A COMPARISON OF PROSPER MERIMEE'S TAMANGO

WITH FOUR OTHER NEGRO SHORT STORIES

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INTRODUCTION

Upon examining the textbooks which are provided for American students of French, one finds only one Negro short story included. This story, Prosper Mérimée's Tamango, is to be found in several of the more popular texts. Among those examined by the writer, four included Tamango.\(^1\) The Library of Congress lists three more.\(^2\) Moreover, the writer examined textbooks provided for England and France in which this story in its entirety or excerpts were included as models of good prose style.\(^3\) From some of the American volumes certain passages have been deleted, as will be discussed later, but all of them give the essential elements of the story.

The Negro subject was much discussed from the middle of the eighteenth century until far into the nineteenth when slavery was finally abolished. Literary expressions were numerous. Some of these did not succeed, even then, but many of them were widely acclaimed by that public. One wonders why today those same short stories, novels and plays are practically unheard of, while Tamango enjoys an enduring popularity.

This study proposes to select four short stories as composite examples of the negrophile literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and by contrasting them with Tamango, to show the superiority

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of the latter. The stories which have been chosen are: Ziméo, by Saint-
Lambert, Mirza, by Mme de Staël, Jean-Pierre Florian's Sélico, and Ourika,
by Mme de Duras. Original sources have not always been available and the
writer has had to resort to authentic copies for the text of Sélico. Ziméo
and Ourika are from the Atlanta University series; Mirza is from the author's
complete works and Tamango from Vingt et un contes.

The lives of the authors will be discussed in the chronological order
in which the stories were published. Thus Saint-Lambert, whose Ziméo, ap-
ppearing in 1789, was one of the earliest Negro short stories in French,¹
will be spoken of first. Mme de Staël will be second. The exact date of
Mirza is unknown, but the author says that it was written before she was
twenty years of age;² the date can therefore be placed before 1786. It
was published, though, in 1793.³ Florian, whose Sélico was released to the
public in 1793, follows Mme de Staël, and Mme de Duras is the last of these
four to be discussed. The latter's Ourika was published in 1824, just five
years before Tamango.

The first chapter will be in the form of an historical background:
an expose of the causes that precipitated the Negro question, with the
lives of the authors in the order aforementioned. Special emphasis will
be placed on the lines at which each writer's life touched either the Negro
question or Negroes.

Chapter two proposes to present the various plots of the several
stories and to underline the similarities of each to the other and to

¹ Saint-Lambert, Ziméo, edited by Mercer Cook and Guichard Parris,
(Atlanta, 1938) p. 1.
³ Edward Derbyshire Seeber, Anti-slavery Opinion in France, (Balti-
more, 1937) p. 17.
the negrophile literature in general. Chapter three will contrast the style of the stories to show how Mérimée lifted his Tamango out of the set pattern which the others followed. The conclusion will emphasize the salient points of chapters I, II, and III.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Traces of sentiment against the practice of slavery are evident in French literature as far back as the fifteenth century.⁴ This did not concern the Negro, however, for Negro slavery was not introduced into the French colonies until about 1625.⁵ One of the first official documents pertaining to this particular institution was the famous Code Noir⁶ which, appearing in 1685, was designed to regulate the duties and privileges of the Slave. With the increasing number of voyages to Africa and the New World, however, people became more intensely interested in the black man; persons who had never seen him learned much about him through travel, literature, stories, and treatises on the practice of slavery.

About 1746 and 1747 l'Abbé Prévost published a collection of the writings of several earlier travelers.⁷ This book, L'Histoire générale des voyages, had instant success and was widely used by other writers as a source of useful information.⁸ But it was with the publication of Montesquieu's L'Esprit des lois that the discussion came out into the open; the "encyclopédistes" or "philosophes" took up the fight and a general agitation for emancipation ensued.

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1 Seeber, op. cit., p. 17.
3 Ibid., p. 57.
4 Seeber, op. cit., p. 47.
5 Ibid., p. 47.
6 Etienne Servais, Les Sources de Bug-Jargal (Bruxelles, 1923)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "bon sauvage" doctrine furnished a basis for the humanitarian contention. The slave became a person of very pleasing physical endowments, who, in his native habitat, was possessed of all the virtues, but who was corrupted by contact with higher civilization. All of his bad qualities were traced to cruel masters; specific good qualities were revealed through humane treatment.

There appeared many plays, short stories and novels which dwelt on the oppressed slave as their theme. A very early example of such literature and one which was repeatedly referred to was La Place's translation of the Oroonoko by Mrs. Aphra Behn (1745). Indeed, Swinburne termed Mrs. Behn "the first literary abolitionist ... on record in the history of fiction."¹

It was in such an atmosphere as this that Saint-Lambert, Mme de Staël, Florian and Mme de Duras wrote the short stories which will be discussed in this study. These are the things which furnished the general background and literary impetus for the Tamango of Prosper Mérimée.

Jean François de Saint-Lambert was born at Nancy in 1716. He was educated by the Jesuits who taught him lessons in tolerance—lessons which subsequently stood him in good stead as an abolitionist. Upon leaving school he served in the infantry; later, at the court of Luneville he met Voltaire who was destined to exert great influence on his life and writings. An attack of paralysis which forced him to give up the military life made him decide to follow a career of letters.

It is quite evident that although he did not live in an environment

¹ Seeber, op. cit., p. 28.
where slavery was practiced, Saint-Lambert came under the influence of the abolitionist movement. At Paris, where he finally settled, he became enamoured of Mme du Châtelet, Voltaire's mistress, who later died in giving birth to Saint-Lambert's child.\(^1\) A singular aftermath to the tragedy was the friendship which grew up between the two men and the popularity that Saint-Lambert subsequently enjoyed. His literary and social importance grew apace; he frequented the salons of Mme Geoffrin and Mme Necker which were important focal points for the discussion of humanitarian thought. At dinners at the home of Mlle Quinault he came in contact with Diderot, Duclos, d'Holbach, and others of the "encyclopédistes" who had become interested in abolition with the publication of *l'Esprit des lois*. He was influential in the French Academy to which he was elected when his poem *Les Saisons* appeared in 1769.

Although Saint-Lambert made no mention of slavery in the first edition of *Les Saisons*, he later included a short stanza on the horrors of the institution.\(^2\) In his notes to the poem, he asked the rhetorical question: "La Découverte de l'Amérique et celles des passages aux Indes par le cap de Bonne-Espérance ont-elles servi au bonheur de l'espèce humaine?\(^3\) He noted the extinction of the peaceful tribes which originally had inhabited the New World, the constant warfare among the Negroes of Africa as a result of the white man's intervention with guns and liquor and concluded with the lament that those who had been unable to bring happiness

\(^3\) of Ibid., The same question was proposed by Abbé Raynal eighteen years later as the subject of an essay contest.
had not refrained from bringing misery in their wake.\textsuperscript{1}

Perhaps the writer from this group who came under the influence of the abolition movement at the earliest period in life was Anne Germaine Necker who became Mme de Staël. She was born at Paris in 1766, the daughter of the Mme Necker whose salon was mentioned above and of Jacques Necker, financier and renowned French statesman.

Mme de Staël was a precocious child and early attended the discussions which took place in her mother's salon. Thus she gained invaluable information on subjects pertaining to literature, history, philosophy and politics. Since she came in direct contact with the distinguished writers who frequented her home, she probably heard the reading of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* when she was about twelve years of age.\textsuperscript{1} Her favorite authors were Montesquieu and Rousseau; at the age of fifteen she presented her father with selected passages from *L'Esprit des lois* annotated with her own reflexions. About the same time Abbé Raynal obtained a dissertation which she had written anent the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. So impressed was he with the force of her thought and the excellence of the style, that he considered giving it a place in a new edition of his *Histoire des deux Indes*.

