# 2

# Fictions, 1832–1852

## *Sentimental Antislavery and the Sisterhood*

On a summer day in 1914, the eve of World War I, staff members at the Headquarters of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in London were busy stacking an ample stock of posters, received hot off the press. They had been specially commissioned from well-known Hungarian illustrator Willy Pogány to do some 'really useful international work', and featured a design envisioned to speak to women in at least all the twenty-six affiliated countries of the IWSA, with 'a varying superscription' in different languages (Figure 2.1; Stanton Coit 1916, 91). They depict a woman holding an infant on one strong arm, while raising the other to ward off a menacing, skull-crested wave. From both wrists dangle broken chains.

This was not an isolated depiction. The masthead of the prominent German suffrage journal *Zeitschrift für Frauenstimmrecht* also showed a woman in delicate, broken chains, while under the leadership of the spirited Louise Weiss, French suffragists symbolically burnt their 'chains', made from paper, on the Place de la Bastille in 1935 ([Masthead] 1908; 'Louise Weiss' 1935). Why did so many suffragists see this strange motif of ineffectual chains as an effective encapsulation of their grievances? How did it come to appeal to women across class and ideological divides, as well as geographical borders? And how did it gain such pedigree within the international women's movement? This chapter begins to answer this question by exploring some of the earliest manifestations of this evocative image in relation to women's advocacy in the 1830s and 1840s. It contends that through their interaction with the antislavery movement and its cultural productions, early women's advocates drew on memories of the antislavery to develop a productive analogy between the horrors of chattel slavery and the subjection of women.



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FIGURE 2.1 Willy Pogány's poster design for the IWSA. This image featured on the front page of *Jus Suffragii*, English edition, on 1 August 1914, and in the French edition for September–October 1914. New York Public Library.

Any claims that early women's advocates in Continental Europe engaged with antislavery at first glance seem unfounded. After all, as Seymour Drescher concludes in his survey of women's role in abolition in France and Britain, even in the case of France there was no noteworthy connection between organised abolition and women's advocacy. He warns that a latterly discovered 'obscure example or two of such a linkage' should not tempt one to generalise (Drescher 2007, 99). As regards organisational structures and popular support for antislavery, Drescher's point holds true for other Continental contexts as well. The picture changes, however, when one looks in other places. Though romantic socialists were not involved in liberal, institutional abolitionism, antislavery was a potent, if divisive, theme among their circles, particularly in France – the same context in which women's rights critiques began to be seriously discussed (Andrews, 2013; 2020). The cultural impact of these discussions does not show up in the minutes of meetings or, at this time, in petitions – but it does in the fiction produced by some leading women radicals of

this period. Here memories of antislavery were attentively examined, creatively adopted, and passionately defended.

This chapter follows Martha Nussbaum in her contention that the 'literary imagination [is] a public imagination' and that novels are sites of 'public reasoning' (1995, 3, 9). This conception, which affords literary works a special place in the public debate essentially as laboratories that allow for the exploration of new angles of thought, is a productive lens particularly for 'literary feminism' (Rendall 1985, 230; Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker 2004, 310). This chapter focuses on three literary works from the period: George Sand's and Luise Mühlbach's novels, *Indiana* (1832) and *Aphra Behn* (1849), and Flora Tristan's imaginative travel memoir, *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838).[1] These authors are hardly 'obscure examples', neither by the measure of their public impact nor by that of their centrality within the radical reformist circles of their time.

This chapter uses these three works as windows on the imaginative engagement of women's rights advocates with the history of slavery and abolition in the 1830s and 1840s.[2] The evidence of the influence of memories of antislavery in these texts is clear, particularly when they are held against the light of the literary works they explicitly modelled themselves on: in the case of George Sand, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788), and for Luise Mühlbach, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688). Calling on memories of antislavery, these writers treated this history simultaneously as an imagined common cause, as a figure of thought, and as a source of powerful rhetoric. Each in their own way, the authors played with the perennial contradiction between assertions of women's moral influence and their practical powerlessness. Fiction provided a unique platform to work out these contradictions, allowing the authors to stage scenes, articulate debates, and pull in reference material to build arguments in one of the few forms accessible to women in the period.

[1] In the second half of the century, references to antislavery in fiction thematising women's rights gravitate towards Stowe, as in the case of the Dutch foundational feminist novel, *Hilda van Suylenburg* (1897).

[2] Strikingly, the works show some noteworthy continuities with English-language examples from the period. They share their fascination with abject, racially Other, sister figures, such as can be seen in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). They also take part in the palpable sense of excitement around the opportunities afforded for women's eloquence by new humanistic dinner conversations, the type gently mocked in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815). For *Jane Eyre*, see, famously, Gilbert and Gubar 1979, esp. ch. 10; Winter 2010, 92ff. In *Emma*, a light-hearted echo of antislavery politics can be found in chapter 17. These themes also drew the attention of feminist novelists elsewhere, see Holmqvist 2022.

Their most evocative passages of social critique rely on complex juxtapositions between memories of antislavery and the woman–slave analogy. As the examination in this chapter reveals, authors relied especially on those antislavery motifs now termed 'sentimental' (see Chapter 1). Despite being minimally involved in the movement, the authors identified themselves with an international version of the abolitionist sisterhood and were drawn to the same paradoxes as their American and English sisters (Bogin and Fagan Yellin 1994, 3). Reflection on the imbrication of these different histories of subjection, however, did not equal solidarity. Though all three authors brandished antislavery motifs, progressive discourses could also chafe, and the limits of sentimental modes of appeal in their works clearly reveal themselves. The discussion of Tristan, which rounds out this chapter, pays special attention to these limits.

## SOCIALISMS, FICTION, AND THE EARLY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Despite the exotic locales of their works, the novelists discussed in this chapter were not writing fanciful escapism. They openly engaged in the intellectual debates around them in a way they could only manage through fiction. This section will set the stage to understand in what ways they did so, before turning to the analysis of the works themselves. There are earlier examples of Continental women producing antislavery texts which thematised gender, most famously Olympe de Gouges.[3] Moreover, in French discourse the woman–slave analogy can be traced back, as Karen Offen has meticulously done, to at least the seventeenth century (2007). There are several reasons that these lines of interest began to intersect particularly in the 1830s.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the progress of the antislavery movement held the attention of European reformers, including the romantic socialist circles of Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, and Owenites, where the idea of women's rights first began to be structurally discussed (Andrews 2013; Griffin 2018). In the Saint-Simonian and Fourierist press, writers criticised the English model of abolition in favour of a socialist model based on 'association' (Andrews 2013). But these factions were not always supportive. Fourierist publications like *La Démocratie pacifique* also regularly published criticisms of abolitionist 'religious societies, women', and

[3] This strand is sometimes also referred to as 'feminist abolitionist discourse': Ueckmann 2020, 135; Kadish and Massardier-Kenney 2008.

'generous but ignorant négrophiles' whose ambitions, they claimed, first and foremost served British business interests ('De l'emancipation' 1844; 'Question' 1844). These pronouncements had to do equally with a general Anglophobia among French socialists, which extended to the triumphalist free market inflections of British abolitionist ideology, and with the fact that they were occasionally sponsored by colonists (Jennings 1992, 976).

