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A Mother's Perspective: Religion, Morality and Slavery in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Aloka Patel

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) had challenged the system of slavery, and, thereby, the established social, political, and religious institutions of her times. The revolutionary potential of the novel was widely recognized even before it could be published in book form. Rave reviews appeared in newspapers and journals. Three thousand copies were sold the first day and more than three million in the first year. A popular novel in nineteenth century America, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stimulated concern for its cause from various parts of the world. The entire novel is a passionately drawn picture of the horrors of slavery and its many manifestations. While slavery had been banned in the Northern states, in the South plantation owners argued in favour of slavery. As a result the country, trapped between the superior moral anti-slavery stance of the North and the agricultural South which depended upon slave labour to work in the fields, was finally faced with a Civil War in 1861. Although there were instances of slave traders and plantation owners exploiting the black people for commercial benefits in the South, slavery could not be abolished, and slave trade continued till late into the nineteenth century. Plantation owners and preachers used ingenious arguments to defend slavery. Preachers, who depended upon the plantation owners, cited



the Bible and "Cursed be Canaan" to justify slavery, while slave owners claimed it to be a patriarchal organization. At such a crucial moment of America's history, Stowe's narrative had the power to bring about social and moral transformation among the people of America and other places around the world.

Even before *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe had given evidence of strong moral and ethical responsibility towards her society. She had earlier written on diverse social and moral issues such as slavery, women's position in society, the rise of industry, capitalism and consumerism, religious controversies, and nation building—issues that she continued to address in later works. Almost all her works propose an ideal world based on her ideas of home, family, and religious values.

Stowe lost her mother, Roxana Foote, in 1816, when she was only five years of age. But she retained loving memories of her mother as an influential force within the family, moulding and imbibing moral values in her children. Largent Kimberly quotes Stowe: "I think that her memory and example had more influence in moulding [our] family, in deterring from evil and exciting to good" (n.pag.). The seventh of eleven children, Stowe studied, and later taught in the Hartford Female Seminary founded by her older sister, Catherine, with whom she wrote her first book, *Primary Geography for Children*, in 1833. Both sisters shared a concern for the problems of women. Together they wrote *The American Woman's Home* (1869) which was a guide and a treatise on the "principles of domestic science" as the subtitle suggests. The aim of this book was to give the same honour and dignity to domestic jobs of women that the "professions of men" enjoyed. A writer who desired social reforms for women, Stowe, in Hamilton Kendra's words "combined literary realism with evangelist fervor" (24). Her novel, *The Pearl Of Orr's Island* (1862) gives details of household management and community rituals. *Lady Byron Vindicated* (1870) contributed to the debate over the place of women in the nineteenth century, by defending the wife

of the poet. *Agnes of Sorrento* (1862) is likewise a story of a young girl who matures into a powerful woman after being exposed to romantic love, papal corruption and political resistance. It expresses Stowe's dissatisfaction with the severity of the Calvinist forms practiced by her father, Lyman Beecher, a well-known Congregational minister of the nineteenth century in Litchfield, Connecticut.

As a child, her father's dynamic preaching and strong religious commitment had had a profound impact on Stowe, as well as her other brothers and sisters. All of Stowe's brothers had followed their father to the pulpit. At the early age of nine years Stowe herself had given evidence of her religious predilection when she wrote an essay on "The Difference Between the Natural and the Moral Sublime." But not an uncritical believer of her father's preaching, Stowe differed from his conservative Calvinist views. Particularly, after her marriage in 1836 to Calvin Ellis Stowe, a widower and a Professor in the Lane Seminary at Cincinnati she formed her own ideas of Christianity based more on what she believed to be 'feminine' compassion. Her works combine this passion for religion with her concern for women.

Cincinnati was a town bordering the slave state of Kentucky. And it was her experiences in this town that helped Stowe form ideas that enter into her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Primarily, three things influenced her writing: First, the place gave Stowe an opportunity to witness slavery firsthand. She met fugitive slaves and was exposed to the abolitionist movement, and the Underground Railroad. Second, one of her children, an eighteen month old son, Samuel Charles Stowe died during a cholera epidemic in July 1849. Stowe was emotionally shaken, and compared her state with that of black women who lost their children to slavery. She is known to have said, "it was at his dying bed and at his grave that I learned what a poor slave mother may feel when her child is torn from her" (Hedrick 193). And, third, the Fugitive Slave Act was passed the following year in 1850. The Act made it mandatory for every citizen to help

slave owners to capture runaway slaves. Anyone found helping slaves to escape could be fined or sent to jail. Stowe had known the incident of a slave woman who had tried to save her little son from slavery by escaping to the northern states, where slavery had been banned. Claspng her baby in her arms, the woman had jumped from ice floe to ice floe across the frozen Ohio River. Stowe's still fresh grief at the loss of her son, combined with her anger at the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, prompted her to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This paper, accordingly, dwells upon slavery as a moral issue for Stowe, and focuses on the ways in which her novel brings together maternal instinct and Christian faith as feminine virtues that challenge the system of slavery.

Many of the slave narratives, particularly Josiah Henson's *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, As Narrated by Himself* (1849), Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself* (1845), and Theodore Weld's *Slavery As It Is* (1839) served as sources for Stowe's novel. They all testify to the various horrors of slavery, of inhuman physical violence inflicted on slaves, such as cropping up ears or cutting off bits of tongues (David Walker, *Appeals*). Slaves were also denied the right to marriage, education, or even to worship. Women slaves suffered the worst of abuses. Harriet Jacobs in her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) speaks of sexual abuses inflicted upon her by her master. Responses of white women from the southern states, like Mary Boykin Chesnut confirm such stories as Jacobs's. Daughter of a former South Carolina governor and planter, Chesnut in her diary agrees with her friends about the sexual escapades of their fathers, brothers, and husbands.

