

THESIS

BUILT ON EMOTION: HARRIET BEECHER STOWE AND THE
EMOTIONAL WORK OF *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Submitted by

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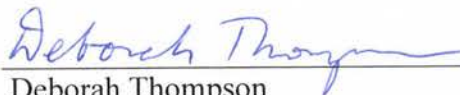
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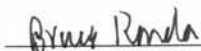
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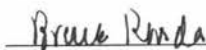
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

BUILT ON EMOTION: HARRIET BEECHER STOWE AND THE EMOTIONAL WORK OF *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Except for the Bible, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, was the largest selling book during the nineteenth century. Modern emotion theorists have produced extensive scholarship exploring the ways in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* functioned within antebellum America, and the ways in which it changed the American slavery debate. Using emotion theory, this thesis explains how Stowe's family history and regional location contributed to her ability to address a variety of audiences with her novel. It describes how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* employs many rhetorical strategies from American antislavery writing. It examines the ways in which the text was received in American society with a particular emphasis on the book's contemporary reviews and it shows how Stowe's approach to writing changed in the aftermath of the novel's release.

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Introduction

Emotional Structures in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Uncle Tom's Cabin reaches its climax with the violent death of Harriet Beecher Stowe's most famous character, Uncle Tom. Yet the real turning point of the plot, the point of no return, takes place two chapters earlier, when Tom receives a vision of Jesus. "Tom sat, like one stunned, at the fire," we read:

Suddenly everything around him seemed to fade, and a vision rose before him of one crowned with thorns, buffeted and bleeding... the sharp thorns became rays of glory...and a voice said, "He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (Stowe *UTC* 388-89)

This is Tom's equivalent of the Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane, the moment he accepts his fate and henceforth it is sealed. It is also a prelude of the way things must come to an end and a cue to nineteenth-century Victorian-era American readers to recognize a prominent typology, an archetypal storyline about to reach its fulfillment. The Biblical quote is from the book of Revelation (3:21), the seminal document in the Victorian millennial ideology, which was an expectation for the world to come to an end and be transformed. This passage is the beginning of the climax in what has come to be the quintessential example of sentimentality in nineteenth-century American literature. As Kathleen Woodward says, "Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *Life Among the Lowly* is the narrative to which scholars of sentiment in

literary and cultural studies inevitably return. In the United States it is the ur-text of the liberal narrative of compassion” (62).

At once, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* teaches us the ways in which sentimentality accomplished the evocation of feeling in its readers to support a given cause, illustrates the problems and difficulties inherent with using sympathy, and suggests how we might see similar practices of promoting an agenda by eliciting preconditioned emotional responses today. In this thesis, I will show how Harriet Beecher Stowe used sentimentality to change the ongoing debate about slavery in antebellum America, and how her own personal world was transformed by its success, not unlike the millennial expectations to which she was alluding.

Sentimentality worked by relying upon established grand narratives to create emotional reactions, particularly sympathy, through a convention of metonymic association. In other words, Stowe tied the situations of her characters to recognizable Biblical and historical figures by evoking particular imagery that would have inspired a chain of associations and comparisons in the minds of her readers. For example, soon after Tom has accepted his fate, we see him quietly accepting the hopelessness of his interrogation (Stowe *UTC* 410), in the manner that the Bible depicts Christ's questioning before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:63), and later, Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:3). As his last strength leaves from his body, he forgives his executioners (Stowe *UTC* 411) as Christ did on the cross (Luke 23:34). They force him to drink brandy (Stowe *UTC* 412) as the soldiers forced Jesus to drink vinegar from a sponge (John 19:29) and once he has expired, they are converted (Stowe *UTC* 412) in much the same way as the soldiers proclaim the dead Jesus to have been the son of God (Mark 15:39). This mirroring of

Christ's tribulation would have created clear parallels for Stowe's Puritan Protestant audience between her abolitionist fiction and the crucifixion narrative.

Modern emotion theorists contend that writers used recognizable scenes like this, because readers who were familiar with those iconic images had already been pre-conditioned to react in accordance to particular emotional expectations to "feel right." Glenn Hendler explains that feeling right "is to have proper sentiments, an appropriate response to the scenes of suffering and redemption that the reader has witnessed in the course of the novel" (3). Readers who were predisposed to experience reactions of grief and guilt over images of the crucifixion were thereby also predisposed to carry those culturally constructed propensities to react in certain ways to a Christ-like character suffering a Christ-like death in a Christ-like way. Therefore, it is of little surprise that Stowe asserts in her concluding remarks that, "There is one thing that every individual can do, --- they can see to it that *they feel right*" (Stowe *UTC* 442).

Yet, it would be inaccurate to relate this metonymic translation in such a simple, straightforward manner, because the reality is far more complicated. Peter Stearns provides some compelling insights that lend more complexity to the implications behind 'feeling right.' He deems modern assumptions about the Victorian era as emotionally repressed to be "a considerable oversimplification" (16). He points out that while the common perception of Victorian emotions as subdued or constrained is in many ways correct, it fails to describe accurately the complicated dynamic of expectations that framed nineteenth-century emotional hegemony, or the prevailing dominant cultural enforcement. In fact, while many expressions of emotion like fear and sexual arousal

were discouraged or suppressed, other expressions like grief and guilt were acceptable and even expected (Stearns 38, 50).

Stowe skillfully plays upon these expectations, designing scenes that would elicit specific patterns of feeling within her readers, and then attaching her own messages to those moments of feeling to create subtle associations between predominant structures of storytelling and her own agenda. As Woodward puts it, “The reader is prompted to identify empathetically with a character that is suffering (generally through the medium of another character), and this response is read as an experience in moral pedagogy” (Woodward 62). In this way, Stowe could attach emotional expectations to slave characters, and then to an abolitionist philosophy.

As Woodward implies, Stowe often mediates her imagery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, either by relating the suffering of one character through the perspective of another, or by retelling the same story through multiple perspectives of character or narration (Hendler 4). For example, the story of Eliza crossing the Ohio River is told three different times from three different perspectives (Gilmore 61). We learn of this story through Black Sam, then through Stowe as the narrator, and then through Eliza herself.

Stowe also uses several themes or grand narratives to evoke conditioned emotional reactions from her readers. Again, the famous scene when Eliza carries her son, Harry, across the icy Ohio River, leaping from one floating sheet of ice to another in order to preserve her family (Stowe *UTC* 58), is a perfect example of this. Besides the Biblical allusions to the account of the Jewish slaves' flight out of Egypt and crossing of the River Jordan into the promised land, Stowe is echoing a powerful domestic narrative

about the love of a mother for her child. This would have resonated strongly with the primarily female audience to which novels of the time were typically addressed (Walters 173).

Uncle Tom's Cabin not only mediated multiple themes of association through multiple characters, but in so doing, also modeled the sympathetic method for its readers. Characters were not only depicted as sufferers, but also as sympathetic, stressing the value of sympathy that, in the Victorian era, was especially praised. Sentimentality worked by presenting suffering through the perspectives of sympathetic characters. This method gives the reader a prescribed method in which to interpret the meaning of the suffering and to provide examples of how sympathy can alleviate the suffering. It then implies that the sympathetic response should carry over to the appropriate personages in the real world (Hendler 35). One excellent example of this in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the interaction between Eva and Topsy. As the dying Eva takes compassionate pity on Topsy, Eva's emotional response interprets the meaning of Topsy's suffering to the reader and prescribes the proper reaction. The reader then will presumably carry that sympathetic reaction over to a person in the real world who reminds them of the character Topsy. The conversion of expected emotional reaction in the real world, the realigning of the ways in which people came to associate archetypes with actual slaves and the reassignment of meaning to their suffering was what made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* so powerfully transformative (Woodward 62).

There are several important attributes in this scene. Besides Eva's converting capacity to sympathize, there is an underlying component of anticipated grief in this scene. Grief was an emotion in Victorian culture that elicited especially intense reaction.

It was something that people were expected to express openly, publicly and passionately. This coupling between grief and sympathy would have had a profound impact on Stowe's readers. "Death itself, correspondingly, would move one to the core," Stearns goes on to say, "Despite its pain, the essence of grief was a vital part of the Victorian life" (Stearns 38).

Besides the component of grief in this scene, Stowe renders it even more effective by possessing Eva with what Woodward calls "motherly love" (Woodward 63). "Motherlove," as Stearns terms it, in the nineteenth century was considered boundless, and writers in the Victorian age commonly used this theme to create affect in their readers. Stearns writes, "The religious-like qualities of this love were no accident; they were deliberately signaled by many advice writers, evangelical and secular alike" (Stearns 35). The technique would have elicited within the reader a feeling of sameness, as would the Christian themes, which Stowe was using to dismantle the predominant racial otherness that empowered the institution of slavery at the time.

Hendler makes this point explicit when he writes, "The oft cited moment in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when the escaped slave Eliza Harris wins the senator's wife, Mrs. Bird, over to her cause by asking, 'Have you ever lost a child?' is the classic example of this gesture, in which motherhood and recent loss become the analogous ground on which a cross-racial sympathetic identification can be based" (Hendler 6). While proponents of slavery contended through arguments of sophistry and reason that African Americans were inherently different from European Americans, Stowe countered those arguments by convincing through emotional response that the similarities of feeling outweighed the differences of appearance.

When Eliza's husband, George Harris, joins his wife and son in their escape from slavery, Stowe takes this association one step further. Not only do the three of them mirror the New Testament narrative of Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt with the baby Jesus, but George, who shares the name of the father of our nation, adds a new grand narrative of American egalitarianism for men to the equation. "I have n't any country," George says, "any more than I have any father" (Stowe *UTC* 110). When cornered, he declares, "I am George Harris... I'm a free man, standing on God's free soil; and my wife and my child I claim as mine" (Stowe *UTC* 195). It is a powerful declaration of independence that implies to the reader that participation in a nation that claims liberty and justice for all men, not just for all white men, is also by association through the democratic process a participation in its various institutions, and particularly slavery. In addition to this, the sanctity of the family carried with it a sacramental emotional preeminence that transcended all other bonds of association (Stearns 20).

The implication of failed egalitarianism adds to what it means to 'feel right'. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which criminalized any assistance given to a runaway slave, also eliminated the luxury of northern claims that slavery was merely a southern problem. This piece of legislation made it impossible for many Americans in the North to dismiss slavery as a remote institution. Thereafter, all Americans, not just southerners, were implicated in the guilt of slavery (Walters 176).

Perhaps guilt was the most important among the emotional reactions Stowe evoked. Stearns tells us that guilt was the primary vehicle through which hegemonic enforcement of feeling operated. He says, "Victorian emotional culture capped its central themes by developing a growing reliance on guilt as the central enforcement mechanism

for proper behavior, including suitable expressions of feeling” (50). Used heavily in other genres of reform literature like Temperance narratives that were common in Stowe’s time, guilt was the motivator by which an individual enacted change. The increased intensity and duration of guilty feelings comprised a central part of the self-examination process during the nineteenth century. Through guilt, a person would identify the reverberating effects of one’s own actions; through guilt one became empowered to work on the cause of change.

Once again, Stowe’s entreaty to make sure that one ‘feel right’ proves an ever deeper and more complicated provocation. She is *combining* particular predisposed emotional reactions by framing her narrative into typological constructs of biblical, familial, maternal and political associations all simultaneously. These grand narratives in Victorian culture would have evoked feelings of grief, love, patriotism, and guilt, which were all, by metonymic association, transferred onto African American slaves. By asserting a relation of sameness, the novel effectively negated racial otherness. No longer were proponents of slavery able to convince people that the feelings and opinions they held for their neighbors did not also apply to African Americans, with whom northern readers had very little acquaintance.

Yet, Stowe’s attempts to foster sympathy and compassion in her readers proved perilous in a number of ways. Her efforts to evoke sympathy include a responsibility to address ideas of what constitutes the meaning of suffering, gender constructs of emotional expectations, and regional differences of feeling. As this thesis will show, she was surprised by criticism from proslavery writers and particularly from African

Americans. She did not anticipate the many perils associated with using sentimentality to evoke sympathy for marginalized people.

First among these, Stowe's efforts to elicit sympathy in order to undermine a system of slavery ran the risk of actually underpinning it instead. As Elizabeth Spelman explains, "far from tending to undermine the master-slave relation, kindly feelings of various sorts may simply reflect and reinforce it" (Spelman 59). In other words, depictions of suffering and sufferers for the sake of eliciting compassion can result in the reinforcement of the attitudes that created the suffering as well as compel people to work towards reform. In part because sentimentality assumes that the interpretation of suffering is universal, a disconnect exists between the suffering of a slave and the imagining of that suffering by a free person. Therefore, political movements inspired by sympathy evoked within empowered people will inherit the same type of disconnect (Woodward 71).

Moreover, sentimentality works on an audience "predicated upon a fiction of abstracted, disinterested, and disembodied subjectivities interacting in a sphere where 'the best argument,' rather than coercion, carries the day" (Hendler 13). This undefined audience is particularly significant to the work of Stowe, because her concept of change was one of individual conversion (Walters 188). Although Stowe believed that she was working on a 'one person at a time basis,' she was in reality operating within a commodified public sphere. Moreover, she failed to anticipate the powerful coercive effect that culture, economics and politics would exert in the diverse regions throughout the United States outside of Protestant New England.

As it turns out, wherever compassion is concerned, neither the sufferer nor the suffering is in any way universal. Stowe's use of multiple perspective mediation helped to diversify the ways in which readers interpreted the suffering of her characters, but it also opened up additional sources of criticism when opponents considered the narratives unlikely or impossible in reality. Lauren Berlant insists that "There is nothing clear about compassion except that it implies a social relation between spectators and sufferers, with the emphasis on the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its subsequent relation to material practice" (Berlant "Introduction" 1). Therefore, the effectiveness of the depiction of suffering, and especially as it relates to any overall agenda of the text, depends on the way a reader interprets its value or meaning. Elizabeth Spelman essentially agrees. She says, "As we sift through and try to make sense of the suffering to which we are called upon to respond, we implicitly and explicitly sort out, measure, and give shape to it" (Spelman 1).

Consider, for instance, the affliction of Uncle Tom. It is easy to mistake Uncle Tom as a tragic figure because he loses the nineteenth-century sacredness of home and family, falls victim to a man who, contrary to the Victorian expectations of constrained anger, is quick to fury, and suffers a savage beating by distinctly un-Christian persecutors. However, on top of all the other grand narratives that Stowe has to navigate, the literary tradition of tragic typology complicates the emotional dynamic even more.

The first factor that determines whether Tom's suffering qualifies as tragic is his disposition. As Spelman points out, in order for a character to be tragic, he must be of better than average moral fiber, yet not so good that the average sympathizer cannot identify with his nature (Spelman 36-7). Tom is clearly morally ideal, which serves to

reinforce his Christ-like quality, but this ideal undermines his ability to be tragic. His morality, however, is offset by his limited education and simple nature. These qualities make him more suitable for tragedy. But Tom's social stature overrides his moral character. According to the classic Aristotelian model of tragedy that Spelman employs, and that would have prevailed in Stowe's time, tragic figures are autonomous, almost always of the ruling class and never slaves. She notes, "Aristotle's criteria for the tragic protagonist, in the strict sense of the *Poetics*, preclude the idea that being born a slave, being a slave by nature, is tragic" (Spelman 43). Slaves lack the autonomy to have a choice whether or not they enter into the tragic situation and generally cannot be considered identifiable to the average sympathizer. Therefore, Tom's suffering cannot be tragic either.

Tom's suffering fulfills the requirement that it must be grand in scope, and therefore spectacular. However, tragic suffering is at its center the result of an individual's own bad choices. Tragic suffering can never be the result of imposed choices, as Tom's is. Nevertheless, here again, Tom's situation is deceptively complicated. His suffering is not entirely the result of imposed choices, since he is offered several chances to save himself by revealing the location of two of his fellow slaves (Stowe *UTC* 410). As indicated by the title of the chapter in which Tom is beaten to death, he is a martyr. Like a tragic figure he suffers as the result of his own decisions. Unlike a tragic figure, he enters into the suffering fully aware of the ramifications of his decisions before he chooses them. Even more, he does so for the benefit of others at his own expense.

Still, other characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are not so complicated and instead of compassion, evoke pity, a condition which, Spelman says "unlike compassion, is not a matter of cosuffering, [and] heightens rather than erases differences between the nonsuffering and the suffering" (Spelman 65). It can also allow the pitier to take pleasure in the suffering of another through what Hendler calls a Lacanian 'duplicate mirror-structure.' (Hendler 216) The pitier can at once take pleasure in the fact that they are not suffering, while simultaneously take pleasure in the fact that they perceive themselves to be more sympathetic in being able to recognize the suffering of others.

At once, these complications contributed to both the limitations and successes of Stowe's novel. Her inability to navigate the discourses behind what was and wasn't considered admirable suffering contributed to the severe animosity with which some readers received *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The type of suffering her characters endure invited criticism that they are really more like caricatures. As a result, it was parodied frequently and viciously in popular culture.

Yet Stowe's successful employment of nineteenth-century structures of emotional expectation also resulted in the profound accomplishments of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. One of her primary purposes in writing the book was to inform readers of the realities of slavery. Up until the eighteen fifties, northerners did not really have much exposure to slavery or abolitionism. To many people in the north, slaves and slavery were distant concerns without faces or connection. Stowe needed to find a way to describe the institution so that she could engage the most readers possible, and in a way that would make sure they would continue reading. This was also facilitated, in part, by new technologies that enabled periodicals to be home delivered on a monthly basis.

However, releasing her book in series form in a monthly abolitionist periodical posed additional problems with structures of emotional expectation. It entailed releasing a novel, a primarily feminine medium, within a masculine political publication. For a work of a genre whose main mode of persuasion was in sympathy and compassion, releasing her book initially in an abolitionist periodical meant that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would have to appeal emotionally to men as well as women. This was a complicated issue because men and women in Victorian America often had conflicting expectations of emotional response. While women were expected to display emotional responses to given stimuli, men were expected to exert rational restraint (Stearns 45). Navigating the different gendered emotional expectations proved to be a difficult and sometimes perilous endeavor. For example, sympathy in the nineteenth century was not synonymous with compassion. Men who practiced oratory were supposed to create sympathy, meaning *same feeling* (Hendler 3), which often took the form of outrage, a reaction that was almost never acceptable in women (Stearns 29). In order to mediate between the dual expectations of emotional reaction among the multitude of her emotionally charged grand narratives, Stowe addresses her abolitionist argument through both male and female characters, some relying more upon reason, others more on emotion.

Regional differences of emotional expectations explain some of the criticism her book received. One of the most significant differences between the Northern and Southern Victorian American emotional cultures was a Southern preponderance to react with intense alacrity in matters of disputed honor (Stearns 43). In her efforts to elicit compassion for slaves, her negative descriptions of Southern slave owners evoked a regional emotional response. As a result, she found herself compelled to write a second

book, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in order to defend the validity of the novel. This venture into fact-based scholarship proved to be a transformative period for Stowe and for her style of composition.