In light of this ambivalence, the fact that in 1833 the very first women's rights journal, the *Tribune des femmes*, treated the progress of antislavery in the British dominions as of natural interest to their readership is less surprising than it at first glance appears – though no less significant. In between its deliberations on the sufferances of Parisian women and its coverage of the ills of modern marriage, the editors printed an article on the process of abolition in Jamaica, alongside a letter received from New Orleans which described the violence perpetrated against the enslaved there and asked women to 'continue […] to preach for the intervention of *woman* in human affairs; her gentle and religious inspiration alone may save the poor country from the horrors witnessed on Saint-Domingue' ('Le fait' 1833, 57).[4] Cosmopolitan gestures like these, combined with evidence of the transnational reception of the short-lived journal and other writings by its founders, offer a glimpse into the early stirrings not just of feminism, but of feminist internationalism (McFadden, 1999, 123ff.; Anderson 2000, esp. 88; Pavard, Rochefort, and Zancarini-Fournel 2020, 41ff.).

The *Tribune des femmes*, first published as *La femme libre*, ran from 1832 to 1834, under the editorship of a collective of female Saint-Simonians, including Désirée Véret, Suzanne Voilquin, and Jeanne Deroin, who is the subject of Chapter 3. Building on the doctrines of Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), this circle was an early scene for critical discussion of women's social position, as was the circle practising the ideas of Charles Fourier (1772–1837).[5] Each in their own way, the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists preached that human progress went hand in hand with women's emancipation and in both circles the woman–slave analogy was common currency. The analogies writers pursued in the *Tribune des femmes* built on the register of Saint-Simonian leadership,

[4] 'Continue, chère sœur, à prêcher, à réclamer l'intervention de la *femme* dans les affaires humaines: sa douce et religieuse inspiration peut seule sauver cette malheureuse contrée du sort affreux éprouvé par Saint-Domingue' ('Le fait' 1833, 57).

[5] Moses 1984, 41ff.; Riot-Sarcey 1994, ch. 1; Andrews 2013.

who not only declared women slaves waiting to be set free but made the advent of the *mère suprême* the precondition of a new world order.[6] Similarly, Fourierist leadership circulated their founder's pronouncements on how to free the 'slave women of Society [*femmes esclaves de la Civilisation*]' ('Opinion de Fourier' 1845, 222). A Fourierist pamphlet arguing for the abolition of slavery in 1836 did not fail to mention that women, too, were not allowed 'to love, hate or to remain cold and indifferent, or to come alive and flare up, without being denounced' (Dain 1836, 59), and that they had to endure slavery in a global system of oppression.[7]

These early socialist visions circulated prominently in Paris in the 1830s and 1840s, where Sand and Tristan engaged with them, and also fuelled discourse on women's rights among progressive literary-philosophical circles in the Atlantic World and in German states, including the constellation of literary figures that came to be known as the Young Germans, to whom Luise Mühlbach belonged (Butler 1968; Goetzinger 1988; 'Young Germany' 1997, 580–582; Breckman 2001, 156ff.).[8] Flora Tristan (1803–1844), Luise Mühlbach (1814–1873), and, of course, George Sand (1804–1876) were prominent authors of their time and connected with these romantic socialist collectives in different ways. After the instant success of her first novel *Indiana* (1832), Sand quickly rose to transnational fame as a foremost French author of her time and ultimately became a role model (albeit a more controversial one than Stowe) for women's rights advocates at home and abroad (McFadden 1999, ch. 4). One of the editors of *Tribune des femmes* commented on how she perceived Sand's relationship to their initiative in her memoirs, recalling:

> Then there suddenly appeared in the intellectual sky a brilliant star, who forced men to salute her coming. Certainly our George Sand is worthy in her own right: she can be counted among the first writers of the century; her style is delicious

[6] Claire Goldberg Moses traces the emergence of these ideas within Saint-Simonian doctrine (1984, 45ff.). For example, leadership proclaimed that women, 'debased slaves that they were [*esclaves avilies qu'elles étaient*]', had special 'sympathetic power [*puissance sympathique*]' which drove the progress of social philanthropy, and which needed to be unleashed (Enfantin 1831, 28). Moses 1984, 90ff.

[7] 'Elle ne peut ni aimer, ni haïr, ni rester froide et indifférente, ni s'animer et s'embraser, sans qu'on l'accuse! […] La femme n''est ni reine, ni compagne … Elle est esclave!' (Dain 1836, 59).

[8] Notably, in the German context, abolitionism and Saint-Simonianism shared a major liberal broker in the figure of Friedrich Wilhelm Carové, a legal professor who was the leading authority on both movements in the 1840s.

music for the soul; and her heart dictates her eloquent pages. But she owes the development of her genius to the great religious ideas that were floating over the world and which will change the face of society by the end of the century […]. (Voilquin 1993 [1866], 172)

Sand voiced support for the experimental progressivisms of her day, including Saint-Simonianism, and she became a prominent Republican in the 1840s (Pilbeam 2013, 70, 101). She was outspoken in her ideas on women's emancipation and, throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Parisian Saint-Simonian women considered her not just an important ally, but a figurehead for their campaign. By 1848, however, having much to lose, she proved reluctant to be associated with any organised advocacy for women's political rights, refusing to campaign for women's rights in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution (Riot-Sarcey 1994, ch. 3; Offen 2018, 78).

French-Peruvian Flora Tristan was a prominent socialist writer and international organiser before her untimely death in 1844, when she caught typhoid fever while on a tour of France promoting her workers' union. She chronicled her personal struggles, attempts to escape an unhappy marriage, and subsequent travels in South America in her *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838). Tristan's writings and colourful life, which included her attempted murder by her ex-husband, made her a widely discussed social critic. She corresponded with prominent reformers, including Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, and Alphonse de Lamartine, as well as early women's rights advocates at home and abroad, including Eugénie Niboyet, George Sand, and Anna Wheeler (Fedelma Cross 2020, 2).

Luise Mühlbach's influence came, in the first instance, from being the wife of Young German literary critic and university professor Theodor Mundt. She hosted a prominent salon in Berlin in the 1840s (Wilhelmy-Dollinger 2000, 156), through which she and her husband maintained contact with many progressive figures of the day. Mühlbach's zeal for emancipatory politics speak from her early writings, which centred on social issues, particularly marriages of convenience. In it, she channelled and responded to the philosophical discussions she was surrounded by. After the disappointments of 1848–1849, she became less political and frightfully prolific, producing an estimated fifty multi-volume historical novels, which were a huge success with a broad German and foreign readership (Pataky 1898; Tönnesen 1997; Kurth-Voigt and McClain 1981). This shift has led some to express regret over what they consider her transformation into a 'main supplier of lending libraries' (Renate Möhrmann, quoted in Tönnesen 1997, 212). At issue in this discussion

is the last work of her early, engaged period, *Aphra Behn* (1849). Since the novel did not initially attract much attention, she could republish it in 1859, this time under the title *Karl der Zweite und sein Hof*.

## RÉUNION PLANTATIONS AND THE DENATURATION OF WOMANHOOD IN GEORGE SAND'S *INDIANA* (1832)

The social mores regulating the relation between the sexes form the central theme of George Sand's literary début, *Indiana* (1832). Sand delineates the influence contemporary gender conventions had on the character of her protagonists, both male and female and, in tune with Saint-Simonian ideas, sought to express her passionate 'horror at brutal and stupid slavery' in all its guises (1855, 193).[9] The nuance and originality of her thought went well beyond previous iterations of the woman–slave analogy. In the most politically engaged of her several prefaces to the novel (1842), for instance, Sand explained that 'the misery of woman means that of the man, like that of the slave means that of the master' (1984 [1832], 46).[10] She used memories of antislavery prominently in her critique, particularly in her characterisation of the protagonist as a denatured woman.[11]

*Indiana* chronicles the tale of a young woman, Indiana, who grew up on a plantation in Île Bourbon (Réunion) with her judicious English friend Sir Ralph and Noun, her mixed-race foster sister, maid, and confidante whose health and 'creole' ardour is contrasted with Indiana's frailty. In an attempt to escape her tyrannical father, Indiana marries an elderly colonel. Unfortunately the marriage proves unhappy and she soon finds she has merely 'changed masters [*elle ne fit que changer de maître*]' (Sand 1984 [1832], 88), leading her to begin an affair with a young rogue, Raymon.[12] Unbeknownst to Indiana, Raymon had previously seduced Noun and had

[9] 'J'avais en moi seulement, comme un sentiment bien net et bien ardent, l'horreur de l'esclavage brutal et bête', 1855, 193. On Sand's treatment of the connections between different systems of oppression, see also Rogers 1979, Kadish 2004, Porter 2012.

