

GENDERED READINGS OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN:

THE EXAMPLE OF SAND AND FLAUBERT

The virtually unprecedented popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) in the United States and England was no less marked in France, as evidenced among other things by the commercial success of the eleven French translations that were produced within the period of ten months after its original publication. This and other indications of the significance of Stowe's novel for the mid-nineteenth-century French reading public have been extensively documented, most notably in Edith Lucas's illuminating *La Littérature anti-esclavagiste au dix-neuvième siècle*. Literary historians have failed to make sufficiently explicit, however, the crucial role of gender in readers' responses to Stowe's novel and other similar writings by women of the time. Notable examples of contrasting feminine and masculine readings of Stowe's novel in nineteenth-century France are George Sand's exuberantly positive response and Gustave Flaubert's dismissively negative reaction. (1) As a woman writer and reader, Sand responded positively to a work that belonged to a current of sentimental, socially-oriented, moral and religious literature which was produced largely by and for women and which in the hands of male authors such as Eugène Sue often seem to glorify "non seulement les infortunés de la terre mais aussi leurs vices" (Lucas 111). In contrast with Sand's appreciation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Flaubert dismissed that work by applying the apparently gender neutral universalist aesthetic of "art for art's sake," a criterion of writing that was produced largely by (if not also for) men. In rejecting such features of Stowe's work as its sentimentalism, I would urge, Flaubert was in fact doing more than just attacking an aesthetic theory. He was also responding to literature in a predictably gendered way. After examining Sand's and Flaubert's remarks about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I shall attempt to support my contention that gender plays a role in readers' responses to that novel by adducing other examples of male and female writers who echo the opposing positions that Sand and Flaubert adopted at the time of that novel's publication in France. As I shall observe in closing, even today's most illuminating attempts by Francophone theorists to address the questions of slavery and race that are at the heart of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* echo certain of Sand's and Flaubert's aesthetic and ideological attitudes. Those echoes suggest that there is still much to be learned by ferreting out the gender issues that have arisen in the debate about Stowe's novel.

Literary history undoubtedly contains few more striking examples than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of a major work that has been identified with women and that has continued to interest and inspire women critics and readers. Abraham Lincoln's celebrated remark on meeting Stowe--"So this is the little woman who made this big war"--draws attention to the feminine stamp that from her lifetime to the present time has marked her writing. Emphasizing Stowe's feminine status, John Lemoine wrote in November of 1852 in the *Journal des débats* that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "le coup le plus profond peut-être qui ait jamais été porté à cette institution impie: l'esclavage; et ce coup a été porté par la main d'une femme." (2) Other accounts similarly show that at the time of its publication critics and general readers worldwide perceived the book as having special relevance or appeal to women:

Women responded to Mrs. Stowe from all over the world--George Sand from France, Jenny Lind and Frederika Bremer from Sweden, Anna Leonowens on behalf of a Siamese court lady, impelled to free all her slaves. Queen Victoria's friend, the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Byron, Mrs. Browning and a half million other women in Europe and the British Isles filled twenty-six folio volumes with their greetings and signatures--and protests against slavery--and forwarded this Affectionate and Christian Address to Mrs. Stowe (Papishvily 74).

It is significant that Sand, a prominent humanitarian voice, not only chose to promote Uncle Tom's Cabin in her article about the novel that appeared in *Presse* in December 1852, thereby contributing to its success in France, but also that she did so by emphasizing its feminine qualities. She stated that mothers, young people, children, and servants could read and understand a novel that she designated as "essentiellement domestique et familial." She went on to observe that even "les hommes supérieurs" would be touched by Stowe's descriptive and sentimental talents (Table 322). 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 "la plus maternelle qui fût jamais" (Table 325). Significantly, it is precisely the strong maternal features of Uncle Tom's Cabin that have served as a basis of the most convincing recent arguments for a feminist reading of Stowe's novel, arguments that develop Sand's early recognition of the significance of Stowe's maternal ethics. Characterizing Stowe's work as a rewriting of the story of crucifixion, Jane Tompkins identifies the mother as the figure of sacrifice and the home as the kingdom of heaven on earth in which women exercise ultimate control and set a revolutionary, communitarian model of a society that relies on cooperation and harmony rather than competition and exploitation. Tompkins observes that the "new matriarchy . . . constitutes the most politically subversive dimension of Stowe's novel, more disruptive and far-reaching in its potential consequences than [sic] even the starting of a war or the freeing of slaves" (Tompkins 96). (3)