Evidences of Mme de Staël's liberty-loving spirit are numerous. Her literary contributions from early youth were largely pro-freedom. In 1787, she wrote the preface for a translation of a work by Wilberforce which related to the slave trade. In her preface, while praising Wilberforce and extolling his works for the abolition of slavery, she berated the defenders of the slave trade:

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 429.
\textsuperscript{2}Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had visited the Ile de France from 1768 to 1770.
Les colons prétendirent qu'ils seroient ruinés si la traite
était abolie; les villes de commerce d'Angleterre affirmèrent
que leur prospérité tenoit à celles des colons; enfin l'on rencontra
de tous les côtés ces résistances qui recommencent toujours, quand
les honnêtes gens s'avissent de défendre les opprimés contre les
oppresseurs.1

In 1803, during the period when Napoleon, the ardent negrophobe, was
ruler of the French, Mme de Staël was one of the few individuals who dared
speak in behalf of the Negro. Her interest at that time was centered upon
Magloire Pelage, a black man whom Napoleon had imprisoned. She asserted
that he had rendered his country a great service; that he had saved Guade-
loupe for France, and demanded his release.2

In fact, she so irritated Napoleon by her constant attacks against
his policies that finally she was sent into exile. This controversy has
been explained:

Son influence, son esprit d'indépendance, son livre De la
littérature (1800) qu'anime l'amour de la liberté, la rendirent
susceptive à Bonaparte qui lui donna l'ordre de s'éloigner à
quarante lieues de Paris (1803). Cette sorte d'exil, en l'obligeant
to voyager, acheva de faire d'elle un esprit cosmopolite ...... Son
livre De l'Allemagne (1810), saisi et détruit par ordre de Napoleon,
la fit définitivement exiler de France.3

In 1814 she again showed her sympathy for the slave by her plea for
concerted action toward abolition. In her appeal to the sovereigns of
Europe who were meeting at Paris she cited the following statement which
she attributed to M. Pitt:

Je ne connois aucun mal qui ait jamais existe, et je ne
puis en imaginer aucun qui soit pire que quatre-vingt mille

1 Mme de Staël, op. cit., v. 17, p. 356.
2 La Comtesse Jean de Fange, "Mme de Staël et les Nègres," La Revue
de France No. 19 (Oct. 1, 1884) p. 436.
3 Abry, Crouzet, Audie, Histoire illustrée de la littérature française
(Paris, 1928) p. 446.
personnes annuellement arrachées de leur terre natale par la combinaison des nations les plus civilisées de l'Europe.¹

Her Mirza, which is one of her earliest works, was directly influenced by the Chevalier de Boufflers, former governor of Senegal.² He was a very humane man who did much to relieve the situation of the Negroes of his colony.³ Despite the fact that he needed the financial accoutrements, he refused to engage in the slave trade as his predecessors had done.⁴ Instead, he attempted to carry out Saint-Lambert's proposal to teach the blacks to cultivate sugar, thus obviating the necessity for slavery.⁵ Boufflers once visited the island of Goree, near Senegal and later recounted incidents of his trip to this "paradis terrestre". He was the "Voyageur de Sénégal" to whom she credits the inspiration of the story.

From the foregoing sketches one sees that Saint-Lambert and Mme de Staël were active abolitionists. Although neither of them had actually lived in an environment where Negroes were not an anomaly, both were closely associated with individuals who had known slavery. Their lives were inextricably bound with those for whom the question was of vital importance. Their stories appeared at the height of the period of humanitarian influence.

¹ Mme de Staël, op. cit., v 17, p. 367.
² La Comtesse Jean de Pange, op. cit., p. 436.
⁴ Comtesse Jean de Pange, op. cit., p. 437.
⁵ Mme de Staël, op. cit., v. 2, p. 205.
⁶ Comtesse Jean de Pange, op. cit., p. 437.
This abolitionist spirit was not so well defined in another writer whose short story, Sélico, was published about the same time as Mirza. He had had no direct contact with the Negro and he did not meet the question as early as Mme de Staël did. This author, Jean Pierre Florian, was born in 1756 at the Château de Florian near Sauve. While still a child he was presented to Voltaire, whose niece had married his uncle, the marquis de Florian. Three years later, at the age of thirteen, he was made the eighth page of the Duke of Penthèvye. After following diverse careers, he returned in early manhood to the service of the Duke, who obtained for him an annuity that made it possible for him to devote his time to writing. He became Voltaire's protegé and was admitted to membership in the French Academy in 1788.

During the period of the French Revolution, Florian evinced too great a sympathy with the people's cause. Through his writings he incurred the displeasure of the Comité du Salut Public and was imprisoned. His friends pleaded to no avail for his release; he protested his own innocence but was not released until a very short time before his death which occurred from natural causes in 1794.

Some of the important events which took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century are reflected in Florian's work. Noticeable among these were the massacres of Saint Domingue. The mulattoes of this American colony, led by Julien Raimond and Vincent Ogé, demanded civil rights for their group.¹ Finally on May 15, 1791 the National Assembly passed a resolution which granted to free Negroes the right to hold office.²

¹ Seeber, Anti-slavery Opinion, pp. 170-171.
² Ibid., p. 171.
The white citizens, however, refused to accept this decree and, as a result, the mulattoes revolted in August of the same year. The state of unrest which this revolt typified continued until finally, in February of 1794, the bill was signed for the abolition of slavery.¹

Florian had perhaps come in contact with the Negro question from his association with Voltaire.² His immediate interest was doubtless motivated by the controversy which ensued during the period leading to and directly following the revolt. Consequently, he read the travel reports and stories previously written,³ and fabricated a story which followed the trend of the other negrophile literature.

In the three decades which elapsed between the stories previously mentioned and the next one to be discussed, some important events occurred. The French Revolution, beginning in 1789, had sought to establish a new order. Robespierre's "Reign of Terror" coincided with the troubles of Saint Domingue. Napoleon made his meteoric rise to become Emperor of France, was exiled in 1814, returned for one hundred days and was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815.

Napoleon's first wife, Josephine, was a Creole from Martinique and it is probable that she influenced his negrophobic tendencies. Holding that slavery was indispensable to the prosperity of France, he revoked the decree of 1794.⁴ During the napoleonic era the Negro lost the

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¹ Ibid., p. 172.
³ Seeber, Anti-slavery Opinion, p. 189.
⁴ Ibid., p. 194.
characteristics attributed to him by the "bon sauvage" literature. An example of the description now accorded him is found in these lines from Guichard's poem, *La Negresse* (1802):

\[
\text{Si tous étaient de la sorte, sans peine}
\text{Je répondrais de m'en goûter,}
\text{Ce n'est qu'une épingle, j'admire sa tournure,}
\text{D'un éteignoir il offre la figure.}
\]

After Napoleon came Louis XVIII whom Charles X followed in the very year that *Ourika* was published. The trend flowed back to negrophile literature but with a more modified tone than had existed before Napoleon. In 1823 the French Academy, inspired perhaps by Clarkson's book, *Le Cri des Africains*, sponsored a poetry contest in which the abolition of Negro slavery was the central theme. Chauvet's poem, *Néali*, which was awarded the first prize, related the story of a captive who, rather than submit to seduction by her white captor, incited the other Negroes to revolt and when they were vanquished, killed her daughter and herself. A few lines from the poem will serve to show the author's sympathetic attitude toward the slaves:

\[
\ldots \text{Infortunés! Vainement leur vertu}
\text{S'étèle à des exploits que notre orgueil publie,}
\text{Morts pour la liberté, la gloire les oublie,}
\text{Leur sang demeure esclave, et leurs tristes lambeaux}
\text{Pour voeux ont le blasphème, et les mers pour tombeaux.}
\]

These then are the elements which entered *Ourika*, which was one of the first short stories to be written by an individual who had really lived among Negroes, and which appeared early in the nineteenth century. The author, Mme de Duras, née Claire de Kersaint, was born in 1778 at Paris. When her father was executed by order of the revolutionary tribunal of 1793, she and her mother fled to the United States, thence to Martinique.