Stowe was also getting to be increasingly agitated by the way Christians employed the Bible to justify slavery. The Second Awakening, a religious revival in nineteenth-century America, had already inspired abolitionist movements by popularizing the theological idea that individuals could have direct relationship with

god, unmediated by church officials. Traditional beliefs were being challenged. But there were also members of the old school of Calvinists who believed in the idea of predestination. They branded slaves as descendents of Ham—destined to live a life of servitude to white masters. Stowe knew that the theological arguments for or against slavery generally masked the self-interest of economic groups. Her novel not only condemned slavery as a social institution but it also attacked the institutional Christianity of nineteenth century America, which, she believed, was disgracing the values of the New Testament by supporting slavery. Stowe was aware of at least two southern Presbyterian ministers. Charles C. Jones and James Smylie, who invoked Calvinist doctrines of predestination as pro-slavery strategies—that god had preordained the destiny of the black Africans. Jones argued that missionaries to slaves must of necessity be proslavery in their views. He wrote a *Catechism* for slaves which emphasized the duty of slaves' obedience to their masters. It also warned slaves against attempting to escape as a sin. Smylie, similarly, argued that there was nothing evil about slavery, and that the Bible itself gave sanction to it. The critic Theodore Hovet notes that in the responses of the church to slavery Stowe detected an attitude where the intellectual, institutional, and impersonal aspects took precedence over the emotional, individual, and personal. Such an attitude, she thought, would alienate the individual from its religious impulses. Stowe believed slavery to be a moral and religious question of concern to her society, and articulated her objective in writing the novel in her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "to bring this subject of slavery, as a moral and religious question, before the minds of all those who profess to be followers of Christ..." (iii).

Many people who had never given a serious thought to the sufferings of slaves were passionately responding to Stowe. But if the novel was praised and welcomed with appreciative remarks from nineteenth century critics and novelists from around the world, like Macaulay, William Dean Howells, J. W. DeForest, and Leo Tolstoy,

many black writers and critics, condemned it. William J. Wilson, a black abolitionist and regular contributing editor of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* had asked if a white writer would do justice to the black experience of slavery. Martin Delany had been vexed enough to declare that "Our elevation must be the result of self-efforts" (Levine 96). In the South many readers accused Stowe of failing to understand slavery as a patriarchal institution which was beneficent for black people. They alleged that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contained factual errors for which Stowe had to write *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1853 to prove the authenticity of her sources.

Even in the twentieth century readers have not always appreciated Stowe's concern for the sufferings of black slaves. Many readers disapproved of the novel's stereotypical representation of blacks and Stowe was criticised for being a racist. Memorable appraisals to the effect had come from Richard Wright, James Baldwin and J. C. Furnas, reasons for which are not far to seek. Recent studies reveal that towards the end of the nineteenth century, popular cultural reproductions of Stowe's story together with the frustration over delays in achieving equal status for black men following the Civil War, had led to a reversal of the meaning of "Uncle Tom." The phrase had by now come to be used as a pejorative epithet for denoting the docility of submissive black men. Later studies, by critics such as John Frick and Susan F. Clark, have pointed out the possible reasons for such mis/readings of "Uncle Tom". John Frick's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin on the American Stage and Screen* (2012) for example, notes that stage shows took massive liberties with the book. Even before it could be published in book form, several playwrights recognized the dramatic possibilities of the novel, and turned parts of it into melodrama. According to Susan F. Clark, by the 1890s there were numerous unauthorized dramatic versions of the novel doing the rounds in America. The play had long lost its anti slavery message and was more of a spectacle. Frick's book chronicles the various ways in which Stowe's novel was adapted for

theatre and film. Hundreds of acting troupes called "Tommers" were putting up "Tom Shows" in almost every town, and as the story moved from book to the stage Stowe's revolutionary themes got corrupted by songs, spectacle, and mimicry. There was also a "compromise" *Uncle Tom* written by the playwright H. C. Conway for Moses Kimball, proprietor of Boston Museum. Conway had "tempered" the "crude points" and "objectionable features" of Stowe's novel upon Kimball's request to present slave life as happy and carefree. These "Tom Shows," loosely based on Stowe's story produced in theatres and travelling shows across America, were largely responsible for later "misreading" of the novel. Most of these performances were shortened or simplified versions where characters became caricatures. The story got fused into blackface minstrel tradition, and white actors in blackfaces highlighted racial stereotypes, or danced jigs to entertain audiences. Tom became an aged, shuffling and submissive old man. By 1870s *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, according to Edmund Wilson, was half a minstrel show and half a circus. Wilson notes that by the early 1900s few young people had any clear idea of what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contained. Around 1920, the general sense of "Uncle Tom" as a contemptuous and servile character had been firmly established. When Richard Wright wrote his fiction *Uncle Tom's Children* in 1936 he was confident that the pejorative meaning of the term was apparent. He declared "Uncle Tom is dead" referring to the death of the "cringing type" of black men. The new black people, according to him, had overcome their fear to fight back injustice. They believed that violence must be met with violence. The fiercest attack on Stowe's racial stereotyping came from James Baldwin in his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1955): "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a very bad novel" (14). Baldwin called Stowe "an impassioned pamphleteer," and accused, "Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty" (20). J. C. Furnas's, in a scathing indictment of Stowe held her responsible for the "wrongheadedness, distortions and

wishful thinking about Negroes" (8). T. S. Eliot compared the novel with Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* to the detriment of the former and condemned it as "sensational propaganda" (Tompkins 132).

It should not, however, be forgotten that by writing about slavery in the nineteenth century, Stowe was going beyond the permissible limits of women novelists of her times. One George F. Holmes cited scriptures to express his resentment: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection" (514). In his review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* he warned Stowe against overstepping her limits: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," and reminded her of her "Christian" duties, "THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR" (514). Aspersions on Stowe's character were also made. Holmes went so far as to say in his review that Stowe was "something less noble" than Joan of Arc, but "certainly a much more refined person" than "the virago of Thames" (504-5).

Whatever be the personal feelings of such reviewers and critics, Stowe developed a female tradition of writing, and gave women confidence to write and to give free expression to their opinions. In 1853 Stowe had received *The Affectionate and Christian Address of Many Thousands of Women of Great Britain and Ireland to their Sisters, the Women of the United States of America* calling for an end to slavery in America. Women writers likewise celebrated the success of a contemporary. Elizabeth Barrett Browning praised Stowe, so did George Eliot. Writing to a correspondent, Elizabeth Browning exhorted her to read Stowe's book: "I rejoice in the success both as a woman and a human being" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 481). Georgiana May, an abolitionist, testified to the impact of Stowe's novel on her passions by writing to her "I was a thoroughgoing abolitionist before, but your book has awakened so strong a feeling of indignation and compassion, that I never seem to have had any feeling on this subject until now" (qtd. in Gilbert and

Gubar 481). As Gilbert and Gubar note, many indeed confessed to have been moved to tears.