In addition to the issue of the maternal character of Stowe's novel, Sand raised the thorny issue of its aesthetic value. What most critics of the time deemed to be the defects of Uncle Tom's Cabin--its marked, some might say excessive, sentimentality coupled with its unpolished style and lack of aesthetic subtlety--presumably did not offend Stowe's feminine reading public; nor did it concern Sand. (4) She admitted that Stowe's novel was "mal fait suivant les règles du roman moderne en France" (Table 322). Writing to Emile de Girardin on December 9, 1852 to express her interest in writing about *l'Oncle Tom*, she stated: "Il me semble que je serais compétente pour parler de cette brave femme qui m'ennuie et qui me fait pleurer en même temps, avec sa Bible, ses nègres et ses moutards. Ce n'est pas une femme d'esprit, mais c'est une sainte, et je suis assez bête encore, malgré mon presque demi-siècle de déceptions, pour me passionner pour les saints" (Correspondance 496-497). Implicit in these statements is the view that the moral and sentimental force of Uncle Tom's Cabin made its literary defects insignificant:

Si le meilleur éloge qu'on puisse faire de l'auteur, c'est de l'aimer; le plus vrai qu'on puisse faire du livre, c'est d'en aimer les défauts. Il ne faut pas les passer sous silence, il ne faut pas en éluder la discussion, et il ne faut pas vous en inquiéter, vous qu'on raille de pleurer naïvement sur le sort des victimes au récit des événements simples et vrais (Table 320).

Urging a principle of diversity in forming aesthetic judgments, Sand states that Stowe's sentimental genius should not be compared to that of "un homme de lettres" nor should her style be judged according to rigid standards of literary talent (Table 322-323). It is not a matter for Sand of Stowe's qualities outweighing her defects; rather, Sand calls into question narrow, universalist definitions of what constitutes defects for a writer such as Stowe:

Ces défauts-là n'existent que relativement à des conventions d'art qui n'ont jamais été, qui ne seront jamais absolues. Si les juges, épris de ce que l'on appelle la facture, trouvent des longueurs, des redites, de l'inhabilité dans ce livre, regardez bien, pour vous rassurez sur votre propre jugement, si leurs yeux sont parfaitement secs quand vous leur en lirez un chapitre pris au hasard (Table 320).

Although Sand does not address the issue of gender directly, her comments about Stowe lay the groundwork for the kind of reading appropriate to women authors: a reading that respects differences, that is aware that artistic conventions vary, and that recognizes that women's writing does not always follow the same conventions as men's. Naomi Schor calls attention to the important difference between on the one hand equality feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir, who "revindicated equal rights for women and unmasked femininity as a male construct," and on the other hand difference feminists such as George Sand and Luce Irigaray, "who, while sharing the same aspirations to education and economic independence as equality feminists subscribe to the notion of an inalienable female difference" ("French Feminism" 6). Sand takes the position that there exist different values for women and for women writers and readers, a position that separates her from a writer such as Beauvoir, whom Schor rightly criticizes for her unwillingness or inability to question patriarchal aesthetic systems of values and their "privileging of the universal as a marker of artistic significance" (7).