[10] 'Mais quoi! celle que je défendais est-elle donc si petite? C'est celle de la moitié du genre humain, c'est celle du genre humain tout entier: car le malheur de la femme entraîne celui de l'homme, comme celui de l'esclave entraîne celui du maître, et j'ai cherché à le montrer dans *Indiana*' (Sand 1984 [1832], 46).

[11] A catalogue of George Sand's library, published in 1890, does not indicate her possession of notable antislavery readings before the first publication of *Indiana*. Some relevant entries for this discussion are her nearly complete run of the elite *Revue des deux mondes* for 1833–1889, and a signed copy of Victor Schœlcher's *Des colonies françaises. Abolition immediate de l'esclavage* (1842–1843). *Catalogue* 1890, 72, 85.

[12] In my translations I glean from George Burnham Ives' translation (1900), made available online by Mary Mark Ockerbloom's Celebration of Women Writers initiative.

eventually driven her to suicide. Indiana moves from France to Bourbon with her husband and Ralph but continues to correspond with Raymon. When she finally abandons her household to join Raymon in France, she finds out he has married another. Ralph finds Indiana alone and destitute on the streets and finally reveals his love for her. Following these revelations, the pair flee to an 'Indian cottage [*chaumière indienne*]' in the wilderness on Bourbon and live out their days emancipating and offering shelter to the enslaved (Sand 1984, 344).

In addition to her criticism of contemporary gender relations at the level of the plot, Sand intersperses critiques at the discursive level. She frequently invokes the woman–slave analogy, as when Indiana tells her husband: 'I know that I am the slave and you the master. The laws of this country make you my master. You can bind my body, tie my hands, govern my actions. You have the right of the strongest, and society confirms you in it' (Sand 1984, 232).[13] When the colonel, enraged after having found Indiana's letters to Raymon, throws her to the ground and stamps on her forehead, Indiana compares this action to the branding (*flétrir*) of a slave. Echoing the ironic reversals of antislavery rhetoric, she suggests that the mark is indicative of his transgression, not hers: 'I want to show to everyone this mark of his shame which he himself has taken pains to stamp on my face. It is a strange kind of justice that requires one to keep secret the crimes of another, when the other presumes the rights to brand one without mercy!' (Sand 1984, 270–271).[14] These comparisons are an elaborate imaginative extension of the critiques of marriage common among Parisian progressives at the time and Sand's medium allows her to insert some biting sarcasm – like when she insouciantly remarks that Noun could have surpassed her foster sister's beauty had Indiana not had her 'slavery and her sufferings' as additional adornments.[15]

[13] 'Je sais que je suis l'esclave et vous le seigneur. La loi de ce pays vous a fait mon maître. Vous pouvez lier mon corps, garrotter mes mains, gouverner mes actions. Vous avez le droit du plus fort, et la société vous le confirme' (Sand 1984, 232); see also Massardier-Kenney 2000, 25.

[14] 'Je veux montrer à tous les yeux ce stigmate du sien qu'il a pris soin d'imprimer lui-même sur mon visage. C'est une étrange justice que celle qui impose à l'un de garder le secret de crimes de l'autre, quand celui-ci s'arroge le droit de le flétrir sans pitié!' (Sand 1984, 270–271).

[15] 'Si madame Delmare n'eût eu pour l'embellir, son esclavage et ses souffrances, Noun l'eût infiniment surpassée en beauté dans cet instant; elle était splendide de douleur et d'amour' (Sand 1984, ch. 4); for the analogy, Offen, 2017, 71–73; Offen, 2007; Jeanne Deroin's *Profession de foi*, reprinted in Riot-Sarcey 1994; the comparison is also common fare in *Tribune des femmes* and the *Gazette des femmes* (1836–1838).

Indiana's recriminations of her husband explicitly recall the 'constant tableau of the evils of slavery' that form the background to the story's beginnings on Île Bourbon (Sand 1984, 88).[16] *Indiana* is narratively framed by its protagonist's experience in the colonies and specifically by her first-hand witnessing of slavery. Sand explains her protagonist's odd, obstinately enduring character by her childhood on her cruel father's plantation, where she was not only deprived of affection but also forced to witness slavery day in, day out:

> through watching the constant tableau of the evils of slavery, of enduring the weariness of solitude and dependence, she had acquired a superficial patience, proof against every trial, an adorable kindliness towards her inferiors, but also an iron will and an incalculable power of resistance to everything that tended to oppress her […]. Brought up in the wilderness, neglected by her father, spending her life surrounded by slaves, to whom she could offer no other assistance or encouragement than her compassion and her tears, she had accustomed herself to say: 'A day will come when everything in my life will be changed, when I shall do good to others; until that day, I shall suffer, be silent and save my love to reward him who will save me.' This liberator, this messiah, had not come […]. (Sand 1984, 88–89)[17]

Powerless to act on her inborn antislavery sentiments, the sensitive girl grows up denatured, detached, and passive, character failings which drive the novel's plot. Rather than developing a virtuous femininity, Indiana instead adopts the 'silence and submissiveness of the slave who has made of hatred a virtue and of unhappiness a merit' (Sand 1984, 207–208), and who waits for a (male) 'liberator, a messiah' (89).[18]

Only when she unites with Ralph are Indiana's natural sympathies able to flourish. As Ralph explains, he and Indiana spend the remainder

[16] '[L]e continuel tableau des maux de la servitude' (Sand 1984, 88).

[17] '[E]n voyant le continuel tableau des maux de la servitude, en supportant les ennuis de l'isolement et de la dépendance, elle avait acquis une patience extérieure à toute épreuve, une indulgence et une bonté adorables aves ses inférieurs, mais aussi une volonté de fer, une force de résistance incalculable contre tout ce qui tendait à l'opprimer. […] Élevée au désert, négligée de son père, vivant au milieu des esclaves, pour qui elle n'avait d'autre secours, d'autre consolation que sa compassion et ses larmes, elle s'était habituée à dire: Un jour viendra où tout sera changé dans ma vie, où je ferai du bien aux autres; un jour où l'on m'aimera, où je donnerai tout mon cœur à celui qui me donnera le sien: en attendant, souffrons; taisons-nous, et gardons notre amour pour récompense à qui me délivra. Ce libérateur, ce messie n'était pas venu; Indiana l'attendait encore' (Sand 1984, 88–89).

