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Harriet Beecher Stowe and Antislavery Literature in America:
Another American Renaissance

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Introduction

In her favorable review of *Dred* (1856), Harriet Beecher Stowe's second antislavery novel, George Eliot defines Stowe as the originator of the "negro novel." Although Stowe was not the very first author to write a story on slavery or to present a black protagonist, her best-selling *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) did have a far greater impact on the United States than any other abolitionist work published before, or even after, it. Myra Jehlen admits of the book's revolutionary element in spite of its use of the sentimental tradition; soon after its publication, the novel "had already begun to change the world" (385). In fact, Eliot's evaluation of Stowe as the originator of the new American literary genre is no cheap flattery to a woman in the same profession, but contains some truth worth noting:

Looking at the matter simply from an artistic point of view, we see no reason to regret that Mrs. Stowe should keep to her original ground of negro and plantation life, any more than that Scott should have introduced Highland life into "Rob Roy" and "The Fair Maid of Perth," when he had already written "Waverley." Mrs. Stowe has *invented* the negro novel, and it is a novel not only fresh in its scenery and its manners, but possessing that *conflict of races* which Augustin Thierry has pointed out as the great source of romantic interest—witness "Ivanhoe." Inventions in literature are not as plentiful as inventions in the paletôt and waterproof department, and it is rather amusing that we reviewers, who have, for the most part, to read nothing but imitations of imitations, should put on airs of tolerance towards Mrs. Stowe because she has written a second Negro novel, and make excuses for her on the ground that she perhaps would not succeed in any other kind of fiction. . . . But whatever else she may write, or may not write, "Uncle Tom" and "Dred" will assure her a place in that highest rank of novelists who can give us a national life in all its phases—popular and aristocratic, humorous and tragic, political and religious. (G. Eliot 43-44)

In this review, Eliot tells of two important things about Stowe: her excellence as a novelist and her superb literary innovation. Not only is Stowe a good writer but has also invented a literary genre that Eliot calls “negro novel.” Eliot affirms that the invention of a new literary genre is itself an outstanding feat, but her emphasis seems to lie more in the possibility that Stowe’s antislavery fiction like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Dred* will constitute a national literature comparable to the romantic novels by Sir Walter Scott, already a national writer celebrated in Britain. Considering the antebellum period when America was enthusiastic about creating a national literature different from that of the British, Eliot’s comment can be read as covert criticism of American authors who would imitate British novels and produce “nothing but imitations of imitations.” And the aspiration for a uniquely American literature was not new but had been a long collective one ever since America achieved economic as well as political independence by the victory of the War of 1812. The creation of “American” literature became an even more urgent imperative, especially when the English critic, Sydney Smith, asked the notorious rhetorical question, “in the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?” (E. Foster 23)

Being earnest in looking for American subjects, American critics quickly affirmed that “literature produced in this nation would have to be ground-breaking, equal to the new nation, and completely original” (Baym, “Melodramas” 125). “Americanness” was regarded from the beginning as a more important standard than “a standard of excellence” in assessing American fiction (125-26). The dominant male writers found Americanness in an independent man living in the middle of vast nature or fighting for freedom, one of the basic factors of American democracy. The image of a solitary man struggling to survive in the wilderness, or to free himself from the restrictive society, emerged as an important icon of American heroism: individualism, nature/wilderness, and democracy, thus, became the main elements of American literature as we see in the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, or Henry David Thoreau, while making authentic American topics gendered, and polarizing sentimental novels that center on the home and the family.

Forming a national literature distinctly American, thus, meant that women writers, who chiefly penned sentimental domestic novels, were excluded from the mainstream. F. O. Matthiessen, one of the most influential

critics who served to determine the canons of American Renaissance, exalted five male writers: Emerson, Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. For the selection of these five representative men, he gave the reason that they were all concerned with the theme of democracy: “The one common denominator of my five writers, uniting even Hawthorne and Whitman, was their devotion to the possibilities of democracy” (ix). And his scope of American Renaissance is limited to the 1850s, especially the first half of the decade, when the nation’s “great masterpieces” were published one after another: *Representative Men* (1850), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *Moby-Dick* (1851), *Pierre* (1852), *Walden* (1854), and *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

Jane Tompkins objected to this male-dominated literary canonization, illuminating the fact that in the same period Matthiessen specified as the peak of American literary classics, women writers also wrote significant best-selling novels such as *The Wide, Wide World* (Susan Warner, 1850), *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), and *The Lamplighter* (Maria Cummins, 1854). Their novels deeply moved the contemporary audience and circulated far more broadly than those of their male counterparts. However, these novels, once so popular, were degraded and neglected by modernist critics for being maudlin, unrealistic, didactic, and, therefore, worthless. In order to grasp their literary value, Tompkins insists that we have to understand that “the work of the sentimental writers is complex and significant in ways *other than* those that characterize the established masterpieces” (126). Sentimental novels, influenced more or less by the Christian reform movement, aim to change the world by the power of women’s “right” emotions. They dramatize the process of how women’s Christian values can rescue the patriarchal, money-oriented, corrupt society to rebuild and sustain the ideal republic, what their democratic America should be; in this sense, they reflect the paradigm of the traditional American jeremiad whose characteristics Sacvan Bercovitch made clear in his notable book of 1978, *The American Jeremiad*.

Tompkins revalued the rich production by women writers in the fifties and called it “The Other American Renaissance” to challenge Matthiessen’s male-dominant canonization. George Eliot’s review, mentioned above, also seems to commend Stowe’s novels which deal with slavery, a very American subject, as works worthy of national literature.

Referring to the same review by Eliot printed in October 1856, Henry

Louis Gates, Jr., supports her statement, by saying that “Stowe did indeed invent the Negro novel,” since *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* generated a number of not only antislavery novels but also proslavery ones (*Figures in Black* 134); the latter includes such novels whose titles apparently show reactive responses to Stowe’s like *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin* (1852), *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia and Tom Without One in Boston* (1853), and *Little Eva: The Flower of the South* (1853). As Gates further suggests that the impact of Stowe’s work also spawned fiction by African Americans whose traditional literary writing had almost exclusively taken the form of slave narratives (*Figures in Black* 134); Frederick Douglass published the novella “The Heroic Slave” in 1852 soon after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which was followed by William Wells Brown’s *Clotel* in 1853, and Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig* which came out in 1859.

In 1855, when Douglass published his second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom*, the expanded version of his 1845 slave narrative, he applauded, in a lecture, what Stowe had initiated by writing an antislavery novel: “One flash from the heart-supplied intellect of Harriet Beecher Stowe could light a million camp fires in front of the embattled host of slavery, which not all the waters of the Mississippi, mingled as they are with blood, could extinguish” (“The Anti-slavery Movement” 361). He sensed a great upsurge of a new literary movement to abolish slavery and foretold that the fifties would be regarded as “the age of anti-slavery literature” (361). What Douglass suggests here by “anti-slavery literature” is not limited to novels but encompasses all the antislavery discourses both written and spoken; it is evident that his writings and speeches are also included in it.

Douglass’s view of the fifties gives us a new perspective from which to examine the literature of that time, a possibility of “another American Renaissance,” to emulate the phrase by Tompkins. This study attempts to reconsider the literary landscape of mid-nineteenth-century America in terms of abolitionist discourse, with Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in its center, and to examine how the antislavery literature that flourished in the fifties formed “another American Renaissance” comparable to those classic works of literature by white male writers, canonized by Matthiessen. It also aims to prove that this new literary movement was not a transitory one, which came out with the rise of national crisis of disunion and vanished with the end of the Civil War, but was bequeathed to the mainstream American literature.

For these purposes, I have divided the whole discussion into four parts.

Part I discusses the antislavery literature before the publication of the novel to examine how Stowe was influenced by the preceding works and what differentiates *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from those works. In this section, I take up two works, David Walker's *Appeal* and Richard Hildreth's *The Slave*. Although it is the landmark of slave narratives in this period, Douglass's 1845 slave narrative is not included as it was incorporated into his 1855 autobiography, which I discuss in Part III, and is frequently referred to throughout this study. Part II examines Stowe's three novels that deal with slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Dred* (1856), and *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), and traces the transition of her abolitionist views and the development of her antislavery literature, taking into consideration their intertextual relations with other contemporary antislavery texts.

Part III aims to show the flourishing of antislavery literature that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had promoted. I have included Abraham Lincoln's speeches though it is not certain if he had ever read the novel, because Stowe and Lincoln had lived in a similar cultural climate of the antislavery movement in the fifties. We cannot deny the possibility that the two representatives of that age could have experienced a certain amount of remote influence from each other. The well-known legendary greeting that he made in the late 1862, to welcome Stowe in the White House, is symbolic of the position in which she was placed then in the United States. The other abolitionist works by the five writers, W. W. Brown, Douglass, Herman Melville, Harriet Wilson, and Harriet Jacobs, respond explicitly or covertly to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While examining each text, I try to elucidate the similarities to and differences from the novel. The analysis of these texts must reveal the diversity and fecundity of the antislavery writing that Douglass had predicted.

Part IV takes up Lydia Maria Child's postbellum antislavery novel, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) as indexes that illustrate the continuation of this literary tradition; they show that the rise of antislavery literature is not an ephemeral phenomenon peculiar to antebellum America, but has formed a genre incorporated into the mainstream of American literature. Its fundamental issues such as democracy, race, gender, class, and, above all, "bondage and freedom," have become America's "authentic" literary subjects as we see in Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

[Part I: Precursors of Antislavery Literature]

Chapter 1

David Walker's *Appeal*: The Emergence of Antislavery Literature

1. Walker's *Appeal*

Jean Yellin, a well-known scholar of African American history and literature, declares in her book, *The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776-1863* (1972), that “[m]odern literary portraits of black people have been shaped by the black figures which were outlined by Thomas Jefferson” (vii), and begins her comprehensive study of black figures in American fiction in the period between the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation with a solid analysis of the delineation of the black race that America’s third president presented in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781). Yellin is quite right in her special attention to Jefferson’s *Notes*, for many African American activists and writers were to react against the black figures stamped in the book.

David Walker was one of the earliest African Americans who, in fear of its profound impact, attempted to repudiate it. In his powerful political document, *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), he urges his brethren to rebut Jefferson’s remarks on blacks: “I say, that unless we try to refute Mr. Jefferson’s arguments respecting us, we will only establish them” (18). Behind the sense of urgency expressed in the tone of Walker’s *Appeal* lies the increasing popularity of the American Colonization Society founded in 1816 (Hinks, Editor’s Notes 123, n.66) and the rising racism of the 1820s. Although the ideology of colonization was not entirely anti-black, it was very often entwined with the prejudice against the black race: blacks were seen as inherently inferior to whites so that the two races should not intermix and that blacks should go back to their ancestral land (Hinks, Introduction xxvii, xxix-xxx). While the white suffrage was gradually expanded in the period of nation building after the

Revolution, the laws restricting blacks were reinforced or newly enacted. Even in the North racial discrimination was rampant: blacks were segregated in “all public facilities” like churches, schools, restaurants, and transportation vehicles (Hinks, Introduction xxix); everywhere they had to see “[c]uts and placards descriptive of the negroe’s deformity” (Price and Stewart, *To Heal the Scourge* 106-07). Those visible signs and discriminatory laws indicate the popular notion of the time that blacks were an inferior species, closer to animals. This is in keeping with Jefferson’s portrayal of them in the *Notes* in which they are associated with the “Orang-Outan” in order to justify the existent southern slavery¹ and, hence, the vehemence of Walker’s rebuttal.

Walker’s fury, however, is not directed to the private Jefferson alone. He makes Jefferson the target of his attack strategically and politically as well; he takes advantage of his fame as a distinguished president of the United States, as the chief drafter of the Declaration of Independence, and as a wealthy slaveholder. Just as he emphasizes the impact of the fact that “a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts,” should pronounce to the world “that we are inferior to the whites, both in the endowments of our bodies and our minds” (12), Walker turns the tables by making use of Jefferson’s fame in proving the racist discourse permeated in the contemporary society to be groundless by attacking the idea of Jefferson as that of the Representative Man. Jefferson is indeed a good example for exposing how wrong and cruel the debasement of African Americans is, for he is the author of the Declaration of Independence that endorses the essential principle of democracy, “all men are created equal.” Thus the contradiction of the new Republic is most explicitly revealed in the nation’s representative man, Thomas Jefferson, who was at once a prominent advocate of democracy and a slaveholder.

Peter Hinks, a scholar of David Walker, maintains that the contradiction of American republicanism co-existing with slavery was not unobserved by “white thinkers and orators” but that “for an African American to come forward and ridicule and accuse American pretensions was a bold and possibly dangerous action even in the late 1820s” (*To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 176). It might have been even more precarious for him to dethrone Jefferson from his pedestal as a symbol of American democracy. Hinks further asserts that, although some African Americans criticized “the

idea of black inferiority” with the aid of the Christian doctrine of equality of men before God, none had ever condemned Jefferson or his *Notes* as a source of racial prejudice before the appearance of *Appeal* (178), and “no African American prior to Walker had attacked the Virginian’s hypotheses with anywhere near as much vehemence or scope” (178).

Walker’s bold action led to the rumor that he was murdered, a rumor whispered among black communities, when he was found dead at the door of the second-hand clothing store that he ran, in July 1830, within a year of the publication of *Appeal*. Whether his death was caused by poisoning or by illness, one thing at least is certain: he had been in constant danger of being killed immediately after the book appeared.² What Walker tried to do at the risk of his own life was to elucidate the contradiction of American democracy and the injustice of the subjugation of black people in such a way that everyone, even an uneducated black, could see it clearly, and thereby to appeal to the world for the abolition of slavery. These antislavery discourses were to be followed not only by black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, but by white ones as well, such as Richard Hildreth and Harriet Beecher Stowe. It is essential, therefore, to scrutinize Walker’s speech against Jefferson in order to assess the achievements of antislavery writers in the 1850s.

2. Jefferson’s *Notes* and Walker’s Rebuttal in the *Appeal*

Walker’s *Appeal* published in 1829 consists of a preamble and four articles. Its structure apparently follows that of the Constitution of the United States, probably aiming to evoke the issue of slavery as it was involved in the sacred document of the new Republic. The main assertion of the first article is stated in the opening passage: “we, (coloured people of these United States of America) are the *most wretched, degraded and abject* set of beings that *ever lived* since the world began, and that the white Americans having reduced us to the wretched state of *slavery*, treat us in that condition *more cruel . . .* than any heathen nation did any people whom it had reduced to our condition” (9). Walker insists in the passage that black people are made by the white Americans “the *most wretched, degraded and abject* set of beings that *ever lived* since the world began.” Such italicized terms as “*most wretched*” and “*ever lived*” convey his insistence that American slavery is

the worst institution of the servitude in world history as well as his indignation at the “degraded” condition of the black.

This responds directly to Jefferson’s *Notes*, in which he argues that although Greek and Roman slaves were more severely treated than American slaves in the South, they left many marvelous pieces of art, while the latter produced nothing worth the name of art, and concludes, “It is not their condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction” (149). Walker is thus compelled to prove, first of all, that no slavery in the past was crueler and more inhuman than the slavery in contemporary America; he appears to admit the lack of art produced by African Americans, so he must overturn Jefferson’s hypothesis about the condition in which they are put. He refers back to the age of Biblical heroes like Joseph and Moses and, comparing the Israelites kept in bondage in Egypt and the blacks under American slavery, he attempts to persuade the reader that “the sufferings of Israel . . . under *heathen Pharaoh*” were not so harsh as “ours under the *enlightened Christians of America*” (11). As evidence for his assertion, Walker illustrates the harsh and cruel treatments African Americans habitually suffer by asking a rhetorical question referring to the degree of the hardship suffered by the Helots among the Spartans: “[Can] any man show me an article on a page of ancient history which specifies, that, the Spartans chained, and handcuffed the Helots, and dragged them from their wives and children, children from their parents, mothers from their suckling babies, wives from their husbands, driving them from one end of the country to the other?” (15). It is evident that he is enumerating here the sufferings of American slaves in this question about the Helots.

Such a listing of the afflictions black slaves experience in order to impress upon the reader the horror of the system is repeated again and again in *Appeal*; this strategy was to be employed more thoroughly a decade later in Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), one of the most aggressive abolitionist documents in the 1830s, which Stowe consulted when writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Hedrick 230-31).

Another strategic device of *Appeal* that was developed and expanded fully in Weld’s book is the use of newspaper articles and advertisements. Walker introduces, for instance, an article from a South Carolina paper that criticizes the “barbarity of the Turks” who “treat the Greek more like *brutes*

than human beings” (15), and by juxtaposing this “humane” article and an advertisement in the same paper of eight well-built black men and four black women for sale, Walker lets the reader judge if the paper is really humane; he furthermore directs the reader’s attention to the irony of the fact that the same newspaper reports “the cuts of three men [runaways], with clubs and budgets on their backs, and an advertisement offering a considerable sum of money for their apprehension and delivery” (15). This strategy of making a newspaper article or advertisement, which is suggestive of appalling violence, speak of the reality that southern slaves faced enables him to make a strong retort to the inveterate proslavery assumption that slaves were content with their condition without worrying about food, clothes, or housing.³ Having reiterated the oppression under which slaves are kept ignorant, Walker protests that they have no chance to develop their talents and in this way insists, contrary to Jefferson’s assertion, that it is the condition and not nature that has brought about the present inactive creativity.

Walker’s protest against this oppression is not limited to the physical damage alone, but extends to the spiritual. Eugene Genovese finds one of the characteristics of Walker’s document in the discussion of how racism had wounded blacks’ hearts and hampered the nurturing of their self-respect:

In his discussions of miscegenation, of hostility toward the free Negroes, and of the flagrant racism of Thomas Jefferson and other prominent Americans, he demonstrates that the Negroes were damaged much more by having their manhood denied them than by actual physical deprivation. Walker’s essay, read carefully, provides ample evidence and argument to show that slavery, in its racist American form, demoralized most of its victims and stripped them of their dignity and self-respect. (364)

As Genovese implies, it is significant that Walker sheds light on the psychological effect of slavery upon African Americans, both free and bound. Weld, on the other hand, never delved into the psychological wounds blacks suffered though he introduced much more dreadful examples that testify to the physical violence under slavery. Indeed, for that matter, almost all white abolitionists keep silent or seem unconscious of, or indifferent to, their injured pride. Walker’s anxiety lies here; unless blacks themselves subvert

this distorted portraiture, the image of black inferiority cannot be swept away. He is one of the earliest black abolitionists to stress the importance of speaking out their side against the dominant white discourse of what blacks are:

We, and the world wish to see the charges of Mr. Jefferson refuted by the blacks *themselves*, according to their chance; for we must remember that what the whites have written respecting this subject, is other men's labours, and did not emanate from the blacks. (17)

Considering that blacks themselves writing their own story, or allowing the voice that "emanate[s] from the blacks," to reverberate has been a lasting subject of black writers from Douglass and Francis Harper to modern novelists like Toni Morrison, we can understand Walker's remarkable prescience. It might be worth remembering here, for example, that Douglass deliberately added "Written by Himself" to the title of his first autobiography.

3. Awakening the Slumbering African Americans

Having refuted the idea of black inferiority by asserting that blacks are forced into their wretched situation by slavery and that they would be as capable of improvement as whites if only they were given opportunities to learn, Walker then appeals to his brethren to make every effort to improve themselves. For this purpose, he first chides them for their ignorance. The episode of a shoeblack being perfectly contented with polishing whites' shoes is a typical case to show how ignorant blacks are. He criticizes the shoeblack's narrow views that confine him to the lowest, subjugated status in society.

Another typical example he introduces to illustrate their deplorable self-satisfaction is the black father who believes that he has given his son a good education only because the son writes a good hand, when in fact he knows nothing of grammar; the father cannot understand that writing a good hand does not mean composing correct sentences. Walker urges complacent fathers like him to realize that what they think of "education" is nothing; and he never fails to point out that this kind of "almost universal ignorance among us" is caused by the fact that the school committee would not allow

blacks to study grammar (35-36).

The most conspicuous case, however, in which black ignorance manifests itself, according to Walker, is seen in the episode of a slave woman helping her white master instead of her oppressed brethren. He cites an article from a recent issue (Aug. 22, 1829) of the *Columbian Centinel*, a Boston newspaper, that reports the details of “[a] most shocking outrage . . . committed in Kentucky” (25) and condemns a black woman who saved a slave driver attacked almost to death by rebellious slaves and whose help consequently led to the capture of all the slaves. Denouncing this woman’s action as deceitful, Walker justifies murdering the white oppressors, for they are analogous to devils that deprive men of their natural rights that God has endowed them with: “it is no more harm for you to kill a man, who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty” (28).

Walker regards the woman’s almost spontaneous rescue of the slave driver as characteristic of slaves: “we are too servile to assert our rights as men” (65). Beneath his reproach of her, there are two things he feels crucial to inculcate into his “slumbering brethren” (5): 1) the consciousness of their right to freedom and 2) the necessity for them to unite to resist the tyranny of whites. “One of the principal burdens of the *Appeal*,” Peter Hinks maintains in his *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, “was to communicate to African Americans that they were not dependent on or obligated to whites, that they were wholly free agents, and that they could come to assume responsibility for the moral application of that freedom” (221). Awakening the sense of liberty as essential to each individual, Walker believes, leads to the collective bond of African Americans, which, in turn, provides them with strength to resist slavery. In attributing the cause of the defeat of Hannibal, an ancient Carthaginian general, to the disunity of his people and their inability to support him, he therefore urges the blacks to unite so as not to remain under the control of whites.

This problem is connected in his mind with Jefferson’s insulting remarks on African Americans, which “have sunk deep into the hearts of millions of the whites, and never will be removed,” for “how can they, when we are confirming him every day, by our *groveling submissions* and *treachery*?” (30) Walker deplores this, and seeing “the ignorant deceptions and consequent wretchedness of my brethren,” he almost believes that blacks were made slaves by God to serve whites (30), which is all the more reason

for him to encourage them to improve themselves. His fervent address is especially directed to the free and learned blacks:

Men of colour, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my APPEAL designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore to cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren, and do your utmost to enlighten them—*go to work and enlighten your brethren!* (30)

Walker is certain that without the enlightenment of the whole black race they will have no power to gain freedom nor to unite together to fight racism. His firm belief in the education of his brethren comes also from his belief in a just God who punishes the oppressors and delivers those who have suffered from them. As Dolan Hubbard showed in minutely examining the elements of the New England jeremiad in *Appeal*, its speech follows the traditional American jeremiad.⁴ Walker seems to believe in millennialism, and is almost a prophet in preaching to his people to pave the way for the advent of the Messiah by doing their utmost to improve themselves and their more wretched brethren: “Let the Lord see you doing what you can to rescue them and yourselves from degradation” (30). The effort for improvement is considered also a call for God’s salvation. The issue of religion thus becomes the main subject of Article III.

4. Religious Hypocrisy of Americans

Walker’s criticism is particularly harsh against religious hypocrisy, since the indiscriminate doctrine of Christianity is incompatible with the idea of slavocracy, the overlordship of a person over another. “[T]housands of them,” Walker illustrates of the contradiction of American Christians, “*will absolutely beat a coloured person nearly to death, if they catch him on his knees, supplicating the throne of grace,*” whereas the pagans, like Jews and Mahometans, try to convert them to their religions (39); or else white mobs, calling themselves “patrols,” will attack and disperse blacks who have gathered to pray to God: “the wretches would burst in upon them and drag them out and commence beating them as they would rattle-snakes” (39). Douglass also describes a similar scene in his 1845 narrative in which his

Sunday school for educating his brethren to read the Bible was suddenly terminated when some white men “came upon us with sticks and other missiles, drove us off” (78); he emphasizes the disparity between the public face of southern Christians and their violent obstructions of the black religious life by pointing out that some of those mobbish whites are “class-leaders,” and concludes the scene with the sentence, “Thus ended our little Sabbath school in the pious town of St. Michael’s” (78).

Towards the American ministers, Walker’s rebuke is even harsher. He criticizes them first for being silent about slavery when their duty should be to preach the universal equality of men and to awaken the benighted black people to Christ’s love. Some of them even support slavery. Ironically enough, they “send out missionaries to convert the heathen” outside America, “while they keep us and our children sunk at their feet in the most abject ignorance and wretchedness that ever a people was afflicted with since the world began” (39). They furthermore treat blacks as if they were “domestic beast[s]” while holding the Bible in their hands (40). Walker calls such hypocritical clergymen “pretended preachers,” equating them with an “Infidel or Deist” (40).

His lament over the degradation of American Christianity reaches its climax when he begins to warn white Americans of coming destruction, repeating the rhetorical phrase, “their cup is nearly full” (41-42). Just as in the traditional jeremiad, Walker assumes the attitude of a prophet of the Old Testament, urging Americans—whose hearts are hardened and who would not listen to him—to repent before the impending final destruction:

I tell you Americans! that unless you speedily alter your course, *you and your Country are gone!!!!!!* For God Almighty will tear up the very face of the earth!!! . . . I hope that the Americans may hear, but I am afraid that they have done us so much injury, and are so firm in the belief that our Creator made us to be an inheritance to them for ever, that their hearts will be hardened, so that their destruction may be sure. This language, perhaps is too harsh for the American’s delicate ears. But Oh Americans! Americans!! I warn you in the name of the Lord . . . to repent and reform, or you are ruined!!! (42)

Walker is sure that the heavenly Lord will avenge the sin that the white

people have committed against the blacks, unless they repent, for God is just.

To be sure, his speech falls within the strain of the Puritan jeremiad, lamenting the divergence of Americans from Christian ideals and warning them of the approaching devastation. Yet it also echoes *Notes* where Jefferson voices his fear of the wrath of a just God in Query XVIII after he declares that the racial “difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation” of African American slaves (151) in Query XIV:

Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. (169)

Despite the long and seemingly scientific discussion of the racial inferiority of the black and its consequent justification of southern slavery, Jefferson gives voice here to his unquenchable worries over the day when God’s justice might be done upon his country. As if to respond to his anxiety over “my country,” Walker foretells its future: “[U]nless you speedily alter your course, *you and your Country are gone!!!!!!*” (42). Hubbard calls this a “Jeffersonian Jeremiad” and thinks that the basis of Walker’s *Appeal* consists in the expansion of its apocalyptic tone (338). Walker’s application of the “Jeffersonian Jeremiad” to his *Appeal*, however, goes much further than that, for Walker seems to know very well where the Virginian’s apocalyptic fear arises from; the demographic majority of blacks in many of the southern states and the frequent slave revolts and conspiracies.

Wilmington, North Carolina, where Walker was born and grew up, “had an indisputable predominance of black residents” (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 9). The place had historically been a region for naval stores and lumber, and blacks “performed virtually all the labor” in the industry of pine derivatives from cutting the trees to procure the sap to keeping the kilns to change turpentine into tar, and they “likewise dominated in the lumber industry” (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 3). The South that Walker had seen when young relied heavily on black labor and

artisanry (Hinks, Introduction xii, xv, xxxv), and yet kept the black majority in the lowest state to serve the white minority. Slave conspiracies and revolts had long swept through the area since colonial times, but during the Revolutionary era, rebellious slaves, taking advantage of the disturbances of war and of “their owners’ democratic rhetoric,” began to increase their resistance and, in spite of the continuous governmental suppression, slave uprisings continued in the early nineteenth century (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 40-43). The most conspicuous were Gabriel’s (1800) and subsequent rebellions of 1801-1802, and Denmark Vesey’s conspiracy in 1822, the latter of which, Hinks suggests, Walker might have witnessed at first hand (Introduction xxi; *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 39, 63). In addition to this, the news of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) had reached the South; its bloody details were reported by the French who had fled from the battleground of St. Domingue. The news of the overthrow of the rulers by their servants, of the birth of a new nation of black people, would have stimulated the suffering slaves to resist their tyranny, while it certainly alarmed slaveholders along the eastern coast so much that they attempted to prevent “white émigrés” and free blacks from “disembarking on their shores” or from “contaminating their slaves” (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 47).

Jefferson’s fear of a future reversal of the positions between the whites and the blacks, therefore, was no mere fancy to David Walker but rather a realistic possibility widely felt in the actual life of the South that he experienced. He probably recognized in the perusal of *Notes* that this kind of fear would be a sore spot to shoot at to move whites, for he uses the strategy of stirring the fear in a crescendo until it reaches a peak with the repeated passage with two capitalized terms: “O Americans! Americans!! I call God—I call angels—I call men, to witness, that your DESTRUCTION *is at hand*, and will be speedily consummated unless you REPENT” (45).

5. Walker’s Rebuttal of Colonization

The last part of *Appeal*, Article IV, deals with the ideology of colonization, the most pressing issue to the contemporary blacks. As is already mentioned, the American Colonization Society was established in 1816 and its plans to transmit free blacks to Africa became very popular in

the 1820s. Walker and other African American leaders in the North were alarmed by this movement of black relocation led by whites. He therefore devotes his energies to revealing the lies of the colonizationists in the final article.

Comparing two representatives, Henry Clay, a famous Whig politician who endorsed the colonizing plan, and Richard Allen, a black leader in Philadelphia who questioned the ideas of colonization, Walker presses the reader to choose between the two alternatives of remaining at home or leaving for Africa. He denounces Clay's proposal as having nothing to do with the question of emancipation or with the abolition of slavery, but as a scheme of driving free blacks "away from among those of our brethren . . . so that they may be enabled to keep them the more secure in ignorance and wretchedness . . . and consequently they would have the more obedient slaves" (49). Walker gives three major reasons for condemning it. It is impossible, in the first place, to give the blessing of American civilization to the benighted land of Africa as the colonizationist envisions by sending African Americans who are kept ignorant in the States. Secondly he cannot trust this southern politician from Virginia who now lives in another slave state, Kentucky, because he aids measures to send poor fugitive slaves back to their owners out of sympathy with slaveholders bothered by slave resistance:

Do you believe that Mr. Henry Clay, late Secretary of State, and now in Kentucky, is a friend to the blacks, further, than his personal interest extends? Is it not his greatest object and glory upon earth, to sink us into miseries and wretchedness by making slaves of us, to work his plantation to enrich him and his family? (52)

In contrast with this castigation of Clay, he glorifies Richard Allen, a black minister in Philadelphia who founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church to contribute to the enlightenment of the black people. He tells the reader that Allen saw the real purpose of the colonization plan: the perpetuation of slavery by expelling free blacks from America and thereby better securing slaves against any agitation for liberty. This clergyman, he continues, published his refutation of the plan despite the great danger that would follow the opposition voiced by a black: "Why should they send us

into a far country to die? . . . the free must be sent away, and those who remain, must be *slaves*. . . . This land which we have watered with our *tears* and *our blood*, is now our *mother country*, and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds and the gospel is free” (60). The last part of the passage quoted here from the *Freedom’s Journal* constitutes the third major ground for resisting the colonization. America is the blacks’ country as well as the whites’; the blacks have even more right to the land than the whites because “we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*” (67). Walker calls out to his brethren for their firm resolution to remain where they are: “Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country” (67).

Throughout the fourth article Walker condemns the colonization as a most detestable idea, and at the same time sums up what he has so far argued from Article I to Article III, amplifying the tone of his protest, and his speech increasingly sharpens the division between the black and the white, the suffering people and the oppressors, the saved and the damned. He urges the latter to repent and alter their brutal way before the day of God’s judgment. Walker’s God is apparently blacks’, the just God who will take revenge on the whites—the blacks’ “natural enemies”—for their cruelties and deliver the suffering slaves from bondage: “I tell you that God will dash tyrants, in combination with devils, into atoms, and will bring you out from your wretchedness and miseries under these *Christian People!!!!!!*” (74).

Although Walker seems to approve of violence as a means of procuring freedom, he never endorses it; it might be much better if it can be avoided. It is to press the whites to change their attitudes and treat the blacks as men, not as brutes, that he intensifies his aggressive tone almost into a bellicose one, for he believes that peaceful reconciliation is still possible. It is up to the obdurate whites, not the blacks who are “not like you, hard heartened, unmerciful, and unforgiving. What a happy country this will be, if the whites will listen. What nation under heaven, will be able to do anything with us, unless God gives us up into its hand?” (73). Here all the conventional racial discourses are reversed: it is the whites, not the blacks, who are greedy and ignorant; it is the white who are brutal and unreasonable; it is also the whites who should listen to others, be humble, and become human. And the future depends on the blacks, God’s chosen people, like Abraham and Lot: “But I tell you, that this country would have been given

up long ago, was it not for the lovers of the Lord” (69).

In the denouement of *Appeal*, Walker recites the Declaration of Independence and makes Americans face once again the contradiction between the democracy they boast of and slavery, between their ideal doctrine of equality of men and their cruelties, a hundred times greater than those of the British, that Jefferson had inscribed in the document, saying, “See your Declaration Americans!!! Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4th, 1776” (78). This is the rhetoric that Stowe and Douglass are to elaborate in their antislavery writings.

6. The Emergence of Antislavery Literature

It was indeed a bold and dangerous act for an African American to criticize whites in the 1820s, expressing hatred for them, or calling them “natural enemies.” Even during the 1850s, when slavery became an urgent issue of national discussion, black abolitionists took special care not to pique whites’ feelings. Walker seemed to be conscious of the risk of his outright speaking: “they may put me to death if they choose” (56); yet he did not moderate his expression because he felt it his duty to publish the pamphlet to make his voice reach the suffering blacks. In the beginning of Article IV, he declares that his writing is “the will of my Master” (47). In attributing the authorship of his work to God, he is close to Stowe who said some decades later that God made her write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Douglas 30; Sundquist, Introduction 5-6).

The aggressive and frenzied tone of *Appeal*, however, earned frowns of disapproval even from those white abolitionists sympathetic to blacks. Benjamin Lundy, a Quaker abolitionist, for instance, condemns the *Appeal* as containing “the wildest strain of reckless fanaticism” and as designed to “rouse the worst passions of human nature” (qtd. in Hinks, Introduction xliii). William Lloyd Garrison, one of the most militant abolitionists in antebellum America, also deprecates in 1831 “the spirit and tendency of this Appeal,” though he admitted many merits contained in it (xliii). This kind of reprimand led to the later prolonged neglect of the *Appeal*. It will probably take the work still longer to earn a just appreciation.

The fanaticism or madness that the contemporary critics sensed in

Walker's speech perhaps came partly from the reiteration of certain distinct ideas expressed in simplified dictions with powerful accents, cadences, and intonations that are often seen in African American evangelical sermons. As Walker himself mentions in the fourth article, his *Appeal* is written in a very simple language so that "the most ignorant, who can read at all, may easily understand" it (74). It is expected, in fact, to be read aloud by the literate black to the illiterates. Hinks suggests that it anticipates not so much silent reading as oral reading among a large group of unlettered blacks (Introduction xxxviii). The aggressive, sometimes threatening, and emotionally uplifting tone and repetitive simple phrases and sentences with subtle transformations are skillfully calculated to impress his voice on the minds of those who listen to his appeal. Probably to intensify the effect, Walker also uses visual signs to guide the reciter how to read such as exclamation marks, capital letters, italics, and graphic index fingers, just like forte or pianissimo in a musical score. Ames Beman, a black abolitionist in Connecticut, remembered "*how members of his community would gather to hear the Appeal and other antislavery works 'read and re-read until their words were stamped in letters of fire upon our soul' "*" (Hinks, Appendix 109). The emotionalism that dismayed white readers may have been yet another strategy for refuting Jefferson's *Notes*: to express his brimming feelings shows that blacks are men, not brutes, as Jefferson implied in his *Notes*. It also implies that Jefferson's seemingly scientific writing shows nothing but his "emotional" prejudice against blacks.

The fierce and provocative speech of the *Appeal*, then, was intentional; it meant to terrify whites on the one hand and to give assurance to blacks on the other that they have a justifiable right to anger and resistance against tyranny. Hinks, praising Walker's *Appeal* as a "masterpiece of exhortatory writing," estimates the impact that it had on contemporary African Americans as comparable only to that of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* upon "the white patriots of revolutionary America" (*To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* xiv). Yet the inflammatory book had an even prompter impact on slaveholders, for many southern states immediately passed severe laws to restrict blacks' activities soon after copies were found circulating: some required "the death penalty, against possession or distribution of Walker's *Appeal*, or similar materials" (Crockett 305). Henry Garnet said in 1848 that the "little book produced more commotion among slaveholders than any

volume of its size that was ever issued from an American press” (Garnet, n.pag.). It marked, according to Hasan Crockett, the beginning of the post-1830 abolitionist movement.⁵ It is often said that *Appeal* induced Nat Turner’s revolt of 1831 (Hubbard 331-32). Though we cannot know if Turner had ever read Walker’s *Appeal*, it is at least certain that the book contributed to Garrison’s transformation from a colonizationist into an abolitionist (Hinks, Introduction xliii; Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 112; D. Jacobs 2). Putting special emphasis on this fact, Douglass linked Walker, not Garrison, with “the origins of the organized antislavery movement,” and pointed to his *Appeal* as “a righteous opening salvo defending African American integrity and power” (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* 115). With its powerful speech, Walker’s *Appeal* marked the emergence of antislavery literature.

Chapter 2

Richard Hildreth's *The Slave; or, Memoirs of Archy Moore*: A Precursor of Antislavery Fiction

1. The First Antislavery Novel

It seems safe to say that *The Slave; or, Memoirs of Archy Moore* is the first American antislavery novel (Schlesinger 230; Brandstadter 160; Karcher, *The First Woman* 333). The book was written by Richard Hildreth, then a young lawyer and editor of the *Boston Atlas*, a daily newspaper. As the title indicates, it takes the form of “memoirs” written by a slave, and when first published anonymously in 1836, it was believed to be an authentic slave narrative (“Richard Hildreth’s *Slave*”). Hildreth announced himself as its author the following year (Nichols 330). Although it was no bestseller like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, it circulated well among New England abolitionists, especially Garrisonians, and went through seven editions in about a dozen years between 1836 and 1848 (Nichols 330).¹ *The Liberator* and its radical readers embraced *The Slave*, for Hildreth’s realistic depiction and unrelenting exposure of the depravity of the southern slavery seemed “exactly what the abolitionist cause needed” (Brandstadter 168). It was often referred to in *The Liberator* throughout the year of 1837 (Brandstadter 167). In the issue of 16 April 1837, for instance, one correspondent praised it as “one of the most ingenious, well written and interesting works of the present age” (qtd. in Brandstadter 168).

However, the realistic presentation of the peculiar institution offended many mid-nineteenth century readers who were familiar with sentimental and romantic stories. Not only did Hildreth have difficulties in finding a publisher, but he was embittered by the fact that most newspapers and magazines ignored his work: “the book . . . was carried to New York for publication, but no one dared to publish it. It met with the same timidity in Boston, and was finally printed without any publisher’s name on the title-page” (Turner 52). And when it came out on the market, Hildreth deplored the neglect of his work by the press: “no review or magazine, or hardly a

newspaper, took any notice of it” (qtd. in Turner 52). *The Slave* was destined to fall into oblivion until the sensational popularity of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* resurrected it (Brandstadter 168): soon after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its immediate success in 1852, Hildreth added a sequel to the 1836 story and reprinted it under the new title, “The White Slave,” and this enlarged edition enjoyed a wide circulation for a while (Schlesinger 230),² but soon faded from the memories of common readers as well as literary critics and scholars. While Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has remained one of the most important works of antislavery literature to the present, this first piece of American antislavery fiction by Hildreth has sunk almost into oblivion, apart from brief references in critical works on other antislavery authors.