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1Etienne, op. cit., p. 65.
2Guichard, *Contes et autres poésies*, (Paris, 1823)
It was during her stay in America that she first saw a large number of Negroes. Several years later she and her mother returned to settle in England and there she subsequently married. The couple returned to France to live.

Although she took no part in the political intrigues of the day, Mme de Duras formed close friendship with several eminent negrophiles. Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël, who frequented her salon, exercised great influence on her writings. During one of the discussions in her salon she told the tragic story of a Negro girl who had been adopted by her friend, Mme de Beauvau, aunt of a former governor of Senegal. The story was so unusual and so well told that her friends urged her to write it. When published, Ourika was an immediate success. Mme de Duras, though not an abolitionist in the strictest sense of the word, was naturally attracted to the oppressed and her writings show a sympathy for the unfortunate individual in any situation of inequality.¹

Prosper Mérimée, whose short story Tamango was published in 1829, presents a sharp contrast to the writers who have been discussed in the foregoing pages. His sympathy with the Negro as an individual is questionable. Of him Lanson says:

Merimee est le moins humanitaire des hommes, et son pessimisme est ce qu'il y a de plus oppose au rationalisme optimiste des encyclopedistes; il meprise tout l'homme pour avoir fai au progres.²

Seeing the possibilities offered by the Negro question which was in vogue at that time, he made use of it. The literature which had preceded

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¹ Sainte-Beuve, Portraits des femmes, (Paris) p. 69.
him, as well as recent events, furnished a rich background from which he could draw material. Public interest was currently focused on the exotic, the fantastic, and maritime adventures. He took advantage of the situation.

Born at Paris in 1803 of a poor middle class family, he was given a good classical education at the Collège de Charlemagne and later studied law. But he preferred writing to practicing law and soon published a collection of short plays entitled *Le Théâtre de Clara Casul*. From his very first work his excellent style was noticeable and he later became one of the preeminent French prose stylists.

Merimée wrote in a period of romanticism but his hatred of exaggeration and his cynicism caused him to veer from the set pattern:

> Il traite ses sujets terribles avec une impassibilité absolue, et sous une forme entièrement impersonnelle. Les personnages ne s'analysent pas, ils agissent, et malgré les passions violentes qui les dominent, ils nous semblent vrais, vivants et naturels.

We find on the one hand, therefore, four authors who were all spiritually allied, each writing with the same purpose in view. For them slavery was an evil which must be abolished and their stories were articles of propaganda. On the other hand, we find a man who had no "ax to grind" and consequently, rendered a different version of the same material. His story has lived while theirs are seldom read. This study proposes to point out similarities in material and differences in structure in justifying the enduring popularity of *Tamango*.

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1 Léon Vignole, "Les Sources du 'Tamango' de Mérimée et la littérature négrière à l'époque romantique," *Mercure de France*, (December 15, 1927)

CHAPTER II

AN EXPOSITION OF THE PLOTS OF THE STORIES

An examination of the negrophile literature resulting from the foregoing background reveals many similarities in the stories which were based on the ideas in vogue at the time and the reports disseminated by the several voyagers.

The first story to be studied, Saint-Lambert’s Ziméo relates the tale of a former African prince who, with his fiancée, is kidnapped by a band of Portuguese traders and sold into slavery. Later, he escapes to join the maroons, or fugitives, whom he leads in a revolt against the cruel planters of Jamaica. The climax is reached when he finds his long-sought fiancée who has undergone many hardships but who, notwithstanding, has remained true to her absent lover.

It was a generally accepted belief that the master’s treatment was reflected in his servitors; that the Negro’s bad qualities were engendered by the cruelty of some owners, and that kind masters received excellent service from their devoted slaves. During the revolt which is a feature of Ziméo, the servants of the humane whites were willing to defend their owners with their lives. The attacks, however, were confined to those plantations on which the slaves had been harshly used.

Ziméo, who led the maroons, was the epitome of the noble and beautiful savage familiar to the negrophile literature. Many travelers had spoken in glowing terms of the physical beauty of the Negro of certain localities; Mrs. Behn had made Oroonoko a superior savage in mentality and physical traits. The description which Saint-Lambert employs does not veer from the tradition:

1 Seeber, op. cit., p. 55.
2 Henri Grégoire, De la littérature des Nègres (Paris 1808) p. 29.
Ziméō était un jeune homme de vingt-deux ans, les statues de l'Apollon et de l'Antinoüs n'ont pas des traits plus réguliers et de plus belles proportions. Je fus frappé surtout de son air de grandeur. Je n'ai jamais vu d'homme qui me parût comme lui né pour commander aux autres.¹

The kidnapping of the hero and the dire consequences which often result are also based on historical fact. Actual accounts of kidnapping had been related by various travelers,² as had instances of suicide by dejected captives who preferred death to slavery.³ Several of the Beninese, stolen along with Zimeo, killed themselves. He attempted but was prevented.

In the climax of the abolition literature, riches were often heaped upon the slave and he was given his freedom. This ending served to emphasize the misery to which the victim had already been subjected and showed, at the same time, that he could be truly happy only when free. The pleasant ending, however, was not employed exclusively, as was later seen in Mirza. This story, in which many of the features of Saint-Lambert's Ziméō reappeared, veered slightly from the usual in depicting the evils of slavery:

Ximéō, who manages the colony which the governor has founded at Goree, mourns the death of Mirza whom he once loved. When her people, the Jaloffes, defeated his and he was about to be sold into slavery, she redeemed him by offering herself in exchange. Although they were both given their freedom, she, realizing the futility of her love, committed suicide after insisting that he live on and love Ouriaka, to whom he was betrothed.

The hero of Mirza resembles Saint-Lambert's Ziméō in more than name, for "la taille de l'Apollon de Belvedere n'est pas plus parfaite."⁴

¹ Saint-Lambert, op. cit., p. 7.
² Etienne, op. cit., p. 19 n.
³ Seeber, Anti-Slavery Opinion, p. 80.
⁴ Mme de Stael, op. cit., V. 2, p. 207.
A third character, Mirza, is likewise superior, but in intelligence instead of in beauty.

The abolitionist literature of this period was replete with stories of the superior savage whose prime thought was for the happiness of others. Self-sacrifice as portrayed by Sélico in Florian's short story, Sélico, was a popular means of delineating the noble qualities of the blacks in comparison with the lower instincts of the whites:

Sélico, a native of Juida, sacrifices himself to be sold into slavery so that his mother and brothers may have money to buy food. He changes his plan, however, for he takes advantage of a situation which offers more lucrative returns and at the same time will put a quick end to his sufferings. Delivered as the violator of the king's harem, he is about to be put to death but his fiancée, Bérissa, whom he has mourned as dead, recognizes him and the real culprit's identity is divulged. It was merely her father who had visited her and comes forward to accept his punishment. He is pardoned. The king, impressed by the nobility of Sélico's designs, shames the traders and, heaping gold and presents upon the couple, sets them both free.

