A LITERARY CIVIL WAR

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Abstract: Fiction and fact seem to have interacted much more significantly in American culture than in any other one in world history; America's greatest war itself may have been arguably caused by the impact of one—or several—novel/s. Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in 1852, and in the following thirteen years (till the outbreak of the Civil War) something like thirty "anti-Tom novels" (an average of three per year) came out, and thus a literary war may have anticipated the real war (Abraham Lincoln's famous greeting is apocryphal). The paper gives a description of the socio-political-literary-cultural context, of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel (alongside her Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin) and of the "anti-Tom literature," thus being more of a piece of cultural criticism than of literary history and interpretation; the focus is not on the substance of the novels themselves, but rather on their impact and function in the period.

Keywords: slavery, Uncle Tom, Stowe, anti-Tom, abolitionism, Civil War

To explain our title, we need to quote the authors (Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren) of the American Literature anthology subtitled The Makers and the Making; on the very first page we are warned that in American cultural history fiction (always) precedes reality: "Literature existed in America before America existed;"(p.1) and, in their turn, they quote from another "fiction," Robert Frost's "The Gift Outright," which the poet read in 1961 at the invitation of the president-elect John Fitzgerald Kennedy—"The land was ours before we were the land's." And the authors go on to describe the birth of the novel, in both Britain and America, with an insistence on its always telling "real stories"—whether it be sentimental (Luther William Hill Brown's 1789 The Power of Sympathy, Susanna Haswell Rowson's 1796 Charlotte Temple, or Hannah Walker Foster's 1797 The Coquette), genteel literature, or one infused with morbidity, violence and perversion (Charles Brockden Brown, 1771-1810), or novel of the frontier, of the sea or of manners (James Fennimore Cooper, 1789-1851) and so on; whatever the "genre," the American novel was a relation of fact and all sides insisted on the veracity of their narratives or writings in general, even when they gave completely different versions of the same "truth."(see infra)

And this introduces (one of) the most controversial reality/ies of the period, namely slavery; the American truth is there explicitly since 1776, when Thomas Jefferson wrote in his own hand in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal…"; Jefferson died in 1826, and over a period that may be taken to end with the firing at Fort Sumter, on April 12, 1861 (the beginning of the Civil War), "the paradox of chattel slavery in a nation founded on the conception of the natural rights of man continued to be the central fact of national life." (Makers, p.325)

This "central fact" seems to have mobilized various social, political and intellectual energies—and tensions—in the first half of the 19th-century; industrial and technological developments, the millennial dream of the Great Awakening, a constant passion for reform, the democratization of American politics, the Mexican War of 1847—abolitionism, racism, and emancipationalism--, and the Compromise of 1850 passed by the US Congress (i.e. the second Fugitive Slave Law), prohibiting assistance to fugitives (and thus the end of slave trade) and obliging citizens to participate in the slavery system; this law helped deepening the

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tensions between the slave-holding south and the northern industrial urban society (resulting, basically, in the vilification of the southerners); and thus the literary-cultural war begins, more than twenty years before the real Civil War; and so what the whole thing becomes is not only fiction based on facts, but also (see infra) fiction determining fact.

However, the first cultural fact is not a novel, but a "testimony"; a pre-Tom and pro-Tom abolitionist compilation put together by Theodore Dwight Weld and the Grimke sisters (Sarah and Angelina—his wife as well)—American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses(1839); the book was designed to portray the horrors (truth, and the "as it is" in the title will become some sort of a trademark) of American slavery through a collection of first-hand testimonials and personal narratives from both freedmen and whites; other than personal interviews, the authors include extracts from newspapers, periodicals, letters and books, all representing "well-weighted testimony" about "well-authenticated facts," as well as "corroborative testimony" about slaves and slaveholders (with names and addresses given in full), and the latter's infamy and their incredible atrocities. The introduction informs the readers that two-million-seven-thousand persons, free-born citizens of the US, live in slavery, and the information comprises descriptions of their work, rest, clothing, housing, afflictions, privations…, their lives and deaths in all imaginable details; the subchapter and section titles are more than telling: overworking, suffering from hunger, torture, cruelty to women slaves, throat-cuttings, iron yokes with prongs, salt water applied to wounds, woman with child chained to her neck, flogging, iron collars-chains-fetters-handcuffs, ear cuttings, slaves chopped piecemeal, assaults and maimings, murders… and all sorts of other barbarities.

