Stendhal) on the coach. Even their so long-awaited arrival in Venice was cold and depressing. When they had arrived at their apartment in the Hotel Danieli, George continued to remain ill. As the couple were new to the city and had not had time to make any friends, Alfred was left very much on his own. Feeling lonely and depressed, he started to stay out for long periods in the evenings, and began to lapse into his old habits of frequenting the slum areas. One morning, however, he returned much later than usual. Covered with blood, he soon became a victim of one of his crises. This was in early February, over a month after the couple's arrival. Not knowing what to do, and afraid of what might happen, George called in a certain Pietro Pagello, the young physician who had been attending her throughout her illness.

During Musset's month or so of delirium, it was George and Pagello who stayed beside him, nursing him faithfully day and night. During the early stages of his sickness, George wrote to a friend of hers in Paris, Boucoiron, telling him of Alfred's illness, and beseeching him to make no mention of it in Paris. The anxiety and

state of mind of George Sand at this stage in their relationship is very acutely shown by the tone of the letter:

Il est réellement en danger . . .le délire est affreux et continuel. Aujourd'hui cependant, il y a un mieux extraordinaire . . .mais la nuit dernière a été horrible; six heures d'une frénésie telle que, malgré deux hommes robustes, il courait tout nu dans la chambre. Des cris, des chants, des hurlements, des convulsions; ô mon Dieu, quel spectacle . . .Gardez toujours un silence absolu sur la maladie d'Alfred, et recommandez le même silence à Buloz.<sup>40</sup>

Apparently George had made some effort to have Alfred committed to an asylum,. These thoughts were to stay with Musset throughout his entire lifetime, as can be witnessed by the remarks of Mme Martellet (then Mlle Adèle Colin) in her book Alfred de Musset intime. Mme Martellet, who nursed Musset during the last ten years of his life, tells of an incident that occurred during this time:

Il se réveillait très inquiet et regardait alors autour de lui . . . .Il me dit un jour:  
 -Adèle, suis-je chez vous? Ne suis-je pas dans une maison de santé?  
 -Vous êtes chez vous, dans votre chambre . . .  
 -Il y a encore une chose que je voulais te demander, suis-je marié?  
 -Non, vous n'êtes pas marié. Pourquoi demandez-vous tout cela?  
 -Si j'étais marié, ma femme, me voyant malade, aurait peur; elle me mettrait sous la coupe d'un médecin qui, sous le prétexte de me soigner, me rendrait fou. Dans une maison de santé, je ne pourrais pas vivre. J'ai toujours peur que l'on ne m'y mette.<sup>41</sup>

From this text, therefore, it is evident that Musset hears or believes he can hear, the voice of George

Sand speaking to him, and the doctor mentioned is Pagello who eventually became George's lover.

How much Musset knew or saw of their liaison, no one actually knows, for with a delirious man, it is hard to separate the world of dreams from that of reality. He claims to have seen George seated on Pagello's knee; he also asserts that he saw them kissing and sipping tea out of the same cup. Whatever Musset actually did see makes little or no difference, for nonetheless, Pagello did become George's lover.

Once Musset was back on the road to health, the question of how George and Pagello were going to keep their love a secret became an important issue. George insisted that as soon as Musset had regained his strength she would tell him the truth. Pagello, however, earnestly entreated George to remain silent, maintaining that Musset was not yet fully recovered, and could very well have a relapse at the news that his beloved had been unfaithful. In a long letter to Pagello, however, George writes:

Aurons-nous assez de prudence et assez de bonheur toi et moi pour lui cacher notre secret encore un mois. Dans deux ou trois jours, les soupçons d'Alfred recommenceront et deviendront peut-être des certitudes. Il suffira d'un regard entre nous pour le rendre fou de colère et de jalousie. S'il découvre la vérité, à présent, que ferons-nous pour le calmer. Il nous détestera pour l'avoir trompé . . . .42

That Pagello and George refrained from telling Musset of their relationship is made apparent by the nature of Alfred's departure. In a short note to his mother and brother, Alfred wrote:

Je vous apporterai un corps malade, une âme  
abattue, un coeur en sang, mais qui vous aime  
encore.<sup>44</sup>

When he finally left for Paris on March twenty-ninth, Musset brought with him two strange companions, "une tristesse et une joie sans fin".<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, his state of mind was sad because he had just lost his mistress; on the other hand he was content because he had made a self-sacrifice. Van Tieghem interprets the author's action as follows:

Par amour pour George, il se sacrifie: qu'elle  
soit heureuse avec l'autre, puisqu'il ne peut pas  
lui donner le bonheur.<sup>46</sup>

Musset saw himself as playing a super-human rôle, and remained perched high upon this pedestal until his long-time friend, Tattet, told him that he had not made any sacrifice, but that Pietro and George had already been lovers for quite some time.

Musset's arrival in Paris marks the beginning of the second phase of their relationship. This second stage, extending from his return in mid-April, until George's return in August, is dominated by his sincere concern for her well-being and happiness.

During the first month of this stage Musset suffered from fits of depression and melancholy. He tells us himself of his feelings at this time:

Je crus d'abord n'éprouver ni regret, ni douleur de mon abandon. Je m'éloignai fièrement, mais à peine eus-je regardé autour de moi que je vis un désert. Je fus saisi d'une souffrance inattendue. Il me semblait que toutes mes pensées tombaient comme des feuilles sèches . . . Dès que je vis que je ne pouvais lutter, je m'abandonnai à la douleur en désespéré . . . Je m'enfermai dans ma chambre, j'y passai quatre mois à pleurer sans cesse, ne voyant personne et n'ayant pour toute distraction qu'une partie d'échecs que je jouais machinalement tous les soirs . . . Je connus et j'aimai la mélancolie . . . Je compris alors ce que c'est que l'expérience, et je vis que la douleur nous apprend la vérité . . . Ma maîtresse était brune; elle avait de grands yeux; je l'aimais, elle m'avait quitté; j'en avais souffert et pleuré pendant quatre mois, n'est-ce pas en dire assez? . . . On ne devient pas homme en un jour.<sup>47</sup>

As time wore on, however, Alfred became happier. Seized with the idea of writing the story of their relationship, he wrote to George on April thirtieth:

Je m'en vais faire un roman. J'ai bien envie d'écrire notre histoire; il me semble que cela me guérirait et m'élèverait le coeur. Je voudrais te bâtir un autel, fût-ce avec mes os, mais j'attendrai ta permission formelle . . .<sup>48</sup>

George immediately replied:

Il m'est impossible de parler de moi dans un livre dans la disposition d'esprit où je suis; pour toi, fais ce que tu voudras, romans, sonnets, poèmes; parle de moi comme tu l'entendras, je me livre à toi les yeux bandés . . .<sup>49</sup>

Unfailing in his desire to write this novel, which was eventually to become La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle,

Alfred replied:

Je voudrais cependant écrire . . .il y a une voix pour toi et . . .c'est celle d'un homme qui t'a connue pendant un an, précisément peut-être d'un homme que tu as quitté. Il m'est très indifférent qu'on se moque de moi, mais il m'est odieux qu'on t'accuse avec toute cette histoire de maladie . . .le monde saura mon histoire; je l'écrirai. . . .La postérité répétera nos noms comme ceux de ces amants immortels qui n'en ont plus qu'un à eux deux, comme Roméo et Juliette, comme Héloïse et Abélard. On ne parlera jamais de l'un sans parler de l'autre . . . .50

The period of relapse and passion, that so well characterized the third phase of the liaison, begins with the arrival of George and Pietro in Paris. Prior to his departure, the docile young doctor, painfully aware of his mistress' growing discontent with him, wrote the following note to his father:

Je suis au dernier stade de ma folie . . . .  
Demain je pars pour Paris où je quitterai la  
Sand.51

Pagello, who possessed good common sense, did indeed have a foreboding of their rupture, for it was at Nohant, George's country estate, that their relationship was terminated.

Meanwhile Alfred had once again fallen prey to his passion for George. Deciding that he must go away to Baden for a rest, Alfred begged George to grant him one last reunion. After meeting with her for only two hours, he found himself hopelessly in love again. From Baden there continued to flow a stream of highly passionate and desperate

letters. The tone of the following excerpts, taken from Alfred's first letter to George on September first, gives an indication of the frenzied state of mind in which he found himself:

Je voulais te parler de mon amour; ah! George, quel amour! Jamais homme n'a aimé comme je t'aime. Je suis perdu, vois-tu; je suis noyé, inondé d'amour; je ne sais plus si je vis, si je mange, si je marche, si je respire, si je parle; je sais que j'aime . . . Je t'aime, ô ma chair et mon sang! Je meurs d'amour, d'un amour sans fin, sans nom, insensé, désespéré, perdu! Tu es aimée, adorée, idolâtrée, jusqu'à mourir! . . . Mais maintenant, écoute j'aime mieux ma souffrance que la vie . . . .52

This last sentence was to set the tone for all of Musset's literary production. Love, for the author, was always to remain a form of suffering.

In the final stage of the affair can be traced the see-saw relationship of George and Alfred, so characteristic of the entire liaison. This period, extending from November of 1834 until March of 1835, reflects the beginning of the lovers' resignation, and their mutual awareness of the hopelessness of their love. Before the period of total abandonment was to occur, however, furious scenes developed between the two lovers. Unpleasant situations would arise, followed by pleas for forgiveness and remorse. Unable to bear the quarreling any longer, George left for Nohant in early November. On the twelfth of that month, Alfred wrote to his friend Tattet, "tout est fini",<sup>53</sup> and at approximately the same time Sainte-Beuve



received the following note:

Il ne m'est plus possible maintenant de conserver sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, des relations avec elle, ni par écrit, ni autrement.<sup>54</sup>

George, in a last desperate attempt to win Alfred back, cut off all her long dark hair and sent it to him. Paul de Musset writes that upon receiving this parcel, his brother burst into tears and determined to meet with George again. In January of 1835, the two were reunited, and on the fourteenth of this same month George wrote triumphantly to Tattet: "Alfred est redevenu mon amant".<sup>55</sup> This reunion, like most of the preceding attempts, lasted only a few months. This time it was George, always the more dominant of the two partners, who decided to make an end. She arranged to meet Alfred in her apartment on March seventh, but left Paris for Nohant on the evening of the sixth.

The memory of his former mistress was never to be effaced from Alfred's mind. Serving as a single model for all of Musset's heroines, George was the main source of his inspiration. This great love affair which broke his heart, proved to be essential to the expression of his literary genius. Musset would draw upon certain aspects of the liaison for his literary material, and would then transpose these sufferings into his plays. All of Musset's best works have a biographical origin, with George Sand, archetype of the femme fatale, proclaiming her presence on

every line. It was this direct inter-action of the two lovers that was to provide the stimulus necessary for Musset's dramatic works. Throughout his plays, well-defined images both of his own personality, and that of George Sand, can be traced. On the one hand, Marianne and Camille are distinct reflections of George Sand. On the other hand, André, Octave, Coelio, Fantasio, Perdican, and Lorenzo are projections of the author's own complex personality.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Some critics feel that Musset's great love for Italy stems from his Italian ancestry.

<sup>2</sup>Philippe Van Tieghem, Musset, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre (Paris: Boivin et Ciè., 1944), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Aurélin de Sèze, Stéphane Ajasson, by whom she had a daughter Solange, and Jules Sandeau. It was the latter who persuaded her to leave Nohant and come to Paris, where they lived together in an apartment on the Quai Malaquais.

<sup>4</sup>Taken from "Stances à Charles Nodier", August, 1843.

<sup>5</sup>Pierre Gastinel, Le Romantisme d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1931), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Léon Séché, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907), I, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup>Philippe Van Tieghem, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>9</sup>Gastinel, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>10</sup>Van Tieghem, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>A theme essential to the work of Hugo.

<sup>12</sup>Séché, op cit., p. 73.

<sup>13</sup>Gastinel, Le Romantisme d'Alfred de Musset, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup>Paul de Musset, Biographie d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Charpentier Editeur, 1877), p. 99.

<sup>15</sup>Henri Lefebvre, Alfred de Musset - Dramaturge (Paris: l'Arche, 1955), p. 154.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>17</sup>Simon Jeune, "Musset caché", R.H.L., LXVI, p. 420.

- <sup>18</sup>Paul de Musset, op cit., p. 25.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 101.
- <sup>20</sup>Henri Ghéon, (Translated by Adèle M. Fiske) The Art of the Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 49.
- <sup>21</sup>Jean Sarmant, Théâtre Complet de Musset (Paris: les Editions Nationales, 1948), p. 5.
- <sup>22</sup>Léon Lafoscade, Le Théâtre d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1901), p. 6.
- <sup>23</sup>Séché, Alfred de Musset, I, p. 36.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>25</sup>Jules Sandeau
- <sup>26</sup>Jean Pommier, Variétés sur Alfred de Musset et son théâtre (Paris: Librairie Nizet et Bastard, 1944), p. 37.
- <sup>27</sup>Rumour had it that Gustave Planche arranged matters so that George would find herself sitting next to Alfred.
- <sup>28</sup>Musset, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, ed. Raymond Laubreaux (Paris: Didier, 1961), p. 9.
- <sup>29</sup>Emile Henriot, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1928), p. 38.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>32</sup>During Musset's childhood there was a distinct lack of corrective punishment. One day he committed three malicious deeds: smashing a dining-room mirror, cutting a new pair of curtains into shreds and dripping red sealing-wax on a large map of Europe. Fearful for their son's health, the Musset's always tended to forgive their son, thus perpetuating his tendency to become the spoiled darling of the family.

