



Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life

By Joan D. Hedrick

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"Up to this year I have always felt that I had no particular call to meddle with this subject....But I feel now that the time is come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak." Thus did Harriet Beecher Stowe announce her decision to begin work on what would become one of the most influential novels ever written. The subject she had hesitated to

"meddle with" was slavery, and the novel, of course, was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Still debated today for its portrayal of African Americans and its unresolved place in the literary canon, Stowe's best-known work was first published in weekly installments from June 5, 1851 to April 1, 1852. It caused such a stir in both the North and South, and even in Great Britain, that when Stowe met

President Lincoln in 1862 he is said to have greeted her with the words, "So you are the little woman who wrote the book that created this great war!"

In this landmark book, the first full-scale biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe in over fifty years, Joan D. Hedrick tells the absorbing story of this gifted, complex, and contradictory woman. Hedrick takes readers into the multilayered world of nineteenth century morals and mores, exploring the influence of then-popular ideas of "true womanhood" on Stowe's upbringing as a member of the outspoken Beecher clan, and her eventful life as a writer and shaper of public opinion who was also a mother of seven. It offers a lively record of the flourishing parlor societies that launched and sustained Stowe throughout the 44 years of her career, and the harsh physical realities that governed so many women's lives. The epidemics, high infant mortality, and often disastrous medical practices of the day are portrayed in moving detail, against the backdrop of western expansion, and the great social upheaval accompanying the abolitionist movement and the entry of women into public life.

Here are Stowe's public triumphs, both before and after the Civil War, and the private tragedies that included the death of her adored eighteen month old son, the drowning of another son, and the alcohol and morphine addictions of two of her other children. The daughter, sister, and wife of prominent ministers, Stowe channeled her anguish and her ambition into a socially acceptable anger on behalf of others, transforming her private experience into powerful narratives that moved a nation.

Magisterial in its breadth and rich in detail, this definitive portrait explores the full measure of Harriet Beecher Stowe's life, and her contribution to American literature. Perceptive and engaging, it illuminates the career of a major writer during the transition of literature from an amateur pastime to a profession, and

offers a fascinating look at the pains, pleasures, and accomplishments of women's lives in the last century.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

That French philosopher Foucault, who died from AIDS-related illness in 1984, continues to influence gay activism and theory without ever having explicitly endorsed such activism or given sustained attention to homosexuality is the paradox that Halperin, a professor of literature at MIT, confronts in this demanding, eloquent and caustic book. Halperin offers close readings of Foucault's thought, forging a link between its characterization of political resistance as a creative process and gay politics. The goal of activism, then, is not reform but resistance; the retrieval of the word "queer" and its empowering use by gays and lesbians is one such example. Halperin closes the book with analyses of Foucault's biographers, singling out for blistering attack James Miller, whose *Passion of Michel Foucault* (1993), Halperin argues, epitomizes the disingenuous ways in which "mainstream" accounts of gay culture play upon the very homophobia they purportedly wish to illuminate. Photos.

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Review

"Hedrick interprets the life of her remarkable subject as a shrewdly adaptive and emotionally fulfilling assertion of creativity and moral authority on the face of numerous constraints."--*The New England Quarterly*

"Thoroughly researched, carefully documented, and clearly written, it is a recommended read."--*Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*

"Hedrick is particularly eloquent in interpreting Stowe's personal life and womanly sorrows, implicitly recognizing Stowe's identifications with enslaved suffering, especially among females....This absorbing, richly detailed biography captures the historical and literary significance of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and places her squarely in feminist scholarship. The research is daunting and the interpretive narration thoroughly engaging....Hedick's accomplishment is monumental. This book is excellent popular and scholarly reading."--*American Historical Review*

"For its daring reconceptualization of American literary history, its panoramic view of nineteenth-century middle-class culture, and its keen insight into the art and personality of a major woman writer, scholars will find Hedrick's book indispensable. No one in the fields of American literature, American Studies, Women's Studies, or feminist criticism can afford to miss it, and no one in search of a great read will want to overlook it."--*Legacy, a Journal of American Women Writers*

"It's a pleasure to see this 1994 *New York Times* award-winner in paperback: this means new audiences will have access to and be able to afford Hedrick's spirited version of Stowe's life and achievements."--*Reviewer's Bookwatch*

A New York Times Book Review Noteworthy Collection

"Joan D. Hedrick makes an extraordinary effort to place Stowe's life in a wider context, creating a much better understanding of her career and her personal life."--*Florida Historical Quarterly*

"Hedrick has explored carefully the social and spiritual life of Stowe as well as the cultural and literary era that shaped her. A deep and compelling portrait emerges, creating a better understanding of Stowe not only as a writer, but also as a strong, personable woman."--*KLIAATT*, November 1995

"Intelligent, thoroughly researched....Helps us understand [Stowe's] contradictions by locating Stowe within the cultural context of her time, and in doing so, gives us an indelible portrait of 19th-century America."--*The Wall Street Journal*

"A classic biography--engrossing, capacious, definitive."--E.L. Doctorow, *The New York Times Book Review*

About the Author

Joan D. Hedrick is the author of *Solitary Comrade: Jack London and His Work*, and the Director of Women's Studies and Associate Professor of History at Trinity College, Hartford.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Bullen:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information currently can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a know-how or any news even a problem. What people must be consider any time those information which is in the former life are challenging be find than now's taking seriously which one works to believe or which one the resource are convinced. If you find the unstable resource then you obtain it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life as the daily resource information.

Dorothy Marr:

The book untitled Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains the woman idea with easy technique. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not

worry, you can easy to read that. The book was compiled by famous author. The author will take you in the new period of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice go through.

Richard Chambers:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to find information. The information will make anyone to understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. Typically the book that recommended to you personally is Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life this guide consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented how does the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some study when he makes this book. Here is why this book ideal all of you.

Valery Carpenter:

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