[18] 'Mais c'était le silence et la soumission de l'esclave qui s'est fait une vertu de la haine et un mérite de l'infortune' (Sand 1984, 207–208). Strikingly, Sand's characterisation resembles the unbearable 'frantic powerlessness' Angelina Grimké's personal diary expressed, almost contemporaneously, about her time in South Carolina, Yellin 1989,

of their lives defying the hatred of other colonists to aid the island's black population:

> The greater part of our income is devoted to the redemption [*racheter*] of poor and infirm blacks. […] Would that we were rich enough to set free all those who live in slavery! Our servants are our friends; they share our joys, we nurse them in sickness. This is the way our life is spent, without vexations, without remorse. (Sand 1984, 342)[19]

This idyllic ending, purposefully presented as a *deus ex machina*, completes Indiana's transformation from a slave into a free woman and genuine benefactress. Throughout the ambivalent text, Sand's prolonged engagement with the woman–slave analogy navigates the tensions between the states of slavery and freedom and between victimhood and complicity in systematic violence.

Sand's critique comes alive, timely and suggestive, through her creative reworking of the memories of antislavery, the influence of which is made especially visible via the novel's obvious engagement with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788). *Indiana* recalls *Paul et Virginie* in its plot as well as explicitly.[20] A scene from that story decorates Indiana's bedroom wall (Sand 1984, 101) and Ralph reads it to her in their youth (318). In the last chapter of the novel, Ralph and Indiana live out the rest of their days in an idyllic cabin explicitly modelled on that of the earlier bucolic fantasy (344). By presenting this chapter as an addendum to the novel, Sand leaves the reader uncertain as to whether these events are part of the tale, or the narrator is imagining an impossible happy ending in the style of Saint-Pierre.

31; compare, for instance, Grimké's exclamation 'My lips were sealed, and my soul earnestly craved a willingness to bear the exercise which was laid on me. How long, O Lord, how long wilt thou suffer the foot of the oppressor to stand on the neck of the slave! None but those who know from experience what it is to live in a land of bondage can form any idea of what is endured by those whose eyes are open enough to feel for these miserable creatures' (quoted in Yellin 1989, 30).

[19] 'Tous nos jours se ressemblent; ils sont tous calmes et beaux; ils passent rapides et purs comme ceux de notre enfance. Chaque soir, nous bénissons le ciel; nous l'implorons chaque matin, nous lui demandons le soleil et les ombrages de la veille. La majeure portion de nos revenus est consacrée à racheter de pauvres noirs infirmes. C'est la principale cause du mal que les colons disent de nous. Que ne sommes-nous assez riches pour délivrer tous ceux qui vivent dans l'esclavage! Nos serviteurs sont nos amis; ils partagent nos joies, nous soignons leur maux. C'est ainsi que notre vie s'écoule, sans chagrins, sans remords' (Sand 1984, 342).

[20] The plot elements in which *Indiana* echoes *Paul et Virginie* are numerous, including the love plot between near-siblings and Indiana's travel between the idealised colony and corrupted France. For close analyses of *Indiana*'s intertexts, see Didier 1998 and Kadish 2004.

*Indiana*'s rewriting of *Paul et Virginie* forty years after its first appearance indicates the transnational cultural impact antislavery had made in the meantime and demonstrates ways in which this development offered ammunition to women's rights advocates. *Paul et Virginie* was a hugely popular sentimental colonial romance with which readers across Europe were intimately familiar. Like *Indiana*, it recounts a love affair between two children who grew up together on a slaveholding island. In *Paul et Virginie*, depictions of colonial slavery primarily serve to enhance local colour. The novel's main black characters consist of a band of maroons in the jungle and the congenial enslaved servants. The story furthermore illustrates Virginie's pity and purity through an episode in which she tries to aid a female runaway by asking forgiveness for her from a plantation owner. Though colonial atrocities are referenced, slavery is not problematised in the tale and functions merely as a set piece in a work primarily interested in popular Enlightenment exotic escapism.[21]

Where Paul and Virginie lived peacefully with enslaved servants, Ralph and Indiana's farm houses only emancipated slaves. The couple's antislavery tendencies are presented as a natural corollary of their virtue, while abolition is conceived as a liminal condition for the achievement of any just society. Sand uses the motif of women's heightened sympathy with the enslaved to characterise Indiana's denatured state, presenting slavery as both a corrupt and a corrupting institution. Ralph's rationality, described as typically English, needs to be complemented by woman's special sensitivity in order to pave the way for the happy ending of universal emancipation. He is initially described as an excessively blunt and emotionally distant character, who scoffs that '[l]ove and devotion, apparently generous passions, are perhaps the two most self-interested that exist' (Sand 1984, 123).[22] Indiana's sensibility complements Ralph's clear-headedness and their happy ending enacts the union of appeals to the heart and to economic interest epitomised by the early antislavery campaign.

*Indiana* juxtaposes scenes of women's oppression in French society, trapped in unhappy marriages and powerless to effect societal change, with the untapped potential for good their sensibility holds. Sand expresses these ideas through the paradoxical contrast between the theme of woman's 'slavery' and prominent motifs from the antislavery

[21] Some contemporary as well as modern commentators have identified antislavery critique in *Paul et Virginie*. See Labio 2004; Cassity 2018.

[22] 'L'amour et la dévotion, qui sont deux passions en apparence généreuses, sont les plus intéressées peut-être qui existent […]' (Sand 1984, 123).

campaign, particularly that of women's importance for moral progress. In doing so, Sand read the Indian Ocean setting of Bourbon through an 'Atlantic bias' prevalent at the time (Prasad 2020, 1). The bucolic ending to her novel is deliberately out of sync with the rest of the narrative and does not resolve the tensions that have been conjured. Writing nearly twenty years later, Luise Mühlbach, aware of Sand's literary achievements and possibly having read *Indiana*, would set up a similar tension in her *Aphra Behn*. This reimaging of the life of a seventeenth-century English author relied heavily on the sentimental logic prevalent in nineteenth-century antislavery culture, which portrayed the goal of abolition as a matter of a sufficiently powerful appeal to feeling, under the right circumstances.

## IMAGINING HISTORIC ANTISLAVERY HEROISM IN LUISE MÜHLBACH'S *APHRA BEHN* (1849)

Luise Mühlbach's *Aphra Behn* has been identified as a 'historical social novel' (Tönnesen 1997, 211). Though set in radically different surroundings, the novel is a clear reflection on Mühlbach's experience with the revolutions of 1848. As the wife of a prominent man of letters involved with the experimental Frankfurt parliament, she had witnessed revolutionary politics up close and her correspondence at the time reveals her frustrations with what she considered the 'raging, blowing, gurgling […] Babylonian confusion' of Republican proceedings, liberal leadership's 'hair-splitting' (quoted in Tönnesen 1997, 264), and the general lack of regard for revolutionary women or women's issues. In one letter, she describes yearning to move to the exotic 'American jungles', where she would '[r]ather howl with the wolves in the jungle, than with the republicans of the day in Berlin' (Tönnesen 1997, 263).[23]

Mühlbach found a vehicle for her disillusionment in the notorious historical figure of Aphra Behn. Behn was known as England's first professional female author and as the writer of the sensationally violent tale of slave rebellion, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688), made internationally famous especially by its adaptation for the stage by Thomas Southerne (1695). Across three volumes, Mühlbach's novel

[23] 'Ist das nicht köstlich idyllisch so aller Politik zu enttäuschen? Aber Lieber in dem Urwald mit dem Wölfen heulen, als in Berlin mit den Republikanern des Tages' (quoted in Tönnesen 1997, 263). Her experiences are captured in her letter exchange with Gustav Kühne, one of Mundt's close friends, from May to December 1848. Reprinted in Tönnesen 1997.

chronicles the frustrations, disappointments, and ultimate corruption of the seventeenth-century English author, first in colonial Suriname and then at the perverted Restoration court of Charles II. Her character is tormented by her unrequited romantic love for the African prince Oroonoko and her ultimate inability to aid his insurrection and prevent his execution. Mühlbach invests in establishing the historical veracity of her story by footnoting several sources she used to reconstruct Behn's life.[24] Nevertheless, she radically reinterprets Behn, who was primarily remembered as a bawdy, promiscuous, and little-read playwright – a verdict which Mühlbach's husband rehashed in his literary history of English theatre published the year before (Mundt 1848, 207, 220; Spencer 1986; Hughes 2004).[25] Mühlbach recasts Behn as a tragic antislavery heroine by taking *Oroonoko* (1688), which was in fact one of Behn's last compositions, and reimagining it, instead, not only as Behn's socially engaged debut novel, but also as a faithful telling of her life story.