- <sup>33</sup>Paul de Musset, Biographie, pp. 85-86,
- <sup>34</sup>This notion of the double personality was very popular among early Nineteenth century Romantics. Heinrich Heine even gave his second self a name -- Doppelgänger.
- <sup>35</sup>Musset, (ed. Baty) Les Caprices de Marianne, p. 9.
- <sup>36</sup>Pommier, op. cit., p. 54.
- <sup>37</sup>Letter to Sainte-Beuve, September nineteenth, 1833.
- <sup>38</sup>Letter to Sainte-Beuve, November fourteenth, 1833.
- <sup>39</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 126.
- <sup>40</sup>Maurice Allem, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Société des Editions Louis-Michaud, 1940), p. 78.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 85.
- <sup>42</sup>Séché, Musset, II, p. 21.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 23.
- <sup>44</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 129.
- <sup>45</sup>Maurice Donnay, La Vie amoureuse d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1926), p. 65.
- <sup>46</sup>Van Tieghem, Musset, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre, p. 81.
- <sup>47</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., pp. 133-134.
- <sup>48</sup>Allem, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
- <sup>49</sup>Musset, Oeuvres Choisies (composed by Jean Thomas and Michel Berveiller) (Paris: Librairie A. Hatier, 1947), p. 336.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 336-337.
- <sup>51</sup>André Maurois, Lélia, où la vie de George Sand (Paris: Hachette, 1952), p. 208.
- <sup>52</sup>Suzanne A. Rothschild, A Critical and Historical Study of Alfred de Musset's Barberine (Paris: I. A. C., 8 rue de Fustenberg, 1965), p. 9.

<sup>53</sup>Séch , Alfred de Musset, II, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup>Rothschild, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM ANDRÉ TO SAINT-JEAN

Alfred de Musset became the model for each of his heroes. He was especially fascinated by those figures in whom he could see both his own self and his problems reflected. Octave, Coelio, Fantasio, Perdican and Lorenzo all have one unifying element -- each is in different ways a portrait of the author himself. Everything that appears in Musset's theatre, therefore, is co-existent with his soul and heart. He wrote his plays during the most formative and creative years of his life, incorporating into them purely personal elements. Van Tieghem writes of this transposition:

Il n'était pas question pour présenter Musset et son oeuvre, de séparer celle-ci de celui-là; l'oeuvre poétique et même l'oeuvre dramatique sont ici un trop fidèle reflet de la vie de l'auteur.<sup>1</sup>

In Musset's dramatic works, all is sincere and spontaneous:

Né poète, il ne cessera cependant jamais de rester un homme; la poésie ne sera pour lui que le reflet, constamment interrompu, des émotions puissantes que ressent l'homme sensible ou passionné, lorsqu'il ne se refuse à aucune des jouissances de la vie.<sup>2</sup>

Musset's transference of feelings from himself to one of his own creations, is portrayed in the three-act prose drama André del Sarto. This play, which appeared in the Revue des deux mondes, April first 1833, marks the beginning of the

author's long association with the review. Contrary to the view of many critics, however, André del Sarto does not constitute Musset's first prose play. After the production of La Quittance du Diable and La Nuit Vénitienne appeared La Coupe et Les Lèvres and A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles (1832), two verse plays which filled the void between the prose plays of 1830 and those of 1833-34. This gap is further filled by some articles for journals, some finished poems and a large quantity of fragmentary verse.

The subject of André del Sarto was suggested to the author by a notice appearing in the Musée Filhol, one of his favorite books of painting reproductions. There he found the background material for his characters and the historical backdrop necessary to the drama.

Composed several weeks before Les Caprices de Marianne, this play is an important literary undertaking, incorporating many themes that were to play a prominent rôle in the later plays. The great artistic achievements of the Italian Renaissance, as well as the theme of love, in all of its various aspects, became central motifs in the dramatist's work.

The moral of the play could easily be the triumph of one form of love over another: the victory of free love over conjugal. André, who had been married to Lucrece for twenty-five years, realized his wife's love for Cordiani, and agreed to renounce her. The marriage between Aurore and



Casimir Dudevant presents a somewhat analogous situation. Casimir, who had been married to George for only eight years, abandoned her to Sandeau. Although the comparison is not as dramatic as the one imagined by the author, it is still curious that he was able, before even having made George's acquaintance, to foretell the events of the future. This premonition on the dramatist's part, appears again in the theme of the sacrifice. Musset, George and Pagello re-enacted one year later precisely the same drama as *André*, *Lucrèce* and *Cordiani*. The solution to each of the conflicts was the same also. *André* forgives *Cordiani*, just as Musset will pardon Pagello. Although the author does not poison himself as did *André*, he does go away, thus leaving everything in order for his rival. If the exact date of the play's publication were not known, one might be led to conjecture that the main inspiration for the work was the relationship between Musset and George Sand, so great are the parallels between the two affairs.

Blind passion also plays a major rôle in this play. *André* committed two acts of betrayal; against his work and against his moral duty. He underwent an intrinsic moral drama that was peculiar to him, for husband and artist are joined together in a single character. *André* squandered the funds granted to him by his protector, François I, on lavish gifts for his wife. By wasting this large sum of

money on satisfying Lucrece's whims, André betrayed not only himself but also his art, humbling himself in his own and everyone else's eyes.

Once again Italian culture and atmosphere are given a prominent rôle to play. At the time of the composition of this work, Musset had not yet been to Italy. All the Italian elements in the play, therefore, are borrowed. The dramatist reproduced information gleaned from other authors by setting the play in sixteenth century Florence. The Italian names, Andrea del Sarto, Lucretia del Fedo and Cordiani, are no more than names taken from the pages of history. Musset will develop this love for Italian customs and habits in his later plays and will give it a personal interpretation.

André del Sarto acted as a forerunner for yet another common characteristic of Musset's work, that of the author's duality, for he is at one and the same time André and Cordiani, just as he was both Razetta and the Prince d'Eysenach in La Nuit Vénitienne. Musset developed and expanded this problem of self-identity in his later plays, with the result that Octave and Coelio, Fantasio and Saint-Jean, are all reflections of the same personality. Yet André is considerably older than the average Musset protagonist. In the earlier plays, the hero was a callow adolescent who faces and rejects suicide, and who has apparently no aim in life. André, on the contrary, is in

the prime of life, he belongs to a distinct artistic class, and does not reject the possibility of suicide.

Of the twelve characters in the play, it is André who has by far the most dominant part. He is the central figure; and yet it is Cordiani, his long-time friend and pupil, who motivates the action and occupies the centre of the stage from beginning to end. The story is that of a great Florentine artist who is growing older and whose reputation is on the decline. In the opening scenes the brief conversation between two of André's pupils, Lionel and Césarío, reflects this deterioration. Lionel looks around at the abandoned studio and remarks:

Que d'écoliers autrefois dans cette académie!  
Comme on se disputait pour l'un, pour l'autre:  
. . . sous Michel-Ange, les écoles étaient de  
vrais champs de bataille; aujourd'hui elles se  
remplissent à peine, lentement, de jeunes gens  
silencieux. On travaille pour vivre, et les  
arts deviennent des métiers. (I,i)

One of the most obvious parallels to be drawn between the Renaissance artist and the playwright, is in the domain of painting. At one stage in his life, Musset had dreamed of becoming an artist. At home among the more sensitive natures of artists, he frequently visited their haunts. In a letter to his brother in January of 1831 he wrote:

Je passe ma vie avec une demi-douzaine de  
peintres, quels bons garçons que les artistes  
quand ils ne sont pas du même genre que  
vous . . . .3

The author possessed a great deal of artistic talent and could have been an above average painter. Musset, however, wanting to be either a Shakespeare, or a Schiller or else no one, decided not to be a painter, probably because he felt that he could never reach the standards he would set for himself.

Alfred and André also share the same sentiments as they were both complex personalities. Possessing tender and sensitive constitutions, both dreamed nostalgically of the great past epochs, where it was art that clearly reigned. The death of Renaissance art that is observed by both Lionel and André had already been expressed by the author three years earlier. Musset voiced his thoughts regarding the decline of art in "Les Voeux Stériles", a poem appearing in mid-1830. In it he alludes to the great artistic achievements of antiquity, and contrasts it to the present age:

Temps heureux, temps aimés! Mes mains alors peut-être,  
 Mes lâches mains, pour vous auraient pu s'occuper;  
 Mais aujourd'hui pour qui? dans quel but? sous quel  
 métier?

In the Dédicace of La Coupe et Les Lèvres, written a year earlier, Musset salutes Renaissance art, and also expresses a deep regret that art is no longer what it once was:

Un long cri de douleur traversa l'Italie  
 Lorsqu'au pied des autels Michel-Ange expira.  
 Le siècle se fermait -- et la mélancolie,  
 Comme un pressentiment, des vieillards s'empara.

L'art, qui sous ce grand homme avait quitté  
 la terre . . . .  
 L'art avec lui tomba . . . .  
 Aujourd'hui l'art n'est plus -- personne n'y  
 veut croire.

Alfred censures the art of his day in these works. His only suggestion for saving literature is complete liberty for the individual to try to realize in art his feelings, his dreams, his experiences. Yet all these must be accomplished without subscribing to literary schools, systems or doctrines. Above all the artist must be free. Both André and Alfred were dissatisfied with their art and sought fulfillment elsewhere. André sought his inspiration from his wife, just as Alfred relied upon his mistress. A woman became a source of inspiration for these artists.

Cordiani, André's chief disciple and friend, foreshadows some of the later heroes, such as Octave and Perdican. Like his master, Cordiani is ready to sacrifice both himself and his art for the sake of a woman. Unlike Octave and Coelio, who represent two contrasting ideas of the author regarding love, André and Cordiani uphold similar views in their manner of loving. Van Tieghem develops this idea in more detail:

Ils ont même coeur et même âme. Tous deux sont prêts à sacrifier leur art à leur amour, et pour tous deux l'amour est cet élément sacré, et seul sacré, de la vie terrestre, qui justifie l'existence de l'homme et donne un sens à sa vie.<sup>4</sup>

Henri Lefebvre presents further evidence to substantiate the

view that in this play Musset has projected himself not into just one character, but rather into two:

André del Sarto, c'est Musset qui se voit né trop tard dans un siècle trop vieux. Et Cordiani, le séducteur, le criminel amoureux, c'est encore lui. Auparavant, il se représentait dans un personnage: Frank, Rolla, etc. . . . Ici il tente de se projeter dans un couple de personnages antithétiques, dont le conflit représente ses conflits intérieurs.<sup>5</sup>

Although the play is important as it presents pertinent themes and situations, it is technically deficient in many ways. It passed completely unnoticed by the critics at the time of its publication and was not at all well received when it was staged at the Comédie-Française in 1848. Lefebvre presents the following criticism regarding the play's shortcomings:

Elle [la pièce] se veut titanique: géniale tragédie du génie. Elle échoue. Il lui manque d'ailleurs un élément théâtral et une sorte de justification interne; point de masque, de jeu dans le jeu. Tout y est donc trop cru, trop nu, trop déclaré, trop bien éclairé.<sup>6</sup>

Lefebvre's remarks concerning the absence of a theatrical element, and the lack of a justification interne are fully warranted. The play abounds in melodramatic elements which are completely alien to the later works. Within the space of three relatively short acts a variety of events occur: an assassination, a duel, a kidnapping, and a suicide. Although these incidents weaken the play as a whole, they do not detract from the literary ideas and themes which the

author develops more fully in the following plays.

Only six weeks after the publication of André del Sarto, Les Caprices de Marianne, a two-act prose play appeared in the Revue des deux mondes. This play, which was staged by the Comédie-Française in 1851, marks the start of the most fertile and productive period for the dramatist. After it appeared such important works as Fantasio, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour and Lorenzaccio. This work, which reflects the stage of Alfred's life just prior to his meeting with George, enables the reader to become more familiar with the dramatist's complex personality.

Once again the setting is Italian. The scene is Naples during the time of the Italian Renaissance. Yet there is nothing of the historical veracity regarding subject or background that was so predominant in the previous play. Rather this play is much freer in construction, much more is left to the reader's imagination.

In Les Caprices de Marianne, the playwright presents us with yet another aspect of his duality. Whereas he had revealed himself in the earlier plays as André - Cordiani, Razetta - Prince d'Eysenach, and Frank (La Coupe et les Lèvres), here the two extremes of his personality are represented by the Coelio- Octave couple. Fashioned from two aspects of the same individual, Coelio and Octave, who appear to be the very opposites of one another, are

really very close to their model and creator. Paul de Musset says of this dédoublement:

Tous ceux qui l'ont connu savent combien il ressemblait à la fois aux deux personnages d'Octave et de Coelio, quoique ces deux figures semblent aux antipodes l'une de l'autre; on ne trouve pas ailleurs qu'en soi-même cet humour, cette gaieté intarissable, cette insouciance railleuse qui animent les scènes entre Marianne et Octave. Que l'auteur ait été ainsi, on le croira facilement, mais, pour concevoir que le même homme puisse se retrouver dans Coelio avec une passion contenue, l'exaltation plaintive et douce de ce timide amant, il faut se dire que l'amour a le pouvoir de vous transformer. Une fois amoureux, Alfred passait incontinent d'un rôle à l'autre, et cela n'a rien d'incroyable.<sup>7</sup>

During the years immediately preceding the composition of the play, the author was leading the kind of a life to be expected from a youthful dreamer, Coelio, and a cold-blooded libertine, Octave. Musset's constant vacillation between these two different aspects of himself was a characteristic that was to haunt him throughout the rest of his lifetime. Asked once by George which was the real Musset, Coelio or Octave, he replied: "Tous les deux, je crois. Ma folie a été de ne vous en montrer qu'un, George".<sup>8</sup> The one facet of himself that Musset revealed to his mistress was the passionate, dreamy and melancholy aspect embodied in Coelio. A faithful reflection of the author's melancholy, Coelio is a visionary who makes a religion out of love.

Coelio, who is handsome, elegant and cultured, is



about twenty years old, the same age as the author himself at the time of this play's composition. A neighbour of Claudio, the old but powerful judge married to Marianne, Coelio is the only son of Hermia, a noble and tender maternal figure. Paul de Musset writes in his Biographie that Alfred had not far to look to find a model for this character:

Il en avait le modèle sous les yeux dans la personne de sa mère, toujours occupée de lui épargner un souci ou d'ajouter quelque chose à son bien-être.<sup>9</sup>

The situation of the son whose father is dead will be developed again by Musset in his Lorenzaccio. The sudden death of his father from the 1827 cholera outbreak, had important significance on his life. It marked the beginning of the emergence of the author's literary genius. It was now up to him to support his family. Musset also became more and more dependent upon his mother, just as do Coelio and Lorenzo. Great feelings of love and respect existed between mother and son, and Coelio, like his creator, "s'est laissé vivre dans son cabinet d'études". Coelio also typifies the author in that he too became the enfant gâté of the household, the young and melancholy lover who preferred the world of dreams to the world of reality.