For the nineteenth century women, writing was a respectable way to earn outside income. Harriet Beecher Stowe was one of many such women who started writing sketches and stories for magazines and newspapers to earn some extra money. A busy housewife, she wrote stories and articles whenever she could to support her family. However, writing literature was never a profession. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* in a survey in mid-nineteenth century concluded that there had been a burst of books written by and about women in the nineteenth century, more than "all that have been issued during the preceding five thousand years" (qtd. in Hedrick viii). In 1859, Nathaniel Willis was writing, "It is women who exercise the ultimate control over the press" (qtd. in Hedrick ix). And yet, women writers in the nineteenth century were faced with the dilemma of what to write. Critics like Nancy Cott and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explore constructions of womanhood and speak of the separate spheres of men and women in the nineteenth century society. Women's sphere was defined by their home, family, and children. They were not expected to speak openly on public matters of politics or social reform. Even antislavery and abolitionist societies did not allow full and free participation and membership of women. And to be able to write of social issues would indeed be a rebellious attempt. Influencing public opinion was her intention, but the subjects Stowe chose to discuss in her novel were the most controversial for the times in which she lived, particularly for the female author. Yet, Stowe was not deterred from doing what she believed in so passionately. Although women had been given the liberty to write, Mary Bryan pointed out in her 1860 essay, "How Should Women Write?" that women still did not enjoy full freedom of expression. They were not permitted to grapple with social and moral problems. *The National Era* too, paid attention to "human rights" in its published fiction only within the context of family relations. Hence, it is not

surprising that Stowe, although was writing against slavery, she was using the traditional form of the sentimental fiction, and appealed to female sentiments in her fiction. In her 2004 essay, Barbara Hochman points out that although the *National Era* claimed high literary and political ambitions, its subjects were limited to the cruelty of parents, or step parents, disobedient and lazy, or untruthful children who break the hearts of their parents, and the like. Occasionally, poems about the hypocrisy of the Church, or the value of freedom would be published. Slavery, as an issue entered the paper only after 1850. But instalment fiction, which was mostly the domain of women, assiduously avoided the subject until *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began to appear. Stowe knew her reading public well and addressed the women of America in a form and language that they could relate to. She exploited the nineteenth-century stereotypical notions about the nature of women and black folk to her advantage by tugging at the emotional and religious sentiments of her readers. This has mostly led to criticism of the novel as propaganda literature.

Stowe's fiction directly challenged the ethics of the *National Era* by probing religious doubt, political conflict, and problems of human rights. But Stowe's use of the familiar style of the domestic and sentimental fiction masked the challenge that her fiction posed. Jane Tompkins, in her book *Sensational Designs* clearly explains the strategy of many nineteenth century women writers like Stowe, who could not openly rebel against prevailing social and political realities, of appropriating, instead of rejecting cultural codes outright, in order to subvert the very same beliefs and customs. Women wrote tales only of ordinary, everyday domestic life under fantastic names like "Fanny Fern" and "Grace Greenwood." Sarah Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* had closed her columns to antislavery sympathizers. Catherine Beecher, although showed concern for women, nevertheless inveighed against women who she thought "overstepped" their limits by involving themselves in political conflicts. Yet, women writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child,

Caroline Kirkland, and Catherine Maria Sedgwick produced radical reform literature that would become the medium for social change. Many black women writers like Harriet Jacobs, and the free born Frances Ellen Watkins Harper defied male social codes to write of the sexual exploitation of women, particularly of black slave women by their masters. These writers paradoxically exploit domesticity and familial values to express their views on social and political matters of the country. They disguised their resentment of public issues, in what appeared ostensibly to be domestic fiction. Elizabeth Ammons in her essay, "Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior," gives the examples of Huck, Jim, Ishmael and Queequeg to argue that male writers of the nineteenth century simply fled from realities of society, taking to sea, or a raft, or a shed by a pond, seeking individual salvation in isolation. Women writers, in contrast, sought salvation of the group and community (159).

Tompkins insisted on the powerful emotional appeal of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an instrument for radical social changes. Stowe's stated intentions were those of a reformer and activist. But, in spite of all her radical views, Stowe was perfectly conventional in her style of writing, and morally persuasive in her approach. She had written to the editor of the *National Era* that her intention was "simply that of a painter... to hold up in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible Slavery, its reverses, changes and the Negro character" (qtd. in Hedrick 208). However, her Preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* makes her moral purpose explicit, "The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust and to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it" (29-30). Where rational analysis and arguments of abolitionists had failed to expose the evils of slavery, Stowe's emotional and moral appeals had proved more effective in transforming public opinions and sentiments. In 1892 James Ford Rhodes, in his history of the United States had

pointed out that there was an obvious link between women's feelings, sentimental fiction, and political change. Stowe's book was addressed to women, as she makes clear in the "Concluding Remarks": that she is speaking to "you, Mothers of America" who pity "those mothers that are constantly made childless by the American Slave trade!" (503) Her "Appeal to the Women of the Free States," marks out the duties of women, "to feel that as mother, wife, sister, or member of society, she is bound to give her influence on the right side" (n.pag). In the same "Appeal" Stowe exhorts women "to moderate the acrimony of political contest, remembering that the slaveholder and the slave are alike our brethren, whome the law of God commands us to love as ourselves" (n.pag). Her faith in the ability of women to evoke social changes helped her to explore the political, cultural, and economic possibilities of her novel as a form of protest and reformation.

An anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not her only story to express Stowe's sentiments against slavery combined with her concerns for the institution of home, domesticity, family as a unit of the nation, and the role of women within it, particularly as mothers, to keep the family together with a religious fervour. As early as August 1850 her shorter work "The Freeman's Dream: A Parable" published in the *National Era* gave prominent place to her antislavery concerns through the story of a family of runaway slaves who are captured by slave traders in a Northern state. Another story, "The Two Altars, or Two Pictures in One" (1851), which appeared at the same time when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was beginning to be serialized, expressed antislavery sentiments in response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The story narrates the pains of separation of a coloured husband and a mulatto wife when the husband is arrested as a runaway slave and removed to Georgia. Ideas and sentiments expressed in these stories reappear in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As noted by Egbert S Oliver, the "cabin image" itself signifies the importance

of home and family, and "involves the family unity and its security from discordant and destructive pressures" (356).