Nonetheless, it made an enduring impression on William Dean Howells, the “dean” of nineteenth-century American literature, who took up Hildreth and highly rated *The Slave*, which he had read some four decades before, in *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* published in 1900:

I had read, before I met him, his novel of Archy Moore, or The White Slave, which left an indelible impression of his imaginative verity upon me. The impression is still so deep that after the lapse of nearly forty years since I saw the book, I have no misgiving in speaking of it as a powerful piece of realism. It treated passionately, intensely, though with a superficial coldness, of wrongs now so remote from us in the abolition of slavery that it is useless to hope it will ever be generally read hereafter, but it can safely be praised to any one who wishes to study that bygone condition, and the literature which grew out of it. (85)

Howells believes that the power of *The Slave* lies in its authentic picture of slavery. Though he does not anticipate that it will circulate among general readers again in the future, he recommends the book to those who wish to study the “bygone” institution and “the literature which grew out of it.”

The realistic portrayal of slave life was what Lydia Maria Child, a prominent antislavery writer, wanted. When the book first appeared, she hailed it in a letter to *The Liberator*, praising its “unsparing delineation of slavery and its accuracy of detail” (Karcher, *The First Woman* 333). Child

even expressed her gender-conscious wish: "If I were a man, I would rather be the author of that work, than of anything ever published in America" (qtd. in Karcher, *The First Woman* 333). As Carolyn Karcher remarks, this "wistful avowal" suggests Child's awareness of the limits imposed on women's writing, for no female writers could portray a rebellious male slave as the central figure of their works (333), at a time when women's sphere was the home and domestic fiction was almost the only arena available for women writers because writing itself was generally considered a male activity.³

Hildreth himself must have been conscious of the common sentimental antislavery writing, most probably composed by those popular female authors who appeal more to the emotions of readers than to their strict sense of justice, when he makes his first-person narrator, Archy Moore, warn the reader at the very beginning of *The Slave* that "[mine] are no silken sorrows, nor sentimental sufferings; but that stern reality of actual woe" (1). Archy indeed exposes in his "slave narrative" numerous unspeakable examples of oppression he underwent or witnessed and expresses his irrepressible indignation at such cruel treatment, and the unrelenting delineation of the dire reality of slavery and the discourse of an infuriated hero are what Child was unable to adopt in her antislavery fiction. Yet it is certain that Hildreth's fictional slave narrative inspired Child to write stories for the abolitionist cause (Karcher, *The First Woman* 333), and *A Romance of the Republic* (1867) in which she dared to deal with the sexual abuse of slave women, as Hildreth did in depicting Cassy, was perhaps Child's long-nursed response and female counterpart to it.

2. *The Slave* and Harriet Beecher Stowe

Child is not the only woman writer who was influenced by Hildreth's *The Slave*. Charles Nichols is convinced that the real source of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is *The Slave* and probes the extent of Stowe's "borrowing of her chief characters and incidents" in his article "The Origin of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (328). Nichols is certainly right when he says that the rebellious mulatto slave⁴, George Harris, is "a mere replica of Archy," that Uncle Tom resembles the pious and obedient Thomas (Tom) before he discarded Christian religion after his wife was cruelly killed, and that Eliza is Cassy's

double in keeping hope for her slave child (330-31). According to Evan Brandstadter, moreover, the little girl who helps Archy and Thomas to escape from the slave trader by cutting the rope that binds them was developed into the angelic little Eva who charmed nineteenth-century readers (Brandstadter 166-67). Hildreth himself thought that Stowe had read *The Slave* and that she had obtained the idea of her *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from his novel (Brandstadter 167). Stowe, however, gave no indication that she had ever read *The Slave*, while she freely referred to *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), a powerful and thorough document on slavery compiled by Theodore Weld and the Grimké sisters, and to such slave narratives as those by Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, and Josiah Henson as the materials that had helped her in writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁵

Despite Stowe's silence about *The Slave*, its influence upon her antislavery writing becomes more obvious if we compare it with *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), in which the titular hero plots a revolt with his fellow runaways in a colony built on an island amid the great swamp. Dred is indeed the disillusioned Thomas who comes to hold the policy of an "eye for an eye" after the death of his wife and who eventually becomes the leader of a group of fugitive slaves roosting on the islet of a shapeless swamp, plundering its neighboring plantations for their provisions. Hildreth's description of a swamp probably derives in part from the actual swamps he had seen in Florida, where he had stayed for about two years for his health (Gossett 113). It anticipates the impressive picture of "the dismal swamp" that Stowe conjured up for readers without any experience of visiting marshy ground in the deep South.

David Miller explores in his *Dark Eden* the symbolic meanings attached to the swamp in American culture and traces nineteenth-century literary descriptions and paintings of the swamp in the South. In the second chapter he examines the inheritance and transformation of the traditional representation of the swamp seen in Stowe's *Dred*, but he nowhere mentions Hildreth's *The Slave*. A comparison of Hildreth's swamp with Stowe's, then, may be worthwhile in order to probe Stowe's debt to her precursor. The fugitive that Archy and Thomas happen to meet on their way of escape from Carter, a terrible planter like Legree, guides them to a large swamp:

The gigantic trees among which we were wading, sprung up like columns, from the surface of the water, with round, straight, whitish-colored, branchless trunks, their leafy tops, forming a thick canopy over head. . . . The water began to grow deeper, and the wood more gloomy; and . . . presently we came to a little island which rose a few feet from the surface of the water, so regular and mound-like, that it had quite the appearance of an artificial structure. . . . Its edges were bordered by low shrubs and a mass of green. Our guide pointed out to us a little opening in the bushes, through which we ascended; and after having gained the dry land, he led us through the thicket along a narrow and widening path, till presently we came to a rude cabin built of bark and branches. (212-13)

With this in mind, let us look at how Stowe invites the reader to the swamp in which Dred's base is located. The following quotation depicts the scene when the hero rescues a fugitive and takes him to his colony:

After about an hour of steady travelling, Dred arrived at the outskirts of the island. . . . For about twenty paces before he reached it, he waded waist-deep in water. Creeping out, at last, and telling the other one to follow him, he began carefully coursing along on his hands and knees. . . . The path wound up and down the brushwood, through many sharp turnings, till at last it ceased altogether, at the roots of a tree; . . . Dred climbed the tree, and directed his companion to follow him, and, proceeding out on to one of the longest limbs, he sprang nimbly on to the ground in the cleared space (278)

Both Hildreth and Stowe set up a colony on a dry island in the impenetrable swamp that secures safety from ruthless hunters and gives the possibility of practicing self-government. They endow the swamp with special significance as a locus of freedom and wildlife, and the central figures of the place possess superhuman strength: Thomas, with "a stout muscular frame" (176), defies any hard whipping and repeats robbery which, he believes, is just revenge on the whites who "lawfully" rob the black race of everything, while Dred moves swiftly in the vast woods like a wild animal from tree to tree and in a mysterious roaring voice through the thick verdant foliage

warns the people in the camp meeting against God's wrath and an impending catastrophe. Finally, both are willing to sacrifice themselves for their comrades while showing no scruples about killing slaveholders or overseers.

The transformation of Thomas from a meek slave to an angry rebel might have given Stowe some hints when she felt impelled to create a defiant hero. To Stowe, the creation of the Christ-like martyr Uncle Tom meant her own religious examination; she pursued in him ideal Christian virtue and faith. A passive slave martyr, however, does not always offer a tenable image to antislavery activists and suffering blacks. Nor was it effective when the opposition between the North and the South, between anti- and pro-slavery debates, had brought the whole nation to the middle of a hair-trigger situation. Confronting the urgent crisis of so-called bleeding Kansas, Stowe probably felt it necessary to test a violent hero, Dred, the opposite of Uncle Tom, just as Hildreth had dramatized, two decades before, the change of Thomas from a nonviolent religious Christian to a fighting hero who dares any danger.

Stowe's rebellious characters, not only Dred but other slaves such as George Harris, Harry Gordon, and even mad Cassy, seem to reflect Archy and Thomas to a greater or lesser extent. It is not too much to say that in his only novel Hildreth created the archetype of a black rebel common in later antislavery literature. Yet neither of the two main characters in *The Slave* is as charming as any of the various figures that fill Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, since except for the part where his wife tells him in flashback of her experiences after her forced departure from him, the story is told almost exclusively through the viewpoint of Archy Moore. Archy is not so much an independent character as a spokesman of the author and therefore lacks vividness. Hildreth fails to convey the "vitality of black life" that Stowe succeeds in describing in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

While [*The Slave*] is replete with potentially fascinating personalities, they remain for the most part flat and lifeless stick figures. Nowhere does Hildreth succeed in creating fictional characters that the reader can empathize with, such as St. Clare or Topsy in *Uncle Tom*. (Brandstadter 164)

It is certain that as a literary work *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is much superior to *The Slave* in its structure, language, and delineation of characters. *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin introduces multiple viewpoints of both slaveholders and slaves, both Southerners and Northerners, both men and women, and thus unfolds a great panorama of America in the mid-nineteenth century. Though those figures are sometimes stereotypical for modern readers, she vitalizes them by using the vernacular: "In *Uncle Tom* . . . there is a wealth of dialect, ranging from the poor-white Southern drawl of Dan Halley and Tom Locker, to the quaint Quaker *thee's* and *thy's* of the Hallidays, to the thick black dialect given almost all the slaves" (Brandstadter 164).

On the other hand, however, no white authors made such a great literary effort as Hildreth did to write from a black perspective (Brandstadter 164). Not only does he present realistic details of black life, but makes full use of his imagination to show what a slave sees, feels, thinks, and schemes. *The Slave*, therefore, sounds more like a nonfictional slave narrative than an antislavery novel like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The discourse of Archy Moore actually recalls Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* in many respects: Archy's violent indignation at slavery and deep woes about his hard life; his harsh criticism of slaveholders, including even a benevolent one; his experience of feeling manhood when he defeated his pursuer; his ability to see through the wicked aim in the seemingly good intentions on the part of a white man and to use a ploy to avoid it; and his condemnation of the hypocrisy of the Christian religion in the South and the contradiction of America that boasts of democracy to the world while holding millions of men and women in bondage.

3. *The Slave* and Frederick Douglass

A. Sexual Abuse

It is in fact more probable that Douglass had read *The Slave* and derived some hints from it for his slave narrative of 1845 than Stowe had for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Douglass had become a Garrisonian abolitionist and subscribed to *The Liberator* by the time he started to write his narrative. As a Garrisonian, he was perhaps versed in their ideologies and rhetoric and read many abolitionist writings before beginning his narrative, among which *The Slave* must have been included, for *The Liberator* often referred to it as I have already noted. A close comparison of the two works reveals how much

Douglass's narrative echoes its precursor, *The Slave*.

Douglass dramatizes in the early part of his narrative the incident in which his beautiful aunt, stripped of her clothes down to her waist, is severely whipped by his master, Captain Anthony. While the bloody sight bears the erotic connotations of a man inflicting violence on the naked body of a young woman, it is made even more sensational by the auditory effect—the sound of his hideous whipping and his victim's heartrending shrieks: "The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran faster, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin" (45). To Douglass, then a young boy, it was his initiation into the hell of slavery. It indicates both the fearful punishment imposed on a slave who displeases his/her master, and the sexual abuse by the master—nearly a surrogate rape of the slave woman who refused his lewd approach.

Hildreth also portrays this problem of sexual abuse by the slaveholder as one of the vilest forces caused by the institution that allows the slave owner unlimited power. Archy is a son of his master, Colonel Charles Moore, a respectable gentleman of Virginia, and his mother, almost white, is Moore's concubine. This setting itself discloses the sexual indulgence of the slaveholder and the degradation of the family. However white he looks, Archy is to remain a slave forever according to the southern law: a child born of a slave mother is a slave. Thus, Archy is the chattel of his own father and, as a slave, he has to serve his half-brother James and later another half-brother William, who waits for the chance to tyrannize him. He chooses to be a field hand rather than a house servant working for this cruel William.

What makes this family relation more complicated is that Archy falls in love with Cassy, the daughter of another concubine of Mr. Moore, and marries her though he knows that she is his half-sister by a different mother. Hildreth seems to insist that, under a slave system that pays no attention to black family ties, this kind of incestuous marriage cannot be avoided, for slaves are kept ignorant of their paternity, just as Douglass confesses his lack of knowledge about his father, but for a rumor that his father is his master, in the very beginning of his narrative. Mrs. Moore celebrates the marriage of Archy and Cassy, though she seems to know they both are her husband's children:

Whatever she [Mrs. Moore] might know, she discovered in it no impediment to my marriage with Cassy. Nor did I; —for how could that same regard for the *decencies of life*—such is the soft phrase which justifies the most unnatural cruelty—that refused to acknowledge our paternity, or to recognize any relationship between us, pretend at the same time, and on the sole ground of relationship, to forbid our union? (37)

In the mid-nineteenth century when Christian piety and matrimonial chastity were highly valued and the home was regarded as a sacred place, extramarital relations were horrible enough to repel northern readers. But Hildreth dares to go further to suggest the possibility of breaking the last taboo in the proslavery South. Mr. Moore tries to make erotic approaches to Cassy, his own daughter:

She exerted all her strength, and succeeded in break-away from his hateful embraces. Then summoning up all her energies, she looked him in the face, as well as her tears would allow her, and striving to command her voice, “Master,—Father,” she cried, “what is it you would have of your own daughter?” (131)

Colonel Moore is regarded by his friends and neighbors as “the faultless pattern of a true gentleman” (3), and yet this shameless behavior does not mar his fame at all since decency is kept only among whites. The gulf between the respectability of Moore as a Virginian gentleman and disgraceful relations with his own slave may insinuate the rumor that Thomas Jefferson had an affair with one of his female slaves and begot a baby by her. This rumor concerning the third President of the United States, famous for drafting the Declaration of Independence, had already spread widely in the 1830’s (Levine, “Cultural and Historical Background” 8-17). William Wells Brown was later to deal with this scandal in his *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter*, the very first novel by an African American (See Chapter 8). Colonel Moore in some ways reminds us of Jefferson. He is a rich planter of Virginia. When young, he fought for America in the Revolutionary War; although he belonged to the aristocratic, and naturally

conservative, partly by birth and education, “the impulses of youth and patriotism were too strong to be resisted. He espoused with zeal, the cause of liberty, and by his political activity and influence, contributed not a little to promote it” (3). He is always an enthusiastic advocate of “liberty” and eloquently speaks of human rights in public. But in the private sphere, he has imprisoned his concubines in a cottage hidden from the public eye; and he now attempts to snatch Cassy away from Archy in order to make her another sex slave serving to him.

Having escaped from this terrifying disgrace and enjoyed a newly wedded life in the hidden corner of a deserted plantation for a short while, Archy and Cassy are captured in the end and taken back to their owner. Mr. Moore commands Cassy to whip Archy so as to punish and humiliate both of them, and she refuses his order, by saying, “Master, he is my husband!” (66) At this resistance, Moore, usually calm and good-natured, loses all his reason and sense of honor, and behaves like a brutal despot:

That word *husband*, seemed to kindle colonel Moore into a new fury, which totally destroyed his self-command. He struck Cassy to the ground with his fists, trampled on her with his feet, and snatching up the whip which she had thrown down, he laid it upon me with such violence, that the lash penetrated my flesh at every blow, and the blood ran tickling down my legs and stood in little puddles at my feet. . . . I screamed with agony. “Pshaw,” said my executioner, “his noise will disturb the House;”—and drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he thrust it into my mouth, and rammed it down my throat with the butt-end of his whip-handle. Having thus effectually gagged me, he renewed his lashes. (66)

Many a hint at Moore’s noble blood and respectability and his fervent belief in liberty and the equality of men points to Jefferson, and his possession of slaves and his exercise of tyrannical power symbolizes the contradiction of American democracy.

The scathing criticism of the reality of American democracy is repeated later in a more explicit way when Archy and other slaves are put into a jail in Washington, the district where the Capitol is located. Gazing at the building of Congress, Archy says to himself, “This . . . is the head-

quarters of a great nation,—the spot in which its concentrated wisdom is collected, to devise laws of free people and a great democracy!” (98) The Capitol, the very symbol of freedom, is placed in stark contrast to the sight of the slaves being driven to a jail to be sold at auction. Hildreth, too, employs the auditory effect of “the rattling of chains” and “the cracking of our drivers’ whips” to make the contrast dramatic, and leaves a sarcastic comment which Brown is to repeat in *Clotel*: “within a stone’s throw of the Temple of Liberty—nay, under its very portico—the most brutal, odious and detestable tyranny found none to rebuke or to forbid it” (98).

B. The Problem of Violence

Denouncing the hypocrisy of a slave-holding nation that boasts of democracy was stock rhetoric of the Garrisonians in the mid-nineteenth century. Robert Abzug maintains that Garrison and his followers had resorted first to “the fear of black revolt” to appeal to antislavery sentiment, and this strategy was reinforced by the rebellion of Nat Turner in 1831, but around the mid-1830’s, when peaceful emancipation in the British West Indies succeeded, they changed the argumentation for their abolitionist cause from the fear of slave violence to “the civil liberties” (23-25).⁶ The latter strategy aimed to reveal how far apart the reality was from the great cause of the Revolutionary War, from the ideal principles of the Founding Fathers or the Declaration of Independence. The impressive retort of George Harris, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, to Wilson’s remonstrance of observing the country’s law is a refined example of this tradition: “My country again! Mr. Wilson, *you* have a country; but what country have *I*, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don’t make them,—we don’t consent to them,—we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven’t I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches?” (185) And Douglass’s Fourth of July speech, a sort of expanded version of George Harris’s harangue, was a monumental achievement in this line of civil liberties.

In *The Slave* Hildreth uses both the fear of slave revolts and the demand of civil liberties. The scene of the execution of Martin, the overseer who killed Thomas’s wife, recalls the insurrection of Nat Turner. The group of runaway slaves with Thomas as their leader are attacked by a number of

white pursuers. Having fought with them, Archy and Thomas narrowly escape from this large-scale hunt, taking Martin captive. Thomas is determined to kill the captive to avenge his murdered wife. To Archy, who has instinctive scruples about shedding blood, Thomas repeats the sentence—as if it were an oracle—“Archy, that man dies to-night” (206-07):

His eyes flashed fire, as he repeated,—but in a low and quiet tone that contrasted strangely with the matter of his speech—‘I tell you Archy, that man dies to-night. She commands it; I have promised it; and now the time is come.’ (207)

Archy still feels horror at the idea of killing a person, although he sympathizes with his friend’s statement that the death of Martin is “an act of righteous retribution” (207), and thus Martin, in spite of his desperate begging for his life, was shot dead.

A vengeful slave like Thomas must have been fearsome enough to the readers of the time, but what was perhaps even more terrifying was that even Archy feels no remorse after the execution of the overseer. On the contrary, he declares that he had “that lofty feeling of manhood vindicated, and tyranny visited with a just retribution” (211). Hildreth here not only admits violence as righteous revenge, but even seems to suggest that it is a necessary rite of passage for manhood. Douglass also emphasizes in his narrative the demonstration of physical power with which he defeats Covey, a slave breaker, and defines this incident as vital for his manhood: “The battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood” (89). Though Douglass, as a Garrisonian, does not endorse violence, he at least denies passive endurance of violence. In this sense, Hildreth is much more radical, for after the experience of killing a white person (Martin), Archy no longer feels any hesitation in resorting to violence; when he becomes a sailor on the British privateer, he murders the captain of the enemy ship despite his cry for quarter, immediately after he recognizes that the man is Jonathan Osborne, who had once discarded slaves on a ship named *Two Sallys* in a storm and let them sink into the deep sea:⁷

“Jonathan Osborne late commander of the Two Sallys?”

“The same!”

“Then die;—a wretch like you deserves no mercy!” and as I spoke I plunged the weapon to his heart, and felt thrilling to the very elbow-joint, the pleasurable sense of doing justice on a tyrant! (238)

Archy has become as vengeful as Thomas, though he suggests the possibility that his sense of justice might be “sullied by passion” (238).

Violence was what bothered Stowe even when she dealt with a rebellious hero like Dred. As a Christian she could not allow him to commit bloody violence and in the end let him vanish from the story before he could have a chance to carry out his plan of revolt. This moderate treatment of violence may in part have brought her the large audience that Hildreth could never enjoy; *The Slave* was too radical to Christian readers of his day. Yet the black figures in the novel as dangerous as Nat Turner undermine the proslavery belief that blacks are passive and ignorant like children and therefore unable to contrive a stratagem.

In David Levy’s analysis of the stereotypes of slaves in antislavery fiction, “full-blooded” African slaves are for the most part described as “puerile, lazy, blissfully ignorant, gamboling creatures content with their lot and devoted to their masters” (265). If slaves are defiant, they are always “white” ones (mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons) because their “superior” white blood enables them to understand the abstract idea of freedom and render them discontent with their perpetual condition of servitude (Levy 269-72). Douglass depicts an episode that shows this kind of racial prejudice prevalent in antebellum America: when he is being taken to a jail after his first plan of escape was betrayed, the mother of Mr. Freeland, who had hired Douglass, shouts at him, “*You devil! You yellow devil!* it was you that put it into the heads of Henry and John to run away. But for you, you long-legged mulatto devil! Henry nor John would never have thought of such a thing” (100). Mrs. Freeland’s words expose her belief that it is a mulatto, not a black of unmixed blood, who can plot to flee for freedom. Stowe’s characterization of slaves in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* follows for the most part this division of black slaves and “white” ones; the slaves of mixed blood like George Harris and Cassy are rebellious and intelligent enough to articulate their protest against the injustice of slavery, while those of pure African blood are either passive and devoted to their masters like Tom, or comical, jovial, and

ignorant, like Sam and Andy.

Hildreth's slaves are not painted so differently depending on whether they are fully black or partly black; indeed, the author deliberately makes Archy and his mother confess at certain points their own prejudice against darker "negroes" and how foolish they had been to be proud of the white blood in them. Readers might have taken both Thomas (a slave of unmixed African blood) and Archy as white if information of their complexion had not been given, for they always speak standard English that displays powerful rationality. While white authors of antislavery fiction tend to give heavy dialect to the black slave's speech and let the white slave speak "perfect" English, writers of slave narratives hardly distinguish between them. Black characters who speak dialect might have sounded more realistic to the readers of the time than those who speak "perfect" English, but on the other hand, such broken "incorrect" English with strange accent is likely to make them appear foolish, inferior beings. In order to eradicate the prejudice against the black race that was deeply rooted in the consciousness of Americans, not excepting even abolitionists in the North, they tried to minimize the racial difference. It is no wonder then that slave narratives seldom differentiate African Americans according to their complexion.

C. The Black Perspective

Seen from the black perspective in this way, slaves are no longer mere miserable victims who are examined and valuated like cattle in the market, the passive object of scrutiny. They become subjects as well who watch and assess their masters. Douglass thus depicts many slaveholders and overseers critically: Master Thomas Auld and his new wife are a well fit couple, "being equally mean and cruel" (*Narrative* 75); Mr. Freeland is "an educated southern gentleman" and, being a slaveholder, he seems to "possess some regard for honor, some reverence for justice, and some respect for humanity" though he has "many of the faults peculiar to slaveholders, such as being very passionate and fretful" (91-92); Mr. Gore is the "first-rate-overseer," for he can "torture the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of the slave, into impudence, and would treat it accordingly" (55), and Mr. Covy is a well-known "nigger-breaker" and his "*forte*" lies in "his power to deceive" (81-82) slaves, or even himself, because he believes himself to be among the

most devoted of Methodists in spite of his cruel treatments of his slaves.

The stern criticism of the ruling class from the viewpoint of blacks is shared by *The Slave*. Archy's denunciation of slaveholders is in a sense harsher than that of Douglass. Moore, a parody of Thomas Jefferson, as we have already observed, presents a satire on American democracy, revealing the shameful conduct of a first-rate gentleman of the South. Carlton is another hypocritical slaveholder. He is a religious master and prays "night and morning, with the most punctilious regularity," and preaches that all men are equal before God, whereas slaves are never invited to his family worship (116). Though he is a devoted Presbyterian who contributed to repairing some ruinous church buildings, he is disposed "to settle every disputed point by the pistol" (115). General Carter is "a man of princely fortune" (171) but the worst master, one who forces slaves work as hard as possible with the least food; he flatly refuses Archy's modest request for a small amount of salt with which slaves could eat their scanty tasteless meal. Moreover, it was on his plantation that Thomas's wife was whipped to death for being a little slow in returning to the field from nursing her baby.

In contrast to Carter, Thornton emerges as a non-violent "kind" master. He provides his slaves with plenty of food, clothes, and enough time to rest as long as they are obedient and work well. He is a reformer and advocates "clover system cultivation" (77) to prevent both slaves and land from exhaustion, an effective, thrifty way of using labor and real property. He offers a sort of answer to the question, posed by St. Clare in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of how to make slaves work without using a whip. "Yet, is he not a tyrant?" Archy seems to ask the reader. His answer is definitely in the affirmative: "He was . . . a tyrant," despite his generous allowance for the slaves, because he "felt no scruple in compelling his fellow man to labor, in order that he might appropriate the fruits of that labor to his own benefit" (80). He does not care in the least about selling a slave and separating his/her family members—and emancipation is out of the question.

Mrs. Montgomery is another "kind" slaveholder. Unlike Thornton, she does care for the welfare of her slaves and feels guilty for their hard toil that makes her comfortable life possible. After the death of her husband, she actually launches into a reform in treating them more benignantly. Firing a cruel overseer, she tries to listen to her slaves' complaints directly and gives them a greater allowance than before. Lacking a solid system like Thornton's,

however, the new humane system does not make profits; and being not ready to resign her luxurious life either, she is in the end compelled to give up her new way and leaves the management of her plantation to her brother, who insists that “if she wished to make a crop she must keep a smart overseer, put a whip into his hands, and give him unlimited authority to use it. . . . but as long as she followed her present plan, she would be no better than the slave of her own servants; and her philanthropy would end in their being sold for debt, and her being left a beggar” (154). Thus her plantation goes back to the old system of being handled by a merciless overseer. All that she can do now is to forget the wrongs imposed upon her slaves in “the dissipations and gaieties of Saratoga or New York” (156).

The cases of both Thornton and Montgomery suggest that even “benevolent” masters can do little in their effort to better the condition of slaves. Reforming slavery is no good; since slavery is an evil, Archy insists, nothing is solved until the system itself is abolished:

It is impossible to build any edifice of good on so evil a foundation. The whole system is totally and radically wrong. The benevolence, the good nature, the humanity of a slaveholder, avail as little as the benevolence of the bandit, who generally clothes the stripped and naked traveler in a garment plundered from his own portmanteau. What grosser absurdity than the attempt to be humanely cruel and generously unjust! (157)

By denying “good-natured” slaveholders, Archy denounces the entire system of slavery.

4. Subverting the Racial Prejudice

Through Archy’s experiences on several types of plantations, Hildreth discloses that none of them work well so long as they depend upon slave labor. Each plantation to which Archy is sent is a testing ground for the author to examine and expose the evils of slavery, and the system of each plantation corresponds to the character of its owner. Serving various masters, Archy sees through their human nature and classifies them—gentlemanly, cruel, practical, benevolent—and condemns them one after another as

tyrannical after all. This close examination and classification of slaveholders by a slave was bequeathed to the later writers of antislavery literature, particularly to those of slave narratives, including Frederick Douglass.

As discussed earlier, the characterization of Archy is flat and bland and his first-person narrative seems to reflect for the most part the voice of its author rather than to have an independent voice. The various slaveholders observed by Archy, a single slave, appear to be mere illustration of Hildreth's ideas and views on slavery. Yet the critical opinions he articulates are well imagined and authentic enough to show what slaves really felt and thought. Hildreth's sharp insight into the inner life of the oppressed also subverts the biased notion that blacks are innately inferior, so brainless that they cannot understand abstract ideas such as freedom or democracy, and so ignorant and weak-witted as an infant that white masters should protect them as fathers protect their children.

Hildreth's most significant contribution to antislavery literature probably consists in his depiction of black characters full of wisdom, intelligence, and cunning, in his sincere effort to break the stereotypical images attached to African Americans. When serving Moore's second son James, Archy, still a little boy, learns letters faster than Master James and becomes his teacher.⁸ This clever boy quickly understands that he can control his young master by "flattery and apparent obsequiousness" and thus comes to have "actual superiority" (8) over him. Attending patriotic Colonel Moore at other times, he learns about the "beauty of liberty and equality" and abhorrent "tyranny and oppression" (11) through Moore's conversation with his fellow gentlemen. At the same time he quickly perceives that he must conceal his literacy and knowledge as much as possible since a learned black is regarded as "a dreadful monster breathing war and rebellion, and plotting to cut the throats of all the white people" (10). Archy, therefore, pretends to be an ignorant and obedient slave content with his present state: "deceit is one of those defenses against tyranny, of which a slave early learns to avail himself" (17). Using this art of deception, Archy gains the favor of overseers as well. He manipulates the hostility between the two overseers, Martin and Christie, and leads the former to ruin the latter and thereby successfully gains revenge for the undeserved whipping he received from Christie.

However, the most adroit ruse is shown by Thomas who organizes a gang of thieves to plunder the neighboring plantations. He contrives that they

all wear shoes of the same large size so that they leave the same footprints and induce the whites to conjecture that the theft is done by one person. They succeeded in this ploy and none of them roused suspicion of the plunder on the side of the whites. The final result, however, is tragic and shocking: an innocent slave whose foot happened to correspond exactly with the size of the footprints left on the field was caught and hanged immediately without any further examination. This episode demonstrates African Americans' intelligence in outwitting the whites' vigilance against theft on one hand, and on the other the appalling iniquity of the slavery South, where no laws are applied to protect slaves and where innocent slaves are cruelly executed without justice.

Indeed, no white author could reveal more powerfully the reality of slavery from the viewpoint of blacks than Richard Hildreth. Yet proving their mental capacity means exposing the stupidity and wickedness of the ruling race, the white. Given the fact that the great majority of the audience of antislavery fiction were white Christians, Hildreth's realistic and straightforward portrayal of the slave life was indeed a doubly courageous deed. Hence, *The Slave* deserves Lydia Maria Child's admiration and William Dean Howells's high commendation.

[Part II: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Her Antislavery Novels]

Chapter 3

Uncle Tom's Cabin and Women's Power of Sentiments Based on
Christianity

1. The Woman Interfering in the Field of Politics

It was a significant episode in American history that President Abraham Lincoln welcomed Harriet Beecher Stowe in the White House in the late fall of 1862 in the midst of the Civil War, saying, "So you're the little woman who made this big war?"¹ Since Stowe had not left any records of this interview, we can never know what was really going on at that moment. However, if we believe her son who accompanied her, we can say that Lincoln expressed in that one sentence the best tribute to the author and her work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It conveyed his celebration of the power of a woman and of the pen in contrast with that of the sword. It also marked the moment when a best-selling novel by a woman was connected with American politics, for Lincoln's legendary statement, even though it was a mere diplomatic language, indicated that he admitted the influence of women on the nation in its time of crisis. More than likely, Stowe referred to the problem of slavery in this interview (F. Wilson 484-85; Fields, *Life and Letters* 262). It was on the New Year Day of 1863, only a couple of months later, that the president finally issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

It is a well-known fact that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been neglected for a long time as a work of political propaganda. It was forbidden—especially in the South—that women should go beyond their domestic sphere and talk about political matters in public. George Holmes, a contemporary southern critic, attacked women like Stowe who meddled in public affairs, calling them "diaper diplomatists" and "wet-nurse politicians" (7-8). It might also be true, however, that her excessive emphasis upon domesticity led to the underestimation of the novel, as Carl Van Doren's comment typifies in the

following: “Leave out the merely domestic elements of the book . . . and little remains” (qtd. in Sundquist, Introduction 2). To turn it around, these contradictory responses suggest that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* could have an impact upon both the women’s domestic sphere and the men’s public sphere. It is indeed in the admixture of the two worlds that the novel’s mysterious charm and success lie.

In the Victorian era when the private sphere of home and the outer space of politics and business were sharply divided and when women were under social restrictions on speaking in public, how could Stowe achieve the feat of combining these two? It was Christianity based on Christ’s love of the New Testament that she employed as an effective device for uniting the separate spaces. Christianity was the strongest spiritual prop for Stowe in order to transcend the difference in economic systems between the North and the South, to dissolve the color line of race, and to overcome the gender-based demarcation of society. This matter is reinforced by the following three observations: Josephine Donovan says, “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* cannot be understood without an appreciation of its profound religious and ethical grasp” (Uncle Tom’s 10); Heinrich Heine compares the evocative power of the novel to that of the Bible (C. Warner 71); and Jean Yellin, though admitting its diversity and complexity, asserts that the story is “primarily a Christian novel” (“Doing It Herself” 85). When Stowe herself attributes its authorship to God (Sundquist, Introduction 5-6), she expresses not only the humbleness that a woman writer often feels obliged to show in taking up her pen (Showalter, *Sister’s Choice* 9-10), but the fact that the spirit of Christianity *is* the backbone of the story.

How does Stowe, then, combine the political matter and domesticity? Moreover, in what way does Christianity serve to overcome the greatest crisis in mid-nineteenth-century America, slavery? By focusing on these points, this chapter examines some of what *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has achieved.

2. Home as a Heavenly Mansion

First of all, slavery was perceived as a religious sin rather than as a social evil by Stowe, whose father was a minister who had inherited the traditional New England Calvinism. Many men in Stowe’s family became clergymen and she herself married a Calvinist minister. The perception

indicates that slavery is not merely a deviation from the doctrine of equality of men before God, but a wicked serpent creeping into the “Edenic home” (G. Brown 21), or Satan destroying the home. In order to comprehend this, it would be helpful to briefly look over the social change surrounding women and the Puritanical climate in the nineteenth century when Stowe grew up.

As Barbara Welter suggests in her notable study, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” the home was severed from the place of work and sharply separated from the public space in the mid-nineteenth century, from the rapid progression of the industrial revolution. This involved the division of men’s and women’s spheres more than the distinction between the area of work and that of rest. Men as the patriarchs supported their families, with a concentration on economic activities outside, while the burden of managing all the household matters rested solely on the women at home. Conversely mothers were mainly expected to heal and purify the souls of men exhausted and defiled by the profit-seeking business world. The rapidly changing social circumstances caused by industrialization and the emergence of an urban life susceptible to the market economy gave a new meaning to the home as an unchangeable and steady locus (Kimball 83).

According to Colleen McDannell, Puritans had traditionally emphasized religious education at home, for which mothers as well as fathers were responsible, and this stress on the domestic guidance led to the evangelicalism chiefly directed by women in the Victorian era (5). Gayle Kimball also suggests a relationship between the family ties in Puritans and the “feminization of religion” in the nineteenth century (29-30). Such a close connection between the family and the Puritan religion had probably brought about the idea of the sacredness of home through the cult of domesticity. The sanctification of home was tantamount to that of the mother who presided over it. Home became, thus, a small church and the mother who managed it began to assume the role of a minister who guided the souls of her family congregation.

Behind the fervent Victorian idealization of home lay a woman’s zeal for improving her social status. In the “sentimental novels” published one after another in this period, the home was compared to the heavenly mansion (Tompkins 141) and to decorate it meant ornamenting its counterpart above. Accordingly, a woman was represented as an “angel” who embodied the ideal Christian virtues. Stowe also attempted to raise the woman’s position

by employing the metaphor of the home as a sacred place as other female writers did, but she surpassed them in the strategic use of the metaphor as a means of surmounting the racial barrier. By presenting the analogy between the home of the “white” and that of the “black,” she tries to impress upon the reader the fact that the black people are human beings just as whites are, and thereby reveals the injustice of slavery.

The dwelling of Uncle Tom who manages Shelby’s farm as slave overseer, for instance, is a small log cabin, and yet a close reading of its description proves that it is given the image of a middle-class home. Though consisting of only one room, the cabin is partitioned into several corners according to their uses: a place for a kitchen that centered on the hearth, a corner where stood a bed, “covered neatly with a snowy spread” (67), and another corner covered with a piece of carpet that served as a “parlor.” It is Aunt Chloe, Tom’s wife, a cheerful and proud cook, who keeps the whole space of the establishment together with motherly love. This home presents a place filled with happiness where everything is kept in such peaceful order that even the young master of the Shelbys frequently wants to visit it.

The introduction to Uncle Tom’s cabin in Chapter 4 begins with a warm pastoral scene of a family dinner, and concludes with the religious sight of Tom’s prayer to God:

Nothing could exceed the touching simplicity, the child-like earnestness, of his prayer, enriched with the language of Scripture And so much did his prayer always work on the devotional feelings of his audiences, that there seemed often a danger that it would be lost altogether in the abundance of the responses which broke out everywhere around him. (79)

Tom’s cabin is nothing less than a small church and a miniature of the heavenly mansion except for the fact that its residents are slaves. However, we readers know that this delightful scene of a family will not go on forever, for we have witnessed the scene, in the opening of the novel, in which the business contract of Tom’s sale had been made between his master and Mr. Haley, a slave trader. By juxtaposing the scene of the slave trade in the house of Mr. Shelby and that of Tom’s happy family, Stowe conjures an image of slavery as an ominous snake creeping into a paradise—or as Satan—which

destroys a sacred family. Slavery was, as it were, the original sin to her that America had inherited (Douglas 23).

It was a widely accepted rhetoric in the nineteenth century to describe home as a sacred sphere, and Stowe applied it to the home of the black family and tried to expose the cruelty of slavery by presenting a vivid picture of how it would destroy the blessed domain. To be sure, it was not only Stowe who employed the analogy of home, but the commercial success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* undoubtedly owes much to this rhetorical strategy. She had probably recognized its effect from the painful experience of losing her dear son, Charles, who died of cholera. As the author herself wrote to her acquaintance in a letter, the deep sorrow and affliction she had suffered in the death of her infant child helped her to understand the agonies that a slave woman would undergo when torn apart from her small child (C. Foster 27). Stowe might have noticed through the experience that the analogy of a family separation could be an effective device for making the white reader take slaves' suffering to the heart, since a death in the family was a common incident in the nineteenth century (Fisher, *Hard Facts* 109). *Uncle Tom's Cabin* thus contains so many scenes of separation between mothers and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, that Philip Fisher calls it an "anthology of partings" (*Hard Facts* 107).

