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The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader

Joan D. Hedrick (ed.)

Oxford University Press USA (1998)

Abstract

While best known for the immensely popular and controversial novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe is also the author of an extensive body of additional work on American culture and politics. Playing many roles--journalist, pamphleteer, novelist, preacher, and advisor on domestic affairs--Stowe used the written word as a vehicle for religious, social, and political commentaries, often leavening them with entertainment in order to reach a broad audience. She had a profound effect on American culture, not because her ideas were unique, but because they were common. What made her so radical was that she insisted on putting her ideas into action. The *Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader* offers a focused collection of Stowe's writings from the 1830s through the 1860s. Illustrating her broad range, rhetorical strategies, and cultural designs on the world, it is ideal for courses in nineteenth-century American literature, women's literature, and American history. The volume collects those selections best suited for classroom use, reprinting many pieces here for the first time. Editor Joan D. Hedrick provides a substantial introduction that assesses Stowe's vital impact on nineteenth-century American literature, politics, and culture. The readings are divided into three sections: *Early Sketches*, *Antislavery Writings*, and *Domestic Culture and Politics*. *Early Sketches* presents the finest writing of Stowe's literary apprenticeship. *Antislavery Writings* includes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its entirety, placing it in the context of Stowe's considerable and often-overlooked body of other antislavery writings. This section also includes a generous selection from *A Key To Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a companion volume to the novel. *Domestic Culture and Politics* shows the scope of Stowe's thinking on the Victorian home, for which she was a major propagandist. The inclusion here of "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," an exposé of male debauchery and incest at the core of a nineteenth-century home, represents Stowe's willingness to tackle the most challenging political and social issues of her time.

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