Like many of her women contemporaries, Stowe insisted on free expression of women's opinions against slavery. In the Preface to her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe writes, "The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust..." (29-30). She reminded readers that slaves had no substantial identity under the legal system in which they lived, and that they were constantly under threat of being physically abused, or sold and separated from their families. To serve her intentions, Stowe borrows from the American Indian captivity narratives, slave narratives, and spiritual autobiographies of saints' lives. The novel tugs at readers' emotions by sentimental construction of black characters, and giving graphic details of slave experiences in a realistic style. This bringing together of sensationalism and realism augments the persuasive quality of the novel. The novel gives the best examples of the worst predicament that they suffer, in female slaves in all three stages of life—as children, young adolescent girls, and women, as observed in the characters of Topsy, Emmeline, and Cassy respectively. In the case of Topsy, Stowe makes clear that her evil nature is the outcome of her upbringing in a slave society. Topsy had never known a family. She had been brought up by a speculator. Jane Tompkins refers to the pathetic note in Eva's evocation of love for Topsy, who adds humour through her clever pranks but exemplifies the psychological complexities that define an orphan slave child: "O Topsy, poor child, I love you.... I love you because you haven't any father, or mother, or friends—because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good" (330).

Stowe points out that among the greatest sins of slavery are the sale of little children and separation of families. The worst form of the slave trade is enacted in the "slave warehouse" where we find

"an abundance of husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and young children, to be 'sold separately, or in lots to suit the convenience of the purchaser'" (337). A system such as this, Stowe suggests, places financial gain above moral or social values. Slaves are forced to look happy, and little children sprightly and smart, and young women beautiful, to increase their value as 'human capital.' The atrocities on little children are worked out in the instance of Harry, who is asked to sing and dance Jim Crow to increase his market value. Topsy's duplicity, noticed in her dance and her clever pranks, similarly, are but reminders of the psychological impact of slavery on black children. St. Clare explains the deceptions that slavery causes on little minds like Topsy's: "from the mother's breast the colored child... sees that there are none but underhand ways open to it" (256). In her *Key*, Stowe writes that children such as Topsy belong "to a large class of children who are growing up under the institution of slavery, — quick, active, subtle, and ingenious, apparently utterly devoid of principle and conscience..." (50). St. Clare is amused by Ophelia's efforts to reform Topsy, which he knows is an impossible task. But the worst of all atrocities perpetrated by slavery is the rape of slave women by their owners. Stowe alludes to sexual exploitation of women in the predicament of the fifteen year old Emmeline in the slave warehouse about to be sold to the highest bidder. Her future is anticipated in the example of Cassy, the mad woman in Legree's estate.

The example of Cassy illustrates that white husbands and white fathers more often than not betrayed, abandoned, and sold their black, creole, or mulatto "wives" and children. Cassy is the Creole woman, who having been fathered by a white slave owner, husbanded by another, is sold twice over, first to a cousin of her husband, and then to Legree to be exploited sexually. Another such example, although with a better fortune, is George's sister, Madame De Thoux a French Creole 'lady'. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also employs gothic style in the romantic tradition made popular by works of

English women writers, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) to bring about the effect of mystery and horror, particularly in its depiction of Legree's estate. The ghastly images that Cassy conjures up through her narrative add to the evil atmosphere of Legree's estate. The gothic style aptly throws light on the ghastliness of the crimes committed by the psychological, social and ideological confinements imposed on women, and the confined nature of women's existence. Gilbert and Gubar, and Jeanne DeWaard try to understand Cassy's violence and "madness" as a demonstration of nineteenth century pathologization of female sexuality, as a manifestation of the reproductive biology and maternal instincts of women. A creole woman, the eerie sensationalism of the mad woman imprisoned in an isolated castle, Cassy represents the fate of both black and white women. As the mistress of Legree, the character of Cassy emphasizes the pathologization of women as sexual beings for gratification of male desires. At the same time, her status as a slave woman emphasizes her position as a commodity for procreation of more slave children. Having denied her the sentiments of a mother—she must witness her children, being sold to slave traders—the white man does not allow her space within a family or community. At the same time it foregrounds, by drawing a contrast with Cassy, the darker and passionate side of women's psyche/nature. The novel, however, argues that love as an aspect of religion, as embodied in Eva, and later in Eliza, are capable of transforming even hardened 'savages' like Cassy. These melancholic characters, whether Topsy or Cassy, or the Christ-like Tom or Eva, served Stowe's spiritual and sentimental purpose. They had the power to persuade readers of the nineteenth century into moral transformation by emotionally motivating them to change their opinions about slavery.

For antebellum writers and readers the highest function of art was to bring souls closer to Christ. Most of the sentimental novels of this time preached Christian principles and were written mostly

for the sake of instruction and not for art. Reading fiction was considered immoral. It was supposed to encourage idleness and romantic fantasy. Whereas, the Church and the family, headed by the mother, were institutions believed to cultivate and encourage moral values. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that Stowe addresses readers who she believes are faithful Christians, and attributes the morally elevating words mostly to female characters, or to characters who believe in the family as an institution that nurtures 'good' human beings. For the nineteenth century women, like Stowe, the historian Mary Kelley says that the home and the family was the place for "the dissemination of values, and women the spiritual and moral overseer" (23). It is relevant to note Stowe's views in a later work. *The Minister's Wooing* (1859) where she compares women's role to the minister's, and home as the "appointed shrine for woman, more holy than cloister, more saintly and pure than church and altar" (qtd. in Hedrick 287). The quaker family in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, accordingly, is presented as the ideal family in an ideal community centred around the matriarch. Ideal maternal love is epitomized, however, not only in the image of women but also in that of Tom and the little child, Eva. For Stowe, Christ's love was that of a woman, especially that of a mother. A few years after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe had said, "Jesus Christ... has still a mother's love for the poor and lowly" (qtd. in Ammons, "Heroines" 169). In the image of the mother Stowe joins her allegiance to New Testament ideologies. St. Clare, a cynical aesthete who has lost faith, nevertheless, says that his mother "was a direct embodiment and personification of the New Testament" (268). Coupled with loving remembrance of his mother, and the Christian love that Tom and Eva have to offer, St. Clare is finally converted and brought "HOME, at last!" (368) His last utterance before he died was "Mother!" (368)