The most impressive of such scenes is obviously that of a mother and her child. Eliza, the body servant to Mrs. Shelby, who is relatively well treated in the house, decides to run away with her son—despite all the possible dangers lying in the way—when she learns that he will be sold. At the critical moment of being caught by the slave trader, she jumps into the Ohio River and manages to cross it by leaping from a raft of ice onto another. This narrow escape of Eliza, being one of the climactic scenes of the story and the one most frequently used for commercial purposes, signifies a symbol of motherly love. Motherhood, as a "natural" feeling universally seen in human beings, offered Stowe a means to transcend the color line.² It also meant unconditional love akin to Christ's love. Eliza's success in crossing the Ohio River represents the victory of a brave slave woman and, at the same time, the victory of a mother and a Christian.

Stowe reinforces the power and sacredness of motherhood by making the happy ending of Eliza in contrast with the pathetic fates of the slave women in the Deep South. For example, there is Prue, who was unable to

protect her last child, and who then became a drunkard and was killed in the end by heavy whipping. Moreover, there is Cassy, who had killed her own baby by poisoning him with laudanum, so that he would not live a slave life like his mother. Stowe thus conjures up a picture of the demonic force of slavery inflicted upon the inviolable sphere of the mother and child, and thereby evokes the reader's sympathy for slaves.

Another analogy that Stowe employs to impress the horror of slavery is one that involves marriage. To Christians, a marriage usually meant a sacred vow between a man and a woman before God, but it signaled one more implication to Puritans. As the family was more and more idealized, marriage became a major metaphor that indicated the relationship between man and God (Kimball 30). Jonathan Edwards, the central leader of the Great Awakening, likens the matrimonial faith to a marriage of one's soul to Christ, saying, "believing is to accept Christ as her bridegroom" (Greven 127). Stowe also regards marriage as a symbol of a union with Christ (Kimball 75). She makes Tom speak that he will not be away from the deathbed of Eva, the little Christian, so as to see the bridegroom coming: "you know there must be somebody watchin' for the bridegroom" (425).

It is sacrilegious enough to Stowe that a holy matrimony is likely to be destroyed at any time by the slaveholder. However, the coerced dissolution of the conjugal ties of slaves contains one more inhumane element—sexual abuse. She emphasizes this subject as the dark factor that haunts the marriage of slaves. The couple, George Harris, a handsome and talented mulatto, and the beautiful and pious Eliza, illustrates this particular dark shadow that followed a slave family. George was a solitary child, as he had been torn away from his family members one after another; subsequently he then found solace and hope when he married Eliza. However, his ingenuity manifested at the factory, where he worked, caused the jealousy of his master and he was shifted from factory working to the hardest farm labor. The master even prohibited him from seeing his wife and son, and ordered him to marry another black woman and to live together with her in the cabin near the farmhouse. Although Eliza protests against this cruel treatment, by saying, "Why—but you were married to me, by the minister, as much as if you'd been a white man!" (63), she has to recognize that there can be no legal marriage for blacks under slavery and that their sexuality is controlled by whites. It is also true of Tom and Chloe. Even Mr. Shelby, a relatively

generous slaveholder, hints at Tom and Chloe having a new spouse respectively after they part from each other. Though Mrs. Shelby insists that the marriage of black people should be as sacred as that of whites, her strong protest poses the reverse reality to the reader.

As Harriet Jacobs reveals in her slave narrative, sexual abuse is a serious issue that frightened female slaves (See Chapter 12). Unlike Jacobs, however, Stowe never directly deals with the issue; she only suggests it in the lustful expression of the slave trader or in the stories that her minor characters narrate as their past experiences. Mary Chesnut, the wife of a wealthy southern planter, criticizes the weakness of Stowe's insight concerning slavery with this point: "Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot. She makes Legree a bachelor" (168). Chesnut suggests, by making the cruel slaveholder in New Orleans, Simon Legree, a bachelor, Stowe was unable to describe the darkest spot of the southern institution; thus, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fails to describe the suffering that the male planter's sexual indulgence brings to his wife and daughters. It is true that the novel lacks the perspective of the situation in which the plantation mistress was placed, but it shows, on the other hand, sincere sympathy for black women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation, the inevitable condition of female slaves that Chesnut did not seem to acknowledge well. While the sexual abuse was an unspeakable matter to the "genteel" women in the Victorian era that idealized the home, Stowe could manage to expose the deception of the dominant white society that prevaricates the double standard by saying that blacks are different. As Joan Hedrick points out in her biography of Stowe, it was her political achievement that she made the subjectivity of black people visible to Americans despite the fact that her perspective was bound to "a white woman's consciousness" (210).

Stowe thus reveals the injustice and cruelty of slavery through the analogy between the political issue and the home, and yet it is merely the first step for her to evoke the reader's moral emotions. The central problem lies in the question of how to confront the reason that is supposed to be the men's domain; specifically, how to overcome the law of the male world that legalizes slaves as property.

3. The Heavenly Law versus the Secular Law

Stowe had been against slavery like her father Lyman and many of her siblings, but she was not a radical abolitionist, and had taken some distance from the antislavery movement (Kimball 139). However, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 no longer allowed Northerners to be bystanders, with regard to slavery as an evil institution peculiar to the South, since the law obligated them to send fugitive slaves back to their masters. Humane actions to help runaways by sheltering and giving food to them became legal crimes. The intellectuals of New England were especially shocked by the passing of the law. At this very time, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had been apathetic to any organized social movement, believing that reforms should be launched by individuals, began to make public speeches against slavery (Richardson 495-99; Collison 180-83). Stowe was one of those literary people who were indignant at the 1850 law. When urged by her brother Edward and his wife, a passionate abolitionist couple, to write an antislavery story, using her literary talent, Stowe was believed to have declared, "I will if I live" (E. Wilson 31). This led to the serialization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *Era*, an antislavery weekly paper (31).

The political problem that Stowe first encountered in writing an antislavery story was the property law on which American democracy was based. This was because both southern state laws and the Constitution of the United States admitted black slaves as chattel, though in an ambiguous way (Reynolds 50-51); therefore, an objection to slavery meant a collision with the Constitution that guaranteed this private property. William Garrison, a radical abolitionist, publicly burned a copy of the Constitution which he believed supported slavery (Reynolds 78). Trespassing a national law was a crime that would bring about social upheavals, whereas it was a crime against personal conscience not to rescue a poor desperate slave. This contradiction between the duty to preserve social rules and the humanitarian cause also made Lincoln, who was confronting the difficult situation of the Civil War, postpone the Emancipation Proclamation until January 1863 (Sundquist, Introduction 19-20). In the early 1850s, when the dispute over slavery reached its climax and a presentiment of a big war was felt everywhere, Stowe presented in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the three ways to overcome the crisis: 1) to fight against the evil institution, even resorting to

violence, which was embodied in George; 2) civil disobedience, as displayed by Mr. and Mrs. Bird; and 3) the philanthropic martyrdom of Tom.

The discussion concerning the appropriateness of the slaves' escape between George Harris, a mulatto runaway, and his former employer Wilson discloses one of Stowe's deepest thoughts on slavery. The good-natured factory owner sympathizes with wretched slaves and yet feels something wrong in George's traveling, disguised as a white gentleman, for freedom, and chides him for "[breaking] the laws of your country!" (185) To this George retorts:

My country again! Mr. Wilson, *you* have a country; but what country have *I*, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don't make them, —we don't consent to them, —we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven't I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches? Don't you tell us all, once a year, that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed? Can't a fellow think, that hears such things? (185)

It is evident here that George implies the democratic principle America guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence and annually extolled on the Fourth of July. Referring to the core phrase of the declaration, "the governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed," he tries to nullify the laws that his people did not consent to, and he even suggests a revolutionary battle:

Do you call these the laws of *my* country? Sir, I haven't any country, anymore than I have any father. . . . I don't want anything of *your* country, except to be let alone, —to go peaceably out of it But if any man tries to stop me . . . I'll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it; if it was right for them, it is right for me! (187)

Invalidating the national laws on grounds of the ideal of the Republic, George aims to justify his own truculent resistance, likening it to the American Revolution. Notably, it might be significant that he is called

George, which is the name of the representative founding father (George Washington). The arguments developed here form a superb abolitionist discourse comparable to the speech entitled “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” given by the black antislavery leader, Frederick Douglass.³

The clash of views between Bird, a senator who voted for the Fugitive Slave Law, and his wife and their consequent actions indicate another possibility that American citizens can seek. The very domestic Mrs. Bird, with an accusing tone, unusually questions her husband, who is back from the house of the state that had just passed the law to preserve the Union: “I heard they were talking of some such law, but I didn’t think any Christian legislature would pass it!” (142) Her words perhaps convey Stowe’s feelings when the law passed the Congress. Mr. Bird, affected by her persuasion based on humane sentiments, is determined to help Eliza escape.

It was a natural result of following the emotional drive inherent in every man to rescue a poorly distressed being. It meant a triumph of a woman’s heart that responds to personal and tangible afflictions with sympathetic emotions over the male politics which would argue slavery in an abstract way with reason in order to protect the “great public interests.” This is suggested in Mr. Bird’s following defense of the law: “we mustn’t suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it’s a matter of private feeling, —there are great public interests involved . . . we must put aside our private feelings” (144). After showing how excellent and eloquent Mr. Bird was in arguing for the law, Stowe describes the process of how his heart comes to work better than his head by the appearance of Eliza and her son. She presents this description with the following: “The magic of the real presence of distress, —the imploring human eye, the frail, trembling human hand, the despairing appeal of helpless agony, —these he had never tried. He had never thought that a fugitive might be a hapless mother, a defenseless child” (156). He is positively involved in sending the fugitive mother and son to a safe place, violating the very law that he had succeeded in passing. This scene, which George Sand calls a “charming episode” (3), shares the idea of nonviolent resistance that Henry David Thoreau advocates in “Civil Disobedience” (1849).

The conflict between legal duty and private conscience converges into that of the secular and heavenly laws to Stowe, a New England Christian writer. The third means Tom resorts to suggests a life that observes the latter.

This implies the ultimate path that a slave could choose to transcend both the subversive action with violence and the antisocial behavior of violating the laws. It is a martyr's way of life based on the love of the New Testament that commands, "Love thy enemy." Tom's absolute denial of violence is the opposite behavior of George, who is secretly carrying two pistols and a bowie-knife inside his overcoat, so that he can use them to kill his pursuers to protect himself and his family. George's attitude reflects the discourse of the radical abolitionists of the day such as Theodore Parker, who compared slave hunters to hungry wolves, as he asserted in "The Function of Conscience" published in 1850 that slaves might use any means to escape from their ferocious fangs (qtd. in Bellin 277).

Admitting to some extent the weapons that George might use for freedom, Stowe as a Christian seemed to feel uneasy to the last to allow violence for the sake of the liberation of slaves. It is for this reason that she manages to make George's shooting give no fatal injury to Tom Loker, his hunter in pursuit of a reward, and even has him being nursed and reformed in order to appease the violence that George has used. She also sets rebellious George in a religious Quaker family who live by absolute pacifism and completes his conversion to Christianity before sending him to Canada, the final destination.

It is evident that the three possibilities Stowe shows for dissolving slavery are more or less based on the faith in Christianity. The third way Uncle Tom takes represents an arena in which it is tested in its ultimate form. The martyr image of Tom that evokes that of Christ, along with the angel figure of the little girl, Eva, seems to be too unrealistic to the present reader to accept as it is. Tom's absolute denial of violence and faithfulness to his master(s), above all, became the object of severe criticism of later black writers. As Elizabeth Ammons suggests, Tom as well as Eva should be regarded as "a type of Christ" rather than as a realistic person ("Heroines" 169). It can be said that Stowe had examined in the extreme condition of slavery how the New Testament core imperative, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," could be realized. It was for her own faith as well. In this sense, Toni Morrison is right when she says, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was [not] written for Uncle Tom" (*Playing in the Dark* 16-17).

There must have been a purpose to raise the status of blacks scourged and downtrodden in romanticizing Tom as an ideal Christian, and yet this

contains complex and troublesome matters. While the emphasis on Tom's docility and passivity has the effect on rectifying the "widespread racist categorization of blacks as brutes" (Ammons, "Stowe's Dream" 167-68), it is a double-edged sword. In this regard, it in fact helped to stabilize the image of meek blacks who were quite convenient for the ruling whites to control. On the other hand, it is true that Stowe could present the first "black Christ" in American literature by attaching a Christ-like image to Tom.⁴ This black Christ, however, could not save a slave who was being devoured by a wolf. Stowe's ultimate salvation was meant to be in the other world after all.

4. Liquidation by the Heavenly Law

If Tom is a representative type of an idealized Christian, then Augustine St. Clare represents a skeptical intellectual. As Leslie Fiedler remarks, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is far more multifaceted and complicated than the masses believe it to be (264), and one of the main factors that make the story diverse and complex is the creation of the figure of St. Clare. In him all possible aspects of slavery are closely examined and deeply explored. His superb intelligence and insight expose the truth behind the institution: racial prejudice against the blacks of the northern people is as strong as—or even stronger than—that of their counterparts in the South; also, the system of exploitation of the working-class people in the industrialized North is no better than southern slavery. The black slavery justified by the fiction of "racial difference" is nothing but the cruel law of the jungle maintained by the selfish avidity of the stronger people. The discussion on slavery between St. Clare and his cousin Ophelia shows the best example of Stowe's antislavery discourse.

As I have mentioned earlier, a woman who interfered with politics was likely to be derided as a "diaper diplomatist" or labeled a "bluestocking." Stowe lets St. Clare, instead of Ophelia, thoroughly state the wrongs of slavery in order to avoid, or at least appease, the (male) attacks against female participation in political discussions. To some extent, he also talks for Stowe and he is indeed a very eloquent spokesman for her.

However, the core of the story about this wealthy slaveholder lies in his conversion to Christianity rather than in his voluble arguments. It can be even more important than the story of the martyrdom of Eva or Tom. The

most frightening thing to Stowe about the expansion of slavery in the 1850s was not so much the existence of wicked slaveholders like Legree as the fact that sensible intelligent people like St. Clare connived at what was going on under the institution. What she was most concerned with when writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seemed to be the awakening of those seemingly indifferent, "lazy" intellectuals.

St. Clare is a kind of person, as he himself admits, who is "up to heaven's gate in theory, down in earth's dust in practice" (344). While thoroughly acknowledging the wretchedness and injustice of slavery, he indulges in the comfort and luxury of his aristocratic life based on slavery. This kind of inaction is also seen in his attitude toward Dinah's cooking. He justifies his resignation of governing Dinah, by saying that if one can enjoy a fine dinner at the end, one had better not see the kitchen in utter chaos, unsanitariness, and waste. It is his principle to endure the inconvenience of disorder, instead of forcing his slaves to work for him by means of whipping, in order to save his moral conscience. St. Clare's "let-alone" policy, after all, means non-commitment to others, as is seen in his response to the misery of a poor slave, Prue, who died in poverty and despair. He refuses his cousin's demand for rescuing her on these two grounds: 1) he is not to blame for her misery, and 2) he cannot interfere with someone else's "property." He concludes his argument by saying, "The best we can do is to shut our eyes and ears, and let it alone. It's the only resource left us" (328). St. Clare's attitude can be reduced to the policy: "See no evil; hear no evil, speak no evil."

Little Eva's death drives him to realize that such an attitude of not committing to others' trouble leads to a religious sin. When he expresses his agonies at the apparent signs of her daughter's impending death, she tries to make him understand that slave mothers like Prue suffer as much as he does when they are deprived of their children:

Poor old Prue's child was all that she had, —and yet she had to hear it crying, and she couldn't help it! Papa, these poor creatures love their children as much as you do me. O! do something for them! There's poor Mammy loves her children; I've seen her cry when she talked about them. And Tom loves his children; and it's dreadful, papa, that such things are happening, all the time! (403)

After the loss of his daughter, St. Clare begins to read the Bible seriously and arduously as if he tried to understand her teaching. He realizes at last that doing nothing does not mean avoiding evil, but committing sin, as he comes across the following verse in the Book of Matthew which tells of the last judgment:

Then shall the king say unto him on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, an[d] ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they answer unto Him, Lord when saw we thee [a] hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he say unto them, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me. (448)

St. Clare acknowledges that the inaction of neglecting the suffering people deserves the eternal fire. The image of God in the last judgment Stowe presents here is not the vengeful god Jonathan Edwards, the New England religious leader, pictured, but rather a rewarding god who liquidates all the imbalance and injustice of the secular world after long torment. It is in this sense that St. Clare exclaims, “What a sublime conception is that of a last judgment!” (450) and firmly declares that one should “[throw] the whole weight of his being against this monstrous system of injustice . . . and, if need be, sacrificing himself in the battle” (451). And with his eyes opening to the heavenly law, he finally overcomes the skepticism that had brought his inaction of many years.

However, his conversion seems too late, for he is killed before he takes any action for the poor slaves. Although this prolonged initiation into Christian life results in driving his slaves to a much crueler destiny, Stowe seems to forgive him. On his deathbed, he cries, “[My mind] is coming Home, at last!” (456); it is evident that the “home” means the heavenly home. Tom inherits St. Clare’s heroic determination to “fight against slavery, even sacrificing himself.” The figure of being whipped to death in order to save the weak fellow dramatizes the moment when an entirely passive attitude transforms into the most glorious heroism. When he says that, although his

body can be purchased, nobody can buy his soul and own it because it belongs to God, Tom invalidates the slavery discourse of the ownership of human chattel, by giving priority to his fidelity to God over that to his master in this world. Stowe envisions her ideal Christian in Tom, who transcends secular ownership by his unshakable loyalty to God.

To follow the heavenly law means to Tom, after all, to wait for the final judgment after death, but it entails a collateral chain of grace. Just as Eva's death led St. Clare to conversion, Tom's martyrdom awakens soft humane feelings that had been lying dormant in Cassy, opens the blind eyes of the slave heads, Sambo and Quimbo, to the gospel of Jesus, and finally urges young George of the Shelbys on to liberate his slaves. It was this power of influence, in fact, that Stowe believed in. It is also because of his firm belief in this power that George Shelby makes Uncle Tom's cabin "a memorial" for everyone "to follow in his steps" and to become an honest and faithful Christian like Tom (617). George's emancipation of his slaves is an example that Stowe presented for America to follow and his "emancipation proclamation" anticipated Lincoln's in 1863, a decade later.

5. A Revolution by Sentimentality

St. Clare's death before carrying out the good he had meant to do is Stowe's literary device for sending Tom further down to Legree's plantation, but it also reflects the author's idea that it is more exigent for him to awaken to the heavenly law than to act according to it. As we have seen, she found the social crisis about slavery in the idleness of intellectuals who did nothing to reform it, considering it as an evil system, rather than the cruel acts of individual slaveholders. I have already mentioned that the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law horrified the northern literati including Stowe, which led her to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The most shocking incident was that Daniel Webster, the star politician in New England, who was regarded as a strong supporter of American democracy, voted for the law (Reynolds 6-7). It gave them proof that even a sensible person with a broad range of knowledge approved of such an inhuman law as the Fugitive Slave Law for the sake of "political compromise" or "public interests"—to use Mr. Bird's words. This must have heightened Stowe's sense of crisis in the two ways: the slackened sensibility of Americans to the suffering of the oppressed and the

precariousness of male politics.

Fisher explains that the function of “sentiments” is to make one return from inhumanity back to the original humanity by evoking humane feelings that should be natural to him or her (*Hard Facts* 99-100). In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Stowe attempts to summon Americans’ true emotions by means of this sentimental function, thereby restoring them to a normal humanity. For this purpose she tries in the novel to induce the reader’s tears in the recurrent maudlin depictions of family separation. To her, “tears” were no sign of pity or weakness, but a literary device for restoring readers to the place where they should be. Furthermore, she also saw “tears” as a powerful weapon to return the America that was deviated from the ideal republic to a true democratic nation, moving them by the power of sentiments to reform the inhumane system that oppresses black people.

Tears also signify her vexation at as well as criticism of male public activities that lack human feelings. For example, Mr. Shelby has sold his old faithful servant, Tom, and covered his “conscience” by evading the very scene of Tom’s being taken from the plantation. Additionally, Mr. Bird votes for the clearly inhuman law under the name of public interests, and St. Clare does nothing for the sake of slaves while he has both the financial power and intelligence to rescue them. The patriarchal acts by these male characters are rectified as well as undermined by the protests of their wives and daughters, who shed sympathetic tears for these suffering people. Finally, there is Stowe’s denunciation of the inability of the “male leaders” to govern the nation during its utmost crisis.

It is not limited to those men engaged in politics and the economy who close their eyes and ears to an individual’s anguish. Churches dominated by male ministers did not oppose slavery, either, for fear their congregation should leave (McDannell 48-49). Actually, there were many pastors who owned slaves and made use of the Bible to support slavery. Stowe’s severe criticism of such clergymen and churches are often seen in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Moreover, instead of the male-centered church that cannot guide people’s souls, she offers a religious education at the “small church” of the mother-centered home, which has the Bible at its core. Both Eva and Tom are devout readers of the Bible and it is also by reading the holy document in earnest that St. Clare, a skeptic, finally converts to Christianity. It is important that both Eva and Tom are unlearned in written language like little

children, for it symbolizes that the Bible is not a possession of only theologians and intellectuals, but one open to everybody.

This kind of advocacy of Bible-centered evangelical religion meant Stowe's independence from her father's religion. Stowe presents a salvation through love in the New Testament that is open to everybody who has a feeling heart. This is in contrast to the conventional Calvinist theology of Lyman's, which emphasizes the sinfulness of human beings and regulates severe and complex rules for the passage to redemption. She believed that women with such feelings would be able to reform America through their sentimental influence. Although Stowe's religion was limited to Christianity and the female activities she approved of were confined in the home, it is true that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* produced within this demarcation could have political impact beyond the home.

Chapter 4

Uncle Tom's Cabin and Slave Narratives

1. Antislavery Discourses in the 1850s

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the first successful novel in the United States that dealt with slavery as the main subject. However, antislavery discourses began much earlier in the Revolutionary Era. As the Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson suggests, it was an already common rhetoric then to compare colonial Americans oppressed by the British monarchy to slaves. Furthermore, the image of the relationship between the slave and the master was to be used in the women's rights movement, as well as in the laborers' protests against capitalists. However, it had the most direct influence on the antislavery cause.

During the period from the 1820s, when the antislavery movement began to be organized, to the 1850s, when the North-South conflict became increasingly intensified, arguments over slavery were expressed in various forms from radical abolitionism to gradual emancipation and to proslavery debates. Furthermore, the thoughts and theories upon which those arguments were grounded were also diverse—the ideology of the republic and of the True Womanhood of the Victorian era, the philanthropic spirit of Christianity, the enlightenment philosophy based on natural rights¹, the Bible hermeneutics, or racist views based on ethnology or phrenology. It is most probable that people of the day were familiar with such arguments through speeches, lectures, newspapers, magazines, letters, pamphlets, and books. Since the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, above all, the slavery issue had evoked a nationwide discussion (Hedrick 194, 208). It can be said that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* poured new fuel into this heated debate.

By 1852, when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published, many white abolitionists expressed their views against slavery. William Lloyd Garrison, one of the most radical abolitionists, started *The Liberator* in 1831 through which he developed antislavery arguments based on Christian morality. Lydia Maria Child, who had criticized America's unjust treatment of

“Indians” in *Hobomok*, condemned American slavery as an entirely inhuman system in her 1832 *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, for which she was ostracized from the genteel Boston society (Levine, “Lydia Maria Child” 274). The sanctions she received signified punishment for female meddling in male political discussions as well as warnings against radical abolitionist opinions. It was not only men who opposed to women’s public speaking but some women also denied female presence in a promiscuous public space. In the late 1830s, Stowe’s sister Catharine Beecher denounced the Grimké sisters who openly advocated rights of African Americans and women.

It was not white abolitionists alone, but black activists and ex-slaves who experienced and witnessed slavery as well, who joined this national discussion. The latter group reinforced white antislavery arguments and offered their own stories, by giving lectures, contributing articles to newspapers and magazines, and publishing books called “slave narratives” that recorded their life as a slave. According to Ann Taves, more than 130 autobiographical narratives were written by African Americans before 1865 (210), and it is very probable that Stowe had read many of those published in the antebellum era, especially in the 1840s, such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), *The Life of Josiah Henson* (1849), and *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849-50). If antislavery discourses had reflected more or less the preceding debates expressed in various media, it might be safe to say that Stowe had touched the accumulative antislavery heritage behind those slave narratives.

African Americans’ slave narratives are written from their own perspective stemming from the actual experience of having lived as a slave, employing at times the white abolitionist discourses, and at other times rectifying and undermining them. According to Robert Levine, white abolitionists tend to emphasize the need to abolish slavery itself, while black ones require to redress racial discrimination as well as to exterminate the institution (“Resistance and Reform” 421). Black fugitives knew well that there was racial prejudice beneath the slavery system and that elimination of the institution alone would not resolve the unjust oppression of the black race.

As one of the representatives of twentieth-century black writers in America, W. E. B. Du Bois insisted that it would not be possible to undermine the “plantation legend” without reading the “slave

autobiographies” (Blight, “A Psalm of Freedom” 15), slave narratives by African Americans expose what white antislavery writers could not describe or silence, and redefine the meaning of slavery from within. In this respect re-reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in light of slave narratives leads to a deeper understanding of the diverse problems of slavery, as well as to a more clear definition of the merits and limitations of the novel.

2. Colonization and Racial Prejudice

Frederick Douglass, one of the greatest black leaders in the abolitionist movement, for the most part, welcomed *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that had caused a nationwide sensation (Stephens 143-44). He probably hoped that the novel would arouse white readers’ interest in oppressed slaves and shed light on the increasingly aggravated slavery-related problems ever since the Great Compromise of 1850. In fact, the social response to the antislavery fiction was great enough to make black leaders in the North optimistic again. In the national convention of African Americans held in 1853 that Douglass presided over, they made a statement that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* would remove the boundary that “long divided the sympathies of one class of the American people from another” and mark the first step toward “human brotherhood” (Levine, *Clotel* 487).

Douglass, however, did not approve of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* wholeheartedly. His chief criticism was directed at the conclusion where Stowe sends almost all the living black characters out of the States for Africa (Hedrick 235). Having escaped successfully to Canada and educated himself for years in France, George Harris is now sailing with his family for Liberia which he fixes as “his home country.” Topsy, who was adopted by Ophelia and received high education in New England, is about to leave for Africa as a missionary to educate “the children of her own country” (612). It is also suggested that even Cassy’s son, whom she has found after her long hard search, will sail for Africa following his mother. Insofar as we see this conclusion, we cannot help suspecting that Stowe is envisioning a “white America” without black people.

It is natural that Douglass vehemently reacted against such a vision that estranges blacks born in America. Being surprised at the unexpected fierce protest from African Americans, Stowe regretted her setting of

colonization of the black characters at the end of the novel, and sent a letter to Douglass, saying that she would willingly change the conclusive part if she could (Step 141).² Based on this episode, some critics regard her colonizationist description as a writing without much thought (Gossett 70). However, we need to examine the racial discourses permeated in American society by the 1850s before making our conclusion in this respect, because it is probable that Stowe had internalized such discourses.

Colonizing free blacks out of America could be one of the antislavery ideas in that it would make possible a nation-building led by them, and some black leaders endorsed this idea. However, Douglass and other black activists were strongly opposed to the colonization movement because of the racism latent in it. It was in 1816 soon after the end of the War of 1812 (1812-1814) that the American Colonization Society was established against the background of white people's anxiety caused by a dilemma of what to do with freed black people, that is, whether to incorporate them into the white America after the emancipation. The dominant white society was afraid of black riots and crossbreeding.

Thomas Jefferson, who stipulated the ideal of the new republic in the Declaration of Independence, expressed a similar uneasiness about the racial coexistence in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Although owning over two hundred slaves at the most, he was basically opposed to slavery, believing that gradual emancipation might be the best and that slavery would be resolved by sending freed slaves to a country out of America after giving them some education. He proposes as a politician in *Notes* to replace black slaves with white immigrants to supplement a labor shortage after the colonization (145). The future republic Jefferson envisioned was a white America, similar to that Stowe presents in the ending of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

It seems that Jefferson could not delineate a peaceful society where whites and blacks would live together as equal citizens and he presents a grim picture of carnage that coexistence of the two races will end up with:

Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of

the one or the other race. (*Notes* 145)

There are two major reasons here for his rejecting the idea of coexistence: historical circumstances and racial differences that “nature” has made. It is the latter element, the biological differences, that he could not sweep away to the end. He further details the racial difference in *Notes*: white complexion has a good appearance and shows rich expression, while the black complexion in contrast lacks beauty and expression. The superiority of the white complexion is exemplified by the fact that black men prefer white women to black ones, just as a male orangutan likes a black woman better than a female of his own species.³ Jefferson relates this racial difference in appearance to that of intellectual faculties. The only thing in which black people are superior to whites is music, but their music is very simple, and when it comes to a more complicated and longer melody, they are incompetent. As for literature, Jefferson affirms that they have created no piece of work deserving the name.

This deficiency in black people’s talents, Jefferson further confirms, is not ascribed to the circumstances they have been put in, because white slaves in the ancient Rome produced excellent art under the same condition of bondage. Jefferson’s argument here reveals his belief in white supremacy and “Negrophobia,” the fear that the whites will be tainted by “miscegenation,” as is implied in the account of black sexual preference. We must note that his discourse suggests that miscegenation occurs from the sexual desire of the inferior for the superior, and not in the reverse way.

Jefferson’s racial views were, in fact, a refutation to those of a French naturalist, Comte de Buffon, who asserted that the inferior climate on the New Continent would produce inferior beings, listing up “Indians” as an example, and even suggested that Europeans who migrated there would follow their fate (Shuffleton xxii-xxiii). To polemicize against Buffon’s ideas, Jefferson emphasized the abundance of nature and superiority of native Americans who would testify to the good chance that Americans would build a great civilization. He praises the eloquence of Indians in *Notes*, equating it with that of famous Roman orators (66-67), thereby guaranteeing their inherent intelligence. However, he labels African Americans as species of innate inferiority on the grounds of racial difference. He applies, as it were, “environment” to Indians, while attributing the low state of blacks to “nature.”

Buffon presented a new vision of the world where animals and plants change according to their environment in place of the old one of the fixed world and assumed that human beings evolved from one species (Boulton 477). Accepting Buffon's environmentalist theory to some extent, Jefferson rejected his idea of one origin of mankind (477-78). The hypothesis of man's plural origins was called polygenesis, which became the basis of the ethnography that developed in mid-nineteenth-century America (Horsman 116-57), and scientifically supported slavery and the colonization of blacks.

It was such racial prejudice hidden in the colonization policy or racial discrimination under the guise of science that black abolitionists had to fight against. David Walker who edited *Freedom's Journal*, the first black newspaper in America, sharply accused the racial prejudice latent in the colonization policy in his book published as early as 1829, *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (See Chapter 1). His criticism is focused on the following two points: 1) that colonization is not meant to abolish slavery but to perpetuate it by excluding free blacks from America (71); and 2) that "America is more their country, than it is the [whites']" because blacks have made her rich and prosperous with their "*blood and tears*" (67). Walker regards Jefferson as the source of racial discrimination; he points out the gravity of the fact that the president who framed the ideal democratic nation declared, at the same time, the inferiority of black people, and thoroughly refutes his racial views one by one.

William Wells Brown also highlights the contradiction of the third president of the United States, both the symbol of democracy and the owner of many slaves, and expresses censure and anger against him. He published the novel *Clotel* in 1853, which is regarded as the first novel written by an African American (See Chapter 8). It fictionalized the rumor, whispered among blacks, that Jefferson begot children by his slave, Sally Hemings (Levine, "Cultural and Historical Background" 8-17; Akashi 139-62). Brown attempted to shock American readers by the sensational story in which the popular president who extolled equality of all men had sexual relations with a slave girl and his illegitimate children were sold as "commodity."⁴

The intense fury of both Walker and Brown testifies to the fact that prejudice against black people and the deep chasm between the ideal and the reality were prevalent in American society at that time. Racism was actually rampant also in the northern free states, and racial segregation was carried

out daily in churches and trains (Price and Stewart, "Hosea Easton" 6, 10-25), and blacks were often portrayed in deformed and humiliating manners (Hinks, Introduction xii). In the mid-nineteenth century, when Douglass promoted the antislavery movement, scientific studies, such as phrenology and physiognomy that were to be labelled later as pseudoscience, developed along with the rise of nationalism. This kind of science did not aim at racial discrimination but resulted in proving white supremacy and supporting proslavery discourses. According to Reginald Horsman, even abolitionists in the North were often influenced by such stereotypical views of race (167-77).

The prejudice against black people hidden in the idea of colonization was the reason why Douglass opposed the ending of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, while hailing the novel on the whole. Considering the social situation of the 1850s, a close reading of the novel from the perspective of blacks reveals stereotypical racial views of the time.

3. Black Characters Divided by Complexion

In Stowe's story, full-blooded African Americans are equated to "Africans" even if they were born in America or their ancestors came to America more than a generation before. They are invariably characterized by black skin, "curly hair like wool," "rolling eyes," and cheerful guffaw or obsequious grinning; they are often depicted comically as mimicking white people's gestures and words. Their good cooking and rhythmical wild dancing are lauded as talents peculiar to Africans; their deep affection, religious sensitivity, and obedience are highly evaluated as inherent dispositions. Although Stowe tries to raise their social position by praising their work and talents, the emphasis on their physical and emotional aspects indicates that black people are suited for physical labor, which has nothing to do with intellect (Gossett 73), and is in danger of affirming the status quo (slavery).

Stowe, however, admits that "ignorance" and miserable conditions of African Americans are due to the environment and insists upon the necessity to educate them. Yet she does not seem to believe that education will make them equal to white citizens. If Africans will ever show a "great drama of human improvement," she speaks through St. Clare, it should be "new forms

of art” quite different from the European ones, born out of “their gentleness, their lowly docility of heart, . . . their childlike simplicity of affection, and facility of forgiveness” (275). George Harris reaffirms this idea of different cultures caused by racial differences toward the end of the novel:

To the Anglo-Saxon race has been intrusted the destinies of the world, during its pioneer period of struggle and conflict. To that mission its stern, inflexible, energetic elements, were well adapted; but, as a Christian, I look for another era to arise. . . . I trust that the development of Africa is to be essentially a Christian one. If not a dominant and commanding race, they are, at least, an affectionate, magnanimous, and forgiving one. (610-11)

The discourse that regards the Anglo-Saxon race as an aggressive race ready to conquer the world and feminizes others as passive enough to be controlled by the former used to be repeated to justify the expansionism in antebellum America, especially during the period of the Mexican War and the annexation of Texas (Horsman 208-28). It was a rhetoric often employed to familiarize slavery and racism. This racially biased discourse, on the other hand, caused a fear of the “aggressive” quality in the mixed blood; in other words, it was generally believed that mulattoes instigated and led black rebellions. In Douglass’s slave narrative, Mrs. Freeland, the mother of a planter, curses Douglass as he was taken to a jail after the attempted escape: “*You devil! You yellow devil!* it was you that put it into the heads of Henry and John to run away. But for you, you long-legged mulatto devil, Henry nor John would never have thought of such a thing” (100). As if to placate such fear of black uprising by mulattoes, Stowe sends George to Liberia, making him declare that he sympathizes with “my poor heart-broken mother” rather than with “my father’s race” to whom he was only “a fine dog or horse” (608).

The idea of “racial difference” that seems to lie deep in Stowe’s consciousness is apparently influenced by the theory of plural origins of the humans. It manifests itself most clearly in the different depictions of black characters when she distinguishes unmixed Africans from mixed ones. The stark contrast between the couple of full-blooded Africans, Tom and Chloe, and the couple of mulattoes, George and Eliza, exemplifies this idea. George

with his appearance, almost white, is gifted with the intelligence to invent a machine comparable to Whitney's cotton gin, besides physical beauty, and is able to command perfect English. Likewise, in the description of his mulatto wife, Eliza, not only her beautiful appearance, but her spiritual and moral virtues are little different from white ladies'. She appears as a delicate "lady" with the idealized qualities of True Womanhood of middle-class women in nineteenth-century America; she is described as a noble mother who dares to risk her own life for the sake of her dear child. She is, above all, a pious woman who never forgets to pray to God and tries to reason with her husband against being rebellious and to guide him toward Christian faith.

On the other hand, the depiction of Tom and Chloe, the couple of unmixed Africans, only refers to their black complexion and includes no expression of physical beauty. As if corresponding to this, their English with strong accents is far from perfection. The scene in which Tom is taking from young George basic lessons of how to read and write, or the episode showing Chloe's wrong usage of "*perfectioner's*" (375)—meaning "confectioner's"—, however hard she is corrected, emphasizes their imperfect command of English. It might be significant here to note the fact that being unable to command English language meant losing a claim to citizenship in mid-nineteenth-century America (Maddox 23-24). Moreover, the relationship between Tom and Chloe deviates from the conventional connubial one. It is Tom, not Chloe, who embodies religious piety and faithfulness that were regarded as female virtues; chiding his wife for cursing the slave trader and criticizing Mr. Shelby who had sold him after so many years of faithful devotion to him, Tom gently urges her to pray for them even if they should act against her. In addition, it is Chloe who manages to earn money to purchase her husband back by working for a confectioner's far away from home, when he serves his new master in New Orleans. It is interesting that Tom seems feminized while Chloe defeminized. Although the reversal of gender roles between the two provides a significant prospect in terms of feminist reading, we should remember that this is possible only within the realm of African Americans.

Being house servants of the Shelbys, Chloe and Eliza stand far apart in their characteristics. In the depiction of Chloe, her difference from the white woman is emphasized in contrast to that of Eliza. Moreover, as if the difference in skin color justified her aptitude for domestic drudgery, Stowe

lets Chloe insist that her “great black stumpin hands” are much better suited to do the kitchen work than Mrs. Shelby’s “beautiful white hands o’ yourn with long fingers”; she even adds that God “must have meant *me* to make the de pie-crust, and you to stay in de parlor” (72). The economic activity Chloe has undertaken in a confectionery is therefore a kind of takeover of the responsibility the plantation mistress is unable to perform. Mrs. Shelby, being unable to carry out her promise to repurchase Tom, suggests her earning money by teaching music—one of the few occupations that respectable middle-class women of the time could take, but even the modest suggestion is rejected by her husband as an act of degrading her social status. Chloe’s working out at the confectionery is an alternative to this failed suggestion.

Stowe’s consciousness of racial difference may also be demonstrated in the closing part of the novel where she tries to affirm the capability of the black race, by giving some examples of talented blacks; she clarifies the degree of mixture of African blood of each black person, such as “full black” and “[t]hree-fourths black” (627), while African American authors rarely refer to the degree of blood mixture. The different descriptions of black figures according to the skin color in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was criticized by Garrison, one of the most radical abolitionists in the North. The most scathing criticism came from James Baldwin, a black writer in the twentieth century. He condemned the author of the novel as “cruel” because she endows “white” George and Eliza with beauty, talents, and elegance and lets them escape to Canada, while she gives “black” Tom freedom only by death after long suffering (576-82).⁵ It was perhaps to incite the sympathy of white readers that Stowe made black characters of mixed blood closer to white ones, and it was her conscious strategy to give the jet-black Tom a martyr’s nature; she attempted to raise the black person who was regarded as subhuman to an admirable human being. Still, it cannot be denied that her differentiation between “white” blacks and full-blooded blacks helped to some extent to consolidate the traditionally supposed racial difference and to enforce the proslavery theory. What black writers faced in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was the problem of how to eliminate or preclude the dangerous issue of “racial difference,” while taking advantage of the antislavery discourse in the best-selling book.

