

**Adaptation in Translation of George Sand's *Gabriel***  
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I received funding to translate and theatrically adapt George Sand's 1839 dialogue novel *Gabriel* from French to English. The original romantic drama contains themes of gender fluidity, women's rights, and freedom of self-expression which I worked to link to the present day in my adaptation. My project questions how and why we continue to tell stories once the values they reflect are no longer accepted, as is the case in Sand's text.

Adaptation is not as clearly defined as translation, and there is much overlap between the two disciplines. In everyday conversations, we value translations for their faithfulness to the original author's work, but a successful translation also considers the cultural context of the source text and whether or not it is shared by the translated text's audience. In a theatrical context, adaptation enables the translator to manipulate many more variables—such as time and place—to convey the source text's message. In the case of *Gabriel*'s target audience, there is not only a cultural disconnect between France and the United States but also the significant difference of almost 200 years. Our opinions of gender have shifted dramatically in that time, as have our expectations of stage productions. In taking a liberal approach to adaptation and translation, the project became about finding the connections between *Gabriel*, Sand's life, and the present day where questions of gender equality and gender expression remain present.

I spent the first weeks researching George Sand's unusual life and career to understand how a piece like *Gabriel* came to be. Her autobiography *Histoire de ma vie* and collections of her letters to fellow authors Gustave Flaubert and Alfred de Musset were particularly insightful as Sand openly discussed her failing marriage, critiques of other Romantic period authors, and opinions on her own writing in these texts. Sand is perhaps best known for her masculine-tending lifestyle of cigar smoking, non-monogamy, and (illegally) wearing pants, but her personal writings reveal another side to her that is empathetic, drawn to the solitude of the country, and even shy. In learning about her own gender expression, I was able to understand how she could conceive of a gender-fluid character in a society that wrote gender roles into the law. Details from her life suddenly became visible in *Gabriel*, and I teased them out slowly through multiple revisions. I am impressed by Sand's resilient empathy and saddened that similar feminine traits appear as tragic flaws of some of her heroines. She writes of wanting to leave her readers with a sense of hope, but it's hard to see hope in the title character Gabriel's death in the original text. Ultimately, I decided to alter the tragic ending of the play, hoping to offer Gabriel—and by extension, Sand—some of that empathy she displayed in her writings and letters.

This project gave me the unique opportunity to combine my academic pursuits in theater and French, approaching the text both as a translator and dramaturg. I found that the work of translating and theater-making both begin with a deep understanding of character, time, and place. Once I understood these fundamental pieces, I altered them to bring the text into the modern era, using anachronism and present-day diction to punctuate Sand's Shakespeare-like text. I learned to trust my instincts and lean into the creative process, always with an eye on Sand's original work. I intend to stage the play in the spring of 2025 at Bowdoin.

I am grateful for the support of the Surdna foundation, allowing me to develop my voice as a writer and to get to know one of the daring women authors of French history.

**Faculty mentor: Professor Charlotte Daniels**

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