With so many predetermined frameworks of emotional expectation, it is apparent how complex Stowe's task was to persuade her readers emotionally. 'Feeling right' entailed negotiating among feelings of religion, family, motherhood, patriotism, personal ability to be sympathetic, admirable pain, pity, gender roles, and regional honor. Although valid arguments have been made pointing out Stowe's (and sentimentality's) shortcomings, somehow she managed to deal with all of these frameworks, align them with existing narratives, and relate the ideas of her own antislavery agenda throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The result was a seminal work of American literature that transformed the character of American public debate - and Stowe's life - in comprehensive ways.

This thesis chronicles the ways in which Harriet Beecher Stowe's culture and environment uniquely prepared her to deal with these expectations of emotional and rational argumentation. In the first chapter, I show how her family and regional background placed her at the center of a changing social and theological environment that was undergoing a drastic paradigmatic change during the Second Great Awakening. Influenced by the sweeping changes brought on by the Enlightenment during the Age of Revolution, theology, politics, and expectations of emotional expression intersected in ways that transformed almost every aspect of American society. Led by her father, Lyman Beecher, young Harriet's family was at the center of that transformation and

experienced divisions and conflicts because of it that echoed the kinds of splits and changes that were occurring throughout the United States.

Influenced by the specific regions in which she was raised and the convergence of forces that shaped those regions, Harriet Beecher gained a perspective that understood the diverse flows of cultural expectation and the ways those flows intersected and complemented each other. Her environment taught her to navigate the spaces between contending and often conflicting discourses, which in turn allowed her to mediate among those powers and reach a diverse American audience in ways that transformed public discourse.

The second chapter details the history of antislavery rhetoric and connects the historical sequence of the ongoing effort to the rhetorical structures of the genre in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was originally published. Beginning with the early efforts of the Quakers and their fundamental belief that equality of men grew from a spiritual connectedness to one God, I catalogue the development of the American antislavery movement through the Enlightenment thinkers, the African American abolitionists, the evangelical reformers, the Colonization movement, the influx of women contributors and finally the abolitionists. I show how each of these groups brought their own agenda to the antislavery movement and imbued its rhetoric with their own contributions of perspective. I then show how Stowe engaged all of these different streams of rhetoric in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and unified them in one coherent novel.

The third chapter deals with the critical reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, relying heavily on the theoretical framework of Jürgen Habermas' 'Public Sphere'. I discuss the

ways in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* grew to dominate public discourse on American slavery and how the methods of association that Stowe employed in the novel changed the nature of American public policy debate. Emphasizing the impact of the sheer magnitude of *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* publicity and the ways its popularity thrust Stowe into the cauldron of the antebellum slavery debate, I provide evidence of an initial Southern inability to comprehend the roots of the novel's effectiveness and show how Stowe's detractors eventually learned to use her methods to achieve their own ends with their own audiences.

Finally, the fourth chapter shows how Stowe was transformed personally and professionally by this period of trial and conflict. Her efforts to produce documentation to support her novel imbued her writing with a new sense of maturity and sophistication that relied more on current events and historical fact and reached beyond the slavery issue into matters of gender inequality. In *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe developed the masterful text-based argumentation she observed and learned from her father and documented the horrific realities of the slave trade, both for her detractors and herself. In *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, she employed the current events of the American political landscape and incorporated many of the facts she had compiled in *A Key*. She wrote *The Minister's Wooing* in a way that spoke more directly to her core audience, addressing her uncertainty with the theology of her father's Calvinism and challenging the authority of clerical and patriarchal institutions. Stowe's resolve was refined during these years and her determination to adhere to her own beliefs in the face of significant social confrontation set the tone for the remainder of her long and enduring career.

Chapter One

The Eye of the Storm: The formative years of Harriet Beecher Stowe before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

“I had a real funny interview with the president,” recounted Harriet Beecher Stowe to her husband Calvin. She had been invited with her daughter, Hatty, to join the Lincolns for tea that cold December 1862 evening with Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts and his wife (Hedrick 305). One of the most commonly recounted anecdotes about Harriet Beecher Stowe’s life is from her meeting with President Abraham Lincoln, when he allegedly told her, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!” (Hedrick vii). Although apocryphal, it remains one of the most oft-quoted statements among historians from Stowe’s life.

Whether Lincoln had really said it, or perhaps something similar to it, the statement is rich with social and cultural contexts of meaning. It relates the particular role Stowe represented to antislavery and abolitionism through her ability to unify across lines of gender and espouse a Victorian American reverence for the home and domesticity (Stearns 21). If true, the statement implies volumes about Lincoln’s understanding of the complex role *Uncle Tom's Cabin* played in the abolitionist movement and its acceptance into mainstream culture. One hundred fifty years later, literary historians still grapple to understand its full implications.

In some ways, because she was a woman and because her beliefs were primarily pacifist, Harriet Elizabeth Beecher Stowe was the unlikely of revolutionaries. In other ways, her emergence as a central figure in antebellum antislavery seems unavoidable. Undoubtedly, though, Harriet Beecher Stowe was uniquely positioned to become a focal point for the antislavery movement due to her family background, her geographic location, and her choice of vocation.

Stowe's family background created a unique foundation upon which her antislavery and religious views would come to represent a crossroads of thought for northern Christianity. Born on June 14, 1811 in Litchfield, Connecticut (*Stowe Center*) into the family of an already-famous clergyman, Harriet Beecher Stowe's life reveals the confluence of forces that would produce the most widely recognized and popular antislavery novel of all time.

In order to best understand the story of how Stowe's perspectives on religion, slavery, and sentimentality developed, it is essential to consider the ways in which her father viewed these key Victorian American cultural attributes, and how his views influenced the paths of his children. Her father, Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), was a man of strong will and conviction who drove his family to accomplish great things, and to suffer great turmoil. His dedication to the structured Calvinist theology would shape Harriet's understanding of God, and would irrevocably tie her ideas of salvation into the promise and formality of education. A seminary headmaster and father of several prominent educators, Beecher also fostered an atmosphere of education and intellectual pursuit in the home (*Stowe Center*).

Born an orphan, Lyman Beecher was not expected to survive. After only seven months in the womb, he was set aside while the nurses tried in futility to save the life of his mother. As Constance Mayfield Rourke states, “His rescue was a casual afterthought.” Beecher spent his youth on the farm of his aunt and uncle in Guilford, Connecticut. Mostly to escape the farm, Beecher pursued an opportunity to attend Yale College, which at the time, under the leadership of the experimental Ezra Stiles, was a “hot bed of the most dangerous radicalism of the day” (Rourke 3, 5, 9).

The precise time in which Beecher entered Yale was a critical component in the ways his perspectives on religion and society grew, and therefore is also of particular importance to the way Harriet Beecher came to understand religion and how it should be practiced. Since 1778, the university had been under the leadership of Stiles, an avid supporter of the American Revolution and a radical thinker. Stiles had fostered an atmosphere of experimentation at Yale at a time when the nation’s exuberance for drastic change was at its highest. He had implemented unprecedented policies and classes in liberal philosophy, tolerated new religious thinking like deism and universalism, and even opened the student body to activities like dancing.

The philosophy of the day was built upon the thinking of men like Thomas Paine who built on the ideas of John Locke; that all men are able to judge for themselves what is right and true by their own common sense of the world around them. Students were learning about French philosophers and opening their minds to the possibility that a shapeless, ineffable God may have created the universe, but that it had been left to men to govern by their own sense of intuition. In Puritan New England, this was radical and

dangerous thinking, especially to the governing families of Federalist conservatives who owned the land and constituted the clergy.

When Stiles died in 1795, the leadership at Yale was eager to reinstate the rigid controls of a Calvinist Puritan society upon the university, so they called upon Timothy Dwight, the Yale valedictorian of 1776 who had familial connections to many of the local leaders and even a direct descent from Jonathan Edwards (Rourke 12). Dwight's leadership style was dramatically different from Stiles'. He immediately reined in the liberality of the university and did away with experimental programs. He considered the philosophy of Locke and its approach to government "groundless" (Rourke 12). In his theology, men needed a rigid structure of thought and behavior in order to submit to the will of an active and engaged God, and anything beyond that framework was sin. He led the college with a belief that "every act was evil unless accomplished in a state of grace" (Rourke 13). Sometimes referred to as "Pope" Dwight, the new president of Yale was erudite in his complicated system of belief, and suspicious of new philosophical ideas that lined up with the radicalism that had recently torn France apart during the Reign of Terror.

According to Rourke, Beecher found a sense of order in Dwight's methods. He subscribed to the perfection of the human soul through practical education, and viewed the free thinkers of the revolution as feral. From Dwight, Beecher gained the belief that allowing people to find the answers for themselves was negligence; that without refinement, men were imperfect and prone to perdition. In Dwight, "The sound and the intention of power rang with something like grandeur as [he] swept onward into a rhetoric which fell into broad and searching rhythms, and made resonantly clear the

unresting state into which the Calvinistic believer must fall – never secure in his hope, always exultant in his worship” (Rourke 13). Beecher loved Dwight and found his own calling in the inspiration.

After graduating Yale in 1797, Lyman Beecher established his ministry in the conservative town of East Hampton on Long Island. His parishioners were suspicious of emotion, and frowned upon outward exhibitions of individuality. This created discord among the parishioners because Lyman Beecher was famous for building ideas and emotions into complex structures. He would construct cathedrals of thought and resonate them in heartfelt words that were intended to move the soul and raise it up to the divine. To the people of East Hampton, the conservative Beecher was too radical. Rourke contends that “it was being whispered that the minister’s family was *worldly*” because they had adorned their home with color (17, 19). Not content in East Hampton, Beecher met an accord with the people of the congregation and moved to Litchfield, Connecticut in 1810.

Litchfield was an ideal place for Lyman Beecher. His daughter Catharine said that it was “probably a period of more unalloyed happiness than any in his whole life” (Caskey 3). A Federalist stronghold, Litchfield was the kind of place that Beecher could practice the methods of his calling in all of his “millennial zeal” (Caskey 4). Millennialism was an important idea in Puritanical thought at the time and an essential component of Beecher’s theology. Millennialism was the belief that the world in its ongoing state was soon coming to an end, that Jesus Christ would return, and that it was of the highest importance to perfect the world and the souls within it to prepare for the coming new world. This idea played in perfect harmony with Beecher’s belief that people needed to

be refined, because it provided a pressing importance and urgency to the task. On the larger scale, this millennial belief gave rise to the reform movements of the early nineteenth century that sought to perfect individuals and institutions, of which Beecher was an important part.

In the early nineteenth century, reformism had become what Sydney Ahlstrom called “a dominant tendency.” He writes, “Most reformers dedicated themselves to specific campaigns. This did not prevent a given reformer from carrying several portfolios, and some men, like Lyman Beecher...put no limits on their interests” (Ahlstrom 640). In a speech given on December 22, 1827, Beecher described the reform movements of America as a “work of moral renovation.” Later, in the same speech, he almost prophetically foretold, in the typical millennial language of time, “And then will the trumpet of jubilee sound, and earth’s debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’” (Ahlstrom 646). Beecher had originally learned a connection between the reformation of the soul and the reformation of society from Yale President Timothy Dwight, and carried it forward into his own congregations.

However, Beecher’s brand of Calvinist control was not the only approach to millennial perfection. In fact, it was the brand of salvation that was waning in the face of the more radical, emotional revivalism. Lyman Beecher constructed his emotions in his sermons, perhaps not unlike a slow-building symphony, heralding about “an illimitable divine sovereignty with all its most drastic implications, commanding an absolute submission, an absolute worship” (Rourke 21). While Beecher adopted the theology of Dwight, the more individualistic, free-feeling evangelical approach was spreading. A

distrust of elitist education was propagating in the wake of ‘common sense’ religion, whose emotional content was not intertwined with theology in sophisticated ways, but was simple and easily accessible by the uneducated masses. This impressed upon Beecher a defensiveness towards the new revivalism that caused him to discredit and distrust it. It was in direct contradiction to his ideals of cultivating souls and it was at least in part because of this trepidation that Litchfield was so comfortable for him. Caskey remarks, “in an increasingly democratic climate, it was the home of the aristocrats of the old school, some still affecting the powdered wig and small clothes of the Revolutionary era as their badge of gentility” (4). When Jefferson was elected president in 1801, the people of Litchfield resolved to secede from the union because he did not represent puritan ideals (20). It was into this microcosm of resistance that Harriet Elisabeth Beecher was born, and in which she learned of the ways of salvation.

A closer look at the content of Lyman Beecher’s sermons gives an insight into the connectivity between religion and education that was impressed upon Harriet in her most formative years. “They say everybody knows about God Naturally,” Beecher preached, clearly attacking the new style of evangelicalism, “A lie. All such ideas are by teaching” (Rourke 22). In the same way Beecher approached religion with the people of Litchfield, he impressed his beliefs upon his children at home. Raising his sons to be Calvinist ministers and teaching his daughters to pursue salvation through education, Lyman taught Harriet to know God through complicated arguments and the measured use of emotion.

Lyman Beecher was not the only influence in the home to stress education. Beecher’s first wife and Harriet’s mother, Roxanna Foote Beecher (1775-1816), had started a private school in the home in order to make extra money to support their first six

children before Beecher received the new position in Litchfield. She was avid about education (*Stowe Center*), and though Harriet was only five years old when Roxanna passed away, her sister Catharine carried on their mother's drive. Catharine founded the Hartford Female Seminary after suffering the death of her fiancé, Alexander Fisher (Hedrick 32). In her moments of pain, Catharine decided to focus her attention on education, and particularly that of Harriet. Their brother, Edward, was already living in Hartford and working as a primary school principal (Hedrick 33), so he was able to help with the founding of the school for teen-aged girls, which Harriet Beecher began attending at the age of thirteen.

Lyman Beecher was extremely supportive of Catharine's efforts to begin a school for women at a time when almost none existed because he saw it as a stronghold against Episcopalianism in Connecticut (Hedrick 68). He suggested that she enroll herself to the apprenticeship of the Reverend Joseph Emerson, who was known for progressive views towards women. Yet Catharine, probably the second central influence upon Harriet and her strongest childhood influence pertaining to womanhood, decided to go it on her own, "equipped only with her own ideas" (Hedrick 33). Again, this incident provides some indication of the ways in which Stowe's family mentors would shape her views of acceptability and expectation. Harriet learned to become a self-directing woman of volition and a public achiever at a time when women were typically expected to remain in the domestic shadow of their husbands.

It was not as if Catharine was not domestic, however. In fact, her mastery of the feminine domestic sphere bolstered her acceptability in Victorian American culture, even though she never married and did not raise a family. Catharine's new school focused on

curricula like House Keeping, Religion, and Latin, the latter two being the first subjects that Harriet taught in the school in addition to editing the school *Gazette* (Stowe Center). It was with Catharine that Harriet Beecher co-wrote her first book, *Primary Geography for Children*. Catharine also went on to be a best-selling author, penning a housekeeping guide entitled *A Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (1841) that was the most prolific of its genre in the nineteenth century (Stowe Center). Religion, education, and domesticity were the main themes that surfaced repeatedly in Stowe's life from very early on until the time of her death. Perhaps just as important, these values were repeatedly upheld in the face of larger cultural structures that did not share, or were even suspicious of, them. Harriet Beecher learned early on that beliefs were of little value if one could not adhere to them and see them through in the face of adversity.

A major turn was about to take place in Harriet Beecher's life, however, which would introduce her both to the variety of religious experience and to the inescapable issue of slavery. In 1832, Lyman Beecher was offered a position as the first president of the Lane Seminary School in Cincinnati, Ohio. At the time, Cincinnati was a hub of American commerce and the last major stop for immigrants heading westward along the Ohio River. Placed between the North and the South, as well as between the East and the West, Cincinnati was also positioned between the past and the future of religion in America. Religions were competing for the parishioners of westward expansion, just as churches were sending parishioners to dominate the new territories. For instance, Catholicism was making great gains in the antebellum period. A large influx of Irish and German immigrants during the middle of the century changed the nature of religion in

America (Johnson 15). Cincinnati was also central to this change, in part because it was a confluence of American society, and in part because the frontier offered American immigrants an opportunity to build a home of their own apart from the prejudices of the established East.

Lyman Beecher was well aware of the geographical significance of Cincinnati and his decision to accept a position at Lane seminary was part of his desire to maintain a Calvinist aspect in American religion. According to Joan Hedrick, Beecher perceived the transformative nature of westward expansion on the national identity and he intended to exert all the influence he could on its religious identity as well. For the next year and a half, he and Catharine planned a concerted effort to direct the religious development of the American West. He accepted the presidency of Lane Seminary and she intended to establish a female college. As with her Hartford Female Seminary, Lyman Beecher thought Catharine's college and his own seminary school would stand in the way of other religions from taking over the new territories (Hedrick 68).

However, Harriet did not share her father's enthusiasm, and left Connecticut in fear and uncertainty. However, in Ohio, she soon embraced the new diverse western culture. "She was a New Englander when she came," Hedrick explains; "by the time she left she was an American" (70). Harriet would become a wife to the seminary instructor Calvin Stowe, a mother, and a writer during her eighteen years in Cincinnati.

Meanwhile, Harriet's father's conflict was not only with Catholics and Episcopalians. The Second Great Awakening presented its own evils to Beecher from within his own denomination. "Revivalism," says Ahlstrom, "also contributed its

emotionalism and anti-intellectual mood to the politics of the era, and in doing so, it probably contributed to the expression of extremist views” (659). Just as the experimental tolerance of Ezra Stiles had infiltrated Yale, and as the emotionality of the new revivalism had grown outside of Litchfield, anti-intellectualism had permeated religion around America and found a home on the western frontier. This environment of an anti-intellectual approach to religion was directly opposed to the complicated structures of thought upon which Calvinism was built. As Beecher found out at Lane, the popularity of his rigid frameworks was falling and the future belonged to the new Evangelical movement. Not only was the erudite approach of Timothy Dwight losing its vogue, but even faith in higher education was being called into question.

The implication was that religion no longer belonged to the educated elite, but had become more of a people’s pursuit, accessible by feeling rather than formal instruction, and thus rendering the educators obsolete. The Second Great Awakening was contributing to religious and political schisms, being a more democratic approach to religion and more emotionally founded, relying less on the intricate theoretical structures of traditional Calvinism (Ahlstrom 657). With the introduction of the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists and the new Revivalists, the western region, and particularly Cincinnati, was quickly becoming a nesting ground for the future churches of the nation. The different denominations were trying their best to capitalize on the rapid change while Beecher was intent upon standing in the way of the inevitable. Simultaneously however, Beecher’s refusal to recognize the future placed his daughter, Harriet, squarely in the focal point of the nation’s major movements. She therefore held an ideal position to understand the differing opinions of religion on antislavery, which was the most pressing

issue of the time, as well as the emotional context that would best address her ideas to the overall audience.

As it turned out, antislavery would become the defining theme of Lyman Beecher's time in Cincinnati, and not the Calvinist resurgence he had planned. Neither was it the first time Lyman Beecher would have to confront the issue. As a nationally known reformist, Beecher was a natural candidate for the abolitionists to approach. Beecher had preached about the problems with the slave trade. However, when William Lloyd Garrison approached him for support in Boston his response was, "No, I have too many irons in the fire already" (Rourke 57).