Like *Indiana*, Mühlbach's novel connects different instantiations of historical injustice at both the level of plot, as Judith Martin has traced in detail, and of discourse, through the parallels drawn between colonial slaves, English subjects, and women that are a constant refrain throughout the work (Martin 2003, 324ff.).[26] These come together in a complex way in Behn's discussions with Imoinda, her black maidservant and Oroonoko's wife. Southerne's stage adaptation had recast this originally African character as a white heroine and Mühlbach appears to be the first author since to re-Africanise the character, luxuriating in the visual contrast between the two women (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 1, 22ff.; Martin 2003, 322). The characters compare their experiences of subjection, with Imoinda pointing out that Behn's 'holiest human rights' had not been desecrated like hers, and Behn retorting that 'poor, powerless humanity' were all chained in some way (1849, vol. 2, 25).

In her discussion of the development of 'explicitly feminist thematics' in women's writing of the Vormärz, Germaine Goetzinger estimates

[24] Among the sources she cites are Bishop Burnet's *History of my Own Time* (1724), James Granger's *Biographical History of England* (1769), and Theophilus Cibber's *Life of the Poets* (1753). On Mühlbach's attitudes towards the art and truth claims of historical fiction, see Hagemann 2015, 344.

[25] Spencer meticulously traces Behn's reputation in the British sphere, and offers some suggestions for how it travelled into Europe as well. For instance, the 1709 German translation of *Oroonoko* included a biographical note on Aphra Behn. Mary Ann O'Donnell (2004) lists nine nineteenth-century translations of Oroonoko, in French, German, and Russian.

[26] For a telling example of such a triangular parallel, Mühlbach 1849, vol. 2, 7–8.

that, out of all the heroines of the period, Mühlbach's version of Aphra Behn is 'the literary figure who rebels and pines for freedom the most' (1988, 97; see also Martin 2003; 2006; Cayzer 2009). Throughout the novel, Mühlbach criticises women's societal oppression and exclusion from political decision-making. In doing so, she frequently reflects on the woman–slave analogy. In one of many examples, her protagonist exclaims:

> I am a woman, that is my misfortune. Everything had been taken from us women, even our right to spiritual creation! We are only allowed to be the slaves of our husbands and carry their children […] I no longer want to be a woman, but just a free, feeling, thinking and acting human creature! (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 2, 284–285)[27]

As this passage illustrates, where *Indiana*'s protagonist was made fatally complacent by her childhood on Île Bourbon, Mühlbach's heroine's anguish in Suriname ultimately prompts her to cynically unsex herself, relinquishing her original feminine feelings and sympathies – except in her writing. In Mühlbach's reimagining, Behn's authorship is closely connected to her sensibility and her passion for the cause of the enslaved (1849, vol. 3, 267, 303). Once she has finished writing *Oroonoko*, her reading of the story at court is so powerful that it enthrals and temporarily ennobles the corrupt assembly, even prompting the king to reflect 'We are barbarians and vandals, we white men against these black heroes!' (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 2, 324–325).[28] Emphasising the potential of literature to drive reform and the importance of listening to women's voices for the moral conscience of the nation, Mühlbach weaves motifs typical of nineteenth-century antislavery into her account and uses them to re-establish Behn's reputation as an author of significance.

Mühlbach also introduced abolitionist motifs into her representation of colonial life. These include an emphasis on the importance of

[27] 'Ich bin ein Weib, das ist mein ganzes Unglück, sagte sie. Man hat uns Frauen Alles genommen, selbst das Recht des geistigen Schaffens! Wir dürfen nur die Sclavinnen unserer Männer sein, und ihnen Kinder gebären, das ist unsere Pflicht und unser Beruf […]. Ich will kein Weib mehr sein, sondern ein freies, fühlendes, denkendes und handelndes menschliches Geschöpf! […] Ich will leben, wie es mir gefällt, ich will sein und mich kleiden, wie es mir gefällt, ich will den Stolz haben, kühn dieser ganzen erbärmlichen und kleinlichen Welt entgegen zu treten und ihr zu sagen: ich verachte Dich, und wenn Du mich verspottest, so lache ich dazu! Ich will ein Weib sein, um zu lieben, und ein Mann, um zu denken!'

[28] 'Wir sind Barbaren und Vandalen, wir weise Männer gegen diesen schwarzen Helden!' (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 2, 324–325). For the parallels between the titular character and Mühlbach's authorial persona, Martin 2006.

song to slave society (1849, vol. 1, 10, 213), a dog chase (156ff.), and frequent description of the brutal practice of corporal punishment by whipping (e.g., 10). These changes render the enslaved as much more defeated than the original 1688 telling of the same story. Compared to Behn's original, the motif of corporal punishment takes on a diametrically opposed meaning in Mühlbach. Whereas in Behn, whipping is characterised as a gross iniquity which catalyses slave rebellion (2016 [1688], 89), Mühlbach frequently describes whippings by overseers as part of the plantation background setting of her story. Perversely, this repetition dulls the significance of the violence, presenting it as a more pedestrian element of slaveholding society. Behn's original mentions the uproarious 'barbarous music' of Afro-Caribbeans at festivities (2016, 63), but Mühlbach chooses to render the singing in funereal terms, describing how 'wonderfully awful [*wunderbar schauerlich*]' the 'monotonous, melancholy' singing of the enslaved sounded as they returned from the plantation (1849, vol. 1, 10). Mühlbach's Aphra voices arguments from antislavery repertoire on various occasions, like when she berates a plantation owner:

> I am telling you, that God's patience has finally run out, and that he is using these blacks to punish you for your vile, cruel crimes! Because you are a criminal! You have audaciously dared to degrade people to the level of animals, and as you stepped on their worth and rights you blasphemed against God and his most beautiful and holiest creations! Judgement Day has come! (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 1, 171)[29]

Similar to Indiana's denunciation of her husband, Behn's speech conjures ironic reversals (slaves punishing their master), adding an emphasis on slavery's sinfulness and the inescapability of divine judgement.

One of the novel's key themes is Behn's wasted potential agency for the common good. Here she represents Mühlbach's keenly felt wasted agency of other enlightened women in turbulent times. The magnitude of this loss is emphasised by the systematic erasure of any agency on the part of the enslaved, especially compared with its source material. Mühlbach maximises the contrast between Oroonoko's courage and the passivity of the other slaves, who are presented as a meek and cowardly mass of

[29] 'Ich sage Ihnen, dass Gottes Langmuth endlich erschöpft ist, und dass er sich dieser Neger bedient, um Sie zu strafen für Ihre fluchwürdigen, und grausamen Verbrechen! Denn Sie sind ein Verbrecher! Sie haben mit frevelnden Muthe Menschen zu Thieren erniedrigt, und ihre Würde und ihre Rechte mit Füßen tretend haben Sie Gott gelästert in seinem schönsten und heiligsten Werke! Der Tag des Gerichtes ist gekommen!'.