I recognize, of course, as did Sand, that men's writing has varied in all literary periods and that there is no absolute, clear-cut difference between works by male and female authors. A case in point is Walter Scott, whom Sand compares at one point to Stowe (Table 322) and whose works, like Sand's and Stowe's, were typically considered appropriate for children because of their sentimental and moral effect. The kind of sentimental, humanitarian literature that Stowe produced has, however, been more often associated with women and more often devalued than the corresponding literary production by men. As Laura Donaldson observes about Stowe's novel: "Ridiculed by critics for its 'feminine' sentimentality and excluded from the canon of 'great' American works, Uncle Tom exemplifies perhaps more than any other text the agenda of the (predominantly male) literary establishment" (39-40).

Sand's appreciation of Uncle Tom's Cabin is not surprising. Although in her novels such as *Indiana* Sand only treated issues of race indirectly and exhibited conflicted attitudes toward race and the problems of slavery (5), Sand shared many of the American writer's religious and humanitarian values, especially during the democratic, evangelical phase of Sand's career around 1848. For example, she expresses the same kind of sentimental, socially-oriented values characteristic of Stowe's writing when she states, "Mes instincts avaient toujours été révolutionnaires, en ce sens que l'injustice était un spectacle antipathique pour ma nature, et qu'un immense besoin d'équité chrétienne avait rempli ma vie dès mon plus jeune âge" (Questions 23). Nothing could be farther from her concept of literature than the theory of "l'art

pour l'art," which she characterizes as pedantic, absurd, hollow, and false (Questions 23). Despite the political disillusionment that marked the years following 1851, a consistent social orientation and a rejection of purely aesthetic values are apparent in the letters that she and Flaubert exchanged from 1866 to 1876 near the end of her life. Writing to him in 1866, she objects strongly when he states, "j'éprouve une répulsion invincible à mettre sur le papier quelque chose de mon coeur," responding that it is impossible to separate the heart and the mind and adding, "ne pas se donner tout entier dans son oeuvre, me paraît aussi impossible que de pleurer avec autre chose que ses yeux et de penser avec autre chose que son cerveau" (Correspondance Flaubert-Sand 107). In 1866 she wrote *Monsieur Sylvestre*, which dwells on the themes of freedom and slavery in relation to a broad range of economic, moral, and intellectual issues. That novel depicts the racism and inhumanity of a slave owner, M. Célestin Aubry, in descriptions such as the following: "Il appela ses noirs, en leur parlant comme à des chiens" and "il en prit un par l'oreille et la lui tira jusqu'au sang, en nous faisant remarquer que ce malheureux ne cessait pas de rire pour lui faire croire qu'il ne sentait rien" (*Monsieur Sylvestre* 52). Aubry's daughter Aldine, who devotes herself to the former slave Zoé to compensate for the wrongs committed by her father, embodies many of the saintly, humanitarian, and maternal qualities that Stowe celebrated in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

In sharp contrast to Sand, Flaubert reacted negatively to Stowe's novel, as did other male critics at the time of its publication. The most notable male critics who wrote about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and indeed the only ones who did more than talk about its popularity, were Philarète Chasles, Emile Montégut, Paul Mouriez, and Théophile Gautier. (6) Although their responses included praise for the good effect that Stowe's novel was likely to have, and an acknowledgment that her work displayed more depth of feeling than other antislavery or sentimental works at the time, these male critics uniformly complained about the novel's lack of artistic qualities and failed to grasp the positive sentimental, maternal features that Sand emphasized. In contrast, these same French critics greeted male American authors with enthusiasm. Simon Jeune observes that between 1844 and 1852, Montégut and Chasles wrote favorably in *Revue des Deux-Mondes* about the male authors Longfellow, Emerson, Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne, while deploring the triviality of such women writers as Stowe, Wetherell, Cummins, and Sedgwick (Jeune 19).