In 1824 Madame de Duras published another short story which became a strong weapon of propaganda. This story, Ourika, analyzed the thoughts of a cultured Negro relative to the Negro question. All the absurdities of the prejudice based on color were shown. A close view of the French Revolution revealed all that it should have meant to the black man and the despair attendant upon the failure to apply to all races the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality. Sympathy was aroused by a Negro who sought refuge in the Church and pined and died because of an unrequited love:

Brought from Senegal at the age of two, Ourika had been reared in an atmosphere of culture. In all respects she was treated as a beloved daughter of the family; nothing reminded her that she was a Negro and a slave. Unfortunately, she fell in love with Charles, her white benefactor's grandson, but was forced by circumstances to conceal her passion. Awakened to her situation in life, she was unable to adjust herself; she entered a convent where, finally she died of a broken heart.
These stories, when published, were followed by other expressions of negrophile literature which usurped the same scenes, characters and situations. Outstanding among these were: Olympe de Gouge's *Zamora et Mirza* (1786), Pigault Lebrun's *Le Blanc et le Noir* (1796), Pizérécourt's *Sélico* (1796) and Paviere's *Elisée*¹ (1799). *Mme de Duras* 'Ourika' furnished the inspiration for three plays and two poems. The more famous of these poems was *Ourika* which was written by Delphine Gay in the same year that the short story was published.²

Here we may summarize the contents of the foregoing short stories. These are the features which appear and reappear not only in the examples here given, but in many other expressions of anti-slavery literature: (1) the stories are enacted in the same environment. *Mirza* is laid near Senegal whence *Mme de Duras* 'Ourika' was taken at the age of two. The incidents of *Sélico* occur in a village on the coast of Guinea which is near the same vicinity. Jamaica, where *Ziméco* takes place, will be the scene of another short story to be studied.

As has already been noted in this study, most of the writers of literature which concerned the Negro had not traveled but depended for their impressions upon the information gleaned from the accounts of others. As early as the middle of the sixteenth century slaves had been taken from the West Coast of Africa.³ Bosman (1705), Ledyard and Lucas, Lobo (1729)

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² *Mme de Duras, Ourika* Edited by Mercer Cook and Guichard Parris (Atlanta, 1936)
and Adanson are among the travelers who emphasized the charms of the Negroes of this vicinity.\footnote{Henri Grégoire, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29.} The unanimity in choice of locality is therefore traceable to the current travel accounts.

(2) The hero is of noble birth—witness Ziméo, Ximeo, and their feminine counterparts: Ellarœ, Ourika (of Mirza), and Bérissa. (3) They are usually highly educated by the "wisest of men". In the case of Ziméo, this man is a native who trains him in all the lore of his people. Ximeo, Mirza and Ourika (of Ourika), however, are versed in the culture of the civilized Europeans and are as proficient as any whites. (4) The kidnapping of the hero often occurs. Ziméo was lured aboard a Portuguese ship. Oroonoko had been betrayed by a Spanish captain. Another, whom we shall discuss later, was also the victim of an unscrupulous trader. (5) The hero, who is unusually handsome, is in love with a girl who is outstanding for her beauty or intelligence. (6) Suicide is frequently mentioned, but almost always, when it concerns the leading characters, it is a planned self-destruction which is never realized. An incident or a circumstance prevents fruition of the attempt. Only when there is a character to be eliminated—as in Mirza—does the suicide actually occur. (7) After many tribulations, when hope is almost lost, the lovers are generally reunited for a happy ending with freedom and wealth assured. The heroine has almost always repulsed the advances of her master—whether they be the illicit intentions of the white man (as in Mirza and Ziméo) or the honorable ones of a man of her own race (as in Sélisco). (8) The names of Ziméo and Ourika recur.

(9) In many of the stories the nobility of the Negro was stressed.
inordinately, as in Mirza and Sélico—often it was so distinctive that the whites were forced to bow their heads in shame; Sélico’s sacrifice for his family and Mirza’s for her lover caused the traders to blush.

(10) Some type of religion formed an inherent part of the slave’s character. In Zimeo they adhere to the teachings of their “Grand Orissa”; Zimeo of Mirza attributes their misfortunes to a clash between the white and black gods. Sélico’s tribesmen adore their serpent fetishes and Ourika is an ardent Catholic.

(11) A modified kind of nationalism is a familiar feature of the stories; seldom do we find an unkind Frenchman. It is the Portuguese or Spanish captain who kidnaps the black man and maltreats him, as in Zimeo. The slave traders of Sélico are Dutch. In some instances the cruel whites are termed Europeans which is, of course, indefinite as to real nationality. But the kind whites in Mirza and Ourika are definitely designated as Frenchmen. In Sélico, the more hardy trader who appraises the hero at ten thousand éous is French. A Quaker is the humane white of Zimeo.

(12) Comparison with the Europeans was often effected and always to the discredit of the latter. Three of the stories gave situations which held the white man up to contempt by such passages as the following:

.......... un Français .... m’a donné ce que les Européens ont de digne d’envie; les connaissances dont ils abusent et la philosophie dont ils suivent si mal les leçons.¹

(13) The harassed slave occasionally revolted in negrophile literature, as we have seen in Zimeo. But even then he was just—wreaking vengeance only upon those who had maltreated him or his brethren.

¹ Mme de Staël, op. cit., V. 2, p. 212.
Small wonder then that the stories are of an appalling "sameness". With the authors so closely allied both spiritually and socially, and with each employing the same sources, it is readily apparent why these tales are so much alike. Mérimée, however, took the same elements and fashioned a "different" story and one which endures.

In plot it is related to all the other negrophile literature:

Tamango, a black chieftain, completes a trade with the captain Ledoux, of the slave ship l'Espérance. In a drunken fit he gives to Ledoux his favorite wife, Ayoha, because she has angered him. When he becomes sober and learns that she is gone, he follows and is taken prisoner to be sold with the other slaves.

But the wily black plots his revenge and with the aid of Ayoha he frees the others. They fall upon the whites, kill them and take the ship. But, unversed in the art of navigating a vessel, they finally perish—all except Tamango who, rescued by an English frigate, is carried to Jamaica where he subsequently dies of a pulmonary disease.

In Tamango we find again: (1) the incidents occurring in the vicinity of Senegal and the coast of Guinea; (2) the hero of noble birth; (3) an unscrupulous captain who kidnaps the hero; (4) love as the element that motivates the incidents; (5) the hero an outstanding man; (6) seduction of the Negro heroine by the white captain. But Mérimée avoids many of the exaggerated situations found in the stories which preceded his story. For the abolitionist writers, the Negro question was a serious one. Their stories were attempts to create within the public the same sentiments that they themselves experienced. They strove so hard to teach a lesson that they neglected everything else. Mérimée, on the contrary, introduced an element of sarcasm which prevented his Tamango from becoming too serious in tone. He gave full play to the comic side of the question, thus lifting it from the class of the others.
The differences in presentation which make Tamango superior to the other short stories studied, will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

A CONTRAST OF THE STYLE OF THE STORIES

It is in the manner of presentation that one finds the essential difference between the frankly romantic stories of the first period of negrophile influence and the Tamango of Prosper Mérimée. The romanticism of the one stands out in sharp contrast to the objectivity of the other.

The usual humanitarian narrative is typified by a long introduction which leads up to the particular situation. Saint-Lambert's Ziméo, Mme de Duras' Ourika, Mme de Staël's Mirza, and many others tell the real story only after a detailed introduction involving customs surrounding the practice of slavery and the background for the incident. The story is then related—often abruptly—as in Mirza:

(Ximéo has been showing the plantation to his visitor. He turns away without exhibiting one particular spot and his guest speaks):

Pourquoi ... ne me montrez-vous pas ...? ---Arrêtez ... vous avez l'air sensible; pourrez-vous entendre les longs récits du malheur? ... Il y a deux ans que je n'ai parlé; tout ce que je dis, ce n'est pas parler. Vous le voyez, j'ai besoin de m'épancher; vous ne devez pas être flatté de ma confiance; cependant, c'est votre bonté qui m'encourage, et me fait compter sur votre pitié. ---Ah! ne craignez rien ... vous ne serez pas trompé ... --- Je suis né dans le royaume de Cayor ...!

The apologetic tone of this introduction detracts from the validity of the story, despite the fact that the language and halting phrases denote well Ximéo's reluctance to speak. The beginning has been loosely compounded to make reference to the plan for the cultivation of sugar, a profound hatred of slavery, the intellectual possibilities of the Negro and the exemplary life that a freed man lives. It is an idyllic

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1 Mme de Staël, op. cit., V. 2, p. 211.
picture but overdrawn, and as the story unfolds, one sees no real relation between the two. The narrative could very easily be developed without the introductory passage.

