

## George Sand, Napoleon, and Slavery

Karl Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte opens with the celebrated formulation that "all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur . . . the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce" (15). Without straying too far from the spirit of Marx's intended meaning, we can read those words as applying to the actions of the First and Second French Empires in relation to slavery. The tragedy was the restoration of slavery in 1802 by the soon to be crowned emperor Napoleon. By restoring slavery less than a decade after its abolition by the First Republic in 1794, Napoleon brought about nearly a half century more of toil, suffering, and premature death for thousands of enslaved blacks. Slavery only came to an end in the French colonies with the emancipation decree penned by Victor Schoelcher.<sup>1</sup> The emancipation decree was promulgated by the Second Republic on April 27, 1848, two months and two days after the institution of the provisional government of the Second Republic headed by Alphonse Lamartine, who said: "I granted blacks their freedom . . . If my life consisted of only that moment, I would have no regrets about living" 'Je signais la liberté des Noirs . . . Ma vie n'eût-elle que cette heure, je ne regretterais pas d'avoir vécu' (Chauleau 36).

The farce was Louis Napoleon's replaying of his uncle's nefarious pro-slavery policies. Marx commented in the closing pages of The Eighteenth Brumaire that Louis Napoleon and his entourage had as much dignity as Faustin Soulouque, president of the republic of Haiti in 1847, who chose to become emperor Faustin I of Haiti in imitation of Napoleon (134). Victor Hugo observed that the French had laughed at Haiti, but that, with Louis Napoleon, France "saw the figure of this white Soulouque" 'a vu apparaître ce Soulouque blanc' (46). Farcical comparisons

between the two emperors, one white and one black, indeed arose so often that when Louis Napoleon's extravagant expenses at Versailles were mocked as Soulouquerie, he issued a specific order forbidding the use of the word (Dayan 12).<sup>2</sup> Louis Napoleon did indeed replay his uncle's pro-slavery policies, as Marx observed. For example, he ended the direct parliamentary representation for the colonies that had been established by the Second Republic; he ignored the continued operations of the slave trade by Spain; and he imported low-wage African and Asian workers to the former colonies, thereby effectuating a disguised renewal of slavery. Such practices provoked Marx to label Louis Napoleon "the patron of slavery, in all its forms," "the general slave-dealer of Europe," "the man who had revived the infamous traffic in its worst features under the pretext of 'free emigration' of the blacks to the French colonies" (Marx, On Colonialism, 201- 02).

It is highly probable that George Sand was familiar with the salient details of this story of slavery and empire which spans the greater part of the nineteenth century and forms the backdrop of the nearly half century of her prolific career as a writer. Michelle Perrot describes her as "one of the most political women of her time" 'une des femmes les plus politiques de son temps' (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 34), and she was celebrated internationally for her life's work devoted to the cause of the oppressed.<sup>3</sup> What is more, she participated actively in the political arena during the period between 1843-1850, the most intense and decisive period of French abolitionist efforts in the nineteenth century, sharing many of the republican sentiments of leading abolitionists such as Lamartine and Schoelcher.

Why then are Sand's frequent references to the subject of slavery always expressed in guarded, often cryptic ways? How do her allusions to slavery change in kind and function over the four decades of her writing? In attempting to answer these questions, I will look at Sand's

works in relation to a variety of factors, including the legacy and policies of both imperial governments, the writings on slavery by other literary figures, and the changing conditions of colonial activity in France. What I hope to show is that, notwithstanding its indirect forms of expression, Sand's position on slavery deserves serious consideration as one component in the tripartite structure of race, class, and gender that in fact defines her work. Now that the rich critical literature about Sand in recent decades has filled in many of the details of her treatment of class and gender, I feel that it is time to factor in the missing link of race: at the very least, to account for some features of her writing that have escaped critical attention; at best, to make visible the full range of Sand's complex political, social, and humanitarian thought.<sup>4</sup> The differences between her thought and that of other thinkers of her time can also serve to show that there are more ways of expressing the political than is commonly thought. In fact Sand may be considered as the model for writers who retain control over social and political issues by defining them independently rather than accepting categories of thought imposed by the dominant political discourses of the time.

## I

Although Sand's literary career only begins in the 1830s, allusions to slavery in her early novels reach back in time to the First Empire in order to emphasize the profound incompatibility between despotism and freedom and Napoleon's association with despotism. In her opposition, by temperament and political conviction, to empire and monarchy, Sand differs from earlier writers in the 1820s, the heyday of the genre known as negrophile literature, which recounted the capture, mistreatment, or uprising of slaves. Examples include Hugo's Bug Jargal, which has as its

background the slave uprisings in Saint-Domingue; Prosper Mérimée's Tamango, which dwells on a mutiny of slaves aboard a ship; and Claire de Duras's Ourika, which presents a black protagonist who, having retreated to a convent, recounts her sad story to a doctor and later dies at a young age. The 1820s was also the time when scores of other works about blacks by lesser known authors were published. One example is Sophie Doin, whose works will be seen later to bear curious although undoubtedly fortuitous similarities with Sand's. The literature about blacks from the 1820s often bears the mark of the monarchical political context in which it was produced, containing, for example, tributes to Charles X for recognizing the independence of Haiti in 1825, an act motivated primarily by a desire to provide reparations that would placate the former French colonists.<sup>5</sup>

The tolerance shown by negrophile writers of the 1820s such as Hugo, Duras, and Doin toward the restored monarchy contrasts with Sand's intolerance for "the hypocritical despotism of the Restoration" 'le despotisme hypocrite de la Restauration,' which she traced back to Napoleon's reconciliation with the Church in the Concordat of 1801 (Vermeulen 171). It would be wrong, however, to overstate the difference between Sand and authors of the 1820s. For one thing, the political ambiguity that characterizes the Restoration makes it "difficult to align literary and political trends" for authors of that period (Jenson 96). For another thing, negrophile literature stemmed from basically liberatory principles aimed at promoting many of the same humanitarian ideas that would come to define Sand's writing. That literature of the 1820s reaches back further in time to writings from the French revolutionary period by abolitionists such as Olympe de Gouges and Germaine de Staël; like those earlier works, the literature about blacks from the 1820s established many fundamental linkages between race and other forms of oppression.<sup>6</sup>