The delineation of the principal characters sustains the view that this play is a much richer and more complex

drama than was André del Sarto. The purely descriptive portrait of Coelio is remarkably similar to that of Alfred himself. Like the dramatist, Coelio comes from an old and distinguished aristocratic family, and is "d'une figure distinguée" (I,i). Many parallels can be made with the author from the following description of Coelio given by Octave:

Coelio est le meilleur de mes amis; si je voulais vous faire envie, je vous dirais qu'il est beau comme le jour, jeune, noble, et je ne mentirais pas; mais je ne veux que vous faire pitié, et je vous dirai qu'il est triste comme la mort depuis le jour où il vous a vue. (I,i)

One can just imagine one of Alfred's acquaintances, perhaps Alfred Tattet, describing him to another friend, for indeed the dramatist possessed precisely those qualities that he attributes to Coelio.

The characters of the two gentlemen also possess many similarities. Coelio, a reflection of Musset's heart, is suffering from le mal du siècle. A debt for him is a remorse; love means a sacrifice. Called by Augustin Lireux "l'amoureux le meilleur qu'on ait au Théâtre-Français",<sup>10</sup> Coelio remains torn between his love for women and his hope for happiness and contentment. Of his attempts to approach Marianne, he says:

Vingt fois j'ai tenté de l'aborder; vingt fois j'ai senti mes genoux fléchir en approchant d'elle. . . . Quand je la vois, ma gorge se serre et j'étouffe, comme si mon coeur se

soulevait jusqu'à mes lèvres. (I,i)

Coelio, therefore, is timid and tongue-tied. He has loved Marianne from the beginning and he will continue to do so. He declares his love for her in a speech to Octave that is full of foreshadowing comments:

Le souffle de ma vie est à Marianne; elle peut  
d'un mot de ses lèvres l'anéantir ou l'embraser  
. . .ou je réussirai, ou je me tuerai . . . . (I,i)

Coelio is completely dominated by love. Overwhelmed by Marianne's physical beauty, he abandons himself to the thoughts of love she inspires in him. André Maurois equates this love that is constantly developing, to Musset at the times when he fell in love: "Dans l'ordinaire de la vie, il [Musset] était Octave, gai, souriant, railleur. Dès qu'il était amoureux, il devenait Coelio".<sup>11</sup> Like Musset, Coelio had never before had any faithful liaisons; Marianne is the first woman he has ever fallen in love with. The events that were to occur one month later between George and Alfred, where Alfred affirms that his love for George will last forever, echo very closely the words uttered by Coelio. Marianne is Coelio's only passion, the place that George was to assume in her relationship with the author.

Coelio, like Musset, and also like his own predecessors André and Frank, would prefer to live in another age. The theme of the sterility of art, developed in André del Sarto, is replaced in this play by the barrenness

and hopelessness of love. Typically romantic are the words that Coelio exclaims in his brief monologue:

Ah! que je fusse né dans le temps des tournois et des batailles! Qu'il m'eût été permis de porter les couleurs de Marianne et de les teindre de mon sang. Qu'on m'eût donné un rival à combattre, une armée entière à défier! Que le sacrifice de ma vie eût pu lui être utile! Je sais agir, mais je ne puis parler. Ma langue ne sert point mon coeur, et je mourrai sans m'être fait comprendre, comme un muet dans une prison. (II,ii)

The words uttered by Coelio in this soliloquy are indeed ironic, for he will have an opportunity to wear Marianne's 'colours', which will be stained with his own blood. Furthermore he does have a rival, and an armed band of assassins will be waiting for him. He will end by sacrificing his life in vain, will die without having been understood and without having realized that Octave was trying to help him.

Coelio, who is called by Octave "la bonne partie de moi-même" (II,vi) and who has "un pied de blanc sur les joues", is the mouthpiece of Musset. In complete antithesis to Coelio is Octave, who wears "un pied de rouge" on his cheeks. Frivolous, cynical and almost always drunk, Octave is a much more complicated figure than Coelio. Although the author is at one and the same time Coelio and Octave, it is with the latter that he assumes much more complexity and plenitude.

Several years older than Coelio, Octave is much more

experienced and mature. It is his function in the play to serve as a spokesman or intermediary for Coelio. In assuming this rôle, Octave undertakes to play a three-fold part, during which can be traced a development from his rôle as a debauchee and libertine to that of a loyal and true friend. Henri Lefebvre says of the author's transposition of characters:

Dans Les Caprices de Marianne, Octave personnifie le côté ironique, blasé, lucide et cynique de l'auteur. Quand à Coelio, c'est l'autre côté: la mélancolie, la passion sincère, la pureté ou le désir de la pureté.<sup>12</sup>

During the early stages of the play, Octave-Musset reveals himself to be a rake, a lecher who has been wandering around the city for eight days dressed in a clown costume. Full of life and spirit, Octave is a dandyish, mocking fellow who is in the process of gambling and drinking his life away. It is in this rôle as a coxcomb that Octave is reminiscent of the author. Many was the time that Paul de Musset reproached his brother for his reckless extravagance. Echoes of these talks can be seen in the words used by Coelio to scold his friend for the frivolous life he is leading:

COELIO: Tu te tueras, Octave.

OCTAVE: Jamais de ma propre main, mon ami,  
jamais . . . .

COELIO: Et n'est-ce pas un suicide comme un  
autre, que la vie que tu mènes? (I,i)

Octave himself describes his character in the following

manner:

L'ivresse et moi, mon cher Coelio, nous nous sommes trop chers l'un à l'autre pour nous jamais disputer; elle fait mes volontés, comme je fais les siennes. (I,i)

A few lines later he continues:

Moi, mon caractère est d'être ivre; ma façon de penser est de me laisser faire, et je parlerais au roi en ce moment comme je vais parler à ta belle. (I,i)

Yet one would tend to believe from Octave's later actions, that his character is not totally dominated by this licentiousness. Michaut provides further insight into this apparent contradiction in Octave's personality:

Son [Octave] libertinage n'est pas seulement, comme on aurait pu le croire, chaleur de sang et comportement de jeunesse: c'est la pratique d'une doctrine; c'est presque une religion. Une sorte d'épicurisme ardent et quasi-mystique l'inspire; il en parle en belles images et en paroles éloquentes et il célèbre la Beauté, le Plaisir, et l'Amour, comme les lois suprêmes de l'Univers.<sup>13</sup>

There would then appear to be a poetic and philosophical aspect to Octave's character. It is in his rôle as a go-between that this side of Octave's nature becomes apparent. This middle stage forms the transition between the roué and the final period, dominated by the loyal and generous side of himself. In this aspect Octave still follows the old motto of debauchees that "toutes les femmes se ressemblent" (I,i). This maxim, which reflects Musset's views on women, shows how for Octave women were only toys and playthings. In the life of a libertine where

gambling and drinking play such a large rôle, women can only be allotted a small place. Naturally this attitude is very different from the one expressed earlier by Coelio.

Octave, who was feeling defeated in his second rôle as a counsellor to Coelio, is pushed almost in spite of himself to his third rôle, that of a faithful and trustworthy confidant. In this rôle, Octave begins to forget himself and to concentrate more on Coelio's happiness. It is by acting thus that he finally manages to shed his two previous rôles and can manage to make the transformation complete. There is in this metamorphosis, however, a complete reversal of the rôles: Octave, the dandy, has become a twin brother of Coelio, the dreamer. In this juxtaposition of parts, Octave who appeared at first in the play as "un débauché joyeux", finishes by assuming the same rôle as that of Coelio at the start of the play. Paul de Musset's comment on this evolution, sums up Octave's development:

Musset est Coelio et il est Octave. Ou plutôt il a été Coelio et est devenu Octave, ou plutôt encore, il voudrait tuer en lui le Coelio idéaliste qu'il a été et devenir Octave.<sup>14</sup>

It is in the last scene set in a cemetery, where Octave, full of remorse and seated before the grave of Coelio, completely abandons his two previous rôles. Upon realizing that the grave was meant for him, Octave is overcome with sorrow and bids farewell to all that had

formerly constituted his life:

Adieu la gaieté de ma jeunesse, l'insouciante folie, la vie libre et joyeuse au pied du Vésuve! Adieu les bruyants repas, les causeries du soir, les sérénades sous les balcons dorés! adieu Naples et ses femmes, les mascarades à la lueur des torches, les longs soupers à l'ombre des forêts! Adieu l'amour et l'amitié! Ma place est vide sur la terre. (II,vi)

Marianne, however, tries to make Octave look at the brighter side of things by assuring him that she still keeps a place for him in her heart, and that there is no reason for him to bid adieu to love. Octave repulses these advances and the play ends with his final words:

Je ne vous aime pas, Marianne; c'était Coelio qui vous aimait. (II,vi)

At the conclusion of the play, therefore, Octave reveals himself to be pure and sincere and even more loyal than was Coelio, who at times tended to doubt Octave's loyalty. Gaston Baty in his critical study on Les Caprices de Marianne describes Octave in some depth, showing the incorporation of all three elements of his character:

. . .Octave incarne l'âme légère de l'homme de plaisir. Viveur avec affectation et fanfaronnade, il affiche une inconduite exubérante, tient volontiers des propos cyniques et ne se prive pas d'épater le bourgeois. Il s' imagine blasé, roué, sceptique, mais il a un fond de loyauté et de saine jeunesse.<sup>15</sup>

Jules Lemaître also comments on the complexities of Octave's character. He shows how Octave and Coelio complement each other with their opposing tendencies:



Octave n'a d'autres titres à la préférence de Marianne que d'être un roué. Octave est un roué, certes, et Coelio a toutes les vertus. . . . Mais Octave est beau, aussi beau que Coelio, puisqu'il est Musset, tout comme Coelio -- il est éloquent, il est hardi, il est spirituel, surtout il est gai. 16

Musset, who uses Octave and Coelio to demonstrate contradictory facets of the same personality, utilizes Marianne to present his views on women. Asked by his brother where he had found his model, Musset replied: "Nulle part et partout; ce n'est point une femme, c'est la femme."<sup>17</sup> A conglomeration of all the women the author had ever known, Marianne is a vain, cold and indifferent woman. It is somewhat ironic to see how the dramatist painted the portrait of a true coquette, a proud woman -- a portrait that was to come to life with George Sand.

Rigorously virtuous, Marianne is "une mince poupée qui marmotte des Ave sans fin" (I,i). At the age of eighteen she left the convent where she had been educated, and a year later married Claudio, an old, jealous magistrate. The fact that the dramatist had created the figure of Marianne before he had ever met George Sand is not too strange a coincidence, especially if one recalls that in the Nineteenth century most young women received their education in convents. George also left her convent at eighteen, and married, a year later, a man much older than herself. It is in this respect that the character of Marianne, a

convent-bred woman, whose injured pride leads to disaster, points toward the later creation of Camille in On ne Badine pas avec l'amour.

Marianne's character is used by the author to illustrate the rôle of arrogance in a love relationship, for as a young flirt, Marianne possesses haughtiness, the failing of all women. Lucrèce, George and Camille will all eventually suffer from this defect. Van Tieghem says of its results for Marianne:

L'orgueil maintient Marianne dans une solitude  
sans soleil, volontairement cloîtrée avec le  
plus insipide des maris.<sup>18</sup>

She seems to be void of all sensibility and feelings and is called indifferent by Octave:

Vous ne pouvez ni aimer, ni haïr, et vous  
êtes comme les roses du Bengale . . . sans  
épines et sans parfum. (II, i)

Twice during the play she is referred to as "cruelle Marianne", a characteristic well-suited to her personality. She is not in love with Coelio because there is no challenge involved; on the other hand, her interest in Octave is continually growing. Octave provides her with a distraction, and talking to him becomes a sport for her. It is Octave who occupies her imagination, his voice she hears as he is soliciting on behalf of Coelio. Octave, who represents gay, spontaneous youth, provides Marianne with an opportunity to taste life more fully. He excites her

curiosity about love and when she tells him she wants to take a lover, it is he whom she has in mind. She is ready to love Octave whom she views as a conquest. Throughout their conversations, her pride will not stop her from believing that Octave, although pleading for his friend, cannot help himself from falling in love with her. In this respect it can be said:

Marianne a l'orgueil de croire qu'elle vaut quelque chose. Elle ne veut pas être traitée comme une courtisane, mais comme une femme libre et fière, qui veut choisir, non être choisie.<sup>19</sup>

Once again the fact that Musset was able to foresee future events, predicting their outcome, is somewhat amazing. That Musset was already haunted by the rôle of pride in love is obvious by the place allotted to Marianne in the play. For the first time in the Comédies et Proverbes, the rôle of a woman is set forth. The dramatist, speaking through the character of Marianne, has succeeded in giving his definition of a woman:

MARIANNE: Qu'est-ce après tout qu'une femme?  
L'occupation d'un moment, une coupe fragile qui renferme une goutte de rosée, qu'on porte à ses lèvres et qu'on jette par-dessus son épaule. Une femme! C'est une partie de plaisir! Ne pourrait-on pas dire quand on en rencontre une: Voilà une belle nuit qui passe . . . ?  
(II,i)

It was this precise haughtiness that prompted Van Tieghem to write:

Elle a déjà le défaut que Musset reprochera à George Sand quand ils se quitteront à Venise, cet orgueil qui empêche la femme de suivre son coeur et lui fait préférer la solitude ou un amant moins aimé, à la crainte de ne pas avoir une victoire assez belle ou d'accepter quelque blessure d'amour-propre.<sup>20</sup>

Van Tieghem also suggests another technique by which the author's works may be studied:

La vie de l'écrivain est bien souvent guidé par ce que l'imagination lui a suggéré et lui a fait écrire . . . Les drames que posent la vie du poète sont souvent ceux que le poète portait en lui avant de les vivre. Une biographie d'artiste doit souvent, si elle veut descendre des causes aux effets, étudier d'abord l'oeuvre pour comprendre ensuite la vie.<sup>21</sup>

This method, although valid for several of the early plays, proves faulty as the plays become more complex and more central to the drama of the two lovers.