The book also includes pro-slavery (southern) arguments that are refuted ("Objections Considered," pp.120-210), such like: good treatment of slaves, kind and generous slaveholders, their hospitality and benevolence, slaves are not inhumanly treated, public opinion is a protection to the slaves… One notes among the testimonies those of Sarah Grimke and of author James K. Paulding; and one also finds it interesting to remark that Harriet Beecher Stowe does not include Weld's "thousand testimonies" among her sources (see infra) and we can speculate that she either ignored the book published more than a decade before her famous novel, or chose not to acknowledge her debt to it, however veiled or implicit.

As if all these did not seem enough, soon comes a second cultural fact, which again is not a piece of fiction, but a personality and his autobiography; black abolitionist, reformer, statesman, preacher, writer, and eminent human rights leader Frederick Douglass (1817?-1895; born a slave in Maryland, Douglass learned to read and write, escaped to Massachusetts and became an agent for the Anti-Slavery Society sponsored by none other than the great radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879)--, and soon enough, a living example of what a freed black man might become—a counterexample to the slaveholders' argument that slaves lacked the intellectual capacity to function by themselves. His "autobiography" came out in three stages: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave in 1845 (and thus well before Uncle Tom's Cabin)—a best-seller--, My Bondage and My Freedom in 1955, and The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass in 1881. The first one is the first version of a compelling human document, easily describable as an existential story of (lack of) identity (the slave as a chattel, legally a thing rather than a man), that was the first (a third "first") in a series of such narratives by such African-American writers as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright and James Baldwin; its impact before the Civil War must have been remarkably great, but difficult to properly evaluate—given the historical-cultural conditions. There is also a third important preparatory moment before the publication of the novel (Josiah Henson's memoirs), but that will be treated further down here.

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Still, the really earth-quaking cultural event that energized the anti-slavery forces in the American North and gave rise to widespread anger and outrage in the South (the beginning of our Literary Civil War) was a novel—Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), by Harriet Beecher Stowe; as anticipated, we shall skip a couple of years in chronology and go to her Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin: Presenting the Original Facts and Documents Upon Which the Story is Founded, Together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work (Boston, 1854)—so facts once more, documents and truth, all turning the novel into some kind of muckraking novel (Upton Sinclair's The Jungle is the prototype), or of nonfiction, as it were, of the type that was to be made famous in the next century by the likes of Robert Penn Warren (World Enough and Time, 1950), Truman Capote (In Cold Blood, 1966), Norman Mailer (The Executioner's Song, 1979)…; a "Key" that will probably help us in completing the background for Uncle Tom's Cabin.

This lengthy book (over five hundred pages in four parts) documents the actual cases on which her novel's incidents were based, and thus simply becomes a defense of Uncle Tom on grounds of its factual realism; Stowe had enlisted family and friends to send her information on such cases and also scoured freedom narratives and anti-slavery newspapers; still, she made sure she also listened to the other side, so "the author inserts a few testimonials from southern men, not without some pride in being thus kindly judged by those who might have been naturally expected to read her book with prejudice against it." (Chapter XIV) Hence—"Human nature is no worse at the South than at the North; but law at the South distinctly provides for and protects the worst abuses to which that nature is liable;" and a major section of The Key is a critique of how the legal system supported slavery and licensed owners' mistreatment of slaves (so she put the law itself on trial in almost all of the fifteen chapters of Part II.

But here is again the writer herself, in Part I, Chapter I: "At different times, doubt has been expressed whether the scenes and characters in Uncle Tom's Cabin convey a fair representation of slavery as it at present exists. This work, more, perhaps, than any other work of fiction that ever was written, has been a collection and arrangement of real incidents, of actions really performed, or words and expressions really uttered, grouped together with reference to a general result…; the book had a purpose entirely transcending the artistic one, and accordingly encounters at the hands of the public demands not usually made on a fictitious work. It is treated as a reality—sifted, tried, and tested as a reality; and therefore as a reality it may be proper that it should be defended."