Flaubert explains the reasons for his negative reaction to Stowe's novel in two letters to Louise Colet dated November 22 and December 9, 1852. In the first, he reveals that even before reading it he was prejudiced against it ("J'ai, je l'avoue, un préjugé défavorable à son endroit") because of its popularity, which he feared meant that the novel addressed only "passions du jour" and "questions du moment" (Correspondance 179). In the second letter, after having read the novel, he restates his earlier objections, claiming that *L'oncle Tom* is too narrow and topical: "Quand il n'y aura plus d'esclaves en Amérique, ce roman ne sera pas plus vrai que toutes les anciennes histoires où l'on représentait invariablement les Mahometans comme des monstres" (Correspondance 203). Misjudging slavery as having only transitory significance and thus as a subject that would hold no more interest for posterity than other tales of horror from the past, Flaubert dismisses Stowe's novel for failing to aspire to "la vérité seule, l'éternel" and "le Beau pur" (Correspondance 203). Unlike the value that Sand places on a diversity of aesthetic judgments, Flaubert's universalist values limit his appreciation of works such as Stowe's that bear the mark of sentimentalism or social commitment. He thereby either dismisses or tolerates only grudgingly much of the women's writing of his time.

In his second letter to Louise Colet, Flaubert also objects to the sentimental tone of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Claiming to be "irrité tout le temps" by Stowe's reflections about slavery, Flaubert recommends the presumably realist, objective narrative technique of showing rather than the more subjective technique of telling: "Est-ce qu'on a besoin de faire des réflexions sur l'esclavage? Montrez-le, voilà tout" (Correspondance 204). But as Schor has convincingly shown, such notions as sentimentalism and realism in the nineteenth century had distinctly gendered connotations. Schor observes that the triumph of the characteristically male aesthetic doctrine of realism went hand and hand with a neglect for and a discrediting of alternative aesthetic modes associated with the feminine--notably sentimentalism and idealism--which contested realism's claims to universality and objectivity (Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* 43). Those were precisely the modes that were adopted by nineteenth-century writers who, like Sand, "placed themselves, however awkwardly, on the side of 'the people,' the 'progressives'" (Schor 86).

This same letter provides Flaubert an occasion to express the view that the novel should cancel out the author and to articulate his well-known aesthetic dictum on the invisibility of the narrator: "l'auteur, dans son oeuvre, doit être comme Dieu dans l'univers, présent partout, et visible nulle part"; the author, he goes on to affirm, should manifest "une impassibilité cachée et infinie" (Correspondance 203-204). I find it somewhat ironic that what literary history remembers in this instance is only Flaubert's general aesthetic pronouncement, not the factors involving gender and race--a woman writer protesting slavery--that were one of the occasions for his remarks and that he failed to see as related to aesthetic issues in any way. It is also ironic that these remarks occur in a letter to a woman, Louise Colet, for in many ways Flaubert's aesthetics are 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. It also entails appealing to the humanitarian and sentimental reactions that have historically characterized female readership. For women writers who choose for social or personal reasons to adopt a utopian, engagé, or confessional mode of writing, Flaubert's "impassibilité cachée et infinie" effectively functions to silence their experiences as women and their voices as women writers.

It would be misleading, on the other hand, to overstate the case against Flaubert. For one thing, it would be wrong to take Flaubert's aesthetic pronouncements about impersonality at face value and to overlook the complex treatment of the personal in his novels. As all readers of those novels know, Flaubert's artistic treatment of gender is nothing if not varied and pluridimensional. For another thing, it would be misleading to fail to acknowledge that certain shifts, although probably not a steady evolution, occurred in his aesthetic views in the years following 1852. Special attention in this regard needs to be given, as Schor has observed in *George Sand and Idealism*, to "Un Coeur simple," a work which Flaubert claims to have written to please Sand and to have intended to "move tender hearts to pity and tears" (Schor 186-187). Whether or not Sand directly influenced Flaubert's writing of "Un Coeur simple" is an interesting question that has provoked varied critical reactions but ultimately remains unresolved. (7) What seems clear, however, is that Flaubert did move toward Sand's and Stowe's sentimental and moral values in "Un Coeur simple" inasmuch as that work displays, if only obliquely, a certain concern with the downtrodden, an affirmation of the value of simple people, and a challenge to the established