In Ourika, too, we find the background for the story in a long introduction which is in the form of a doctor's testimony. Several elements are included: the description of the convent; the patient's mental and physical condition; the unusual fact of her color; her reluctance to tell the reason for her grief. Finally, after exhausting this information, the doctor concludes his statement:

Je rendis mes visites au couvent de plus en plus fréquentes. Le traitement que j'indiquai parut produire quelque effet. Enfin, un jour de l'été dernier la retrouvant seule dans le même berceau, sur le même banc où je l'avais vue la première fois, nous reprîmes la même conversation, et elle me conta ce qui suit. ¹

Here we see the first indication of Madame de Duras' conversational style. The introduction is related by an observer in the same manner that one would use if he were telling a story orally. The tone, however, is monotonous; short sentences and repetition as in the use of the word "même" are features of romanticism.

Longer and more involved is the section of Saint-Lambert's Zimoc which introduces the real story. The locality is described; various methods of treating the slaves are set forth; allusion is made to the illicit approaches of a white man to his black slave girl; and all the main characters are named before the story really commences. In fact, it is only in the middle of the narrative that we find the true beginning:

¹ Madame de Duras, Ourika, p. 10.
Escoutes, hommes de paix, le malheureux Ziméc, il n'espère qu'en vous, et il mérite votre pitié; écoutez ses cruelles aventures.1

Again we see an introduction which is a prolonged apology—in this instance, for the revolt. The negrophile literature which was attempting to paint for the public the best possible picture of the slave, had to give ample justification for an uprising. But Ziméc's own speech contradicts the author's first picture of him. An individual who would ruthlessly slaughter the inhabitants of an entire village would not cringe and beg for pity and justification in this situation.

Tamango, on the contrary, begins with the first word: "Le capitaine Ledoux était un bon marin"2 and proceeds to the conclusion in a clear concise manner. There is no abrupt change from one idea to another.

Sentence and paragraph structure in some of the stories leaves much to be desired. An example of the overcrowded sentence is this one from Ziméc in which the ideas are numerous and unrelated:

Les affaires de mon commerce m'avaient conduit à la Jamaïque; la température de ce climat brûlant et humide avait altéré ma santé, et je m'étais retiré dans une maison située au penchant des montagnes, vers le centre de l'île; l'air y était plus frais et le terrain plus sec qu'aux environs de la ville; plusieurs ruisseaux serpentent autour de la montagne, qui était revêtue de la plus belle verdure; ces ruisseaux allaient se rendre à la mer; après avoir parcouru des prairies émaillées de fleurs, et des plaines immenses couvertes d'orangers, de canne à sucre, de cafiers et d'une multitude d'habitations.3

In this single sentence we see the reason the writer is in Jamaica; favorable climatic conditions of one locality and unfavorable conditions

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1 Saint-Lambert, op. cit., p. 9.
2 Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 145.
of another; location of the house; description of nearby country, and
description of surrounding countryside. The author has attempted to
draw a picture but the plurality of words detracts from the image.
He has used about fifty words to describe a scene which could be de-
scribed in less than twenty. Punctuation is, of course, bad--other-
wise this would be a paragraph instead of a single sentence; but one
clause is especially noticeable for the glaring fault of punctuation;
the last clause, which has no verb, is set off as if totally independent.

Paragraph division is usually arbitrarily effected. The twenty-two
pages of Mirza are confined to two paragraphs. This, however, is rather
the exception than the rule. The usual paragraph fault is one of inter-
polations. Often there is included in the paragraph a passage which
would be better placed elsewhere or entirely omitted. Especially is this
true in instances when the writer paused for moral or philosophical homi-
ilies as Mme de Duras often does:

"Me sauver de l'esclavage, me choisir pour bienfaitrice Mme
de B., c'était me donner deux fois la vie; je fus ingrate envers
la Providence en n'étant point heureuse; et cependant le bonheur
résulte-t-il toujours de ces dons d'intelligence?"

The last clause of the excerpt is rather awkwardly included and totally
unnecessary to the story. If it were entirely omitted, the clarity would
not suffer and the conciseness would be greatly improved.

Occasionally the insertion was made to introduce a custom peculiar
to a certain tribe:

"Sélico, le plus jeune de ses frères, allait souvent à la ville
porter les premières de la moisson, les offrandes de la pauvre
famille, au temple du principal dieu du pays. Ce dieu, comme on

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1Mme de Duras, op. cit., p. 1.
sait, est un grand serpent de l'espèce de ceux appelés Pétiches, qui n'ont point de venin, ne font aucun mal, dévorant au contraire les serpents venimeux, et sont si vénérés à Juida, qu'on regarderait comme un crime horrible d'oser en tuer un seul; aussi le nombre de ces serpents sacrés s'est-il multiplié à l'infini: Au milieu des villes et des villages, dans l'intérieur des maisons, on rencontre à chaque pas ces dieux qui viennent familièrement manger à la table de leurs adorateurs, se coucher près de leurs foyers . . .

The information concerning the mode of worship is inserted between two ideas which are not related to it; in the preceding paragraph the author emphasizes the love of three brothers for their mother and the duties of each. In the following paragraph he returns to Sélico, describing him and portraying his love for Hérissa. The reference which is made to Sélico above is misplaced. His duty is a part of the first paragraph; his age is a part of the second. Placing the two closer would have been much more effective. The significance of the serpents is seen later when the village is attacked by Audari; that information could, therefore, be easily worked into the incident rather than separated as it is.

And even if it were included in the incident, some deletion would be necessary for conciseness. The section from "Ce dieu" to "leurs foyers" is a single sentence according to the punctuation. Like the one quoted earlier from Zimeo, it could be divided into simpler sentences. The utter simplicity of the words saves it somewhat and insures relative clarity; but the romanticism as evinced by the short descriptive phrases which begin with: "au milieu des villes . . .", prolongs the narrative to too great a degree. One loses the thread of the thought in the force of the tender sentimentality.

Contrast to this Mérimée's introduction of a tribal custom:

1Florian, Sélico.
(Tamango has been snatched from his lethargic acceptance of
captivity by the sight of Ayché, whom the captain has clothed in
a manner befitting his favorite. Unshackled, she is serving
wine to the whites.)

- Ayché! cria-t-il d'une voix foudroyante, et Ayché poussa
un cri de terreur; crois-tu que dans le pays des blancs il n'y
ait point de Mama-Jumbo?

... Ayché, fondant en larmes, semblait pétrifiée par ces
mystérieuses paroles.

L'interprète expliqua ce qu'était ce terrible Mama-Jumbo,
dont le nom seul produisait tant d'horreur.1

The tribal custom, which involves the detection of a wife's infidelity,
is explained. The language used is that of the sailors without the
tender romanticism of the preceding excerpt.

Antithesis is a necessary feature of romanticism and, as such,
finds its place in these negrophile stories. A passage selected from
a very long paragraph will serve to show how it can retard the action
of the narrative:

J'entendais autour de notre habitation les ruisseaux mur-
murer et les oiseaux chanter; le bruit de la mousquetterie,
les cris des Blancs égorgés et des Nègres acharnés au carnage
arrivaient de la plaine jusqu'à moi; cette campagne opulente
et désolée, ces riches présents de la nature et ces cris du
désespoir ou de la fureur, me jetèrent dans des pensées mélan-
coliques et profondes; un sentiment mêlé de reconnaissance
pour le grand Etre et de pitié pour les hommes me fit verser
aux larmes.2

Thanks to the romantic appeal to the emotions, the picture of the revolt
is almost obliterated. One sees instead the sad feelings of the observer
and, perhaps, there is a sympathetic pang of sorrow which does not make
the revolt any more vivid. The choice of words is good but there are too
many of them used. The contrast, too, is so much in evidence that the
reader loses sight of the main occurrence. "Murmurer", "chanter," "égor-

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1Irvin and King, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

--until the very end of the battle the action is swift and clearly defined.