Having gradually become aware that "slavery… is too dreadful for the purposes of art" (see also Weld above) and so its description could give readers anything but pleasure, Stowe came to this decision: to "proceed along the course of the story, from the first page, and develop, as far as possible, the incidents by which different parts were suggested"; and so the forty-eight chapters of The Key become an annotated bibliography of her sources. Besides letters, trial records, newspaper extracts, various people's "relations," editorials, even textbooks, all sorts of "communications," opinions and judgments, the author also had her own experience in Cincinnati, which was across the Ohio from Kentucky, a slave state, so she visited a plantation there and could witness slavery first hand; while here, she talked with escaped slaves and even contacted Frederick Douglass; such slaves "have been in her family as servants; and, in default of any other school to receive them, she has, in many cases, had them instructed in a family school, with her own children. She has also the testimony of missionaries…" and "a number of interviews with escaped slaves" during her stay in Cincinnati, where the Underground Railroad had local abolitionist sympathizers and were active in efforts to help runaway slaves on their escape route from the South. Then, a younger brother of Harriet's worked in New Orleans (another setting of the novel) and returned to Cincinnati with stories on the plantations of Louisiana; finally, while in Brunswick, Maine

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(her husband was a teacher at Bowdoin)—where she actually wrote the novel after receiving a letter from her sister-in-law Isabella Porter Beecher: "…if I could use a pen as you can, Hatty, I would write something that would make this whole nation feel what an accurse thing slavery is…"—the Stowes again disobeyed the law by hiding runaways.

An important document The Key insists on (beginning p.42) is the 1849 Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself; a slave on a tobacco plantation in Bethesda, Maryland, owned by Isaac Riley, Henson escaped slavery in 1830 by fleeing to Upper Canada (now Ontario), where he helped other fugitive slaves arrive, as a former overseer and now a negro preacher; Stowe explains: "A… parallel with that of Uncle Tom is to be found in the published memoirs of the venerable Josiah Henson, now… a clergyman in Canada… Henson grew up in a state of heathenism, without any religious instruction, till, in a camp meeting, he first heard of Jesus Christ." Henson became a Christian (much like Tom) "and enlightened his fellow heathen." After the publication of Stowe's novel, Henson republished his memoirs as The Memoirs of Uncle Tom and traveled on lecture tours in the US and Europe.

And this brings us to Stowe's motivation/s to write her unexpectedly famous novel; except for her natural desire to do good and a passion to set things right, Stowe did not argue for integration, but wanted instead the churches of the northern states to defy the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, "to seek the entire abolition of slavery throughout America and throughout Christendom,"(Chapter 10) to educate (religiously) the escaped slaves and to assist them to get to Liberia so they could set up a true Christian republic there (Liberia, "the land of the free" on the West African coast, had been founded in 1822, and established as the homeland of greed African Americans by the American Colonization Society and a protectorate until 1847, when it gained its independence).

In her "Concluding Remarks" (Chapter 45 of The Key) Stowe becomes more careful in defending her non-fiction novel (our italics): "The separate incidents that compose the narrative are, *to a very great extent*, authentic, occurring, *many of them*, either under her own /the writer's/ observation, or that of her *personal friends*. She or her friends have observed characters the counterpart of *almost all* that are here introduced; and *many* of the sayings are word for word as hear herself, or *reported* to her." No wonder later research revealed that Stowe did not read many of the cited works until after she had published her novel; guess work? Anticipation? False memory? Vision/s?

Except for her strong religious background (reflected in her insistence in the novel on the great role of Christianity and the church), there seems to have been little in Stowe's early—or later--life and education to recommend her as the great "warrior" she was; Harriet Elizabeth Beecher (1811-1896) was the daughter of the famous outspoken Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher (of Connecticut) and sister of Henry Ward Beecher, also a famous preacher and abolitionist; Lyman Beecher had also supported the creation of Liberia. When she was twenty-one, in 1832, the family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, a hotbed of the abolitionist movement. When, in 1836, she married biblical scholar Calvin Ellis Stowe (with whom she will have seven children), they both supported the Underground Railroad. During a communion service at the college chapel, Harriet Stowe did have a vision (see supra) of a dying slave, that might have inspired her novel's story. Between 1850 and 1853 they lived in Brunswick, Maine, where Uncle Tom's Cabin was written and quickly translated into thirty-seven languages. Next (1853-1864) they moved to and lived in Andover, Massachusetts, and then back to Connecticut (in Hartford, this time, where their next-door neighbor was Mark Twain, who wrote about her after Calvin's death in 1886—"Her mind had decayed, and she was a pathetic figure.") But, before all that, on November 1862, while in Washington, D.C., she was invited at the White House and according to her son and biographer Charles Edward

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Stowe, Lincoln greeted her with "so you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war."