Motherhood and Christianity take primacy over every other virtue. Mrs. Shelby believes that the best lesson she can give to Eliza

is how she should love and care for her husband, and bring up "her boy... as a Christian mother, to watch over him, pray for him... in a Christian way" (66). A deeply religious woman, Stowe urged her readers to see to it that their sympathies are "in harmony with the sympathies of Christ" (504). Condemning human being as "an oppressive animal" (229) Stowe had said in her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* that "Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon LOVE" (229). Little Eva, who is seen as an evangelist, as Elizabeth Ammons notes ("Heroines" 169-70), gives expression to Stowe's views: "the Bible is for everyone to read for themselves" in order "to learn God's will" (310). Eva preaches Christian love, as do many other characters. It is Eva's religion of love that transforms Topsy where Miss Ophelia's moralizing had failed. Tom, similarly, preaches patience and empathy to slaves at the Shelby estate, who wish that the slave trader should burn in hell forever: "I'm afeared you don't know what ye're saying.' Forever is a dre'ful word..." (88).

Stowe attributes to Tom a compassionate heart. She invests in him Christian values of spiritual love and compassion, virtues traditionally associated with women, but also believed to be shared by black people. One instance of such an opinion about the black people can be perceived in the slave trader, Haley's panegyric about Tom, who he wants to sell, "All the moral and Christian virtues bound in black morocco, complete!" (189) Although we also get the ironic response of St. Clare who cannot believe in the possibility of so much goodness "bound" in one man, Stowe seems to suggest that Tom is indeed that good. His human compassion leads him to help Lucy fill her basket, and encourages Cassy to escape with Emmeline at the risk to his own life. The novel presents him as a rebel hero when he refuses to surrender to Legree and reveal Cassy's whereabouts even under extreme torture. Unlike what was believed by some critics in the early twentieth century, his apparently submissive nature as a racial "type" hides Tom's passive resistance to injustice and his compassion for all mankind. His Christ-like self-sacrifice is also seen

as an enactment of his social responsibility towards his community. Stowe's portrait of Tom as the 'highest type' of African American despite his lack of education, Arthur Riss points out, is surely intended to elevate the enslaved black man in the eyes of her readers.

Stowe believed Africans to have "a natural genius for religion" (228). Their "child-like simplicity of affection and facility of forgiveness" (222) made them the chosen race who would lead humanity into a utopian future. St. Clare, who has no religious feelings notes that religion is "given to children and poor, honest fellows" (351) like Tom. The child, Eva, also symbolically takes the place of Christ. She is Stowe's fictional embodiment of the true evangelical spirit. Eva has not learnt from religious teachers, but she transforms St. Clare's household into a spiritual family. She wants to keep servants because "it makes so many more to love" (227). Her Mammy considers her a "blessed soul" not destined to live long, and Ophelia describes her as "Christ-like" (331). Unlike her unsentimental mother, Maria, who cites the Bible to support slavery, Eva identifies with the sufferings of slaves and tells Tom, "I can understand why Jesus *wanted* to die for us... I *would die* for them, Tom, if I could" (323). Her goodness assumes a divine quality with her final wish to her father to free his slaves.

Whether it is the feminine Tom, or the blessed Eva, both embody a maternal and a spiritual love to be found in most women characters in the novel. Except Eva's mother, all the women characters are not only active opponents of slavery, but are also extremely talented in managing household affairs. Although stereotypes, women like Eliza, Eva, Mrs. Shelby, Aunt Chloe, and Rachel Halliday, forcefully embody the redeeming power of maternal love. Eliza's flight across the Ohio is the desperate attempt of a mother to protect her child from being sold into slavery. It is slavery's denial of her responsibility towards her child, which makes Eliza oppose the system. Her desperation as a mother rouses the sympathy of

other mothers, which ultimately helps Eliza to attain freedom for her family.

As an ideal mother with her feminine affection tempered with spiritual love Eliza not only saved her child from the clutches of slavery, her "constant reading of the sacred word," made her a proper guide even for the "shattered and wearied mind of her mother. Cassy yielded at once... and became a devout and tender Christian" (490). Formerly a virtuous and loving mother, Cassy had fallen into the darkness and horror of Legree's plantation, Cassy represents the corruption of the domestic ideal by the slave holding system. According to Jeanne DeWaard, Cassy suffers from a violation of her domestic purpose. But after her triumph over Legree, she is restored to her "appropriate" domestic sphere.

The idea of love, whether maternal or spiritual, is indeed at the core of Stowe's novel. By channelling its virtues as an argument for social change, Stowe presents a mother-centred family as a model for what a community ought to be. The sentiment expressed by a character from her novel *My Wife and I* (1870) "The woman question of our day, as I understand it is this—Shall MOTHERHOOD ever be felt in the public administration of the affairs of state?" (qtd. in Wyman 384), is a continuation of Stowe's ideas in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For Stowe "the state is nothing more nor less than a collection of families" (qtd. in Wyman 384), and it is mothers who are the ruling forces within these families. The maternal and Christ-like characters, both black and white, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have an influence that is warm, loving, and caring. It is ultimately the maternal power which has a redeeming quality that Stowe believed, could achieve freedom for slaves.

The slave system, as Stowe saw it, was a consequence of male glorification of conquest and colonization. According to her, a culture where masculinity was defined by aggressiveness, violence, and conquest, men, as opposed to women were more inclined to

perpetuate slavery. Men sought to conquer whereas women nurtured and restored an injured society. Like her sister Catherine, Stowe believed that men and women occupied separate worlds. Money and law were the primary concerns of men; women's sphere was the family and home. Her idea of the transformative power of mother as a moral force grew out of the shared idealization of motherhood in her society. Nineteenth-century America was undergoing the transition from a domestic homebound economy to an industrialized economy. Developments in commercial agriculture and industry in the nineteenth century made the family a unit of consumption more than of production. While the father went away to work in the office or factory, the mother stayed at home to nurture children. The supreme calling for women lay in the right kind of mothering. This involved loving and teaching children to internalize virtues of hard work and integrity, and to avoid evil. Stowe's "Appeal to the Women of the Free States," marked out the duties of women, "as mother, wife, sister, or member of society... to give her influence on the right side" (n. pag.). According to James McPherson a "cult of domesticity" (xiii) emerged to describe the middle-class ideal of family and motherhood. The home, thus, became the dynamic centre, and mothers' faculty and activities were heightened to a state of moral and spiritual authority.