It is likely that Beecher was hesitant to engage the contentious issue because it may have created divisions and therefore distracted from the focus of the Calvinist resuscitation he was trying to accomplish. It is also possible that he was attempting to avoid the turmoil that surrounded abolitionists. Even in the North, abolitionists were not widely popular. According to Henry Mayer, "For almost every assertion of conscience, every instance of racial integration, and every organization founded, the crusaders could expect acts of ostracism, verbal retaliation, or physical abuse" (188). Garrison himself was at one point beaten and dragged on a rope through the streets of his home town of Boston by an angry lynch mob for his abolitionist sentiments (Gougeon 175).

There may have been more to Beecher's resistance than mere distaste for the radicalism of Garrison. Calvin Stowe, who had known Beecher for years and now worked under him, said that Beecher had, "without being aware of it, not a little of the old Connecticut prejudice against the blacks" (Rourke 57). Race alone was not

necessarily the only prejudice either. ‘Old school’ preachers like Beecher tended to avoid the issue of antislavery, while ‘New school’ preachers were far more likely to embrace it. In his distaste and distrust for the new evangelical preachers, it is possible that Beecher avoided the antislavery cause because it would have necessarily aligned him with the very factions he was trying to oppose.

Beecher could not avoid the rising tide of abolition for long, however, because as the 1830s progressed, the issue of abolitionism heated up, arrived at his, and therefore Harriet’s, front door and placed him and his family on the front lines of the national debate. For years, the abolitionists had been trying to force preachers to declare their opposition to the institution of slavery, just as Garrison had approached Beecher in Boston. Throughout, Garrison and his contemporaries had been aggressively pursuing churches to renounce slavery as immoral, and genuine rifts were beginning to appear throughout the churches. According to Henry Mayer, “The come-outerism that Garrison and Douglass offered... emphasized the necessity of making slaveholding so odious and wicked that every compromise with it – either in church organizations or in politics – would suffer popular repudiation” (Mayer 369).

Abolitionist pressure on the churches was beginning to work. New churches like the Progressive Friends, The Baptist Free Mission Society, the Union Church, the Free Presbyterian Church, and the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Antislavery Friends were drawing as many as half a million followers (Mayer 303). By the late 1830s, the split had divided the greater churches so much that they began to rift at the national level. After a theological dispute in 1837 the ‘Old School’ conservative Presbyterians expelled four ‘New School’ synods because they were all abolitionist strongholds (Mayer 376). Lyman

Beecher was about to experience this divisiveness first hand. If converting congregations to the antislavery cause made sense in the short term, then converting a seminary school of the next generation's ministers made better sense for the long term.

In 1834, Theodore Dwight Weld, an abolitionist and teacher who was closely associated with the Tappan brothers, co-founders of the American Antislavery Society with Garrison, "brought the antislavery gospel to Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati" (Ahlstrom 652). Yet, the situation was more complicated. On the one hand, Beecher was jealous of Weld because of the way the students at the seminary admired him. Once again, Beecher's brand of structured Calvinism proved less accessible and therefore less desirable than the more emotional, less intellectual evangelical approach. Much like his mentor, Timothy Dwight, Beecher's reaction to what he viewed as radical change was conservatism. This in turn manifested in a deeper indifference towards antislavery. According to Rourke, Beecher's attitude towards slavery was "Aggressively neutral." He warned his son William who was preaching in Ohio to avoid taking sides on the topic. While he reluctantly admitted that slavery was an evil, his overarching perspective was that it would be corrected in the Millennium (Rourke 58).

After a long series of debates on slavery, the students had "issued a ringing indictment of the Colonization Society" (Ahlstrom 652). They also voted in favor of immediately abolishing slavery, a stance that would almost certainly result in the withdrawal of a number of sources of financial support for the Seminary (Rourke 57). While Beecher was away in the East, the trustees of the school passed a number of disciplinary measures that prohibited public gatherings, dismissed pro-antislavery faculty,

disbanded the Antislavery Society at the Seminary, and threatened expulsion for any student who did not comply with the new regulations (Rourke 58-59).

Beecher had been placed in a weak position. Because he had been usurped by the trustees, he was expected to resign. During the calamity, he had promised to uphold the students' right to free expression. Moreover, if he joined with the students, he would find himself a follower of Weld, his subordinate who surpassed him in the eyes of his students. Beecher neither contested the ruling nor resigned. He was not about to let Weld and his followers cause him to leave his Calvinist mission in the West, so he did not address the issue of free speech either. (Rourke 59). Essentially, Beecher told the students to go along with the disciplinary measures of the trustees, so Weld and his followers left the Seminary for nearby Oberlin College.

Lane Seminary had been at the heart of the 'Old' and 'New' Schools, and so the event that occurred there began to rift outward. The conflict at Lane Seminary, therefore, had broad implications for churches throughout the United States. At the same time, the conflict was intensely personal and familial, and few families felt this more deeply than the Beechers. Harriet had been at the center of it all, and as her life and family in many ways was the church, so too did her family begin showing signs of fracturing. The episode became a turning point for Harriet and her siblings, who all became more and more involved in the antislavery movement in significant and very public ways. While Lyman Beecher was unwilling to clearly side with the antislavery movement, other members of the family were not so hesitant. The debates at Lane Seminary were a sort of seminal moment in the life of his son, Henry Ward Beecher. While he had obeyed his father and studied Calvinism at Lane Seminary, the strict rules and theology was not to

his preference. Caught between the stalwart resolve of his father and the militancy of the student activists, Henry Ward Beecher decided that the appropriate method for him was one of persuasion (Adams, G. 202).

Even among Beecher's children, the allure of Calvinism was beginning to fade as they explored other, more accessible religious paths, including those that embraced educated and uneducated seekers alike. Henry Ward Beecher staunchly opposed the expansion of slavery into the new territories, especially Kansas, where the new Evangelical approach reached immigrating pioneers more easily. He became a leader of the effort to send antislavery Christians into the new territories to populate them with antislavery congregations, and even "raised money from his pulpit to provide rifles... for the cause" (Ahlstrom 658). These Sharps rifles eventually came to be called "Beecher's Bibles," in a strange twist that illustrates how deeply rooted Henry became in the abolitionist movement.

Henry was not the only Beecher who became involved in the struggle of antislavery. In 1837, Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in Alton, Illinois, while attempting to keep his fourth printing press from being destroyed by an angry mob that disapproved of his abolitionist message (Ahlstrom 653). By this time, Edward Beecher, Harriet's brother, had become president of Illinois College, and the event convinced him to join with the cause of abolitionism. He published a dramatic narrative of the Alton riots and in 1845 he wrote "a series of articles on 'organic sin', which gave evangelical abolitionism some of its major ethical and theological insights" (Ahlstrom 653). According to John R. McKivigan, "Beecher recognized the sinfulness of owning human property but denied that slaveholders were sinners. The moral responsibility for the organic sin of slavery,

according to Beecher's doctrine, lay with the society that passed laws to sustain the system, not with the individual masters" (McKivigan 32). Edward also grew to become a national public figure in the antislavery issue.

Abolitionist sentiments were not limited to Beecher's sons. In 1837, Catharine Beecher published "An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females." As with her formative role in the female seminary, Catharine placed her unusual gender position in the sphere of traditional feminine domestic roles. She writes within the conclusion of her 151 page essay the assertion that "The peculiar qualifications, then, that make it suitable for a man to be an abolitionist are, an exemplary discharge of all the domestic duties; humility, meekness, delicacy, tact, and discretion, and these should especially be the distinctive traits of those who take the place of *leaders* in devising measures" (Beecher). Catharine's comments are particularly interesting in view of the changing nature of the antislavery debate at the time. As the following chapter will discuss further, the role of women in the public antislavery debate was increasing; however, it generally took the form of literary fiction, or of supportive roles like gathering signatures for petitions. Catharine's "Essay" is a departure from the traditional roles of women in public debate, and her use of the domestic sphere to support her arguments indicates her awareness of at least some of the risks involved with engaging the ongoing conversation. As the third and fourth chapters of this thesis will detail, Harriet's entry into the public sphere of the slavery debate also carried considerable risks and challenges, and the issue of domesticity in her novels was a consistent theme.

It is also interesting to note that Harriet based much of the information in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on Weld's *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, published five years after the Lane Seminary conflict. Moreover, it was precisely her use of emotional context, or sentimentality, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that made her message so effective, or for that matter, affective (Woodward 62). When Stowe informs readers at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that "Of that, every individual can judge. There is one thing that every individual can do, - they can see to it that *they feel right*," she is alluding to the 'common sense' judgment that usurped the Calvinist need for education. She is referring to the individual reform imperatives of the millennial theology. She is invoking the intuitive emotionality of evangelical revivalism and she is framing them all in a way that is ambiguous enough to be accessible to all traditions simultaneously. As Lauren Berlant explains, "sentimentality's universalist rhetoric gains its authority not in the political domain, but near it, against it, and above it: sentimental culture entails a proximate alternative community of individuals sanctified by recognizing the authority of true feeling – authentic, virtuous, compassionate – at the core of a just world" (Berlant *Complaint* 34-35). Set between East and West, North and South, new and old, radical and traditional, emotional and intellectual, rural and urban, Cincinnati was perhaps, the most comprehensive crossroads in American culture and therefore the best possible location to come to understand, and therefore reach out to, an expansive American audience.

The debates at Lane were not the last of the Cincinnati slave debates that occurred while Stowe lived there. Her environment continued to host an ongoing focus on the national issue. One of the best-known Cincinnati debates on the issue of slavery and abolition was between Jonathan Blanchard and N.L. Rice in 1845. The two men spoke

over four days and the content of their speeches was painstakingly recorded for publication. The book that contains the record of their debates, *A Debate on Slavery*, lists no fewer than 219 topics between the two speakers, most of them based on religious precedent (Blanchard and Rice iv-vii).

Framing the debate about slavery around religious precedent was not at all unusual. Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison made religion the central argument in the issue of abolitionism. Garrison's speeches rang of religious content with titles like "The Powers that Be Are Ordained of God," "Holy Time," and "A Short Catechism, Adapted to All Parts of the United States" (Garrison *Selections* iii-iv).

In response, Southern theologians began rebutting the attacks using biblical precedent. One example is a book from 1851 entitled *Bible Defense of Slavery*, by Josiah Priest. Filling some 569 pages, *Bible Defense* is broken into fifteen sections, beginning with Adam and Eve and ending with "Abolitionism" (Priest vii-xiii). Interestingly, Lyman Beecher's reliance upon complicated structures of theological thought in the face of changing attitudes towards education and religion is paralleled by Southern defiance of changing attitudes about slavery. The Southern religious argument for slavery grew more and more complicated and intricate and their culture of proslavery religion depended on educating congregations about these structures. Sydney Ahlstrom points out:

Richard Furman's biblical argument was adopted by the South Carolina Baptist Association in 1822, and by 1841, when John England, the Roman Catholic bishop of Charleston, published his defense, this line of thought had sunk deep into the Southern consciousness and underlay all others. Theologians and laity alike learned to recite the standard biblical texts on Negro inferiority, patriarchal and Mosaic acceptance of servitude, and Saint Paul's counsels of obedience to masters (659).

Using these structures of theological argument, the churches themselves held their own debates on the issue of slavery in Cincinnati. For instance, there was the *Debate on "Modern Abolitionism" in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Held in Cincinnati, May 1836*. One interesting excerpt from the text reads that, "there was no analogy between Catholicism and *modern* Abolitionism. The latter was at war with all sense of decency, it outraged all our notions of good order and propriety, and was, in its every feature utterly intolerable" (*Modern Abolitionism* 13). This quotation shows the resistance presented by some churches to the antislavery issue. While antislavery was increasingly popular in the northeast, it was much harder to sell throughout most of the country. It was disruptive to congregations, divisive among the churches, and destructive to the revenues of ministers, as Stowe would later write about in her third novel, *The Minister's Wooing*.

When Henry Chase and Charles Sanborn chose to release their lecture, *The North and the South: A Statistical View of the Condition of the Free and Slave States*, comprised of information from the census of 1850 (Chase and Sanborn iii), they premiered the information in Cincinnati ("Southern Press Review"). The location was no accident. Cincinnati was the last city with major meeting places emigrants from the east would meet on their way to Kansas and Nebraska between the 1830s and 1850s. Because of the rule of popular sovereignty that would decide whether the Kansas and Nebraska territories would be slave or free soil states, both sides of the debate made Cincinnati a last chance battleground in the fight for public opinion.

Cincinnati also shared a border with Kentucky, a slave state. Slaves escaping to the North often did so through Cincinnati and it was because of this relationship that

Harriet Beecher Stowe knew and heard the stories of many escaped slaves (Hedrick 121). Therefore, being located in Cincinnati provided Stowe not only with an understanding of the ways that religion, emotion, and antislavery intersected; it also provided her with a good deal of the material she would later use to make her antislavery novel.

The Lane Seminary Debates also provided Stowe with possibly the most important component of her writing career: the necessity of it. According to Hedrick, as 1838 drew to a close and Lane Seminary's income diminished in the wake of the debates, so too did Calvin's compensation, leaving the family in debt (136). For the Stowes, Harriet's writing became a necessity, and it was out of this period that she began to diversify her writing to address multiple audiences. The first three periodicals to which she sold her work were the *Western Monthly Magazine*, a periodical for men about life on the frontier; *Godey's Lady's Book*, a magazine for women about matters of domesticity; and *The New York Evangelist*, which addressed a Christian public (Hedrick 133). It was also for this last publication that Stowe composed her first antislavery work, "Immediate Emancipation," in January 1845 (Hedrick 171). In this story of a Cincinnati slave named Sam who gains emancipation from his master, Stowe echoes her brother Edward's ideas of organic sin. She states, "The slave system as a system, perhaps, concentrates more wrong than any other now existing, and yet those who live under it and in it may be, as we see, enlightened, generous, and amenable to reason" (Hedrick 172). It was fitting that she should begin her antislavery writing career with a Cincinnati setting and a philosophy that emerged from her family's time there. As Hedrick asserts, "In ways subtle and pervasive, the border town of Cincinnati, with its race riots, commercial trading, runaway

slaves, disease, and death... formed the tide-mud of 'the Real' out of which emerged Stowe's most powerful work of fiction" (172).

Like Lyman Beecher, Calvin Stowe was supportive of Harriet as she moved to the edges of the domestic sphere. For him, however, it was not about the money. As he had been seduced to Lane by the promise of Lyman Beecher's transformation of the western frontier, he was now invigorated by the prospect of his wife's potential to do the same in print and he informed her, "You have it in your power... to form the mind of the West for the coming generation" (Hedrick 140). He assured her, "You must be a *literary woman*. It is so written in the book of fate." (Hedrick 138).

Stowe learned that through her writing, she could make enough money and augment Calvin's income to survive. One of the publications that accepted Stowe's material was an abolitionist periodical called *The National Era*. More moderate than Garrison's highly aggressive *Liberator*, the *Era* enjoyed a broader audience and its editor had also lived in Cincinnati and so appreciated her perspective (Hedrick 206).

In some ways, abolitionist periodicals were an ideal genre for Stowe. Abolitionists, generally speaking, were pacifists. In Garrison's writing, for example, he consistently embraces peaceful change. In "Extracts from a Fourth of July Narration," he says, "We wield no physical weapons, pledge ourselves not to countenance insurrection, and present the peaceful front of non-resistance to those who put our lives in peril" (195). Again, in "West India Emancipation," he describes his movement as "the peaceful overthrow of...despotism" (347). This would have coincided with Stowe's beliefs thoroughly. Although she ardently called for an end to slavery, she never advocated

violence or forcible abolition. “For Stowe,” wrote Ronald G. Walters, “the answer was always moral suasion through the power of words” (185). While Stowe’s belief in the ability of words without violence to prevail may have waned in later years, she never relinquished her belief that non-violence was the correct approach to change.

Another way Stowe fit in well with the genre of abolitionist writing was the crossover between abolitionists and activists for women’s rights. Garrisonian abolitionists especially embraced the cause of women’s rights at a time when few in the nation were willing to embrace it. Women were welcomed as co-crusaders and encouraged to enter the public domain of political discourse as no other group was willing to accept them. According to biographer Linda Maloney, William Lloyd Garrison insisted, “all reforms were one” (74). In other words, he equated the antislavery cause with such other causes as the rights of Native Americans and especially women. Although the sentiment was not shared by all abolitionists, Garrison felt strongly enough about the equality of women that he allowed a rift to develop in his American Anti-Slavery Society (Mayer 261). While the event equally displays the reality that there were abolitionists who felt strongly enough against women’s rights to divide over the issue, at the time, there were few organizations that would have been willing to put their existence into jeopardy to support the equality of women.

The Second Great Awakening was a powerful democratizing of American institutions of all types, and white women were included in that democratizing impulse. Mark David Hall writes:

The second Great Awakening not only transformed the religious landscape in America, it significantly changed the way women viewed the family,

society, and politics. Notably, evangelicalism helped expand the Revolutionary Era notion of republican motherhood to give women an even greater and more autonomous role in the moral and spiritual education of their families. Likewise, evangelicalism's millennialism encouraged women to attempt to reform society as a whole, a task that led them to engage in public activities such as writing, organizing benevolent societies, and even participating in politics (483).

Among the religious and racial revolutions that were emerging in antebellum society, part of the sweeping social revolution that was taking hold was a drastic realignment of women's expectations within that changing society. In a heuristic sense, society and its component demographics were simultaneously realigning with an emerging paradigm shift in human awareness.

However, it is incorrect to believe that American society was shifting in any unified sense, as the many rifts and fractures that changed the different cultural institutions of the time would indicate. With change comes resistance to change, and there was ample resistance to what many saw as a denigration of the American identity and way of life. In fact, the abolitionists and feminists were never more than a small minority in American antebellum society. Stowe was acutely aware of this reality as well. Her experiences and observations of her father and sister Catharine had taught her to maintain her values in the face of popular adversity, but she was never willing to entertain ideas of separating from the larger society that disagreed with her views.

This set Stowe at odds with some of her fellow abolitionist writers, and therefore complicated the ways in which she fit in among them. While abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison spoke of separation and expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Constitution because of government's complicity with slavery, Stowe places the blame not with government or region, but with the individual. "At times," Walters writes,

“Stowe might think of guilt in collective terms, but even then moral responsibility rested with individuals; it was their duty to leave corrupt churches or denounce the national sin of slavery” (188). Rather than embracing a policy of acceptable disunion, as other abolitionist writers had, Stowe’s policy of separation was between the soul and sinful behavior.