But her own war had begun over a decade earlier than the American Civil War (1861-1865) with the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin; it first came out as a forty-week serial in National Era, between June 1851 and April 1852; in book form (two volumes) it was published in 1852, and in less than a year 300,000 copies were printed and sold; its first subtitle was The Man That Was a Thing /a chattel?/, then changed to Life Among the Lowly; in a few years (so still before the Civil War) over 1.5 million copies were in circulation in England, and it gradually became the best-selling novel in the world in the 19th-century.

Our intention is not that of giving a detailed description of this much too well-known novel, but highlight a few of its characteristic features; the narrative is organized along two plot lines, one focusing on Tom, his wife and three children, the other on Eliza, her son Harry, and their reunion with husband-and-father George Harris. The starting point is represented by the decision of deeply indebted Kentucky farmer Arthur Shelby to sell Tom and young Harry to a slave trader. Eliza overhears the news and runs away with son Harry, while Tom and family are placed on a Mississippi river boat, he saves little Eva from drowning, is bought by the latter's father Augustine St. Clare and all arrive on his farm in Louisiana (near New Orleans); there is a slave hunter Tom Loker tracking the Harrises, Tom stays for two years with the St. Clares, Little Eva dies and so does St. Clare, the latter's wife sells Tom to vicious plantation owner Simon Legree, Tom refuses to accept Legree's cruel terms, is finally killed, not before forgiving his overseers, who become Christians; Eliza discovers her mother Cassy, they go to Canada with Emmeline, another slave, then to France and Liberia. Other characters include Ophelia, a Vermont St. Clare relative prejudiced against blacks, George Shelby who returns to his parents' farm in Kentucky and frees all his/their slaves, Chloe—Tom's wife, Mammy—Marie St. C;lare's maid, Topsy—a mischievous young slave girl transformed by Eva's love, some of the good, caring Quakers in Ohio…

All in all, a sentimental and moralistic novel about Uncle Tom's life, i.e. the life a subtle long-suffering black slave around whom the stories of many other characters revolve; he is pictured as a praiseworthy person, a noble hero even, a completely dedicated Christian who has taken Christ's teachings literally and who has the courage to abide by them, in spite of threats even to his life; and he dies a martyr's death. And so, Stowe's basic theme is the redemptive role of Christian faith, side by side with a presentation of the evils of slavery and its immorality and the importance of women's influence.

Uncle Tom was not only the best-selling novel of the century, but a number of dramatic adaptations were immediately produced, beginning with George L. Aiken's 1852 one, with four full musical numbers for its Broadway sessions; Twelve Years a Slave by freed slave Solomon Northrup (previously on a plantation close to Stowe's setting) appears in 1853; many other adaptations and remakes, as well as the so-called Tom shows, follow rapidly; in 1853 is published a French edition and by 1857 the novel had been translated into twenty languages (including Chinese and Amharic/Ethiopian) and soon into other forty; what we are witnessing is not a civil, but a World War ensuing.

Consequently, Uncle Tom's Cabin had an influence equaled by few other novels in history; one might start thinking here of the role of literature as an agent of social and political change, and also notice Stowe's belief (in her "Preface"): "another and better day is dawning; every influence of literature, of poetry and of art in our time, is becoming more and more in unison with a great master chord of Christianity, 'good will to man.'" Written in reaction to a political and moral Fugitive Slave Act, Uncle Tom fueled the abolitionist cause in the 1850s, helped many 19th-century American determine what kind of country they wanted and "helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War" (Will Kaufman)—and it did represent the outbreak of the Literary Civil War. As such, it received great praise from the abolitionists and bitter

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protests from the defenders of slavery (who described it as "utterly false," a distortion or a criminal, scandalous, inaccurate novel) accompanied by threatening letters sent to Stowe.

Unbelievably soon (beginning as early as 1852, a sign that they had already been in the trenches, ready to strike back), the southerners also responded with numerous pro-slavery, "anti-Tom novels," portraying southern society in positive terms and, curiously enough, did not attack the novel on any aesthetic-literary grounds; the fact that Uncle Tom was not a great novel—and not even a good novel—came a little later, and not necessarily (in fact quite seldom) from the South; other than being "a merely sentimental," melodramatic novel, an example of didactic and domestic fiction, or even "Sunday-school fiction" (George F. Whicher), Uncle Tom was described as "a blend of children's fable and propaganda" or "a mediocre novel"(Richard Posner); critics (see also Makers) condemned it for its "often careless writing," for the author's "plucking at the reader's sleeve to tell him how to react to this or that," for its "looseness of language" and lack of "a sense of syntax" (Edmund Wilson); more than a century later, and African American writer, James Baldwin, considered it "racially obtuse" and "aesthetically crude," worthless and dehumanizing, and, in fact, "a very bad novel."