A word must also be said about the two commedia dell'arte figures, Claudio and Tibia, who belong to an original category of comical characters called fantoches, from the Italian fantoccio. These clown-like figures are concentrated in a very small number of plays -- those written during the 1833-34 period. Claudio, who always appears on the stage accompanied by his valet, and shadow, Tibia, is drawn from the standard inventory of comedy. He is the typical old man, the judge or doctor, who is married to the beautiful young girl, and suspects her virtue. According to the commedia dell'arte tradition, the

old man hires guards to keep watch over his wife. In the conventional dramas, such plans as those drawn up by Claudio would be foiled and would result in uniting the young lovers, while at the same time making a fool of the plotter. Such is the case in many of Molière's dramas. In Les Caprices de Marianne, however, the reverse is true. Claudio's plotting is successful, and Coelio is claimed as an innocent victim. Musset continues this buffoon tradition in On ne Badine pas avec l'amour and also in Fantasio.

There is an interval of almost nine months between the publication of Les Caprices de Marianne and that of Fantasio on January first, 1834. This long interval corresponds neatly to a change in the personal life of the dramatist, for it was shortly after the publication of Les Caprices de Marianne that Musset met George Sand. The play, which was written during the autumn of the preceding year and published while the author was in Italy, echoes the happy life and gay atmosphere so characteristic of the start of the liaison.

The only other work published during the nine month gap is the long narrative poem "Rolla", whose morbid tone negates any likelihood that it was conceived during the days in George's small apartment, for if we are to believe the letters of the time, this period was one of great contentment and bliss for the two lovers. This feeling of

enchantment makes its presence felt throughout the play.

Fantasio is Musset's only happy play, for the world of Fantasio is truly one of gaiety. It is in this respect that the play is definitely singular in conception, for at no other time in his life was the author so happy as at the period of this play's composition. There are no disasters in this play, no problems that have to be resolved; for once everything works out for the best.

The sources of the play also give some insight into the author's state of mind at this particular time. The principal source for the play was a contemporary event. A year before the play's composition, Princess Louise, the daughter of Louis-Philippe, was forced to marry Léopold, King of Belgium. The wedding took place in Compiègne on the ninth of August, 1832. This royal marriage, that was arranged solely for political reasons, gave Musset the basis for his play, and there are several analogies to be made between the actual events and those portrayed in the play.<sup>22</sup>

Fantasio, the hero, is the incarnation of the author himself. In his early twenties (Musset was twenty-three), Fantasio is representative of gay, restless youth. Convivial and light-hearted, Fantasio is Musset's double, wearing "le mois de mai sur les joues", and "le mois de janvier" in his heart. Van Tieghem writes that "Fantasio

ressemble comme un frère à l'auteur,"<sup>23</sup> a view that lends support to the notion that Fantasio's qualities are those of his creator. Paul de Musset further underlines the link between Fantasio and the playwright:

Ceux qui ont eu le bonheur de connaître l'auteur dans ses accès de jeunesse et de folle gaieté savent avec quelle fidélité de pinceau il s'est représenté lui-même sous la figure si originale de Fantasio.<sup>24</sup>

The character of Fantasio is thus rich in psychological significance. In the first act, before adopting the disguise of Saint-Jean, Fantasio is portrayed as a young, idle bourgeois from Munich. Like his predecessors Frank and Rolla, Fantasio is bored and disoriented. He and his friends Spark, Hartman, and Facio are seen whiling away the time in sidewalk cafés. Fantasio, in an attempt to escape his creditors, seeks distraction among his companions. Yet everything bores him; the sunset is "manqué" and even nature is, as he says, "pitoyable ce soir". His friends are boring to him, but most of all he is bored with himself. In the following remark to Spark, Fantasio openly admits his discontentment with the world and with the kind of life he has been living:

. . .O Spark! Mon cher Spark, si tu pouvais me transporter en Chine! Si je pouvais seulement sortir de ma peau pendant une heure ou deux! Si je pouvais être ce monsieur qui passe! (I,ii)

As well as expressing this desire to become someone else, Fantasio, just like Musset, yearns to become impassioned. As a result of being unoccupied, he suffers from le mal du siècle, and aspires to do something to get himself involved. He himself realizes that he is désœuvré and that "il n'y a point de maître d'armes mélancolique" (I,ii). Representative of Musset in the years 1831-32, Fantasio is unhappy with himself and with life in general. Dominated by boredom and inactivity, Fantasio-Musset lives from one moment to the next, relying entirely on his wits and imagination. Nothing is planned, and every act becomes an improvisation. Comparable to both Octave and Frank in this respect, Fantasio is living the life of a rake. Paul Foucher,<sup>25</sup> Musset's school friend, supports the view that the Fantasio of the first act is a faithful silhouette of the author:

J'ai ressenti une des plus poignantes émotions de ma vie. Il m'a semblé voir revivre l'auteur lui-même -- Alfred, comme je l'appelais -- et les souvenirs de notre jeunesse à tous deux.<sup>26</sup>

There are other references throughout the first act in which can be traced elements of the dramatist's past. The character of Spark, especially, is reminiscent of Paul de Musset. Spark, in his rôle as a counsellor and guide, advises Fantasio to become either a "journaliste ou homme de lettres". With this proposal, Musset, speaking



through Spark, is voicing his utter contempt for journalists and professional men, who in his opinion were sacrificing their art. This view had previously been expressed by the author in "Les Voeux Stériles", and La Coupe et Les Lèvres where he writes:

C'est un triste métier que de suivre la foule,  
Et de vouloir crier plus fort que les meneurs . . . .  
On est toujours à sec, quand le fleuve s'écoule.

In the second act of the play, Musset begins to analyse himself under the guise of Saint-Jean, the late court-jester of the King. Fantasio, who loses one identity, believes that by adopting the external aspects of the buffoon, a red wig and an artificial hump, he will change internally. It is at this stage in the play that Fantasio, who hopes to be able to vivre et agir, begins to play a rôle. Henri Lefebvre describes Fantasio's symbolic gesture in the following manner:

. . .Il va pouvoir dans le rôle de bouffon  
donner libre cours à la meilleure part de  
soi. Il se délivre de soi pour devenir ce  
qu'il est.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Fantasio's assumption of a disguise is not accompanied by any shift in character. In adopting this second rôle Fantasio is completely successful. It is entirely compatible with his character, for he was a clown long before he assumed the disguise. Throughout the first act, Fantasio's behavior was precisely that of a buffoon. The

complete opposite, however, is true with the Prince of Mantua. As in Les Caprices de Marianne, the dramatist enriches the action with the addition of the two comical figures of the Prince and his aide Marinoni. The Prince, who is stupid and unimaginative, is incapable of pretending to be other than what he really is. Although he adopts the exterior aspects of his aide de camp, this second rôle is totally incompatible with his character. Incapable of assuming the rôle of an aide, he continues to act like a conventional prince. Fantasio, on the other hand, is completely at ease in his rôle and expresses his contentment several times throughout the second act:

Quel métier délicieux que celui de bouffon. (II,iii)  
and again a few scenes later:

J'aime ce métier plus que tout autre. (II, vii)

Fantasio feels perfectly secure in his disguise. Yet he soon becomes bored with it and admits: "Je ne puis faire aucun métier" (II,vii). Any post for Fantasio, therefore, is strictly temporary. It is impossible for the hero to retain any employment, just as it was impossible for the author himself.<sup>28</sup>

That Musset wanted people to see his portrait present in the play is made evident by the fact that during a production, Musset refused to allow a certain Brindeau the part, the reason being: "Fantasio, c'est moi,

vous ne me ressemblez pas assez.<sup>29</sup> After the first showing of the play in August, 1866, Sarcey, the well-renowned and feared critic, wrote the following commentary on the work:

Ce personnage de Fantasio, Alfred de Musset n'a pas eu besoin de le chercher dans ses souvenirs, de le composer de pièces et de morceaux; il s'est pris lui-même et s'est en quelque sort répandu tout entier dans son drame. Il n'a pas voulu, le dessein prémédité, se peindre et laisser un portrait de lui. Ce n'est pas une oeuvre d'artiste qu'il a faite. Il a, pour ainsi dire, ouvert son coeur et l'a laissé couler. Et c'est pour cela que nous l'aimons tant, ce cher poète! C'est que dans tous ses livres, poésies, drames ou contes il s'est donné, lui, son âme et sa vie, avec une sorte de fièvre, de délire . . . . Son oeuvre est sa chair et son sang. C'est lui-même que nous dévorons en lisant ses livres.<sup>30</sup>

The abundance of enthusiasm shown by Sarcey in the above quotation is astonishing. Usually caustic and cutting in his criticisms, Sarcey is full of admiration for Musset, calling him "ce cher poète". Rather than saying that the dramatist has created an "oeuvre d'artiste", Sarcey carries his compliments to a greater height, by proclaiming Fantasio to be an "oeuvre d'art".

The play Fantasio is characterized by the absence of the kinds of problems that had dominated the earlier works. Unlike André, Fantasio does not have to face up to his impending destiny. Furthermore, there is no love, no jealousy, no vengeance, and most important of all, no deaths in Fantasio. Unlike Octave, who assumes a rôle that is partially in conflict with his nature, and thus brings

about the tragic ending, Fantasio's rôle is fully consistent with his known character. Similarly, Octave and Fantasio, who are more mature versions of Frank and Razetta, will subsequently be developed into Perdican and Lorenzo. The association between love and death, dominant in André del Sarto and Les Caprices de Marianne, will also be continued in the later plays.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

- <sup>1</sup>Van Tieghem, Musset, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre (Paris: Boivin et Ciè., 1944), p. 5.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.
- <sup>3</sup>Maurice Donnay, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Hachette et Ciè., 1914), p. 171.
- <sup>4</sup>Van Tieghem, Théâtre Complet de Musset (Paris: les Editions Nationales, 1948), p. 45.
- <sup>5</sup>Henri Lefebvre, Alfred de Musset - Dramaturge (Paris: l'Arche, 1965), p. 57.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 57.
- <sup>7</sup>Musset, Les Caprices de Marianne (Edition Critique) (Paris: Société française et étrangères, n.d.) pp. 9-10.
- <sup>8</sup>Van Tieghem, Théâtre Complet, p. 73.
- <sup>9</sup>Paul de Musset, Biographie (Paris: Charpentier Editeur, 1877), p. 117.
- <sup>10</sup>Henry Lyonnet, Les Premières d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1927), p. 107.
- <sup>11</sup>André Maurois, "Alfred de Musset -- Les Comédies", R. S. M., no. 89, p. 26.
- <sup>12</sup>Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 57.
- <sup>13</sup>Musset, Les Caprices de Marianne (Edition Critique), p. 33.
- <sup>14</sup>Van Tieghem, Théâtre Complet, p. 275.
- <sup>15</sup>Musset, Les Caprices de Marianne (Edition Critique), p. 13.
- <sup>16</sup>Jules Lemaître, Impressions de théâtre, VII (Paris: Lecène et Oudin, 1894), p. 253.
- <sup>17</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 117.

- <sup>18</sup> Van Tieghem, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre, p. 62.
- <sup>19</sup> Séché, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907), I, p. 81.
- <sup>20</sup> Van Tieghem, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 59-60.
- <sup>22</sup> Gustave Lanson, "Mariage de Princesse", Revue de Paris (March 1st, 1913), pp. 32-46.
- <sup>23</sup> Van Tieghem, op. cit., p. 86.
- <sup>24</sup> Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 137.
- <sup>25</sup> It was he who introduced Musset to the Cénacle.
- <sup>26</sup> Lyonnet, op. cit., p. 149.
- <sup>27</sup> Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 66.
- <sup>28</sup> Musset tried his hand at painting, law and medicine, as well as holding an administrative post for ten months. Yet he was forced to renounce each profession in turn, preferring the more unrestrained life of a writer.
- <sup>29</sup> Claude Schnerb, "Fantasio, ou la destruction d'un mythe", L'Illustre Théâtre (Printemps, 1965), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>30</sup> Lyonnet, op. cit., p. 155.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE GENESIS OF PERDICAN AND LORENZO

The following two plays, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour and Lorenzaccio, pertain to a somewhat special category. Although they were published in July and August of 1834 respectively, after Musset's return from Italy, there are many indications that both were begun much earlier, even before the "Venetian adventure".

In On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, the most famous and most frequently staged of the dramatist's plays, is depicted a Musset transformed by the suffering of his Venetian sojourn. Written when Musset was twenty-three, the play reflects clearly his lingering preoccupation with George Sand. As only three months had passed since their fateful trip, the memory of his former mistress was still very much alive in his mind.

Presented on November eighteenth 1861 at the Comédie-Française, this three-act prose comedy is the first of Musset's plays to bear the subtitle Proverbe. Proverbs, which had originated in the mid-eighteenth century in French dramatic literature, were in vogue as a literary genre around the 1830s. At its origins, the proverb was a source of amusement rather than a literary endeavor, the

word itself designating "un plaisir de salon".<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth-century writers developed and advanced this literary mode even further.<sup>2</sup> Musset himself avoids the tradition outlined by both Carmontelle and Leclercq of using a proverb as the final word in a play. This he does by varying his décor incessantly. Of the three distinct planes of action present in On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, thirteen take place in the château, three in the village area, and two in or near the woods and the fountain. Marjorie Shaw writes of

Musset's Proverbes:

Rien ici ne rappelle les Proverbes de Carmontelle, et de Leclercq. Il y a trop de personnages, des situations trop difficiles à monter sur un théâtre improvisé, des changements de décor que l'on peut facilement imaginer à la lecture, mais qui exigeraient une mise en scène plus variée que le coin d'un salon.<sup>3</sup>

La Coupe et les Lèvres, written two years prior to On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, could be considered as an example of a proverbe. The title itself evoked a well-known proverb which served as the epigram for the play: "entre la coupe et les lèvres il y a encore de la place pour un malheur", or as the more popular version of this ancient saying goes, "Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres". It is On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, however, that is a model for the many plays to follow which contain the title or subtitle of proverbe.<sup>4</sup>



The main point of interest in this play lies in deciding when the work was actually written. Currently this is a subject of widespread dispute, with the majority of the scholars<sup>5</sup> agreeing upon a composition period of two distinct stages. In the Biographie Paul writes:

Depuis longtemps, il [Musset] avait tracé en quelques lignes le plan d'une comédie sous le titre provisoire de Camille et Perdican. Il en avait même écrit l'introduction en vers.<sup>6</sup>

This initial project bearing the provisional title of Camille et Perdican, after the names of the two protagonists, outlined in verse the characters that were to appear in the first scene. Although Musset later changed the text from verse to prose, the content of this first scene remains basically the same.

