



# Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery

*Carolyn Vellenga Berman*

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## **Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery** Carolyn Vellenga Berman

The character of the Creole woman—the descendant of settlers or slaves brought up on the colonial frontier—is a familiar one in nineteenth-century French, British, and American literature. In *Creole Crossings*, Carolyn Vellenga Berman examines the use of this recurring figure in such canonical novels as *Jane Eyre*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Indiana*, as well as in the antislavery discourse of the period. "Creole" in its etymological sense means "brought up domestically," and Berman shows how the campaign to reform slavery in the colonies converged with literary depictions of family life.

Illuminating a literary genealogy that crosses and recrosses political, familial, and linguistic lines, *Creole Crossings* reveals how racial, sexual, and moral boundaries continually shifted as the century's writers reflected on the realities of slavery, empire, and the home front. Berman offers compelling readings of the "domestic fiction" of Honoré de Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Jacobs, George Sand, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others, alongside travel narratives, parliamentary reports, medical texts, journalism, and encyclopedias. Focusing on a neglected social classification in both fiction and nonfiction, *Creole Crossings* establishes the crucial importance of the Creole character as a marker of sexual norms and national belonging.

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