'poor, trusting blacks' (1849, vol. 1, 183).[30] Mühlbach's cynical emphasis on this contrast reflected her frustrations with the failures of 1848, which she ascribed to the personal failings of Republican leadership, and this becomes especially clear in her reimagining of the slave revolt (Behn 2016 [1688], 53; Mühlbach 1849, vol. 1, 90). In Behn's original, the enslaved collectively leave the plantation. Once the colonists overtake them, they stand their ground and even, in an ironic reversal prepared by Oroonoko's battle speech (2016, 89), whip their pursuers: 'they never stood to Parley, but fell on Pell-mell upon the *English*, and kill'd some, and wounded a good many; they having recourse to their Whips, as the best of their weapons: And as they observ'd no Order, they perplex'd the enemy so sorely, with Lashing 'em in the eyes' (2016, 94).[31] Mühlbach's story, on the other hand, omits the scene of this collective rebellion altogether. Instead, when Behn informs the enslaved on the plantation that the Governor has learnt of their plans, all but Oroonoko lose their courage:

> The men had become slaves again! […] The Governor is coming! He wants to have us torn apart by his dogs, the Negroes howled with trembling knees, and here and there some were seen throwing themselves to the ground, others flinging their knives away, here and there some quietly crept away or climbed up the tall trees to seek protection there from the terrible Governor. (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 1, 183)[32]

Mühlbach strips the slaves of any heroic impulse. In doing so, she not only emphasises the natural leadership of Oroonoko, but also Behn's moral authority as a sentimental heroine and as the sole white defender of the enslaved in a, by then, well-established rhetorical flourish of abolitionist storytelling.

[30] 'Stumm und mit niedergeschlagenen Augen satz Aphra neben ihm […] jetzt empfand sie glühende Scham, fühlte sie sich niedergebeugt unter der Last des Verbrechens, das ein Weißer, das einer ihrer Landsleute, ein Engländer begangen an dem armen, vertrauenden Schwarzen' (1849, vol. 1, 183).

[31] In the original, it is the women and children of 'fearful Cowardly Dispositions' who eventually plead with the men to abandon their attack. This passage stands in contrast to what comes after and which has attracted more attention from critics: Oroonoko's furious verdict on his fellow fugitives, whom he now deems 'Dogs, treacherous and cowardly, fit for such Masters' (90), and the seeming narratorial endorsement that speaks from the fact that his co-conspirators join in whipping him at the post (91).

[32] 'Alles blieb still, keine Hand erhob sich, keine Lippe öffnete sich, – die Männer waren wieder Sclaven geworden! […] Der Gouverneur kommt! Er will uns Zerreißen lassen von seinen Hunden, heulten die Neger mit schlotternden Knieen, und hier und da sah man Einige sich zur Erde werfen, Andere ihre Messer von sich schleudern, hier und da auch schlichen sich leise Einige davon, oder kletterten empor auf die hohen Bäume, um dort Schutz zu suchen gegen den furchtbaren Gouverneur' (Mühlbach 1849, vol. 1, 183).

*Aphra Behn* was not reprinted and the scarcity of copies that have survived into the present day attest to the limits of its circulation.[33] Mühlbach's reimagining of Aphra Behn in terms of sentimental antislavery, however, showcases the creative afterlife of these memories of antislavery in Continental Europe. Throughout her novel, Mühlbach uses analogies with slavery to critique both the subjection of women in marriage and that of subjects under a tyrannical despot, triangulating them with her portrayal of colonial slavery in a complex argument for women's emancipation. In Mühlbach's imagination, women novelists had a crucial role to fulfil in the moral welfare of the nation. Rewriting Aphra Behn as a sentimental heroine able to move people with her words, Mühlbach honed in on a tragic friction between women's influence and their powerlessness and offered a suggestive historical allegory to critique the exclusion of the voice of women from the public sphere at the critical juncture of 1848. However, Mühlbach's rewritings of her source material also showcase the limitations of sentimental antislavery when it came to imagining genuine common cause. Her vision structurally depended on the understanding of the enslaved as passive objects of history. The case of Flora Tristan makes the limitations of this discourse even more apparent.

## LIMITS OF SENTIMENTAL ANTISLAVERY IN FLORA TRISTAN'S *PÉRÉGRINATIONS D'UNE PARIA* (1838)

A scandalously outspoken feminist socialist, Flora Tristan was one of nineteenth-century France's most powerful female voices (Moses 1984, 107; Offen 2017, 157).[34] Her *Pérégrinations d'une paria* relates the account of her journey to Peru, where she hoped, in vain, to secure an inheritance from her father's aristocratic family. Tristan's lifestyle gained her notoriety, and her acrimonious divorce case, in which passages of her work were entered as evidence, made the pages of international newspapers. *Pérégrinations* is a hybrid text, part 'travel narrative, autobiography, Bildungsroman and manifesto' (Mary Rice-deFosse quoted in Paulk

[33] A rare indication of the size of the novel's readership is that the Brno-based *Die Presse*, which serialised another of her novels, referenced *Aphra Behn* as one of the novels which had earned Mühlbach such a 'great and common recognition in Germany' ('Feuilleton' 1850, 1). Further research might show the circulation of the 1859 re-edition.

[34] Tristan's *Promenades dans Londres* (1840) was especially successful, with four editions appearing between 1840 and 1842. In *Union ouvrière* (1843), an extensive proposition for a transnational workers' union, Tristan takes on opponents of women's education.

2010), and Sarah Grogan has perceptively suggested that Tristan's work ought to be read 'kaleidoscopically' (1997, 11), as she 'carefully selected and deliberately maintained' an array of different roles in her writing (1997, 12). Tristan's professed attitudes to the slavery she witnessed in Peru are similarly kaleidoscopic, shifting back and forth between first-hand accounts and cultural memories of antislavery. Like Sand and Mühlbach's heroines, Tristan styles herself as a sentimental heroine who vocally opposes slavery. However, Tristan also plays the role of a masculine 'aggressive, interactive seeker of knowledge' and these eyewitness-styled passages, marred by racist overtones, paint a different picture of her interaction with enslaved men and women than her passages in the sentimental antislavery mode (Pratt 2003, 159; see also Thompson 2012, 264ff.).

Throughout *Pérégrinations*, Tristan compares and contrasts women's lives in the different places she visits, juxtaposing, for instance, the liberty of women in rural Peru with those trapped in unhappy marriages at home in France and among the Peruvian aristocracy (2004 [1838], 268ff.; see also 432ff., 594ff.). Like the previous two texts, Tristan's work echoes Saint-Simonian ideas about the importance of women's love for counteracting men's cold reason (e.g., 96ff.) and analyses the misfortune of freethinking women in a patriarchal world (268).[35] In contrast to Indiana and Aphra, however, Tristan characterises herself as having successfully fought her own 'enslavement'. It is a pervading, complex sense that slavery is not just a system of victimisation, but also a moral failing that motivates her to tell an unhappily married South American relative:

> Cousin, there is suffering wherever there is oppression, and oppression wherever there is the power to exert it. In Europe, like here, women are slaves to their husbands as they are here, and have even more to suffer from their tyranny. But in Europe one meets more women whom God has imbued with enough moral strength to escape from the yoke! (2004 [1838], 270)[36]

Tristan characterises resistance to gender conventions as a moral, as well as personal victory, and uses her own story as an exemplary case of women's emancipation paving the way for a powerful new social conscience.

[35] Compare also Tristan's elaborate woman–slave analogies in *Promenades dans Londres* (1840, 95–96, 238, 243).