Still, in the context of the 1850s, this very bad novel called forth a host of hostile answers from southern writers, thus constituting a separate chapter—anti-Tom novels—in what American literary histories recorded as plantation literature; a form of literature that may be said to have begun with Of Plimmoth Plantation, compiled by William Bradford between 1630 and 1651, and continued by such (not very good) writers as Rupert Gilchrist, Joseph Chadwick, George Tucker, Roger Blake, Ashley Carter, John Pendleton Kennedy (and his 1832 Swallow Barn)…, and, as the most prominent among them, Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) and Harry Stillwell Edwards (1855-1938)—all the way down to Margaret Mitchell (1900-1949) and her 1936 Gone with the Wind—another best-seller that most critics disdained. Plantation literature is also equated with local color fiction and may include another specific "sub-chapter," that of slave narratives or even the "captivity narratives" and "neo-slave narratives" in the late twentieth-century.

The "Anti-Tom Literature" proper included eight anti-Tom novels published only in 1852 (they may have started coming into being as Uncle Tom was being serialized, from June 1851), and until 1860 other twenty; anyway, Gossett mentions twenty-seven pro-slavery works written in response to Stowe's novel between 1852 and 1860. The general pro-slavery viewpoint was that slavery was fundamentally beneficial to African Americans, and that the evils of slavery were "overblown and incorrect" in Uncle Tom; the main strategies were those of defending the plantation as a good place, attacking the North for its treatment of "while slaves" (i.e. the new industrial working class), and depicting blacks as either happy in slavery ("the faithful happy-go-lucky darky" singing before the little cabin door and reminiscing fondly about the bravery, kindness, and aristocracy of his owner/s), or racially unfit for freedom (see Douglass above); the frequent patterns was that of a benign patriarchal master and his pure wife presiding over their childlike slaves in a benevolent extended family style plantation.

No need to observe that almost all of these novelists insisted on the veracity and truth of their stories, even when anonymous, as this 1852 The North and the South or Slavery and Its Contrasts: A Tale of Real Life, or "A Lady of New Orleans's" 1856 Tit for Tat; the authors' preference for an obsessive "as it is" even resulted in identical (sub-)titles—W. L. G. Smith's 1852 Life at the South: or, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" As It Is or C. H. Wiley's 1852 Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is. Technically anonymous is also the 1852 novel of William Gilmore Simms ("the best novelist America had ever produced" in the opinion of Edgar Allan Poe), The Sword and the Distaff; Or, "Fair, Fat, and Forty." A Study of the South, at the close of the Revolution by the Author of "The Partisan," "Mellichampe," "Katharine Walton," Etc.

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Etc.; in his introductory letter to Dr. Joseph Johnson of Charleston, S. C., Simms typically informs him (and the reader) that "the persons… are all drawn from life," being "well-known personages of preceding generations… disguised under false names…"; Simms' evocations and his "scenes of intrigue and suspense" (many involving Bostwick, the squatter and the novel's villain) were then republished, in 1854, as Woodcraft; or, Hawks About the Doncote by Refield, not long after Simms had this to say (in the Southern Quarterly Review, January, 1854) about Mrs. Stowe's novel, which, "considered wholly aside from the slavery question /an obvious impossibility/, is a story of great and striking, though coarse, attraction."

Other titles that deserve mention in this literary war are Philip J. Cozans' Little Eva: The Flower of the South (a rewriting of the character in Uncle Tom), Thomas Bangs Thorpe's The Master's House: A Tale of Southern Life, Adam F. Colburn's Uncle Tom at Home (not a story, but "a review of the reviewers and repudiators of Uncle Tom's Cabin by Mrs. Stowe"), and even a longish poem, Joseph Addison Turner's "The Old Plantation: A Poem." But the fiercest southern warrior in this anti-Tom battle are, appropriately, two women novelists—Mary Henderson Eastman (1818-1887) and Caroline Lee Hentz (1800-1856).