The antithesis begun in Ziméo is continued in Ourika, which is literally compounded of contrasting ideas: the black heroine and the beautiful white girl whom Charles marries; the lowly origin of Ourika and the noble birth of Mlle Thémines; the unhappiness and happiness within Anaïs—one due to the death of her parents, the other because of her husband’s love; the happiness of Anaïs and Ourika’s unhappiness. As propaganda or as mere conversation this element of contrast has its value. But the impression which it creates is made upon the emotions and is dependent for greatest effect upon the current issues. When the crisis passes, however, stories which have only emotional appeal for that particular occasion are passe.

Constant appeals for sympathy are made through reference to actual or attempted suicide. Ourika, who wanted to die, would not take her own life because she was a Christian. Ziméo would have committed suicide had it not meant forsaking Ellarcé. Mirza committed suicide but Ximéo, who wanted to do likewise, was honor-bound to obey her last wishes. Only Sólico’s love for his dependent mother kept him from ending his life. The object was twofold: (1) to create strong sentiment in favor of the Negro who, unable to endure thoughts of enslavement, preferred death; (2) to preserve the hero for the final happy ending.

Tamango, too, is a strong-willed character who detests the idea of slavery but he does not make abortive attempts at suicide. Instead, he plots a way to free himself and his comrades and although death does result for all the others, it is not his original design . . . Nor does it seem too strange that he is the sole survivor. The author has built up a consistent picture of his hero—a man of great physical strength who has never known restraint of any kind. His fellow slaves are now
more resigned to the idea of slavery and are consequently more abject and willing to take whatever comes. He is accustomed to leading; they to being led.

Mérimée, however, does not exalt his hero unduly. While the negro-phile author had chosen to make of the Negro a superior being with finer sensibilities than his white brothers, he depicted his as an object of limited mentality, a buffoon and in individual no better than any other. This difference is first apparent in the physical attributes of the several characters. Reference has already been made to the Apollo-like heroes of Mme de Staël, Saint-Lambert, Florian and others. Tamango, too, is of noble birth but the extravagant picture which describes the others is omitted here. A single statement is allotted to description but it suggests all the force and strength of the other exaggerated portraits:

Ledoux, après l’avoir examiné en connoisseur, se tourna vers son second, et lui dit:
- Voilà un gaillard que je vendrais au moins mille écus, rendu sain et sans avaries à la Martinique.

Only once does Mérimée mention Ayché’s physical appearance and then only in passing when he speaks of her as "la belle nègresse."

The only other approach to a description is at once a satire on the mentality of the Negro and a humorous picture:

Tamango s’était paré pour recevoir le capitaine blanc. Il était vêtu d’un vieil habit d’uniforme bleu, ayant encore les galons de caporal; mais sur chaque épaule pendaient deux épaullettes d’or attachées au même bouton, et ballottant, l’une par devant, l’autre par derrière. Comme il n’avait pas de chemise,

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1Cf. pp. 15, 16 of this thesis.
2Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 148.
3Ibid., p. 157.
et que l'habit était un peu court pour un homme de sa taille, on remarquait entre les revers blancs de l'habit et son calèçon de toile une bande considérable de peau noire qui ressemblait à une large ceinture. Un grand sabre de cavalerie était suspendu à son côté au moyen d'une corde, et il tenait à la main un beau fusil à deux coups, de fabrique anglaise. Ainsi équipé, le guerrier africain croyait surpasse en élégance le petit-maître le plus accompli de Paris ou de Londres.

The first and last sentences quoted evaluate the Negro's mentality as equal to that of a child who is attracted by the glitter of tinsel. For the rest—the physical features are ignored but his attire is clearly portrayed. It is not a picture which will fade with more knowledge of Negroes or increasing prejudice against the black man. Tamango could be any chieftain from one of a hundred tribes. On the contrary, Ziméó, or Ximéó, or Sélico, who were unusual at the time that the stories were written, are even more unusual today. Additional knowledge has taught the public to expect mutilated instead of regular features in the savage. The story, therefore, which seems more to be fabricated on fact is of more historical significance and consequently more enduring.

Mérimée employs Tamango's costume again to show the different standards of values in the black man, who, as a last resort, offers his "épaulettes d'or, son fusil et son sabre" in an attempt to buy back his wife . . . This very selling of Ayohé is contrary to all principles of negrophile literature. The love of the savages is a tender and beautiful sentiment as pictured by other writers. Ziméó and Ellaroé, Sélico and Bérissa, and Mirza suffer many hardships because of their feeling for each other. In Tamango, though, the love interest takes an unexpected

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1Ibid., p. 147.
2Ibid., p. 156.
twist when liquor makes him forget his mate and attempt at reclaiming her brings on the events of the story.

The inferiority of the white man is sometimes shown by his misuse of his superior education and the savage’s appreciation of it. An instance of this has been quoted from Mirza wherein the whites are publicly embarrassed because of their lack of humane feeling. Usually this is done by a white, but in Sélîco, it is a savage king who makes the traders blush:

... le roi lui tend la main... et se tournant vers les marchands européens que ce spectacle avait attirés:
Vous, dit-il, à qui la sagesse, l’expérience, les lumières d’une langue de civilisation ont si bien appris à un âge près, ce que peut valoir un homme, combien estimez-vous celui-là?
Les marchands rougirent de cette question.¹

In a period when whites were casting aspersions upon each other because of the fact of slavery, sarcastic statements like the above were applauded. Another society which was not interested in abolition or which was negrophobe would not be so tolerant.

Strangely enough, Tamango, however, is so constructed that it may be either pro- or anti-Negro in scope. Nowhere in the entire narrative does the author subject the white man to the contempt which is the rule of the majority of the negrophile literature. Instead, the black chieftain is painted in ludicrous tones which should delight the sensibilities of any negrophobe. He is possessed of low mentality, is a drunkard and loses all sense of responsibility under the influence of a little strong drink, while the white man’s sensibilities are whetted under the same conditions. He has no sense of honor, is lazy, scheming, a liar, and a

¹Florian, op. cit.
cease. And the negrophile can take the same incidents and construe them to the discredit of the whites. But Nérimée's sarcasm is veiled; he does not say that the white man is dishonorable and that the Negro is intelligent and faithful in love and to his master. He merely gives a realistic picture and the reader puts his own interpretation upon it.

While it is improbable that such was the author's intention, the story is so written that passages which might offend a person to whom Negroes are anathema can be deleted without marring the narrative. This is what happens in some collections, among which is Buffum's French Short Stories. Whether because the editor deemed the inference too sordid for immature minds, or against the principles of the white readers of certain localities, all allusion to the relationship between Ayche and the white captain is omitted. The reference to "Nara-Jumbo" which in other editions is conclusive evidence of undesirable relationships between a white and a black is not found in this book. The following is somewhat taken from it.
"semblent pétifié par ces mystérieuses paroles." And then Buffum makes a complete break, omitting the explanation of the term "Mama-Jumbo" as well as the incident portraying the captain's attempts to soothe Ayché:

A ces mots, le capitaine descendit dans sa chambre, fit venir Ayché et tâcha de la consoler; mais ni les caresses, ni les coups même, car on perd patience à la fin, ne purent rendre traitable la belle nègresse . . . .¹

No signs denote these omissions and no explanations of any sort are given. The story is resumed at a point which reveals none of the relationship:

La nuit lorsque presque tout l'équipage dormait d'un profond sommeil, les hommes de garde entendirent d'abord un chant grave, solennel, lugubre, qui partait de l'entre-pont, puis un cri de femme horriblement aigu.²

Without the preceding incident, one does not see any untoward occurrence; an entirely different interpretation is given the story.