Although both abolitionist writing and negrophile literature had receded from direct view when Sand began to write in the 1830s, those earlier literary endeavors formed a kind of intertextual quarry available to writers like Sand seeking to express ideas about social and political oppression. This is the quarry that I believe Sand mines in the novels of the 1830s, which have been designated as her “novels about the slavery of women authorized by marriage” ‘romans de l’esclavage des femmes scellé par le mariage’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 15). It is important to note, of course, that writers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often employed metaphorical allusions to slavery that in many cases had little to do with actual issues of race and human bondage. As Michel Trouillot observes, “‘slavery’ was at the time an easy metaphor, accessible to a large public who knew that the word stood for a number of evils except perhaps the evil of itself. Slavery in the parlance of the philosophers could be whatever was wrong with European rule in Europe and elsewhere . . . Diderot applauded U.S. revolutionaries for having ‘burned their chains’ and for having ‘refused slavery.’ Never mind that some of them owned slaves. The Marseillaise was also a cry against ‘slavery’” (85-86). In Indiana, however, Sand’s use of the metaphor of slavery is far more specific, as Deborah Jenson has convincingly demonstrated (183-209). By developing in a colonial context the analogy between oppressed slaves and similarly oppressed wives, Sand gives added meaning to the widespread metaphor of married women as slaves and highlights the inextricable ties binding gender and race.

Most importantly, Sand brings the extended sense of slavery into direct connection with the real slavery of blacks.<sup>7</sup> In “(De)masking the ‘Other’ Woman in George Sand’s Indiana,” Pratima Prasad calls attention to Indiana’s upbringing among slaves, the elements linking her Creole identity to Noun’s, and her enslavement by both her father and her husband (105). In “George

Sand and Slavery,” Nancy Rogers shows how in Indiana Sand relates the subjection of women in marriage to the institution of slavery, recording for example the similar lack of education of women and blacks and their comparable lack of power before the law (29, 32). And in “Representing Race in Indiana,” Doris Kadish highlights Indiana and Ralph’s choice at the end of the novel to live apart from the island’s white colonialist inhabitants and devote their efforts to helping black slaves. That reading of Indiana also makes the case for interpreting Noun, whose status as servant mirrors that of a slave, as a woman of color (25-26).

Admittedly, the subjection of women perhaps meant more to Sand personally in the 1830s than that of blacks under slavery. But she directly connected those two forms of subjection. Indeed, ample textual evidence supports the claim that oppression against women and oppression against blacks walk hand in hand in Sand’s writing and thinking at this time. Consider the example of what can be read as intertextual references in Indiana to Hugo’s Bug Jargal, both its early publication as a short story in 1820 and the expanded and revised version as a novel in 1825. The intertextuality at work in Indiana is especially strong in the opening scene, which Isabelle Naginski has linked to Chateaubriand (George Sand, 57) and Naomi Schor to Balzac (229). I would propose adding Hugo to that list because of the way in which the beginning of Indiana echoes the 1820 version of Bug Jargal: both open with a Napoleonic officer named Delmare and with a dog whose begging for kindness and attention from a master is answered kindly in Hugo’s story and cruelly in Sand’s. In both cases, the treatment of the dog functions as a metaphor for the treatment of slaves. The close bond between Hugo’s Delmare and his male dog Rask connotes the bond Delmare had with the former owner of the dog, the heroic black leader Bug Jargal, a stand-in for the hero of the Haitian revolution, Toussaint Louverture. Conversely, the cruelty and insensitivity of Sand’s Delmare to his female dog Ophelia represents his sentiments toward his

wife, whom he treats like a slave. Other reversals of roles in the two novels include substituting a weak, enslaved woman (Indiana) for a strong, enslaved man (Bug Jargal) and creating a love triangle involving two women (Indiana and Noun), who love the same man (Raymon), as opposed to the triangle Hugo created in the 1825 version of his story in which two men (Bug Jargal and Delmare, renamed Dauverney) love the same woman (Marie). This inversion of gender roles deconstructs the masculinist perspective of Bug Jargal at the same time that the intertextual framework reinforces Hugo's foregrounding of the unjust treatment of blacks.

A significant ideological disparity separates Sand's concept of oppression from Hugo's, however, as can be seen in the far different connotations attached to Napoleon in their works. Hugo valorizes Delmare's military role by making him a kindly white, whose good intentions and acts almost seem to redeem the plantation system, just as Bug Jargal's gratitude toward him mitigates if not exonerates the mistreatment of blacks. In addition, the positive portrayal of the relationship between Delmare and Bug Jargal could also be said to paper over the real relationship between Napoleon and Toussaint Louverture, whom Napoleon basely betrayed, captured, and put to death. In contrast, Sand's treatment of her characters embodies a clear condemnation of the slavery that affects both blacks and women, and she connects the dots linking it to Napoleon and the antislavery policies of the First Empire. The despotism over his wife that Sand's Delmare exercises stands for far more than the enslavement of women by men in marriage. It specifically represents Napoleonic despotism. From the start of the novel, Delmare appears as "the master of the house, Colonel Delmare, a brave old soldier from Napoleon's army living on his pension" 'le maître de la maison, le colonel Delmare, vieille bravoure en demi-solde'<sup>8</sup> who maintains "the stiffness befitting all the movements of a former military officer" 'la roideur convenable à tous les mouvements d'un ancien militaire' (Sand, Indiana 49). Confirming his Napoleonic identity, he is

presented later in the novel as a man who “hadn’t made a step forward since 1815. He stood guard over the old values, as retrograde and obstinate as the émigrés of Coblenz . . . This man acted as if Waterloo had happened yesterday” ‘n’avait pas fait un pas depuis 1815. C’était un stationnaire aussi encroûté, aussi opiniâtre que les émigrés de Coblenz . . . Cet homme était toujours au lendemain de Waterloo’ (Sand, Indiana 168-69). In short, Hugo may have targeted racial issues more specifically than Sand, which explains why Bug Jargal, not Indiana, typically appears on lists of French nineteenth-century treatments of race. Yet ultimately Sand’s move is the more radical one; it reaches to the heart of the matter—Napoleon and his imperial politics—rather than merely repeating the themes of the negrophile literature of her time.<sup>9</sup>