4. What Slave Narratives Reveal

Slave narratives take the form of autobiography told in the first person and their authors, ex-slaves, thereby gain the subjectivity of self that white writers, and even radical abolitionists, had never allowed black slaves to have. The voice of black authors undermines the steadfast construction of “racial differences.” Douglass’s 1845 autobiography denies “racial difference” by placing the black protagonist in the mainstream of American culture. The book narrates the rise of its protagonist from a slave, the social and spiritual bottom, to a free man, the master of himself, through self-reliance and self-help. It describes the process of the black hero’s material and spiritual triumph, by using two frameworks of traditional American literature, initiation story and success story. Douglass acquires the power of language by means of his own ingenious device under the state of bondage, succeeds in purchasing his own “time” from his master Hugh for the industrious hard labor, and obtains a job to earn enough money to support his own family like a white man. This plot reflects a story of a self-made man like that of Benjamin Franklin. And the incident in which Douglass fights back at Covey and defeats him, presented as a climax of establishing his manhood, can be read as a rite of passage in an initiation story.

Douglass grew up isolated from his family—he has no knowledge of his father and scant memory of his mother from whom he was torn apart when still a little child. His siblings were also almost strangers to him because of early separation. His story of an orphan who obtains freedom and becomes a patriarch who supports his own family resembles that of George Harris in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*; or Stowe may have found his model in Douglass. However, they are different in their intellectual condition in the beginning: George has literacy or intellectual knowledge from the start as if it were his natural right, whereas Douglass underlines the process of obtaining it. Douglass’s narrative details the process of how he regained the language, of which the slave had been deprived, by means of his wisdom and constant effort. This reveals two things that Stowe could not describe well in her antislavery fiction: 1) intellect symbolized by literacy, which is key to independence, is something not innate but acquired, and 2) slaves’ attaining freedom owes more to their own toiling and endeavor than to whites’ favor and help.

Douglass dramatizes his hard struggle to acquire the language. It starts from the moment, soon after he receives his first instruction from his mistress Sophia Hugh, when her husband vehemently rebukes her behavior and prohibits her from teaching a slave how to read. He introduces in the narrative some impressive devices for educating himself: making hungry neighborhood children his teachers to exchange their “knowledge” with his “bread” that he takes from Hugh’s kitchen; borrowing secretly the spelling book of his young master Tom’s while he is alone in the house and tracing the characters written in it; and purchasing a book of speeches (*The Columbian Orator*) to read it many a time until he learns the speeches by heart. It is significant that Douglass’s struggle with language begins at the moment when he is deprived of the chance to learn it, for the scene in which Hugh excoriates his wife for teaching him how to read provides him with a moment of revelation for the true meaning of slavery—a moment of epiphany when he realizes that the power of the white, the ruler, is related to language (knowledge); it means, in other words, that the inferior state of the black in society comes from the deprivation of language. This episode suggests that a slave does not always passively endure his or her master’s oppression but, through suffering, has an insight into some truth available only to the oppressed.

This paradoxically gained intellect challenges the predominant image of a helpless and piteous slave. The white antislavery discourse often foregrounds a picture of a merciful white person who lends a hand to a poor helpless slave. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* benevolence and aid from the white Christian characters, rather than slaves’ own struggle, are apt to be underlined. This is apparent when antislavery novels by white writers are compared to slave narratives. Those autobiographies by ex-slaves, such as Henry Bibb and Harriet Jacobs, try to emphasize their long, painful battle against the white tyranny and the mutual assistance among the family and black community, although they refer to the help they had received from a few kind white people. It is true that a number of white abolitionists and philanthropists helped fugitive slaves in various ways to escape into the North; yet it might trivialize black people’s hard striving for freedom, if such help is highlighted more than necessary. African Americans’ slave narratives detail their experience of unspeakable agonies they received as slaves to make them their own possessions.

This is related to the difficulty of black writers speaking to white readers. The use of the white literary tradition can be an effective strategy to deny racial differences when narrating their own stories, but the very form to secure an understanding of the whites also becomes the heavy armor that they are bound to clothe in. Jacobs's slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), conveys this dilemma well. Because the publishing company required her to authorize the narrative by a kind of preface written by a distinguished white person, Jacobs first asked Stowe, already a well-known successful author, for her favor. However, Stowe, busy writing *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* just then, curtly rejected Jacobs's request but offered instead to incorporate her story into *Key*. To accept Stowe's offer meant that Jacobs's precious experience would be reduced to a mere material to guarantee the truthfulness of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Jacobs decided to write her own story by herself. It was Child who agreed to authorize the narrative that she had completed after long hardship, and thus *Incidents* was finally published with Child's help of editing and her "preface."

Child as the editor declares in her introduction that she has added no correction but some small changes "for purposes of condensation and orderly arrangements" and that "[with] trifling exceptions, both the ideas and the language are her own" (Preface 6). According to Bruce Mills, the biggest change made by Child is deleting the part where Jacobs refers to the fanatic abolitionist, John Brown, and his attack at Harper's Ferry, thereby making the story end with memories of her grandmother ("Lydia Maria Child" 256-60). By this revision Jacobs's autobiography was completed as a story dedicated to her grandmother, her "surrogate mother." The editorship of Child as a professional author, who was well acquainted with how to compose a story and what readers would want, successfully transformed the narrative into the popular literary form of domestic fiction. Because of this, Jacobs's story was put into the popular formula frequently employed by white women authors so that the story was more acceptable for white female readers. It is true that Jacobs herself consciously used the conventional form in order to appeal to the sympathy of white female readers, but at the same time, she had to repeat the difference in experiences of the heroine of domestic fiction and of the slave girl.

It was common for slave narratives to be authorized by distinguished white writers or activists when they were to be published. Douglass's

narrative is prefixed with the passages to guarantee his writing and personality written by the two prominent abolitionists, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. The fact that slave narratives are authorized by white writers/activists means that they are more or less influenced by the viewpoints of those white authorities. W. W. Brown gives an excerpt from his own autobiography published six years before at the beginning of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*. By authorizing his writing and personality by himself, he seeks independence from white authorization while criticizing such tradition.

As the literary tradition that frames slave narratives was, to some extent, a necessary device for appealing to its dominant audience, white readers, the major problem the black authors faced was how to keep their story as their own, not to be incorporated into whites' story. One of the strategies they took was to reverse the meaning of incidents narrated within the limited framework from the perspective of the slave. By this means, the authors of slave narratives reveal a lie in American democracy, hypocrisy of white Christians. They attempt to reverse the discourse of white supremacy, asking rhetorical questions: which is more "savage," the white person who treats a human being like a beast or the black person who is forced to live like a beast by such treatment?; which is the "criminal," the white men who have stolen black people from Africa and exploit their labor, or African Americans who fight against their masters for freedom?; is it not white people, rather than black people, who should be inculcated to be saved?

Stowe also uses such rhetorical questions in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to illuminate the true problem of slavery, but what she is unable to surface is the immorality or cruelty of the "good-natured" white people. The possibility of Mr. Shelby's sexual abuse of slave women—and jealousy and anguish Mrs. Shelby may undergo because of this—is out of Stowe's scope. Even Marrie, St. Clare's wife—possibly the sole bad woman in the novel—is immune from diabolic jealousy caused by her husband's licentiousness. Tom's faithfulness to his master is one-dimensional and always connected with virtues. This is in contrast to Josiah Henson who is regarded as a model of Tom; he is as faithful as Tom and yet suggests in his narrative that faithfulness to his master does not always bring about good results and that it may even lead his brethren to a cruel destiny (31-34). Jacobs details the tenacious sexual harassment from her white master and thus subvert

Jefferson's discourse about the seduction of the "inferior race."

Another way to retain the viewpoint peculiar to slaves, to maintain their own voice, within the framework authorized by the white abolitionist is to expatiate sufferings that they had experienced: the cruel whipping frequently performed on the ground of trivial error, the blood flowing from the lacerated flesh, and "heart-rending shrieks, which were enough to melt the heart of humanity" (Bibb 70), or a bullet shot into the head of a slave who tried to escape whipping (Douglass *Narrative*, 57). In addition to the physical violence imposed on the slave's body, the painful experience of coldness and starvation is also detailed and overwhelms the reader: Douglass, for instance, explains that no shoes, no socks, no trousers, or no coats were given to a slave child throughout a year, so that he had to live only with a shirt that reached the knees even during the mid-winter; on freezing days, he slept with his head thrust into the corn bag which he stole (59). Douglass also illustrates how poorly a slave is supplied with food, by inserting an episode in which a starved slave girl ate "the offal thrown into the street," competing with pigs (65).

White abolitionist speeches generally tend to fall into abstract ideas of antislavery cause, while ex-slaves are persistent in detailed depiction because the agony of the victims cannot be reduced into a religious doctrine or social ideology and because the details of this agony are the very weapon available to them in order not to yield their experience, their own story. It was probably for this reason that Douglass did not respond to Stowe's request for detailed information about "a cotton plantation" (F. Wilson 263-64) and that Jacobs rejected her offer to publish her experience in *Key*.

By inserting the present tense suddenly in his narrative written mostly in the past tense, Douglass draws the reader's attention to the deep cut in his foot caused by the frosty air, which remains in the narrative present (59). Jacobs ends her story, deploring her own "home" or "hearthstone" not yet obtained (156), and thus emphasizes the anguish still unappeased. Such lament that appears in the closing part of slave narratives presents a kind of antithesis to the easy happy ending of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or of the domestic fiction.

5. Race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In the 1850s when the slavery system was the biggest political issue of national discussion, it was extremely difficult for a woman to write a novel on slavery. There were piles of social and political matters to be considered, and many debates over race, gender, and class took place. Authors of antislavery fiction, while writing, had to assume various groups as their readers—abolitionists, Copperheads, and white women in the North, slaveholders and their mistresses in the South, clergymen, politicians, and African Americans both free and enslaved. The audience that Stowe chiefly spoke to in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, were middle-class white Christian women, and this inevitably conditioned the range of the novel to some extent. Dealing with the tough question of how she should speak to northern white women, ignorant of and indifferent to the reality of the southern institution, or how she should advocate the antislavery cause without raising antipathy to it from “genteel ladies” or from those with proslavery sentiment, Stowe attempts to dramatize a very political issue in the framework of domestic fiction—quite popular then among women—and thereby attain both the literary effect (entertaining the reader) and political effect (elevating the abolitionist sentiment).

When examining the race issue in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, therefore, we have to pay attention to the political and literary consideration that the author might have taken into account. It should also be noted that the racism seen in the novel, whether it is the result of the author's political consideration or her unconscious prejudice against black people, is no more than the average view prevalent in American society of the day. Almost every racial discourse in the nineteenth century seems to be unable to escape from being censured as racism by us readers of today.

Chapter 5

Dred: Legal Exploration in a Sentimental Novel

1. Stowe's Second Antislavery Novel

The great success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) not only made Harriet Beecher Stowe a "famous" American writer but also pedestaled her as a literary "crusader" of the antislavery movement. This may partly be the source of her keeping antislavery writing; only a year later, she published *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), which attempted to prove the truthfulness of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through factual information gleaned broadly from various documents. When the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was about to be voted on in the Senate in February 1854, she had her "Appeal to the Women of the Free States of America" printed on the *Independent*, trying to evoke a sense of moral duties among the northern Christian women, and in 1856, she completed another bulgy antislavery novel, *Dred: A Story of the Great Dismal Swamp*.

In spite of the severe criticism of *Dred*, most of which questioned Stowe's artistic talent, it sold well (Grüner 1; F. Wilson 419; Fields, *Life and Letters* 218, 221). George Eliot, well conscious of the general damnation of *Dred* by critics, still praises the American authoress' genius in depicting landscapes, characters, and humorous scenes (43-44). Her review is especially significant in placing Stowe as the originator of antislavery novel as I have already mentioned in the introduction. Let us quote her words again here: "Mrs. Stowe has *invented* the Negro novel. . . . Inventions in literature are not as plentiful as inventions in the paletôt and waterproof department" (43; emphasis by Eliot). Although it is hard to identify the definite point of the emergence of this literary genre, because it is closely related to slave narratives and many other antislavery writings that were published and circulated in large numbers in the mid-nineteenth century, Stowe was indeed the very first writer in America who was brave enough to challenge this most unpopular and controversial topic. In the preface to her second "Negro novel," *Dred*, Stowe prides herself as a leading novelist of the genre by saying that

the subject of slavery provides a novelist with “so wide a scope for the exercise of his powers” (3).

However, *Dred* is a product of her keen sense of national crisis as well as of her artistic impulse because, to Stowe, the object of the writer is not limited to “the production of a work of art”; rather he/she has a “higher”¹ moral object to wield his/her pen for the redress of injustice (Preface 3). As is well known, ever since the presentation of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which advocated leaving the decision of whether to introduce slavery in the new states to their free choice, Kansas had become the central ground of sectional conflict where violence, both verbal and physical, was reciprocated between pro- and antislavery factions. In these hysteric battles, both parties employed similar accusatory rhetoric, calling each other fanatic, filthy, inhuman, or beastly (Boyd 52), and such mutual slandering escalated to the extent that it was difficult to distinguish between the two discourses.² Under this heated warfare, abolitionist leaders also increasingly grew violent. Angelina Grimké, for instance, stated that “slavery is more abhorrent . . . to Christianity than murder” (qtd. in Grüner 6). Stowe’s brother Henry Ward Beecher, the pastor of Brooklyn Plymouth Church, yelled at a church meeting, “There is more moral power in one Sharpe rifle, so far as the slaveholders of Kansas are concerned, than in a hundred Bibles,” and the church’s communicants sent barrels of rifles to Kansas, calling them “Beecher’s Bibles” (F. Wilson 407). Far more aggressive is the incident where Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner, Stowe’s close friend, was struck nearly to death with a cane by Preston Brooks from South Carolina after Sumner’s “bristling” antislavery speech on the “Crime against Kansas” (410). Although the legislature denounced his brutal deed, Brooks became, to the horror of Northerners, “a national hero” in the South and a group of excited Missourians invaded and “sacked” free-soil Laurence (Grüner 5). Only a few days after this mob attack, John Brown, in retaliation, led his band and killed five slaveholding settlers at Pottawatomie (F. Wilson 414).

According to Joan Hedrick, the sectional warfare that raged in Kansas from 1854 through 1858 was “most intense between December 1855 and September 1856,” the period during which *Dred* was written (258). Hedrick assumes that Stowe completed the entire story (in two volumes) in about three months and attributes its “weakness” to this hasty writing (260). Many critics point out that the bloody assault on Sumner made her change the

course of the story from a sentimental romance focused on a southern girl, Nina, to a more political and realistic novel that explores the possibility of insurrection led by a fugitive slave, Dred, and most of the critics agree that this transformation resulted in its lack of unity and, thereby, its failure as a work of art.

Apart from assessing the artistry of the novel, a close reading of *Dred* illuminates on what profound level Stowe tries to discuss the problem of slavery. The novel reveals the atrocity of slavery through the eyes of the oppressed and delves into the very core of the institution, the law, so that a humanistic understanding of it seems no longer tenable. If *Dred* appears to lack enough unity of the plot, it is not because Stowe wrote it in a hasty way, nor because she sacrificed the sentimental plot for the sake of a more “dreadful” plotting of slave insurrection in the latter half, but because of her almost impossible attempt to open an arena of legal discussion—which was regarded as a “male” sphere in nineteenth-century America—while retaining the domestic/sentimental ideology that composes one of the essential pillars of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Stowe perhaps recognized that power of sympathy was not sufficient in the time of “bleeding Kansas,”³ and yet she could not let go of the traditional form of the sentimental novel that values self-sacrifice in order to appeal to white Christian women, the major audience of her novel. But the incorporation of the “male-controlled” legal discourse into *Dred*, as Lisa Whitney remarks, partially “undermines the workings of the sentimental fiction . . . because it admits no role for female characters and feminine values” (556-57).

Dred is, in fact, Stowe’s most ambitious work in that she challenges the task of combining the two “incompatible” discourses and thus transcends *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the landmark of the antislavery novel she herself had constructed. Despite the consequent harsh criticism of *Dred*, Stowe was convinced, as she nearly finished it, that the novel “was going to surpass *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* both in literary quality and as a political document” (F. Wilson 415-16).⁴ Stowe’s conviction suggests that the seemingly defective plot is not an accidental one but the result of her audacious experiment. To examine the process of this literary experiment leads to an understanding of the new horizon of antislavery literature toward which Stowe had expanded.

2. Limits to the Sentimental Domestic Ideology

The central figure of the first volume of *Dred*, Nina Gordon, is a young southern plantation mistress, and her story roughly replicates a typical sentimental plot: an ignorant spoiled girl grows into a self-sacrificial Christian lady through many hardships and a religious awakening. The opening scene initiates the reader into a rather comical scene of Nina's dilemma that her careless whimsical behaviors engender. The large amount of her consumption of decorative materials parallels her coquetry, which results in her engagement with three gentlemen at a time. Her inability to understand how household finances are managed and how to keep things in order is illustrated by the scattered bills of the garments and accessories she has purchased: some of them are mingled with the love letters from her fiancés and some are used for "curl-papers" and are crumpled.

Like the traditional sentimental heroine, Nina gradually transforms herself into a lady of True Womanhood⁵ through "moral influences" of good examples around her. Serious and religious Edward Clayton sees through the good nature of undisciplined and frivolous Nina and draws it out of her not by preaching but just by standing close by her. His gentle, somewhat paternal, presence drives her to reap what she has sown, that is, to dissolve the multiple engagements. His sister Anne, a model housekeeper, shows to Nina how well household matters can be organized and controlled. Greater spiritual influence, however, comes from more marginal characters like Milly, Sue, and Tiff. Milly is a female Uncle Tom and, like Tom, she embodies the love of Christ. She also substitutes for Nina's mother and directs the orphaned child to seek for the heavenly Father.

The history of Sue more faithfully traces that of a sentimental heroine. Being ignorant of the world, the daughter of the aristocratic Peyton family in Virginia romanticized and married a young stranger who turned out to be a good-for-nothing, unable to support his family. Having regretted her rash behavior in her youth and suffered utter poverty, she died of emaciation, leaving her small children behind. Sue's fate provides Nina with a possible course she may take and, after attending her funeral, Nina becomes less frivolous and more sympathetic toward poor people.

Tiff, a slave of the Peytons, who followed and served Sue, is as pious and as selfless as Milly. Reading the Bible for him, Nina achieves a deep

understanding of the sacred book. It comes first from observing his earnest attitude: “When she saw Tiff’s earnest and eager attention, her heart smote her to think that the book, so valuable in his eyes, was to her almost an unread volume” (336). As she frequents Tiff’s cabin to read his favorite story of Christ repeatedly, she begins to transcend worldly desires and attains piety, the most important element of True Womanhood:

Nina half awakened from the thoughtless dreams of childhood, yearning for something nobler than she yet had lived for, thought over, and revolved in her mind, this beautiful and spotless image of God, revealed in man, which her daily readings presented. (344)

Preparing Nina thus for the last ordeal, Stowe consummates the creation of a self-sacrificial sentimental heroine. In the midst of the rampant cholera epidemic, Nina stays in her plantation with “my people” (her slaves) (361) and takes care of the sick—in contrast to her aunt Nesbit who immediately deserts the place for her own security—and successfully manages to keep the whole estate in order by showing herself with dignified calmness and practicality as a model figure for the frightened and helpless servants to imitate. And for this motherly devotion to others, she is given the best reward of a conventional sentimental heroine, death, the ultimate call for the heavenly home.

Yet her death scene is not so dramatic as that of Eva in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and neither does it convert anyone as Eva’s does Topsy and Ophelia, or even St. Clare: if Nina does have a moral influence on anyone, it is on Clayton, who is to assume the unpopular and dangerous task of pursuing a humanitarian reform under the institution of slavery. Religious and angelic as she becomes, Nina remains ignorant to the end of how Harry, a quadroon slave, makes sacrifices to manage her plantation. Much more significantly, she is also ignorant of her blood ties with Harry and, therefore, blind to his profound affliction and complex dilemma both as her brother and her slave. Because Nina is a legal slaveholder, her death renders her slaves more in peril: they become the property of her brother Tom Gordon, a merciless man just like Simon Legree, and this also nullifies her brave act of rescuing Lisette, Harry’s wife, from imminent danger of sexual abuse by Tom.

The death of a beautiful young woman in sentimental fiction

traditionally offers a moment of dissolution of knotted human emotions by means of cathartic tears, a moment of forgiveness between long-parted relatives or of spiritual elevation of the bereaved caused by the sublime figure of the dead. Stowe gives little of this sentimental power to Nina's death. On the contrary, it brings about a new plight for Harry and starts a chain of more fearful violent incidents. As Maria Karafilis remarks, Stowe does not emphasize so much in *Dred* the domestic and matrifocal ideology that "valorizes mother love, sympathy, and pacific Christian ideals and values" (27). This is why the contrast between Nina's sloppy management of things and Anne's perfect control of the plantation cannot have the same symbolic meaning as that between the clean, well organized kitchen of Mrs. Bird and Dinah's dirty, messy one. In fact, Stowe even criticizes Nesbit's systematic way of keeping her belongings as order for the sake of order.

Stowe's restraint on feeling power in *Dred* is related to the southern reaction to her first antislavery novel as well as the increasingly aggravated social condition of the mid-1850's. The unprecedented popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its collateral impact upon American society give rise to tremendous repulsion from proslavery forces; the novel not only invited spiteful reviews that attacked even Stowe's personality but opened a market for proslavery fiction: no less than seventeen "vituperative" anti-*Uncle Tom's Cabin* stories were published, and most of them were written by women, including Mary Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* as their representative (Grüner 4; Levine, Introduction xv). It must have been disappointing, even shocking, to Stowe, as Mark Grüner suggests, that most of these novels defended slavery based on a similar domestic sentimental ideology. Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, for instance, describes plantation life as the "locus of Christian, matrifocal values" (Grüner 4).⁶ Such proslavery fiction stresses that slaves are contented with southern familial life and with being protected by benevolent and generous masters. A common plot is that a runaway slave finds the industrialized North more oppressive and brutal and ends up begging his/her master to let him/her return to the pastoral life of the plantation. Stowe probably felt that moral suasion alone would not offer a good enough strategy to counter these proslavery discourses (Karafilis 27).

Instead of exclusively championing the domestic/sentimental ideology, therefore, she introduces various perspectives on slavery to

explore possible visions of democratic America. For this purpose, Stowe foregrounds the theme of miscegenation, which is only indirectly implied by Cassy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harry, the black son of Colonel Gordon (Nina's father), is a pivotal character of the work who offers a different aspect of the oppressed that is unseen by the dominant society. Given the advantage of education by his father-master, he is a talented black "gentleman" with dark hair and blue eyes. Harry's racial and cultural hybrid exposes the very contradiction of the slavery system. Despite having the same father, he is forced by law to serve his white sister: Mr. Gordon loved his daughter so much that he willed that Harry (his own son) would remain in bondage to serve her as overseer with a possibility that he would be able to buy his freedom for 500 dollars after performing his duty.

Fatherly love, meanwhile, is never given to a child of mixed blood because his existence indicates an immoral sexual affair: as Harry explains to his wife, reflecting Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, that many a man is sold "for nothing else but looking too much like his father, or his brothers and sisters" (62). The education Harry has received does not allow him any release from bondage or any social opportunities that might be given to the white race:

Then, the way I've been educated makes it worse. The fact is, that when the fathers of such as we feel any love for us, it isn't like the love they have for their white children. They are half-ashamed of us; they are ashamed to show their love, if they have it; and, then, there's a kind of remorse and pity about it, which make up to themselves by petting us. . . . If we show talent and smartness, we hear some one say, aside, 'It's rather a pity, isn't it?' or, 'He is too smart for his place.' (63)

The passage above partly responds to Mary Chesnut's criticism that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* misses a vital point of slavery by making Legree a bachelor (450). Although Stowe avoids complicated family relations that cause conflicts between female slaves and their mistresses by making Nina an orphan to keep white women from degrading into mean jealous plantation mistresses like Mrs. Flint in Jacobs's slave narrative, Harry's discourse reveals, to some extent, the complex psychology of male slaves. Harry, like

George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, must deplore his education and talents which cause nothing but frustration.

Nina knows none of these agonies that go through Harry's inner heart. When he is provoked by Tom's malign insult and turns pale, Nina notices a strong resemblance between Harry and her father but she does not realize their father-son relationship. As she becomes aware of the injustice of slavery, she observes that white people have no right to possess slaves like Milly and Harry or Lisette who can support themselves by their toil far better than slaveholders like her, and yet she fails to set them free. When Harry hints that even innocent angelic Nina might hate him if she should know her blood relation with him, he clearly states that Nina is not immune from the victimization of slaves under the southern law and, thereby, relativizes the redeeming power of her sympathy.

3. Legal Exploration of Slavery

The receded sentimental power in *Dred* comes from Stowe's recognition that little can be done by individual benign efforts as far as slavery is concerned. By the time she completed *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she was convinced that the root evil of slavery would not be removed unless the laws were changed: "it seems as if there was very little that the benevolent owner could do which should permanently benefit his slave, unless he should seek to *alter the laws*" (*Key* 115; emphasis by Stowe). *Key* is a turning point for Stowe to conduct a thorough examination of the southern laws; while the first part tries to prove the veracity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the second part details the southern slave code, introducing some of the actual cases debated in the court. *Key* is an intermediary work between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*⁷; it is a key to *Dred* as well. And in *Dred*, Stowe employs some of the legal debates on slavery developed in *Key* in her attempt to transcend *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which aims to overcome the social injustice predominantly through Higher Law (moral religious sentiment).

As Lisa Whitney remarks, "the opposition between law and sentiment in *Dred* is clearly and powerfully dramatized in the character of Harry Gordon" (563), Harry is split between love and loyalty for his sister-mistress Nina and anger at the cruel law of slavery. Despite the repeated

incitement of anger by Dred, the rebellious fugitive slave, Harry cannot join his plot of revolt because it means that he will fight against Nina: “I love her better than I love myself. I will fight for her to the last, but never against her, nor hers!” (270) When she declares during a cholera infection scare that she cannot discard her servants who have lived for her, his feeling of bitterness is “sweetened and tranquillized by the noble nature of her to whose hands the law had given chain which bound him” (361-62).

The most unbearable part of the law to Harry is personified in Tom. Being the only lawful son, Tom is disinherited by his father because of his loose morals and hates gentlemanly Harry who takes the role of Nina’s guardian and runs the Gordon plantation in place of him and who never shows the obsequious attitudes expected from his race. Tom utilizes the most savage element of slavery; that is, he imposes abominable violence on a slave with impunity. The following outcry Harry makes against Tom’s licentious approach to his wife elicits his pent-up indignation at the unreasonable social system: “my younger brother chooses to come, without right or reason, to domineer over me, to insult my wife . . . and . . . the laws will protect him in it, if he does it! Ah! ah! . . . No matter how right I am—no matter how bad he is! Everybody will stand up for him, and put me down; all because my grandmother was born in Africa, and his grandmother was born in America” (196).

The decisive impetus to drive Harry toward the revolt is Judge Clayton’s legal account of what slavery is in the case of Milly’s injury. The scene in which he delivers his judicial decision is extremely dramatic and worth of a close examination because it sways two young men related with Nina—Harry and Edward Clayton. While Milly is hired out to compensate for her mistress’ financial loss, she is beaten and shot by her drunken master for no reason other than defending a poor slave girl from his bad temper. Infuriated Nina takes this matter to court, asking Clayton to speak for Milly. Clayton’s speech as a lawyer is characterized by the paternalistic discourse which focuses on slaveholders’ moral responsibilities for guiding and protecting their slaves such as those a father has for his children or a master for his apprentices; he emphasizes “the duty of those to whom is instructed the guardianship of the helpless” (302). Although his appeal to the jury’s humane sentiment brings him victory, it is totally refuted by his father, Judge Clayton, in the higher court.

Judge Clayton crushes his son's idealistic vision of a guardian master benign to his slaves and reveals the real character of slavery. The "authority of the parent over the child" cannot be applied, Judge exposit, to the relationship between the master and the slave because the object of the former lies in "the happiness of the youth" born with natural rights whereas the object in the case of slavery is "the profit of the master, his security, and the public safety" (353). This cold logic allows the absolute authority of the master and no room of humanity for slaves, who are doomed to "toil that another may reap the fruits" (353).

The decision of Judge Clayton is modeled on that of Judge Thomas Ruffin in the 1829 case of *State v. Mann* in North Carolina (Crane 200; Brophy 1120-32; Whitney 560-62) that Stowe has already examined in *Key* in detail, and she borrows his words almost verbatim in *Dred*. She admires the unsentimental, thoroughgoing way in which Judge Ruffin exposed the reality of slavery (Whitney 561-62): he disclosed the utter inhumanity of the system when it was commonly presented in the South as a "Christian" institution for protecting the "uncivilized" African people.

As she pays respect to Ruffin for his faithfulness to his profession, Stowe endows Judge Clayton with courage to "speak a truth" as well as a "logical severity of thought" (26). Judge Clayton knows well how abominable slavery is and, as a person, feels sympathy for poor slaves; however, as a judge, he has to announce the severe doctrine against his feelings. This is a dramatization of Judge Ruffin's dilemma; Stowe states in *Key* that his remarks "express the conflict between the feelings of the humane judge and the logical necessity of a strict interpreter of slave-law" (77). Alfred Brophy argues in his essay on *Dred* that the separation between personal feelings and legal duties reflects the dilemma of lawyers and judges in antebellum America and that it was frequently advocated by professors of law and leaders of the bench and the bar to sever moral sentiment from the law in order to preserve the state legislation and the Constitution of the United States. As a faithful student of this instruction, Judge Clayton makes a "painful" decision: "A judge can only perceive and declare. What I can see, I must speak, though it [goes] against all my feelings and all my sense of right" (350). Like Ruffin, he is "an *expositor*, and not a *reformer* of law" (*Key* 79; emphasis by Stowe).

If Judge Clayton upholds the law at the sacrifice of his feelings,

Edward Clayton gives precedence to his personal moral sense over the law. He actually resolves to resign, to his father's great disappointment, from the profession of lawyer because he apprehends that there is little he can do for slaves under the existent slave code and he pursues his own reform within his plantation. It is important, as many critics point out, to note that Clayton's deep understanding of what the Judge's interpretation of the slave code means is conveyed by observing Harry's pale face and "a fierce and peculiar expression" that "flashed from his "dark-blue eyes"⁸: "Never had Clayton so forcibly realized the horrors of slavery as when he heard them thus so calmly defined in the presence of one into whose soul the iron had entered" (355). Perception of truth through the eyes of the Other anticipates the fiction of Henry James and it is one of the main achievements of *Dred*. Stowe makes the narrator emphasize this point in the beginning of the chapter entitled "The Desert": "We shall never have all the materials for absolute truth on this subject, till we take into account, with our own views and reasonings, the views and reasonings of those who have bowed down to the yoke, and felt the iron enter into their souls" (445).

The humane reform that Clayton and Anne pursue in the plantation of Magnolia Grove echoes a little of what William Wells Brown suggests as an ideal prospect in *Clotel* (1853): they educate slaves and thus prepare for their emancipation and expect to introduce a (northern) system of work and wages. Both Clayton and Anne believe that they can awaken the moral sentiment of the public by showing their plantation as an example for their neighbors to emulate: Anne, for instance, retorts to a neighbor who warns against her illegal education, that "it is time such laws were disregarded" and that they will be dead letters if "people disregard them" as she does (314).

When the three influential neighbors visit Clayton toward the end of the story to give him "good" advice that is, in fact, the final warning—a possible parody of the three wise men who visit Christ—he again has to face the formidable legal wall. The interview elucidates the opposition as to teaching slaves between abolitionist and proslavery forces, which is ultimately reduced to the topic of slave rebellion that they dread most. As one of the three gentlemen, Judge Oliver, insists that teaching slaves to read and write is against the laws and that if Clayton does not stop the education, they will have "to take measures to put the law into execution," Clayton

maintains that such laws are “a mere relic of barbarous ages” and that the modern time of Christianity should abolish them (529). Being impatient with the ineffective gentle way of Judge Oliver’s speaking, Mr. Knapp, a wealthy planter and ex-congressman, gets to the matrix of their fear, the slave insurrection, referring to the fact that past fearful revolts were led by intelligent “negroes” like Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey. While Knapp insists that the laws to prohibit teaching slaves are indispensable for public safety, Clayton maintains that “systematic education” is the “only sure defense against insurrection” (530) because the laws cannot prevent blacks from learning how to read by themselves, from obtaining the knowledge of the Declaration of Independence and absorbing the republican egalitarian spirit, and because it is more dangerous to let them interpret the knowledge they have acquired for their own merit.

The failure in reaching a mutual understanding in this interview mirrors the impasse the sectional conflict fell into in the mid-1850s. Knapp even hints that the South cannot retreat from the present system for the sake of future prosperity because of the tremendous amount of money already invested in it: “We must proceed with things as they are” (531). This somehow reverberates, though in a rather negative way, with the mood of resignation of Judge Clayton who thinks it his duty as a magistrate to interpret the things as they are, not as they should be: “I see no way but that the institution will be left to work itself out to its final result, which will, in the end, be ruinous to our country” (359).

Clayton’s reform in Magnolia Grove is frustrated by the uncontrolled violence of the mob led and incited by Tom Gordon: he is struck with a cane by Tom, obviously reflecting the violence Charles Sumner received, and Anne’s school for black servants is destroyed by an incendiary fire. What Clayton can do in the end is to emigrate his slaves to the North. As if to prevent the abolitionist reader from underestimating his efforts, Stowe adds a comment on how brave it is for a slaveholder to help slaves escape from the South where the law prohibits the slightest assistance for a fugitive slave—“giving him the meanest shelter and food”—and those who break the law will be “stripped of their whole property, and turned out destitute upon the world” (518).

4. The Swamp—the Locus of Wild Visions

Stowe imagines in *Dred* a space that is not ruled by the slavery law, the swamp, to probe various possibilities of a democratic America for blacks. As *Dred*'s subtitle ("A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp") implies, the swamp and its main resident, Dred, constitute the focal symbol of the entire story. David Miller might be right in saying, in his notable book on the representation of swamp in nineteenth-century American culture, that Dred's appearance "rescues Stowe's novel from almost unrelenting mediocrity" and that her sporadic insertion of passages about the swamp even gives a thematic unity to the novel (95)⁹. The swamp (with Dred in the center) is presented as the locus where established ideas and customs of the dominant society are tested, tossed, reversed, or challenged by opposing ones.

The camp meeting set in a clearing of the dense forest in the vast swamp highlights this characteristic of a cauldron of multifarious discourses. It offers a carnival-like occasion when people of all classes, regardless of age, sex, and color, join the gathering for various reasons: "some from curiosity, some from love of excitement, some to turn a penny in a small way of trade, some to scoff, and a few to pray" (231). Religious denominations are also diverse: Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist ministers convey their respective doctrines so that the audience freely compares them. Stowe also presents varied comments on the camp meeting by letting the participants speak freely: Anne detests the wild freedom of the meeting for she believes that "religion is a sacred thing" and that praying should not be conducted in a buoyant way, while Nina denies "the distance between laughing and praying" (245); contrary to Mrs. John Gordon's ironic critical view of those who convert only temporarily in excitement, Clayton, who is a mouthpiece of the author to some extent, offers a generous view of them, by saying that it is "better to have a vivid impression of the vastness and worth of the soul . . . for a few hours once in a year, than never to feel it at all" (282).

Yet Stowe is also aware of the danger of the electrical excitement in such a mass meeting where the audience is likely to be carried away by a minister's manipulative eloquent oratory. Father Bonnie, the leading popular minister, has the magical power to elevate people and produce many repenters, but he defends slavery, maintaining that it is a sacred institution guaranteed by the Bible. Stowe makes his hypocrisy explicit to the reader by

introducing the scene of his bargaining with a trader to purchase a slave before his powerful sermon on how sinful human beings are. Just at the moment of the climax of glorifying God, the voice of Dred, which pierces through the dense woods, counters the gospel of the New Testament with the curse of angry God of the Old Testament: “your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers are greedy for violence! . . . Ye oppress the poor and needy, and hunt the stranger. . . . Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery!” (262-63)

As is implied in the scene of the camp meeting, the amorphous swamp, partly land and partly water, collapses the boundaries of all the cultural divisions between male and female, between white and black, or between the ruler and the ruled (Miller 78; Boyd 59); it is pregnant with images of both radical democracy, “savage freedom” in Clayton’s terms (254), and uncontrollable chaos. Stowe is dexterous in giving the swamp ambivalent images. It is a place of “hopeless disorder” where “the abundant growth and vegetation of nature, sucking up its forces from the humid soil, seems to rejoice in a savage exuberance, and bid defiance to all human efforts either to penetrate or subdue” (209), and, at the same time, it offers a safe home for the fugitives, the wounded, and the orphans, providing blessings of its fertile and beautiful nature.

The swamp’s double image of disorder (the uncontrollable growth of nature) and benevolence (the shelter and nurturance for the oppressed) is connected with that of Dred. He is at once a self-proclaimed Mosaic prophet grounded on the doctrine of vengeance (eye for eye) and a benign father who protects those suffering from violence and starvation. Stowe associates the almost inhuman power of Dred with the wild nature of the swamp. His agile movement from tree to tree evokes an image of wild monkeys, creatures of a jungle, and his power to carry a wounded man on his back without any difficulty through the watery unstable area darkened by the thick foliage conveys that he is in unison with the wilderness. Yet he is a fighter armed with a weapon of civilization, a rifle, and is versed in the Bible.

Fictionalizing him as the son of a historical figure, Denmark Vesey, the leader of the 1822 slave revolt in South Carolina, Stowe models him on another rebellious figure, Nat Turner, who led the 1831 insurrection in Virginia and whose “Confessions” published by T. R. Gray she attaches to the text as an appendix. Stowe attempts to legitimate slaves’ fury at injustice

as far as her imagination can carry her pen. The locus of swamp beyond the reach of civilization makes this possible and in this secluded wilderness she tests the fundamental consensus of American society, the Declaration of Independence, from the viewpoint of the most oppressed. It begins in the chapter titled “The Slave’s Argument” with the letter addressed to Clayton from Harry, who fled into the swamp, after striking back at his new master, Tom, and joined Dred’s group of rebellion: “if it were proper for your fathers to fight and shed blood for the oppression “that came upon them, why isn’t it right for us?” Harry’s discourse, similar to that of George Harris in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, evidently reflecting Douglass’s “What Is the Fourth of July to Slaves” speech, emphasizes that the oppression described in that document is almost nothing compared with what blacks suffer by “the laws which are put over *us!*” (435) so that there is far greater justice in their rebellion/revolution. Harry’s use of the word “us” is significant here because it illuminates his keen sense of division between “you” and “us” and his intense antagonism against the ruling class of “you”: Denmark Vesey and his men only followed “your example and your precepts” and yet “your people hung them” (436). This general division excludes even Clayton from “us” because the law and customs categorize him into the “you” community however good he means to “us.” Harry, a gentleman in Nina’s plantation, turns into a violent rebel like Dred in the swamp.