In Aunt Phillis's Cabin, or, Southern Life *As It Is* (italics ours) Eastman gave her own 1852 best-seller, accompanied by critical comments in her "Preface" and "Concluding Remarks"; the preface begins her defense with the stereotypical view of blacks as children, who needed protection, and continues with talk about the essential happiness of slaves in the South as compared to the inevitable sufferings of free blacks and the working classes of the North ("In the South, they /the slaves/ are necessary: though an evil, it is one that cannot be dispensed with…," p. 21) but the essence of her argument comes from slavery as sanctioned in the Bible, and all we can do is quote: "slavery was instituted by God as a curse on Ham"/Noah's son/, and "the whole continent of Africa was peopled principally by the descendants of Ham"; "He commanded the Jews to enslave the heathen around them, saying, 'they should be their bondmen forever…"; "God has permitted slavery to exist in every age and in almost every nation of the earth…"(p.15) "Every book of the Old Testament records a history in which slaves and God's laws concerning them are spoken of…" (ibid.); Abraham, Isaac, Jacpob and others were all slaveholders; "St. Paul could not be an Abolitionist"(p.20). But other authorities are also invoked: "'No legislator of history,' says Voltaire, 'attempted to abrogate slavery…'": Egypt, Sparta, Athens, Carthage, Rome… had thousands of slaves each; moreover, the subject of slavery is acknowledged in the American Constitution (p. 22); so that, "authorized by God, permitted by Jesus Christ, sanctioned by the apostles, maintained by good men of all ages…"(p.24) thus slavery is perfectly good, morally, religiously…, humanly; and the narrative depicts is "as it is," with the author's "Concluding Remarks" after Chapter XXVI—an unsentimental, sarcastic critique of Stowe; who answers in her Chapter XIV of The Key: "I have read two columns in the Southern Press of Mrs. Eastman's Aunt Phillis's Cabin, or Southern Life As It Is with the remarks of the editor. I have no comments to make upon it, that being done by itself. The editor might have saved himself being writ down an ass by the public if he had withheld his nonsense. If the two columns are a specimen of Mrs. Eastman's book, I pity her attempt and her name as an author."

In its cruelest phase, this literary was also implies trespassing the bonds of friendship; daughter of an abolitionist, Caroline Lee Hentz was married to a southern slave owner and, while in Cincinnati, she was a close personal friend of Stowe; The Planter's Northern Bride (autobiography?), 1854, fits the already overused pattern: "The history of Crissy and the circumstances of her abduction are true. The character of Dr. Darley is drawn from life… Many of the circumstances we have recorded in these pages are founded on truth. The plot of the insurrection, the manner in which it was instigated and detected, and the brief history of Nat, the giant, with his domestication in a Northern family, are literally true."("Preface," pp.VIII-IX) The historical background (and argument) includes the episode of Thomas

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Jefferson's arrival at Monticello on his return from Paris after an absence of five years (his daughter is quoted) and the enthusiasm of his reception by his slaves. Another (also older) side of the argument is that black people lacked the ability to function well without the oversight by the whiles. Thinking of her dear friend Harriet, Caroline condemns the "moral blindness… and the intolerant and fanatical spirit of the North."

Like her friend, she also draws on personal experience: "during our residence in the South, we have never witnessed one scene of cruelty or oppression /remember Weld/, never beheld a chain or a manacle, or the infliction of a punishment more severe than parental authority would be justified in applying to filial disobedience or transgression…"(p.V); "…we have seen and studies domestic, social, and plantation life, in Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida…; and we have never been pained by an inhuman exercise of authority, or a wanton abuse of power. On the contrary, we have been touched by the exhibition of affectionate kindness and care on one side, and loyal and devoted attachment on the other…"(ibid.); becoming convinced that "…the negroes of the South are the happiest laboring class on the face of the globe…, we have conversed a great deal with /these/ colored people, feeling the deepest interest in learning their own views of their peculiar situation, and we have almost invariably been delighted and affected by their humble devotion to their master's family, their child-like, affectionate reliance on their care and protection, and above all, with their genuine cheerfulness and contentment." (pp.V-VII)

This seems to be more than enough material (especially for a non-American in the twenty-first century) to give one a convincing picture of a "literary civil war" where the two sides look at the fundamental aspects of slavery and see entirely different things; in other words—as in any conflict—each of the combatants depends on an ideology that is completely at odds with the other's, since, regarded from opposite positions (like the North and the South), truth is never one and the same—in fiction (Tom's truth) or in reality (Lincoln's truth)—and its pursuit ends in tragedy.

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