A similar intertwining of gender and race occurs in Sand’s “Le Poème de Myrza,” published in 1835, an extended allegory about the origin of inequality in the world and women’s role in the story of creation. Myrza is presented as “a prophetess . . . one of those hybrid mixes of bohemians and sibyls” ‘une de ces prophétesses . . . espèce mixte entre la bohémienne et la sybille’ (Sand, “Myrza” 474).<sup>10</sup> Myrza is willing to serve as “God’s slave” ‘une esclave de Dieu,’ but she proudly defies all attempts by men to deceive and enslave: “others told us to enslave ourselves to a single master” ‘d’autres nous disaient d’être esclaves d’un seul maître’ (Sand, “Myrza” 494, 497). Such examples of the language of slavery serve throughout “Le Poème de Myrza” to assert the rights of women and the people. In a text of some twenty five pages, one comes across eight occurrences of the word “race,” five of “master” ‘maître,’ four of “slave” ‘esclave,’ along with a full panoply of related words such as “domination,” “despotism” ‘despotisme,’ “to put in chains” ‘enchaîner,’ “empire,” “injustice,” and “violence.” The name Myrza also bears connotations of slavery through the intertextual relationship it establishes with the black heroine named Mirza in Olympe de Gouges’s play L’Esclavage des noirs (1792), a work known for its political activism in favor of

blacks. By thus participating in a common discourse of race and slavery, “Le Poème de Myrza” acquires enhanced social importance. As Isabelle Naginski observes, “Le Poème de Myrza” stands as the first text by Sand in which the feminine protagonist accepts a public role and proclaims a social message: “Thus, Sand goes from a solitary romanticism to one marked by solidarity” ‘Ainsi, Sand passe d’un romantisme solitaire à un romantisme solidaire’ (Naginski, “Le Poème de Myrza” 163-64).

“Le Poème de Myrza” also bears a relationship with Germaine de Staël’s story “Mirza ou Lettre d’un voyageur” (1795) in which a black woman named Mirza plays the part of poet and sibyl. In addition to the name, Sand grants her protagonist the role of female poet, famously associated at the time with Staël’s towering heroine Corinne and with Staël’s public opposition to Napoleon. As Joan DeJean observes, Staël wrote Corinne one month after Napoleon had himself crowned king of Italy, thereby annihilating freedom in that country, just as many alleged that he had destroyed republican values in France; DeJean interprets Corinne’s poetic improvisations as forms of passive resistance to imperial military oppression (131-32). Corinne’s celebrated crowning as a poet has also been read as a challenge to Napoleon’s power. Adored by the people, as is Sand’s Myrza, Corinne stands as an alternative feminine authority figure: “a peace-loving ruler whose crown is gained for merit, not traditional privilege, whose glory is aesthetic, not military, whose freedom is gained through the powers of the mind and the pen rather than brute force and the sword. She stands as an alternative to Napoleon’s absolutist aspirations to royalty and aristocracy as emperor” (Kadish, “Narrating ”119).<sup>11</sup> Allusions to Staël take on added resonance when one considers Staël’s deep involvement with abolitionism. Her public stance in 1814 in opposition to the slave trade gained wide recognition, as did the decisive role in the abolitionist movement played by members of her family—her son Auguste, her daughter

Albertine, and her son-in-law the duc de Broglie—in the 1830s and 1840s, after her death. That Sand had such associations with Staël in mind is not implausible. Naginski notes that at the time of writing “Le Poème de Myrza,” “Sand was immersed in the work of her foremother Staël” ‘Sand est plongée dans ‘l’oeuvre mère’ de Staël’ (Naginski, “Le Poème de Myrza” 158).

## II

To shift focus now from race and gender to race, gender, and class is also to mark a step forward to the 1840s, a period in which issues of slavery and empire find similarly sporadic and even less explicit expression in Sand’s writing than in the preceding decade. The modification that occurs can probably be explained by the growing emphasis among liberal and humanitarian writers generally on ameliorating the poverty and oppression of the working poor in France. Tellingly, Flora Tristan reproached Schoelcher for his commitment to slaves in the colonies at the expense of the suffering workers in France (Schmidt 62).<sup>12</sup> But what does not change is Sand’s commitment to combating all forms of oppression and her belief in their interconnectedness: “We do not even make a special case for the cause of women; we do not separate into different causes the great, the eternal cause of ignorant and poor people” ‘Nous ne faisons même pas un plaidoyer particulier pour la cause des femmes; nous ne séparons pas en causes diverses cette grande, cette éternelle cause des ignorants et des pauvres’; “In France we are some thirty million proletarians, women, children, uneducated or oppressed people of all sorts” ‘nous sommes en France environ trente millions de prolétaires, de femmes, d’enfants, d’ignorants ou d’opprimés de toute sorte’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 190). Retaining the conviction that all forms of oppression result from the despotic forces of imperial and monarchical government, she inevitably has recourse to

the language of slavery. Blaming past monarchs for the gap between the provinces and Paris, which has disenfranchised and impoverished the people, she notes that “Louis XIV reappeared in a more grandiose figure, in Napoleon. Each one said: ‘I am the state; where I am there lies the empire’” “Louis XIV a reparu dans une figure plus grandiose, dans Napoléon. L’un comme l’autre a dit: ‘L’Etat c’est moi; et où je suis, là est l’empire’,” with the tragic result that the rest of France has become “a brutalized and docile slave” ‘une esclave abrutie et obéissante’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 127). Bent on showing that enslavement affects workers too, she refuses either to dismiss or to elevate in importance one form of slavery over the other. Parisian workers, she states, constitute “an unfortunate class, more enslaved by salary than the slaves of the conquests of Antiquity or the serfs under the feudal system ever were” ‘des malheureux, plus esclaves du salaire que ne l’ont jamais été les esclaves de l’antique conquête ou les serfs de la féodalité’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 138).