There is also further evidence to suggest that the play was written in two separate periods before and after the author's trip to Italy. Henri Bidou writes:

la pièce semble faite de deux morceaux d'une époque différente. [. . . .] Le dernier acte et une partie du second sont de Musset après la grande épreuve d'Italie.<sup>7</sup>

Paul de Musset, who usually diminishes the rôle of George Sand in the life and work of his brother, also gives more proof that the play was written in two stages:

La pièce . . . porte en quelques passages des traces de l'état moral où était l'auteur.

Le caractère étrange de Camille, certains mots d'une tendresse mélancolique dans le rôle de Perdican, la lutte d'orgueil entre ces deux personnages, font reconnaître l'influence des souvenirs douloureux contre lesquels le poète se débattait.<sup>8</sup>

These "deux personnages" mentioned by Paul can be none other than George and Alfred. Paul also gives further evidence that part of the play was written after Musset's return. He writes that both he and his mother encouraged Alfred "par manière de passe-temps et pour mesurer l'état de son esprit, à écrire un proverbe en prose".<sup>9</sup> This "proverbe en prose" is none other than On ne Badine pas avec l'amour.

It seems that the play was written under pressing circumstances. Buloz had lent the dramatist a considerable sum of money to help finance the Italian trip, and as payment, he was to receive manuscripts, one of which was On ne Badine pas avec l'amour. It was in April of 1834 that Buloz asked for the comedy, and it was this request that prompted the following cry of outrage from Musset:

De mon côté, je ne sais même pas comment faire  
à Buloz une malheureuse comédie -- faire une  
comédie! -- dont je lui dois déjà le prix.  
J'enrage, mais qu'y faire?<sup>10</sup>

Bidou divides the two distinct phases of composition in the following manner. Act I, and most of Act II, according to him were begun in the last weeks of 1833, before the great emotional crisis; whereas Act III

and a small part of Act II were completed by the writer when he had found solitude in Paris. It is certain that Musset rewrote and modified the scenes he had written earlier, as the feelings he had expressed in them were out of keeping with those he felt after his return.<sup>11</sup>

Bidou's reasoning regarding the two periods of composition is completely convincing, and the line of demarcation between the scenes written in 1833 and those of 1834, is not hard to determine. The following excerpt from a letter written by George to Alfred on the twelfth of May 1834 sheds some light on the problem:

Ton coeur . . .ne le tue pas; . . .qu'il se mette tout entier ou en partie dans toutes les amours de ta vie, mais qu'il y joue son rôle noble afin qu'un jour tu puisses regarder en arrière et dire comme moi: j'ai souffert souvent, je me suis trompé quelquefois, mais j'ai aimé; c'est moi qui ai vécu, et non pas un être factice, créé par mon orgueil et mon ennui.<sup>12</sup>

As if to establish the precise date when the play was written, Musset took the latter part of this letter and reproduced it textually in the last scene of Act II:

On est souvent trompé en amour, souvent blessé et souvent malheureux; mais on aime, et quand on est sur le bord de sa tombe, on se retourne pour regarder en arrière et on se dit: J'ai souffert souvent, je me suis trompé quelquefois, mais j'ai aimé. C'est moi qui ai vécu, et non pas un être factice créé par mon orgueil et mon ennui. (II,v)

The appearance of the grotesques, the typical

commedia dell'arte figures so abundant in the early plays of Musset, also indicates that the third act was written at some later period than the first two. The four fantoches in this play, Blazius, Bridaine, the Baron and Dame Pluche, appear many times during the first two acts. Of the five scenes in Acts I and II, they appear four and three times respectively. In Act III, however, their rôle is greatly reduced. In the eight scenes of Act III, they appear only in four. All the attention in this last act is centred on the three protagonists, Camille, Perdican and Rosette, whereas the pupazzi are scarcely of interest.

The changes that take place in the two principal characters from Act I to Act III also suggest that the author composed the play at different stages. Camille, at the beginning of the play, was portrayed as a school girl, living on the memories of her convent. Bidou affirms that certain words expressed by Camille, her capriciousness, as well as her oppressive attitude, all betray an inner conflict. One cannot help but believe that, almost in spite of herself, Camille is interested in Perdican. The Camille of Act III, however, betrays much of George Sand's influence. At this point in the play the character is the complete antithesis of the Camille who previously used discretion and kept her thoughts to herself. This evolution from girlhood to womanhood comes about more precisely in the

fifth scene of Act II. It is here that the actual break between the two stages of writing is placed. The long tirade that Camille addresses to Perdican illustrates this change:

Vous voilà courbé près de moi avec des genoux qui se sont usés sur les tapis de vos maîtresses, et vous n'en savez plus le nom. Vous avez pleuré des larmes de joie et des larmes de désespoir; mais vous saviez que l'eau des sources est plus constante que vos larmes et qu'elle serait toujours là pour laver vos paupières gonflées. Vous faites votre métier de jeune homme et vous souriez quand on vous parle de femmes désolées; vous ne croyez pas qu'on puisse mourir d'amour, vous qui vivez et qui avez aimé . . . . (II,v)

In place of all her other feelings comes the fateful orgueil, which, according to Musset, leads to the downfall of every woman.

Perdican also changes from the young and elegant seigneur of the first scenes, where he was portrayed as being full of life and yet unassuming. Something of a metamorphosis takes place by the time Act III is reached. Perdican now is impassioned and goes so far as to read other people's letters. He too becomes obsessed with arrogance. This trait of haughtiness and vanity that Camille and Perdican discover in each other, is a transposition of George and Alfred during their stay in Venice, for the fault that they discovered in each other was precisely this overbearing arrogance.

The couple, Camille and Perdican, produces more

evidence to support Bidou's thesis. It is first of all Perdican upon whom the attention of the reader is focused, for it is he who speaks and takes the initiative, just as did Alfred himself in the early days of his liaison with George. Almost the first words pronounced in the play deal with Perdican:

MAITRE BLAZIUS: Vous saurez mes enfants que le jeune Perdican, fils de notre seigneur, vient d'atteindre à sa majorité et qu'il est reçu docteur à Paris . . . . Toute sa gracieuse personne est un livre d'or . . . enfin, c'est un diamant fin des pieds à la tête . . . .  
(I,i)

Act III, however, brings about a total reversal of the rôles, for now it is Camille who assumes the more important part. It is she who is on the stage more often, and at her uncle's château, where a large part of the action unfolds. Although she does not appear on the stage in every scene, her presence is felt through the letter intercepted by Perdican and by the fact she is hiding behind a tree in the great fountain scene. Camille also begins to control the situation, confiding her projects and feelings. The following speech by Camille expresses exactly opposite feelings from those expressed in the previous two acts:

Je voudrais qu'on me fît la cour; je ne sais si c'est que j'ai une robe neuve, mais j'ai envie de m'amuser. Vous m'avez proposé d'aller au village, allons-y, je veux bien; mettons-nous en bateau; j'ai envie d'aller dîner sur l'herbe, ou de faire une promenade dans la forêt . . . .  
(III,vi)

Even the dialogue changes between the acts.

Simple and carefree at the start, the conversation abounds in images where Perdican tries to revive childhood memories in Camille's heart:

Quoi! Pas un souvenir, Camille? Pas un battement de coeur pour notre enfance, pour tout ce pauvre temps passé, si bon, si doux, si plein de niaiseries délicieuses? Tu ne veux pas venir voir le sentier par où nous allions à la ferme? (I,iii)

This light and charming tone is the language of Les Caprices de Marianne and especially of Fantasio. The style of the third act, however, is extremely evocative of the letters exchanged between Musset in Paris and George in Venice. The tone of the following words uttered by Camille and Perdican betrays exactly the same sentiments as the letters from Alfred to George quoted in Chapter I.<sup>13</sup>

CAMILLE: M'avez-vous abandonnée, ô mon Dieu? Vous le savez, lorsque je suis venue, j'avais juré de vous être fidèle; quand j'ai refusé de devenir l'épouse d'un autre que vous, j'ai cru parler sincèrement devant vous et ma conscience. Oh! Pourquoi faites-vous mentir la vérité elle-même? Pourquoi suis-je si faible? Ah! Malheureuse, je ne puis plus prier!

Perdican then replies to Camille in climaxing and moving language similar to that used by Alfred in his letters to George from Paris:

Orgueil, le plus fatal des conseillers humains, qu'es-tu venu faire entre cette fille et moi? La voilà pâle et effrayée, qui presse sur les dalles insensibles son coeur et son visage. Elle aurait pu m'aimer, et nous étions nés l'un pour

l'autre; qu'es-tu venu faire sur nos lèvres, orgueil,  
 lorsque nos mains allaient se joindre? . . . .  
 Insensés que nous sommes! Nous nous aimons. (III,viii)

It is striking to note the development that has taken place from the vanity of Lucretia, and the conceit and arrogance of Marianne. Camille, who evolved from both Lucretia and Marianne, is the epitome of the femme orgueilleuse in Musset's theatre. Disagreeable and insensitive, she incorporates many of the elements that can be found in Marianne but with this important difference; like George Sand, she is domineering and more aggressive than her predecessor.

One is able to conclude, therefore, that there are two plays within a play. Gastinel says that there is in this play:

une comédie, à la manière du Spectacle dans un Fauteuil, un drame teinté de romanesque et volontiers grandiloquent.<sup>14</sup>

There are in this play many elements common to the earlier plays, but they are not to be found in Lorenzaccio and many of the later works. This sudden change in the choice of themes, setting and structure, can be attributed, no doubt, to the absence of George Sand. Although the two lovers were known to collaborate and to provide each other with inspiration, after the ill-fated trip to Italy, Musset's work seemed to suffer as much as he himself did, for after Lorenzaccio, his plays are lacking in inspiration and fail



to rise above the mediocre. Above all what is particularly reminiscent of the early plays is the appearance of the fantoques. It is with On ne Badine pas avec l'amour that Musset's characterization of these comic figures reaches its peak. The evolution of the comic character from Claudio and Tibia, the Prince of Mantua and Marinoni, to the four figures in this play, shows with what imagination Musset could invent and use these typical characters. In the following quotation, Bidou writes that these jesters are not characteristic simply of one of the author's plays, but rather of a precise period of his life:

Vous pouvez regarder un auteur dramatique comme un homme qui crée tout un peuple éphémère et brillant de personnages; ces personnages après un moment d'éclat qui est la durée assignée à leur vie, s'évanouissent. Ils n'appartiennent pas à une pièce, ils appartiennent à une période de la vie du poète, les pupazzi fantasques sont de la première partie de la vie de Musset . . . . Il créera encore, après 1834, des personnages amusants, mais ils seront faits de chair.<sup>15</sup>

Musset, however, was soon to abandon this literary tradition. Lorenzaccio, Le Chandelier, Barberine and Un Caprice, only to mention a few of the later plays, present amusing and comic figures that are neither as subtle, nor as convincing as those of the earlier plays. Perhaps after his trip to Venice he felt himself to be too sophisticated to include such buffoons in his theatre. Perhaps, too, the influence of George Sand, who was very serious and pragmatic, had a profound effect upon him, and

caused him to give up this practice.

The setting or atmosphere of On ne Badine pas avec l'amour is also indicative of the earlier dramas. In André del Sarto, Musset paints Renaissance Italy, after documenting himself carefully so as to ensure the accurate portrayal of the characters, the time and the setting. In Les Caprices de Marianne and Fantasio there is no such documentation. In the former, the setting is once again Italy and more specifically Naples, but at precisely what stage in Italian history is a hard matter to decide. Although most of the designers who had illustrated the Comédies, and in particular Bida,<sup>16</sup> have not hesitated to dress Octave and Marianne in Renaissance costumes, there is no exact reference made to establish the time as that of the Renaissance period. In Fantasio there is little or no documentation regarding setting or time. There is a distinct lack of historical precision in Fantasio that is carried over into On ne Badine pas avec l'amour. Gastinel senses the ambiguity of the play:

Un cadre vague, mi-intérieur, mi-nature, où les amants trouvent la complicité des jardins, où les fantoches ont la salle à manger qui les attire, le cabinet de travail qui abrite leurs inutiles méditations; quelque part en France; époque imprécise, où les charges, les titres, les costumes parlent des âges disparus, tandis que les sentiments relèvent de la sensibilité et du vocabulaire romantique.<sup>17</sup>

From André del Sarto to On ne Badine pas avec

l'amour, one can detect an evolution which reveals the dramatist's diminishing adhesion to the Cénacle with its strictness regarding couleur locale. What these plays lose in historical veracity and precision, they gain in simplicity and poetry, for with an imaginary or imprecise décor the poet can transport his readers at his will.

On ne Badine pas avec l'amour is the last play which deals with love in its various aspects. Once again the reader's attention is focused on Musset's lovers, who are his most personal and sincere creations. Léon Séché says of these characters:

En eux il a mis toutes ses aspirations, toutes ses émotions, toutes ses souffrances, toute son âme. L'homme a souvent été amoureux, le poète a sans cesse chanté l'amour: l'amour est le ressort de la plupart de ses oeuvres dramatiques.<sup>18</sup>

Camille and Perdican, Marianne and Coelio, Lucretia and André, Belcolore and Frank<sup>19</sup> are all representative of frustrated love. As with the other plays in the first volume of Spectacle dans un fauteuil, trifling with love can have disastrous and even fatal results for some of the characters involved. André and Cordiani, Coelio and Rosette all pay for having treated love with flippancy. The sacrifice of the innocent Rosette, so suggestive of the murder of Coelio, is the last case in which death, resulting from love, occurs in the theatre of Musset. In the later plays, Barberine, le Chandelier, and Bettine,

love no longer demands victims, and even those who are so unfortunate as to fall prey to it, Fortunio and Carmosine for example, do not die from its blows.