order that produces oppression. Aimée Israel-Pelletier attributes the shift that occurs in "Un Coeur simple" at least in part to Flaubert's having been surrounded at the time by writers such as Sand "who believed fervently that literature had an obligation to address social problems and that, moreover, it had the power to influence and change some of these problems . . . [I]n the *Trois contes* Flaubert might have been predisposed to fantasize and dramatize the possibility that fiction and illusion can have an effect on the world" (Israel-Pelletier 3). Calling attention to this possibility that Flaubert envisioned some twenty five years after his response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is helpful for countering the persistent tendency in traditional pedagogical and critical circles of magnifying the importance of Flaubertian notions such as "l'art pour l'art" and the invisibility of the narrator and of failing to place them in their proper, limited historical context.

It is worth turning briefly to a few of the interesting echoes of Sand's and Flaubert's responses to Stowe which can be found among nineteenth and twentieth century writers and which to my mind illustrate the ongoing nature of the debate surrounding the gender implications of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Echoes of Flaubert's views can be found in James Baldwin's well-known article "Everybody's Protest Novel," published in the *Partisan Review* in 1949, in which Baldwin calls into question Stowe's appeal to the emotions of her reading public and states acrimoniously,

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality, much in common with *Little Women*. Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty (Baldwin 28).

Baldwin adopts an arrogant aestheticism, which authorizes him to characterize Stowe's writing here as "very bad" and to complain elsewhere that it does violence to language and makes excessive demands on credibility (31). Baldwin also finds Stowe guilty of having only narrow, topical concerns and failing to aspire to what Flaubert calls "*la vérité seule, l'éternel*": "she was not so much a novelist as an impassioned pamphleteer; her book was not intended to do anything more than prove that slavery was wrong . . . How is it that we are so loathe to make a further journey than that made by Mrs. Stowe, to discover and reveal something a little closer to the truth?"--a truth that Baldwin then defines in universalist terms, using the masculine possessive adjective in a presumably generic, indefinite way, as "a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment" (28). Baldwin also follows his nineteenth-century predecessor in stigmatizing sentimental literature as categorically inferior, thereby upholding a masculine tradition of undervaluing feminine genres and literary conventions. His denigrating dismissal of *Little Women* is especially striking given the impact which that work has had for generations of feminine readers. Baldwin thus ends up substituting gender insensitivity for the covert racism he claims to discover in Stowe. Baldwin fails ultimately to discern the distinguishing qualities that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shares with other antislavery writings by women of the time: emphasis on the sympathetic response between black and white women; on the voice of the other; on the mental, spiritual, or creative strengths of persons of color. He also fails to see the positive qualities of Stowe's religious outlook, characterizing it as regressive and self serving. (8)

African American and other women writers appear to have responded to Uncle Tom's Cabin in more balanced and in some cases actually favorable ways. (9) An early African American example is the leading ante-bellum American poet and abolitionist Frances Harper, the author in 1853 and 1854 of 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." Nothing could be farther from Flaubert's and Baldwin's reactions than Harper's simple and heartfelt comments such as "I thank thee for thy pleading for the helpless of our race" or "For the sisters of our race Thou'st nobly done thy part" (Harper 57). What is especially important to my mind in this tribute to Stowe from her African American contemporary is the value that Harper and Stowe, like Sand, attributed to social activism and sentimental literature. As Frances Smith Foster states, "Harper's literary aesthetics were formed during the first half of the nineteenth century, and her commitment to a literature of purpose and of wide appeal remained constant" (Harper 25). What Sand said about Stowe is also what Foster and other critics emphasize about Harper, that one cannot appreciate her poetry or its popularity in her time if she is judged by the standards of high art, which it was not her intention or goal to produce.