In literary works from the 1840s about peasants and workers, Sand seems to hint at the nexus of slave, woman, and Napoleonic despotism observed in a work like Indiana, albeit in subtle forms that are probably imperceptible to most readers. Writing at the time for a popular rather than an elite, bourgeois audience (Schor 112-13), Sand perhaps aimed to sensitize workers subliminally to the ties binding their condition to that of slaves.<sup>13</sup> François le champi provides a representative example of a linking between slaves and peasants. Not only does that novel include a despotic land owner reminiscent of Delmare and an enslaved wife who recalls Indiana. Their name, Blanchet, also suggests a linkage between the master class and the white race. It is also worth noting that the condition of the eponymous protagonist, François, doubles that of the slave: impoverishment; the hard labor in the “champs,” as his name suggests, that field slaves performed; painful separation from the mother; lack of education, religious instruction, or rights

of any sort. On several occasions in the story François's fate is in fact determined, as was that of slaves, by exchanges of money: his foster mother Isabelle Bigot takes him in for money; Blanchet's mother offers money to get rid of him; his wife, Madeleine Blanchet, pays to keep François near her; and finally his biological mother appears at the end of the novel to set him free through a kind of dowry that resembles the self-purchase that abolitionists advocated for slaves in the 1840s.<sup>14</sup> There is also the fact that Mme Blanchet, François's kindly mistress and fellow sufferer, provides him with the instruction that humanitarian women were known to have provided to slaves in the colonies. The name of François's adoptive mother Zabelle is even resonant of slave names, often marked as exotic by the letters "X" and "Z."

Revealing additional features of François le champi emerge when it is viewed intratextually in relation to Sand's 1841 short story "Mouny-Robin." In that story, Sand also has recourse to the name Blanchet, in this case for the prosperous mill at which Mouny-Robin works as the miller. And she similarly depicts Mouny-Robin's wife, like Mme Blanchet in François le champi, in terms of whiteness: "She was as small, delicate, and white as the narcissus of her field" 'Elle était petite, fluette, et blanche comme les narcisses de son pré' (Sand, "Mouny-Robin" 275). Curious innuendos of non-whiteness mark Mme Mouny's male partner. One is reminded that François's white skin was combined with "curly hair that was kind of dark at the roots" 'des cheveux frisés qui étaient comme brunets à la racine' (Sand, François le champi 96) when reading that Mme Mouny "preferred over her husband a hearty, black, rough miller boy with kinky hair" 'préférait à son époux un gros garçon de moulin, noir, rauque et crépu,' a choice which remarkably provokes no jealousy on her husband's part since "he had no natural prejudices about conjugal honor" 'il n'avait aucun préjugé sauvage sur l'honneur conjugal' (Sand, "Mouny-Robin" 276). In this case, overtones of race ("black" 'noir,' "kinky" 'crépu,' "prejudice" 'préjugé') are audible. Since, as

critics have long noted, conjugal or sexual unions function for Sand as symbolic figures of class conciliation (Schor 87), it seems plausible that Sand would extend combinations of gender and class to include race. The couplings of François and Mme Blanchet, and more obviously Mme Mouny and the miller boy, thus raise the issue of miscegenation, hinted at but rejected in Indiana when Noun, pregnant with Raymon's child, chooses to end her life by drowning, thereby meeting the same death as Ophelia, the victimized dog symbolizing slaves in that novel. No such clearcut rejection occurs in "Mouny-Robin," unlike François le champi, in which all threats to societal standards disappear when François's real mother appears on the scene: François's condition no longer doubles that of the slaves, and thus the threat of miscegenation is dispelled, as are the related dangers of incest and class disparity.

Although works from the 1840s thus hint at the impossibility of separating the oppression that affects women, workers, and slaves, they fall short of any actual endorsement of plans for the immediate emancipation of blacks, plans that grew in urgency and support among liberal thinkers and abolitionists over the years preceding the revolution of 1848. Why did Sand hold back? Her response to the abolitionist agenda of emancipation at this point in time appears to parallel her attitude toward the feminist agenda of suffrage for women. As with women so too with slaves, Sand refused to jump on the liberationist bandwagon, judging precipitous and unproductive efforts to seek political rights for uneducated oppressed people. As long as oppression continued in its socially sanctioned forms, she claimed, no true liberation would be possible for oppressed groups: "Women protest against slavery; they should wait until men become free, for slavery cannot grant freedom" 'Les femmes crient à l'esclavage; qu'elles attendent que l'homme soit libre, car l'esclavage ne peut pas donner la liberté' (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 40). For Schoelcher and Lamartine, the end to slavery meant full participation by blacks as citizens of the

French Republic. For Sand this was just talk, typical of politicians, who “are not concerned enough with the moral and intellectual state of the masses they want to emancipate; their goal is to lead them to action rather than enlighten them” ‘ne se préoccupent pas assez de l’état moral et intellectuel de ces masses qu’ils veulent affranchir; ils songent à les faire agir plutôt qu’à les éclairer’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 166). Such criticism undoubtedly explains why Sand rarely mentions Schoelcher in her extensive writings about the events of 1848; and, when she does, her words of praise sound decidedly halfhearted. Learning that he had entered the fray in 1848 and had been wounded and arrested, Sand confined herself to observing: “He’s a worthy man, Schoelcher, not very *advanced*, but firm and loyal to his point of view” ‘C’est un digne homme ce Schoelcher, pas très *avancé*, mais ferme et loyal à son point de vue’ (Sand, Souvenirs et idées 87).