The rebellious tone of the letter is repeated and further augmented in a scene of the gathering of Dred and his followers where Harry is asked to read the Declaration of Independence. Quoting some passages from the document that celebrates human equality and warrants the right to throw off the government that abuses its authority, Stowe underscores its impact upon slaves by inserting the impassioned sentence, “What words were those to fall on the ears of thoughtful bondmen!” (455) After they hear Harry recite the document of the Fourth of July, the members then begin to narrate the abuses they received, witnessed, or heard, one after another. Here, again, Stowe interweaves into the fictional text some actual cases of horrid violence by slaveholders that she had already examined in *Key* like the case of *State v. Mann* or of *Souther v. the Commonwealth*. With the news of the cruel death of one member of the group, their indignation is intensified and Dred culminates it in his prophetic woes permeated with the language of the Old Testament: “Behold the blood of the poor crieth unto thee! Behold how they

hunt our lives! Behold how they pervert justice, and take away the key of knowledge! . . . Behold our wives taken for a prey! Behold our daughters sold to be harlots! . . . Wilt thou not avenge thine own elect, that cry unto thee day and night?" (460)

Stowe presents for the first time in *Dred* a black revolt as a just and possible means for dissolution of slavery, and the swamp and Dred are the product of her wild literary imagination. This shows the influence she received from many African Americans she came to be in touch with either directly or indirectly after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as Robert Levine maintains that the issue of violence is inseparable from "blacks' points of view" (Introduction xxiv). Not only did she subscribe to *The Liberator* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, but she responded to Douglass's mild criticism of her idea of colonization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and entertained him at her home in 1853 (Hedrick 235; F. Wilson 395; Fields, *Life and Letters* 214-15; Levine, Introduction xvi). During her antislavery lecture tour in the same year, she met a number of black abolitionists, including William Wells Brown, William G. Allen, and Samuel Ward (Levine, Introduction xvi). Talk with Sojourner Truth, who stayed at her house for several days, perhaps made her aware that black abolitionists were not monolithic as to the issue of violence (xxiv), about which experience she described later in "Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl" (1863) with that famous sentence, "Frederick, is God dead?" (480) And in her essay "Anti-Slavery Literature," she directly admits the influence of black writers on her understanding of slavery, highly estimating the slave narratives of Josiah Henson, Henry Bibb, Lewis Clarke, Frederick Douglass, and William Wells Brown (Levine, Introduction xvi-xvii). The creation of Dred, a militant, Samson-like warrior, in contrast to faithful, pacifist martyr Uncle Tom, therefore, is a partial response to those African Americans she has encountered.

However, Stowe does not grant Dred God's signs for the righteous retaliation that Nat Turner declares to have been given in his "Confessions." Dred is killed by the gang led by Tom and disappears from the text before he executes his plan. As a counter to his vengeful ideology, she places the love of Christ embodied in Milly; when the anger of the blacks in the swamp rises to the peak, she has Milly appear and suggest "a better way" (461): "O, brethren . . . Leave de vengeance to [de Lord]. . . . Like he loved us when we

was enemies, love yer enemies!” (462) Fundamentally based on Christian matriarchal love, Stowe probably cannot agree with social revolution by violence, because she fears that force may engender force and end in fatal devastations. Just as she expresses the danger of the electrical excitement of the camp meeting that spreads through the whole audience, she also hints at the infectious explosion of outrage that becomes uncontrollable. The image of the uncontrollable, which also implicates the image of unprincipled growth of vegetation in the swamp, seems to converge on the cholera epidemic that attacks the vast area indiscriminately.

The metaphor for the uncontrollable, represented by the epidemic, becomes most powerful and fearful when it is connected with the mob violence that Tom Gordon instigates. The first target of Tom’s attack is Father Dickson, the only clergyman who preaches that slavery is a sin while all the other leading ministers either avoid the issue in silence or justify slavery, like Father Bonnie, exploiting the Bible. Having tied nonresistant Dickson to a tree, the infuriate mob excited by whiskey whipped him almost to unconsciousness, while insulting him with blasphemous words and songs. Stowe glorifies Dickson, who never yields to the mob law to the end, by giving him an image of Christ suffering humiliation and agony with utter calmness. The masked gang, who anticipate the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War, assaults Clayton and makes him decide in the end to emigrate his slaves to the free district. Their violence spreads over the whole region like cholera and is directed at anyone who seems to help a fugitive slave since, in cases of lynch law, no evidence is necessary; a man is “accused, condemned, and judged, at the will of his more powerful neighbor” (504). Hence, it is sufficient for Abijahr Skinflint to be tarred and feathered that Tom thought that he had sold weapons to Dred. Far more horrible is the fact that the Justices of the Peace give outlawry Tom legal permission to murder his slave, Harry. Giving the reader an example of the public notice that authorizes a murder, the narrator adds her infuriated comment: “the lowest brutality and the most fiendish cruelty should be remorselessly practiced by those whose ferocity thus receives the sanction of the law” (505).

Against the threatening dark shadow of the outlaw that covers the later part of *Dred*, Stowe warns her contemporary readers, especially Southerners, through Father Dickson’s prophetic speech:

“You must see that your course will lead to perfect anarchy and confusion. The time may come when your opinions will be as unpopular as mine. . . . If your course prevails, you must be lynched, stoned, tarred and feathered. This is a two-edged sword you are using, and some day you may find the edge turned towards you.” (481)

5. Sentiment of Forgiveness

The closing pages of *Dred* lead the reader back to the framework of a sentimental/domestic novel, distancing the arena of aggressive racial and political turbulence. While Clayton and Anne establish an ideal black colony in Canada based on free labor, Tiff and Milly remain in America, each having a “happy” family with his/her adopted children. Richard Boyd says that *Dred* is “a sentimental novel” with all its references to the “cold-blooded murders of men in Kansas” and to the violent attack on Charles Sumner (55). By frustrating the revolt of Dred and Harry, Gregg Crane remarks, Stowe evades the direct association of “the revolutionary sentiment and Americanness” (202-03).¹⁰ It is more to “protect the image of humble slaves,” James Cox suggests, than to hamper the black revolt that Stowe killed Dred (“Harriet Beecher Stowe” 463). Considering the “general intolerance” of the blacks demanding equality, Mark Grüner further implies that the elimination of Dred “left Stowe’s readers secretly grateful that “the South had successfully contained the horrors of slavery and kept the . . . defects ascribed to African Americans from polluting the Northern gene pool” (11).

Each of the critical views above might be partially true since Stowe, already a literary lion after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, had, willy-nilly, to anticipate possible responses to the novel from various quarters, and she might have taken them into consideration while writing *Dred* when the sectional conflict was in the middle of a hair-trigger situation. Yet, she should still persist in her own belief regardless of such anticipation if there was an object higher than the creation of art in writing a piece of literature. Being peripheral characters in *Dred*, Tiff and Milly convey the author’s central Christian sentiment of altruism and forgiveness that forms the basis of her vision of a democratic America. Tiff is a comic Uncle Tom whose cheerful laugh of “he! he! he!” and “ho, ho ho!” changes the gloomy aspect of things into a sunny one and whose “large, rough, black paws” easily collect every possible

blessing out of mother nature (99), while accomplishing all the house work, sewing, knitting, and cleaning the humble home for Sue's poor orphan children Fanny and Teddy. His feminized "mammy"-like devotion and innocent Christian faith rescue himself and his children from the barbarism of their drunken father, transform a small portion of the wilderness into "a potato patch" (446) and, in the end, lead to a gracious home in the North. As if to reward his altruistic devotion to the children, Stowe makes Fanny inherit a big fortune and marries her to a northern gentleman worthy of the Peyton family just as Tiff has dreamed. The marriage of Fanny, a southern girl, and a gentleman from Connecticut may symbolize the peaceful union of the North and the South that Stowe dreams about (Grüner 25).

Tiff, however, represents a more important factor in *Dred*. Although he is proud of the Peyton family for being descendants of one of the oldest Virginia families and identifies himself with the Peyton blood, the family he serves in a hut by the swamp are regarded by neighbors as detestable "poor whites" no better than blacks. Aunt Nesbit, exposing her prejudice against poor whites, calls them "liars and thieves" and insists that there should be "a law to make 'em all slaves" so that they would be taken care of (105), reflecting her proslavery discourse. Endorsing her idea, Uncle John philosophizes it in a single sentence, "The brain ought to control the hands" (218), meaning that the educated people of the upper class should rule the ignorant and incompetent of the working class. By applying the proslavery discourse to the issue of poor whites as well, Stowe expands and universalizes the problem of slavery for white readers to see it as their own.

In this context, Tiff's success in bringing up and educating the poor offspring of the Peytons into respectable American citizens invalidates the proslavery discourse along with the prejudice against poor whites. It also embraces the reverse course; the mere slave (the "hands") adopts orphaned poor white children and educate them better than the ruling class (the "brain"). This is what Milly embodies more explicitly. Without any special pride like Tiff's, she has learned the soul of Christianity, forgiveness, after a long period of suffering and raging like Cassy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Forgiveness is the ultimate sentiment to Stowe in the time of bleeding Kansas. Milly forgives her former mistress who sold her children one after another to make money to send her own son to school; warns Dred and Harry against their rash revenge; rescues herself and Tomtit, her only blood relative, from

the atrocity of slavery; and now begins to adopt New York street children who are destitute, including blacks, whites, and foreigners.

Milly's forgiveness may seem to indicate a submissive character that nullifies the revolutionary discourse Stowe has elaborated in *Dred*. Yet her words in answer to Clayton's reference to the racial mixture of her children are quite subversive since whites are assessed by the standard of blacks:

I don't make no distinctions of color—I don't believe in them. White hil'en, when they 'haves themselves, is jest as good as black, and I loves 'em jest as well. (546)

Milly's political speech of "forgiveness" seems to bind two seemingly incompatible discourses of the law and the sentiment, and resonates with Lincoln's discourse of forgiveness towards the end of the Civil War (See Chapter 7). It stands in striking contrast with the proslavery lawyer Mr. Jekyl, who drives the freed Cora, Harry's sister, and her child back to the state of bondage by the "law" under the name of "the greatest amount of good on the whole" (386-87). And what Milly represents perhaps is the ideal democratic community Stowe envisions for America. Alexis de Tocqueville sees moral sentiment based on Christianity as an indispensable factor for keeping the democratic system (law) from falling into the tyranny of the majority (self-interest) throughout his *Democracy in America*.

Chapter 6

The Minister's Wooing: Slavery in a Historical Novel

1. A New England Story

Set in a New England seaport town in the late eighteenth century, *The Minister's Wooing*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's third novel, seems to have dwindled from the epic-like grandeur of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) or *Dred* (1856) to a narrow, closed world both in time and space. It depicts the simple everyday life of small-town religious people in Newport, Rhode Island, in the declining Puritan milieu after the Revolution. No dramatic events occur—no rebellions, no tragic break-up of families, no hairbreadth escapes that the reader might expect after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*.

The story roughly covers a short span of three years in the preindustrial era, during which the young heroine, Mary Scudder, marries her cousin James Marvyn after the dissolution of her engagement with a noble Calvinist minister, Dr. Hopkins, and is restricted to the limited space of a small community within which the main characters live, working at home, visit their neighbors, or go to church; there are of course a few exceptions like James and Madame de Frontignac, Mary's French friend, who travel rather widely, but their journeys are placed on the periphery of the major narrative and are often invisible.

The Minister's Wooing indeed deals with a world of diminished time and region, which is sometimes denounced as "local." This does not mean, however, that the work is less important or dramatic than Stowe's previous two novels. As the author has her narrator declare early in the story that her interest lies not so much in the Puritan theological doctrines themselves as in their "psychological" effects on ordinary people, especially women (17), the novel aims to create a psychological drama out of seemingly insignificant matters. By means of this literary device, Stowe gives light to the deep vast area of the human heart and thus illustrates what rich, profound emotions are evoked in the Puritan heroine who, having been educated to perform her duty under any hardship, maintains surface calmness even when she suffers

stormy tides of passions.

The economy of action is not limited to theology, but extends to all other factors such as slavery and romance. Slavery, for instance, is no longer a central theme in this New England novel, despite the fact that it was published in 1859 when the issue had become the subject of national discussion, and yet she presents crucial problems inherent in the slavery system through several minor episodes. Likewise, the narrow rural region that composes the background of the story does not signify a mere local district but extends to the whole nation since those episodes concerning slavery in the North presents a microcosm of the contemporary slavery in the United States. In writing *The Minister's Wooing*, Stowe examines America of the 1850s and explores a possible way the country should take for its future.

2. The Question of Slavery in the Domestic Sphere

Nell Painter suggests in her introduction to the slave narrative by Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave New Yorker, that New York was entirely dissociated from slavery by the 1850s so that Truth's (auto)biography, first published in 1850, could not attain authenticity with the northern audience (xii-xix). It was generally taken for granted that the North was the land of freedom whereas the South was corrupted by the slavery system, when Stowe published her anti-slavery novels in the 1850s, though the complete abolition of slavery in the North was not achieved until as late as 1835 (Painter xii-xiii). Given this simple image of regional division current among the public, Stowe's portrayal of an old New England town flourishing by the slave trade does not indicate her mere nostalgia for the past idyllic world, but is her exquisite device for reminding the ignorant northern readers of the fact that slavery had existed in the North as well, and thereby involving them in a search for its solution; it is rather a well-planned scheme to make them realize their part in the "national crime."

Although both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* suggest that slavery is not a social evil peculiar only to the South, a historical novel set in a northern district deeply involved in slavery can persuade the readers more effectively to accept the notion. *The Minister's Wooing* reveals from the beginning class divisions in New England in spite of its boasts of equality: the few rich slave-

holding people and the majority of those residents managing their small households by themselves:

New England has been called the land of equality; but what land upon earth is wholly so? Even the mites in a bit of cheese, naturalists say, have great tumblings and strivings about position and rank. (29)

The narrator defensively tries to minimize the disgraceful fact of inequality as universal with a sympathetic tone for New England with its glorious history (“but what land upon earth is wholly so?”). The seemingly defensive gesture, however, hints at an ironic tone, when the universality is extended to “the mites in a bit of cheese.” Josephine Donovan defines this double attitude, sympathetic and ironic, as an “insider-outsider narrative stance” and pronounces it characteristic of the local color school (*New England Local Literature* 53). The double stance is indispensable for the narrator of *The Minister's Wooing*, for she is struggling to cajole reluctant readers into her story and, at the same time, to chide them for their ignorance, or self-righteous distance from the unpleasant realities of social and racial inequality.

And the narrator as an outsider often assumes the role of an educator for the young readers of the 1850s who enjoy consuming modern products lavishly but are largely ignorant of, or indifferent to, the historical facts of their grandmothers' era (about three decades before the publication of the book). Thus, when she begins her narrative with the first chapter entitled “Pre-Railroad Times,” she has to spend the whole chapter explaining certain features of the old New England life before introducing the first scene in Mrs. Scudder's kitchen where she invites her neighbors for tea: the actual development of this scene, in fact, is further postponed until the fourth chapter.

Small and trivial as the gathering may be, Stowe dexterously implicates a subtle tension among the members in the kitchen. Mrs. Twitchel, the wife of an honest man who lives a modest life, yields the central chair to Mrs. Brown, the wife of one of the richest slaveholders in the town. Although Mrs. Brown believes that her social position deserves her neighbors' deference, she feels uneasy before another neighbor, Mrs. Scudder, now a widow, who humbly lives with her daughter Mary but who prides herself on supporting herself.

This subtle tension becomes clearer when they refer to the hardship of housekeeping. Provoked by Mrs. Twitchel's servile and yet challenging remark that Mrs. Brown must know nothing of this trouble because she has many servants to do everything for her, the mistress retorts, emphasizing how hard it is to handle slaves, as did Marrie St. Clare, a wealthy southern mistress, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

"I'm sure, those that have servants find work enough following 'em 'round. . . . As to getting the work done up in the forenoon, that's a thing I never can teach 'em; they'd rather not. Chloe likes to keep her work 'round, and do it by snacks, any time, day or night, when the notion takes her." (34)

Mrs. Scudder, then, quickly grasps the chance to criticize owning slaves and triumphantly declares that she needs no servants because she knows "what's to be done" and that she and Mary "get our time to sew and read and spin and visit, and live just as we want to" (35). Stowe here contrasts the two types of families, a small-scale independent household and a large-scale one dependent on slaves' labor, and it is evident that she endorses Mrs. Scudder's well-organized thrifty housekeeping in a small cottage with "a snug little farm" as an alternative to the extravagant management of a huge estate and numerous "chattels." By discussing the problem of slavery in terms of domestic economy, she condemns a large-scale capitalistic society built on the exploitation of people in the lowest social stratum.¹

The question of slavery examined on the domestic level develops into a larger issue as Hopkins takes it up in terms of religious and political justice. The Calvinist minister's antislavery discourse is founded on the spirit of the Revolution, the view that "all men are created equal," the Christian doctrine of benevolence, and to some extent the Marxist theory of labor and capital. He is such a man of principle that he admits no gap between theory and practice. Seeing Candace, one of Mr. Marvyn's slaves, he decides to do what he thinks right—that is, to persuade the master to liberate her.

Having wealth and intelligence, Marvyn helps his neighbors to solve economic and judicial troubles. In his attempt to persuade Marvyn to emancipate his slaves, Hopkins takes advantage of the advice he happened to overhear the slaveholder giving to two neighbors in a financial dispute.

Mr. Marvyn told the one to pay for the labor the other party had performed, quoting from Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy. . . . At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee" (100). Hopkins resumes the subject by asking Marvyn, "if it is wrong to keep back the wages of a servant till after going down of the sun, what those are to do who keep them back all their lives [?]" (101).

Marvyn, a man of justice and common sense, quickly recognizes the analogy between the case he solved and the case the minister presents to him, the possession of slaves whose labor is unpaid "all their lives." His last question is whether or not his slaves themselves want their freedom since they seem to be quite content with their present condition. Candace's prompt request of freedom as her inalienable right guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence negates Marvyn's last ground for keeping slaves and, at the same time, invalidates the proslavery belief deeply permeated in mid-nineteenth-century America that slaves are happier under the "protection" of a white master. The episode demonstrates that even the most generous treatment by a gentle master like Marvyn does not make a slave happier than full legal freedom.

Marvyn's final emancipation of his slaves and hiring them as paid servants after that signify what Stowe holds as a possible way of peaceful solution of slavery and of coping with freed blacks.² In contrast with Marvyn, Brown, a rich ship owner of Newport thriving by the slave trade, makes a far more tremendous obstacle and ordeal to Hopkins. Being a man of business, he splits off the religious matter entirely from his business and reproaches the minister for being impractical when the minister urges him to quit the slave trade. As he is the major financial contributor to the church, offending him means that the minister would lose both monetary support (his salary) and an opportunity to publish a theological book through which to disseminate his religious beliefs. Despite threats from Brown and much anxiety of his earnest female supporters, Hopkins never wavers about his decision to preach against slavery.

Hopkins's clear announcement before the public that slavery is an evil institution reflects the author's severe critique of those ministers who remained silent for fear of losing the financial support of their congregations,

or who delivered proslavery speeches referring to the Bible, or who even owned slaves while preaching the salvation of the human soul. His sermon underscores both the direct and indirect participation of the whole nation in the sin of keeping African Americans in bondage: not only slaveholders or those involved in the slave trade but also “all the legislatures who have authorized, encouraged, or even neglected to suppress it to the utmost of their power, and all the individuals in private stations who have in any way aided in this business, consented to it, or have not opposed it to the utmost of their ability” (143). He also puts stress on the fact that slavery is incompatible with the “national declaration” (143) lately made and alludes to the “signs of national disaster which foreboded the wrath of Heaven” (144).

What Hopkins speaks to his congregation reminds us of one of the most powerful Puritan sermons ever made in America, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” in which the prominent eighteenth-century revivalist minister Jonathan Edwards intensifies the sinfulness of almost every member of the whole community and God’s anger. Stowe’s depiction of a little child who declared “I saw God there” (144) corresponds to the well-known episode of a four-year-old girl who, inspired by Edwards’s sermon, confessed her sinfulness. In spite of the parallel between the two figures, however, God’s apocalyptic wrath is more explicitly associated in Hopkins’s preaching with politics (“signs of the national disaster”) than in “Sinners.” In this view, the sermon, one of the pivotal events in the novel, also implies an “American” jeremiad, as defined by Sacvan Bercovitch in his book, *The American Jeremiad*, in that sacred religious salvation is related to the secular destiny of a nation (3-30).

After the sermon, the Browns leave his church and join the rival church of proslavery Dr. Stiles.³ Mr. Brown is to be the only neighbor who offers no wedding gift to Hopkins but the satirical words that he would gladly give him a “negro boy” to help his new home (251). Unlike Marvyn who gallantly admits his error and rectifies it, Brown hardens his heart against his spiritual mentor. In describing the two slaveholders who react differently, Stowe urges southern planters to choose the better course before the second advent of Christ.

3. Women Working behind the Scenes

The fictionalized minister is modeled on the historical figure of Samuel Hopkins, one of the disciples of Jonathan Edwards.⁴ Having inherited the New England Puritan tradition, Stowe idealizes Hopkins to a certain degree as a noble antislavery minister; his courageous action against slavery and earnest commitment to his ministry are described with sympathetic adoration. Yet he is criticized as a patriarchal theologian, as a spiritual leader of the community. Just as slavery is examined in the domestic sphere, so the male-centered theological world is scrutinized from the viewpoint of the female characters who sustain the mundane life of the minister.

Instead of making a frontal attack on Hopkins's religious doctrines, Stowe reveals what he is blind to by foregrounding the women's exertion to support his spiritual activities. This largely contributes to the ironic tone of the narrative. He does not know, for instance, the daily efforts of Mrs. Scudder—"the privy consultations, the sewings, stitchings, and starchings, the ironings, the brushings, the foldings and unfoldings and timely arrangements, that gave such dignity and respectability to his outer man" (99). The narrator, apparently appealing to women readers who must have taken care of numerous household matters for others (chiefly their husbands), emphasizes "how much of his own leisure for spiritual contemplation was due to the Martha-like talents of his hostess" (100). Referring to the biblical figure of Martha, Stowe attempts to illuminate the practical work that sustains the intellectual activity and thereby to raise the status of Martha, undervalued in the Bible, as high as that of Mary, who embodies spirituality. When we remember that Hopkins once envisioned an ideal millennial world where no Martha would be necessary, we can understand Stowe's ironic view of the male disregard of women's work and abilities and find in her stance toward the Holy Scripture something at times as radical as that of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who dared to criticize it in her late years.

It is not Mrs. Scudder alone who willingly offers unpaid anonymous labor to Hopkins. When his marriage to Mary is announced, a crew of energetic and able women parishioners devote half a day's labor to renovating the place that is to be his temporary new home: "every inch of that paint had been scrubbed, and the windows taken out, and washed inside

and out, and rinsed through three waters, and . . . the curtains had been taken down, and washed, and put through a blue water, and starched, and ironed, and put up again” (284). The minister, who was asked to step out of his study during the big clean-up, “only innocently wondered in his ignorance” why this havoc was necessary for his marriage. Standing closer to her female readers, the narrator suggests, “Let not any ignorant mortal of the masculine gender . . . rashly dare to question” the impulse of the “genius” that drives women (284).

The recurrent minute descriptions of women’s work and faculties highlight Hopkins’s absorption in theological contemplation and his ignorance of the daily exertions of women that make his intellectual work possible. In contrasting the two gendered fields, Stowe voices her critical view of the male tendency to attach too much importance to theoretical constructions and to slight the concretes of actual life, particularly the individual emotional/physical experience. As if to mark this as a keynote of the novel, she inserts a significant passage early in the story that is often cited by critics: “where theorists and philosophers tread with sublime assurance, woman often follows with bleeding footsteps; —women are always turning from the abstract to the individual, and feeling where the philosopher only thinks” (17). The contrast between male abstraction and female intuitive response to the individual suffering reminds us of the discussion of the Birds in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* about helping fugitive slaves. Depicting the minister’s absorption in theological doctrines and women’s practical support for the needed, Stowe seems to dramatize the domestic conflict of Mr. and Mrs. Bird.

In *Little Foxes*, published in 1866, Stowe portrays another minister, Mr. X, who is enthusiastically devoted to preaching God’s gospel at the pulpit but who cannot stand “the cry of his baby or the pattering feet” (36) of his little children at home. The clergyman’s irritation at home reveals Stowe’s belief that even the grandest tenet, if heedless of actual individual life, is no good. As Joan Hedrick implies, Mr. X might be an Arthur Dimmesdale at home (319). If Hawthorne’s Dimmesdale is portrayed chiefly from the pulpit, Hopkins is shown in the domestic sphere whose business he is mostly unaware of. As Stowe adds the comment that, if he knew how hard the women were working behind him, he would appreciate their efforts, his “innocent” ignorance is often travestied. The comic tone, however, turns serious when she discloses the tragic psychological effect of Calvinist

doctrines upon women. She calls it “a slow poison” (197) and its effect is illustrated most dramatically in Mrs. Marvyn’s suffering as she faces the death of her son, James.

In the traditional New England Calvinist theology, a person who died without conversion is destined to the eternal damnation, so that the bereaved must undergo painful suspense in searching for evidence of the regeneration of the loved one in addition to the unbearable sorrow at his or her death. The pain Mrs. Marvyn suffered when her dear youngest son was reported killed in a shipwreck was thus doubled since he had been skeptical about Hopkins’s religion while alive and therefore has little possibility for salvation. This means she has lost his son in the other world as well as this one.

The thorough and colossal Calvinist exclusion of the unregenerate, the unfaithful, and the skeptical from the group of the select few blessed by God thus resulted in excessive pain for women in the nineteenth century, who were often parted from their loved ones. Harriet Beecher Stowe herself suffered the heartbreaking loss of her dearest son, Henry, who drowned in the Connecticut River in 1857, and only after a long period of agony did she manage to convince herself that his soul was saved. This experience is said to be the direct motivation for writing *The Minister’s Wooing* (C. Stowe and L. Stowe 246-47; F. Wilson 434). More than three decades before, her sister Catharine too had lost her fiancé, Alexander Fisher, one of the most promising scholars of the day, in a shipwreck, and experienced similar prolonged distress in searching for evidence of his conversion. Finding no evidence, however, Catharine in the end rejected the strict doctrines of her father Lyman that would condemn such a refined scholar as Fisher. In helping her father write his autobiography, Stowe reread broadly the family writings, including Catharine’s letters and journals, where she must have identified the same deep chasm between personal emotions for the dead and the theological imperative demanded by religious authority (Buell 121; Hedrick 285). This perhaps accounts for the reason why the Beecher sisters and their close relatives (mostly women) gradually turned away from Lyman’s Congregational church to the more liberal Episcopal church after his death (Gatta 413).

Mrs. Marvyn’s suffering thus reflects the experience of Harriet and Catharine, and her revolt against Hopkins echoes the similar resistance of the Beecher sisters to their father, one of the most prominent Calvinist

ministers of the day (C. Wilson 555; Gatta 415; Buell 122, 125; Harris, Introduction vii; 56; Fields, *Life and Letters* 53-54). This also explains Mary's involuntary inner revolt at Hopkins's mechanical inquiry about the spiritual state of James. She instinctively reacts against the systematic analysis of the human soul: in a tragic experience, emotions (sorrow, sympathy, solace) should come first before cold logic. Mary, in fact, is described in contrast with Hopkins: while the doctor "[practices] his subtle mental analysis" on everything, the young heroine has "the blessed gift of womanhood, —that vivid life in the soul and sentiment which resists the chill of analysis" (169). Stowe attributes the feeling heart to women as something complementary to, or even having the potential to overturn, the dominant male system of logic.

This gendered paradigm also indicates the religious shift from the God of the Old Testament to that of the New Testament. The episode of James's supposed death reaches a climax as Mrs. Marvyn is gradually driven to madness under strict orthodox Calvinist doctrines. She does not let anyone come close to her but Mary; neither her husband—a wise adviser to his neighbors—nor the minister—the spiritual guide of the town—can save her soul. When no words of the male leaders reach her, Candace voluntarily offers herself to save her; embracing the frantic mother in her arms and rocking her gently like a baby, the African woman assures her again and again that Jesus loves James as well as his mother, whose pent-up feelings are finally released and who finds relief from the crisis of disintegration of self. The black woman thus raises her mistress out of the abyss of despair, by preaching a gospel of Christ's love.

It is probable that Sojourner Truth who visited Stowe in 1853 is the model for Candace, for Stowe pictures a similar scene of a black motherly woman solacing her white mistress agonizing over her lost child in "Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl." Though the essay appeared in the May 1863 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, the episode was introduced as a story Truth had narrated while staying at the Stowe house about a decade before:

Well, I went in an' tended that poor critter all night. She was out of her mind—a cryin', an' callin' for her daughter; an' I held her poor ole head on my arm, an' watched for her as ef she'd been my babby. An' I watched by her, an' took care on her all through her sickness

after that, an' she died in my arms, poor thing! (111)

Although the mourning mother died in Truth's arms in the end, the image of black Pietà described above resembles Candace's holding the suffering mother like a baby in her arms.⁵ While Truth represents a black woman's power to sooth human suffering, Candace in this story connotes more than that—female religion based on love in contrast to male dogmatic one. As many critics note, the scene marks a historical moment of “feminization of religion” (Eakin 41; Harris, Introduction xii; Sato 135), for it signifies the shift from a Puritan patriarchal religion that underlines human sinfulness to a maternal one based on love and forgiveness. As Candace, in her own simple yet expressive words, observes that “sick folks mus'n't hab strong meat” (202), suffering people need the tender love of Jesus, not hard dogmas: “*Look right at Jesus. . . . Don't ye 'member how He looked on His mother, when she stood faintin' an' tremblin' under de cross, jes' like you? He knows all about mothers' hearts*” (202).

Candace's success in redeeming the suffering mother highlights the superiority of the feeling heart to the mighty intellect. Though she presents a stereotype of the African American mammy (Harris, Introduction xiv)—rich outward expressions and overflowing emotions, utter ignorance resulting from lack of education but good instinctive perception of the truth, and physical idiosyncrasies such as corporal amplitude, rolling eyes, and wild guffaws, she is idealized as a loving mother who celebrates intuitive human feelings. Susan Harris acknowledges the importance of the role Candace plays in the story and argues that Stowe uses such a marginal figure as Candace as her mouthpiece because the black woman can “articulate the unspoken” without threatening the community “where women are not expected to challenge the ‘truths’ arrived at by men” (Introduction xix). As her name means “light” in the ancient Greek, Candace embodies God's truth. In spite of her lack of Western knowledge (enlightenment), she sees where true love is. She represents the triumph of the heart over the head (intellect) in religion.

Candace's “light” is in some way inherited by Mary, for the young woman comes to intensify her intuitive love for the poor after the episode mentioned above. Just like Mrs. Marvyn, Mary is also tested as a true Christian through the ordeal of the “death” of James. After a long silent

agony, she begins to assume sacredness and speak like an angel. Hearing her spontaneous prayer, the women around her feel “a celestial light and warmth descending into their souls” (212; emphasis added). Something holy about Mary even strikes Hopkins; his way of calling her changes from “dear child” to “dear friend,” and finally “dearest of all friends” (220) as if she had become his equal coworker or even his spiritual guide: “he appeared to yield his soul up to her leading with a wonderful humility, as to some fair, miraculous messenger of Heaven” (219).

4. A Vision of Nation Building

As in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe often presents a matriarchal world as an alternative to the male-dominant society. She seems to believe that the nation governed by male rules is failing, its most conspicuous wrong manifested in slavery, and that women's power and values are required to rescue the nation. The “feminization” of religion discussed in the previous section, therefore, implies her view of a new nation that will replace the old one. In other words, the religious matter is in parallel with the issue of nation building. By examining the religious reform in the story, we may delve into Stowe's vision of America, which faces now the greatest crisis of disunion over slavery.

The feminization of religion, in fact, is related with two important factors, its democratization and cosmopolitanism. Most of the women supporting the secular life of Hopkins hardly understand his highly theoretical doctrines, but they “feel” his genuine piety and great devotion to God. Candace, for instance, could never accept the catechistic teaching of the original sin because she “nebber did eat dat ar' apple” (82). Arguments made “no manner of impression on her” (82), but once she was convinced of justice in his exertion for liberating her cousin in bondage, she began to uphold him wholeheartedly: “I's gwine to b'liebe every word you say. . . . I did eat dat ar' apple, —I eat de whole tree, an' swallowed ebery bit ob it, if you say so” (83).

Prissy, a seamstress, is another marginal figure of the town and, like Candace, does not understand the details of the minister's difficult theory, but “feels” the sacredness of what he preaches. She knows the intrinsic value of Dr. Hopkins and determines to support him after the “unpopular” sermon

against slavery. Like Candace, she too plays an important role in the novel as a character who instinctively sees through to what is right and what is wrong. By highlighting these marginal women, Stowe attempts to record the historical moment when religious truths were no longer kept exclusively by a select few male scholars with esoteric learning but were open to the masses, to anyone with a feeling heart, and thus announces the democratization of religion.

Prissy serves to endorse this democratic mode of religion by bringing the material into the spiritual. Being impressed by the minister's sublime talk about the millennium, she expresses her own religious elevation by offering to sew a ruffled shirt for him: "*I should like to hemstitch the Doctor's ruffles; he is so spiritually-minded, it really makes me love him*" (120). She pays the spiritual gains with material goods as if to say that they are convertible. Nor does the author slight the material world either, for "so long as we have a body and a soul," the "[two] worlds must mingle, —the great and the little, the solemn and the trivial" (120).

The equal affirmation of the two worlds is a celebration of wholeness, of the integration of the physical and the spiritual. This can indicate a critical view of the world divided by gender, race, or religious denomination. We have already examined Stowe's criticism of the binary social structure based on gender division—male intellectual activities in the public sphere and female emotional experiences in the private one, and its collateral hierarchical estimation of the two, that is, the superiority of the former to the latter. The dominance of the male spiritual world causes female activities to be devalued, minimized, or expunged in the formal records of national history. Stowe's reevaluation of female domestic activities is, in a sense, an attempt to uncover and imprint women's experiences made invisible in male-centered history. And it is at this point that Prissy might be viewed in full close-up, for the author seems to interpose her own vision of ideal America in the description of the seamstress's struggle to create a piece of art.

Prissy's trade, sewing, is emblematic in a double sense: it symbolizes both women's faculties and domestic values. Sewing was one of the most important skills required of Victorian women⁶ and is closely associated with "domesticity." Prissy possesses a magic art of restoring "a dress faded and defaced" to "more than pristine splendor" by "turning, twisting, piecing, contriving, and, by unheard-of inventions of trimming" (112). Prissy's

excellent skills in stitching and ingenuity in reforming an old worn dress into a new fashionable one, therefore, represent women's creative power as well as their faculty in practical matters.

This female power is most explicitly illustrated in the scene of quilt-making where each of the town women brings her small pieces of cloth to create one large quilt with a totally new design. This conjures up the political prospect of women reforming the old world made by men into a new democratic nation. Given the fact that the novel was written in an era when the United States was in the crisis of disunion, the making of a grand design by the cooperation of women, both rich and poor, single and married, young and old, and black and white, suggests Stowe's vision of America as an alternative to the male-centered, hierarchical, racist society menaced with an imminent war.

Prissy, who arranges and directs the whole project of quilt-making, is compared to an army general commanding his division, though in quite a comical way. The image of reform Prissy is endowed with further expands to a renewal of America by replacing the older generation with the younger one. Indeed, it is Prissy who braves herself to tell the doctor the truth of Mary's love for James and, thereby, leads him to unfasten his ties with Mary and to refasten her with young James, the rising generation. Hopkins in fact is described as a man of the older generation who fought in the Revolutionary War; he was an enthusiastic patriot and supported the new republic; yet "he was brought up under the shadow of a throne" and his soul "trained from its earlier years in the habits of thought engendered by monarchical institutions," so that he devotes himself to God as to a mighty King (16). After a night of intense agony due to Prissy's truth-telling, Hopkins resolutely yields his position of the heroine's bridegroom to James. The scene of his gallant handing over of Mary to James seems to envision a symbolic moment of succession of the throne between generations:

"Mary, my dear child," he said, "I will be to thee as a father, but I will not force thy heart."

At this moment, Mary, by a sudden, impulsive movement, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, and lay sobbing on his shoulder.

"No! no!" she said, — "I will marry you, as I said!"

“Not if I will not,” he replied, with a benign smile. “Come here, young man,” he said, with some authority, to James. “I give thee this maiden to wife.” And he lifted her from his shoulder, and placed her gently in the arms of the young man, who, overawed and overcome, pressed her silently to his heart. (319)

We may note here that Hopkins retreats to the role of Mary’s father instead of her future husband and calls her “child” again. He withdraws from the main stage and thereby ends his wooing. This scene reminds us of repeated rituals in American literature that allude to a birth of new nation.

Lydia Maria Child, for instance, inserts a scene in her story of early America, *Hobomok* (1824), in which the “Indian” hero, sensing that his white wife, Mary, still loves Charles, who was believed dead but who, just like James, has come back alive, declares to return Mary to his white rival. Kathryn Sedgwick, also presenting a narrative of relationships between Indians and whites in the New England colonial days, concludes her *Hope Leslie* (1827) with the Indian girl, Magawiska, stepping aside for the white couple, Hope and Everell; like Hopkins, Magawiska celebrates the new couple by effacing herself into the background. Both of these fictional scenes induce the reader to anticipate that the future generation of the white race will build and lead a new democratic America based on love. And both authors record a dramatic moment of the end of the old world and the beginning of a new republic, while drawing the reader’s attention to the sacrifice made by the native Americans who are to vanish into the remote retreating wilderness.

It is true that neither Child nor Sedgwick was able to incorporate the “dark” hero(ine) into the mainstream of American culture. Yet these female historical romancers made a bold attempt to present a possible peaceful resolution to the race problem by means of miscegenation: Child has the son of Mary and Hobomok assimilate to the dominant white society and Sedgwick constructs sisterhood between the Indian and white heroines literally as well as figuratively by marrying Hope’s sister to Magawiska’s brother. Compared with the works of frontier romance by their contemporary male writers, most notably James Fenimore Cooper, it becomes evident that they have much modified the conventional genre with their emphasis on women’s power in correcting the course of the nation, through their

sympathetic view of native Americans, who almost unexceptionally are destined to extinction on the plane of masculine battles, and by their presenting a more pacifist approach to nation-building that often suggests a certain degree of miscegenation. Child even dares to place the issue of mixed marriage between the black and white races in the center of her later novel with the symbolic title, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867).