Twentieth-century African American and white women writers continue to take Stowe's novel seriously and to treat it as a touchstone as they respond to the social issues that they share with Stowe, Sand, and their contemporaries. Although I don't know any modern African American women writers who have spoken out directly about Uncle Tom's Cabin, they have addressed its importance in a number of indirect ways: a striking example is Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which Lori Askeland describes in detail as "a conscious parallel to Uncle Tom's Cabin" (Askeland 412). Although Askeland demonstrates the ultimately patriarchal nature of Stowe's work and the important ways in which Morrison forges structures of race and gender that are more appropriate for what we see today as the needs of women and persons of color, it seems clear from her analysis that Morrison's reconfiguration is not a rejection of Stowe of the sort that Baldwin was seen to have pronounced. Rather, it is a tribute to the relevance of Stowe's subject and the ongoing need by women, both white and black, to address that subject as writers and readers of literature. One can also cite in this regard the recent comments by the white novelist Jane Smiley, who contrasts the canonization of *Huckleberry Finn* by male critics such as Lionel Trilling, Leslie Fiedler, and T.S. Eliot with those same critics' dismissal of Uncle Tom's Cabin, which Eliot termed merely "sensationalist propaganda" (Smiley 65). Decrying Huck's moral failure and Twain's unwillingness to face up to slavery in that novel and give it a public voice, as Stowe did, Smiley concludes: "I would rather my children read Uncle Tom's Cabin, even though it is far more vivid in its depiction of cruelty than Huck Finn, and this is because Stowe's novel is clearly and unmistakably a tragedy. No whitewash, no secrets, but evil, suffering, imagination, endurance, and redemption--just like life" (67). Like Sand in 1852, Smiley in 1996 places value on moral and social rather than purely aesthetic values.

It is significant to note in closing that the limitations that mark Flaubert's response to Uncle Tom's Cabin live on in French literary criticism and theory today. I am especially interested in the ways in which a number of the most illuminating recent theoretical approaches to race in a Francophone perspective continue to apply the aesthetic values that either Sand or Flaubert brought to bear on Stowe's novel without recognizing the gender implications of their responses. One such approach is developed by Christopher Miller in *Blank Darkness*. Extending Edward Said's analysis of how European ideas and attitudes have deformed the object that they purport to

study--the Orient in Said's case, Africa in Miller's--, Miller surveys examples of "Africanist discourse," that is, French writings about blacks from as early as the sixteenth and as late as the mid-twentieth century that similarly fail to grasp the attributes of African culture and impose a notion of blankness and absence: "the common denominator of French texts about Africa from Alphonse de Saintongeais (1559), through Charles de Brosses (1760) and Gobineau (1854), is . . . a certain involvement with the problem of negativity, absence, and nullity" (Miller 153). Revealingly, the authors of Miller's examples, which he generalizes as representative of "French texts," are all male--principally, Baudelaire, Céline, Conrad, Gobineau, Ouologuem, Rimbaud, and Sade. I suspect that Miller's choice of these male writers and exclusion of women writers is closely linked to the same kind of disregard for feminine genres evident in Flaubert's response to Stowe. Although Miller goes back to Antiquity, he says virtually nothing about the scores of French women who also wrote about blacks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and who did not impose blankness and absence in the way that their male counterparts did: notable examples include Olympe de Gouges, Germaine de Staël, Sophie Doin, and Claire de Duras. The few women writers that Miller mentions are marginalized: in one case, in an epigraph; and in the case of Staël, in a footnote, but with no acknowledgment of the numerous writings about Africans and in protest of the slave trade and slavery produced by her, by members of her family, and by the Coppet group. (10) I don't know why Miller fails to consider women writers. The most plausible explanation seems to be that, like Flaubert, he dismisses them because they "spoke a language of melodramatic urgency aimed at performing a legislative end" (Miller 127). (11)