### III

The list of factors adduced thus far to explain Sand’s muted statements about slavery in the period prior to 1848—the political climate, the emphasis on the working classes, a reluctance to endorse political causes directly, reservations about granting rights to the uneducated—needs to be expanded for the period of the Second Empire. That the subject of slavery continues to haunt Sand’s writing at a time when slavery per se had ceased to exist in the French colonies may seem surprising at first glance. But I would argue that, thematically and ideologically consistent to the end, Sand continued to have recourse to the tripartite structure of race, class, and gender that marks her writings from the 1830s and 1840s as she confronted the new and different forms of oppression and injustice in French society under Napoleon III.

One new condition that undoubtedly affected Sand was the fact that the Second Empire “prohibited touching directly or indirectly on anything that could seem like politics or social issues” ‘interdisa[it] de toucher de près ou de loin à tout ce qui pouvait ressembler à de la politique ou à des études sociales’ but favored the publication of foreign books, especially moral ones (Lucas 239). This perhaps explains why in December 1852 Sand published an article in Presse that promoted Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin and contributed to its success in France. Why did Sand choose to extoll this work and its overtly abolitionist views? One can postulate that Stowe’s novel presented an opportunity for Sand to express political sentiments generally and views about injustice toward blacks specifically that would have otherwise been prohibited under the despotic imperial regime. Consider for example her explicit evocation of the principle of freedom in describing the reunion of the runaway slave family in Uncle Tom’s Cabin: “What a beautiful page it is, how heart-rending, what a triumphant protest in favor of man’s eternal and inalienable right to freedom on earth” ‘Quelle belle page que celle-là, quelle large palpitation, quelle protestation triomphante du droit éternel et inaliénable de l’homme sur la terre: la liberté!’ (Sand, Autour de la table, 327). At a time when bourgeois readers and writers were drawn to the popular doctrine of l’art pour l’art, which Sand characterized as pedantic and hollow (Sand, Questions 23), she seems to have seen in Uncle Tom’s Cabin an occasion to remind French intellectuals of the importance of literature as a means to keep a humanitarian and republican agenda alive during repressive political times. She even goes so far as to state that turning away from socially responsible literature such as Stowe’s constitutes an intellectual enslavement analogous to the actual enslavement of blacks and the political oppression under despotic governments: “It is regrettable that so many people are condemned to never reading it: helots of misery, slaves as a result of ignorance, for whom political laws have so far been powerless to

resolve the double problem of food for the soul and food for the body” ‘On regrette qu’il y ait tant de gens condamnés à ne le lire jamais: ilotes par la misère, esclaves par l’ignorance, pour lesquels les lois politiques ont été impuissantes jusqu’à ce jour à résoudre le double problème du pain de l’âme et du pain du corps’ (Sand, Autour de la table 319).

By endorsing Stowe’s novel, Sand thus positioned herself not only against the dominant paradigm of imperial politics but also against the ruling mode of thinking in literature. The basis of her praise for Stowe was the feminine qualities of Uncle Tom’s Cabin.<sup>15</sup> Asserting the superiority of moral over aesthetic values, heart over mind, and female saints over male writers, she eulogized her American fellow novelist, describing Stowe’s soul as “the most maternal there ever was” ‘la plus maternelle qui fût jamais’ (Autour de la Table 325). Male critics in France, in contrast, complained about the lack of artistic qualities in Stowe’s novel.<sup>16</sup> Gustave Flaubert deemed it too narrow and topical and objected to its sentimental tone, recommending the presumably realist, objective narrative technique of showing rather than the more subjective technique of reflecting upon slavery. In many ways, however, Flaubert’s aesthetics were inimical to women as writers and readers. As Sand and Stowe both understood, women’s writing entails among other things speaking out in their own voices as advocates of oppressed groups. Significantly, African American and other women writers responded to Uncle Tom’s Cabin in favorable ways: for example, the leading ante-bellum African American poet and abolitionist Frances Harper wrote three poems of praise for the author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin and her work: “To Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe,” “Eliza Harris,” and “Eva’s Farewell.”<sup>17</sup> For Harper and Stowe, like Sand, the reflections upon slavery that Flaubert decried were a necessary form of social activism in behalf of blacks and the oppressed.

More than a decade separates Sand's remarks on Harriet Beecher Stowe from a number of later works in which the topic of slavery resurfaces in either direct or indirect form: notably her 1865 novel Monsieur Sylvestre and the curious science-fiction story Laura published in 1864.<sup>18</sup> Sand's allusions to slavery in these works written in the mid 1860s, a time of increased liberalization under the Second Empire, appear to be fueled by the spread of economic exploitation and racial domination throughout the expanding French colonial empire. Most notably, "She fears the reign of money, the proprietary obsession, the play of capital investment" 'Elle redoute le règne de l'argent, l'obsession propriétaire, le jeu des capitaux' (Perrot, Barbès 14). As she makes clear in her correspondence and literary works of the 1860s, Sand associates the ascendancy of these tendencies with the power exercised by the English, the Americans<sup>19</sup>, and Jews<sup>20</sup>: cultures possessing strongly marked, acquisitive characteristics, which she, like other nineteenth-century writers at the time, refers to as "races." Regarding the English, Sand states, "I don't hate the people but English society. I hate its present action in the world; I find it unjust, iniquitous, demoralizing, perfidious, and brutal" 'Je ne hais point ce peuple, mais cette société anglaise. Je hais son action présente sur le monde, je la trouve injuste, inique, démoralisatrice, perfide et brutale' (Perrot, Barbès 14). And in a similar vein, Mlle Vallier states in Monsieur Sylvestre, "To begin with, I don't like Jews. Don't assume that I have old-fashioned prejudices. I don't like the English either" 'D'abord, je n'aime pas les juifs. N'allez pas croire que j'ai d'antiques préjugés. Je n'aime pas les Anglais non plus' (. . .). In response to objections that Edouard Rogrigues, a Jewish follower of Saint-Simon, voiced about these words in Monsieur Sylvestre, Sand replied "I don't know if Mlle Vallier is wrong or right to not like Jews. Personally I neither like nor hate them; I like you, that's all I know" 'Je ne sais pas si Mlle Vallier a tort ou

raison de ne pas aimer les juifs. Moi je ne les aime ni ne les hais, je vous aime, voilà tout ce que je sais' (Correspondance XIX 308).