When Mérimée wishes to portray inhumanity, he uses a more piquant incident than the abolitionist writers employed, and the portrait is more realistic than those which preceded it. Ledoux is no more humane than his predecessors in the trade but in this situation, he is not affected by the appeal to his better nature:

(Seeing that he has only a few slaves left, Tamango attempts to force Ledoux to take them.)

- Aohête, dit-il au blanc, ou je la tue; un petit verre d'eau-de-vie ou je tire.
- Et que diable veux-tu que j'en fasse? répondit Ledoux.³

The demand of the black chieftain, whose low mentality has been established, is not surprising. Added to that is the realism as exemplified

¹Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 157.
²Buffum, op. cit., p. 15.
³Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 150.
by the drunken man who would do anything for more liquor. Ledoux's
answer is typical of a man who has lived as hard a life as his had been
and who has learned to think primarily of himself. Merimeé neither
causes him to blush nor finds him kind because he is a Frenchman.

Another departure from the usual is that the author of this story
paints his black hero as black as he paints the white villain, for the
chieftain murders in cold blood one of the slaves in question—the
mother of three children. He would murder them all but for the inter-
vention of the humane interpreter. And when he does picture an humane
white, the portrait is not a cloying one in which the individual is
exalted high above his neighbors:

... L'interprète était un homme humain. Il donna
une tabatière de carton à Tamango et lui demanda les six
esclaves restants. Il les délivra de leurs fourches, et
leur permit de s'en aller où bon leur semblerait.  

Such a course of action would have been too simple and matter-of-fact
for a Wilmouth who "n'exigeait de ses esclaves qu'un travail modéré" and
offered them their freedom after ten years. Neither would the
governor in Mirza have stopped there, for he not only established a
colony for the cultivation of sugar, but, in the words of Ximoe:

... le gouverneur m'a convaincu qu'il fallait vivre
pour être utile à mes malheureux compatriotes pour respecter
la dernière volonté de Mirza.  

Mme de Beauvau, Ourika's benefactress, expended much time, energy, and
money in attempting to make her happy; and Sélico's benefactor gave him

1Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 151.
2Saint-Lambert, op. cit., p. 2.
Bérissa, freedom, and ten thousand pieces of money. These early writers were much more profuse in their gifts to the slaves; freedom did not suffice. They each showed a personal interest in the recipient of their kindness and often visited them after their days of slavery were over.¹

Their generosity is neither so true to life nor easy to accept as that of the interpreter. Such incidents are too melodramatic to outlive the period of their specific usefulness.

Tamango is made infinitely more interesting by certain descriptions of the manner in which the slave trade was carried on. But these facts, tinged with the author's priceless satire, are bereft of the harshness that could be theirs if stated in a more serious tone. Ziméo, Sélico, and Mirza had each mentioned the slave trade but only one of them (Mirza) gave an approach to the methods employed, and there the tone was quite bitter:

... les Européens examinoient notre âge et notre force, pour y trouver l'espoir de nous faire supporter plus long-temps les maux qu'ils nous destinoient.²

But in Tamango the complete description of the mode of transportation is given:

Ils parurent sur une longue file, le corps courbé par la fatigue et la frayeur, chacun ayant le cou pris dans une fourche longue de plus de six pieds, dont les deux pointes étaient réunies vers la nuque par une barre de bois.³

It is possible for a sympathetic reader to become emotionally upset upon reading this vivid illustration. But the author does not bid for sympathy.

¹Saint-Lambert, op. cit., p. 18.
²Mme de Staël, op. cit., v. 2, p. 221.
³Ibid., p. 150.
Instead, he becomes satirical at the end of the sale:

... ils se hâtaient de leur ôter leurs fourches de bois pour leur donner des carcans et des menottes en fer; ce qui montre bien la supériorité de la civilisation européenne.

The actual transaction is depicted, but in it, Mérimée neither discredits the white man nor asks sympathy for the benighted black. It is the negrophile who would emphasize the rascality of the captain who, knowing the power of liquor, employs it to attain supremacy over the black. The portrait is a realistic one in which each party behaves characteristically:

A chaque esclave mâle ou femelle qui passait devant lui, le capitaine haussait les épaules ...
- Tout dégénéré, disait-il; ...
  Cependant, tout en critiquant, il faisait un premier choix des noirs les plus robustes et les plus beaux.
  ... Ledoux manqua de tomber à la renverse, de surprise et d'indignation ... il se leva comme pour rompre tout marché avec un homme si déraisonnable ... Ce fut le tour du noir à trouver folles et extravagantes les propositions du blanc. On cria, on disputa longtemps, on but prodigieusement d'eau-de-vie ... Plus le Français buvait, plus il réduisait ses offres; plus l'Africain buvait, plus il cédait de ses prétentions.\footnote{Ibid., p. 160.}

This very vivid scene can also be construed to emphasize the stupidity of the Negro and his naive craving for liquor. The author returns to this same theme later and all the slaves forget their troubles when they find the cask of liquor.\footnote{Ibid., p. 164.}

The very language in which the scene is couched is quite expressive and each word is selected to draw a picture. One sees the incident as if it were actually being enacted before him.

\footnote{Ibid., p. 164.}
Predominant in the scene is the comic element. While others had presented the slave trading as a thing of horror, "infini échange", and passed on, this writer cast over it an aura of humor. Consequently the casual reader is attracted by the humor and the impression thus created is sufficient to arouse his interest in the story. Perhaps, later he will analyze it for the author's beliefs.

In none of the preceding stories had the slave ship been shown so clearly as Mérimée shows it. Ledoux is a recognized authority in the business of fitting a slave ship. Through his ingenuity the vessels now have iron casks for conserving the water; the handcuffs and leg chains are painted to prevent rust; the interior of the ship is so arranged that the slaves will be fairly comfortably seated, yet several more can be squeezed in if necessary. The dimensions are quoted and the time of sailing. The story even makes allusion to the devices employed for passing inspection. Yet none of this is done in a dry tone but spiced with the satire which Mérimée uses to perfection, and which extends to the names: "Ledoux" and the slave ship "l'Espérance". Slave trading is termed "trafiquants de bois d'ébène". The liberality of the captain is satirized:

... car enfin, disait Ledoux à son armateur pour justifier cette mesure libérale, les nègres, après tout, sont des hommes comme les blancs.

One can imagine that Mérimée put his "tongue in his cheek" in displaying the "courage" of the white man. With the utmost cunning Ledoux disarmed the trusting Tamango and then two sailors fell upon him and, after a

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1 Hede de Staël, op. cit., v. 2, p. 221.
2 Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 147.
terrible struggle, subdued him.

Repetition, which is apparently a necessity for emphasis in many of the stories, is not employed in Tamango. Zimé gé had to justify his revolt and in order to impress his native kindliness upon the readers, his speech is punctuated by the poetic but naive refrain: "Hommes de paix, n'éloignez pas vos coeurs du malheureux Zimé gé."¹ The plea, as was intended, weakened the force of the revolt, but it also weakened the force of the narrative; it is inconceivable that this superb specimen of manhood, having just finished slaughtering the whites of the village, should debase himself and plead forgiveness from two utter strangers who had been reputed kind.

The reader's credence is strained by the melodramatic element as exemplified by this incident. A reader, disinterested in the slavery question, finds it too improbable to believe that these two would have met on the Wilmouth plantation in just this way and at just this time after so many diverse experiences. The climax, too, is falsely realized. One foresees the denouement even though an attempt is made to ease an air of mystery over it.

The pathos for which Saint-Lambert strove in the refrain that has just been quoted, is introduced into Tamango by the revolted slaves who are unable to steer their ship. But even there, the play is not made upon the emotions; instead, one sees that the author had a perfect understanding of human character which seizes upon some object to blame for its ills:

Perfidel imposteurs s'écriaient-ils, c'est toi qui as causé

tous nos maux, c'est toi qui nous as vendus aux blancs, c'est
toi qui nous as contraints de nous révolter contre eux. Tu
nous avais promis de nous ramener dans notre pays. Nous t'avons
cru, insensés que nous étions ! et voilà que nous avons manqué de
périr tous parce que tu as offensé le fétiche des blancs.1

With the short sentences, each beginning with "c'est toi," Mérimée em-
phasizes the ire of the savages. One sees therein the anxiety which
causes them to repeat themselves and berate their own intelligence for
having followed Tamango.