Like many sentimental novelists, Stowe exploited this "sacred" nature of domesticity to address her predominantly female readership. Her faith lay in the persuasive power of women of America to transform their society. Slavery, as described in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was perpetuated by men who saw only its commercial value and used economic and legal arguments in its defence. They failed to notice slavery as an offence against the integrity of the family as a sacred institution. The protection of home and family therefore lay primarily with women. Their sentimental love and the emotional claims of family were the right forces to oppose the injustices of slavery. The split between the attitude of men and women towards

slavery is best embodied in the Shelby couple. Mr. Shelby, although by definition of the culture, is a good man, reasons that to save his business he has to sell some of his slaves. But Mrs. Shelby cannot reason away her emotions. As a mother she understands Eliza's fear of separation from her child, and Aunt Chloe's sorrow at her broken family. Senator and Mrs. Bird similarly represent this opposition between emotion and reason. Mrs. Bird immediately responds to Eliza's suffering when she is fleeing with her child to save him from the slave trader. But Senator Bird argues for the law before he gives in to Mrs. Bird's persuasions. To the Senator's reasoning, "You allow yourself to feel too much," Mrs. Bird replies, "Feel too much! Am not I a woman, — a mother?" (107) By subordinating reason and patriarchal pragmatism to emotion, Stowe turns the stereotypical "feminine" sentiment into an asset to revolutionize her society. Elizabeth Ammons pointed out that for Stowe, "true womanliness", as embodied in Mrs. Shelby meant allegiance to Christian virtues of love, faith, hope, charity, mercy, and self-sacrifice. The novel positions the sympathetic response of Quakers like Rachel Halliday, in opposition to the institutionalized Calvinist church to bring out the compassionate aspect of Christianity as a female virtue. Rachel Halliday, primarily a mother who influences her family of Quakers, and Senator Bird, go against the law to help George and Eliza escape to Canada. Kathleen Margaret Lant rightly notes that Stowe "has demanded that feminine influence work its humanizing effects not simply on private individuals—errant husbands, drunken fathers and recalcitrant sons—but on those with public, institutionalized power: on bankers, judges, plantation owners and slave foremen as well" (49). The novel relies on feminine nurture, motherhood, and sanctity of family to influence political decisions, and for an effective eradication of slavery. Both, Mrs. Shelby's and Rachel Halliday's talents and encouragement help Eliza to escape with her child. The centrality of the mother in the Halliday home, according to Stowe, makes it beautiful. Her description at the head of her table as

"benignly happy," and her "motherliness and full-heartedness even in the way she passed a plate of cakes or poured a cup of coffee" (179-80). Elizabeth Ammons points out, "is humane and spiritually nourishing" ("Heroines" 166). Referring to Rachel Halliday's perfection in managing her home, and her extraordinary power as a mother, Stowe remarks, "So much has been said and sung of beautiful young girls, why don't somebody wake up to the beauty of old women?" (173) It is not only the spiritually nourishing quality, or the beauty of the mother that is emphasized in the novel, but Stowe also exploits the centrality of these characters in the kitchen, the symbolic space of the nurturing mother, to remark on their abilities to manipulate community affairs and persuade social transformation. Lisa Watt Macfarlane points out that "[t]hrough this symbol of the kitchen, Stowe used the politics of domestic order both to reflect and to transform the national order; revised familial relationships enabled the reform of social and economic institutions" (273-74). If Rachel Halliday's compassion is felt in her domestic powers, (one of her children remarks, "Mother can do almost everything" (180). Macfarlane, further, cites Harriet and Catherine Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869) to point out that "managing a kitchen...was essential to the creation of a Christian neighbourhood, a just and democratic nation, and a peaceful world" (275).

Benevolent mothers like Mrs. Shelby and Rachel Halliday, the novel argues, are instrumental in bringing about such transformations. Their creative and transformative qualities get manifested by foregrounding their power of maternal nurture and compassion, and by presenting the evil nature of Marie as an antithetical contrast to such benevolence. The indiscipline in the household of abusive women like Marie St. Clare, or Dinah's kitchen in the household manifest the disarray found in a family with a callous mother. Ammons calls Marie the antithesis of her daughter Eva. Marie is despicable because she fails to live up to the domestic ideals of Stowe's society. Her unwomanly self-centred indifference to Eva's

illness makes her an abominable mother. Her lack of decency and human concern, combined with her ruthless exercise of power over her slaves makes her an evil force equalling Simon Legree. Evil, it suggests, is the outcome of the denial of maternal love. Legree had denied himself the love of a doting mother. However, a golden lock of hair that reminds him of his mother is powerful enough to terrify him. Evil, Stowe says in the novel, can transform "things sweetest and holiest to phantoms of horror and affright" (427). Legree's isolated life as an outcast, without family and society, in his desolate house comes up as a contrast to the peace and tranquillity of Tom's cabin in the Shelby estate. Maternal influence, family, and domestic space become interconnected and inseparable elements in determining human character and the national ethics of a state that nurtures them.

Legree and Tom as two opposing characters exemplify the influence of the domestic space on human nature. Their houses determine the virtues or qualities that are nurtured within people that occupy them. The Cabin of the title becomes an image for the domestic bliss to be found within a happy family. Within Tom's cabin, Stowe describes, can be seen the cheerful image of Aunt Chloe bustling about, looking into the needs of her husband and children. The ethical identity of a nation, and the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of its citizens are only extensions of the domestic harmony that is to be found within families of the nation. The contented lifestyle of the Halliday family is an extension of such domestic tranquillity, that is also found in Tom's cabin. The Harris's home, seen at the end of the novel is the most cheerful picture of domestic harmony. "A cheerful fire blazes on the hearth; a tea-table, covered with a snowy cloth, stands prepared for the evening meal" (487). The scene is given a final touch when the family is reunited with the Eliza's long lost mother, Cassy. In comparison, all other houses where slavery is practised, are flawed. The Shelby home is flawed because of the primacy it gives to monetary benefits over personal relationships. It

breaks the families of Tom and Eliza. On the other hand, the St. Clare family has never been a family at all. The mistress of the house is a woman without human affections, and one discovers disorder and disarray in the arrangements of the house, especially the kitchen. Lacking in emotional fulfilment, relationships have failed to achieve harmony in this house with an oppressive mother and wife as mistress, a husband who is almost always away from home, and a sick daughter deprived of the mother's nurturing affection. The worst image of a degraded house is, of course, that of Legree. Its "forlorn, brutal, forsaken air" smacks of psychological derangement. It is a house which completely denies the idea of a family or mother. It is the ultimate counter to the slave owners' argument that slavery was a patriarchal organization. Stowe showed that whatever be the defences, the legal formulation of the slave as "property" which can be bought and sold, flatly contradicted all paternalistic notions.