The rivalry of pride between Camille and Perdican, characteristic of Musset and George's relationship, forms the main theme of the play. Van Tieghem says of this conflict:

Il [Musset] transforme en expérience indirecte chez Camille, l'expérience directe de George Sand, et fait jouer contre une déclaration ce qui avait joué pour une rupture.<sup>20</sup>

In Camille, Musset painted the portrait of his Lélia, for the character of Camille is complex, as was that of George Sand. Just as Marianne occupied a place of honour in an earlier play, so too does Camille in this play. Known as l'orgueilleuse because of the coldness and aloofness of her manner, Camille has just left the convent where she, like George Sand, received her formal education. No doubt the author obtained his information on the convents he describes in Les Caprices de Marianne and On ne Badine pas avec l'amour from his talks with George Sand in her apartment. Even the convent from which Camille left as "la meilleure chrétienne" is strangely suggestive of the one George Sand attended. Soeur Louise, the invisible third person who comes between Camille and her love for Perdican, is no doubt Madame Marie-Xavier, one of the English nuns in George's convent. In her autobiography, Histoire de ma

Vie, George describes her friend as follows:

Madame Marie-Xavier était la plus belle personne du couvent, grande, bien faite, d'une figure régulière et délicate; elle était toujours pâle comme sa guimpe, triste comme un tombeau. Elle se disait fort malade et aspirait à la vie avec impatience. C'est la seule religieuse que j'ai vue au désespoir d'avoir prononcé des vœux. Elle ne s'en cachait guère et passait sa vie dans les soupirs et les larmes. C'était une âme défaillante, tourmentée, misérable, plus passionnée que tendre, car elle ne s'épanchait que dans des accès de colère et comme exaspérée par l'ennui. Les unes pensaient qu'elle avait pris le voile par désespoir d'amour et qu'elle aimait encore; les autres qu'elle haïssait et qu'elle vivait de rage et de ressentiment.<sup>21</sup>

George Sand, therefore, identified with Madame Xavier, just as Camille associated herself with Soeur Louise, who incorporated many of the same traits as George's religious friend. While listening to the stories told by Louise herself, as well as the rumours that no doubt circulated about the convent, Camille thought of Perdican, for he was the only young man she knew. Perdican became synonymous with the young men who had abandoned Soeur Louise, and thus assumed in Camille's mind the rôle of the unfaithful lover. Afraid of marriage, and yet curious to learn about love, Camille echoes George Sand who wrote in her autobiography:

Je fais la jolie femme. Ah! Pour femme, pas trop! Jolie encore moins . . . J'ai mes violences et elles sont terribles. J'ai cent défauts, mais je suis bonne dans le fond . . . .<sup>22</sup>

The following letter that Camille wrote to Soeur

Louise could have been written by George to one of her friends:

Je pars aujourd'hui, ma chère, et tout est arrivé comme je l'avais prévu. C'est une terrible chose; mais ce pauvre jeune homme a le poignard dans le coeur; il ne se consolera pas de m'avoir perdue. Cependant j'ai fait tout au monde pour le dégoûter de moi. Dieu me pardonnera de l'avoir réduit au désespoir par mon refus. Hélas! Ma chère, que pouvais-je y faire? Priez pour moi . . . . (III,iii)

Even the different stages through which Camille's love passes, coldness, vengeance, jealousy and finally passion, are suggestive of George Sand.

Just as he borrowed several traits from George Sand in conceiving the rôle of Camille, he also embodies many characteristics of his own past. At twenty-one, Perdican was not only the son of a Baron, but he was also a "docteur à quatre boules blanches" of the University of Paris. In the following extract from a letter written by Musset when he was seventeen (September twenty-third 1827), one can trace clear parallels between Perdican and the author:

J'avais à peine expédié mon examen, que je pensais aux plaisirs qui m'attendaient [en province]. Mon diplôme de bachelier rencontre dans ma poche mon billet de diligence, et l'un n'attendait que l'autre. Me voici au Mans; je cours chez mes belles voisines. Tout s'arrange à merveille; on m'emmène dans un vieux château . . . .23

Every word in this letter forecasts the character of Perdican, and the last word "château" is suggestive of the

setting of the play.

Perdican's romantic memories of his past and of his youth, are clearly those of the dramatist himself. Like Perdican in his childhood, and like George Sand at Nohant, Musset was on extremely familiar terms with the peasants. Although essentially a city-dweller, Musset spent all of his vacations at his Uncle's country estate, and quite often spent his weekends there.

In this play, one can trace the ever-present influence of George Sand upon the author. Although the presence of George had been felt in Fantasio, it is not until On ne Badine pas avec l'amour that the full force of George's influence on the author becomes apparent. The love-war game that Camille and Perdican engage in throughout the play is the direct result of the same game that was played at Venice earlier in the year. In an undated letter that appeared in the November first issue of the Revue des deux mondes, George writes of their affair:

Tout cela vois-tu, c'est un jeu que nous  
jouons; mais notre coeur et notre vie  
servent d'enjeux, et ce n'est pas tout  
à fait aussi plaisant que cela en a l'air.<sup>24</sup>

This play, which gives an analysis of the human heart, is perhaps the most representative and complex of the plays hitherto discussed. Perdican, the exact double of the author at this period in his life, shares the latter's view concerning an ideal conception of love. No longer a

carouser as were his predecessors Octave and Fantasio, Perdican is a sensible young intellectual in love with life. Camille, the most complex of Musset's heroines, shows how familiar the author was with the workings of the female mind, and how enormous was the influence exerted by her on the poet's life and literary works. Musset, who could at will re-open the old wounds he had experienced, painted a vivid portrait of his former mistress. The full impact of George Sand upon the works of the author, however, is realized in Lorenzaccio.

The five-act prose drama Lorenzaccio stands apart in the theatre of Musset. Although it appeared in the August edition of the Revue des deux mondes, the play was not performed until December third 1896, where under the direction of Sarah Bernhardt it was well received. Again, as with On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, the question of when and where the play was written must be asked. The abundance of contradictory opinions regarding the play's composition, and the apparent insolubility of this question, prompted M. Dimoff to write:

. . .Plusieurs chercheurs se sont-ils attaqués à ce problème. Ils n'ont pas pu, malgré leurs efforts, le résoudre dans toute sa complexité, -- apparemment parce qu'il est insoluble, -- mais ils ont eu le réel mérite, en l'étudiant en détail et de très près, de rendre possible le départ entre les solutions plausibles et les autres . . . . 25

Although, as M. Dimoff says, there is no concrete



evidence with respect to the exact date of the writing of the play, several scholars<sup>26</sup> have presented hypotheses on this point. Of all the historians who have speculated on the different stages of production, Paul de Musset is the only one to claim that the entire work was written during and after the Venice sojourn. As proof of this affirmation, he refers to letters that Alfred had written from Florence in December:

Des lettres datées de cette ville, nous apprîrent qu'il avait trouvé dans les Chroniques florentines le sujet d'un ouvrage dramatique en cinq actes et qu'il prenait un grand plaisir à visiter les places publiques et les palais où il voulait mettre en scène les personnages de sa pièce. C'était le drame de Lorenzaccio.<sup>27</sup>

Not only does Paul de Musset allege that Alfred had not composed a rough draft of the work before his departure, but he also states that the dramatist took advantage of his stay in Florence to examine the chronicles that were later to provide the necessary documentation for his drama.

Paul de Musset's contention was, however, doubted by many scholars. Gastinel, Allem and Lafoscade all felt that the dramatist could not possibly have had sufficient time in Florence to gather any of the material. The dates of the voyage would tend to lend support to this view.

It was an impossibility for the dramatist, who left Marseilles on December twenty-second, stopped briefly at Genoa before arriving at Florence, which he left on the

twenty-eighth, to have been able to stay in Florence for a long enough period to gather material. His stay in Florence was very short, at the most no more than four days. A letter from George Sand to Buloz, dated Febraury fourth, 1834, assures us that Alfred was working on a manuscript during their stay in Venice; probably Lorenzaccio if we are to believe Paul de Musset:

Depuis quinze jours, j'étais bien et je travaillais. Alfred travaillait aussi, quoi qu'il fût un peu souffrant, et qu'il eût de temps en temps des accès de fièvre.<sup>28</sup>

From the tone of this letter, it would seem that the dramatist was hampered by ill health and was unable to continue writing while in Venice. According to Paul de Musset's supposition, therefore, the rest of the play must have been composed in Paris. Yet once again it seems inconceivable that the convalescent at Paris could have written the entire five acts between the time of his return in mid-April, and the tenth of May, the date of the play's completion. It was precisely at this date that Alfred wrote the following letter to George:

Tu me parles de gloire, d'avenir. Je ne puis rien faire de bon. Je vais publier ces deux volumes de prose de Lorenzaccio. Cela ne peut que me faire tort.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Musset mentions "ces deux volumes de prose", would indicate that George was already familiar with his work, an impossibility if he wrote most of the play after

his return. Musset's letter of April nineteenth, where he says he is still incapable of writing plays, and that of the thirtieth, in which he proposes writing La Confession d'un enfant du siècle,<sup>30</sup> also suggest the improbability of the play's composition at such a late stage.

The only logical conclusion is that the general design of the work was conceived and undertaken before the Italian trip. During the latter half of 1833, Musset no doubt reread the Italian Chronicles and pondered over the basic elements of his plot. It is very probable, therefore, that his draft was almost complete at the time of his departure.

After his return to Paris, Musset undoubtedly was inspired to revise many scenes of his work, thus enriching the whole drama. Musset, who had been planning his trip to Italy since July of 1833, would not have finished his play without waiting for his impressions of Italy, and more particularly of Florence, to be verified. It was after seeing that Italy lived up to all his expectations that the dramatist rewrote many scenes. While walking along the narrow twisted streets of Florence, home of the Médicis, the author was able to glimpse the old palaces and fortresses he describes so vividly in his plays. It is also very likely that Alfred attended masquerade balls, similar to those he described in La Nuit Vénitienne, Les Caprices de

Marianne and Lorenzaccio. So, too, in Venice he must have gone for Gondola rides along the Grand Canal, just as did Razetta in La Nuit Venitienne.

The great importance of this play, however, lies in the fact that it serves as an example of the direct artistic collaboration between the two lovers. It is somewhat amusing to notice that Paul, characteristically, makes absolutely no mention of either George Sand, or the collaboration. In fact his only comment on the play is:

Un ouvrage de plus longue haleine que les amours de Camille et de Perdican avait été offert à la Revue des deux mondes où cependant il n'a jamais été inséré; c'était le drame de Lorenzaccio. Probablement il fut trouvé trop long, ou bien on préféra le réserver inédit pour la collection des ouvrages dramatiques réunis en volumes et publiés par la librairie de la Revue.<sup>31</sup>

With the play the influence exerted by George Sand on the works of the author reaches a climax, for it is her presence that is felt throughout the play. The subject is entirely her inspiration. It was while living with Jules Sandeau,<sup>32</sup> with whom she also collaborated,<sup>33</sup> that George composed her half historical and half political adventure entitled Une Conspiration en 1537. She conceived the idea for this historical scene while reading in Italian the Storia Fiorentina of Benedetto Varchi. These Chroniques provided her with a solid foundation for her play.

It is she who has the merit of being the first to transpose this historical tale into an historical drama.

The reason for George's sudden interest in the theatre can be attributed to the fact that around 1830 historical scenes were in vogue. Several writers, most notably Ludovic Vitet had tried to bring historical locales to the theatre. Les Barricades, Les Etats de Blois and La Mort de Henri III are three of his plays whose episodes were borrowed from the time of the religious wars. Loeve-Veimar's <sup>34</sup>Le Camp de Campiègne and Prosper Mérimée's Les Mécontents are two other examples of scènes historiques.

George Sand was, however, not a good dramatist, and her play is lacking in psychological richness and depth. She reduced Varchi's Chroniques to a series of six tableaux and gave the Duke the most important role to play, whereas Lorenzo retains the same rôle allotted to him by Varchi, that of a simple conspirator.

George lost interest in the subject quickly and put the play away with some of her other manuscripts. It was while searching through these papers at the Quai Malaquais, that Musset came across the work. George probably gave it to him to use during the late summer or autumn of 1833, no doubt encouraging him to continue it, though taking no interest in it herself. The dramatist adopted George's work, therefore, and by changing the construction of the intrigue and modifying the detail of the Chroniques made it his own. Musset, like George, borrowed

much from Varchi. Although he had been learning Italian since he was eight, he did not seem to have a very good grasp of the language. This can be seen from the following letter sent to him by George:

Je ne voulais, je ne pouvais pas te laisser seul  
en pays étranger, sans entendre la langue et  
sans un sou . . . .35

Nevertheless Musset was much more historically accurate in his endeavor than was George Sand. The six tableaux used by George in her play became thirty-nine scenes, and of the thirteen characters outlined, Musset chose to keep eight. He did, however, enlarge the drama by inventing a whole new series of characters. Louise Strozzi and the Marquise de Cibo represent new women characters. As for the men, the dramatist multiplied his figures: The Marquis, Cardinal Cibo, Côme de Medicis, sire Maurice, the four Strozzi, Salviati, Tebaldeo the painter, Maffio, and many others who are merely faces in the crowd, show to what an extent Musset used his dramatic ability to enrich the play.

The most significant change brought about by the dramatist is in Lorenzo himself. Musset changed the conception of Lorenzo in his play, giving him a more complex character. Lorenzo is no longer a simple plotter; rather, he is the image of the author. Lorenzo is torn apart by contradictions which are those of the dramatist himself. It was in amplifying the character of Lorenzo and placing

at the centre of the play his moral struggle, that Musset showed himself to be much more original than his models, George Sand and Varchi. Van Tieghem says of Musset's renewal of this character:

. . .il en a scruté l'âme et le coeur et ce qu'il a cru trouver dans son héros, c'est un état moral tout proche du sien. Il a tiré Lorenzo de son côté, et il en a fait un des personnages les plus vivants et les plus complexes que notre théâtre ait créés.<sup>36</sup>

It was in this same manner that the dramatist showed how this play differed from those he had written earlier. The elaborate structure of Lorenzaccio, so alien to the plays forming Volume I of the Spectacle dans un Fauteuil,<sup>37</sup> is due solely to the fact that Musset was not at all concerned with having the play produced. The great ampleness of the play, whose five acts, thirty-nine tableaux, and thirty characters are developed without confusion, is proof of Musset's technical and dramatic ability.