[36] 'Cousine, il y a souffrance partout où il y a oppression, et oppression partout où le pouvoir de l'exercer existe. En Europe, comme ici, les femmes sont asservies aux hommes et ont encore plus à souffrir de leur tyrannie. Mais en Europe il se rencontre plus qu'ici des femmes auxquelles Dieu a départi assez de forces morales pour se soustraire au joug' (Tristan 2004, 270).

As is evident from the passage, her view of emancipation is tied up with latent assertions of European superiority, despite her insistence on the solidarity between the 'pariahs' of the world (2004, 40–41).

Tristan's travelogue reports on the slavery she witnessed throughout the regions she visited. The two most elaborate encounters with the realities of plantation life bookend the narrative, framing Tristan's development in a way reminiscent of *Indiana*. The first occurs in the second chapter, set in La Praia (Cape Verde Islands), when she ends up having dinner with a slaveholder whom she characterises as 'not a Frenchman, but a cannibal [anthropophage] in sheep's clothing' (Tristan 2004, 106). The second takes up the penultimate chapter of the book, when Tristan visits a plantation at the seaside resort of Chorrillos. Mirroring each other, the two scenes throw Tristan's character development into sharp relief. While the opening chapters emphasise Tristan's indulgence in what are described as juvenile ideas, like her chauvinism about French culture (2004, 83–85) and belief in the importance of love (95), by the end of the book she has been transformed from a naïve 'voyageuse observatrice' (2004, 108) into an impassioned and eloquent defender of transnational solidarity and social reform.[37]

Tristan describes her witnessing of slavery on La Praia and her interactions with a slaveholder as a transformative moment which left her 'crimson' with indignation (2004, 111):

> No, I cannot describe what a painful impression this horrible sight produced in me. […] These reflections shocked my moral ideas, and plunged me into a black melancholy. Mistrust, that response from the evils we have suffered or have witnessed, the bitter fruit of life, was born in me, and I began to believe that goodness was not so common as I had believed thus far. (2004, 113)[38]

On this occasion, Tristan is literally dumbfounded by the horrors of slavery and rendered incapable of arguing with her adversary. Near the end of her journey, however, she manages to engage a plantation owner with

[37] 'En 1833, j'étais encore bien loin d'avoir les idées qui, depuis, se sont développées dans mon esprit […] J'étais donc bien loin encore de reconnaître la solidarité des nations entre elles, d'où résulte que le corps humanitaire en entier ressent le bien et le mal de chacune d'elles' (Tristan 2004, 84–85).

[38] 'Non, je ne saurais dépeindre quelle douloureuse impression cette vue hideuse produisit sur moi. Je m'imaginais voir ce misérable Tappe au milieu de ses nègres. Mon Dieu! pensai-je, M. David aurait-il raison! Les hommes seraient-ils tous méchants? Ces réflexions bouleversaient mes idées morales, et me plongeaient dans une noire mélancolie. La défiance, cette réaction des maux que nous avons soufferts ou dont nous avons été témoins, ce fruit âcre de la vie, naissait en moi, et je commençais à craindre que la bonté ne fût pas aussi générale que je l'avais pensé jusqu'alors' (Tristan 2004, 113).

rational arguments and oratorical force. In this second encounter, she visits a *sucrerie* and engages in a long polemic (Tristan 2004, 619–626) which revisits key commonplaces of abolitionist discourse. She not only counters the planter's racism, but also debates the benefits of free versus forced labour (620) and schools her opponent on the difference between colonial slavery and forms of servitude in Europe (621). Moreover, she proposes practical measures to end slavery; she suggests that France should only consume sugar from beets they can grow at home (623) and proposes a scheme for gradual manumission to avoid situations like the uprising on Saint-Domingue (624).

Countering the planter's objections that she sounds like the fine 'philanthropists on the parliament benches' (Tristan 2004, 623) and that her abolitionism 'proves nothing except a good heart and far too much imagination […] [making] for superb poetry' (625),[39] Tristan finally introduces a prime historical example of women's agency, British women's sugar boycotts in the previous century:

> Slavery has always aroused my indignation; and I felt an ineffable joy when I learned of the existence of that holy league of English women, who forbid themselves the consumption of sugar from the occidental colonies: they undertook to only consume sugar from India, even though it was more expensive because of the rights with which it is surcharged, until the emancipation bill had been adopted by Parliament. The agreement and the constancy with which the charitable resolution was carried out made the American sugars fall on the English markets, and triumphed against the resistances which opposed the adoption of the bill. May such a noble manifestation of religious sentiments in England be imitated by Continental Europe! Slavery is an impiety in the eyes of all religions; to participate in it is to deny one's faith; the conscience of humankind is unanimous on this point (2004, 626).[40]

[39] 'Mademoiselle, votre manière d'envisager la question de l'esclavage ne prouve autre chose, sinon que vous avez un bon cœur et beaucoup trop d'imagination. Tous ces beaux rêves sont superbes en poésie… Mais, pour un vieux planteur comme moi, je suis fâché de vous le dire, pas une de vos belles idées n'est réalisable' (Tristan 2004, 625).

[40] 'L'esclavage a toujours soulevé mon indignation; et je ressentis une joie ineffable en apprenant [l'existence de] cette sainte ligue des dames anglaises, qui s'interdisaient la consommation du sucre des colonies occidentales: elles prirent l'engagement de ne consommer que du sucre de l'Inde, quoiqu'il fût plus cher par les droits dont il était surchargé, jusqu'à ce que le bill d'émancipation eût été adopté par le Parlement. L'accord et la constance apportés dans l'accomplissement de cette charitable résolution firent tomber les sucres d'Amérique sur les marchés anglais, et triomphèrent des résistances opposées à l'adoption du bill. Puisse une si noble manifestation des sentiments religieux de l'Angleterre être imitée par l'Europe continentale! L'esclavage est une impiété aux yeux de toutes les religions; y participer, c'est renier sa croyance: la conscience du genre humain est unanime sur ce point' (Tristan 2004, 626).

Though she fails to convince the slaveholder, as 'talking to an *old planter* is like talking to a *deaf man*' (Tristan 2004, 625), in this passage Tristan deftly connects the register of religion and sensibility (ineffable joy, noble manifestation of religious sentiments, impiety) with the jargon of economics and policy (surcharge, prices falling, fluctuating market prices), allowing the historical example to serve both as a transcendental and as a rational economic case against slavery. Acting as both conduit and interpreter for the memory of her British compatriots' actions, Tristan simultaneously uses the vignette to contextualise her own worldview. She places her own struggle for emancipation in a sentimental rendering of world history, in which feeling demonstrably plays a prominent role.

Tristan's mobilisation of the memories of antislavery, with she herself taking on the mantle of antislavery advocate, brought out the paradox between women's social influence and their legal powerlessness. However, the limits of her repertoire also quickly become clear, when it clashes with the racism of her eyewitness-styled reports of Peruvian life. Tristan's passionate pleas for abolition are strikingly at odds with her frequent denigrating and racist language regarding the enslaved she encounters (e.g., 2004, 91; see also Grogan 1992, 160ff.; Paulk 2010, 122ff.), leading David Haberly to consider her work as much 'anti-slave' as 'anti-slavery' (quoted in Paulk, 2010, 123). Moreover, Tristan herself availed of enslaved attendants during her travels and complained when they did not comply with her wishes. Whereas the history of antislavery formed a cornerstone of Tristan's emancipation rhetoric, in these passages she is not writing in the role of sentimental heroine, but in the mode of an 'aggressive pursuit of truth-saying' (Thompson 2012, 267).