The curious duality is that the Second Great Awakening was a movement that centered on the individual’s ability to perceive truth, while at the same time requiring each individual to change the character of the overall structure of society. Stowe’s philosophy of persuasion was harmonious with this emerging perspective, concurrently a reaction to, and an interpretation of, the reciprocal changes that were taking place from society to the individual perspective, and from the individual back into society. According to Walters, Stowe’s answer to the question of where change begins is “with the individual” (174). In regards to social demographics of gender, race, or region, Walters claimed, “Stowe repeatedly insists that the institution knows no sectional bias in its ability to corrupt” (180). Instead, he claimed that Stowe’s perception implied that the location of slavery is within the mind of anyone who wants to control another for personal gain. In this respect, Stowe’s philosophy again echoes Garrison’s, that all reforms are one reform, because in essence, all issues of rights are really issues of slavery.

The one event that really unified Stowe with the abolitionist movement was the very thing that prompted Stowe to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the first place. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 gave nearly everyone in the North a common issue upon which they could all agree. It morally implicated Northerners in the institution of slavery

by requiring them to return runaway slaves. (Walters 179). The act provided the impetus for antislavery sentiment among the population, and Stowe had been uniquely qualified to express that sentiment in a way that moderated between the diverse cultural perspectives in America. Having seen Calvinism's inability to inspire modern thinkers in the Lane Seminary slave debates, and having matured in an environment of great diversity, Stowe understood that the way to motivate people is not with dry, logical statistics and sophistry, but through emotional appeal across cultural, religious, and gender differences.

The Beecher family not only provided young Harriet with a solid though complicated foundation in the topic of religion and education, but in the wake of the Lane Seminary debates, her brothers and sister provided a rich body of consideration upon the ways Christianity and emotion shaped the way antislavery issues are conveyed. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, we see her father's complex theology and complicity with slavery in the speeches of Augustine St. Clare, and his distaste for radicalism in the way her main character Uncle Tom suffers for his freedom patiently and peacefully. St. Clare's lectures on the system of slavery in the South also reflect notes of moral imperative similar to Edward's notions of "organic sin". There are even reflections of Henry Ward Beecher's internal conflicts in the way the character George Harris fights for his family's freedom, but is unwilling to kill Tom Loker after he has shot him (Stowe *UTC* 432-433, 201-251, 199-200). Throughout, we see images of families being rent and torn apart by the institution of slavery, as the issue fractured indeed Harriet's own family.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's family provided many of the fundamental concepts and values that made her supremely suited to write the book that unified the religious split

between Calvinism and Evangelical Revivalism. Her family and the many acquaintances with whom they associated provided Stowe with a unique understanding of the national values that underlay the antislavery debate, and the many streams of concern and tradition that those values were based upon. Similarly, Stowe's geographical location in Cincinnati, Ohio, where her husband Calvin Stowe had taken a position at Lane Seminar in 1833 also provided a unique context of enlightenment into the national convergence of ideas regarding antislavery. While the home of abolitionism may have been in the northern cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and while the pro-slavery home may have been in southern cities like New Orleans, Charleston, and Atlanta, the two sides converged to debate their positions in Cincinnati.

Finally, Harriet Beecher Stowe's choice of vocation completed her ideal position to become a focal point around which the antislavery sentiment of America could congeal. As this thesis will explore in the next chapter, abolitionist rhetoric was foremost a phenomenon of print media. The culmination of multiple streams of antislavery rhetoric, her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was not only the result of the forces of her own life, but also of the efforts of many who preceded her.

Lincoln's comment to Stowe over tea that night might indicate that he had learned a similar lesson since the time of his election. Judging from Lincoln's letters, at the outset of his presidency, he may still have had a thing or two to learn about the value of understanding emotional affect. In a letter from Dec. 15, 1860 to John A. Gilmer, the president-elect addresses his opponents' false charges and cries of dishonor and outrage by suggesting they consult the written transcripts of his official position (Lincoln). However, after two years of war and having to recognize that the effort to maintain the

union hinged on the public sentiment, President Lincoln may have been showing his own heightened perception of emotional appeal. That “little woman” represented a balance between the traditionally emotional domestic feminine with the rational public masculine, and the unification of a diverse constituency. As the following chapters will show, however, these binary distinctions were anything but simple, and always in motion.

Chapter Two

The Sum of Its Parts: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the rhetoric of American antislavery

The antislavery conversation into which Harriet Beecher Stowe entered with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a distinct history and a set of conventions that are reflected in the structure of her novel. She well understood that the national debate over slavery had a long-running set of arguments and counter-arguments. She knew she would have to address this ongoing conversation in order to engage the issue in any meaningful way. First published in an abolitionist periodical, *The National Era*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a direct product of its antislavery ancestry.

In this chapter, I will explain how the rhetorical structures of the antebellum debate over the issue of slavery emerged through its historical context. I will begin with an exploration of the history of antislavery in the United States, leading up to the way that history shaped the rhetorical conventions of the conversation in Stowe's time. I will then examine the way those rhetorical structures reflect in the narrative of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel.

The history of antislavery in America begins with the Quakers of Pennsylvania and their refusal to reconcile the peculiar institution with their Christian ideals. Dating as far back as 1688, the "Germantown Protest" is the first documented Quaker disagreement with the institution. Intended as an expression of their dissatisfaction of the Germantown

neighbors who had chosen to take part in the practice of owning slaves, the “Protest” compares the trade with Turkish, or Islamic slavery, categorizes slavery as theft, and connects it to other sins like adultery. More specifically, the “Germantown Protest” employs biblical language such as the Christian golden rule:

There is a saying that we shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are. And those who steal or rob men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not alike? Here is liberty of conscience wch is right and reasonable; here ought to be likewise liberty of ye body, except of evil-doers, wch is an other case. But to bring men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against. (Hendericks)

The “Germantown Protest,” however, is not merely an expression of Christian ideals and identity, but also one that is undeniably and explicitly American. Hendericks and his neighbors express their concern over their American Quaker reputations when they suggest, “You surpass Holland and Germany in this thing. This makes an ill report in all those countries of Europe, where they hear off, that ye Quakers doe here handel men as they handle there ye cattle” (Hendericks). Meanwhile, in the same year in Europe, two other seminal documents, John Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding” and “Two Treatises of Civil Government,” would begin to add nuances to the Quaker and American antislavery argument.

The first of these works introduces Locke’s ‘tabula rasa’ or ‘blank slate’ theory in which he suggests that people are not born with inherent abilities to comprehend complex ideas, but learn through sense impressions to categorize the world in complicated ways. The second condemns government by monarchical succession and instead supports a government based on popular consent and the natural rights of inherently equal individuals. These ideas played a significant role in the philosophical

makeup of pre-Revolutionary America, strongly influencing the thinking of such writers as Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin. It is also possible to see reflections of Locke's philosophy in later Quaker writing like that of John Woolman (1720-1772). Notice the way Woolman integrates Locke-influenced Enlightenment thinking into his 1754 Christian argument, "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes." Based on the same Biblical passage as the "Germantown Protest," he writes, "*Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* I take it, that all Men by Nature, are equally entitled to the Equity of this Rule, and under the indispensable Obligations of it. One Man ought not to look upon another Man, or Society of Men, as so far beneath him, but that he should put himself in their Place" (Woolman 394).

Woolman's "Considerations" is an example of Quaker antislavery writing that by the 1750s mandated Quaker manumission of slaves and renunciation of slavery. These became the first efforts to forbid explicitly the practice of slaveholding (Newman 16), although these mandates only applied to members of Quaker congregations. Soon after, however, new non-Quaker sources of antislavery rhetoric would begin to contribute additional arguments to the issue.

In the previous chapter, I documented some ways in which Enlightenment thinking changed the American cultural landscape. I gave the example of Ezra Stiles, the radical and experimental president of Yale College, who fostered an atmosphere of free-thinking and free-feeling that ultimately undermined the popularity of the complicated scaffolding of education-based Calvinism. Opposed to this, I presented the image of Timothy Dwight, Stiles' successor, who sought to rein in the revolutionary spirit that proved so deeply transformative throughout American society. Woolman displays a

unique combination of these two influences in that, like the Calvinists, he builds complicated structures of theological arguments based upon introductory scriptural quotation, but also flavors his arguments with added Enlightenment terms and concepts. “Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes” helps to illustrate that these two converging streams of thought were not exclusive, but interactive, and in many cases additive. By varying degrees, the two currents of perspective coexisted and complemented each other, and while both influenced almost every aspect of social life and public policy, it follows that both became major components of antislavery rhetoric from the middle-eighteenth century well into and beyond the Age of Revolution.

Other antislavery writers of the latter eighteenth century depended more fundamentally on Enlightenment philosophy, like Thomas Paine, for example. Just before writing “Common Sense” (1776), the pamphlet that was instrumental in forming American opinion about revolution, Paine seems to have almost simultaneously inspired America’s organized antislavery movement as well. Only six weeks before the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society (PAS), “the world’s first organization dedicated to securing slavery’s end” (Newman 16), formed in 1775, Paine’s essay, “African Slavery in America,” appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advisor*. This essay, like Woolman’s, also echoed some of the opinions of the “Germantown Protest,” but with some more refined Enlightenment ideals. In the following passage, Paine seems almost to parallel the “Protest” of nearly a century earlier:

That some desperate wretches should be willing to steal and enslave men by violence and murder for gain, is rather lamentable than strange. But that many civilized, nay, Christianized people should approve, and be concerned in the savage practice, is surprising; and still persist, though it has been so often proved contrary to the light of nature, to every principle

of Justice and Humanity, and even good policy, by a succession of eminent men, and several late publications. (Paine)

Paine's essay incorporates a refined sense of human rights and dignity, shifting the emphasis from the Quaker Christian ideals that base antislavery on an inherent equal connection to God's spirit towards a rationalist argument derived from natural rights. The son of an Anglican Quaker, Paine's involvement in the PAS does not contradict the idea that the society was a manifestation of Quaker antislavery theory, but the distinctly Enlightened ideals he brought to its rhetoric further illustrate the heterogeneous nature in which these streams of thinking interacted.

Paine was not the only Revolutionary writer who embraced the idea of antislavery by any means. Though briefly disbanded during the chaos of the Revolution, the PAS reformed in 1784 and was soon joined in the following year by the New York Manumission Society (NYMS) and groups in New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia and Kentucky (Newman 18). Movements in Great Britain and France followed these. Frequented by such statesmen as John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin, these groups became the continuing work of many important American Revolutionary founders, so it is a matter of course that its language became imbued with the Declaration of Independence and the rhetorical features of the "Enlightenment's doctrine of human rights" (Dal Lago 3).

Benjamin Franklin placed the antislavery movement explicitly in the context of a continuation of the American revolution when he wrote his "An Address to the Public: from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage" (1782). Referring to the American

Revolution he begins, “Encouraged by this success, and by the daily progress of that luminous and benign spirit of liberty, which is diffusing itself throughout the world, and humbly hoping for the continuance of the divine blessing on our labours, we have ventured to make an important addition to our original plan” (Franklin 354). Based firmly in Enlightenment rhetoric, Franklin’s “Address” is based in ideas like ‘reflection’, ‘power of choice’, ‘reason’, and ‘conscience’.

However, within the structure of PAS, were some reasons for another eventual change in the antislavery approach. The post-Revolution PAS had begun long-standing antislavery traditions of petitioning government officials to pass antislavery legislation. Its members worked in the courts to defend free and runaway African Americans and to overturn pro-slavery decisions. However, while the PAS worked with African Americans in their struggle for freedom, they did not allow any African Americans to join their organization. Richard S. Newman states, “it believed that only certain individuals could serve the abolitionist cause: elite white males who could bolster the group’s legislative strategy and tactics, lawyers who could manipulate legal codes, and wealthy benefactors who could fund legal work” (6). They shunned literary tactics and emotional appeals (Newman 7).

This elitist mentality and preference to speak for African Americans rather than letting them speak out for themselves would eventually become the reason for the decline of the PAS. As Newman explains, the PAS “became famous for its distinctly conservative style of activism. Elite patronage, refined legal and political strategy, and careful tactics guided the group’s work for over fifty years” (16). It was out of these

beginnings that the early rhetorical strategies of gradualism and ‘dispassionate reform’ had begun, and continued to dominate the main stream of abolition for decades (6).

Throughout these first decades of the antislavery movement, another current of American antislavery rhetoric, that of the African American abolitionists, worked diligently at the fringes of society, often out of the public arena. In fact, groups had been established early on in the fight for abolition by African Americans like the Free African Society of Philadelphia (1787), and the African Society of Boston (1796), and the African Masonic Lodge in Boston (1797). Black abolitionists like Absalom Jones, Richard Allen and Cyrus Bustill had crusaded for the end of American slavery as early as the eighteenth century (Bacon 16). While most African American abolitionists were church leaders, their messages were generally spoken rather than printed. It was not until the 1820s that the African American abolitionist voice began to be heard through the mass medium of print.

The rhetoric of African American abolitionists reflected their religious positions. The scriptures they tended to quote were more ominous and foreboding than those chosen by the Quakers. Rather than the golden rule, Absalom Jones’ 1808 “A Thanksgiving Sermon” relies on the story of the Jewish slavery in Egypt to illustrate God’s willingness to redeem the oppressed from their overseers, although it stops short of emphasizing the wrathful way in which that redemption was accomplished. Towards the end of the sermon, Jones refers to imagery from the book of Revelation, stating:

O, hasten that glorious time, when the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall cover the *earth, as the waters cover the sea*; when *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall*

lead them; and, when, instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and, instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.
(Jones)

“A Thanksgiving Sermon” exhibits the millennial anticipation that was prominent in nineteenth-century Christianity, as I discussed in the previous chapter. The timing of this particular sermon is especially significant because it was delivered on the day in which the trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished by the slave clause in the United States Constitution. The event may well have represented a significant step towards preparing the earth for the return of Jesus Christ to those who were looking for signs of a changing world. While many anticipated a violent and wrathful end of the earth, many millennialists preferred the idea of a gradual change towards a perfect society brought on by the redemption of souls and conversion of individuals. Among these was Harriet Beecher Stowe’s father Lyman, who at the same time was preaching his own reform messages. From this perspective, Stowe adopted a similar belief that the world could be changed by the conversion of individuals.

It was precisely this energy of reform enthusiasm that provided the next stream of rhetoric to the American antislavery debate in the period that immediately followed the War of 1812. According to Enrico Dal Lago:

Evangelical ministers and evangelical converts touched by the new revivalist wave effectively constituted the most important influence on the abolitionist movement; several abolitionist leaders were educated in New England by Evangelical preachers, who gave them a strong sense of moral and religious commitment and a will to fight moral degradation and the evil represented by sin, such as the one of owning slaves. (4)

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the American antislavery movements found new vigor in religious groups, particularly in New York and New

England. Edward R. Crowther explains, “Animated by evangelicalism and its emphasis on individual and moral responsibility, abolitionists tried to show that slaveholding was a sin in the eyes of God, and immediate repentance offered the only remedy” (6). Out of these reform movements, a new antislavery enthusiasm began to emerge in which preachers began to call people to leave their sinful natures behind. If the Quakers had begun antislavery as a religious act, the evangelicals of New England resurrected it in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

It was also during this time that the antislavery colonization movement began. Begun in 1816, the American Colonization Society began to advocate the removal of emancipated African Americans to the African colony of Liberia. The idea of colonization received significant support among Christian antislavery organizations in the 1810s and 1820s. It also illustrated the ongoing divide between the prominent face of white antislavery and increasingly frustrated African American abolitionists.

African Americans began to pepper the abolitionist rhetoric with anti-colonization and strong emotional sentiments of outrage. They rejected the doctrine of gradualism and some, like David Walker, challenged all of the major rhetorical frameworks of the antislavery movement. His 1829 “Appeal” is perhaps the best known and most inflammatory work of this genre. On colonization he is provocative, stating, “Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears” (Walker).

Walker recoils upon Christianity and challenges believers. “I call upon the professing Christians,” he writes, “to show me a page of history... those heathen nations of antiquity, had but little more among them than the name and form of slavery; while wretchedness and endless miseries were reserved, apparently in a phial, to be poured out upon, our fathers ourselves and our children, by *Christian Americans!*”

He throws the language of the Revolution back into the face of America:

See your Declaration Americans! ! ! Do you understand your own language? Hear your languages, proclaimed to the world, July 4th, 1776 – ‘We hold these truths to be self evident -- that ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL! ! that they *are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights*; that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness! !’ (Walker)

A few weeks later, Walker’s writing was discovered in Georgia and eventually made its way throughout the South, ultimately credited as an inspiration to Nat Turner. These calls again stiffened Southern resistance, particularly after Nat Turner’s rebellion in Virginia in 1831 (Dal Lago 4).

In the North, African American abolitionist publications were appearing by the dozens and their message began to resonate among some of the white abolitionists who regarded colonization as racist and gradualism as ineffective. Newman notes that the editors of the *Freedom’s Journal* stated in their inaugural line in 1827, “For too long others have spoken for us” (13). Some PAS members became interested in the *Freedom’s Journal*, and took subscriptions to it (Newman 14).

Along with the African American abolitionists, women began to introduce new rhetorical strategies, like the use of emotional appeals into the antislavery vocabulary, and added a new degree of enthusiasm to the cause. According to Newman, through

reform movements like temperance, education and religious reform, women emerged into the public sphere “in unprecedented numbers in the 1820s” (12). Women performed core tasks of the antislavery movement including raising money, arranging meetings, and conducting petitions.

One of the most prominent among the women antislavery writers of this time was Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, who wrote for the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, an abolitionist periodical that also employed the young William Lloyd Garrison. Chandler often appealed to the feelings of women, especially mothers, and tied them to Christian and American ideology. She undermined the otherness of slaves and created emotional connections on the basis of gender by asking, “will Christian sisters, and wives, and mothers, stand coldly inert, while those of their own sex are daily exposed, not only to the threats and reviling – but to the very *lash* of a stern, unfeeling task-master?” (Chandler 16). She echoed Walker’s sentiments, appealing to her readers’ identification as Americans and challenging their dedication to egalitarian ideals by suggesting, “And yet this is the lot of hundreds...and that, too, in this *our* land, which we so proudly proclaim to be the only free country on the face of the globe” (Chandler 19). By the early 1830s, antislavery was ready for a new direction and a new unification.

In January 1831, Garrison began to publish *The Liberator*, a Boston-based abolitionist periodical that served as a focal point for the new Garrisonian movement in American antislavery. Brash and aggressive, Garrison’s famous declaration in his premier edition that “I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . . I am in earnest -- I will not equivocate -- I will not excuse -- I will not retreat a single inch -- AND I WILL BE HEARD” (Nord 238) proved an honest and prophetic herald for the

new inception of the American abolitionist movement. Along with some friends, Garrison began the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832, and later joined forces with the New York abolitionist Tappan brothers to form the American Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison's "Declaration of Sentiments of the American Antislavery Convention," considered a seminal document in abolitionist literature, combined multiple elements of antislavery and abolitionist rhetoric that had been inherited from his predecessors. He began with a direct appeal to the ideals of the revolution, including a quotation from the Declaration of Independence:

The corner-stone upon which they founded the Temple of Freedom was broadly this—'that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness.' At the sound of their trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves. (Garrison "Declaration")

It called for the immediate abolition of slavery as the African American abolitionists had decades earlier. One example that echoes the "Germantown Protest" is when Garrison claims "That every American citizen, who detains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is, according to Scripture, (Ex. xxi. 16,) a man-stealer." It appeals to women when it talks about "tearing the tender babe from the arms of its frantic mother" (Garrison "Declaration"). It endorsed the 'moral suasion' of the reform movements of earlier decades in which transformation is achieved through individual conversion and employed the fiery language of African American abolitionists like Frederick Douglass, for whose oratory skills Garrison had expressed his admiration (Newman 7). Importantly, however, Garrison's rhetoric in his "Declaration" differs from many of the African

American abolitionists in that it insists upon the revivalist Christian convention of nonviolent resistance.