What would have been unthinkable for Stowe perhaps is to take up this issue of miscegenation between whites and blacks as a major theme of her novel. This is probably because the topic of “amalgamation” was the touchiest issue in the 1850s; it was the very ground on which the proslavery speech of the time was founded to silence antislavery discourses.⁷ Stowe might well have avoided the topic in order to appeal to the common sentiment of her larger audience. What Stowe resorted to instead was to give voice to such minor characters as Candace and Prissy.

Stowe might have been even more radical, however, than her female predecessors in that she makes Prissy single and financially independent. Making the very “female” skill, sewing, her means of wage-earning, Prissy is able to not only support herself but also become an indispensable member of the community, as Hester Prynne did in *The Scarlet Letter*. Moreover, though remaining unmarried, she obtained a certain kind of freedom in a decisively patriarchal society. By the Victorian standards of True Womanhood, Prissy is obviously unladylike in two respects, being an “old maid” and working outside the home, yet these elements secure her high mobility for collecting and sharing with others gossip but useful information for the community members to help one another. They also enable her independent action to rectify and reform wrongs as seen symbolically in her uniting Mary and James.

It becomes apparent that Prissy suggests an alternative life to the conventional one set for women of the time when we remember Mrs. Shelby’s crying over her own helplessness in rescuing her slaves, Eva’s merely entreating her father to emancipate his slaves, or Nina’s entire dependence upon the management of her estate by her able half-brother, Harry. Stowe had already depicted in *Dred* a southern lady who groaned about the helplessness caused by her rushed marriage and the self-proclaimed spinster Anne, who prides herself in reforming slaves’ conditions, hinting no doubt that marriage is not everything to women. Considering

those authors of domestic novels who demarcate the sphere of their female characters within the home, after all, in spite of their great creativity and ingenuity in making money—think of the heroines of *Ruth Hall* (1854), *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), *Little Women* (1868, 1869), or *The Story of Avis* (1877)—the fact that Prissy remains single and work for money to the end is more significant than it at first appears to be.

Although Prissy does not belong to the dominant middle class and does not expect a social rise even at the end of the story, Stowe gives her a very important role to close the story: the results of the failure of the minister's wooing are related in her "gossipy" letter to her sister. Nancy Schultz, who sees an analogy between sewing and storytelling, regards Prissy's replacing the narrator, who represents the middle-class values in antebellum America, as rather subversive (34-37); the perspective of the able seamstress serves to relativize the cultural and economic structure of the dominant class. By forwarding Prissy's overviews of the town toward the end of her novel, Stowe seems to open up a new way for women's economic independence and its collateral spiritual freedom.

5. Foreign Elements

The quilt-gathering presided over by Prissy does not restrict its members to women; men, both young and old, rich and poor, join the gathering and are equally allowed, despite their minuscule contribution to the project, to partake of the rich and merry feast after the sewing. Nor does it exclude those outside the community, like Virginie, the French lady who has escaped her seducer, Aaron Burr, and has sought refuge in Mary's attic. The story of Virginie, set in the frame of popular sentimental seduction novels like *Charlotte Temple* (1791) and *The Coquette* (1797), provides a striking contrast with that of the New England heroine, Mary. Interposing a seduction plot into the seemingly colorless story of religious people, Stowe appears to be trying to entertain the (female) readers who had been brought up with sentimental novels; yet Mary's courageous confrontation with Burr and successful attempt to drive him away for the sake of her French friend conclude the seduction plot itself just as Prissy does the minister's wooing. In this respect Stowe surmounts the limitation of the conventional literary genre.⁸

However, Stowe's interest does not seem to lie so much in the literary genre as in its effect on the prospect of America, for she seems to grope for an ideal America by comparing the two representative women of different cultural and religious backgrounds. As many critics point out, Stowe introduces in her fiction many images of Europe and other foreign districts. Not only does she compare Mary, as one of the "soul-artists" (78), who see through to the "divine original" among the coarse or incomplete creatures, to European masters of art like Michelangelo who intuitively saw "an angel" in "a block of marble" (77), but also inserts into her narrative sundry "exotic" ornaments from foreign countries—Mrs. Scudder's shawls of rich Chinese embroidery, Mary's India muslin and her necklace of "Venetian shells" (233), and Candace's "flaming red and yellow turban of Moorish stuff" and her "pair of gorgeous yellow morocco slippers with peaked toes" (69). These foreign souvenirs were brought by Mary's father and James, both of whom had seen a wider world as sailors.

However trivial each item may appear, this inlay of foreign articles serves to bring heterogeneous elements to their provincial, small New England community. Being a sort of outcast in a strict religious society, James would "often shock the established prejudices" (18) with his new ideas and contempt for the orthodox dogmas. He declares that it gives him more merits to see Mary than to listen to a sermon in church and that she is "a living gospel" while he "can't make head or tail of a word Dr. Hopkins says" (24). Despite his infidel discourses, the author hints that he in a way sees through to the truth by making him reproach the minister's sermon for lacking a sense of reality: "He has got what they call a system . . . but it is too narrow to take in all I see in my wanderings round this world of ours" (44). James even suggests, as Ishmael of *Moby-Dick* might have declared, that Hopkins would know better what he should say to his congregation if he "would take a voyage round the world in the fore-castle of a whaler" (44).

James's criticism of New England religion as well as his gifts from overseas signals the existence of other diversified people and cultures. Virginie also represents this view of the Other, providing comments on American society from a European and Catholic perspective. As the narrative proceeds, Virginie replaces James who becomes invisible in the main action of the novel. She assumes the role of assessing the young republic, appraising what is good and denouncing the repressive aspects in the light of

her own culture, and thus to relativize the values held by New Englanders.

In the chapter entitled “New England in French Eyes,” Stowe inserts a letter by Virginie addressed to one of her French friends, in which she appreciates the self-supportive simple life in the northern town based on manual labor, like spinning, feeding the livestock, and making butter: “These people in the country here in America have a character quite their own, very different from the life of cities, where one sees, for the most part, only a continuation of the forms of good society which exist in the Old World. . . . [These] people seem simple, grave, severe, always industrious” (281). With special emphasis upon the fact that people there “keep no servants, but perform all the household work themselves” (282), she even calls the town “the true Arcadia” (282). It is evident that the author speaks through the French lady’s voice that a life without slaves is not only possible but the best way. And, while endorsing the New England way, almost tantamount to Jeffersonian democracy based on independent farmers in opposition to the industrial materialism of city life, Virginie, the prodigal young wife of a rich aristocrat, also transforms herself gradually from a mere beautiful object to be adored to a useful woman who can appreciate and help others like Mary.

Yet she also points out the very contradiction of America, maintaining the inhuman system of slavery while declaring that “all men are created equal.” And she reacts, just like James, against the provincial strictness of New England life and intuitively notices the danger in stretching logic too much in the spiritual sphere. Indeed, it is Virginie alone in the story who insinuates that Dr. Hopkins will make a “dull” husband (232) for Mary. Unlike Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women* (1868), in which her heroine marries a father-like mentor contrary to the expectations of its readers, Stowe uses Virginie to bring a true romance to Mary, who declines to give priority to her personal desires over her duties. By repeatedly decorating the Puritan girl, Virginie attempts to bring out her hidden love for James.

This subtle shift toward romance, however, does not make Mary less religious, for religion is, as John Gatta argues, entwined with beauty for Stowe (420). What Virginie aims is to add a touch of color to Mary, who has become almost a “New England nun” (Eakin 42-43). Virginie is in fact described as a person who can appreciate “the picturesque side of every condition of life” (232); she is an artist who makes poetry of life. The

Catholic woman serves to revise the Calvinist tradition that tends to eliminate all surface embellishment of life. This shows the influence on Stowe of her trips to Europe, where she saw many cathedrals and churches decorated with beautiful works of art (Hedrick 264-68); she probably thereby acknowledged the religious effects of those visual icons in elevating the human soul.

Virginie thus helps to make Mary a Christian wife. As we have already seen, Mary's marriage with James suggests an attainable vision of the newly built democratic nation. This is why the description of the married couple in the denouement is deeply tinged with optimistic prospects in both religious and economic terms. In spite of its late-eighteenth-century background, *The Minister's Wooing* accounts a possible ideal course for contemporary Americans. With the aid of foreign views, Stowe thus aims to reform the traditional male-centered rigid society, which has come to the impasse in the anti- and pro-slavery battle, into a more liberal and democratic one.

[Part III: Antislavery Literature after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*]

Chapter 7

Harriet Beecher Stowe and Abraham Lincoln

1. Stowe and Lincoln at a Crossroads

We have seen certain characteristics of Stowe's antislavery novels and the literary development of her antislavery discourses while examining the three novels *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Dred*, and *The Minister's Wooing*. In this section (Part III), we will explore the interrelations between Stowe's antislavery fiction, especially *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and other antislavery works by her contemporary writers, most of which were published in the 1850s. This will illuminate both the differences and intertextuality among antislavery descriptions of the time. We begin this examination with Abraham Lincoln's political speeches, because Stowe and Lincoln seem to share many ideas about the nation, and each of them has become a kind of national icon.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–96) was a contemporary of Abraham Lincoln (1809–65), the sixteenth president of the United States—she was only two years his junior. Although the two met just once, in that legendary interview in the White House in late 1862, Stowe and Lincoln had much in common. Each of them grew up in a northern state bordering the South (for Stowe it was Ohio, while for Lincoln it was Indiana and Illinois). Likewise, each grew up in a Western (frontier) town that was being rapidly urbanized (for Stowe it was Cincinnati, while for Lincoln it was New Salem and Springfield). Thus each came from a border area, in two senses of the word. The geographical boundaries also signify social and political divisions as to slavery, which had become the subject of nationwide discussion by the 1850s.

Stowe witnessed slavery firsthand when she visited Kentucky, which was across the Ohio River, while Lincoln saw several slaves chained on a boat heading down the Mississippi toward New Orleans. The experience of

living in a border area helped form their stance toward slavery. It simultaneously cultivated their sympathy for poor slaves and prevented them from falling into a self-righteous sectionalism that would lay all the blame for the inhuman institution on Southerners. They were definitely against slavery from the start but were not militant abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison or Wendell Phillips. And yet in the end they became abolitionists of a sort. Stowe became an abolitionist by writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,¹ serialized in the *National Era*, a moderate antislavery weekly newspaper,² from June 1851 to April 1852.³ Meanwhile, Lincoln was forced over a much longer term to be an abolitionist by participating in a number of political debates and by leading the nation through its biggest crisis, the Civil War (1861–65).

Thomas Gossett suggests that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may have contributed greatly to Lincoln's election as president in 1860 (183–84). In this sense, Stowe and Lincoln had interacted with each other even before they met. Gossett introduces several examples that illustrate the effect of Stowe's novel on public support for the Republican Party, with its antislavery policy, as opposed to the Democratic Party's proslavery (or laissez-faire) policy, in the 1850s. Rufus Choate, "a prominent proslavery lawyer," was afraid that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would make "two millions of abolitionists" (183). A biographer of Horace Greeley argued that the "chief force in developing support for the Republican Party in the 1850s had been *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (183). Many postbellum historians also maintained that "the novel had been the most important source for opposition to slavery in the North" (184). Moreover, James Ford Rhodes, looking back in 1893, was convinced that the novel was responsible for Lincoln's winning the 1860 presidential election:

The great influence of Mrs. Stowe's book . . . was shown in bringing home to the hearts of the people the conviction that slavery is an injustice; and, indeed, the impression it made upon bearded men was not so powerful as its appeal to women and boys. The mother's opinion was a potent educator in politics between 1852 and 1860, and boys in their teens in the one year were voters in the other. (184)

It is probably not as a compliment alone, therefore, that Lincoln asked—if

the reports are true—that famous question, “So you’re the little woman who made this big war?” when he welcomed Stowe to his official residence.⁴ Lincoln might have paid sincere tribute to this woman whose “pen” dramatically transformed Americans’ position on slavery into one aligned with the Republican Party, which in antebellum America was still a new and minor political group.

This interaction, both visible and invisible, between the author of a million-selling novel and the political leader serving before and during the war culminated in their legendary meeting mentioned above. Although the meeting remains the only episode involving Stowe that has entered history as almost an appendix of the far larger event, the war itself, it has evoked a symbolic scene for many Americans. Harry Townsend, for instance, pictures the scene with Lincoln facing toward us, the viewers of the drawing, with only his eyes pointed at Stowe, who speaks to him, showing her profile to us (See Figure 1).⁵ This picture is more significant for its symbolism than for any actual political effect it might have had. Lincoln sits here as the commander-in-chief of the Union armies, assuming the highest responsibility for the war, while Stowe is a mere mother-wife-citizen, albeit a famous writer.

Here, the two contrasting elements manifest themselves: masculinity, most conspicuously represented in combat, confronts the female power symbolized in motherhood, which often invokes an image of sacrifice, especially in times of war. Given that Stowe was already a literary titan by 1862, the image of her speaking on equal terms with the commander-in-chief indicates that a female “pen” can be as mighty as a male “sword.” At the same time, the picture reveals the president’s broad-mindedness in allowing a woman to interfere in “male” politics in the midst of warfare: Lincoln, in fact, received many civilians—both male and female, white and black—as well as soldiers and government officials in the White House, and Stowe was just one of them.

Despite the various images it conjures up, Townsend’s picture suggests one important factor that the two figures painted on the canvas share: the power of language, which can change the whole nation. If Stowe “caused” the big war with a single book, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which he was ready to issue at that time, eventually ended the war. The proclamation not only liberated black slaves but also consolidated the moral

cause of the Union in order to discourage foreign intervention as well as to heighten the morale of Northerners. As Wilbert Jenkins says, “all changed with the stroke of a pen” (19). When the president welcomed Stowe to the White House, he might have had the draft in his pocket, for he had revised it many times for several months before finally making it public on January 1, 1863. Lincoln trusted in language no less firmly than Stowe and wielded his pen as adroitly as his female guest. Indeed, both Stowe and Lincoln became “national heroes” by uniting the complicated, multilayered problems of politics, economy, race, class, and gender in the singular issue of slavery and presenting it in a clear, persuasive discourse understandable to all Americans.

This chapter examines how Stowe and Lincoln, respectively, manipulated their language to cultivate and strengthen antislavery sentiment in Americans and how their rhetorical antislavery discourses resonated with each other in mid-nineteenth-century America to help drive the nation to the final emancipation.

2. Stowe’s Kingdom of Motherhood

Harriet Beecher Stowe, like her father Lyman Beecher, was not a fervent antislavery crusader: “In the 1830s she criticized militant abolitionists for indulging in ‘excess’ and felt that ‘an intermediary society’ between slavery and freedom would be preferable to immediate abolition” (Kimball 139; Warner 62).⁶ It is worth noting here that avoiding “excess” to choose a middle ground is Lincoln’s main stance as well. What alarmed Stowe, as well as many others in the literary world in the North, was the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. The law obliged Northerners to hand over runaway slaves to their “lawful” southern masters and made them responsible both politically and morally for the slaves’ fate; thus slavery was no longer an institution only of the South. Henry, the eldest of the Beecher brothers, perceived that the law brought “the abomination of slavery to our very door” (Hedrick 194) and urged Stowe to write a book on the subject (E. Wilson 31). Another brother, Edward, and his wife, Isabella, the most militant abolitionists in the extended Beecher family, also urged her to write something against slavery. She once received a letter from Isabella that read, “Hattie, if I could use a pen as you can, I would write something to make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is.” In response, Stowe is

said to have stood up, with the letter in her clenched hand, and declared, “I will write something. I will if I live” (Fields, *Life and Letters* 130; Hedrick 207).

Stowe did produce a work that would reverberate throughout the whole country. When she proposed a serial story to Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of the *Era*, she had in mind only three or four installments, but it gradually grew into a much longer, more sprawling story than she and Bailey had expected. This expansion of the story owes much to the enthusiastic responses of and encouragement from the *Era*’s readers. But it also comes from an aspect of the narrative itself. For even before it was serialized in the *Era*, Stowe already knew that it would not be completed in a few installments:

As the “three or four numbers” became five or six and the fortnight it was going to take to turn them out was already a month and she was still only on the threshold of the story, Harriet became aware that she was setting forth to write a novel. (F. Wilson 162)⁷

Stowe seems to have realized what a massive task she has set out for herself the moment she pens the first scene, in which two “gentlemen” are bargaining over a slave in the parlor of a Kentucky plantation house. She attempted a work nobody had ever dared before: a novel dealing with slavery. Slavery as a literary subject was quite unpopular and was, above all, a touchy political problem.⁸ In this sense, Stowe was courageous enough to center her story on the slavery issue—the very issue that menaced the United States with disunion and the core source of contradiction in mid-nineteenth-century American democracy. By attempting to depict what slavery was, she probably realized that she was struggling to grasp an America that had already grown into a giant nation of multicultural, multiracial, and hierarchical societal groups.

Stowe sends the main slaves of her story outside Kentucky, where “the mildest form of the system of slavery is to be seen” (50). She moves Eliza and her husband, George Harris, north as far as Canada through Ohio and Indiana; she sends Tom down the Mississippi to New Orleans, which is notorious for its huge slave market and for engaging in the harshest form of slavery. The two longitudinal journeys up and down the country endow

Uncle Tom's Cabin with the element of an American epic (Moers 136). Josephine Donovan regards the story as "the first epic novel written by a woman" (*Uncle Tom's* 9).

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is comparable to Melville's *Moby-Dick* (Itabashi 42)⁹ in its wide range of topics and regions. It could also be said that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a kind of American *Pilgrim's Progress*, an indigenous *Divine Comedy*, in which the 'inferno' is the final stopping place and the 'paradiso' only an intimation" (Douglas 29). Stowe unwittingly produced a work with the potential to join the body of distinctively American literature being formed by her contemporary male authors around the 1850s.

The mid-nineteenth century was the era of the American Renaissance, when a national literature different from that of Europe, especially of England, was called for. At that time, "nature" was regarded as the most authentic subject matter for American literature, as seen in the works by male authors such as Cooper, Emerson, Whitman, and Melville. Stowe's novel challenges this male tradition and offers a new and more immediate topic that is unmistakably American. Slavery, however, is no mere literary subject to Stowe: it has become a "catalyst" for delving into American society. She probes and analyzes the structure of the nation by narrating about the patriarchal system. Identifying the Civil War "as a catalyst for nationalist reevaluations," Benjamin Spencer argues that "[after] the beginning of hostilities . . . most American writers of an analytical temper turned from a consideration of the character of the national literature to the graver and more elemental issue of the national structure: Union or Confederacy" (Elsden 64). Composing the narrative of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe exposes how the nation and the home, as its basic unit, are in a crisis of division and destruction, and how the souls of human beings are in danger of disintegration and corruption. She attempts throughout the story to persuade her readers that women's power based on domestic values can be a viable asset for uniting the nation and the races.

Examining the system of slavery naturally leads us to the political/legal issue of the individual right to property. Since the Constitution stipulates, albeit in a very ambiguous way, that black slaves are property, arguing against slavery involves friction with the national law. This is part of the reason why Lincoln postponed the announcement of the Emancipation

Proclamation until January 1863.¹⁰ William Garrison, a militant abolitionist, even publicly burned a copy of the Constitution on July 4, 1854 (Reynolds 78). Breaking the federal law is serious and could cause social turmoil, yet refusing to help a poor slave who is being returned to bondage could torment one's conscience. Stowe dramatizes this dilemma in a scene where George, the mulatto slave, argues with his former employer, Wilson, over the justice of his running away disguised as a white gentleman. Wilson represents the ordinary good citizen in antebellum America: as a pious Christian, he is sympathetic to the oppressed slave, but at the same time, he cannot overlook George's illegal escape, because, as a respectable citizen, he feels he must help preserve "law and order" (183). When Wilson warns him against breaking "the laws of your country," George rebukes him, referring to the Declaration of Independence, the sacred document of the American Revolution. Let us quote his claim here again:

My country again! Mr. Wilson, *you* have a country; but what country have *I*, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don't make them,—we don't consent to them,—we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven't I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches? Don't you tell us all, once a year, that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed? Can't a fellow *think*, that hears such things? Can't he put this and that together, and see what it comes to? (185)¹¹

George's refutation is based on the Declaration of Independence, which declares that "all men are created equal," guarantees them "inalienable rights" ("life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"), and stipulates that American governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed" (337–38), a statement of popular sovereignty. George's impassioned speech makes it evident that this sacred law secures nothing for African Americans and that they have no part in "the consent of the governed." Just as the document accuses the British of exercising unjust control over the colonies, George denounces whites' unjust control of blacks in the South. Comparing his bold struggle against slavery to the Revolutionary War, he justifies his violence: "I'll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it; if it was right for them, it is right for me!" (187). Here George

not only reveals the injustice of slavery, which deprives African Americans of their human rights, but also legitimizes slave revolts through an analogy with the War of Independence.

Stowe, however, was uncertain whether violence was a proper means of reforming society. Rebellious and somewhat impious George is eventually tamed by his conversion to true Christianity with the aid of religious Eliza. Instead of a militant masculine force, Stowe advocates the power of Christian and maternal love to dissolve the evil in American democracy. As many critics point out, Eva and Tom are representative icons of Christian love. They illustrate the potential power of self-sacrificial love to save American society and function as ideal models to “influence” many others around them. Thus Eva transforms her father, St. Clare the atheist; Topsy, the loveless black child; and Ophelia, the well-meaning but somewhat dogmatic Puritan. Meanwhile, Tom, emulating Eva, saves Sambo and Quimbo, the ignorant henchmen of a wicked slaveholder, Legree, as well as Cassy, Legree’s desperate mixed-race concubine, and eventually drives George Shelby, through his martyrdom, to emancipate all the slaves the young master inherited from his father.

Most of the mothers, even the dead ones, who appear in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* offer maternal love, which is, to Stowe, synonymous with Christian love. Mrs. Shelby, for instance, inculcates the spirit of Christianity in her son, and in her slaves as well, as if they were her own children. However, she realizes that her Christian motherly kindness cannot save the slaves before the harsh reality of male business—Mr. Shelby has sold Tom and Eliza’s son Harry to pay off the debt: “This is God’s curse on slavery. . . . I thought I could gild it over,—I thought, by kindness, and care, and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom—fool that I was!” (84). Here Stowe shows that efforts to improve the condition of slaves within the institution never guarantee their well-being or safety. She thus subverts the prevailing proslavery conception that blacks are happier under the institution as they are protected by “benevolent” masters.

This scene shows that Mrs. Shelby is utterly helpless in terms of financial management. Because a lady is not expected to perform public activities in the patriarchal society of the South, what she can offer is only this small assistance, and the “bargain” of the slaves is made between the two “gentlemen” without consulting her at all. Yet she accomplishes the

emancipation of the slaves through her son George, whom she has brought up as a good Christian citizen. This signifies the idea of what Linda Kerber calls the “Republican Mother”: the idea that mothers take part in public affairs by bringing up and educating their children into good citizens to guide the nation properly. This idea indicates that the power of mothers lies in “influence.” Besides Mrs. Shelby’s power of influence as a mother, however, Stowe also seems to suggest her potential business acumen. The novel hints that widowed Shelby manages the plantation better than her dead husband: “Mrs. Shelby, with characteristic energy, applied herself to the work of straightening the entangled web of affairs,” and she made everything into a “tangible and recognizable shape” to rebuild the economy of the plantation (587).

Mrs. Bird, the wife of a senator, is another able woman who keeps her home in order, so that her parlor, the center of the home, looks very cozy and bright: “The light of the cheerful fire shone on the rug and carpet of a cosey parlor, and glittered on the sides of the tea-cups and well-brightened tea-pot” (141). Gillian Brown points out that the order of the kitchen implies the moral goodness of the mistress who presides over the place (13–29). Mrs. Bird is a typical domestic woman for whom “[her] husband and children were her entire world,” and she governs this domestic sphere “more by entreaty and persuasion than by command or argument” (143). Although she humbly admits she is ignorant about politics, she instinctively feels and declares that the Fugitive Slave Act is an un-Christian and inhuman law. Even though Mr. Bird chides her for interfering, Mrs. Bird criticizes male politics for sacrificing “private feelings” under the pretext of “public interests” (145). Holding the Bible as the highest law people should follow, she tries to persuade her husband that helping a poor distressed slave is the Christian thing to do. The appearance of Eliza, a helpless fugitive slave, presents the hard reality of “personal suffering,” overwhelming the abstract conception of “public interests.” Thus, Mr. Bird, encouraged by his wife, comes to help Eliza, defying the very law for which he has just voted as a senator.

Stowe belittles male political activity by contrasting this scene, in which Mr. Bird yields to his personal emotions, with the glorious one in which he successfully spoke for the law: “Our good senator in his native state had not been exceeded by any of his brethren at Washington, in the sort of

eloquence . . . ! How sublimely he had sat with his hands in his pockets, and scouted all sentimental weakness of those who would put the welfare of a few miserable fugitives before great state interests!" (155) The appearance of Eliza reveals his lack of imagination: "He had never thought that a fugitive might be a hapless mother, a defenseless child" (156).

As in the case of the Birds, home in Stowe's novel is not a private space separate from the public but rather a primary place where public affairs are brought and examined. It is a realm dominated by domestic virtues, from which social reform develops and spreads to a larger society by the female power of "influence." Stowe's idea of home, therefore, presents a community alternative to a society governed by men. The Quaker family of the Hallidays that Eliza is next taken to signifies an ideal matriarchal community that Stowe envisions for America. Here Mrs. Rachel Halliday, like Mrs. Bird, keeps everything in order and immaculate, which brings great comfort:

A large, roomy, neatly-painted kitchen, its yellow floor glossy and smooth, and without a particle of dust; a neat, well-blackened cooking-stove; rows of shining tin, suggestive of unmentionable good things to the appetite; a small flag-bottomed rocking-chair, with a patch-work cushion in it, neatly contrived out of small pieces of different colored woolen goods, and a larger sized one, motherly and old, whose wide arms breathed hospitable invitation, seconded by the solicitation of its feather cushions,—a real comfortable, persuasive old chair, and worth, in the way of honest, homely enjoyment, a dozen of your plush or brochetelle drawing-room gentry. . . . (214)

A clean, neatly kept kitchen reflects the mistress's moral, spiritual, and religious purity. The hospitality of its furniture indicates that the place is open to everybody, and Rachel's chair, above all, signifies her character: "for twenty years or more, nothing but loving words, and gentle moralities, and motherly loving kindness, had come from that chair" (215). Here everything is ruled by motherly affection. Rachel commands this place by gentle suggestion or mild persuasion such as "Thee had better" or "Hadn't thee better?" rather than masculine order: "'Mary, hadn't thee better tell John to get a chicken ready?' and Mary disappeared accordingly" (222). Rachel's home is not walled off from the outside world but is opened to the neighbors,

who cooperate with each other. One neighbor, a young mother named Ruth, brings a cake for Eliza's son, while Rachel's daughter Mary takes care of Ruth's baby. When there is a sick person in need of help, many neighbors go in turns to help however and whenever they can:

"And how is Abigail Peters?" said Rachel, as she went on with her biscuits.

"O, she's better," said Ruth; "I was in, this morning; made the bed, tidied up the house. Leah Hills went in, this afternoon, and baked bread and pies enough to last some days; and I engaged to go back to get her up, this evening."

"I will go in to-morrow, and do any cleaning there may be, and look over the mending," said Rachel.

"Ah! that is well," said Ruth. "I've heard," she added, "that Hannah Stanwood is sick. John was up there, last night—I must go there to-morrow." (218)

Mutual aid based on motherly love is predominant in this community. Quilting, as we have seen in the previous chapter on *The Minister's Wooing*, has traditionally been regarded as women's cooperative work. The patchwork cushion put on Rachel's chair represents the virtue of mutual aid in the matriarchal community.¹² And the cushion "neatly contrived out of small pieces of different colored woollen goods" implies a community open to people of different races, different classes, different sexes. This idealized matriarchal community presents a utopia that Stowe offers as an alternative to the male society that has reached the impasse of slavery.¹³ Rachel's home is extended to a larger world or, rather, the whole community has become a kind of large family. This is why Eliza, an escapee from outside, is called "my daughter" by Rachel (216). And it is in this family that Eliza, for the first time, has felt safe and had a sound sleep since she began her desperate pilgrimage for freedom. Likewise, it is in this family that George, for the first time in his life, has "sat down on equal terms at any white man's table" (223). Thus Stowe's 1852 novel anticipates, more than a hundred years in advance, the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., that "the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood" (Ravitch 333). King's somewhat patriarchal, vertical discourse

seems to be absorbed here in Stowe's matriarchal, horizontal, inclusive vision. The description of the Quaker community is idealized by Stowe and has a somewhat dreamy atmosphere, as Philip Fisher suggests (*Hard Facts* 111–13). The following quotation suggests Stowe's vision of the ideal home/nation to which America should aspire:

Everything went on so sociably, so quietly, so harmoniously, in the great kitchen,—it seemed so pleasant to every one to do just what they were doing, there was such an atmosphere of mutual confidence and good fellowship everywhere,—even the knives and forks had a social clatter as they went on to the table . . . and when George and Eliza and little Harry came out, they met such a hearty, rejoicing welcome, no wonder it seemed to them like a dream. (223)

3. Abraham Lincoln, a Prophetic Figure in the West

A. Reason and Passion

A close reading of Abraham Lincoln's speeches reveals the best of and the limits to what a Republican national leader could accomplish during the biggest crisis America had faced since the Revolution. Lincoln's years in the political arena, from the 1830s to the mid-1860s, correspond with an era of unprecedented territorial expansion and industrial development, which brought about an irreconcilable discord between the North and the South. The birth of new states, induced by rapid migration into the burgeoning territories, made the problem of slavery more and more conspicuous. A series of political compromises were enacted: the Missouri Compromise (1820), which invalidated the Mason-Dixon Line, the original dividing line between free states and slave states; the Compromise of 1850, a patchwork amendment that included the new Fugitive Slave Law, which obligated Northerners to catch and extradite runaway slaves; and the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), repealing the Missouri Compromise, which prohibited slavery north of the 36°30' parallel.

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 alarmed and caused many literary people in the North, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe, to campaign against slavery. Similarly, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of

1854 prompted Lincoln, who had retired to his law office in Springfield after serving for two years as a congressman in Washington, to return to the political arena. Since the Nebraska bill drafted by Stephen Douglas, his political rival, allowed the inhabitants of a new territory to decide whether it would be a slave state or a free state, Lincoln believed this law would lead to the unlimited expansion of slavery. Thus he began to challenge Douglas vigorously and engage in heated public discussions with him, known as the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

However, from the very beginning of his political career, Lincoln sensed an “approach of danger” (14) threatening the young Republic. He predicted that if any danger came, it would come from within, not from outside, the country—from the domestic institution of slavery. He stated that America’s democratic government was threatened with mobocracy, as revealed in the increasing number of broken rules and vigilante lynchings: if “the mobocratic spirit” (16) prevailed, “this Government cannot last” (17). In order to overcome this crisis, Lincoln urged Americans to “be united with each other” and to stand by “the government and laws” (20).

Like Stowe, Lincoln thought it best to avoid violence, which involves the explosion of human passion—anger, envy, or resentment—because the age of passion in which the American Revolution was achieved was over. He was firmly convinced that it was not a time for violence but a time to preserve what the national forefathers had established. He maintained this belief until the last minute, when a war became unavoidable. “[Let] us do nothing,” he repeated again and again in his speeches, “through passion and ill temper” (258). Instead of passion, he endorsed “reason,” which meant to him that lawyers and politicians should observe laws. The legal texts he revered were the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States: the former, he believed, was bestowed on humankind as a gift and was therefore immutable, like the Bible, while the latter could be amended based on the will of the people. These two legal documents constituted a “*political religion*” (17) to Lincoln, who had never belonged to any specific Christian church:

As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor; —let

every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the law, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe . . . let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. . . . And, in short, let it become the *political religion* of the nation. (17)

As Stowe appropriates Christianity to transcend regional, political, economic, or racial differences, so Lincoln attempts to preserve the unity of the nation by utilizing the “sacred” laws of the Founding Fathers.

On the whole, Lincoln's basic political principles did not deviate from the axis of these laws, though he wavered to some extent in his specific policies, mostly for the sake of political strategy, to make compromises or avoid conflicts with his opponents. As a lawyer, he advised, “Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can” (81). As a military leader, even during a war, which tends to inflame passions, he urged Captain James Cutts to avoid an unnecessary quarrel, using parabolic rhetoric—“Better give your path to a dog, than be bitten by him in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite” (402).

To the ambitious young politician from Illinois, the slavery issue presented a wrong worth challenging, just as it gave Stowe, then still an obscure writer in Ohio, a sense of mission to complete an antislavery novel, even to the extent that she ascribed its authorship to God (Sundquist, Introduction 5–6). Lincoln made it his public mission as well as his personal ambition to preserve the Union. As early as 1838, in his address before the Young Men's Lyceum, he states that it is the duty of his generation to “transmit” the legacy of the Founding Fathers to the next one (13).

As the nationwide divisions deepened, this sense of duty gradually expanded, culminating in the Gettysburg Address, one of Lincoln's most poetic and powerful speeches. It was delivered to commemorate those victims in the hard-fought battle at Gettysburg. Though consisting of only two paragraphs, the speech transforms a mere cemetery into a monumental intersection of cosmic time and space; a piece of land for the dead soldiers has become a place where a blessing of the past is handed to the future through the present ordeal, the Civil War, and a testing ground for showing the whole world that “a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to

the proposition that all men are created equal” (405) can be sustained.

Although the address is charged with patriarchal discourse, it does not indicate a mere succession of patrimony from fathers to sons, for the present generation is expected to bring about “a new birth of freedom” (405). What Lincoln achieves in his political speeches, to use Philip Fisher’s interpretation of Emerson, is to “create a new and larger circle” (*Still the New World* 16) of liberty by revising the meaning of “all men.” Thus the Declaration of Independence is, to Lincoln, no longer limited to the historical event—America’s independence from Great Britain—but is applied to “the universal liberty of mankind” (42) in the future as well. Thus to preserve the Union, his ultimate goal, means to him to renew and “re-adopt” (99) the liberty conceived by the Founding Fathers.

If he does succeed in achieving this, albeit with great sacrifice, it owes a great deal to his genius in logic and rhetoric to present the clash over slavery as a war of two incompatible principles, “civil liberty” and “*self-interest*” (94). In other words, he is able to reduce all the complex regional, political, economic, and moral frictions into two alternatives and to present them to the public in a persuasive language: “order loving” Northerners and “pleasure hunting” Southerners (14); reason to keep order by preserving laws and passion to unsettle society through an extreme burst of feelings or by violence (43); man and money (215). As seen in the last example, Lincoln dexterously reduces two big ideologies to a pair of simple, easily understood phrases or words and thus drives his audience to choose between the two alternatives. He asserts that Republicans value both human rights and personal property rights but that, if the two clash, “the man [comes] *before* the dollar” (215), while for Democrats, the dollar takes precedence over the man.

The cluster of these opposing notions in Lincoln’s speeches, on the other hand, suggests a clash of two kinds of liberalism: liberty for the good of the community and liberty for individual happiness. Immersed as we are in capitalism, we tend to associate liberalism with the Lockean view of natural rights. However, the eighteenth-century republicans regarded “private rights and personal enrichment” as corruptive and destructive to “the common good” and believed that they should be restrained by laws (Shulman, “Introduction” 153–54). Lincoln, an heir to eighteenth-century republicanism, felt its central ideology, “civil liberty,” jeopardized by

Southern whites' ideology of "self-interest." It is through the presidential campaign debates with the Democratic candidate Stephen Douglas, his rival, that his republican ideas are sharpened and enriched.

The crucial point is "popular sovereignty," which Douglas advocates in support of the Nebraska bill, which leaves the territory's inhabitants to decide whether to permit slavery or not. Lincoln, in an 1858 speech delivered at Edwardsville, Illinois, refutes the seemingly "democratic" proposition first by showing its true meaning and then by exposing Douglas's abuse of it. The original, true meaning of "popular sovereignty," he says, is "the right of the people of every nation and community to govern themselves" (161). Therefore, it accompanies the government's "just powers *from the consent of the governed*" to secure "certain inalienable rights" of the people (162). "Popular sovereignty" for Douglas, he further argues, is nothing but the whites' right to "breed and flog niggers" (162). When his attack on the logic of the Democratic Party ("let the people decide as they like") is repeated in an Aesopian metaphor of wolves' right to devour sheep (176), it takes on a vivid image and a sharp edge.

Lincoln clearly thinks it necessary for democratic society to restrict the personal pursuit of economic wealth. This sounds anachronistic, however, when we consider how capitalism, an embodiment of "self-interest," was thriving in nineteenth-century America. His vision of an ideal society, as expressed in his address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society (1859), is rather pastoral, even when talking about an industrial society, and surprisingly similar to what Jefferson had pictured several decades before. Here he envisions America as a free society consisting of independent farmers and small-scale household industries, where every person works for himself (and his family), echoing the view of America depicted in St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782),¹⁴ and where "the hired laborer" (234) signifies someone beginning to climb the career ladder and not someone stuck in a fixed class system.

In spite of the Marxist terminology of "labor" and "capital" (233), Lincoln's view of labor reveals a pre-capitalist, Jeffersonian agricultural society, in which hands (manual labor) are harmoniously combined with heads (intelligence) (235). What Lincoln fails to see are the screen that divides the employer from the employees in "Bartleby" (1853),¹⁵ the huge cylinder machine that consumes the poor working girls in "The Paradise of

Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” (1855), and the color line that excludes free blacks even from the lowest-paid jobs, as Frederick Douglass depicts in his 1845 autobiography. Lincoln was, in a sense, blind to the ongoing struggle of the people at the lowest level of society and spoke mostly for freeholders, artisans, shopkeepers, and factory owners. He was, after all, a spokesman for the white middle class, which constituted the vast majority of American society in the nineteenth century.

B. Lincoln and Race

In his address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, delivered in 1856 at Milwaukee, Lincoln constructed an idealized America based on free labor, a kind of utopia he offered for its future. However, Lincoln failed to grasp the full meaning of the emerging capitalism and its consequent rigid social hierarchy. His inability to understand the uncontrollable march of capitalism seems to be related to his “half-hearted” solution of slavery. From the start, he aims at a peaceful gradual emancipation and is firmly against abolition. While he believes that slavery is “a moral, social and political wrong” (190), he repeats his intention not to interfere with the existing institution in the South. Although he is sorry for the poor blacks “hunted down, and caught, and carried back” (102) to their masters to suffer much worse fates, he supports the Fugitive Slave Law drafted by Henry Clay, his political model, only because it is “constitutional.” During the Civil War, he was still reluctant to abolish slavery, and he even retracted General Fremont’s proclamation to free slaves. Until just before the final Emancipation Proclamation, he attempted to keep the border states loyal to the Union by allowing them to reclaim their slaves while permanently liberating all the slaves in the Confederate states. After all, with the Proclamation of January 1, 1863, Lincoln liberated only those slaves who could free themselves. He did not emancipate the slaves even in the border states and could not, in practice, liberate the slaves in the Confederate states until the South was defeated.