Taking aim at these targets of materialism, colonial domination, and injustice, Sand taps into a network of allusions to her own and other works that highlight the imbricated pattern of slavery's relation to issues of gender and class. Consider the situation presented in Monsieur Sylvestre. A principled young man, Pierre Sorède, loves a young woman, Aldine, both of whom have run away from families tainted by connections with the slave trade. Both have been befriended by a benevolent father figure, Monsieur Sylvestre, who deplores the immorality and greed of Second Empire society, bemoaning the fact that "France seems to love dictators" 'la France semble aimer les dictateurs' (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 85). Aldine's real father, Aubry, is guilty of all the sins that Sylvestre, who seems to function as Sand's spokesperson, would heap on modern Second Empire society: in addition to greediness, materialism, and immorality, Aubry manifests the desire for colonial expansion and oppression of the downtrodden, including his own daughter. "He was a big fellow of the most vulgar sort, although his complexion tanned by the tropical sun and the way he wore his shirt, the style of his sideburns, and his hair seemed to be intended to make him look like a naval officer" 'C'était un grand diable du type le plus vulgaire, bien que son teint bronzé par le soleil des tropiques et l'arrangement de sa chemise, de ses favoris et de sa chevelure eussent l'intention de lui donner l'aspect d'un officier de marine' (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 52). Aubry recalls the Napoleonic despot Monsieur Delmare in Indiana. But just as Marx presented Napoleon III as a farcical imitation of Napoleon, so too Aubry represents a debased version of Delmare, whose military aura was at least earned in battle. Like his intratextual model, Aubry mistreats all creatures around him. At least in directing his rage at his dog Ophelia, Delmare distinguished between physically abusing his dog and his wife, whereas

Aubry makes no such distinction between the human and animal domains: “He summoned his blacks, talking to them like dogs, in order to show us how well bred they were” “Il appela ses noirs, en leur parlant comme à des chiens, pour nous montrer comme ils étaient de belle race” (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 52).<sup>21</sup> And although a slave master at heart, Delmare would undoubtedly have been above shamelessly identifying himself as an actual slave trader, as does Aubry: “You think . . . I was involved in the slave trade: Well, why not? I’ve done a bit of everything . . . and there’s nothing illegitimate about buying from tribes that sell their children, their servants and their wives. As long as you pay, they’re happy, and I’ve always paid well” ‘Vous croyez . . . que j’ai fait la traite? Eh bien, pourquoi pas? J’ai fait de tout . . . et cela n’a rien d’illégitime quand on achète à des peuplades qui vendent leurs enfants, leurs serviteurs et leurs femmes. Pourvu qu’on paye, ils sont contents, et j’ai toujours bien payé’ (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 53). To contrast the morally exemplary Sylvestre and Pierre with the depraved Aubry, Sand has recourse to small but telling semiotic signs: Sylvestre cherishes his dog Farfadet and emphasizes that “he had a soul too” ‘il avait aussi une âme’ (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 113); Pierre refuses to bear the aristocratic name to which he is entitled to lay claim but which has been sullied by his slave trading uncle: that name, de Pontgrenet, anagrammatically points to the immoral selling of the “negro” ‘nègre.’

Along with intratextual references to Indiana, intertextual references reaching back to the negrophile literature of the 1820s can be detected in Monsieur Sylvestre. Sand draws upon a plot from that literature—Sophie Doin’s “Le Négrier” is an example<sup>22</sup>—in which high-minded daughters of slave owning fathers save the men they love from the stain of association with the loathsome career of the slave trade. Monsieur Sylvestre also recalls Ourika, in which the young African girl serves her benefactress, Mme B, as a pet, a common practice in eighteenth-century

France. Sand transforms this tale by infusing it with her own liberatory, egalitarian values, as she similarly rewrote Hugo's Bug Jargal. In Sand's version, both the benefactress, Aldine, and the black girl, Zoé, endured Aubry's oppression and sadistically abusive behavior. Taking advantage of Aldine's affection for Zoé, Aubry tells her: "whenever you even try to disobey, I'll have Zoé's father beat her before your very eyes" "toutes les fois que vous essayerez seulement de désobéir, je ferai battre sous vos yeux Zoé par son père" (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 126). After the deaths of both of their fathers, Aldine chooses to devote herself to nursing Zoé, gravely ill, back to health, a choice which reflects both her affection for the young black girl and her guilt for her father's sins. She thereby embodies many of the saintly, humanitarian, and maternal qualities that Stowe celebrated in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Treating her patient more like a sister than a pet, Aldine helps to develop a proud and defiant black woman, who herself articulates a refusal to play the role of the aristocratic pet that Aldine's wealthy Jewish suitor, Gideon, imagines for her: "She added that, for her part, if she didn't join us in the salon, it was because she was black, born a slave, and thus below a white servant" "Elle a ajouté que, quant à elle, si elle ne venait pas au salon, c'est parce qu'elle était noire, née esclave, par conséquent moins qu'une domestique blanche" (Sand, Monsieur Sylvestre 256). Significantly the narratee of Monsieur Sylvestre, Pierre's devoted friend Philippe, is a doctor, a role that recalls the frame narrator of Ourika, whose treatment of his African patient fails. In contrast, Philippe is successful in curing Zoé. Sand's happy ending to Ourika results not only from the superior medical treatment Zoé receives but more importantly perhaps to the relationship of true equality that two women, white and black, create.