According to Robert Fanuzzi, the way Garrison tied all of the rhetorical approaches from the disparate antislavery groups was no accident. Fanuzzi writes, “Garrison intended his appeals to the marginalized and to the normative to complement each other, so that a disinterested, rational public and a persecuted minority might be rendered in the image of each other” (xxii). If women writers had dismantled racial otherness by emphasizing gender similarity, Garrison tried to undermine racial otherness by galvanizing all of the individual groups’ appeals into one contiguous argument. By including all of their perspectives and rhetorical approaches into one unified movement, Garrison at once broadened the base of his audience, amplified the sales of his paper and therefore the visibility of his movement, and maximized the effectiveness of his effort.

As Crowther points out, “Although they were never large in number, abolitionists exerted extraordinary influence in catalyzing debates and issues” (6). As technology and American politics changed, Garrison positioned himself to achieve the full benefit of these new possibilities. The improvements in production of print media and the various methods by which that media could be transported over larger regions in timelier fashions allowed abolitionists like Garrison to amplify their messages into the public sphere of American debate. “Between the 1790s and 1830 American literary production steadily increased,” Newman writes; “after 1830, however, it exploded” (13). Newman explains that the Massachusetts abolitionists used every possible method of gaining publicity available to enlarge their cause, including literary pursuits. Unlike the PAS, they recognized the power of emotion to persuade and rewrite distinctions of identification.

Therefore, they strongly promoted the publishing of slave narratives and efforts to emotionally affect the American readership (Newman 6,7).

Fanuzzi suggests that this public appeal to emotion, too, was by design. He claims, “the true register in which Garrison obtained was not in the private sphere of moral influence and individual sovereignty but in a print culture of publicity and public discussion” (45). He implies that placing the antislavery movement soundly in the print culture gave it a metonymic association with the American Revolution, which also grew from print. In other words, by engaging the public through the same medium as the Revolutionary writers, and especially by using their own language from sources like the Declaration of Independence, abolitionists created a transference of identity from the Revolution over to abolition. This in turn also conveyed certain associative attributes that many readers would have assigned to the Revolutionary writers such as moral correctness, steadfast courage, creative new thinking and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to succeed in the face of what must have seemed like insurmountable odds. “Garrisonism, nominally the signifier of the most liberal individualism,” Fanuzzi contends, “thus did not predicate an individual at all but stood for the prospect of the public sphere, reinstated under the ideological norms of a former political era” (45). To reiterate, because Garrison purposely created these parallel associations between the abolitionists and the Revolutionaries, by portraying himself as a defiant individual within the same very public medium they had employed, he was actually interweaving his own identity in the minds of his readers with the way they had learned to identify the founders of America. Moreover, these associations of identity then transferred onto other abolitionists doing the same thing, and therefore redefined abolitionism and abolitionists

in more favorable ways to readers who might otherwise have been predisposed to distrust them.

Although Garrison may have wanted to associate his rhetoric with that of the American Revolution, and thus to transfer its destiny for success to abolitionism (Fanuzzi xxxi), he was also keenly aware of the changing political landscape of his own day. As Newman explains, “Whereas formerly Democracy in its crudest, purest form had been feared as a precursor to mob rule or even anarchy, by the 1820s many Americans saw democracy as the defining characteristic of the nation” (9). Individual sovereignty as democracy in the aftermath of the Jacksonian era had changed the political fabric of the country, taking its arena out of the backrooms of elitist organizations and bringing American politics out into the public sphere. Garrison united and mobilized his diverse associates in a way that made the antislavery movement more visible and public, and therefore more politically pertinent.

Thus, the antislavery conversation into which Stowe entered had become a matter of an inherently public discourse. Motivated by her own outrage over the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Stowe consciously and deliberately began composing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the specific purpose of engaging the political public sphere through the mass medium of print. Writing for the abolitionist *National Era*, she was acutely aware of the history and conventions of her genre, as is evident in the grand narratives and conventions she chose to employ.

Like the abolitionist literature that preceded her, Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first and foremost as an appeal to Christian values. Peppered throughout with Biblical

references and a main character modeled on Jesus Christ, Stowe used her unique familial and educational background to shape Christian associations that would have broad appeal. For traditional Calvinists, she devised the logical speeches of Augustine St. Clare and his erudite debates with the New Englander Aunt Ophelia. For evangelicals, she used the evangelical Eva and Uncle Tom with their deep, emotional appeals as passionate entreaties, more similar to the revivalists of the reform movements. She used the character of George Harris to elicit associations of identification between runaway slaves and Revolutionary patriots fighting for their freedom, and to employ the Enlightenment rhetoric of natural rights and the age of reason. She used his wife, Eliza, to create associations between mothers and runaway slaves as her female predecessors had done. Throughout, she repeatedly used the rhetoric of separated families that Garrison had used in his "Declaration of Sentiments."

The group that Stowe largely neglected in her rhetoric was that of the African American abolitionists. While Stowe was widely accused of radical abolitionism, her novel in no way advocates the immediate outlawing of slavery. Her example of George Shelby emancipating his slaves voluntarily is much closer to the Pennsylvania antislavery doctrine of gradualism. Her narrative is almost entirely devoid of violent resistance, excepting only George Harris and his Quaker cohort, who declines to kill his pursuer in the end. She seems to endorse the idea of colonization since the escaped slaves in her book eventually leave the United States, and ultimately choose to reside in Africa, and she received a good deal of criticism from African Americans because of this.

Despite her moderate tone and language, however, Harriet Beecher Stowe was savagely criticized for her novel, painted as a promoter of anarchy and civil war by her

detractors, and labeled a radical abolitionist. The reception of her novel in the highly politicized public sphere is the subject of my next chapter.

Chapter Three

A Matter of Spheres: An inquiry into the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with a particular emphasis on its contemporary reviews

As outlined in the previous chapter, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was released into a well-established and necessarily public sphere of debate. Originally published in serial form in an abolitionist periodical, *The National Era*, beginning on June 5, 1851, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* inherited the conventions and conflicts characteristic of antislavery literature. Yet, the publication of the novel in its complete book format accomplished something altogether new that would make it stand out as a seminal work in American literature. The explosive nature of its popularity gave *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a new degree of publicity that set it apart from previous literary works of the same, or for that matter any, genre before.

In this chapter, I will attempt to show the ways in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* changed the nature of the ongoing conversation about abolition that it had joined and ultimately dominated. Using a sample of twenty book reviews and excerpts from book reviews published within a year of the release of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its complete book form on March 20, 1852, I will explain how the book came to be the central focus of the debate with the sheer magnitude of its publicity. I will then explore the way in which it

changed the nature of the public antislavery debate, and finally show how its influence challenged established parameters of regional and cultural emotional expectation.

The contemporary book reviews reveal an intriguing story about the propagation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because they not only chronicle the book's proliferation, but they also reveal a heated battle over its publicity and an effort from both sides of the slavery issue to manipulate its success. Some curious disparities between sales reports from the Northern and Southern reviewers provide the first indications that manipulation took place. For example, in December 1852, *The Southern Literary Press*, a proslavery periodical, estimated the number of copies in the United Kingdom to be a quarter million (4). In January, *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, an antislavery periodical, places the number at one million. Taken together, the two sources are select examples that show the disparity in reports along lines of political motivation.

Politically motivated writers had good reason to attempt to shape the way in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* popularity would be received. The way in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* pervaded the public sphere affected the influence it would exert on the public body of political discourse. By referring to the public sphere, I mean to elicit the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, who identified a shift in political discourse in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which the primary political force shifted from aristocratic monarchs to a democratic body. Outlined in his benchmark book, *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas notes that this was a transformative period in America, as well as England and France, that deeply affected all aspects of society during the Age of Revolution.

Defined simply, “The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public” (Habermas *Transformation* 27). More than this, says Habermas, the public sphere is any place in which private people come together to employ their rationality. The church and reformist reading societies, public places like coffee shops, librarians’ conferences, and indeed the many newspapers and book reviews simultaneously documented and shaped the public opinion. This public opinion was the new measure by which public policy could be evaluated and formed in absence of a monarchical dictatorship, and therefore the public sphere of rational debate became the essence of political power.

Moreover, Habermas identifies literature as “a public sphere in apolitical form – the... precursor of the public sphere operative in the political domain” (*Transformation* 29). In literature, people found impetus for various subjects of public conversation along with varying ways to interpret those subjects. *Uncle Tom’s* success, both in its original publication in series and in its complete book publication, placed it into Habermas’ Public Sphere on many levels, while at the same time it challenged and expanded the definition.

For instance, it is obvious that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* started many public conversations on the issue of slavery. In book clubs and church meetings, in parlor rooms and on city streets wherever the book was discussed, it necessarily included some commentary or rational-critical thought on the issue of slavery. Furthermore, imbued with many existing arguments about slavery, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* shaped the nature of that public debate by providing the participants with multiple arguments against it. For

these reasons alone, it makes sense that antislavery reviewers would attempt to promote the book, while proslavery reviewers would attempt to diminish its magnitude.

Uncle Tom's Cabin also contradicts Habermas' apolitical definition of literature, in that the novel is expressly political. Stowe offered no apology for the fact that she had written the book in response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. She openly admitted that it was composed regarding "deliberations and discussions as to what Christian duty should be on this head" (Stowe *UTC* 440). Therefore, it is evident that Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* specifically to affect the public rational-critical debate about slavery, and therefore to influence the public political sphere.

However, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exerted more impact than just the ways in which it influenced discussions. As Habermas explains, "The public's understanding of the public use of reason was guided specifically by such private experiences as grew out of the audience-oriented subjectivity of the conjugal family's intimate domain" (*Transformation* 28). In other words, the ways in which people interpreted particular arguments or accepted or rejected particular ideas depended on the way they already identified themselves in relation to those issues. Because *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proved so successful at realigning the ways in which people identified themselves in relation to slavery, it also realigned the ways in which they would accept or reject arguments relating to slavery. For example, when so many women came to identify themselves with the frightened Eliza, fleeing to secure the sanctity of her family and to save her own union with her beloved child, they also came to identify the slave-trader as an enemy and a villain. This type of associative identification would compel Northern Christians to identify with the slaves and therefore to reject any arguments in favor of slavery.

This was what made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* different from the abolitionist novels that preceded it. As an example, Ronald G. Walters mentions *The Slave: or Memoirs of Archy Moore*, an 1836 novel by Richard Hildreth. He says, "It appealed to the small number of Americans already converted to the cause, and so did much other anti-slavery fiction, like works aimed at children bearing such titles as *The Slave's Friend* or the *Anti-Slavery Alphabet*" (177). Stowe's unsigned reviewer for *Putnam's* discusses the novel's place among previous antislavery novels. He asserts that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is successful "not because it is a tale of slavery, but in spite of it." He remarks, "The martyr age of antislavery ... had passed away, and the more fatal age of indifference and contempt had succeeded" (5). Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison had attempted to promote those works too (Walters 117). The difference was that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* actually appealed to people outside the antislavery opinion and converted them.

By reorienting a reader's personal identification process, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* therefore reoriented that reader's public opinions and changed the aggregate landscape of public debate on the issue of slavery (Hendler 22). As more people became enamored with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and identified with slaves and antislavery, they shared the book with more of their friends and contemporaries. As the book became more popular, it became more intriguing to those who had not yet read it, and therefore became more alluring as well.

This idea that collective consensus can construct public opinion as well as measure it is key to understanding what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reviewers, first in the North and later in the South, were attempting to actively accomplish with their media. In his chapter "The Public Sphere," in *On Society and Politics*, Habermas writes,

Whereas at one time publicness was intended to subject persons or things to the public use of reason and to make political decisions susceptible to revision before the tribunal of public opinion, today it has often enough already been enlisted in the aid of the secret policies of interest groups; in the form of 'publicity' it now acquires public prestige for persons or things and renders them capable of acclamation. (236)

In other words, ideas or people often receive publicity as an attempt to promote them by manner of repetition rather than simply to prove or test them. Eventually, in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the momentum became a public event unto itself and perpetuated its own propagation.

As an example of the rate by which it grew, *The London Times* reviewer states in September that "Twenty thousand copies of this book, according to its title page, are circulating among the American people, but three times as many thousands more has probably been issued from the American press since the title page was written" (1).

Putnam's reviewer states that "there [are] thirty different editions published in London, within six months of the publication of the work here, and one firm keeps four hundred men employed in printing and binding it" (3). He also goes on to address the novel's propagation throughout Europe, saying, "Four rival editions are claiming the attention of the Parisians" (3), and adds, "Mrs. Stowe's book is more read in Paris, just now, than any other book" (4). He offers a piece of a German book review of the novel, mentions two editions in Italy and speculates about "the other northern nations of Europe" (4).

If abolitionist periodicals could enhance the already potent propagation and public transformation that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was accomplishing in the public sphere, they could also enhance the effect of motivated individuals who were willing to work publicly

to change public policy. In order to enhance its success, they had to produce a number of works repeating assertions that the book was a representation of fairness and truth in order to produce such an association in the public opinion of their readers. This explains the profound difference in the way reviewers represented the truth within the book's argument. While Southern reviewers called the book a farce and a caricature, Northern reviewers spoke of the book's fair-handedness and accurate representations.

However, accuracy was not the instrumental component in the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sentimentality works necessarily outside of reality because it attempts to invoke an ideal world (Berlant *Complaint* 35). Stowe's sentimental idealism therefore was not only free to exist outside of reality and retain its impact, it also existed apart from specific circumstances that could be debated in order to address what should be or what might be. This detachment from particular cases in reality forbade the attachment of extenuating circumstances to influence the impact of the fictional events. Moreover, Stowe created metonymic patterns, or complicated systems of association, by including attributes of Biblical characters or passages in her narrative that merely implied similarity, without actually attributing Biblical qualities to actual, impeachable human beings.

The manner in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had managed to redefine lines of audience orientation contributed to the sudden propagation of its message because her primarily Northern Christian audience was already familiar with the systems of imagery she employed. Additionally, through this metonymic association, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was able to redefine terms associated with the slave debate. According to George Lakoff, public repetition is only useful in shaping public opinion if the message that is repeated

bears with it an association. “When a word or phrase is repeated over and over for a long period of time,” writes Lakoff, “the neural circuits that compute its meaning are activated repeatedly in the brain. As the neurons in those circuits fire, the synapses connecting the neurons in the circuits get stronger and stronger and the circuits may eventually become permanent” (10). Therefore, when readers came to associate new meanings to words like slave trader and slave trade, their brain chemistry actually changed as well. These physical changes within the brains of readers caused them to interpret the various issues that employed those terms in new ways and so changed the character of the American slavery debate. Unprecedented sales gave *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* an extraordinary gift of repetition to its ideas that bore new meanings of association, and this redefinition of terms upon America’s already paramount topic promoted increasing conversation in the public sphere, all of which revolved tightly around the novel.

Like the abolitionists like Garrison before her, Stowe had used the public vehicle of print to create new associations of identification. Unlike her predecessors, she did so in a way that mediated those new associations through multiple characters that informed her readers how to interpret the suffering of her characters. As explained previously in the introduction of this thesis, Harriet Beecher Stowe used these interpretations to create new metonymic associations that connected images of slaves to familiar and extended grand narratives that carried with them entire structures of association. By tying the images of slaves to Biblical figures, she created connections between the word ‘slave’ within the minds of her readers and grand narratives of pious, patient biblical figures who were ordained by God to eventually overcome their oppression. As Garrison had connected abolitionists with American patriots who would eventually overcome great odds, Stowe

connected slaves with God's elect, and therefore, to become an instrument of the abolition movement was to become an instrument of God by metonymic association.

The conversion of readers to activists was a logical transition. Walters explains, "It was an anti-slavery tactic that fit hand-in-glove with her deep conviction that sympathy for the slave, once evoked in a person, produced an instant abolitionist" (175). Stowe had created in her readers emotional associations between 'slave' and compassion. She had created associations between 'slaveholder' and outrage. While *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was still being released in periodical form in *The National Era*, abolitionists like Garrison must have noticed the transformative power it was having over its readers and would have used their own printing presses to magnify the publicity and therefore the effect of the novel.

From the very beginning of its release in novel form, antislavery publishers were attempting to create a publicity phenomenon. Northern reviewers were actively trying to shape the public opinion through representations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* popularity as a kind of public opinion poll. According to Glenn Hendler, "the phrase 'public sentiment' is roughly coterminous with 'public opinion,' a collective consensus that is measured – and in important ways constructed – through quantitative instruments like polls" (2). As I documented in the previous chapter, abolitionist publishers like Garrison were actively using the medium of print to embellish the magnitude of their own movement in order to enhance the impact they could bear upon the public slavery debate. It should therefore come as little surprise that the very first book review about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was printed in Garrison's own *Liberator* only two weeks after its release.

Close inspection of many of the Northern periodicals reveals a common thread and a clear motive. Among the first book reviews, six of the first seven reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* come either from abolitionist periodicals or from religious periodicals, many of which were commonly closely associated with abolitionists and their movement. The second review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in *The Congregationalist*, edited by Edward Beecher, Stowe's brother ("The Congregationalist"). Following this chronologically were *The Morning Post* of Boston, Frederick Douglass' paper of Rochester, New York, *The Circular* from Brooklyn, and the *Mercersburg Review* from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The only exception to this group was *The Literary World*, a New York City review that was harshly critical of the book.

The earliest of the reviews in the Southern press did not come until October of 1852, more than six months into *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* publication. This was not because Southern reviewers were unaware of the novel and its popularity. More likely, they did not want to add to the publicity of the novel early on. Later, they viewed the novel as something that had to be addressed. They outwardly refer to its success as a reason necessitating their reviews. For example, citing the argument that reviewing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* gives it attention that it does not deserve, John R. Thompson writes, "Let it be borne in mind that this slanderous work has found its way to every section of our country, and has crossed the water to Great Britain, filling the minds of all who know nothing of slavery with hatred for that institution and those who uphold it" (18).

The influential Southern journalist George Frederick Holmes acknowledges the book's success as well, stating, "The circumstances of the time; the distempered atmosphere of public sentiment, both at the North and beyond the Atlantic...have all

conspired to give a popularity and currency to the work at this particular moment, which its ability does not justify, and its purposes should forbid" (4,5). He talks about the phenomenon in terms of a poisoning or a plague. He says, "Still, from whatever cause its multitudinous dispersion may arise, this of itself assures us both of the virulence of the venom and of the aptitude of the *public* mind both at the North and in England, to catch the contagion and welcome the contamination" (5).