The theme of politics, banished by Musset in his other plays, is given a prominent rôle in Lorenzaccio. In spite of the dramatist's earlier statements regarding the place of politics in the theatre, "Si la littérature veut exister, il faut qu'elle rompe en visière à la politique,"<sup>38</sup> Lorenzaccio is full of political implications. The feelings of bitter disillusionment and discontentment expressed by Lorenzo throughout the play are not Musset's invention, nor

are they new to his theatre. Many critics maintain<sup>39</sup> that Lorenzo voices the author's own contempt for and dissatisfaction with the materialistic society created by the July Revolution. Yet if one examines George's Conspiration en 1537, one finds that Musset was not exceptional in expressing these views. George, who wrote her play shortly after the Revolution, no doubt deliberately developed this analogy between Nineteenth-century France and Sixteenth-century Florence.

Lorenzo expresses his disenchantment in the same way as Musset's earlier heroes do. Razetta, in La Nuit Vénitienne, says to Laurette: "Quoique bien jeune . . . j'ai trop connu ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler la vie, pour n'avoir pas trouvé au fond de cette mer le mépris de ce qu'on aperçoit à la surface" (I,i). Lorenzo, while voicing his dismay, utters almost these exact words to Pierre Strozzi:

Pareil à un fanal éclatant, vous êtes resté immobile au bord de l'océan des hommes et vous avez regardé dans les eaux la réflexion de votre propre lumière . . . Mais moi, pendant ce temps-là, j'ai plongé -- je me suis enfoncé dans cette mer houleuse de la vie -- j'en ai parcouru toutes les profondeurs, couvert de ma cloche de verre -- tandis que vous admiriez la surface, j'ai vu les débris des naufrages, les ossements, et les Léviathans. (III,iii)

It is in this same manner that Perdican views the loss of his youth, the time when his innocence was a reality:

Le monde n'est qu'un égoût sans fond, où les phoques les plus informes rampent et



se tordent sur des montagnes de fange.

Frank<sup>40</sup> and Fantasio<sup>41</sup> also make similar statements to express their discontentment with the world.

The absence of a central love theme is another distinguishing factor separating Lorenzaccio from the earlier plays. From André to Coelio, Fantasio to Perdican, love has been a subject of prime importance. The world of Lorenzaccio, however, is void of the idealistic and absolute form of love so often dreamed of by the earlier protagonists. In Lorenzaccio not only is woman treated as an object, an instrument of pleasure at the mercy of men, but she is also scorned. Lorenzo, in complete antithesis to his predecessors, professes a universal disdain for all women regardless of age. The only two exceptions are his mother and aunt:

MARIE: Si vous méprisez les femmes, pourquoi affectez-vous de les rabaisser devant votre mère et votre soeur?

LORENZO: Je vous estime, vous et elle. Hors de là, le monde me fait horreur. (II,iv)

The word 'soeur' is somewhat disconcerting. In George's play, Catherine was "Madonna Catterina, soeur de Lorenzaccio".<sup>42</sup> Musset, however, followed the original sources and changed the rôle of Catherine from sister to aunt. Why, then, one wonders, did the dramatist have Marie refer to Catterine as Lorenzo's sister? One can only

surmise that the direct influence of George on Alfred was so strong that the latter chose to follow George's example. The following excerpt from George's play will show how Musset reproduced almost word for word, the conversation between mother and son:

MADONNA MARIA: Vous méprisez les femmes, Lorenzo, nous le savons. Pourquoi affecter de les rabaisser devant votre mère et votre soeur?\*

LORENZO: Madonna, je vous respecte, et Catterina sait si je l'aime. Mais après vous deux, le reste du monde me fait horreur et pitié. (II)<sup>43</sup>

In his earlier plays, Musset allotted a large place to ironic raillery. The good-humoured banter that existed between Fantasio and his companions, and Octave and Claudio,<sup>44</sup> is totally lacking in Lorenzaccio. Even the light-hearted and lyrical manner in which Perdican conversed with Rosette, is nowhere to be found in this play. Rather it has been replaced by a sombre style. Whereas one laughed with delight while watching Fantasio steal the Prince's wig with a fishing-rod, or at the approach of Dame Pluche on her mule, here the only laughter elicited is of a wry and bitter nature. Lorenzo's near-faint at the sight of a sword provokes a laughter tinged with sadness.

The development of subplots also set this play apart from those composed earlier. The abundance of characters allowed Musset to double the principal action, that of the preparation of the Duke's murder, by allowing

a series of events to develop simultaneously. These secondary themes, which amplify the main intrigue, consist mainly of the love affair of the Marquise and the Duke, and the regulation of the affairs between the Strozzi and Salviati families.

The play lends itself to a wealth of interpretation. Complex in character, Lorenzaccio poses multiple problems to the reader. The main difficulty in the play lies in trying to establish the centre of gravity. On the one hand, Lefebvre regards the play from a purely political point of view, defining it as a drama of patriotic fervour.<sup>45</sup> Van Tieghem on the other hand, views the play as the study of the moral dilemma of a certain individual.<sup>46</sup> He values the play as a study of a young adolescent and his relationship with others. He develops this aspect with a great deal of insight, openly asserting that Lorenzo is a transposition of the dramatist himself.

Like Musset, Lorenzo is an enfant du siècle, a man in search of himself and of his place among men. Like his predecessor Fantasio, Lorenzo tries to fulfill the romantic ideal he has set himself by living under the cover of a mask. It is in this manner that Lorenzo's playing the rôle of a court panderer recalls Fantasio in his rôle as a court jester. So great are the similarities between the two, that Fantasio could be called Lorenzo's

sibling. Lorenzo, like Fantasio, is the central figure in the play. It is he who is constantly on the stage and upon whom all the attention is concentrated. Just as Fantasio remains central to conversations held in his absence from the stage, so too does Lorenzo, as is evidenced by the following speech by the Duke:

Renzo, un homme à craindre! Le plus fieffé  
poltron! Une femmelette, l'ombre d'un ruffian  
énervé! Un rêveur qui marche nuit et jour  
sans épée, de peur d'en apercevoir l'ombre  
à son côté! (I,iv)

Fantasio is also a forerunner of Lorenzo in that he was unable to determine his own existence. Like Lorenzo, Fantasio could not affirm his personality except by adopting a disguise and playing a rôle. With Fantasio, it could be any rôle, any métier; with Lorenzo, however, it is a precise act that must serve as a remedy against the all-pervading force of melancholy. Both protagonists feel that it is only by acting that they can find a solution to their personal problems. Meticulous in his preparations for his deed, Lorenzo left nothing to chance. He chose his time well and even accustomed the ears of his neighbours to noise of brawling. Yet the act serves no purpose politically, for the citizens of Florence vote to put another tyrant, Côme de Medicis, on the throne. After committing the murder Lorenzo is not thinking of the service he has just performed for his country, rather he

is relieved because he had sought to affirm himself in his own eyes and give the impression of being more virile, for indeed Lorenzo is not basically very masculine.

He possesses many traits which would reinforce this impression of femininity. The most striking characteristic is Lorenzo's desire for feminine travesty as can be seen by the fact that he, as well as the Duke, and Julien Salviati, are disguised as nuns at the Nasi wedding feast. Lorenzo's near-faint at the sight of an unsheathed sword would also support this view. The various names by which Lorenzo is addressed throughout the play, Lorenzetta, Renzino, Mignon, Renzo and Lorenzino, are all suggestive of an effeminate nature. This quality in Lorenzo is further underlined by the fact that Lorenzo, like Musset, was thin and frail, with a delicate constitution. Like both the author and Coelio, Lorenzo was fatherless, becoming the head of his branch of the Medicean house at age eleven. The fact that the part of Lorenzo is more often played by a woman, than by a man, would also substantiate this view.<sup>47</sup>

The theme of debauchery present in La Coupe et les Lèvres, André del Sarto, Les Caprices de Marianne and Fantasio, attains its fullest expression in this play. It is by deciding to masquerade as Alexander's companion in crime and corruption, and by trying to win the confidence

of this usurper, that Lorenzo becomes morally corrupt. Parading as an adulterer and an apparent informer to Alexander, Lorenzo begins to imitate the Duke and slowly begins to assume the rôle he has chosen. Like Octave and Fantasio, Lorenzo wanders aimlessly during the night associating with women and drinking wine. Lorenzo, like his predecessors Octave and Fantasio, abandons himself to the world of vice. He differs from them, however, in that he loses the capacity to free himself from debauchery. It is not until the precise moment when he is about to act, that Lorenzo realizes that vice is conquering him completely, making him a prey to passion. The enigma of Lorenzo's state of moral corruption is outlined in Act III, scene iii, where Lorenzo, in a conversation with Philippe Strozzi, reveals his true feelings:

Il est trop tard-je me suis fait à mon métier.  
Le vice a été pour moi un vêtement, maintenant  
il est collé à ma peau. Je suis vraiment un  
ruffian . . . .

Lebois also says of Lorenzo's revelation of his true self:

un homme joue un jeu mortel; la limite va  
rester longtemps indiscernable entre la  
personne vraie et la personnalité feinte.<sup>48</sup>

This is Musset describing himself. At first, the life of pleasure was nothing more than a habit for the author, a means of forgetting. Yet he, too, eventually lost his capacity to renounce the world of vice. Maurice

Donnay develops the theme of the mask outlined in Lorenzo's talk with Philippe when he makes the following comment on Lorenzo's indulgence in sensual pleasures:

. . . Lorenzo a pris dans un but sublime une route hideuse: le vice a été d'abord pour lui un vêtement; maintenant, il est collé à sa peau, c'est une tunique de Nessus; le vice était d'abord un masque, il s'est collé au visage jusqu'à se confondre avec lui.<sup>49</sup>

As well as reflecting the author on the purely moral plane, Lorenzo echoes Musset on the psychological plane. The many allusions to another Lorenzaccio, a double, a shadow of himself, are suggestive of Musset's own personality problems.

Lorenzo, like his creator, possesses an unbalanced personality. Torn between several images of himself, among which he is hoping to find some continuity, Lorenzo reflects clearly the author's dédoublément problem. Lorenzo, like other heroes in Musset's play is an adolescent who is seeking to find and affirm himself. Like the earlier protagonists, he has a set goal. It is by killing the Duke that he will discover his identity. Coelio sought to affirm himself in his love for Marianne. Perdican, who had already proved himself academically, was ready to make a proposal of marriage. Musset sought to establish himself by means of his literary creation and his love for George Sand. Yet each of these characters fails in the pursuit of his goal. It is only Fantasio,

who is himself at all times, who succeeds.

Lorenzo is constantly haunted by his past. The memory of his previous state of purity, where he was an "étudiant paisible . . . pur comme un lis", concerned only with "des arts et des sciences", accompanies him wherever he goes:

Quand je pense que j'ai aimé les fleurs, les  
prairies et les sonnets de Pétrarque, le spectre  
de ma jeunesse se lève devant moi en frissonnant.  
(IV,iii)

The silhouette of the studious school-boy described by Marie Soderini, is the exterior projection of Lorenzo's own image:

. . . J'étais seule dans cette grande salle . . . je  
songeais aux jours où j'étais heureuse, aux jours  
de ton enfance, mon Lorenzino . . . j'ai entendu  
tout d'un coup marcher lentement dans la galerie;  
je me suis retournée; un homme vêtu de noir  
venait à moi, un livre sous le bras -- c'était  
toi, Renzo . . . . (II,iv)

Musset takes up this same hallucination in Nuit de décembre, written in November, 1835.

Du temps que j'étais écolier  
Je restais un soir à veiller  
Dans notre salle solitaire,  
Devant ma table vint s'asseoir  
Un pauvre enfant vêtu de noir  
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

The same melancholy atmosphere and clothing are present in each description, indicating the fact that Musset himself was haunted by this hallucinatory image.

Yet this former image of the young scholar



oscillates with that of the adolescent who is seeking greatness. In this regard, one cannot help but remember the letter addressed to George, where Alfred confesses there are two separate entities present in him, Coelio and Octave.<sup>50</sup> Incapable of identifying entirely with one or the other of these two personalities, Musset is at the same time Coelio and Octave. In the same respect Lorenzo, who is constantly haunted by the image of his former self, is at certain times the adolescent, and at other times the adult. Of this indecisive personality complex, Gide writes:

Il est toujours dangereux pour ceux qui n'ont pas une personnalité très décidée et marquante, de jouer un rôle, et particulièrement celui d'un personnage créé par soi. Au bout de peu de temps, on ne s'y trouve que trop à l'aise, pour peu que ce rôle ne force pas le naturel, mais simplement invite la plus grossière et instinctive partie de soi à prendre le pas sur le reste, à ne plus se laisser réduire et asservir pour le meilleur. C'est l'histoire de Lorenzaccio.<sup>51</sup>

Gide, in this quotation, outlines an important aspect of his own theory of disponibilité. He warns Lorenzo that even though he longs to be someone other than himself, he must not reject all the other possibilities. As with Musset, all of Gide's fictional creations are projections, if not parodies, of himself.