The white masters, Shelby and St. Clare, both play filial and patriarchal roles. Tom's solicitude for George Shelby, and later for Eva, as well as for their parents is also pretty apparent. Rhetoric of kinship relations is easily appropriated by the system, and Tom is addressed as "Uncle" and Chloe as "Aunt." Eva addresses her black nurse as "Mammy." There is an apparently shared affection and easy intermingling among the black and white within the family, especially in St. Clare's household. However, the sale of Tom, and Eliza's son Harry to the slave trader Haley is a reminder that slaves could be sold at any moment, and families could be separated for the sake of money. The economic nature of the relation between masters and slaves is made clear in Topsy's reply to the question about her parents, "Never was born... never had no father nor mother... I was raised by a speculator" (285). The legal status of slaves as human 'property' was a constant threat to family ties. Like Tom and Chole, and Eliza and her son, slaves were always faced with the risk of separation. In the Author's Preface to the English edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe writes, "the slave is to all intents and purposes as much

property as a bale of merchandise,— can be sold, leased, mortgaged, taken for debt, without any protection or reserve..." (x). Tom is sold to clear the Shelby's debts, and George Harris leased to work in an industry. Stowe had originally subtitled her novel "The Man that was a Thing," to emphasize the "non-human" nature of slaves as property. The title was later changed. The very first chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* dismantles the myth of masters as indulgent benefactors. Stowe notes the irony embedded in the "patriarchal" institution. "...but over and above the scene there broods the portentous shadow—the shadow of law" (39). She reminds readers that as long as the law considers all human beings merely as "things belonging to a master," any "misfortune, or impudence, or death of the kindest owner," she says, "may cause them any day to exchange a life of kind protection and indulgences for one of hopeless misery and toil" (39). Shelby's failure in business forces him to sell Tom and Harry, while St. Clare's death leads to the misfortunes of his slaves.

St. Clare, who pines for his dead mother, and does not trust the existing form of institutionalized religion, explains to Ophelia that slavery is a "bold and palpable infringement of human rights" (274). Simon Legree, the worst perpetrator of atrocities practised on slaves, exemplifies the ultimate violation of all such human rights. And, Cassy is the ultimate example of the extent of the horrors that could be perpetrated under such a system. Situated at the southernmost extreme, a slave owner without religion or the emotionally redeeming influence of the mother, guided solely by commercial market economy of value, even of individuals, determined by financial profits, Simon Legree says unabashedly, "when one nigger's dead, I buy another; and I find it comes cheaper and easier, every way" (392). Slavery not only converts human beings into lifeless commodities, it also dehumanizes the black people into the animal "savageness and brutality" of Sambo and Quimbo, and transforms the beautiful mother Cassy into a madwoman. As the "mad woman in the attic" of Legree, the female body of Cassy becomes the site of all forms of violence perpetrated by slavery.

Where Cassy's exceptional suffering calls for revenge in the form of violence, and suggests that it is the only solution to the extreme kind of brutality practised by Legree, the novel points to nonviolent and passive forms of resistance practiced by women, blacks, and, above all, Christ. Stowe makes a distinction between the male/white and the female/black forms of resistance. She exploits the beliefs of racial stereotypes of her times to dramatize violent and nonviolent forms of resistance in George Harris and Tom respectively. Stowe ascribes to George Harris the qualities of vitality and aggression because of his light skin. While Tom, as a black negro is lacking in these qualities. Although Tom has been, especially in the mid twentieth century, and particularly after the publication of J. C. Furnass' *Goodbye to Uncle Tom* and James Baldwin's "Everybody's Protest Novel", the cause of much critical debate because of his apparently servile docility toward white people, it should not be forgotten that the sacrifice and philosophical understanding, and social conditioning of the period in America formed much of the essentialist views observed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, whether it was of race, or gender roles. It should be remembered that whereas the entire system of slavery was based on prejudicial thinking, Stowe's novel argued emotionally for blacks to be treated as human beings, by equating their docility and meekness with the sentiments of women, which further got associated with the docility and compassion of Christ. Tom's lack of aggression and passive surrender to torture made writers like Furnass disparagingly refer to "Uncle Tom" as a derogatory and "cringing" type of black African. However, we should also remember that Stowe gives full expression to such attitudes even in the Preface to her novel without being conscious of them as racial prejudices. Her impression of the Anglo-Saxon people was of a "hard and dominant" race which, because of its aggressive and unemotional nature, and its claims to technological and business skills, dominated over other non-white races. She associates this unemotional aggressiveness at the bottom of technological knowledge, and

economic and financial transactions, with white men. bell hooks insists that male slaves like George Harris, who believed in physical rebellion, actually adhered to the norms of masculinity prescribed by the dominant culture. Cynthia Griffin Wolff notes that:

By mid-nineteenth century, a formulaic image of a ruthless, power-hungry American manhood had developed: 'To be a real man, as every foreign observer remarked of Americans at this time, was to have strong opinions on a narrow range of subjects while bending one's life and liberty to the pursuit of money and property.' Traits such as self-sacrifice and sensitivity to the needs of others were anathema to this crude masculine stereotype. Such 'virtues' were deemed feminine—ignominious and sissy! (599)

The novel uses St. Clare's words to attribute George's aggression to the "pretty fair infusion of Anglo-Saxon blood" (316) among the slaves. His very name is a reminder of the mimicry and appropriation of white values, symbolically represented in the portrait of George Washington. Black people, on the other hand, were seen as childlike and innocent, not naturally daring, but home-loving and affectionate—characteristics that were associated with women and considered feminine. St. Clare, on the other hand, with his tender feelings for his slaves, motherly affection for his daughter, can be said to belong to the new class of gentlemen who, to put it in the words of Wolff, "offered a substantial challenge to such coarse definitions of manliness" (599). To such men, Wolff cites David Leverenz to remark

'manners were a form of emotional expression as well as emotional control or restraint.' Agitation for female suffrage and for reform of the laws governing marriage and property was another... generally proposed a more sensitive, other-directed, and pacific role for men.... Finally, within the abolition movement itself, there was a powerful, often urgent inclination to redefine masculinity.... as part of this revisionary attitude, more than a few saw belligerent, combative masculinity as one source of the nation's moral and political crisis.