As the Holmes review indicates, Southern reviewers were acutely aware of the political power of the book's momentous publicity. A closer look at the timing of the Northern and Southern reviews shows that both sides were using their assessments to create specific effects within the political forum. At the time *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was released, the presidential nominees for both the Whig and Democratic national parties were still undecided and slavery was America's primary issue. Both parties would hold their conventions in Baltimore in the first weeks of June. Abolitionist publishers, based mostly in New England, who were attempting to exert as much influence on those elections as possible were certainly using the book at the time to shape public discourse on the issue of slavery and to convert activists to create as much impact on the electoral process as possible. Accordingly, Whig party candidate Winfield Scott's antislavery position was one of the primary deciding factors behind his nomination, and he received a significant portion of his support from New England (McPherson 76). Similarly, while Southern reviewers were not covering *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during the primaries, they did begin to review the book and attempt to discredit it in the weeks leading up to the national election.

While the Northern reviewers were able to use the unprecedented publicity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to perpetuate its success and therefore its effect, Southern reviewers faced a greater challenge. Although they were aware of the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the impact it was having on the ongoing antislavery debate, Southern writers seemed much less aware of how to deal with this new type of associative persuasion. Some of the first Southern reviewers tried to dispatch the issue by refuting the facts in Stowe's argument. One of these was John Thompson for the *Southern Literary Messenger*. He took pains to address the individual arguments and refute them with legal citations and logical arguments, including references to statutes of the Louisiana State Legislature (10, 16) and applicable court cases from the Southern states (11).

Apparently, however, this approach yielded little effect in undermining the ability of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to continue converting new readers over to the antislavery cause. By the time Holmes wrote his review, he took a different approach, starting by stating that the facts have already been addressed by others. He tells us, "So far as a false statement can be rectified by positive denial, - so far as misrepresentation can be corrected by direct, abundant, unquestionable proof of the error, this service has already been adequately rendered by the newspapers and periodical literature of the South" (5).

In some ways, the Holmes review represents a pivotal piece in the ongoing conversation. Prior to Holmes, reviewers from the South engaged mostly on the grounds of the factual validity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but Holmes began to engage the conversation by dealing with Stowe's narratives of emotional association. Probably realizing that the persuasiveness of *Uncle Tom* was not based in fact or logic but in such persuasion and audience identification, Holmes creates a complicated argument that

engages Stowe's narratives by undermining those very associations. He attempts to create new associations in place of Stowe's, ones that connect Northern capitalism and expansionism, while depicting the Southern slaveocracy as the solution to those evils. He claims that the Northern economic system breaks up more families than slavery, and redefines the Southern family as inclusive of beloved slaves (15). He purposefully makes allusion to the suffering of the poor in England and Europe after explicitly referring to the book's success overseas (13).

Holmes undermines the Christian virtue of the author by rewriting the associations of her narratives to nefarious ends. For example, he turns the story of George and Eliza's escape into an example of endorsement of murder and theft (17). He invokes Southern theological frameworks regarding slavery (6) and claims that Stowe distorts the Bible and maligns ministers (18). He contends that abolitionists cause more harm to slaves by necessitating harsher regulations (15).

Most remarkably, Holmes implies that emotions are culturally constructed, and that the associations of emotional expectation upon which the novel's effectiveness relies are unfounded. He adeptly identifies the vehicle of audience identification within *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as its persuasive ability and implies multiple spheres of culture:

[The novel] presupposes an identity of sensibilities between the races of the free and the negroes, whose cause it pretends to advocate. It takes advantage of this presumption, so unsuspectingly credited where slavery is unknown, to arouse sympathies for what might be grievous misery to the white man, but is none to the differently tempered black. Every man adapts himself and his feelings more or less to the circumstances of his condition... Thus what would be insupportable to one race, or one order of society, constitutes no portion of the wretchedness of another. (13)

Nearly as profound is Holmes' prescription for the South to effectively counter this new type of emotional persuasion. He advocates a counter-literature that will create a familiarity and an esteem for the Southern culture. "The Southern population," he contends, "have checked and chilled all manifestations of literary aptitudes at the South; they have discouraged by blighting indifference, the efforts of such literary genius as they may have nurtured" (7). Perhaps it is no coincidence that the reviewer for *Putnam's* a month later remarks upon the new literary movement of anti-*Uncle Tom* literature.

Taken together, Holmes and the *Putnam's* reviewer illustrate a moment in American history when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* effectively nuanced the methods by which public discourse had been framed. They show that Stowe's new kind of persuasion caught the ongoing American debate over slavery by surprise, and that her opponents had to first comprehend how this new mode worked in order to counter its effectiveness. It shows how a work of literature can not only be formed by a personal family history and a rhetorical genre history, but also how the publicity of a literary work can change culture, and even create a new dynamic within that culture. Perhaps this explains to some degree why *Uncle Tom* became so explosively popular and so central to the abolitionist debate. It may also explain why the novel receded in popularity so drastically after the abolition debate was settled by the American Civil War.

The Holmes review also shows how Stowe's opposition began to use her own tactic to undermine her effect and to promote their own agenda. Holmes' pivotal review is tailored as much to his Southern audience of slaveholders as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is tailored to a Northern Christian audience. It did engage the arguments and the discourses of Stowe's antislavery novel, and it acts on the surface more as an emotional appeal to

Southerners, with a particular emphasis on Southern identification. Beneath the surface, it addresses the emotional expectations of Southern men within the public sphere, and in this respect becomes an example of how the employment of moral persuasion was adapted to the cultural expectations of a very different audience than the one Stowe envisioned.

Holmes repeatedly tries to frame Southern culture as its own public sphere and tie it to an impending threat, thereby creating a regionalized identity in two ways, first by creating a distinct opposition to the North, and then by assigning a danger to Southern society. Sara Ahmed writes that “the language of fear involves the intensification of ‘threats’, which works to create a distinction between those who are ‘under threat’ and those who threaten” (72). Multiple times in his review, Holmes asserts such distinctions between an ‘us’ and ‘them’ connected by a threat. Together with the multiple assertions that Stowe is repeatedly attacking the southern character through her mass media public sphere, this would have constituted a threat to Southern honor, which Holmes is intensifying through his own repetition in his mass media public sphere. Peter Stearns contends that “Southern distinctiveness did shine through in emotional criteria related to honor,” and adds that “Southern standards were more single-minded than was true in the rest of the nation” (43).

A famous example of this is the caning of Charles Sumner in the House of Representatives by Preston Brooks in defense of his cousin’s honor. Southern law at the time still tolerated honor killings like duels and fights “against the claims or slights of others” (Stearns 43). Another interesting take on this expectation to rigorously defend against a grievance can be found in the review by Thompson in *The Southern Literary*

Messenger. He rebukes Stowe for her depiction of George Shelby's response to the murder of Uncle Tom. Because George reacts in a reserved manner, knocking Legree down instead of killing him, Thompson accuses Stowe of misrepresenting and demeaning the men of Kentucky (14). According to Stearns, this is indicative of the Southern Victorian emotional expectation. For example, Stearns notes, "Southern culture similarly taught its boys that, while sheer hot-headedness represented a fatal loss of control, violence was often inescapable" (44).

By repeatedly asserting a public threat to honor by Northern and European others (Holmes 6), Holmes was attempting to amalgamate a collective Southern identity. In the same review in which he acknowledges *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* ability to use emotional association to create audience identification, Holmes uses cultural expectations of emotional reaction to unify his Southern audience in a more cohesive regional identity that was confronted with a threat from others to be displaced from their positions of social preeminence in the Southern slaveocracy. Ahmed says "emotions such as hate work to secure collectives... by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth), but to take the place of the subject" (43). Since the Nat Turner slave uprising in 1831, an underlying fear of insurrection, slave initiated violence, and a possible displacement of white power by black slaves had created just such a threat of replacement. Just as Harriet Beecher Stowe relied upon emotional commonalities among Northern Christian readers, Holmes relied on a common fear in his Southern readership to accomplish a similar result in a unique and original way.

Holmes also worked to incite Southern feelings of chivalry by writing about the Southern culture through the metonymic association in which the terms he uses imply similarities between the Southern region and a woman in distress. “She has dismantled her towers,” he writes at one point, “and suppressed her fortresses of all efficient garrison, and she is now exposed, unarmed and unprotected, to all the treacherous stratagems [and] pitiless malice of her inveterate and interested enemies” (8). Holmes’ rhetoric served to create a Southern identity by using metonymic tools of association within a literary public sphere while he simultaneously advised other writers of the South to do the same. At numerous times, he invoked ideas of civil war and anarchy to motivate his readership, indicating that this was the central thesis in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (14).

If Holmes wanted to provide evidence for this anarchical crumbling of society, he would have needed to look no further than Stowe herself and the dramatic changes in the American emotional hegemony that were taking place in antebellum society and the doctrine of separate gender spheres. As I alluded to in the first chapter of this thesis, a fundamental component of the Victorian American emotional culture was a belief that women belonged to the familial sphere of private domesticity while men belonged to the public sphere of socio-political discourse. Stowe’s aptitude with Calvinist discursive structures and effectiveness in the male public domain were but the latest manifestation of a delineation of this gender dichotomy during the Second Great Awakening.

Gender constituted a semi-regional space of culture that can be viewed as a sort of sub-sphere of the public sphere. Gender was effectively spatial because the different ways in which women and men were perceived relegated them to different spaces of society (Rotundo 22). The feminine sphere was the domestic space while the masculine

sphere was the world, or public space. Some of the reviewers from both North and South expressed significant disdain for Stowe's "feminine" method of emotional persuasion in the public sphere, although some Northern writers reflected their audience's acceptance of the increasing place of emotionality and women within the public sphere of political discourse during the Second Great Awakening. Both Northern and Southern writers expressed at least surprise and often scorn for a woman who dared to cross over the domestic sphere of Victorian women into the public political sphere that historically belonged to the Victorian men.

Some Southern reviewers like John R. Thompson were explicitly chauvinistic in their criticism. Thompson condemns placing "woman on a footing of political equality with man, and causing her to look beyond the office for which she was created" (2). Others, like Holmes, were overtly cruel, comparing her to a "haggard crone" (1) and a "foul-mouthed hag" (2) among many other derogatory terms.

While some Northern reviewers expressed admiration for Stowe, the review that affords Stowe the most congeniality is surprisingly that of Louisa S. McCord for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, the only female reviewer from the group. Any derogatory mention of Stowe is entirely absent, replaced with terms of cordiality like "fair lady" (2) and "our authoress" (5). Rather than indicating any sense of camaraderie between the two women writers, this cordiality reflects the social expectation placed on McCord because displays of anger were considered unfeminine for women (Stearns 45). Drawing from a Victorian address to young ladies, Stearns quotes, "An enraged woman is one of the most disgusting sights in nature" (46). Any public display of outrage or anger from McCord

would have masculinized her, while male reviewers were expected to employ the constructive use of anger.

The idea of separate spheres, while a model that facilitates our comprehension of the cultural hegemony of the time and cannot fully represent individual opinions and experiences, is nonetheless paradigmatic among modern emotion theorists. The separate gender spheres constituted a complex system of symbolic actions and expectations that signified social position and duty, especially for Americans in the middle class (Rotundo 22). Consider this against MacKethan's assertion that "Certainly in the North, and I would argue, in the South as well, the concept of 'domestic affection' belonged, by the 1850s, to the cultural ideal of domesticity, which separated matters of home and hearth (women and children) from matters of public opinion, self interest, and law (men and marketplace)" (223). Although not officially enforced by government, public-private emotional spheres constituted a significant component of social expectation in Victorian American culture, providing separation of household duties and providing gender distinctions (Stearns 47).

This explains why Holmes ardently portrays Stowe's attack on legal systems, particularly slavery and the Compromise of 1850, as an appeal to total anarchy, or an attack on all law and social structures. The very fact that she is engaging in legal discourse in a sphere of public opinion would represent, especially in the South, the ways in which the social order was disintegrating. Like words, symbols or a system of symbols can be reassigned signification through new and repeated associations (Rotundo 6).

Moreover, the very structure of the social model of separate gender spheres meant that changes in Northern and Southern lifestyles affected the way these two regions diverged. Preexisting requirements and assumptions were built into the gendered separate spheres that became less and less relevant in the changing American landscape. These changes were manifesting in different ways and at different rates between the North and South, which contributed to diverging regional identities. At the level of the family unit, the separate spheres assigned specific emotional tasks that contributed to the stability of the home. While women contributed an intuitive emotional component to the family identity, men lacked this provision, instead contributing a stability in the form of rational constraint. These two emotional drives complemented and balanced each other out (Stearns 45).

The different spheres of gender brought with them more specific emotional duties that began to change over time. Women's intuitive emotionality contributed to the tranquility of the home (Stearns 46). This tranquility then endowed women with a duty to maintain virtue. As Rotundo points out, "Still, virtue had its own sphere, 'the sanctuary of the home', where a man could fortify the evil influences of the world...men's sphere depleted virtue, women's sphere renewed it...It built upon the idea of republican motherhood and tapped the growing cultural belief that women were the virtuous sex" (23). Therefore, any perception that Stowe might be undermining the separation of the spheres would imply an undermining of virtue.

Rotundo argues that this doctrine of separate spheres was a social reaction to the new realities of the industrial revolution. He says that the changing marketplace required men to be away from the home more often and for longer periods of time. Combined with

the “evangelical perception of the world as an evil place” and the industrial need for men to spend more time in the world, women’s role as defenders of virtue arose as an adaptation to a changing environment. Therefore the separate gender spheres resulted from a general distrust of the world and as a way to adapt to its changes (Rotundo 23-4).

Yet this vehicle for adaptation was apparently a transitory one. The idea that women were “expected to sustain the morality of men,” as Rotundo explains, necessarily meant that they would eventually be drawn into the public sphere regarding issues of morality (24). The antislavery issue was just such a reason for women to impose a moral authority on the subject in the public sphere, and women did so in novels and essays, as Stowe’s sister Catharine had done. This also explains why Catharine had approached the issue from a perspective of domesticity. As women’s duty to cultivate virtue drew them into matters of public discourse, the lines between the private domestic and the public political began to unravel. No woman in 1852 was more public than Harriet Beecher Stowe, and her treatises on public virtue in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* put her in direct opposition to Southern masculinity. “After all,” writes Rotundo, “if the doctrine of separate spheres was a critique of ‘the world’ and the world was man’s realm, then the doctrine was also a critique of manhood” (25). For Stowe to point out the evil of the world, a male institution, or even to belong separate from the world because it was too evil for women to engage in it, she was necessarily also pointing out the evil of the patriarchy that had built the world..

In Stowe’s case, her critique of Southern slaveholding was also a critique of a well-established patriarchal institution. Elizabeth Ammons asserts, “Harriet Beecher Stowe displays in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a facility for converting essentially repressive

concepts of femininity into a positive (and activist) alternative system of values in which woman figures not merely as the moral superior of man, his inspirer, but as the model for him in the new millennium about to dawn” (163). Lucinda MacKethan points out specific text where Stowe warns her readers of the dangers of making “anything beautiful or desirable” from “the oft-fabled poetic legend of a patriarchal institution” (226). She points out that the chapters about the Shelby plantation only show that patriarchy, which is driven by marketplace economics, is destructive to the domestic stability of the family.

This kind of attack on patriarchy, coupled with Stowe’s success in the public sphere, would then have born additional threats to the Southern economy, beyond the attack on the economic institution of slavery. As dramatic industrial changes were taking place in the North, changing the realities in the domestic sphere and the public marketplace, the plantations and estates of the South depended primarily on the home for productivity. Any threats against the stability of the home were also attacks against the economic centers of Southern society (Jones and Donaldson 3). In order to use these distinctions between home and marketplace to emphasize the contradictions between Southern domestic sanctimony and economic reality, abolitionist writers raised questions about the dual nature of the slave as family member and personal property (MacKethan 224). Female abolitionists were particularly effective with such arguments, because not only was it their duty to point out such contradictions in the application of the separate spheres, but by their doing so, the patriarchal institution was forcing them to cross the barriers of those spheres to point out the inconsistencies.

This threat of social disintegration was greatly enhanced and complicated by the master-slave nature of Southern society. In *A Sociology for the South* (1854), George

Fitzhugh identified the importance of the subordination of white women to the authority of slaveholding men in Southern society. He writes, "Slave society... is a series of subordinations... father, masters, husbands, wives, children, and slaves, not being equals, rivals, competitors and antagonists (Donaldson and Jones 2). Because Southern society labeled women as dependents like children and slaves, and structured legal systems to exclude them from basic marketplace protections like contracts, "gender in the South has traditionally been seen as even more constructively defined and polarized than elsewhere in American culture" (MacKethan 223; Donaldson and Jones 6).

However, the model of separate gender spheres is not a universal representation of the Victorian experience, and the particularities of where private emotion became public and the reasons this was considered acceptable changed over time. This change then affected the way the two regions, North and South, differentiated their emotional identification within the historical context of time. For example, differences in regional emotional expectation were probably greater in the colonial period than in the Victorian era because "many southerners came to accept the idea of targeting emotionality more carefully while northerners rediscovered the usefulness of channeled anger" (Stearns 44). Perhaps this is nowhere more visible than in the antislavery debate. Northerners like Stowe were acutely aware of the way anger towards an individual character like Simon Legree could motivate people into antislavery action, while Southerners like Holmes were able to target the emotionality of their readerships in order to create an intended public response. While the regional and economic differences between North and South may have placed distinct expectations and associations upon gendered behavior, writers

of the two regions were developing a similar awareness regarding audience orientation and the use of emotional appeal.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the North and South were anything but homogeneous, and that both regions were comprised of very diverse sub-regions and cultures. Although it is possible to draw general connections between the opinions of reviewers and the regions for whom they wrote, the ways in which the public sphere took shape are more complex. As I suggested earlier, reviewers attested to the factual accuracy of the novel in ways that reflected their own political motivations. Yet the economic reality of the print medium implies that the political motivations that they represented were probably not so much their own as those of their readership. Writers in the nineteenth century were every bit as aware of their audience's beliefs and values as they are today. They tailored their message to resonate those values in order to generate sales. Therefore, the opinions expressed in the reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflect the views of the various periodicals' readerships, or at least what the reviewers perceived those views to be. In this sense, there is a duplicity to the idea of audience orientation in the public medium of print. While Habermas' theory of public sphere rational-critical debate is based upon a private audience orientation, in the medium of print, this private orientation becomes a perceived identification. The writer generalizes identification for an aggregate of private individuals, so that no actual individual with an actual private identity predicates the intended audience.

Therefore, the ways that various reviewers assessed the validity of the assertions in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflect the regional flows of the public sphere in antebellum America. Probably the region with the most unified reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was

the South, whose reviewers were essentially unanimous in their condemnation of the novel. Writing for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, George Frederick Holmes pulls few punches in his condemnation of the book, calling it among other things “deliberate fraud and malignant slander” (15), and going so far as to call “every fact distorted, every incident discolored” (4).