Musset's personality crisis is also a subject of concern to Bernard Masson, who makes the following comments:

regarding the author's ability to utilize his fictional characters to solve the problem of his own identity:

Il y a aussi dans le mouvement même de la pièce, un témoignage plus discret et non moins poignant sur certaines difficultés psychologiques propres au caractère de Musset, ou si l'on veut, sur la manière dont sa personnalité profonde réagit à la situation que son caractère lui impose.<sup>52</sup>

The psychological development of Musset's personality, as revealed through the characters of his protagonists, forms the basis for a study of his works. From André-Cordiani to Lorenzo, the complexity of the author's nature is manifest. Musset incorporated these shadow-figures in his plays in an attempt to find a solution to his own private problems. He was obsessed by the fact that he was both Octave and Coelio at the same time. Of Musset's constant search for self-analysis Van Tieghem concludes:

La création successive des oeuvres dramatiques n'est pas le fruit du hasard de l'inspiration, mais . . . elle est conditionnée logiquement par un effort constant pour éclairer et approfondir une série de problèmes moraux engendrés les uns par les autres, qui se possaient avec exigence à la réflexion de Musset sur lui-même.<sup>53</sup>

It can be said that Lorenzaccio represents the apogee in Musset's search for self-understanding. Lorenzaccio realizes the dramatist's dream of being either a Schiller or a Shakespeare. Indeed many critics agree<sup>54</sup> that this is the play that most resembles the works of Shakespeare in origin, and they rank it with such works

as Julius Caesar, Hamlet and Othello. M. des Essarts, bluntly equates the dramatist with Shakespeare: "Musset nous semble non plus seulement l'élève de Shakespeare, mais son égal."<sup>55</sup>

Lorenzaccio, rich in historical and psychological nuances, serves as a transition between the earlier plays and the ones to follow. In these later plays Musset is no longer the naïve lover of George Sand; nor is he the debauched character whose entire life is absorbed by a struggle between love and corruption. This constant evolution towards maturity, reaches its climax in the two figures of Perdican and Lorenzo. In his plays, as in his lifetime, Musset was constantly struggling to master his emotions and to discover his true identity. Yet in these two characters, as in his own life, Musset became a prey to the ardor of these feelings. In the later plays this same duality will appear and the same questions will present themselves. As with the earlier plays, however, no answer will be given, for the dramatist himself found his problem insoluble.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Musset, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour, Edited by Raymond Laubreaux (Paris: M. Didier, 1961), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>A simple and light-hearted salon comedy, the Proverb was amusing and easy to follow. Derived from the game of Charades, Proverbs were often acted in country estates on weekends by groups of friends gathered together. It was up to the guests to surmise at the end of a performance which Proverb the little piece represented. Two ancestors of this Eighteenth-Century genre were Carmontelle and Leclercq.

<sup>3</sup>Musset, On ne Badine pas avec l'amour edited by Maurice Martin (Paris: Editions Bordas, 1964), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>On ne Badine pas avec l'amour; Le Chandelier; Un Caprice and Il ne faut jurer de rien all carry the subtitle of Proverbe in the Revue des deux mondes. Other examples of Musset's Proverbes are: Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée; and On ne saurait penser à tout.

<sup>5</sup>Henri Bidou, Gastinel, Lafoscade etc.

<sup>6</sup>Paul de Musset, Biographie, pp. 136-137.

<sup>7</sup>Henri Bidou, Conferencia (October 15, 1920).

<sup>8</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>10</sup>Pierre Gastinel, Le Romantisme d'Alfred de Musset, p. 415.

<sup>11</sup>Unfortunately there are no original manuscripts which would allow a comparison between the scenes written in 1833 and those of 1834.

<sup>12</sup>Gastinel, op. cit., p. 430.

<sup>13</sup>See Chapter I, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup>Gastinel, op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

- <sup>16</sup>Bida was the costume designer for Les Caprices de Marianne, Edition Charpentier.
- <sup>17</sup>Gastinel, op. cit., p. 418.
- <sup>18</sup>Séché, Alfred de Musset, II, p. 68.
- <sup>19</sup>La Coupe et les Lèvres.
- <sup>20</sup>Van Tieghem, Musset, l'Homme et l'oeuvre, p. 88.
- <sup>21</sup>George Sand, Histoire de ma Vie (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1891), III, pp. 141-142.
- <sup>22</sup>Maurois, Lélia, ou l'Histoire de George Sand (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1908), p. 101.
- <sup>23</sup>Pommier, Variétés, p. 94.
- <sup>24</sup>Van Tieghem, Théâtre Complet (Paris: Aux Editions du Seuil, 1926), p. 119.
- <sup>25</sup>Paul Dimoff, La Genèse de Lorenzaccio (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1936), p. xxxviii.
- <sup>26</sup>Most notably J. Pommier, "A Propos de Lorenzaccio", R.C.C. XXVI (December 15, 1924), pp. 52-57.  
L. Lafoscade, "La Genèse de Lorenzaccio", R.D.M. VI (November 15, 1927).  
P. Gastinel, Le Romantisme d'Alfred de Musset (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1931), pp. 433-436.
- <sup>27</sup>Paul de Musset, Biographie (Paris: Charpentier édition, 1877), p. 131.
- <sup>28</sup>Lafoscade, op. cit., p. 434.
- <sup>29</sup>Gastinel, op. cit., p. 434.
- <sup>30</sup>See Chapter I, p. 23.
- <sup>31</sup>Paul de Musset, op. cit., p. 141.
- <sup>32</sup>The name Jules Sandeau can be found traced in the margin of the first page.
- <sup>33</sup>Rose et Blanche -- a novel published jointly by George Sand and Jules Sandeau.

- <sup>34</sup>See Chapter I, p. 34.
- <sup>35</sup>Dimoff, op. cit., p. xxi.
- <sup>36</sup>Van Tieghem, Musset l'Homme et l'Oeuvre (Paris: Boivin et Ciè, 1944), p. 92.
- <sup>37</sup>La Coupe et les Lèvres, A Quoi rêvent les jeunes filles, André del Sarto, Les Caprices de Marianne, Fantasio.
- <sup>38</sup>Henri Lefebvre, Alfred de Musset: Dramaturge (Paris: L'Arche, 1955), p. 14. See also Chapter I, p. 9.
- <sup>39</sup>Herbert J. Hunt, "Alfred de Musset et la Révolution de Juillet: La Leçon politique de Lorenzaccio", CCLI (1934), pp. 75-76.
- J. Pommier, "A Propos de Lorenzaccio".
- <sup>40</sup>Frank: "Quel hideux Océan est-ce donc que la vie?" (La Coupe et les Lèvres).
- <sup>41</sup>Fantasio: ". . .un homme absorbé par une grande pensée est comme un plongeur sous sa cloche, au milieu du vaste océan". (Fantasio, I,ii).
- <sup>42</sup>Van Tieghem, Musset, pp. 92-94.
- <sup>43</sup>George Sand, Une Conspiration en 1537, scene II, quoted by Paul Dimoff, op. cit., p. 102.
- <sup>44</sup>See Les Caprices de Marianne (Act II,i).
- <sup>45</sup>Lefebvre, Musset Dramaturge, Chapter IV passim.
- <sup>46</sup>Van Tieghem, l'Homme et l'Oeuvre, pp. 89-96.
- <sup>47</sup>Sarah Bernhardt and Marguerite Jamois.
- <sup>48</sup>André Lebois, Vues sur le Théâtre de Musset (Toulouse: Aubanel, 1966), p. 61.
- <sup>49</sup>Maurice Donnay, Alfred de Musset (Paris: Hachette, 1914), p. 204.
- <sup>50</sup>See Chapter II, p. 41.
- <sup>51</sup>Henri Monnier, Avant-Propos à des Morceaux choisis (Paris: Hachette, 1935), p. ix quoted by Bernard Masson, "Lorenzaccio ou la difficulté d'être", A.L.M., no. 46 (1962), p. 23.

<sup>52</sup>Masson, "Lorenzaccio ou la difficulté . . .",  
p. 41.

<sup>53</sup>Van Tieghem, "l'Evolution du théâtre de Musset  
des débuts à Lorenzaccio", R.H.T. (October - December,  
1957), p. 275.

<sup>54</sup>Van Tieghem, Gastinel, Gautier, Lefebvre.

<sup>55</sup>Gastinel, Le Romantisme . . . , p. 449.

## CONCLUSION

The wealth of biographical information found in the plays of Alfred de Musset helps to present the delicate balance between the varied emotions and private problems experienced by the author during his relationship with George Sand. The moral and intellectual issues that tormented him before, during and after his relationship with her, are all reflected in his plays. Aspects of both *André* and *Cordiani*, representative of the early Musset, can be found in the later characters of *Perdican* and *Lorenzo*. It is in his search for an absolute love that *Perdican* most resembles Musset, while the bitterness and disillusionment expressed by him during the last scenes of the play are characteristic of the same feelings experienced by the author after the end of the liaison.

Yet the theatre of Musset that was composed between 1831 and 1835, does not consist solely of a personal reflection of the author, and the use of biographical material in dramatic works does not necessarily guarantee the value of a work. Musset, however, succeeds in producing works of a high quality. He does this by maintaining a careful balance throughout his theatre, and it is this tension which is the motivating force needed



to stimulate the dramatic interest. In all the plays discussed in the second and third chapters, with the exception of Lorenzaccio, there is a movement towards ideal love. Yet in each of the plays, Musset manages to create a parallel between the joyful élan of love and the bitter disappointment of rejection. In Les Caprices de Marianne this balance is maintained by the character of Rosette, for it is she who determines the turning-point of the play. The same is true with Coelio, the innocent victim, whose sacrifice serves as a counterbalance to the development in the relationship between Octave and Marianne. Both Coelio and Rosette are constants, in the sense that they are factors against which the others move. As a result of the actions of both Coelio and Rosette, the relationships of the other characters remain fixed, for it is with their deaths that the action of the play is terminated, a conclusion which reflects the failure of love in Musset's life.

It is curious to see how Musset, who depended more on the psychological tension of the characters than on a set of contemporary events to stimulate interest in his work, ends all his plays except Fantasio on a bitter note. This was, however, the reflection of the changes that took place in his personal life. It is not difficult to look upon the appearance of Pagello as an "event" that helped to

force to a conclusion the liaison, dramatic in itself, of the two "amants de Venise".

In his career as a playwright, something of the same pattern emerges. Prior to Pagello's intrusion, Musset had been completely mesmerized by George Sand, and it was under her influence that his dramatic production reached its peak with Lorenzaccio and On ne Badine pas avec l'amour. Yet in the plays written after their affair, there is none of the heightened dramatic conflict that was characteristic of the earlier works. We may conclude, therefore, that the absence of George Sand had a profound effect on his work.

Musset's protagonists during this period, like all Romantic heroes and the author himself, are characterized by an extreme sensibility and an abandonment to emotions. Cordiani and Coelio, who are held in awe by the sight of their loved ones, are no different than Ruy Blas who turned pale in the presence of the Queen. The competence that Musset showed in the depiction of his characters, and mainly those several varieties of his own character, show to what extent he was the poet of youth. The great love that Musset felt for George Sand was never to be forgotten.

The frequent changes in Musset's attitude towards George Sand during and after their relationship ran the gamut from profound bitterness to sincere forgiveness and admiration. In his plays as in his life, far from mastering

his emotions he became their prey. This development, together with the factor of his dual personality, served him well as a playwright. The lack of artifice together with the natural dialogue which are characteristic of Musset's life, appear in his works, giving them an authenticity which makes him stand apart from many of his more successful contemporaries. Musset remained essentially a dramatist at heart even when writing for genres other than the theatre. In all his other works one can recognize the dialogue form reminiscent of the theatre. The dramatic situations of the Confession d'un enfant du siècle with its three-part structure, and the continual dialogue between the poet and his Muse in each of the four "Nuits" sequences, show to what extent Musset was influenced by the theatre.

By both his dual personality and the series of different faces he presented to the world, Musset showed himself to be naturally disposed towards the theatre. In each of his plays the dramatist accentuates the adopting of masks and the playing of a rôle. The mask of debauchery adopted by Lorenzo, and Fantasio's assumption of the rôle of a court-jester are all reminiscent of the author's own life. It is by adopting a mask that some of Musset's characters hope to solve their problems of self-identification and self-determination which were Musset's own problems. This theme of alienation can be found in

such early works as La Coupe et les Lèvres and André del Sarto, where the protagonist feels himself to be alone in the world.

During the period we have studied, it is clear that Musset is a fine example of a "poète maudit", a term used by Verlaine to characterize the estrangement of modern poets like Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Yet this term can also be applied to writers like Vigny and Gautier, since they introduced the motif of alienation into their works. Like Vigny's Chatterton, Musset's heroes are sharply aware of the gulf that separates them from the societies in which they live. It is in Lorenzaccio, however, that Musset's hero appears to be the expression of a "poète maudit". Lorenzo pursues his course alone, as he had been scorned by his family and friends. Even the Duke and his entourage at Court ridicule the young Florentine. His quest becomes more lonely when he realizes that his rôle as a modern Brutus may be meaningless. It is in the light of this discovery that Lorenzo is forced to make a choice: to kill the Duke or to withdraw into the background. He willingly decides to continue in his rôle and assumes full responsibility for his crime. It is in this respect that Lorenzo is suggestive of Baudelaire's poem "l'Héautontimoréanos":

Je suis la plaie et le couteau

Je suis le soufflet et la joie!  
 Je suis les membres et la roue,  
 Et la victime et le bourreau.

Like Chatterton, another "poète maudit", Musset has deliberately chosen to alienate himself from contemporary society. It was by refusing to prostitute his art to meet the demands of the crowds, that Musset showed an uncompromising dedication to the ideal of his mission. His complete disregard of the stage, and his lack of interest in the social and political problems which concern both Vigny and Hugo, support the sincerity of his convictions. Although political issues such as power, liberty and conspiracy are introduced into Lorenzaccio, the drama itself remains predominantly that of a multi-faced single individual in search of himself. Like Lorenzo, who is searching for the absolute in the hope that his act will remain forever imprinted in the minds of men, Musset seeks to achieve immortality by focusing his frustrations in a single poem or play.

Musset belongs to the same literary tradition as Baudelaire and Gide, who both made use of diaries to express their personal difficulties explicitly; whereas Musset made use of the stage as an indirect means of communicating his feelings and opinions. His comments on the decline of art, and the place of politics in the theatre, illustrate the incorporation of his personal views into his fictional

works.

Musset is also like Gide in that he projects himself into his works, for in each of the plays studied, the complexities of Musset's personality are injected into two opposing characters, as in *Octave-Coelio*, *André-Cordiani*, or in two very different sides of the same personality as with *Lorenzo* or *Fantasio*. It is in this sense that the dramatist announces the words of Gide, "Je tire sur les rênes et je fouette en même temps". Unlike Gide, however, Musset does not attempt to purge himself of his own latent potentialities through his fictional characters.

Musset brings a fresh approach to the dramatic production of the 1830s. It is in his attempt to make drama appeal to the emotions, as well as to the imagination, that he demonstrated his creativity and talent. The critical acumen that he illustrated in the analysis of his own psychological make-up, permits us to understand the nightmarish and fanciful qualities that characterize much of his work. It is precisely this exaltation of the self that conveys the unbreakable link between the author and the characters who inhabit his dramatic oeuvre.

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