Like Jefferson, Lincoln was against slavery, and on a theoretical level, he was able to go as far as condemning any enslavement of one person by another for whatever reason in “Fragment on Slavery.”¹⁶ Yet in practice, he was not free from racial prejudice. He seemed to believe that black people

were innately inferior to white people, so he flatly denied the possibility of the “social and political equality” (173) of the two races. The equality of “all men,” in his understanding, was thus limited to the minimum right to “eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns” (149).

The policy of colonization of freed black people that he propounded doubtless reflects the sentiment of white supremacy prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century America, as he repeatedly insisted that the two races could not live together or intermarry because of their “apparent” physical differences. The differences, needless to say, implied the racial inferiority of the minority population—African Americans. This racial prejudice is also seen in Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, published in 1785. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Jefferson, though a slaveholder, was fundamentally against slavery and supported a gradual emancipation, but his proposed solution was “colonization”—resettling the freed blacks in Africa. Let us review his argument that the two races cannot coexist in America:

Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race. (145)

Here Jefferson points out two factors for promoting colonization: the physical difference (“the real distinctions which nature has made”) and historical circumstances (the whites’ “deep rooted prejudices” and the blacks’ grudges stemming from “the injuries” they had received for many years).¹⁷ Lincoln inherited Jefferson’s (and Clay’s) idea of colonization along with its racial prejudices, yet there is a great difference in their perceptions of this policy of resettling freed blacks outside America. For the sixteenth president, fighting a war over slavery, it was an urgent, realistic matter, while to Jefferson, it was merely an option available to future generations. As he started to prepare the Emancipation Proclamation in early 1862, Lincoln also sought ways to carry out the colonization. He got Congress to pass a bill earmarking 600,000 dollars for this project and made efforts to ensure a place for their immigration in Liberia, Panama, or Haiti (Jenkins 12–14).

Furthermore, he invited leaders of the black community to the White House to persuade them to agree with his plan, so that they would shape the views of their fellow African Americans. The address on colonization to the Committee of Colored Men (1862), a strange mixture of inculcation and patronizing, epitomizes the limits of what Lincoln, as a white national leader, could do for black people. Here he speaks to a group of black leaders like a benign father to his children. This reminds us of a recurring historical scene in which the U.S. president designates the representative native Americans as his children and thereby consolidates the racial stratum. The entire address comes from the viewpoint of a white ruler who gives a blessing to the “uncivilized” black race: the separation of the two races is for the safety of “you” (the black population); white men are killing each other because of “your” race; those free blacks who reject colonization are blind to its advantages and “extremely selfish”—“[for] the sake of your race you should sacrifice something of your present comfort” (339).

Here, Lincoln presents all the racial issues as “your [blacks’] problems,” when in fact they are whites’ problems. This bears out Douglass’s insight in his *Narrative* that all of the accepted racial discourse about blacks is actually about whites. The idiosyncratic “you” repeated by Lincoln in his address to the black representatives contrasts strikingly with the pronoun “we” frequently found in the Gettysburg Address. The second-person “you” is used to treat the blacks as a foreign element and isolate them from the rest of the nation, whereas “we” serves to conjure up a sense of unity and homogeneity and thus to create a nation out of invisible masses that are, in reality, diverse in their ethnicity, social class, and religion.

Lincoln’s seemingly opportunistic policy towards black people, to be sure, came partly from his republicanism, which respects the “order” of the community, and partly from a racial bias. Yet it was also a result of his strategic efforts to navigate the ship of state toward a safe ground amid social turmoil. The letter Lincoln sent to Horace Greeley in August 1862 is often cited to indicate his lack of true sympathy for slaves. However, if this letter is placed in its proper historical context, a different aspect emerges. Let us cite the well-known passage here:

My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without

freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. (343)

Lincoln declares that the primary object of the war is to “save the Union” and that slavery is a secondary issue. For the sake of the Union, he even suggests, he may sacrifice those enslaved blacks in the South.

His alleged indifference to the fate of African Americans is astounding when compared with Douglass’s vehement grief and indignation about the condition of his race, expressed in his jeremiad, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” This was a speech delivered in 1852 before “a racially mixed audience” of some six hundred people (Levine, *Clotel* 253). However, it must be noted that Lincoln’s letter was not a personal confession but a public political statement. It was sent to Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, and Lincoln was well aware that it would be published. Despite the intense fury or disappointment he anticipated from northern readers opposed to slavery, Lincoln probably thought it best not to aggravate the border states, lest they join the Confederacy. The year 1862 was indeed a crucial and trying year for him. The war had already been prolonged, despite initial expectations that the North would win a quick and easy victory. The longer it lasted, the greater the number of war victims would be on either side, and the more severely he would be criticized as the leader who had plunged the nation into this endless calamity. Therefore, it was essential for him at that critical moment to bring victory to the North (the Union) quickly and with the least possible loss of life.

To get out of this morass, in 1862 Lincoln began to consider resorting to a last-ditch measure, namely, announcing the Emancipation Proclamation, which he had delayed until then in order to ensure that the border states stayed in the Union. On July 22, he presented to his cabinet for the first time the draft of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, though he delayed issuing it, possibly until the Union Army had some victory so that it would not look like “an act of desperation” (Vidal, *Chronology* 473). On September 22, five days after the Union victory at Antietam, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which was to go into effect on January 1, 1863. In the meantime, he appealed to the border-state representatives for gradual emancipation with compensation as a kind of

ultimatum (July 12) and urged black leaders to agree with his plan of colonization (August 14). The letter to Greeley was written on August 22, between the first presentation and the official announcement of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet, when Lincoln had already decided to set free the slaves in the South on January 1 of the following year (though even the final Proclamation still leaves slaves in the border states as they are).

Given the wartime circumstances mentioned above, the letter to Greeley shows that Lincoln made use of the *New York Tribune*. He was still appealing to the border states through the *Tribune* for compensated gradual emancipation after the failure of his persuasion on July 12. He guaranteed that they would receive “compensation” for their property (their slaves) as long as they were faithful to the Union; at the same time, he threatened to confiscate their property if they were not. As a tactful politician, he often took advantage of the medium of newspapers, which had greatly developed in his era. Lincoln was an ambitious politician, and as such, he was “never indifferent to publicity” (Morris 123). When he was assassinated, “eight laudatory press cuttings” were found in his pocket (Morris 123; Vidal, Introduction xxi). His first political manifesto was printed in the *Sangamo Journal*, the Springfield newspaper, on March 15, 1832. He humorously urged his friends to read his speech on temperance published in the *Sangamo Journal* (February 22, 1842) “as an act of charity,” for nobody else would read it (46). However, on other occasions, he often earnestly asked his friends and colleagues to read his speeches carefully to understand the political stance he took: “Examine and study every sentence of that speech thoroughly, and you will understand the whole subject” (72–73).

Although he often made use of newspapers for his own publicity, Lincoln was well aware that their great influence might work against him; the major newspapers, such as the *New York Tribune*, had the power to shape popular sentiments. In a letter to Charles Wilson, he once expressed his worry about the possibility that the articles on the *Tribune* might work against his political activity:

I do not know how *you* estimate Greeley [*sic*], but *I* consider him incapable of corruption, or falsehood. He denies that he directly is taking part in favor of Douglas, and I believe him. Still his *feeling*

constantly manifests itself in his paper, which, being so extensively read in Illinois, is, and will continue to be, a drag upon us. (130)

Lincoln later became convinced that the *Tribune* was in favor of Douglas and referred directly to the newspaper in his speech in Chicago (March 1859) after losing the January 1859 Senate election to Douglas. He explicitly stated that the paper supported Douglas, and he tried to reaffirm to the audience that the Republicans did right by holding to their original principles, for if they had wavered and taken a step toward the logic of Douglas, the *Tribune* would have severely criticized them: “how long would the New York *Tribune* have been in getting rid of the charge that the Republicans had abandoned their principles . . . ?” (212).

Not only was he cautious of the media, but he was also good at manipulating it: “he wrote scores of anonymous or pseudonymous articles in newspapers, and shamelessly cultivated the press” (Morris 81). The letter addressed to Greeley in August 1862 could therefore be quite strategic, all the more because it was written in a crucial war situation. Likewise, his racial discourse in political statements should be reexamined to some extent in a similar strategic context. For instance, when he declares the impossibility of social and political equality between whites and blacks based on physical “difference,” he is defending his political stance against slanderous attacks by Democrats and conservative Republicans sympathetic to southern slaveholders.

Despite the big surge in the antislavery movement in the 1850s, when Lincoln and Douglas competed for a Senate seat in Illinois, there was deep-rooted racial prejudice in the North as well as the South. Merely coming out against slavery could generate hostility from Illinois voters:

In the debates with Douglas, knowing that voters especially in the south of Illinois were antagonistic to blacks, he had, for all his clear and severe opposition to the extension of slavery, not been above demagogic reference to “the nigger.” (Kazin 129)

As the cited passage by Alfred Kazin implies, Lincoln was cautious, sometimes over-cautious, not to be regarded as “pro-black” in the debates with Douglas. By contrast, Douglas, an eloquent statesman, took advantage

of the popular antipathy to blacks, at the very center of which lay the fear of miscegenation. Thus in his speeches, Lincoln was driven to deny repeatedly that he had any sexual interest in black women, to the extent that he emphasized racial inequality perhaps more than he meant to:

There is a natural disgust in the minds of nearly all white people, to the idea of an indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black races; and Judge Douglas evidently is basing his chief hope, upon the chances of being able to appropriate the benefit of this disgust to himself. . . . Now I protest against that counterfeit logic which concludes that, because I do not want a black woman for a *slave* I must necessarily want her for a *wife*. I need not have her for either, I can just leave her alone. In some respects she certainly is not my equal; but in her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands . . . she is my equal, and the equal of all others. (119)

The following passage conveys the atmosphere in which Lincoln made his political speeches, and the words in brackets show how his audience responded to his racial discourse:

I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, [applause]—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. . . . I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position the negro should be denied everything. I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. [Cheers and laughter.] My understanding is that I can just let her alone. I am now in my fiftieth year, and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. (173)

His usage of the derogatory term for African Americans, “nigger” (or “negro,”

which was commonly used then), and his emphasis on racial inequality were partly due to his need to appeal to the audience of ordinary mid-nineteenth-century Americans. Yet even taking into consideration that Lincoln was speaking to voters who feel a “natural disgust” toward blacks, we cannot deny that the fate of the slaves is never as important to him as the preservation of the Union. This explains Frederick Douglass’s assertion that, when all was said and done, the president was a white man and African Americans were “at best only his stepchildren” (Jenkins 23; Morris 132).

The best of Lincoln’s liberal attitude toward slaves shows in his insistence on granting them “natural rights,” which means, above all, a laissez-faire policy that precludes “social and political equality” and leads to the idea of expelling them from America. The Civil War, however, seems to have transformed his view of blacks (Wills 96). In his last public speech, made only a few days before his death, Lincoln referred to the possible future of the black population. He articulated his personal preference that the elective franchise would be given to “the very intelligent” and those who fought for the Union (456). He then mentioned his hope that the black race would attain suffrage by their own efforts (457).

This change to a less biased vision and holding African Americans in higher esteem is perhaps due to black soldiers’ contribution to the victory. The final Emancipation Proclamation permitted blacks to enlist in the Union Army. After the actual recruitment of black soldiers began in the spring of 1863, Lincoln more and more frequently spoke up for them. To a white soldier disgruntled about having to fight alongside blacks, Lincoln emphasizes their contribution to the military successes (392). To the soldier’s complaint that he cannot fight “to free negroes,” Lincoln responded, “Fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union” (392). He concluded a letter to Andrew Johnson in Tennessee (September 1863) with the sentence, “The raising of colored troops I think will greatly help every way” (395). Even in the annual message to Congress in December of the same year, he suggested that blacks provided good military service: “So far as tested, it is difficult to say they are not as good soldiers as any” (407). Lincoln, in fact, personally considered black “freedom fighters” more valuable than “white shirks.” He presented a prophetic vision: when the war was over, some black men would remember that, “with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this consummation,”

while some white men would remember that, “with malignant heart and deceitful speech, they have strove [*sic*] to hinder it” (Wills 144). His high regard for blacks’ contribution made him repeatedly insist that black soldiers be treated and paid the same as white ones. Although the repetition itself reveals that maltreatment of and discrimination against blacks in the army persisted, his insistence upon equal conditions for the two races never wavered.

Lincoln also demonstrated his resolve by upholding to the end his Emancipation Proclamation, however hard he was pressed to withdraw it. Many biographers of Lincoln, even those highly critical of him, identify the last few years of the Civil War as the period when the president transformed himself into a “heroic” national leader. While defending the moral, political, and military rationale for the emancipation and for the equal treatment of the two races in the army, he also prepared the Thirteenth Amendment, permanently abolishing slavery in the United States. He dared to initiate endorsing the amendment “even before the election of 1864” (Jenkins 20), knowing that it would work against his reelection. Immediately after winning the election, he resumed his efforts to get Congress to pass the constitutional amendment, which was realized soon after, in January 1865. Thus he achieved his ambition and mission to purge the evil institution from America.

4. The American Jeremiad in Stowe and Lincoln

Both Stowe and Lincoln regarded slavery as a moral, social, and political wrong; they saw that it was corroding the democratic republic. Stowe took it as her mission to elucidate, in the form of fiction, what an abominable system slavery was and thereby to promote the antislavery movement. Lincoln assumed a similar mission in the field of politics to eradicate the evil institution, though more slowly, and sometimes even reluctantly, but very persistently. The sense of mission the two contemporary figures shared was caused by their anxiety that the nation was deteriorating from what they believed it was originally meant to be.

Sacvan Bercovitch, in his notable book *The American Jeremiad*, points out three major characteristics of the American jeremiad. First, the problem of private salvation is related to the fate of the whole society. Second, sacred and religious time is fused with secular history. Third, the apocalyptic

discourse, deploring America's degradation from the ideal, at the same time prophesies its (exceptional) redemption, the advent of millennium in the land of America. In this sense, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a female version of the American jeremiad, for Stowe's patriotic sentiment is interwoven with religious issues like God's wrath and millennium.¹⁸ St. Clare, who partially speaks for the author, laments over slavery like a Jeremiah in the wilderness, mixing religious and political terms: "One thing is certain,—that there is a mustering among the masses, the world over; and there is a *dies irae* coming on, sooner or later. . . . My mother used to tell me of a millennium that was coming, when Christ should reign, and all men should be free and happy. . . . Sometimes I think all this sighing, and groaning, and stirring among the dry bones foretells what she used to tell me was coming. But who may abide the day of His appearing?" (344). As Josephine Donovan observes, Stowe combines "an apocalyptic vision of the last judgment with that of political revolution, an uprising of the slaves" (*Uncle Tom's* 91).

Revising Perry Miller's emphasis on the mournful tone of New England religious-political leaders, Bercovitch argues that an optimistic faith in the promise, rather than the vehemence of complaint, characterizes the American jeremiad (6–7). Through George Harris's bemoaning of his miserable condition of servitude, Stowe illuminates the "painful discrepancies between America's Declaration of Independence and its legalization of slavery" (Douglas 20). However, her text is less about her mourning than about her urging the nation to redress the social evil and to "preserve the integrity of our unprecedented republic" (E. Wilson 9), which deserves the promise (the coming millennium).

Standing firmly on the rational side of mankind and guarding against passion, Lincoln, by contrast, seems to have had nothing to do with religion. A man of reason, he "believed in Law and Order" (Vidal, Introduction xxv). Jan Morris even suspects he was an atheist (42–43). Yet his belief in the ideal of the Founding Fathers and his enthusiasm for the Union assumed a religious tone when he combined them with his idea of what America was. Suggesting in an 1858 speech in Chicago that the moral sentiment of the Declaration of Independence ("all men are created equal") is the "electric cord" to make immigrants American (145), he called on the audience to work together to perfect it by allowing no exception to "all men" (147). Finally, he appealed to them, "[let] us . . . unite as *one people* throughout this land"

(148; emphasis added). In this speech, Lincoln advocated a sort of theory of American identity comparable to Crèvecoeur's, or even to Frederick Turner's, if we replace the Declaration of Independence with the frontier.

His sense of mission as a political leader had grown far grander than before, as he was elected the sixteenth president of the United States and as the gathering clouds of national disunion grew darker. In his farewell speech to his Illinois supporters on the day he left for Washington in February 1861, Lincoln spoke of the task he would undertake as something "greater than that which rested upon Washington" (277). As many critics suggest, his decisive transformation into a heroic figure took place sometime around the Civil War. Not only do his references to God become more frequent, but he comes to believe that he is moved by some power bigger than that of individual will and effort: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. . . . God alone can claim it" (421). Kazin ascribes this change in Lincoln to the Civil War: "It is clear that the terrible war has overwhelmed the Lincoln who identified himself as the man of reason. It has brought him to his knees, so to speak, in heart-breaking awareness of the restrictions imposed by a mystery so encompassing it can only be called 'God'" (138). And in his second inaugural address in March 1865, for the first time, he depicts slavery as sin (Wills 177) and the Civil War as God's possible punishment:

If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? (450)

Lincoln hints at God's wrath about the inhuman institution, but like Stowe, he regards the Civil War as "God's holy war" through which Americans achieve the perfection originally intended by providence. The terrible war they suffer makes them realize the "departure" from God's "divine attributes." Here again, emphasis is placed less on the lamentations than on the promise of an ideal America to be realized once the evil system is removed: the

present ordeal is designed by God for the future glory. Typical of the American jeremiad that Bercovitch defines, the nationalism combined with millennialism is easily turned into imperialistic rhetoric about leading the world by creating a model state, “a city upon a hill.”

In his eulogy of Henry Clay, Lincoln expressed his own belief that “the world’s best hope depended on the continued Union of these States” (87); he envisioned America as “a great empire” of eighty years and invited them to recognize its glory: “We stand at once the wonder and admiration of the whole world” (111). When he calls Americans the “[Almighty’s] almost chosen people” (280), his America expands to the whole world, and the American Revolution, the historical event of one nation, becomes “something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come” (280). Likewise, the Declaration of Independence becomes a universal document that gives liberty “not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time” (282). Inherent in this glorification of America, inarguably, is a belief that the American way is the best and that it should prevail throughout the world.

Jan Morris asserts that, with Abraham Lincoln, nationalism was edged with imperialism and the American republic became “a centralized power” (198). By power, she means not only the birth of the modern form of government but actual military force: “by the end of the Civil War, Lincoln was commander-in-chief of the biggest army in existence and a navy of 671 warships, supported by a huge expanding industrial base” (198). Facing the greatest crisis of national disunion, Lincoln forged Americans into “one people” by his power of rhetoric. At the same time, in doing so, he shaped an image of an America so powerful and glorious that it could almost be legitimized to dominate the whole world.

Both Stowe and Lincoln induced their audiences to embrace an ideal America in order to preserve the Union. Both of them convinced the American population to reject slavery by conjuring up an alternative ideal world. Although Stowe’s ideal world is based on domestic values centered on Christian love, while Lincoln’s seems to endorse almost exclusively male systems, it is worth noting that, at least by the end of the war, Lincoln, like Stowe, came to emphasize “forgiveness” and “love,” which were often associated with a maternal, Christian spirit:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations. (450)

Chapter 8

William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*

1. Under the Influence of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The unprecedented success and lasting popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)¹ set a landmark in antislavery literature, placing black writers after her more or less under its influence, whether they emulated or denounced it. William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, published in the following year, for example, was an immediate response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Like Stowe, Brown resorts to the form of fiction instead of autobiography common to the black abolitionist literature, exemplified most notably by Frederick Douglass's slave narrative of 1845. Brown extolled Stowe in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, vouching for her ability to illuminate "the dark abodes of slavery" and to awake "sympathy in hearts that never before felt for the slaves" (Levine, *Clotel* 285). Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and witnessing the nationwide sensation it caused, he must have realized the force that fiction possessed to move people and thus produced *Clotel*, the very first novel by an African American.

Most major black writers in the nineteenth century praised *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "mainly for its effectiveness at drawing attention to the evils of slavery" (Donovan, *Uncle Tom's* 18), and often made use of the sentimental tradition for their own antislavery works. However, this placed them in a painful dilemma between their strong, often political, need "to appropriate the emotional appeal of the sentimental novel" and their reverse inner "urge toward realism" (Yarborough 79). While the sentimental tradition could attract many white women readers, who had already become familiar with and much enjoyed the maudlin stories, the cruel reality of slavery is antithetical to the literary form; the genteel middle-class audience would have recoiled from horrible details of bloody violence and sexual abuse. The more the authors of slave narratives tried to be faithful to their experiences, the more they felt the gap between the accepted literary genre and what they

needed to narrate. Harriet Jacobs, for instance, framed her slave narrative in the traditional domestic novel and encountered its limitations in describing her core experience of sexual abuse, because the domestic ideal embraces angelic purity of women. We will see the dilemma Jacobs faced in writing her own autobiography later in Chapter 12. Many black authors in the nineteenth century more or less experienced this dilemma between what the white audience expected to read and their need to write the truth of slavery as they experienced it.

African American authors in the twentieth century were naturally more inclined toward realism, and their criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became harsher. James Baldwin, for instance, condemned it as “a very bad novel” for its sentimentality (578-79) and lack of psychological complexity in the characterization of black figures (579-81). When Richard Wright published his first collection of stories, *Uncle Tom's Children*, in 1938, he reflected the nineteenth-century dilemma; he unites himself with Stowe, as the title indicates and, at the same time, distances himself from her by revealing what it really means to live as a black boy in racialized America. Wright later regrets that its sentimentality could induce tears even from “bankers’ daughters” who were moved to “weep” over the book and “feel good” about it (Yarborough 67). *Native Son* (1940) signifies his decisive parting from the tradition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the rebellious, aggressive Bigger Tom (Thomas) is an alternative black hero to meek, passive, and self-sacrificial Tom.

As many critics suggest, the vehement reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by modern black writers paradoxically conveys the very weight of the influence it had on them (Donovan, *Uncle Tom's* 19; Yarborough 72). This chapter (and Chapter 9 on Douglass and Chapter 12 on Jacobs) examines black antislavery writing in antebellum America as a response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in order to illuminate what Stowe's book was unable to explore, as well as its deep and enduring impact upon black abolitionist literature. Though I sometimes refer to various antislavery works for the sake of comparison, I focus my discussion on *Clotel* in this chapter because it is one of the earliest responses to Stowe's antislavery novel and because, by being explicitly set in the tradition of domestic/sentimental fiction, its similarities to and differences from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are clearly visible.

2. *Clotel*—A Critical Distance from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Clotel is a sensational novel based on the long-whispered rumors that Thomas Jefferson, who drafted the Declaration of Independence, fathered several “negro” children.² The story does not portray directly either Jefferson or Sally Hemings, who was said to be his black lover, but revolves around the fate of his mulatto daughter and granddaughters after his death. Capitalizing on the gossip about Jefferson’s lineage, Brown dramatizes the striking contradictions in American democracy to make evident to the public the injustice of slavery: the man who symbolizes the ideal of the Republic, the “equality of all men,” owned slaves all his life; one of the glorious founding fathers of America had extramarital relations with a slave woman; and the daughters and granddaughters of the third president of America, a man in the highest rank of social hierarchy, were sold as commodities.

Apart from this historical setting, however, the story on the whole follows the framework of the sentimental novel, focusing on domestic elements such as motherhood, romance, and marriage. Like Stowe, Brown emphasizes the tragic separation of families—parents and children, siblings, wives and husbands, or fiancés; but he also revises *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in many respects. Though Clotel, Jefferson’s daughter in the fiction, is brought up as a southern “lady” and is as refined and educated as Eliza, she has none of Eliza’s pathetic appearance that draws kind help from white women. She is resourceful enough to plan an escape for herself and her friend and, after sending him to a free state, she comes back alone to the South disguised as a gentleman to rescue her daughter.

Her final jump into the Potomac River conjures up a scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where a female slave named Lucy throws herself into the Mississippi, shocked to learn that her baby had been sold. Yet Clotel’s jump is described as one for freedom, escaping from bondage, whereas Lucy ends her life out of despair. Brown highlights the scene of Clotel’s death in Chapter 25; resolving never to return to slavery, she jumps into the Potomac before the very eyes of her white pursuers, raising her hands and her eyes toward “heaven,” the province of eternal freedom (207). By centralizing the mulatto heroine on the stage and placing the white people as her audience in the background, the author creates a theatrical scene of the black woman’s death in a sentimental setting and enhances its effect by adding the narrator’s

comment: “Thus died Clotel, the daughter of Thomas Jefferson, a president of the United States; a man distinguished as the author of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the finest statesmen of that country” (207). He even cites a poem by Grace Greenwood with some changes to commemorate the fugitive’s “bold race for freedom” (208) and to imprint her tragic death in the mind of the reader.

On the contrary, Lucy’s suicide is performed in the darkness of night; it is unseen by the audience and known to nobody but Tom, who only “heard a splash in the water” (210). Lucy is never heard of again in the story after Haley, a slave trader, jots down her name “under the head of *losses*” on a page of his account-book (212). For Eliza, however, Stowe provides a far more dramatic and hopeful jump; she dives with her little son in her arms into the icy waters of the Ohio River to save both of them from the slave hunters by a hair’s breadth. This is the very scene in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that was to be best commercialized in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Yet the reader cannot brush aside an impression that her successful escape owes not so much to her own efforts and ingenuity as to kindness of good-hearted white Christians. This might reflect Stowe’s consciousness of the white audience.

Georgiana is another notable character in *Clotel* who undermines the sentimental setting favored by the white reader. A southern white lady and pious daughter of a rich planter like Eva, Georgiana is much more practical and resourceful than Eva or even George Shelby in emancipating slaves. With liberal education in the North and true religious sentiment, she combines Christian love and the spirit of American democracy in her attitudes toward others. She converts Carlton, the skeptical freethinker from the North, to true Christianity, as Eva does her father, St. Clare. And through marriage with converted Carlton, she achieves what Eva cannot do but only begs her father to do—the liberation of slaves. In order to obtain the right to the properties (slaves) that the laws never gave her and to prevent her male relatives from selling them after her father’s death, Georgiana even urges Carlton to marry her, overcoming her sense of bashfulness natural to a lady of the Victorian age, when passivity and obedience were regarded as female virtues and assertiveness as unwomanly. Through the agent of her husband, the “legal” owner of the properties, she does carry out the manumission.

Unlike young George Shelby, who comes too late to save Tom and

who gives his slaves freedom as if it were a gift from the white master, Georgiana lets her slaves earn their own freedom and, in the process, she gives them opportunities to educate themselves, to exhibit their potential to be good American citizens. When Brown named the young girl Georgiana, he was perhaps conscious of the young master George in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Georgiana's way of reforming her slaves, that is, cultivating their own self-help, subverts the proslavery notion disseminated in antebellum America that "negroes" were inferior to the "Anglo-Saxon race," so that they needed the protection of the superior race, and would be happier under slavery because they were taken care of by benevolent white masters. Even a prominent man of letters in the North like Nathaniel Willis, for instance, voices a typical proslavery discourse in his *The Convalescent* (1859), describing a group of happy, contented, domicile slaves protected by a benevolent white planter in contrast with a forlorn poor family of free blacks without white protection (189–93).

The system Georgiana adopts to run her plantation reminds the reader of the American principle that a man works for himself: What he earns by his honest labor will be his, and not be taken away to support the master's luxurious life. This motivates the slaves' industry:

They were no longer apparently the same people. A sedateness, a care, an economy, an industry, took possession of them, to which there seemed to be no bounds but in their physical strength. They were never tired of labouring, and seemed as though they could never effect enough. They became temperate, moral, religious, setting an example of innocent, unoffending lives to the world around them. . . .
(163)

An industrious self-contented American working for himself and his family is associated with the idea of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur on what an American is. In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur praises an independent American farmer in a covert comparison with an European farmer under the feudal system: "Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest" (70). The farmer who labors for no one other than himself also embodies the self-sufficient "yeoman" that Jefferson idealized

for America.

The solution Georgiana proposes to her slaves is, moreover, an answer to the skeptical St. Clare, who falls into a deadlock between two alternatives—either to leave slaves in indulgence or to force them to work by means of violence. It shows a way for blacks to work without “being whipped.” However, the gradual emancipation Brown presents here has nothing to do with that conceived by Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. It is in fact antithetical to the Jeffersonian idea of colonizing free colored people out of America. Georgiana clearly opposes colonization: she says to her husband, retorting his suggestion that they should send them to Liberia, their “native land”:

Why should they go to Africa, any more than the Free States or to Canada? . . . Is not this their native land? What right have we, more than the negro, to the soil here, or to style ourselves native Americans? Indeed it is as much their homes as ours, and I have sometimes thought it was more theirs. The negro has cleared up the land, built towns, and enriched the soil with his blood and tears. . . .
(160)

It is clear that the passage quoted above reflects David Walker’s protest against the colonization policy in *Appeal*. And this argument spoken by Georgiana is Brown’s response to the denouement of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, where Stowe sends most of the main black characters to Liberia, making them call it “my country.” African colonization is one of the issues on which Brown distanced himself furthest from Stowe, just as mid-nineteenth-century major black figures like Douglass did, while praising her antislavery novel.³

Brown later came to support the colonization movement, but his support for the colonization policy was a result of his despair at the unchanging or worsening circumstances that blacks faced. When he wrote *Clotel*, however, his criticism of the African colonization was as harsh as that of any other black activists, and all the differences between Georgiana, a rebellious lady, and Eva, an obedient, helpless child, though incredibly religious for a little girl, convey Brown’s critical distance from Stowe.

3. Intertextuality of the Three Quadroon Stories

Another difference to note is his treatment of female sexuality. Brown exposes the crucial involvement of white women in the sexual abuse of slave girls. He casts light upon the dynamic links of damage wrecked upon a white master, his white wife, and his black lover—the extent of damage escalating in this order—whereas Stowe never introduces a black lover into a white family and thereby protects white ladies; all the white female characters, including even the selfish and merciless mistress, Marie, are exempt from sexual jealousy. Mary Chesnut, the wife of a wealthy southern planter, criticizes Stowe in her diary, declaring that she missed “the sorest spot” of slavery by making Simon Legree a bachelor (168). Though Chesnut’s sympathy does not extend to slave women, she at least discloses southern planters’ sexual indulgence and its consequent bad influences upon their wives and children: “I hate slavery. . . . What do you say to this? A magnate who runs a hideous black harem and its consequences under the same roof with his lovely white wife and his beautiful and accomplished daughters?” (168)

Clotel presents a scene in which Mrs. Green, a newlywed white woman, notices her husband’s beautiful black lover, Clotel, and turns from a happy and cheerful bride into an indifferent cold wife all at once. After the incident, Mr. Green becomes a drunkard and his wife and rich father-in-law decide to sell Clotel and her child. And this is not all, for “as if to make her husband drink of the cup of humiliation to its very dregs, Mrs. Green resolves to take his child (Mary) under her own roof for a servant” (149). Thus begins the miserable life of Mr. and Mrs. Green, as well as the painful life of Clotel and Mary. Here even a white woman cannot be immune from evils of slavery. By making a slave woman a rival in love with a white mistress, Brown tries to convince the reader that slavery is harmful not only to the blacks but also to the whites.

The episode of Clotel’s love affair with Mr. Green is heavily plagiarized from Lydia Maria Child’s “The Quadroons,” which first appeared in the 1842 *Liberty Bell* and was reprinted with minor changes in her *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories* in 1846 (Levine, *Clotel* 274). Robert Levine maintains that Brown’s copying of her story, sometimes even verbatim, was motivated by his admiration for “her brave antislavery

writings” (274). According to Peter Dorsey, Brown cites from many texts from the need to authenticate his story, just as Stowe needed to authenticate hers in *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (274). Alternatively, perhaps, *Clotel*’s high intertextuality results from the author’s attempt to recapture “the texts of a culture that steals black bodies” (Levine, “Cultural and Historical Background” 6). However, it might also reflect his conscious strategy to reveal what white (female) writers are unable to see or disclose. A comparative reading of Child’s “The Quadroons,” Chapter 34 of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* entitled “The Quadroon’s Story,” and Brown’s revised story of a quadroon⁴ makes clear his criticism of white female antislavery writing.

All three heroines are first placed in a similar setting as a lover of a white gentleman, living in a secretive abode. They are all brought up like white “ladies” and their True Womanhood of the Victorian era—symbolized in the four elements of piety, purity, obedience, and domesticity (Welter 152)—is emphasized. Although the love between the white man and the quadroon is genuine, the man will not marry her because of her admixture of African blood. The heroine suffers tragedy when she bears a child; the white gentleman marries a white lady from high society because of his social ambition and/or flirtation. As a consequence of this “legitimate” marriage, the quadroon and her child (or children) are dragged out to the slave market and sold as a “commodity,” often with the mother parted from her child(ren).

This outline of a quadroon story was probably a common text by the time when Child wrote “The Quadroons.” Child appropriates the white appearance of a quadroon and, by stressing the similarity between the “black” heroine and the white female reader, appeals against the injustice of the southern institution of slavery that deprives blacks of human rights. Stowe might have read this story by her contemporary New England woman writer, but her version of a quadroon, Cassy, inserted in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is more complicated, since several stages of her “degradation” are detailed from a wifehood consecrated by heavenly law, though not by the secular, to the state of a slave mistress owned by a mean, cruel planter, and the story, unlike Child’s and Brown’s, is told in the first person by Cassy herself. It is a kind of fictional “female” slave narrative that could be added to the immense inheritance of slave narratives written predominantly by black males.⁵

Cassy narrates the accumulated miseries, pains, and humiliations she suffered in the past, which account for what she is now, a female monster of

madness. Her real story, however, develops outside the one she weaves in Chapter 34. Stowe provides Cassy with a “counter story” of uplift from a sexually abused slave, wild from desperation, to a refined Christian mother. In this dramatic transformation of the quadroon is expressed the best of Stowe’s feminist discourses.⁶ Compared with Child’s pale, fragile quadroon, Rosalie, who gradually weakens to death after her white guardian leaves her, Cassy is a tough woman whose intense “anger” at the wrongs imposed upon her exerts a certain power even on her present master, Simon Legree.

As Karen Halttunen points out, Stowe uses a Gothic setting to dramatize the escape of Cassy and her “adopted” daughter Emmeline from Legree’s hellish plantation.⁷ Cassy’s desperate, uncontrolled “female power” is in extreme opposition to True Womanhood. However, it is this very power that outwits Legree and subverts the master-slave/man-woman order, just as the pent-up female power of the heroine in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” releases her from the nursery room in which she has been confined by her “master” (husband/doctor/patriarch). To borrow the well-known phrase of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Cassy is a “mad woman in the attic.” Her madness mirrors the female power restricted in the male-dominant society; it is an “inversion of the Victorian cult of domesticity” (Halttunen 116).

This unwomanly power transforms itself into a creative one to contrive an ingenious scheme of escape. Far from being a passive heroine of sentimental fiction like Rosalie, Cassy is an active and creative woman. She takes advantage of Legree’s superstitious nature and his subconscious panic of guilt, which she sees through, and dexterously manipulates his mind and action, alluding to ghosts that haunt the house, inducing rumors of invisible beings among his slaves, playing a ghost herself, and pretending an escape while watching from the garret window the whole group of Legree’s men hunting for the fugitives (Cassy and Emmeline). And after these machinations of deception, the only means available to a slave woman, she finally manages to escape from bondage, disguising herself as a Spanish lady and Emmeline as her servant. As Halttunen suggests, Cassy’s anger at Legree reflects Stowe’s criticism of the patriarchal tradition of New England Calvinism (121–30). It may also mirror her own anger at the male-dominant society, where a woman’s creative power is debased at the same time that she often supports the family behind its patriarch, as Stowe did for her whole

life.

Stowe presents a far more complex, resourceful, stalwart quadroon than Rosalie or her daughter Xarifa as delineated by Child. Yet where Stowe demarcates the black female world as distinct from the white, Child boldly blurs the boundary by introducing the quadroon into her lover's "white family" and thereby problematizes the morality and humanity of the white race instead of speaking exclusively of "pitiful" slaves in need of white help.

That is probably why Brown follows Child's text rather than the more popular text by Stowe that he might have borrowed instead. Child described the white wedded wife, Charlotte, as a victim of male licentiousness in order to impress upon the white female audience in the North that slavery was not a problem peculiar only to black people but one that involved their class, all white women, through which she makes it possible for the white women to sympathize with slave girls sexually exploited by white men and to establish bonds of sisterhood between the two. In revising Child's story, Brown intensifies the impact of the involvement of the white woman, Mrs. Green. He breaks the sentiment of sisterhood Child aimed to establish between the heroine and the white audience; she is not so much an innocent victim as a cruel victimizer of slaves. Describing how Mrs. Green turns into a cold, spiteful mistress the moment she learns of her husband's disloyalty, Brown attempts to persuade the reader that it is the institution itself, and not particular wicked individuals, that engenders the evils of slavery, as Douglass does in a scene of his autobiography where angel-like Sophie Auld transforms into a cold oppressor as soon as she is involved in the system of slavery.

Both Brown and Child could make the white woman's part visible as a victim and/or victimizer under slavery. This is exactly what Stowe was unable to portray. However, in their enthusiastic attempts to eliminate the idea of racial difference between the white and the black, Brown and Child Europeanized their quadroons to such an extent that they were incorporated into white culture: *Clotel's* daughter Mary becomes in the end almost a Victorian white lady in Paris and dissolves into the white culture. This problematic ending suggests the complexities of writing an antislavery novel in antebellum America, and Brown seems to show several possible ways to transcend the color line.

4. Black Culture in *Clotel*

As a literary work, Brown's *Clotel* is not so powerful a novel as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in that *Clotel* lacks an integrated story development, mode or style, and vivid depiction of its characters. Yet it presents sentimental heroines, both white and black, from the perspective of black slaves and thereby illuminates what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is unable to show. Moreover, we must note Brown's precious contribution to antislavery literature in presenting a graphic portrait of the slave community behind the curtain of the dominant and fashionable life of the white ruling class. For example, the slaves on the Poplar Farm are, according to its "humanitarian" owner, John Peck (Georgiana's father), well treated in a new system under which they are "well fed and not overworked" and, above all, "have the gospel" that "is calculated to make mankind better" (107). However, the narrative soon discloses that the religious inculcation meant for the wellness of their souls is nothing but proslavery preaching.

Hontz Snyder, a Yankee missionary, preaches the passage from the Bible, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" (Matthew 7.12), one of the core texts of the Holy Scripture, but its message is totally perverted and twisted from the perspective of planters: it means that slaves should serve their master as he wants them to do; by serving their master, they are serving God, so that they should not become "eye-servants," who work hard only when they are watched but are idle behind the master or mistress's back, for God is watching everything (112). Snyder further tells his black audience not to complain of their lot, for God has determined it best for them; their discontent means "quarrelling with [their] heavenly Master, and finding fault with God himself" (113). He concludes his sermon, stressing how they are lucky because their "ignorant and barbarous" fathers were brought to "Christian America" from "that benighted land" of Africa (113).