Although this Southern condemnation of *Uncle Tom's* facts may not be surprising, it is indeed illustrative of the difference in regional perception, and representation, of the book when compared with Northern reviewers. Particularly in Boston, the reception of the facts of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could not be starker in its contrast. Boston's *The Morning Post* reviewer, W. B. S., states that “*Uncle Tom's Cabin* ... is the finest picture yet painted of the abominable horrors of slavery” (1). He says that the book “has fairly represented the various arguments in favor of slavery, and the various feelings which exist in the mind of the south, in reference to this terrible evil” (3). Notice the way that *The Morning Post* reviewer focuses his attention on the issue of Southern feelings. Since, during the Second Great Awakening, ideas like theological understanding were increasingly based on a legitimacy of feeling, the validity of the Southern system of slavery could also be impeached through the implication that Southern feeling somehow affected Southern logic.

Some reviews reflected the mixed perspective of their regions. An unsigned review from *The Western Journal and Civilian*, published out of St. Louis, Missouri, for example, seems to exhibit the dual position of the writer's state, which, although legally a slave state, would remain a faithful state to the Union a few years later. The unsigned reviewer for *The London Times* also exhibits some balance in the way he estimates the

validity of the book's claims. England had abolished the slave trade officially with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. However, this act allowed for exceptions where slavery would still be legal. New York, which was a central hub of the publishing industry then as it is now, is somewhat more mixed in the way its reviewers accepted *Uncle Tom's* argument. A city rife with racial and ethnic conflicts at the time and the site of extensive race riots in 1863, the New York City reviews fall on both sides regarding the debate over the factual validity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

As the diversity in these reviews reveals, there was a distinct connection between the way reviewers assessed the arguments of the novel and their own political agendas and audience. This is indicative of the way the public sphere follows regional flows. It also illustrates the way that literature is shaped by the culture into which it is written, as well as the way cultures are shaped by the repetitive and representational powers of public literary discourse. Beyond the idea of the public sphere as spatial, the reviews display some ways in which discursive representations identify individual public spheres as spatially undefined regions of culture rather than as cultural spaces.

Reviewers of Christian publications, for example, often couched their praise in terms that reflected their religious concerns and religious audience expectations. The writer for *The Congregationalist* writes, "We look upon the writing of this book as providential" (1). Similarly, the unsigned reviewer for *The Independent* writes, "It is for the moral of the book that we would spread it. For the freshness and power with which the experience of the Christian is developed in it." (1). These Christian periodicals are an example of spatially undefined regions of culture since these periodicals addressed

audiences in both the North and the Midwest. Their common system of values was based on religious commonality rather than regional location.

Another spatially undefined region, and one that the North and the South shared in common, was a sphere of mourning. The one part of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that was afforded praise among the Southern reviewers was the death of little Eva. Perhaps this was because of the exceptionally high mortality rates in Victorian culture. Jeffrey Steele explains, "By mid-century, the culture of mourning had pervaded every area of life in America" (92). Even overtly hostile reviews like the one from *The Literary World* of New York called this passage in the book "truly beautiful" (3) and one of the most critical reviews from *The Southern Literary Messenger* called the passage of Eva's death a "gem shining" (Thompson 9).

Regardless of region or religion, race or gender, anyone in antebellum America could find themselves among the sphere of mourners. Peter Stearns places grief soundly in the public sphere as well. "Grief was, in the first place, a vital component in the cultural arsenal," he explains. "It was frequently discussed, a staple not only of story but also of song...Death, correspondingly, would move one to the core. Despite its pain, the essence of grief was a vital part of Victorian emotional life" (38).

Stowe was acutely aware of this and used it to create metonymic associations of identification. "Using the most familiar and clichéd of situations, a mother's grief for her dead child, Stowe displaces personal grief into the public context of racial oppression," Steele writes. "This political move is made possible by the overdetermination of maternal mourning as a culturally familiar – if not unavoidable – site" (98). Apparently, the

reviewers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were also aware of the universal appeal across regional and cultural lines. Regardless of their regional or political associations, reviewers knew their audiences were acutely sensitive to images of death, and especially of the death of children. Mourning was a non-spatial region that could engulf anyone.

Ultimately, the public sub-spheres crossed and overlapped to constitute larger regions and complex collective identifications whose discourses defined the majority opinions through public conversation, representation, and collective identification. In this way, public opinion was not the aggregate of individual opinion, but rather it was the aggregate of what the individual perceived the public opinion to be. Through mass media repetition and new metonymic associations, public opinion shaped the public sphere, and was redefined by the public sphere.

The metonymic associations in which Stowe redefined what it meant to “feel right” regarding slaves and slavery was a new method of moral persuasion that, as exemplified in the contemporary book reviews, Southern writers did not immediately understand. The ways in which her associations realigned her readers’ modes of emotional identification and redefined the terms associated with the slave debate changed the character of American political discourse. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had introduced a convention of realigning audience orientation in order to alter political debate in the public sphere, and Stowe’s opponents and contemporaries alike continued to employ the method. It is at least an essential part of why *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is such a seminal literary event in American history, and may also explain why it became less pertinent to the ongoing culture over time.

The novel drew Harriet Beecher Stowe into the center of the antislavery debate and made her into a worldwide celebrity. The way she dealt with that celebrity and the harsh criticism it brought upon her, and the way that her experience in the antislavery limelight transformed her, is the topic of the next chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Four

Harriet in the Mirror: The major works of Stowe's transformative years after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and before the Civil War

Harriet Beecher Stowe was surprised by the ferocity of her critics in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She had no way of expecting the magnitude and intensity of their condemnation. Yet, in the years that followed the release of the novel, she underwent a time of trial that refined and hardened her resolve. The phase was transformative for Stowe and established the foundation for her long and prolific career. The way in which her style and approach changed after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and before the Civil War can be understood through a comprehensive examination of her major works from that period.

The first book Harriet Beecher Stowe produced after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is, in many ways, a continuation of the novel because it provides the textual notation that supports the ideas in the novel. *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published in 1853 as a response to Stowe's critics, and therefore represents the first example of the ways in which Stowe changed as a writer in response to the criticism she received. Specifically, Stowe's efforts to produce non-fiction scholarship based on factual material was an entry into a new genre of writing that refined her ability to produce sophisticated arguments and heightened her sense of audience awareness.

A Key grew forth as an unexpected product of a single line seeded into *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during its original series printing in the *National Era*, and germinated in the

cultural soil of clerical and gender expectations. In the twelfth chapter, Stowe implicates clerical complicity in the institution of slavery, writing, “an institution which an American divine tells us has ‘no evils but such as are inseparable from any other relations in social and domestic life’” (170). This single line, taken from a misquote in a local newspaper, became the impetus for an ongoing conflict between Stowe and Dr. Joel Parker.

Parker was a Presbyterian minister in Philadelphia who was personally acquainted with both Stowe’s father and husband. He had been implicated by Stowe’s footnote, and during the ongoing correspondence that ensued between them beginning in May 1852, Parker threatened to sue her for \$20,000. Stowe’s response to the challenge eventually grew into the first material for *A Key*. It was during this back and forth exchange that Harriet Beecher Stowe began to change as a writer, becoming more and more confident in her debating technique and further developing her ecclesiastical abilities. What made the confrontation more heated was that it quickly became a matter in the public sphere. On May 20, the *Independent*, a religious newspaper in New York, announced that Stowe was to begin contributing in the form of essays, stories, and varied genres of writing. Almost immediately after, a rival Christian newspaper, *The New York Observer*, began featuring Parker, and the two became engaged in an ongoing public battle of words. Added to this, Stowe’s brother, Henry Ward Beecher, had been engaged in an ongoing battle with the *Observer* because its editors disapproved of Beecher’s openness to evangelicalism. As I explained in the first chapter of this thesis, evangelicalism placed less emphasis on clerical intermediation between the soul and God, and emphasized an individual’s ability to feel one’s way to salvation based on a common sense. Combined

with their impression that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was fundamentally anticlerical, the contributors of the *Observer* who were preachers and theologians, were all too willing to engage Stowe and Beecher in an ongoing debate. When Beecher produced documents to defend his sister, the *Observer* accused him of forgery (Hedrick 225-227).

The specific issue regarding Parker's statement was framed within a much larger one, that of clerical complicity in slavery and the moral implications of it. Furthermore, Stowe's right as a woman to question clerical authority and by association her very womanhood was repeatedly called into question. The fact that a woman was continually challenging Parker and the editors of *The New York Observer* in the public sphere was an ongoing source of irritation. (Hedrick 226). Beecher had raised the issue by showing that Parker had been similarly quoted in a number of other publications previously, but had raised no objections. Moreover, the editors of the *Observer* had made a particular point to question the "decidedly anti-ministerial" stance of the daughter and husband of ministers "specifically framed in gender terms" (Hedrick 227).

By emphasizing Parker as "a divine" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe had presented him as an example of the complicity of clerics with slavery. The actual Parker quotation, however, turned out to deviate very little from the phrasing Stowe used, and actually implicated Parker further on the gender issue. "What then are the evils inseparable from slavery?" he had asked, "There is not one that is not equally inseparable from depraved human nature in other lawful relations" (Hedrick 226). The actual quote could just as easily have been used to discuss the inequity of the institution of marriage as the institution of slavery. As Mary Chestnut observed in her Civil War narrative, "There is no slave, after all, like a wife." By challenging Stowe to a public debate, Parker would

require her to call into question the entire order of gender expectations and to brave the repercussions of that decision in a completely public forum.

At first, Stowe's response was to fall back upon the expected repose of womanhood, stating, "I therefore have read none of the succeeding articles & have taken refuge in that sanctuary of silence which is the most proper resort of a Christian woman when assailed by abuse of any kind" (Hedrick 228). Hedrick, however, points out a change of heart in Stowe, apparently unable to remain silent. She later changed her tone and replied to the *Observer*:

There are some occasions when a true woman must and will be unladylike. If a ruffian attacks her children, she will defend them even at risk of appearing unladylike & you may be sure that whenever a poisoned dagger is lifted to stab the nobly unfortunate *in the back* that some woman's hand will *always* be found between its point & his heart, tho the act be unladylike, & the touch poison to her. (Hedrick 228).

As a result of her run-in with Parker and the *Observer*, Stowe had begun to significantly transform women's place within the public sphere by challenging the parameters of gender expectation imposed upon her. As I explained in the previous chapter, the cultural assumption at the time that women were to "cultivate virtue" in men through example and inspiration, ultimately required them to become more involved in the public sphere of debate (Rotundo 24), and Stowe's revised stance on women's silence seems to typify this idea. In this quintessential case, we see Stowe defying the traditional expectation to remain out of the public sphere of debate by basing her necessity to defend her position upon principles of moral imperative.

While Parker may have assumed that Stowe would shrink away from his challenge to provide documentation that proslavery sentiment was common in clerical circles because of her gender, she was fully prepared to prove him wrong. In response, Stowe called all clergy to task, insisting that, “When clergymen are guilty of any prominent heresy... it is customary for the remainder of the Church to clear themselves from complicity with such heresy by some public act” (Hedrick 230). Relying on her cleric brothers, Henry Ward Beecher and Edward Beecher, Stowe began to compile a treatise of materials implicating clerics and their acquiescence to the institution of slavery. They had so much material that they decided to base their argument solely on articles from the *New York Observer* and the *Philadelphia Observer*, the two periodicals to which Parker commonly contributed. Her response, however, was never published by the *Observer*, and Stowe later decided to include it as an appendix to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Ultimately, it became the fourth and final part of her *Key*, in which “she focuses on the complicity of Southern churches and the compromise of their Northern counterparts” (Otter 27).

Altogether, the four parts of *A Key* comprehensively responded to each of the major arguments from her many detractors (Hedrick 230). More importantly, however, the process of producing the treatise was a transformative act for Stowe as a writer. By compiling the evidence and constructing the arguments with her brothers, Stowe developed her skills of argumentation and confidence in the knowledge of her topic. As children, they all observed their father constructing masterfully complicated arguments built upon pieces of scriptural evidence. As adults, they worked together to construct sophisticated arguments based on the public record, and as an additional weapon in their

arsenal, they had all come to appreciate the persuasive power of emotional content within an argument. They understood the value of addressing the logic of a given cleric, while simultaneously reaching out to an observing audience in a public forum.

In addition to refining her skills of argumentation and documentation, Stowe developed her ability to endure criticism. Besides attacks on her womanhood and religious virtue, Stowe endured accusations of lawlessness, malice, dishonesty, greed, and ignorance. In the *Southern Literary Messenger* review, George Frederick Holmes employs a variation of the argument in the Parker quote. He writes, “If there be any latent truth in... *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, it furnishes a stronger argument against all other departments of social organization than it does against slavery” (Holmes 12). Building upon this assertion, Holmes goes on to say that Stowe’s argument is essentially an attack against all systems of law. Other specific accusations contended that many scenes in the novel could simply never happen. One reviewer, for example, claimed that there were laws and court cases that specifically forbade the killing of slaves or selling of children from their mothers. Others claimed that a slave owner would never beat a valuable slave to death simply because of the value he would lose.

Stowe’s response would rely on a mountain of documents, testimonials, and statistics that she received daily from her legion of fans and admirers. In addition to her own experiences and Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery as It Is*, which had provided material for the novel (Hedrick 230), she compiled a body of evidence and constructed her argument into four parts. The first part, in fourteen chapters, describes her inspirations for many of the events and characters in the novel. The second part begins with a review from the *New York Courier and Examiner* that documents court cases and

laws to discredit any factual basis for her story, and then provides a plenitude of examples that contest the reviewer's attacks (and those of others). The third part poses the question, "Does public opinion protect the slave?" (Stowe *Key* 124). In it, Stowe chronicles example after example of the brutality of slavery, a task that Stowe found particularly daunting, having to read through painful story after story of the evils of humanity, and to choose which to include and which to discard (Hedrick 231). By working with the vast material for *A Key*, Stowe began to realize the weaknesses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and its relative timidity in the face of the actual facts (Otter 26). This in turn strengthened her resolve to ensure that the real story might still be told. What came out of the research process was "a devastating counter-attack on her southern critics and, once again, on slavery itself" (Walters 178). The volume compiled a myriad of sources from slave testimonies, to advertisements, to letters and biblical passages, and her own testimony.

The topic of *A Key* further challenged Stowe's womanhood because it required her to further expound upon issues that were generally considered unbecoming a woman to engage. Telling stories of owners' brutality often included the sexual servitude that masters expected of their slaves and the many shades of offspring they produced. The greater crime for many readers was not necessarily the rape and incest itself, but rather the telling of it. As one Southern critic wrote, "Grant that every accusation brought by Mrs. Stowe is perfectly true, that every vice alleged occurs as she has represented, the pollution of such literature to the heart and mind is not less" (Hedrick 231, 232). In his review of the *Key*, William Gilmore Simms wrote, "Mrs. Stowe betrays a malignity so

remarkable, that the petticoat lifts of itself, and we see the hoof of the beast under the table” (Hedrick 232).

The courage that Stowe had to exhibit to take on the slave institution was remarkable. She had to engage the issue of slavery, the authority of the clergy, and the expectations of womanhood all at the same time. In continuing to address the issues rather than retreat to the ‘sanctuary of silence’, she began to dismantle the boundaries of acceptable feminine behavior for many, and continued to vilify herself in the eyes of others. While Walters suggests that “an intriguing thing about *A Key* is that it was unnecessary” (178), the truth of the matter may depend more on what one considers its outcome to be. It is true that she did not have to produce *A Key* to defend herself against legal action from Parker, or even to defend her book against its detractors. However, the act of remaining steadfast in the face of so virulent an opposition was transformative for Stowe, as can be observed in her subsequent antislavery novels.

By writing *A Key*, Stowe’s views of slavery and the legal system grew more mature. “The key also seems to turn its author,” Samuel Otter writes. “Across the book, as though the change occurred in writing the book, Stowe finds that her ideas of fact and fiction have altered” (25). He indicates that she came to believe fiction afforded a more subdued version of the institution that reality could not accommodate. As I explained in the previous chapter, sentimentality does not rely upon reality or accounts of actual events but rather offers possible circumstances in order to elicit the ideal social possibilities. Absent of real people and events, sentimental fiction cannot be impeached on the grounds of individual behavior or specific circumstances. However, without the reality of actual people suffering genuine misfortune, fiction can also be dismissed as

unlikely or romantic. Actual documented events cannot be dismissed as easily, and so bear more ethical imperative. Because of the more intellectual pursuit of research scholarship, Stowe became more determined, better informed, and perhaps even more radical.

After the wild success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a follow-up antislavery novel for Stowe's multitude of new fans seemed obligatory. The initial success of her second novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, surpassed even that of her first novel, due in no small part to the ongoing controversy she had endured (Adams, J 41). This book, released four years later in 1856, had a decidedly different feel from its predecessor. Imbued with the historical education she received in writing *A Key*, contemporary current events, and the questions that her new education evoked within her, *Dred* presented a slave narrative of greater complexity than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that took the many criticisms she received into consideration.

While Stowe may not have been prepared for the severity and scope of her proslavery detractors, it was the criticism from the African American community for which she was least prepared. Among the most famous of these was that of Martin R. Delaney who wrote in a letter to Frederick Douglass, "In all due respect to Mrs. Stowe, I beg leave to say, that *she knows nothing about us*, 'the Free Colored people of the United States,' neither does any other white person – and, consequently, can contrive no successful scheme for our elevation; it must be done by ourselves" (Otter 17,18). Stowe was confronted with the reality that she had misunderstood the African American sentiment, and misrepresented it in the simplicity of her martyr-forgiver, Uncle Tom.

Consequently, *Dred* would present the reader with a much more complicated, and more dangerous, African American angst.

The character of Dred was but one example of the history found in Stowe's research coming to fruition within her second antislavery novel. Presented as a descendant of the actual Denmark Vessey, who in 1822 was tried and hanged for planning an uprising, and tied to Nat Turner, America's most prominent slave insurrectionist, the fictional Dred represents the suppressed rage within the African American community. Since the white people in the book are only vaguely aware of Dred's existence, Otter suggests that Dred also implies a conscious realization on Stowe's part that perhaps white people are not really capable of expressing African American concerns and that we should interpret Dred as "a volatile mix of *Prophets and Revelation*" (34). He is at once a rage that rises up out of an unknowable disorder, and a warning that the deliverance that God has in store for America is one of retribution, not one of forgiveness. While the biblical references of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are prevalent throughout *Dred*, the tone with which they are used takes on a threatening foreboding.

Another example of history finding its way into the narrative of *Dred* is the case of *The State v. Mann*, which Stowe cited extensively in *A Key*. *The State v. Mann* was a case about a slave woman who had been shot by a man who had hired her services. Stowe quotes the judge directly from the case in the words of Judge Clayton when he says, "THE POWER OF THE MASTER MUST BE ABSOLUTE TO RENDER THE SUBMISSION OF THE SLAVE PERFECT" (Dred 353). The direct parallels between the novel's portrayal of the shooting of the slave woman Millie and the Mann case

illustrate the way Stowe's research in *A Key* directly shaped the story in *Dred*. (Otter 30,31).