Another recent theory is that of "créolité" collectively elaborated by the Martinican writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. (12) That theory, which has attracted a great deal of attention in Francophone circles, goes beyond the earlier notion of negritude, which these authors recognize as historically significant but which they also see as limited inasmuch as it ultimately only replaces a European illusion with an African one (Bernabé 889). In contrast, "créolité" promotes a diverse Caribbean identity and acknowledges a full range of indigenous cultural and linguistic elements. Thus they contrast a false Eurocentric notion of universality to a Creole concept of "diversality," which is characterized by "the nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity" (892) and which provides "the great opportunity of a world diffracted but recomposed, the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities" (903). But "créolité" is itself exclusionary and universalist in many ways. It calls for discovering an "interior vision" and "collective voice" by universally rejecting Western values, without taking into account the fact that the identity of non-Western women is based at least in part on an oppression that all women share and that probably entails discovering some common ground between Western and non-Western women. It is that common ground that produced the groundswell of positive responses to Stowe's novel at the time of its publication. Moreover, these theorists' statements about European culture of the past--"[t]o perceive the world today . . . with the values of the eighteenth century or those of the nineteenth century would be an impoverishment" (902)--reveal little tolerance for the diversity of the past. A true "diversality" would have to recognize its own gender limitations. Without that recognition, "créolité," like Flaubert's "art for art's sake" and other aesthetic theories, perpetuates a discourse about literature that leaves no room for Stowe's mother-centered world view, Sand's "immense besoin d'équité chrétienne," or the other values embodied in the works and lives of women writers and readers of the past and present. (13)

Doris Y. Kadish

NOTES

1. A version of this essay was presented at the Nineteenth Century French Studies Colloquium at The University of California at Santa Barbara in October 1994. It also develops some of the observations I have made about Sand and Stowe in *Translating Slavery* 51-61.

2. Quoted in Stowe, *La case du père Tom*, 1.

3. Laura Donaldson acknowledges the will to subvert slavery in Stowe's novel but is critical of the concept of "angelic motherhood" that is emphasized in Tompkins's reading (*Decolonizing Feminisms* 39-41).

4. Janis Glasgow focuses on Sand's criticism of Stowe's style and contrasts Sand's attitudes toward Stowe and James Fenimore Cooper in "George Sand, critic of american literati: Harriet Beecher Stowe and James Fenimore Cooper," *George Sand et l'étranger* [Actes du Xe Colloque International George Sand] (Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, Debrecen, 1993), 257-264.

5. See Kadish, "Representing Race in Indiana."

6. Philarète Chasles, "Les nègres en Amérique," *Revue contemporaine*, 30 novembre 1852; Emile Montégut, "Le roman abolitionniste en Amérique," *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 1er octobre 1852; Théophile Gautier, *Presse*, 24 janvier 1853; Paul Mouriez, *Album de la semaine*, 29 janvier 1853.

Chapter three of *La Littérature anti-esclavagiste* provides a thorough discussion of these and other critical responses to Stowe's novel. 7. Schor provides a striking summation of "the lengths to which critics will go to contest the notion that Sand might have in any manner 'influenced' the author of *Un Coeur simple*" (*George Sand and Idealism* 187-188).

8. For a more recent negative treatment of Stowe by a male African American writer, see Ishmael Reed's satiric *Flight to Canada* written in 1976 (New York: Atheneum, 1989). In an interesting essay written from the perspective of an African American woman, Hortense J. Spillers expresses sympathy for Reed's and Baldwin's attacks on Stowe and reservations about white feminist readings of that novel: "Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed," in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 25-61.

9. The opinion of African American women critics has not always been favorable, however. In addition to the negative response by Hortense J. Spiller, there is Angela Davis's, in which she reproaches Stowe for having distorted the picture of the life of slave women: *Women, Race and Class* (N.Y.: Random House, 1981), 27-29.

10. See *Translating Slavery* 26-61.

11. In his more recent *Theories of Africans* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), Miller articulates the need to include women writers, which he does principally by devoting the last chapter of the book to the Senegalese author Miriama Bâ.

12. See A. James Arnold's important article "The Gendering of Créolité," in *Penser la créolité*, ed. Maryse Condé et Madeleine Cottenet-Hage (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 21-40.

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