The clash between these roles becomes quite evident when Tristan, a social revolutionary herself, seems strangely unable to recognise insurrectionary behaviours on the part of the enslaved. While she invests in a moral universe in which women's subjection and the enslavement of Africans are symptoms of the same moral corruption, she does not recognise their insubordination as a victory. A clear illustration of this is found in the mayhem that she describes in the town she is staying in, when it becomes clear there is a raid by revolutionary forces on hand:

> The cries of children, the vociferations of the slaves, the curses of the masters gave this confused scene a frightful expression! The possessors of gold, the owners of slaves, in short, the domineering race had fallen prey to terror; while the Indian and the negro, rejoicing in the coming catastrophe, seemed to meditate on their vengeance, and savoured it in advance. Threats rolled off the tongue of the native; the slave refused to obey; his cruel laughter, his sombre and fierce gaze transfixed

the master, who did not dare to strike him. This was without a doubt the first time that all these white and black figures let all the lowness of their souls be read on their faces. Calm in the midst of this chaos, I considered […] the cowardice of the whole white population […]; this hatred of the Indian hitherto hidden in obsequious, vile, creeping forms; this thirst for revenge of the slave who, the day before, kissed the hand that had struck him […] I spoke to my *samba* [black servant] in the same tone as usual, and this girl, who was drunk with joy, obeyed me because she saw that I was not afraid.[41] (Tristan 2004, 487–488)

It is clear from Tristan's account that the African and native Peruvians see an opportunity to rise up against the 'domineering race' and fight back against their subordination. Yet Tristan does not recognise this as a kindred impulse to her own. She foregrounds only what she infers to be their violent intent and ultimately denigrates their status as historic actors, emphasising what she perceives as their duplicity. What is more, unmoved by the girl's elation, she does not allow her *samba* any leave. In the end, Tristan does not characterise the Afro-Peruvians, nor the native Peruvians she encountered, as capable of escaping or transcending slavery in the way she considered herself to have done. While she switched between the discourses of sentimentalism and intrepid reportage, she extended no such privilege of subjective positioning to her opponents, let alone the enslaved people she described.

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This chapter opened with a look at the peculiar early twentieth-century international suffragist iconography of strong women wearing broken, useless shackles. Seeing how, just like their better-known Anglo-American

[41] '[L]es cris d'enfants, les vociférations des esclaves, les imprécations des maîtres donnaient, à cette scène de confusion, une effroyable expression! Les possesseurs de l'or, les propriétaires d'esclaves, la race dominatrice, enfin, était proie à la terreur; tandis que l'Indien et le nègre, se réjouissant de la prochaine catastrophe, semblaient méditer des vengeances, et en savouraient d'avance les prémices. Les menaces étaient dans la bouche de l'indigène, et le Blanc s'en intimidait; l'esclave n'obéissait pas; son rire cruel, son regard sombre et farouche interdisaient le maître, qui n'osait le frapper. C'était la première fois, sans doute, que toutes ces figures blanches et noires laissaient lire sur leur physionomie toute la bassesse de leur âme. Calme au milieu de ce chaos, je considérais, avec un dégoût que je ne pouvais réprimer, ce panorama des mauvaises passions de notre nature. L'agonie de ces avares, redoutant la perte de leurs richesses plus que celle de la vie; la lâcheté de toute cette population blanche, incapable de la moindre énergie pour se défendre elle-même; cette haine de l'Indien dissimulée jusqu'alors sous des formes obséquieuses, viles, rampantes; cette soif de vengeance de l'esclave qui, la veille encore, baisait comme le chien la main qui l''avait frappé, m'inspiraient, pour l'espèce humaine, le mépris le plus profond que j'aie jamais ressenti. Je parlais à ma samba sur le même ton qu'à l'ordinaire; et cette fille, qui était ivre de joie, m'obéissait parce qu'elle voyait que je n'avais pas peur' (Tristan 2004, 487–488).

counterparts, French and German women's rights advocates in the early decades of the nineteenth century called up memories of antislavery to elaborate on the tension between women's moral influence and their social powerlessness, the resonance of this imagery becomes clear. Calling on this staple of women's rights argumentation, the image invoked the experience of 'sisterhood', not just as the supposedly universal experiences and indignations women shared transnationally, but also as the shared language in which they had been expressing these since the 1830s. This dual remembrance, then, really did make this iconography a potent vehicle to speak for the 'women of the world', as the IWSA envisioned (quoted in Forestall 2012, 366).

Women's advocates sought to put into words their experience of subjugation, while at the same time frequently making a contradictory argument for women's power, particularly in the domain of moral progress. As Jean Fagan Yellin brilliantly argued in her study of the meaning of 'abolitionist sisterhood', women's assertions of sisterhood oscillated between finding solidarity in strength or in suffering. Rather than muddling the issue, this indeterminacy became part of the fabric of the movement and generated a productive friction: 'Enacting these complex patterns of address and avoidance, they recoded and re-recoded the emblem of the female supplicant, picturing themselves as chain-breaking liberators and as enchained slaves pleading for their own liberty, then asserting it and freeing themselves' (Fagan Yellin 1989, 5). The identification of white women abolitionists both with the enslaved and with those reformers in the public sphere who had the power to respond to their suffering, proved a productive force in the formulation of feminist critiques both for American and for European women's rights advocates.

In their work, Sand, Tristan, and Mühlbach drew not on personal experience in the abolitionist movement, but on the potent transnational memories of antislavery that circulated among reformist networks. By revisiting stories of women's antislavery, such as Aphra Behn's tale and the sugar boycotts, these nineteenth-century authors demonstrated women's historical influence on a key question of their time. More fundamentally, their reflections on the analogy between women and the enslaved drew on a set of important antislavery motifs. These included the helplessness of the enslaved and the idea of women's powerful sympathy for their plight, as well as the visual melodrama of differently racialised sisters and the voyeuristic interest in the dehumanising practices of enslavement. They were helping to construct a durable discourse of women's shared suffering, particularly in marriage, and shared frustration at their ongoing

exclusion from the national stage. The novels, particularly *Indiana*, were not only transnational in their effect, but also in their composition, as they each in their own way invited readers to imaginatively affiliate with women abroad, in Europe and across the Atlantic. This affiliation was imaginatively expansive, but not particularly encompassing. As the case of Tristan makes especially clear, there was an artifice about the 'universalist idiom' that romantic socialists employed (Andrews 2020, 2). What is more, the sisterhood imagined in these texts was one ultimately rooted in a gendered, sentimental vision of abolitionism which would long retain dominance and structurally obscured other models of action.

The pervasive influence of new cultural attitudes regarding slavery becomes particularly noticeable when comparing the texts to their explicit literary models, *Oroonoko* and *Paul et Virginie*. But the memories of antislavery these writers mobilised were not simply cultural sediment of the abolition campaign, nor of romantic socialist discourse. Using their stylistic skill, these women acted as unequivocal advocates for women's rights to divorce, self-determination, and financial independence. This is also where they parted ways with other romantic socialists, who hypothesised about women's future, rather than seeking to change their situation in the present. Their emphasis on the world-historical importance of abolition also went further than their romantic socialist climate, which remained ambivalent on the issue. By gleaning discerningly from both reform and literary history, Sand, Tristan, and Mühlbach crafted situated comparisons between the causes of women and of the enslaved at the level of both plot and discourse, which were indispensable to their critique. The next chapter showcases the minutiae of this kind of memory work, as it shifts focus to the overtly political register some women adopted following 1848 and their embrace of Garrisonian ideals.