Contrast to Mérimée's direct language that of the earlier romantic
writers whose stories are couched in a language replete with poetic ex-
pressions: "ils jurèrent en montrant le ciel et mettant ensuite la
main sur la terre, qu'ils périraient tous pour nous défendre;" 2 "je vous
rends à votre pays comme a votre amour;" 3 "quand le soleil ne sera plus
sur l'horizon, quand le crépuscule même ne rappellera plus la clarté, il
reviendra, et il ne fera plus nuit pour moi ... ." 4 "ils se livraient
au sommeil;" 5 "Hélas, je n'eus pas besoin d'en mettre sur le mien." 6

Often a group of stilted situations pointed too obviously to the
climax of the story. In Mirza all incidents tended toward establishing
the fact of Ximeo's sorrow:

... En achevant ces mots, elle soupira, s'éloigna, et
quand elle ne rapprocha de nous, j'apercus de traces de pleurs

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1 Irvin and King, op. cit., p. 163.
2 Saint-Lambert, op. cit., p. 3.
3 Florian, Jean Pierre, op. cit.
4 Madame de Staël, op. cit., v. 2, p. 207.
5 Ibid., p. 209.
sur son visage il paraissait inaccessible à toute émotion étrangère à son idée dominante. Les hommes infortunés par cœur ne craignent point, désirent même le spectacle du bonheur des autres.

One meets these allusions to his sorrow so constantly that finally they pall.

The naturalness of the conclusion of Tamango, in which Mérimée omits the usual happy ending with the lovers reunited, is the most fitting of contrasts to the preceding romantic appeal for sympathy. And although he neither vaunts his hero's cleverness in having escaped slavery, nor makes a preachment against the evil institution, his conclusion is effective. Tamango has no illustrious end. He ekes out a living among the planters of Jamaica who are divided in their sentiments concerning him:

... Il apprit un peu d'anglais; mais il ne parlait guère. En revanche, il buvait avec excès du rhum et du tafia. Il mourut à l'hôpital d'un inflammation du poitrine. . . .

The close relationship which existed between the earlier writers, Saint-Lambert, Mme de Staël, Mme de Duras and Florian, is in a large measure responsible for the similarity in the style of their stories. Added to this were elements in each which characterize their particular contributions. Saint-Lambert was reproached for his aridity and sadness --traits which were noticeable in the man as well as in his works. Mme

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1Mme de Staël, op. cit., v. 2, p. 207.
2Ibid., p. 208.
3Ibid.
5Didot-Frères, op. cit., v. 43, p. 54.
de Staël was not interested in literary glory.\footnote{Йме де Стейл, op. cit., v. 1, p. 6.} Her stories are expressions of the many ideas to which she was exposed. She lived in an environment where slavery was frequently discussed and her \textit{Mirza} expresses her sentiments on the subject. If one realizes that she was less than twenty years of age at the time, one understands and sympathizes with the faulty elements of the story. For Florian, the Negro subject was an important issue and therefore merited discussion. His \textit{Sélico} is based upon historical facts which are more indicated than developed. Йме де Дурас began writing comparatively late in life and did not then consider herself a writer in the fullest sense of the word.\footnote{Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, \textit{Portraits des femmes} (Paris), p. 74.} Her \textit{Ourika} is a conversation and is presented as such. She made no attempt at true literary style.

Contrary to all of the others discussed in this study, Merimee was the only one whose work was writing short stories. Saint-Lambert and Florian were poets; Йме де Стейл and Йме де Дурас made their best contribution in the novel.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 74, 84.} Their aims were different from Merimee's. Theirs was to arouse sentiment, his to entertain. They used literature as a vehicle of propaganda; his belief was in art for the sake of art. He studied humanity and learned its reaction to various situations. He studied his public and learned its tastes. In his short story, \textit{Tamango}, he exhibits the results of his studies. In this one story he mingled the prevailing love for exoticism and maritime adventure with the interest in the Negro question. One of the foremost French stylists, he
subjected these elements to his own characteristic treatment.

M. Vignols, in speaking of his presentation of the subject matter, says:

... Il prit l'exact contrepied de l'émphase et de la verbosité, des effusions et imprécations, des longues descriptions lyriques et des prétentions philosophiques, où se complaisaient les romantiques et aussi les classiques qui se combattaient pourtant avec arpidité. Chez Nérimée, au contraire, un parfait naturel, une langue simple et pure.¹

¹Leon Vignols, op. cit., p. 542.
CONCLUSION

The abolitionist authors succeeded in creating public sentiment in favor of the oppressed slave. But interest in the Negro question waned with the abolition of slavery in 1848. To the reading public which came later, the stories that had been written especially to arouse pro-Negro sentiment were antiquated. They were too serious in tone to survive the period of their expressed usefulness.

The main idea in each story was to present the slave to the public as a patient, maltreated human being, whose bad qualities were not innate but the natural result of an evil institution. This was done in practically the same way by all the negrophile writers: the Negro was portrayed as a very handsome, intelligent, industrious individual when it was advantageous that he be so, faithful to kind masters as well as in love, patient and possessed of a high sense of honor. Comparison with the white man was frequently effected to the discredit of the latter, as three of these stories have shown. Occasionally the harassed slave revolted, as in Zimec, but the author then proved that it was not the slave's fault, but the master's.

As a result of the preoccupation with the sentimental treatment of the question, the style was neglected. Historical veracity, evident in some instances which could be used advantageously, was scrupulously adhered to. However, in other instances, truth was enlarged upon. The reports of kidnapping and suicide were unembellished, but physical and moral traits of character were exaggerated and based upon the white man's standards.

For Mérimée, however, the Negro question was an open subject for
litorary exploitation. His Tamango was not written in the same tone of the stories which preceded it. He satirized the elements about which the romantics waxed enthusiastic and inserted an element of humor. The subject of slavery is treated in this story in an entirely impersonal manner and despite the violent sentiments which the characters experience they act in a true and natural fashion. Mérimée's flair for depicting local color is exhibited. One feels the atmosphere of the time and sees the real personality of the persons whom the author discusses.

Tamango is neither decidedly negrophile nor positively negrophobe in scope. It may, however, be interpreted as either in accordance with the locality in which it is used. If read by an individual who considers the Negro a man like any other, there are incidents which lead him to believe that Mérimée was in sympathy with the black man. Such a reader might easily assume that the author considered the slave honest, faithful, intelligent and ingenious. On the other hand, the individual who considers the Negro an inferior member of the human family, finds in Tamango certain incidents which support his contention that the black man is possessed of low mentality, is dishonest, a liar and a cheat. Yet these innuendos are so cleverly concealed that an unprejudiced observer, or one who is not actively for or against the Negro, finds merely an entertaining short story.

If the critic does find passages which he considers offensive either for sordid allusion or for social significance, they may be omitted without marring the sense of the narrative or the smoothness of the language.

Mérimée's story does not make its strongest appeal to the emotions although there are many situations which are sympathy-provoking. It
satisfies the reading public's ever-present taste for the sensational and the unusual; it suppresses the sentimental, appealing instead to the intelligence. The situations are not so improbable as to strain the credence of its readers. Without attempting to do so, it clings more closely to historical veracity than do the other expressions of abolition sentiment.

Yet with all the different and conflicting elements, Nérimée did not neglect style. *Tamango* is a story which is clear-cut and precise, very easily read and quite enjoyable.

Because of its excellence in style and its adaptability to different circumstances, it merits a place in literature. To know *Tamango* is to understand why it is included in textbooks American and foreign.
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