My last example, Laura, is the story of a mineralogist, Alexis Hartz, in love with the eponymous heroine, Laura. This story recounts a series of hallucinations in which Alexis hears

Laura's voice beckoning him to enter the enchanted crystalline world within a geode.<sup>23</sup> Brought back to reality and nursed back to health, Alexis again falls victim to a series of hallucinations under the hypnotic influence of the demoniacal Nasias, posing as Laura's father, who leads him on a voyage of discovery to lay claim to the riches beneath the earth's crust. Eventually freed by Laura from Nasias's domination, Alexis returns to normalcy, Laura's love, and a simple life as a shopkeeper and naturalist.

Nasias's explanation of how he became rich clearly points to the themes of slavery and colonialist expansion and exploitation. Urging Alexis to follow his example, he explains how he sold fake jewelry to "the naïve populations of the Orient" 'les naïves populations de l'Orient,' "women and half-savage warriors" 'des femmes et des guerriers demi-sauvages,' in exchange for precious gems. Nasias justifies his colonialist activities in words that echo those of Aubry the slave trader, "Commerce is commerce" 'Le commerce est le commerce' (Sand, Laura 98-99). Once the voyage to the center of the earth begins, Nasias reveals his nature as a true despot. In a scene reminiscent of the slave ship gone astray in Mérimée's Tamango, Nasias's vessel destined for the North Pole becomes a scene of drunkenness and "savage outcries" 'clameurs sauvages' (Sand, Laura 106), culminating in the death of all the sailors on board, for which he bears responsibility. Later, his Eskimo guides meet a similar death. When Alexis questions him about "the future colonists of this island" 'les futurs colons de cette île,' Nasias objects that he wants it all to himself: "no one but my slaves will develop it, and, if I need a lot of them, I'll find a lot" 'nul ne l'exploitera que mes esclaves, et, s'il m'en faut beaucoup, j'en trouverai beaucoup' (Sand, Laura 137-38).

To conclude, slavery mattered to George Sand. Although how and why it mattered varied, her work over four decades is marked by a remarkably consistent pattern of indirect allusions to the enslavement of black people. Why have Sand scholars failed to acknowledge this pattern? Why has she been left out of discussions of French responses to slavery in the nineteenth century? The obvious answers are that she never engaged in overt or developed treatments of the subject and never played a direct political role in abolitionist movements or activities. But direct intervention is not the only way of exerting influence, and Sand unquestionably wielded great literary and moral authority in her time. Part of that authority can be attributed to her ability to transcend the vagaries of politics and to remain faithful to the fundamental social values of justice, equality, and freedom. Thus although she consistently opposed Napoleonic figures and imperial politics, she did so because of their demonstrated tendencies toward despotism and oppression. Although generally speaking she shared Schoelcher's view that "monarchy and empire mean slavery; the republic means liberation" 'monarchie et empire veulent dire esclavage; république veut dire libération' (Schmidt 220), she ultimately put the fate of enslaved and colonized people above the republic. Her scepticism about the second republic's achievement in 1848 of freeing the slaves in the French colonies was ultimately not wholly unjustified. Even before the end of the second republic colonists blocked all forms of social improvement linked to emancipation, and among the seventeen clauses of the 1848 decree only abolition itself remained. The view that slavery never really ended, economically or socially, is indeed a leitmotif in contemporary Francophone literature.<sup>24</sup> Françoise Vergès indeed argues that abolitionists in 1848 actually paved the way for the future inequality of blacks in the French colonies by conceiving emancipation as a gift and debt toward the mother country, by underestimating real slave resistance and thus stereotyping

slave behavior as either childish or brutish, by envisioning the future of emancipated slaves only as salaried workers participating in a colonial project, and by promoting a model of assimilation that was sentimental rather than conflictual (14-15, 34, 92).

Sand similarly put the social above the political with respect to the French colonization of Africa. Putting the republic first, Schoelcher dreamed of seeing the expansion of French republican values throughout the world, provided that there was no violence against conquered peoples. And speaking in 1879 to commemorate the abolition of slavery in 1848, Hugo stated, “This wild Africa has only two sides: inhabited, it’s barbaric; deserted, it’s savagery . . . Go forward, People! Take over this land” ‘Cette Afrique farouche n’a que deux aspects: peuplée, c’est la barbarie; déserte, c’est la sauvagerie . . . Allez, Peuples! Emparez-vous de cette terre’ (Arzillier 208). I don’t believe that Sand would have ever shown such disregard for the lives of colonized peoples. For her the republic was the means, not the goal. And although there was virtually no formal opposition in France to the colonization of Africa before 1880, the reservations about colonialist expansion that Sand expressed in works from the 1860s such as those examined here stand as testimony to the coherent moral vision that marks her literary production as a whole. That vision, which extends from her opposition to slavery to her scruples about colonialism, deserves the kind of serious consideration that Schoelcher and Hugo have received but that regrettably, Sand, like many other women writers, has been denied.

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1. Recent works that shed light on the period of the emancipation of slavery in the French colonies include Jennings's detailed study of the legislative activities leading up to the 1848 decree; historical studies focused on Schoelcher and other leading abolitionist figures and activities such as the works by Chauleau and Schmidt; and works that provide the perspective of the former French colonies produced in connection with celebrations of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of slavery, notably the works of Bangou and Pago.
  2. Goldstein provides a thorough discussion of censorship under Louis Napoleon in Chapter three of Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France.
  3. Among the international figures of Sand's time who paid tribute to her work on social injustice in modern society, Moers names Whitman, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Marx, Arnold, and Ruskin (30-32).
  4. For a thorough review of the critical literature on gender see Massardier-Kenney 1-14. For an illuminating study of class issues, see Hecquet's analysis of Sand's socialist novels.
  5. For the literary context of the abolitionist writing of the 1820s, see Hoffmann's seminal Le Nègre romantique as well as the introduction to Doin's La Famille noire. Doin's praise for Charles X in that novel is characteristic: "Honor to the Christian king who has just solemnly recognized your independence, Haiti! Your immortal name will live on for centuries . . . May its

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protective hand be similarly extended to blacks who are still suffering!” ‘Honneur au roi chrétien qui vient solennellement de reconnaître ton indépendance, Haïti! avec ton nom immortel, son nom traversera les siècles . . . Puisse sa main protectrice s’étendre également sur les nègres qui souffrent encore!’ (68)

6. See Kadish and Massardier-Kenney, Translating Slavery, for English translations, original French texts, and literary analyses of the works of Gouges, Staël, and Duras.