An instance of a more recent current event being reflected in the *Dred* narrative is the passage when Edward Clayton is beaten by Tom Gordon. When Edward is clubbed by Tom with a cane, if the obvious comparison wasn't evident in itself, Stowe added "Tom Gordon... proved his eligibility for Congress by beating his defenseless acquaintance on the head, after the fashion of the chivalry of South Carolina" (Stowe *Dred* 493). It would have created direct parallels in the minds of Stowe's readers, who were well aware of the recent events in the U.S. Senate in which Preston Brooks had caned Charles Sumner (Otter 30, 31).

Stowe was also incorporating thematic material that would have resonated among her readers as reminiscent of abolitionist and Republican philosophy of the time. The ways in which Stowe describes the landscape in the South reflect the political and philosophical landscape that began to fill the divide between the proslavery South and antislavery North. David Grant explains a popular philosophy among antislavery thinkers that connected the Southern need for expansion with an inherent corruption within Southern society. The contention was that the decaying quality that slavery exerted on the social structure of the South required that it expand in order to continue existing. Stowe would have been aware of this philosophy because Henry Ward Beecher was one of the primary propagators of the idea. Grant writes, "By constructing an historical narrative, in which the process of extension can be divided into distinct stages unfolding over time yet containable within the space of a story, Stowe transforms her brother's merely logical and

other Republican's merely metaphorical link into a causal one that drives her narrative system" (Grant).

For this reason, Stowe imbues her descriptions of the South with images of decay and dilapidation, yet in an expansive framework. In the structure of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the narrative becomes more and more closely focused on the quintessential microcosm of slavery as typified in Simon Legree's plantation, while in *Dred*, destruction is expansive (Grant). For example, injustice comes not by breaking the law, but by using it. The corruption of the Gordon family is revealed when the greater scope of its history is considered and it spreads across the generations, unlike in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the younger generations of George Shelby and Eva St. Clare promote emancipation and the limitation of slavery. The Great Dismal Swamp itself represents the untamable, unknowable danger and violence that cannot be controlled within the Southern slavery society. The rage that dwells within the swamp is the same source for the violence in Kansas that was prevalent at the time of *Dred*'s composition.

Therefore, the questions and misgivings that came out of Stowe's work with *A Key* became the most prevalent issues in *Dred*. Stowe grew increasingly concerned over the institutionalization of violence in Southern society. The uncertain fate of Dred, and the inability of the novel's characters Edward and Harry to remain in America, were not indications of Stowe's inability to envision African American freedom so much as her declining ability to believe that it could come by nonviolent means. Much like America in the years leading up to the Civil War, Harry is poised between his loyalty to his beloved sibling, Nina, and his hatred for his antagonistic sibling, Tom. He struggles with the decision of whether to follow the peaceful example of Millie, or whether to follow the

violent example of Dred. As if on the verge of advising African American slaves to rise up and violently overthrow their masters through her characters, it appears that Stowe was left uncertain of her own faith in moral persuasion by her many unpleasant experiences with her own detractors.

Missing from *Dred* are the strong, rebellious female characters of Cassy and Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Perhaps out of a desire to avoid further confrontation regarding gender issues, Stowe seems to rely more heavily upon the strength of male characters in *Dred*, while her female characters become more passive. We meet the character Nina, for example, engaged to three men, none of whom she actually intends to marry. Her character matures, but does so as a result of the male characters. While another character, Cora, resists enslavement after Tom has used the law to ruin her, we find out about it only by a letter rather than as a central part of the story (339-340). The character Lisette seems to be more of a possession and an object of contention between Harry and Tom than a person of self-determination, and while Millie is steadfast to her convictions, she is more reminiscent of Uncle Tom and his willing acceptance of his fate than of the self-determined Cassy or Eliza, or, for that matter, Dred.

On the other hand, Old Tiff does break the conventions of gender expectation, crossing the boundary of gender spheres by entering the domestic realm. Perhaps this is because it was safer for Stowe to test gender expectations by conveying that challenge through the vehicle of a male character than through another female. Yet, without these strong leading female characters, perhaps Stowe lost some of her own strength and impact in *Dred*. According to John R. Adams, *Dred* was “too largely what it purported to be, a book about black slaves and their white owners at home, less inspiring subjects than

fugitive and suffering women.” As the readers of novels were primarily women, perhaps this is a significant part of the reason that the popularity of *Dred* slowly dropped off, until, as Adams contends, “time has thrust *Dred* into the stacks of forgotten novels from which *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has been miraculously separated” (41). She may have written too much for her male detractors, and not enough for her female supporters.

Modern literary critics still do not seem to know precisely what to do with *Dred*. For example, Adams cites the fact that Dred himself does not appear until the eighteenth chapter as an indication of how the story is weakly constructed with a “very slow beginning” (41). Walters, however, cites the same absence as an example of Stowe’s genius in constructing plot. He contends that delaying the introduction of Dred gives the reader an implication of the way the white people (both in the story and in antebellum society) are unaware of the ever-present black resentment and rage with which the African American population is all too aware. On the other hand, Walters cites the last scene with Milly and Old Tiff in New York as an example of Stowe’s inability to account for African American freedom, calling the scene a “vague account” (182). Meanwhile, Robert S. Levine cites the same scene as an example of the way Stowe’s vision of black freedom in America has developed and grown. He indicates that the scene shows a transformation from the beginning of the novel, in which black slaves play childlike servants to paternalistic whites, to a final depiction of independent, self-reliant free African Americans raising little white children (xxix). When modern critics and experts on Harriet Beecher Stowe can draw such contradictory messages from the same passages, it is clear that the ways in which Stowe’s post-*Uncle Tom* literary career changed her thinking, and therefore her writing, are still being revised.

If the power of women was not altogether present in *Dred*, the roles are reversed in Stowe's last antislavery novel. In *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), slavery is among the driving forces of the plot, but the main issue is the evangelical ability of emotion to achieve salvation over the rhetorical structures of Calvinism. Reflecting Stowe's own growing belief in the female emotive power of evangelicalism and her increasing distrust in the patriarchal clergy, the book draws on Stowe's own experience, and it reflects her insistence, as developed in the fourth part of *A Key*, that clerical complicity with the institution of slavery was tantamount to actively participating in it.

In *The Minister's Wooing*, Stowe sets up an opposition between the Calvinist male power to transform souls in the personage of Reverend Samuel Hopkins and the feminine, emotive Mary Scudder, the young woman whose mother owns the house he resides in. Yet, to imply that the opposition is simply between the two characters is incomplete. Rather, Stowe sets up a community of characters in the town of Newport, Rhode Island, which she describes as a "region of religious faith" (Pryse 142). It is a place where religious revelation comes by feeling and through prayer.

Examples of this type of transformation are found in James Marvyn, his mother, Mrs. Marvyn, Colonel Burr, and Doctor Hopkins. James Marvyn, for instance attends Doctor Hopkins' church, but expresses an inability to find enlightenment in the Doctor's sermons. He claims instead that he sees in Mary's humble and angelic demeanor an inspiration that has the ability to move his soul (Stowe *Minister* 547, 548). When James has been reported dead, Mrs. Marvyn loses all faith in God and in her despair, exclaims, "I am a lost spirit!" (Stowe *Minister* 735). Although words will not console her, the kindness of her emancipated slave, Candace, enables her to sleep, and eventually to turn

to Jesus. Colonel Burr is motivated to change by Mary's sobbing (Stowe *Minister* 815) and Doctor Hopkins is converted twice, once by Candace's expressions of her longing for freedom to begin preaching against slavery, and once by Miss Prissy to allow Mary to be with James. In the second case, it could be argued that Hopkins' conversion comes after his discussion with Miss Prissy, after he has unsuccessfully sought salvation in his books and theories, only to resort to contemplation and prayer. It is consistent with the changing views of Stowe away from the theological structures of Calvinism and toward evangelical salvation through feeling and prayer.

In each of the cases, conversion comes through interaction with the emotions of women. According to Hedrick, "Stowe forces a reevaluation of white, male systems of thought and, as feminist critics have pointed out, depicts women and blacks as instruments of salvation history" (279). Throughout the book, arguments and words alone have no power to transform people's opinions. When Doctor Hopkins argues to his parishioners that slavery is evil and complicity with it is equally so, they leave the church unconvinced. One of Stowe's primary examples of male predomination is Mr. Simeon Brown, who, although he appears to be most adept at comprehending ecclesiastical structures, is incapable of the sacrifice that change will require by giving up his part in the slave trade. As John Gatta points out, "the author elaborates a gender division in which the epistemology and semiotic expression of male clerics are superseded by those of holy women (64). While male characters like Hopkins can elucidate ideas like his "Theological System," the transformations of people's souls comes through the feminine force, making it the true driving energy in the novel, and in its philosophy.

Perhaps the most central of these forces is found in the character of Candace, who “links the political, religious, and romantic themes in *The Minister's Wooing*” (Karcher 213). As explained earlier, it is Candace, the Marvyns’ emancipated slave, who first convinces Doctor Hopkins to begin preaching against slavery. Candace also serves as religious visionary when she is the only one who is in any way aware that James is still alive, and more, that he has been saved spiritually. Candace has an ability to “feels tings *gin’ally*, but,” she says “*some tings I feels in my bones*, and dem allers comes true” (Stowe *Minister* 795). It is also Candace who becomes the impetus for the novel’s conclusion. She recognizes that Mary does not really love Doctor Hopkins and she convinces Miss Prissy to talk to the preacher.

Together, Candace and Prissy become instruments of the transformation of the most central character in *The Minister's Wooing*, Mary Scudder. In the beginning of the novel, Mary is an angelic Madonna type, with no intention to marry and no real interest in anything other than “to feareth God and worketh righteousness,” as she quotes to James before he leaves on his journey (548). Yet, Mary is unaware of her own true feelings, and it takes Candace and Miss Prissy to show her that “we have [both] a body and a soul” (Karcher 214). The implication is that marriage can be pleasurable as well as proper. This is among Stowe’s most liberal feminist messages in *The Minister's Wooing*, and it shows that, unlike in *Dred*, Stowe has remembered to focus her message onto her core audience of supporters, the women of New England society who were often enslaved in their own ways.

Stowe went on to further challenge the nineteenth-century expectations and culture of separate gender spheres. According to Margaret Marsh, her latter writings

became a fundamental instrument and recorder of the growth of masculine domesticity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. She explains,

Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of the nineteenth century's most popular writers, in her last two novels ridiculed patriarchal pretensions and praised domestic men. For example, one of her respected male characters in *My Wife and I* insisted that the opinions of his wife and sister were far more valuable to him than the views 'of all the doctors of divinity.' In the same novel, Stowe asserted confidently that 'sooner or later the true wife becomes a mother to her husband; she guides him, cares for him, teaches him, and catechizes him in the nicest way possible. (115)

Stowe continued to receive criticism for her challenges to gender expectation.

Hedrick provides one example in which Stowe's condemnation for her "coarse and unladylike knowledge" came from both the South and from the North (232). While issues of slavery knew boundaries like the Mason-Dixon line, issues of gender were less delineated, and therefore often even more incendiary. Yet Stowe continued to crusade, having already endured and survived one of the most ferocious propaganda machines the world had yet seen. Her transformation ultimately was one of strength and resilience that stayed with her throughout the rest of her career.

Epilogue

With the onset of the Civil War, the American slavery debate came to an apocalyptic conclusion. However, this is once again too simplified. President Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation" did not free all of the slaves, as many people today believe. In fact, it was a clever political and military effort to end the war earlier than later, or else to weaken enemy logistical support since it only freed the slaves in rebel states. There were still a number of slave states along the border that had not seceded and in which slavery remained legal for another five years, until the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. What is interesting to me is that had General Robert E. Lee not led the Army of Northern Virginia to so many upset victories and dragged the Civil War out for so long, it likely would have concluded with Southern slavery largely intact and the institution and the debate would have entered a new phase entirely.

Again, however, the reality grows more complicated than this version. Jim Crow laws in the South allowed a new American reign of terror against Southern African Americans in which legal injustices, deeply established cultural prejudices, and political intimidations allowed slavery in effect to continue for decades later through various practices like share-cropping, chain gangs and a lack of equitable education. It was for this reason that the Stowes moved to Florida after the Civil War when Harriet's brother, Charles, opened a school for emancipated slaves and asked his sister to join him (*Stowe*

Center). They knew that true emancipation takes place in the mind at least as much as it does in any works of legislation.

It took an act of language, or legislation, and not of war to grant American slaves their legal emancipation, and one of the most stark realizations that emerges to me in reflection upon this thesis is the intrinsic connection between our language and our own identification. In his groundbreaking book *Syntactic Structures* (1957), Noam Chomsky contends that we are all born with a “Language Acquisition Device” (LAD) that turns on when we are small children and at that point, we begin to be programmed through words, which eventually will constitute the associative frameworks by which we identify ourselves in relation to the culture around us. What Chomsky did not assert, however, is whether that LAD works the same way in everyone, and this significant distinction opens the topic to debate about how much of our personalities become the result of our exterior cultural environment, and how much of our choices are the result of the intrinsic qualities with which we are born.

Not many people today are conscious of the fact that we also learn along with those words a second emotional language that simultaneously translates every fact and event in hues of perception that at once add to and are constituted by an individual’s modes of self-identification. Again, how much of that interpretation is the result of our experience and how much is the result of the unique ways in which our interpretive devices work is, at least for now, the unknowable essential component of the truth behind the matter. Obviously, it must always be some combination of the two, or for that matter all combination.

Sara Ahmed's theory of "sticky objects" to which emotions adhere is a fascinating approach to try to grapple with the ways in which emotions work in the space between the external stimuli that elicit emotion and the internal body of experience against which we evaluate those stimuli. She suggests that emotions actually happen outside of the body, somewhere between the subject and the object of the emotion, therefore allowing them to be shared in various ways that can be additive and dynamic (Ahmed 11). Taken a step further, if emotions occur outside of the body, it draws into question whether the 'feeling' subject is really still a subject at all, or possibly a participating object in the phenomenon. Then, looking back to the event of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or rather around at it, the macro-emotional event that took place, and is still taking place, acquires a communal emphasis in which we are still participating. The implications about the subjectivity of our feelings towards the phenomenon in which we are simultaneously participating raises important questions about the objectivity of our research process and the conclusions we reach.

Language is also something that often happens outside of the body, between individuals and often only imagined individuals. As the medium of print is so apt to do, we necessarily direct language towards and receive language from abstract audiences and writers whose actual intent often deviates from the message we receive in significant ways. And yet, this technology of thought that allows us to share a common abstracted dialogue and collective body of information becomes a technology of cultural identification. As this thesis has shown explicitly and implicitly, this process of identification is in many ways intentional, manipulated, and calculated in the public sphere, while at the same time done so by people who may be working from unrealized

assumptions and discursive beliefs. I believe it has also shown that our method of identification also affects the ways in which we react emotionally to the objects and events around us, and therefore the entire process of interpretation and identification becomes perpetually reciprocal. Culture is at once writing us as we attempt to write culture to better fit a vision that has always already been written into us.

Today, it appears to me that many of the components of the antebellum slave debate are still actively at work in the public sphere of policy discourse. As new technologies emerge that further integrate our private sphere identification process into a collective and commodified culture, we see distrust in education framed in terms like “educated elites” and we hear politicians talking about “common sense” approaches to solving problems every day. Emotional persuasion in political rhetoric accomplished through mediated metonymic association is standard practice. Political speeches regularly employ several examples of emotional appeal in order to create mutual identifications through implied similarities, and therefore to realign public rational critical debate. Beneath the surface, these terms and associations still defer historically and culturally to events and situations of the past that we inherit, albeit invisibly and unconsciously.

In politics, the blue and the red of the Electoral College map still shows a distinct Northern/ Southern state divide, and I would argue that in political discourse we still see an inherited fear of replacement of the patriarchal white power by a yet-emergent coalition of women and people of color. After all, the same type of vicious attacks that were leveled against Stowe are still being raised towards public women like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the first female Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and people of color like our first African American President, Barack Obama. I hear in public claims

that “This isn’t *my* America” and “We need to take back *our* country,” which reference inherited fears of replacement. The gender and racial implications that accompany criticisms reveal an inherited sense of entitlement and otherness that shows the fractures of the antebellum conflict have not healed or disappeared, but remain always and already as components of our American identity.

This is the reason literary studies still are, and always will be, important and pertinent. To understand our literary history is to understand our cultural construction and therefore our own present-day modes of identification. By what means do we become enslaved and by what means can we become aware of those identifications and unravel them? Harriet Beecher Stowe was a master of creating new modes of identification that undid an institution of slavery for others, and in part, this was because she renounced inherited prejudicial modes of identification that would have enslaved her from realizing her own potential. Perhaps this implies that true slavery begins in the limitation of the self, in a mental act of denying one’s own ability to accomplish that which one can imagine. Alternatively, perhaps it implies that slavery exists within the quiescent act of accepting the limitations that others impose upon us. In either case, it implies that slavery is a choice, although oppression may not be, or possibly, that slavery is the failure to choose and to have choices made for us.

And these are the dangers of literary studies as well. While we rely upon scholarship based in theoretical models and historical trends, we need to keep in mind that these models of how our society once was are not representative of actual individual experience. We have to remember that the actual lives and thoughts of individuals may have been substantially divergent from what scholars today represent as the overarching

aggregate reality. In addition, we have to keep in mind that our perception of the public opinion of the past is constituted by an identification of otherness. We learn about the past as a concept of opposition to what we believe ourselves to be today, and we do so through the lens of scholars who are addressing us through the context of what they perceive us to believe. Because of this, we allow our understanding and therefore our own perspective of identification relative to our subject matter to be defined by the phrasing and language choices of the scholars we study, and we build upon our own and their discursive assumptions, again often unconsciously.

As the story goes, Stowe's inspiration for Uncle Tom and the martyr's death that transformed the American slave debate was divine. While in church, Stowe saw a vision of a pious old slave being beaten to death by a cruel white master. She wrote the entire climactic scene in a single day. Later Stowe would remark that "The Lord Himself wrote it. I was but an instrument in His hands" (Ryan 308). The first converts of the story were her own children, who were so moved by the emotion of the scene that one of them remarked, "Oh mamma! Slavery is the most cruel thing in the world!"

Perhaps this is the most telling moment in the entire history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because it shows that our emotional identification is something so fundamentally primal to our being that it precludes the need for education or an ability to appreciate rhetorical structures. The simplicity of a child's feeling reveals the root of the novel's power. Harriet Beecher Stowe made the nation feel with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in ways that placed the novel in our literary canon, and in our need to understand how that phenomenon of feeling continues to resurrect it in our modern era in an ever-growing context.

There is a lesson in this. To study and unfold a topic is to complicate it over and over again; to find new ways to oppose it to other topics and to constantly chip away at its endless facets of interactions with the world. Yet to know a thing, if there is such a thing as knowing, is to feel it and to believe – as simply as the child within us upon which all belief is built. Harriet Beecher Stowe felt and believed her book would make an impact upon the world and because she followed that feeling, she was transformed. Perhaps in the end, despite all our work and all our effort, we are all essentially built on emotion.

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