They deplored the extent to which America had always enacted its notions of masculinity through expressions of conquest and colonization; by mid-century, they devoted their energies to addressing the most flagrant of these—the institutions of slavery and such national undertakings as the Mexican War [1846-48] (in their view, a blatant expression of rapacious, expansionist slave power) (599-600)

Tom speaks "with a voice as tender as a woman's" (138) expressing his love of all mankind, a quality in him that approximates the gentle nature of St. Clare. Stowe invested Tom with ideal feminine feelings, making him part of a race that, she insisted was "home-loving and affectionate" (132).

Not just feminine, blacks were also seen as children—emotionally passionate, giving expression to their emotions without reserve. Although the white society believed in emotional self-restraint, to attribute to somebody the simplicity of a child was a compliment of the highest order in nineteenth century America. In her *Key*, Stowe says that when in distress, the blacks lift up their voices to weep, and "cry with an exceedingly bitter cry." When alarmed, they are often paralysed, and rendered entirely helpless. Stowe dramatized such challenges of racial segregation which confronted blacks, and portrayed them as gentle, submissive, affectionate and grateful. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* begins with a stereotypical representation of Tom as having "truly African" features, "large, broad-chested, powerfully made man, of a full glossy black." He was similarly characterized sentimentally as pious, self-sacrificing, and docile. George Frederickson has termed this method of reading the qualities of sentimentality and emotionality attributed to the coloured races as superior characteristics than the rationality of Caucasians or Anglo Saxons, as "romantic racialism" (97). Romantic racialism was facilitated by the fact that no massive insurrections took place after the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831. In 1831 Nat Turner had led a slave rebellion in Virginia and massacred around sixty

white people. As a consequence, with white people resisting the attacks with the support of armed forces, many innocent slaves were massacred. The Nat Turner rebellion had shattered the myth of slavery being a patriarchal system, or black people being docile by nature. Rather, these incidents in 1831 socialized black people into a culture of docility. Resistance to oppression certainly was never easy, and a disposition to submit and acquiesce to injustice had perhaps become common. Tom, for example, could never be excited into violence. Revenge was too far-fetched a thought for him. While many like Nat Turner or George Harris, resisted oppression by violence or tried to escape to Canada, majority of slaves who could not escape, like Tom, chose to resist by small acts of kindness.

This understanding of the priority of race and sex in forming character as a type would not certainly have surprised Stowe's contemporary readers. American intellectuals, by 1850, had embraced inherent racial and sexual characteristics as a scientific fact. But roles also could get reversed with the violated coloured woman (female/black), like Cassy, being attributed with the violence suggestive of white males whereas, the white male, George Shelby, for example, is inclined towards peace and compromise. Slavery, by unleashing male sexuality and violence was responsible for disrupting Cassy's family. A victim of violence, Cassy threatens her perpetrators with the same violence and masculine hardness of heart. She attacks the man who took custody of her children, with a stiletto knife, and smothers her infant with laudanum to save him from slavery. As such, it would not be right to suggest that Stowe believed in only gender and racial stereotypes as determining the character of an individual. Cassy and George Shelby are examples of Stowe's belief that history, and cultural experience, to a large extent, are responsible in forming characters.

In a society where black people were thought emotional and lacking in intellect, Stowe considered them morally superior. Her novel exhibits that although the law may hold slaves as "things,"

there are many people in society, like the Hallidays, for whom emotions take priority over economy. She gave priority to feeling over intellect and discovered redeeming virtues among blacks. Uncle Tom is exemplary of the best qualities that Stowe ascribes to his race and the true gentlemen of her time. His mild and self-sacrificing nature offered a challenge to conventional definitions of manliness. Among reformists and abolitionists in mid-nineteenth century America notions of masculinity had also begun to change. Although not numerous, there were a group of men committed to communal and Christ-like values, who wished to revise conventional notions of masculinity. Their manners were guided by the doctrines of fraternal love. They repudiated competition and conquest as the basis of masculine relationship, and encouraged free expression of affections. Among the proponents of fraternal love was also Henry Waard Beecher, the active abolitionist and brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In her novel Stowe drew upon these revolutionary notions of masculinity to define Tom as an antithesis of conventional masculinity. He is endowed with the "feminine" virtues of Christ which are also attributed to the ideals of maternity. Pious, domestic, and self-sacrificing, his resistance to Legree's tyranny is of a non-violent passive nature. As persuasive as any mother Tom has the ability to bring together isolated and abused individuals to create families.

Nancy Armstrong and Cynthia Griffin Wolff among others point to the parallels between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) which was published more than a century later. Morrison, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993, like Stowe, portrays the victimization of slaves under benevolent masters. Fascinating parallels between Eliza and Morrison's Sethe, both of them mothers who flee to save their children, call attention to the shared objectives of writers from two different ages. Instances of separation of black mothers from their children recur throughout Stowe's novel in order to assert the humanity of black people in the face of racist myths that blacks did not possess emotions like that of

white people. She relied on the essential goodness of human beings as capable of rejecting prevailing prejudices, and used her art to dissuade people from a patriarchal economic system that believed in the commodification of human beings for commercial profits. At the same time, in order to convince people of the ethical fallacy of slavery as a practice Stowe also made use of the Bible, sometimes to persuade readers and sometimes to warn them against damnation on the Day of Judgment. Instead of giving social, political, or economic justification for an unethical practice, Stowe hoped that her people would be emotionally persuaded to respond with compassion. She believed that literature could evoke reforms and had a sense of responsibility towards the society which it addressed. Philosophers like Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty and Robert Solomon agree with Stowe's view of emotional identification as the key to social reform. They believe that social justice is the result of such moral emotions as sympathy, moral outrage, and guilt that are roused by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. "The manipulative sentimentality of a novel like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," to use Solomon's words (13) prodded its readers to react to injustice. Stowe's "Concluding Remarks" in her novel exhorts her readers to "feel right": "the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily, and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! Are they in harmony with the sympathies of Christ?" (504)

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