7. The distinction between marriage as metaphorical slavery and the real bondage of African women is called into question by Colette Guillaumin’s notion of “sexage,” a word which is based on the model of “esclavage” (slavery) and “servage” (serfdom). Sexage for Guillaumin represents the appropriation of one’s body and labor; it is subjection, material servitude, and oppression embodied in the class of women (176-207). For the purposes of this essay, however, the distinction between real and metaphorical slavery needs to be preserved in order to bring to light Sand’s treatment of the subject of black slavery.

8. The recent translation of the novel by Sylvia Raphaël fails to capture the political meaning of “une vieille bravoure en demi-solde,” translating it as “a retired army officer” (15). In early nineteenth-century literature, “demi-solde” has the specific meaning of soldiers from the Napoleonic imperial army who received pensions during the Restoration.

9. “When Marx first arrived in Paris in 1843 he had been advised by his colleague Arnold Ruge to look up George Sand and Flora Tristan; for the French women, Ruge said, were on the whole more radical than the men” (Moers 31).

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10. Sand made similar statements of hybrid identity about herself on a number of occasions: for example, “I’m the daughter of a patrician father and a bohemian mother [...] I’ll be on the side of the slave and the bohemian, and not that of kings and their followers” ‘Je suis la fille d’un patricien et d’une bohémienne [...] Je serai avec l’esclave et avec la bohémienne, et non avec les rois et leurs suppôts’ (Perrot, Politique et polémiques 12). She also presented herself on one occasion, when sunburnt, as looking like a mulatto woman (Sand, Correspondence II, 38).
11. It would be possible to similarly interpret the figure of Quintilia Cavalcanti in Sand’s Le Secrétaire intime as an alternative feminine authority figure. Although she is described as “imperial,” she is also presented as benevolent and devoted to the welfare of the people (29). She also voices anti-Napoleonic sentiments (36).
12. For the contrasting views of Tristan and Sand regarding French workers, see Rebérioux.
13. Closely associated with socialist Pierre Leroux at this time, Sand published several newspaper articles on “proletarian literature”; and she was actively involved in associations that aimed to produce and promote workers’ literature. These activities reflected her conviction that education and self-expression were valuable weapons in the struggle against oppression.
14. An insightful analysis of the role of money in François le champi was provided by Mary Jane Cowles in her paper “The Economy of Desire in François le champi” delivered at the conference “George Sand and the Literary Empires” sponsored by the George Sand Association in 2002.
15. See Kadish, “Gendered Readings of Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

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16. Chapter three of Lucas's La Littérature anti-esclavagiste provides a thorough discussion of critical responses to Stowe's novel in France.
17. Twentieth century African American writers and critics who have expressed negative responses to Uncle Tom's Cabin include Baldwin, Reed, Spillers, and Davis. For the widespread rejection by Southern women of both Stowe's novel and George Sand see Fox-Genovese (357-63, 368).
18. In another work from this period, Tamaris (1862), Sand focuses on a woman of mixed race, "a sort of slave brought by a Turk or a Persian to Marseille" "une sorte d'esclave amenée par un Turc ou un Persan à Marseille" (44). Like Myrza, she's presented as "this hybrid creature, half bourgeois and half savage" "cette créature hybride, demi-bourgeoise et demi-sauvage" (56).
19. In a letter Sand wrote in 1836 to Gustave de Beaumont, the author of Marie ou l'esclavage aux Etats-Unis, she targets the United States as the locus of "odious prejudice" "ces odieux préjugés" (Sand, Correspondance III 438). Here, as in her review of Uncle Tom's Cabin, she seems to deploy the undoubtedly unconscious strategy of displacement by stigmatizing the United States for a problem that existed equally in the French empire. On the other hand, however, Sand presumably had great admiration for the leading figures of American history, speaking in a letter to Saint-Beuve of considering Benjamin Franklin her hero until the age of 25 (Sand, Correspondance II 861). Her negative statements about the United States later in life were based largely on the negative impressions formed by her son Maurice during his trip to the United States in 1862.

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20. Charges of anti-Semitism against Sand are considered in Jugrau's analysis of her correspondance and in Philippe Régnier's forthcoming essay "La Raciologie de George Sand: éléments d'analyse idéologique." Régnier contextualizes Sand's statements about Jews in relation to the views about race, class, and Judaic religion among social thinkers of her time, observing that to some extent her anti-Semitic comments reflected an aristocratic point of view in which Jews incarnate the essence of the bourgeoisie. However, as Taquieff helps to explain in The Force of Prejudice, antisemitism played a foundational role in the invention of racial difference in France; and thus, although Sand can be situated firmly in opposition to slavery, she nonetheless contributed to an intertext that involved the institutionalization of race as we now understand it.

21. "Race" in French means "race" as well as "breed."

22. "Le Négrier" is included in Doin, La Famille noire, along with two other short stories treating slavery: "Blanche et noir" and "Noire et blanc."

23. The fantastic element appears throughout Sand's writing, influenced in part by Hoffman's tales, for which she had a great admiration. One can also speculate that she was influenced by the case of Gérard de Nerval, whose hallucinations ended in his suicide in 1855. His hallucinatory visions appear in his celebrated novel Aurélia.

24. Among the many authors who make this point one can mention Simone Schwarz-Bart in Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle, Patrick Chamoiseau in Texaco, and Daniel Maximin in Isolé soleil.