This sermon by Snyder, covering more than four pages, includes almost all the proslavery religious discourses that were widely repeated in the antebellum South. Brown soon subverts it by adding the negative response of the blacks, many of whom are inattentive to the missionary's "fervent" speech: "he could not succeed in keeping the negroes all interested: four or five were fast asleep . . . ; as many more were nodding, while not a

few were stealthily cracking and eating hazelnuts” (114). The conversation among the slaves after the whites are all gone clearly shows that they all know that Snyder’s preaching is utter rubbish, and that Uncle Simon, a “self-proclaimed” black preacher, is a much better speaker and is able to shatter Snyder’s arguments to pieces.

This kind of humorous scene is in contrast to the tragic one of the black heroine’s death. Humor is one characteristic of Brown’s *Clotel*, as it is of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Humor seems to be an effective literary device, especially in serious political writings such as antislavery literature, by easing readers’ tension and retaining their attention by offering pleasure. Just as Stowe incorporates comic episodes, like that in which the two black slaves, Sam and Andy, pretend to help but in fact disturb Haley’s slave hunting, into her serious antislavery fiction, Brown also inserts comic descriptions that reveal the rich and distinctive culture of the slave community. Black Sam, the head servant of the Peck family, who reminds us of black Sam in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is a dandy and able man. He is proud of himself in everything except his blackness. He believes that this “defect” disturbs his further success in attracting the “ladies” in the kitchen, and tries to compensate his color with good appearance; he uses butter to make his hair and face shine and wears the best clothes, which outshine even those of the white guests he serves. Though being “one of blackest men living” (137), he insists that he is a mulatto, his mother being very white, and tries to impress his servant friends with the “Anglo-Saxon” blood in him. Brown does not hesitate to admit that there *is* prejudice against blackness among slaves, commenting, “no one was most prejudiced against blacks than he” (137). Nor does he fail to point out that they have imitated or internalized the white standard.

Slaves’ imitation of their masters also causes humor. Just as Stowe’s Sam imitates white planters’ political speeches before his fellow slaves in the kitchen—he triumphantly demonstrates his oratory full of big words like “conscience,” “principles,” or “de gen’l interests of society” that he has picked up through hearing white men’s discussion—so Brown’s Sam learns medicine, attending his first master, a physician, and imitates his medical treatment. When Sam acquired among the slaves the appellation of “Black Doctor,” he was so proud of himself that “no regular physician could possibly have put on more airs than did the black doctor when his services were required” (137). Brown adds an episode of his failure: when Sam saw

a patient with toothache, he had pulled a sound teeth instead of bad one and, realizing his mistake, he justified himself with “the idea that as the wrong tooth was out of the way there was more room to get at the right one” (137).

By describing the lowly circles of slaves in the South, Brown demonstrates that slaves are not mere helpless victims, but that they live strongly under adverse circumstances by means of their own wit, wisdom, cunning deceptions, and mutual help. The humorous portrayal of their daily life, as the above two examples show, provides readers with a glimpse of the rich and profound culture that slaves had built under slavery behind the dominant one.

Chapter 9

Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*

1. The Problem of Authentication of Slave Narratives

Frederick Douglass, one of the most influential black leaders in nineteenth-century America, was born a slave in Talbot County, Maryland, and, after his escape to the North in 1838, became a traveling agent of Garrisonian abolitionism. He was already a powerful orator, the author of a slave narrative, and the editor of the *North Star* (later called *Frederick Douglass' Paper*¹), the only successful black newspaper in the antebellum period, when Harriet Beecher Stowe asked him to give her some information about slavery while composing her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.² Douglass politely refused her request, probably because of the emotional conflict that he had constantly experienced working with white abolitionists, the struggle to create and to preserve his own story against the constraints driven by their attempts to mold it into the discourse of their antislavery cause.³

His first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), like many other slave narratives, was authenticated and therefore framed to some extent by the prominent white abolitionists. William Lloyd Garrison offered the "Preface" that praises Douglass's eloquence and power to "write his own Narrative in his own style" (34), yet he eventually appropriates the entire essay to promote his antislavery cause, urging the audience to choose between "the man-stealers" and "their down-trodden victims" (37) and to adopt his motto, "NO COMPROMISE WITH SLAVERY! NO UNION WITH SLAVE-HOLDERS!" (38). In her review of the *Narrative*, Margaret Fuller criticizes his preface as being too indulgent in "violent invective and denunciation" (133) while admiring the main text by Douglass. Wendell Phillips provides another preface in the guise of a letter that celebrates the completion of the narrative but ends in a paradoxical command that the manuscripts be burned, furiously lamenting the reality that there is no safe place for a fugitive slave even in Massachusetts, the ground of glorious American history. He

concludes his letter, supposedly addressed to Douglass but apparently in reality to the white audience, with typical abolitionist rhetoric advocating “consecrating anew the soil of the Pilgrims as an asylum for the oppressed” (40). Neither of the two prefatory essays introduces in a real sense the author or his work.

A decade later, in his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Douglass was to epitomize this problematic force of “authority” in the passage referring to his first public speech at the anti-slavery convention held in Nantucket: Garrison took “me as his text” (267). He clearly denounces the way the Garrisonians exploit his story for the purpose of gaining converts to their cause. As some critics suggest, *My Bondage and My Freedom* is a declaration of independence (McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* 181; Edwards, Introduction xxviii). It is not merely an augmented *Narrative* with added details and new information about Douglass’s life after the encounter with Garrison in 1841, the episode with which he closes his earlier narrative. Douglass, from the beginning, makes the reader conscious of the differences between the 1845 and 1855 autobiographies. The opening “Editor’s Preface,” for example, is nothing more than a preface he wrote himself, since the anonymous editor quickly gives way to “Douglass’s letter” by saying that “the best Preface to this volume” is perhaps provided by the author’s letter (7), thus leaving Douglass to authenticate his own story. This is a kind of parody of the Phillips letter heading the *Narrative* and a bold challenge to the tradition of the slave narratives in which black authors have been taken in someone else’s text. The two possessive pronouns in the title of the second book are suggestive of the author’s recapturing his own text, in contrast to the phrase suggesting an indefinite person, “an American Slave,” in the title of the first.

The subsequent introduction is also no longer written by any white authority, but by James McCune Smith, a free black, who often contributed to *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* and who, like Douglass, struggled to pursue his career amid harsh racial prejudice and achieved the great feat of becoming a doctor when there were very few black doctors in the United States.⁴ Unlike Garrison, who shows Douglass as an example of victims of slavery, Smith introduces him from the start as an exceptional and respectable self-made man and thereby a “Representative American man—a type of his countrymen” (Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* 29),

echoing Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Smith's emphasis on "American-ness" is quite significant because it adumbrates what follows in the main text; it in fact tells of the major distinctive characteristics of the expanded volume made conspicuous when compared with the earlier compact *Narrative*: 1) the presentation of self as an American rather than a southern (ex-)slave, 2) the shift from the convention of slave narrative to the more strategic American revolutionary rhetoric, and 3) a declaration of possible American black literature.

Douglass wrote three autobiographies in his life, *Narrative*, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1881 and revised in 1893. Each of the books after *Narrative*, including the final 1893 version, largely revised and expanded on the previous one. Brent Edwards maintains, quoting the words of C. Peter Ripley, that these three autobiographies were written at important points in Douglass's life "for different reasons" (Introduction xviii), and he regards it as important to pay special attention to the drastic change from the first to the second: "*My Bondage and My Freedom* is written from an entirely different vantage point—one might almost say that it is composed by an entirely different writer" (Introduction xix).⁵ A close examination of some of the main differences illuminates Frederick Douglass as an American writer as well as a black nationalist.

2. Repossessing the Philosophy of the Narrative

Although the outline of *My Bondage and My Freedom* roughly follows that of *Narrative*, the twenty-five chapters of the former more than double the eleven of the latter. The expansion of the skeletal, pamphlet-like *Narrative*⁶ into a bulging book of autobiography comparable to the classic one by Benjamin Franklin comes not so much from the new chapters about Douglass's life in the North as from his rewriting the episodes already depicted in the *Narrative*—furnishing more graphic details about them, supplementing them with further relevant memories, and giving analytic interpretations of his experiences. This extensive revision was chiefly precipitated by Douglass's growth as a person, both private and public. In other words, his new self needed a new form of expression (Edwards, Introduction xx). After the publication of the *Narrative*, Douglass traveled

for two years abroad in Ireland and England, where he was treated as an able and important speaker equal to any white person and where he felt, for the first time, almost entirely free from racism and from the prescribing power of the American abolitionists. This successful lecture tour resulted in the donation of 2,500 dollars, which enabled him to start his own newspaper.

He then began to assume multiple tasks as both the publisher and editor of the weekly *North Star*, collecting essays and information, editing contributors' writings, reviewing a number of books, writing articles and editorials, and responding to letters from readers. By the mid-1850s, as Edwards recapitulates his remarkable achievements, Douglass's reading and writing had given himself "a thorough training in literature and journalism in a way . . . he had never had the chance to do before composing the *Narrative*" (Introduction xix). With his broader experience and knowledge, Douglass could no longer be contained within the role of providing facts about slavery for the white antislavery activists.

However, Douglass felt the gap between himself as a slave and his present, matured self, much earlier, when he collaborated with Garrisonians. He discloses in *My Bondage and My Freedom* the way in which he was exhibited like a rare animal on the platform: "I was generally introduced as a '*chattel*'—a '*thing*'—a piece of southern '*property*'—the chairman assuring the audience that *it* could speak" (268-69). One of his abolitionist friends tried to "pin me down to my simple narrative," and another said, "Give us the facts . . . we will take care of the philosophy" (269). This patronizing attitude from his northern friends indicates not only their controlling power over his story but also their deprivation of his subjective voice by treating him like an unthinking child. Douglass voices his repulsion for being directed to repeat the same simple story:

I could not always obey, for I was now reading and thinking. New views of the subject were presented to my mind. It did not entirely satisfy me to *narrate* wrongs; I felt like *denouncing* them. (269)

Douglass here declares himself a being capable of thought and progress like any American citizen, and not just a "thing" turned into a man.

The tension between what he really wants to express and what he is required to present is seen in the 1845 version, constituting a dynamic force

in the narrative. Though it has not entirely disappeared from *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he narrates much more easily and freely. In order to create and keep his own authentic voice, in the 1855 version he employs varied strategic literary devices rather than the oratorical rhetoric of vehement complaint to draw sympathy and wrathful denunciation to call for justice. He puts less emphasis, for instance, on the lack of knowledge of who his father is.⁷ In the *Narrative* the privation of knowledge about the paternal lineage is closely related to the general ignorance that slaveholders imposed upon slave children, and its opening passage tells the reader that he knew nothing of his birthday or age or of the division of time (month and year) and that this lack of information was “a source of unhappiness to me even during my childhood” (41). However, *My Bondage and My Freedom* no longer laments the absence of his father, but instead expounds the slavery system that excludes the father from the slave “family”: “Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves. A person of some consequence here in the north, sometimes designated *father*, is literally abolished in slave law and slave practice” (40). Douglass eliminates the term “unhappiness” in conveying his personal sentiment and instead uses more objective language, stating that his inability to tell his exact age was one of his “earliest troubles” (40).

In place of the discontented passage about the forfeit of a father associated with the fruit of knowledge that the white son is given as a natural right, he offers a richer and much more amplified description of his grandmother, Betsy Baily, who was the whole world to him. Like Harriet Jacobs’ grandmother, she substitutes for the mother removed from him soon after his birth. Douglass has probably learned from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s best-selling *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that a picture of family separation is effective in stirring the hearts of the Victorian (female) readers. He first associates Betsy with home and conjures up a lowly but happy life in her cabin, reminiscent of Uncle Tom’s: the old cabin, however wretched it looked to the eyes of others, “WAS MY HOME—the only home I ever had; and I loved it, and all connected with it” (47).

After constructing the home of his early childhood supported by the versatility and affection of “Grandmother Betty,” he then moves on to the scene in which he was suddenly taken to the master’s domain and placed with many slave children, including his brothers and sisters who, despite the blood ties, were utter strangers to him because of their early separation.

Douglass describes in a very impressive way how his heart “clave to [his] grandmother” (49) and how his deep sorrow was hard to soothe. The new emphasis on the home serves to bring to the reader a bitter recognition that the slave has no family.

Douglass attaches another symbolic meaning to the forced departure from his first home, saying that “this was, in fact, my first introduction to the realities of slavery” (50). Replacing the melodramatic scene of his witnessing Aunt Hester (called Esther in *My Bondage and My Freedom*) being flogged by his old master, Captain Anthony, with this sad memory of his separation from his affectionate grandmother, he sloughs off the sensational gothic writing as the central discourse that the northern white audience expected from slave narratives: the cruel flogging tears up the naked body, causing gushes of blood and heart-rending screams from the victim, and uncontrollable demonic anger and sadistic pleasure on the part of the oppressor. Although this sensational scene is no longer associated with the gate to slavery, the 1855 text does not fail to use it to cause gothic horror.

As Eric Sundquist points out, the gothic was “a powerful instrument of social reform” (*To Wake the Nations* 108), as is seen in Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), which is full of sensational scenes in which the master cruelly injures the slave. The *Narrative* also exploits the gothic convention by describing the bloody scene of Aunt Hester’s punishment: the master whipped her naked back until she was covered with blood, and the “louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest” (45). Douglass thus dramatizes the episode as his initiation into the horror of slavery: “It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass” (45).

As is often suggested, the scene in which Captain Anthony whips young, beautiful Hester is charged with sexual images. When the narrator insinuates that Hester was punished because she met a young man named Ned, defying her master’s prohibition order, it indeed conjures the image of a pseudo rape⁸ as an outlet of a mix of emotions, including vengeance, jealousy, and latent sexual desire. This sexualized episode invokes an appalling Sodom when connected with the rumor mentioned earlier in the same opening chapter that Douglass’s father is Captain Anthony. Priscilla Wald remarks that the “eroticized language” reflects the Garrisonian view of

slavery that Douglass shared (82).

The violence inflicted upon the female body presents a typical sensational spectacle and, more often than not, signifies objectification of the woman. If sexualization lies in the act of looking (McDowell 178), Douglass, who witnesses and narrates the eroticized spectacle, is also a participant. It is also true, as Deborah E. McDowell asserts, that the 1855 autobiography elaborates the description of the scene with added details and makes his voyeuristic role clearer (179); he was inside a little closet in the kitchen and literally peeping on the scene “through the cracks of its unplanned boards” (*My Bondage and My Freedom* 76). Yet the scene is made less dramatic in the second text not only because it ceases to mark his entrance into slavery but also because it is relativized as one single instance of many that “opened my eyes to the cruelty and wickedness of slavery, and the heartlessness of my old master” (73). Before introducing the episode of Aunt Hester, Douglass depicts another young slave woman who was whipped ruthlessly by an overseer and asked Captain Anthony for protection, only to arouse his anger and then walk twelve miles back to her labor with her wounds unhealed. The episode, anticipating Douglass’s similar experience, underscores the master’s utter indifference to his slaves’ suffering.

What is characteristic here, however, is the interposition of the author’s view that this cruel treatment is partly a political necessity of the slavery system. He expounds how “inhumanity” is inevitably involved in the complex power structure that makes slavery operative:

Was he dead of all sense of humanity? No, I think I now understand it. This treatment is a part of the system, rather than a part of the man. Were slaveholders to listen to complaints of this sort against the overseers, the luxury of owning large numbers of slaves would be impossible. It would do away with the office of overseer, entirely; or, in other words, it would convert the master himself into an overseer. (74)

The sentence written in the present tense (“No, I think I now understand it.”) suggests that the present Douglass understands the deep meaning of his experience that was obscured from the view of the past Douglass as a slave or even as a member of the Garrisonian group.

When he goes on to introduce the next example, Aunt Hester's whipping, Douglass again inserts an analytical comment on the mechanism that allows the slaveholder to indulge in uncontrollable passion: the slave-owner can "go *far beyond* the overseer," for "[what] may have been mechanically and heartlessly done by the overseer, is now done with a will. The man who now wields the lash is irresponsible. He may, if he pleases, cripple or kill, without fear of consequences" (75). It is the absolute power that the southern institution gives to the slaveholder, not his personal wicked nature, that drives him to unspeakable brutality. Both the *Narrative* and *My Bondage and My Freedom* contain the sensational depiction of the "wrongs" poor slaves undergo and the language used to "denounce" them, but the latter inclines more toward the arguments that analyze the institution itself and thus attempts to recapture the "philosophy" of the slave narrative from the Garrisonians.

3. The Inverted Vision of the Master-Slave Relation

As he philosophizes slavery from the viewpoint of a slave and necessarily delves into a more universal discussion of the institution, Douglass undermines the dominant anti- (and pro-) slavery discourse. Parting from the binary oppositions of the abolitionist rhetoric, the devilish wickedness of the master and the helplessness of the poor slave, *My Bondage and My Freedom* presents a much more complex relationship between the master and the slave. Referring, for instance, to the great gap between the luxury of slaveholders and the poverty and physical wretchedness of slaves, Douglass soon inverts the vision by means of introducing higher laws. He transforms the somewhat proslavery phrase "slavery is a greater evil to the master than to the slave," which echoes Thomas Jefferson⁹ or the selfish mistress Marie St. Clare in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,¹⁰ into a true antislavery discourse, carrying a tone of ominous warning: "The self-executing laws of eternal justice follow close on the heels of the evildoer here, as well as elsewhere" (89). Likewise, the worldly wealth of Colonel Lloyd, reminiscent of Job's, and the "Eden-like beauty" (62) of the Great Farm House are quickly shadowed by his slaves' firm secret belief that slaveholders go to hell; superstitious rumors are whispered among the slaves of ghosts haunting the family burial ground: "Few of the slaves felt like approaching [the tombs]

even in the day time” (63).¹¹

Throughout the 1855 text, Douglass insists that slaves are not chattel to be passively valued like domestic animals, but rather thinking animals who also evaluate slaveholders. Having come to own slaves by marriage, Thomas Auld is not a “*born* slaveholder” (149) and lacks the ability to manage his slaves who refuse to refer to him as master, but instead only as Captain Auld, however hard his wife directs them otherwise: “Slaves, too, readily distinguish between the birthright bearing of the original slaveholder and the assumed attitudes of the accidental slaveholder; and while they cannot respect either, they certainly despise the latter more than the former” (150). Mr. Freeland, on the contrary, is a “well-bred southern gentleman” (194). Although he shares many of the defects common to his class, he has “some sense of justice, and some feelings of humanity” (194). What is best in him, however, is that he is not religious, unlike Mr. Auld and Mr. Covey, “[for] of all slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst” (194).

The religion of slaveholders is most harshly criticized because it is the very embodiment of their hypocrisy and deception. Mr. Covey, the merciless slave breaker, is a self-proclaimed pious man who earnestly prays to God, yet he is so corrupted as to purchase a young woman “as a breeder” and lock her up with a hired man every night to increase his “human stock” (167). Proslavery clergymen, above all, become the target of Douglass’s devastating sarcasm. He introduces two ministers who own slaves: one whips a slave, disregarding whether he is good or bad because the “good slave must be whipped, to be *kept* good, and the bad slave must be whipped, to be *made* good” (195); the other frequently lashes a slave “*in advance* of deserving it” (195) in order to nip his evil in the bud.

Denunciation of the southern religion as an utter sham is seen both in the *Narrative* and in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, but in the latter it has become more aggressive, especially in the augmented depiction of Captain Thomas Auld’s profession of religion in a Methodist camp-meeting. Douglass closely watches him from behind a crowd to determine if his master’s conversion is a true one. The repeated expressions used to show his intense gaze, such as “I could distinctly see” (151), “I could see his every movement,” and “I watched very narrowly” (152), are illustrative of his making Master Thomas a spectacle and create a dramatic visual scene that

may anticipate Henry James.¹² Contrary to the familiar situation in which slaves are rudely stared at and valued by white masters and slave traders, Douglass here objectifies and assesses the value of his own master. In the end, he also flatly denies any possibility of Master Thomas' religious progress because his profession does not lead to emancipation of his slaves or better treatment of them. As if deriding the fact that the master's house has become the "preachers' home," he sums up the reality of his religion in the following pithy phrase: "while he *starved* us, he *stuffed* them [preachers]" (153).

What is foregrounded through these episodes is the slaves' ability to see through the master's deception without revealing their insight. By putting more weight on their power to grasp the truth, rather than on their helplessness, *My Bondage and My Freedom* turns out the commonly accepted view of docile and servile slaves, for the caste relationship between the master and the slave is no longer fixed to the author of the 1855 autobiography. In examining a strategic narration in Nat Turner's "Confessions" that Douglass inherits, Sundquist employs Orlando Patterson's concept of "the master-slave relation as one of 'parasitism'" (42), an idea extended from the Hegelian philosophy:

. . . the master, by various paternalistic strategies that amounted to self-deceptions rather than statements of natural relations, camouflaged his own parasitic dependence on the slave with the pretense that slaves were parasites upon their masters. For their part, slaves in turn camouflaged, or masked, their resistance to slavery—and hence the nature of their freedom through consciousness—only on occasion removing the mask and exposing the parasitic relationship of slavery as an "ideological inversion of reality." (*To Wake the Nations* 42)

Slavery is made possible by the reciprocal operation of the slave's pretense of obedience and the master's tyranny, which camouflages "his own parasitic dependence." In this context, then, the slave's silence bears a far more profound meaning than it first appears to.

Like many other writers of slave narratives, Douglass illuminates the fact that slaves instinctively comprehend the danger of telling the truth.¹³ The unwitting utterance of their knowledge or true feelings results in being

flogged or “sold down the river,” and from here arises their maxim: “a still tongue makes a wise head” (97). When asked about their master, they automatically give a positive answer. Douglass, therefore, pretended to be most satisfied with his condition while he plotted his final escape, and throughout his writing he *still* keeps silent about the details of how he managed to escape to the North,¹⁴ which could have provided one of the most climactic scenes in the traditional captivity narrative.¹⁵

Silence is indeed a self-defense weapon to slaves, but it also serves as a sharp sword brandished over the slaveholder. Douglass underlines its strategic importance:

I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave. He should be left to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors, ready to snatch, from his infernal grasp, his trembling prey. In pursuing his victim, let him be left to feel his way in the dark; let shades of darkness, commensurate with his crime, shut every ray of light from his pathway. (241)

Douglass here transforms the image of a runaway slave in fear of slave hunters that may have been sent by the master into an inverted image that the master is frightened by the shadow of “myriads of invisible tormentors, ready to snatch, from his infernal grasp.” Although this inverted image implies divine punishment, it somehow invokes a menacing image of slave rebellion. The silence of slaves can mean their deception or even a “conspiracy,” as in Herman Melville’s “Benito Cereno.”

4. The Black Nationalist Discourse

As Sundquist suggests, Douglass’s first plan for a collective escape is described through a framework of conspiracy (*To Wake the Nations* 84). He first begins to enlighten his friends, pouring his ideas of justice into their minds and opening their eyes to their natural right to liberty. They regularly gather in a secret place to discuss their flight to freedom: “These meetings must have resembled, on a small scale, the meetings of revolutionary conspirators, in their primary condition” (*My Bondage and My Freedom*

210). Douglass elevates and justifies their scheme of disobedience by framing it against the American Revolution. He equates their heroic determination to escape from their tyrannical rulers with the ethos of the Declaration of Independence or with Patrick Henry's "liberty or death" patriotism, reiterating their unity and strong brotherhood. In this revolutionary conspiracy, he further associates himself with the founding fathers or with the black heroes of past insurrections, such as Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey, and underscores the heavy responsibility he has taken for the fate of his fellow members: "I was the instigator of the movement. The responsibility of the whole enterprise rested on my shoulders" (215). He thus engenders the black nationalism that glorifies black heroism in the revolutionary paradigm.

This kind of nationalist discourse reminds us of his well-known speech, "What to the Slaves Is the Fourth of July?" delivered at Rochester in New York on July 5, 1852, and "The Heroic Slave," published in the same year. Both the speech and his only fictional piece appear to be influenced by Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, not only in that they were composed in 1852, soon after the publication of the novel, but also in that they are more or less responding to the bestselling novel.

His Fourth-of-July speech reflects George Harris's rebellious speech addressed to Mr. Wilson, who is sympathetic toward George's wretched condition as a slave but at the same time preaches against his breaking the country law. We have already looked into George's speech in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but let us cite it again here to examine the intertextuality between Stowe's novel and Douglass's speech:

"My country again! Mr. Wilson, *you* have a country; but what country have *I*, or any one like me, born of slave mothers? What laws are there for us? We don't make them, —we don't consent to them, —we have nothing to do with them; all they do for us is to crush us, and keep us down. Haven't I heard your Fourth-of-July speeches? Don't you tell us all, once a year, that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed? Can't a fellow *think*, that hears such things? (185)

The frequent use of the pronouns "you" and "us" helps disclose the deep

chasm between those protected by the national laws and those deprived of their natural rights, despite the former's sentimental affection for the latter. Following the you-and-us rhetoric and sharing the chief logic of George's refutation grounded on the principles of the Declaration of Independence (that "all men are created equal" and "[American] governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed" (Jefferson, "Declaration" 356)), the speech by Douglass is more turbulent regarding the contradiction of the Republican democracy that allows slavery, condemning "your" glorious day as the blackest that reminds "us" (slaves) of the bondage, of being exiles outside the pale of "American people," for "above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions!" (Douglass, "Fourth of July" 156)

There is a certain difference in the intensity of aggressiveness between the two authors: whereas Stowe, as a Christian, a daughter of an evangelical Calvinist minister, and the wife of a Calvinist theologian, is hesitant to resort to violence for redressing this national sin (George does not use the bowie knife or the gun that he carries, after all, to murder his white pursuers, and even Dred, the more rebellious hero, vanishes from the story before fulfilling his planned insurrection), Douglass clearly justifies the slave's "unlawful" actions in *My Bondage and My Freedom*: "If he steals, he takes his own; if he kills his master, he imitates only the heroes of the revolution. . . . Make a man a slave, and you rob him of moral responsibility. Freedom of choice is the essence of all accountability" (149).

This justification of violence on the part of slaves is also endorsed in "The Heroic Slave," which is modeled after the 1841 rebellion led by Madison Washington on the slave ship *Creole*.¹⁶ In this novella Douglass more explicitly connects the slave rebel with the founding fathers, as his name accidentally indicates, though the author's choice of the event is no accident. He first refers to the hero's birthplace, Virginia, as the locale related to Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, and he makes the hero cry out, "I am no coward. *Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it" (4). Along with his enthusiasm for liberty, he is endowed, like Douglass himself, with the power of speech with which to move the audience, as well as excellent leadership to organize his companies.

The story is an antithesis to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the pious Christian hero seems to gain victory only through death. Admitting the effect

of presenting a merciful slave like Uncle Tom on the one hand, Douglass (and probably many other black leaders), on the other, was apprehensive of the danger of the image of a gentle, passive black man ready to be stereotyped and thereby controlled. “The Heroic Slave” aims to eliminate such an image. The author combines the two almost incompatible factors, wild force and gentle love, as Stowe does in her second antislavery novel, *Dred* (1856), when she creates a similar aggressive hero. While Washington is described as a giant who has animal-like power, “the strength of the lion, a lion’s elasticity,” he possesses a huge humane heart such that “[a] child might play in his arms, or dance on his shoulders” (5).¹⁷

The aggressive hero also signifies an alternative to the Garrisonian abolitionist moral suasion accompanied by the doctrines of no violence, disunion, and no voting, the latter two of which aim to keep “innocent” Northerners away from contamination by the evils of southern slavery through political activities or connections. From the year 1850, when the Fugitive Slave Law passed Congress, to the time when *My Bondage and My Freedom* was written, the conflict over the slavery issue between the North and the South had become so heightened that the slightest provocation could touch off a war. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, above all, meant a virtual expansion of slavery in the name of “popular sovereignty”¹⁸ and brought about violent skirmishes between pro- and anti-slavery factions. Garrison’s moral suasion based on Christianity alone seemed unable to cope with the bleeding Kansas. Influenced by Gerrit Smith, who broke away from the Garrisonian group for more practical policies (Wald 77)¹⁹ and to whom this volume is exclusively dedicated, Douglass decidedly shifted toward more political Unionist ideology, as the doctrine of disunion seemed to him to discard his suffering brethren in the South.

Grounded on the cause of the American Revolution, Douglass further asserts that slavery is un-American, that rebelling slaves are more American than the white people, more faithful to the Declaration of Independence, the most sacred document of American republicanism. He warns the southern whites, in the language of Jeremiad, against their divergence from the original spirit of the American document and of the coming retaliation for their fall from the ideal. He remarks in *My Bondage and My Freedom* that the slaveholder is a “violator of the just and inalienable rights of man” (203; emphasis added) whether he is kind or cruel, and that he “never lisps a

syllable in commendation of the fathers of this republic, nor denounces any attempted oppression of himself, without inviting the knife to his own throat, and asserting the rights of rebellion for his own slaves” (203). Whoever supports the system of slavery, Douglass thus affirms, is a traitor to the United States; it is the white majority, not the black protestors, who deviate from the ideal republic. Using the metaphor of a double-edged knife thrust to the throat of the slaveholder, he, like a biblical prophet, warns him of impending disaster. In the course of associating slaves protesting oppression more clearly with revolutionary heroes, he makes his autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, “an American book, for Americans,” to use James Smith’s phrase (35-36).

5. Novelization of the *Narrative*

In his letter inserted in the preface to the second autobiography, Douglass insists that he has never argued the slavery issue on a personal level alone, but rather for universal humanity, and that this book is “not to illustrate any heroic achievements of man, but to vindicate a just and beneficent principle, in its application to the whole human family, by letting in the light of truth upon a system” (8). The universal aspect he stresses here indeed characterizes this volume when compared with the earlier one. If the *Narrative* is a story of Frederick Douglass who becomes a man from a “brute,” *My Bondage and My Freedom* is a story of how a man attains freedom out of bondage and how that process illustrates “becoming an American.” If the former is a book based on his past speeches made as a Garrisonian member, the latter is a more independent literary work that dramatizes his past experiences as an American: it is a novelization of the *Narrative* (Edwards, Introduction xxix).

The more expanded and complex perspective involved in the 1855 autobiography is made possible by Douglass’s experience of racism running rampant even in the North. What is not often described about racial discrimination in the free land in the *Narrative* is augmented in the next book, and the racial prejudice that was felt there is further magnified in contrast to his scarce experience of racism in Britain, the land of monarchy. Douglass emphasizes this new experience of freedom of the color line by repeating his bitter experience in democratic America of being turned away at the doors

of a church, a menagerie, a hotel, and a Lyceum: "We don't allow niggers in here!" (277-79)

Just as he understood the real meaning hidden in the seemingly nonsense songs sung by his fellow slaves for the first time when he was outside of the circle in the North, so did he comprehend the truth of the slavery system and the profound meaning of his being an African American in the States when he was outside of his own country. Cultural distance and intellectual maturity gave him a global understanding of being a slave in America.

Douglass, however, makes great efforts never to give the reader the impression that his insights were suddenly given to him through encountering a new group of intellectual people or new culture and knowledge; rather, he insists that they have gradually developed from what he had already possessed as small sprouts within him. By doing so, he attempts to avoid the predominance of white culture and the binary schematization of benevolent northern whites and ignorant slaves who merely receive the blessing. He therefore dates his religious awakening and the emergence of his desire for freedom much earlier in his life in the second text than in the first. He even identifies his first public speech on the day when he began to preach against slavery to his friends in the South long before meeting Garrison in 1841.

Literacy too was not given only by the guidance of the then-angelic Mrs. Auld, for Douglass was bequeathed enthusiasm for knowledge by his mother, an African descendant, who could somehow miraculously manage to learn to read. Moreover, he seems to place less weight on literacy than he did a decade before, though he still believes literacy is a strong weapon. Instead, he suggests as well that illiteracy, which was commonly equated with dispossessing Anglo-Saxon culture, does not mean utter ignorance, nor stupidity; with this, he sheds more light upon slave culture.

The prolonged depiction of his grandmother and the addition of a few scenes with his mother serve to enrich the portrayal of his childhood. It is not the cherished memories of his family members alone that bring about the fertile sketch of slave life in this text, but the incorporation of several episodes of nasty slaves as well, such as Aunt Katy, the privileged cook of his master, who would favor her own children and bully Douglass, giving him only scarce portion of food, or Uncle Isaac Copper, who would whip

slave kids just as slaveholders did because “[everybody], in the south, wants the privilege of whipping somebody else. . . . Slaves, as well as slaveholders, use it with an unsparing hand” (65-66). Sympathetic blacks and heartless ones, or wise blacks and cunning ones, all together compose a tapestry of the slave world, a microcosm of humanity.

Similarly, Douglass refers to a few kind-hearted white characters, such as Mr. Kinney, an old Englishman at the windmill who “always seemed pleased when he saw a troop of darkey little urchins, with their tow-linen shirts fluttering in the breeze, approaching to view and admire the whirling wings of his wondrous machine” (66). From the viewpoint of the Englishman, he presents a vivid depiction of the exceptional affinity between the white man and the black kids transcending the color line. For the purpose of depicting the entirety of slave life, he portrays pleasant memories too, despite the predominance of wretchedness. However, he takes great care not to romanticize slave culture, not to be incorporated into the common proslavery conception that slaves are content. The following scene demonstrates the paradoxical richness of a slave life compared with that of a white child, which anticipates the world of Huckleberry Finn:

[The] first seven or eight years of the slave-boy’s life are about as full of sweet content as those of the most favored and petted *white* children of the slaveholder . . . He is never chided for handling his little knife and fork improperly or awkwardly, for he uses none. He is never reprimanded for soiling the table-cloth, for he takes his meals on the clay floor. He never has the misfortune, in his games or sports, of soiling or tearing his clothes, for he has almost none to soil or tear. He is never expected to act like a nice little gentleman, for he is only a rude little slave. Thus, freed from all restraint, the slave-boy can be, in his life and conduct, a genuine boy, doing whatever his boyish nature suggests. (44)

The irony and humor contained in this passage manifests one of the elements that characterize *My Bondage and My Freedom* and makes it more literary than the *Narrative*, parting from the propagandistic, deploring tone and, thereby, from the conventional slave narrative. When he said in 1855 that the present would be remembered by future generations as “the age of anti-

slavery literature” (“Anti-slavery Movement” 361), Douglass must have been confident that his new book would contribute to American literature as well as to the antislavery movement.

Chapter 10

Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno"

1. A Story of Slave Revolt

Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno"¹ was published without signature in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*² in 1855 in three installments from October through December, and it was included in *Piazza Tales*, a collection of stories, published in the next year—this time, with Melville's name, and with slight revision. The story appeared at the most critical time for American slavery, the mid-1850s. In 1854, a year before the story was first printed, the Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act which led to what is called "bleeding Kansas"—vehement skirmishes between northern abolitionists and proslavery Southerners. The Dred-Scott Decision of 1857, which virtually denied the liberation of slaves in the North, followed it, and partly caused John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry and his consequent execution in 1859. It was indeed the time just before the Civil War when many Americans felt dark shadows spreading over their nation.

Their foreboding was most explicitly expressed by the discourse of slave revolt. Harriet Beecher Stowe hints at a world-wide revolutionary trend at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). As if reacting to the titular "docile" hero of this antislavery novel, Frederick Douglass creates an insurrectionary hero in his first and last fiction, "The Heroic Slave" (1853), which deals with the mutiny aboard the *Creole* (1841). Its leader, Madison Washington, was well known among Americans along with Cinqué, the central figure of the revolt on the *Amistad* (1839), because the trials of these mutinies on the sea had concluded only about a decade before and had been reported repeatedly in periodicals.³ In responding probably to the image of fighting slaves as well as to the voice of slave narratives and other abolitionist discourses, Stowe also creates a black rebel in *Dred* (1856) modeled on Denmark Vesey, another rebellious figure familiar to Americans. It was in this atmosphere that Melville's "Benito Cereno" was written and published. As some critics suggest, it was a product of the era, often referred to as "the slave revolt panic

of the mid-fifties.”⁴

2. Antislavery Discourses in Melville's Fiction

As far as Melville's fiction is concerned, it may not be too much to say that almost every work of his contains certain commentaries on slavery.⁵ *Redburn* (1849), for instance, compares the protagonist's wretched life as a common sailor to that of a slave: “Miserable dog's life is this of the sea! commanded like a slave, and set to work like an ass! vulgar and brutal men lording it over me, as if I were an African in Alabama”(119). Melville also inserts a story about “the middle passage” told by a sailor named Jackson, who once served in Portuguese slavers, to impress the reader with the historical fact of how brutally Africans were treated on the ship when carried across the Atlantic: “the slaves were stowed, heel and point, like logs, and the suffocated and dead were unmanacled, and weeded out from the living every morning, before washing down the decks” (107).

White Jacket, published in the following year, depicts the horrors of flogging on a U.S. naval vessel, which, no doubt, alludes to slavery in the South; watching a mulatto whipped on the ship, the protagonist utters to himself, “Poor mulatto! . . . one of an oppressed race, they degrade you like a hound. Thank God! I am a white. Yet I had seen whites also scourged; for, black or white, all my shipmates were liable to that. . . . Still, there is something in us, somehow, that, in the most degraded condition, we snatch at a chance to deceive ourselves into a fancied superiority to others, whom we suppose lower in the scale than ourselves” (348). This perception of “a fancied superiority” that whites are likely to hold to nonwhites develops into Ishmael's profound meditation on “whiteness” in *Moby-Dick* (1851), in which he tries to invalidate the long-established racial or cultural scale, by blurring the hierarchical difference in images attached to whiteness and blackness.

Melville thus seems to have questioned the racialism in the America of his day throughout his career as a writer. As the author who had already completed *Moby-Dick*, a masterpiece of American literature, he possibly knew well that not only nature but slavery as well could be a theme peculiar to national literature. Yet “Benito Cereno” is his very first, and only, fiction that takes up slavery as its central theme. Surprisingly, to modern scholars of

Melville, however, this story of slave uprising had not been discussed in terms of slavery for more than a century after its publication. It had received no special attention except as “a good sea-tale” (Kaplan, “American National Sin” 332-33; Scudder 502) until 1928, when Harold Scudder announced its source book, *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres* (1817) written by Amasa Delano, especially the eighteenth chapter, which tells of the slave insurrection on board a Spanish ship in 1805. Although Scudder seems to underscore Melville’s “plagiarism,” his discovery initiated the rise of criticism of the novella and gave Melvillian scholars a precious chance to examine how his imagination created a piece of art out of raw materials.

The early full-scale criticisms seem to focus on the analysis of symbols, as in the study by F. O. Matthiessen who read “Benito Cereno” as a story of good and evil (Altschuler 296; Emery, “Topicality” 303-04; Delbanco 231), and regarded the issue of slavery as minor (Adler 88-89; Feltenstein 254).⁶ As Allan Emery maintains, Melville’s “topicality” began to be perceived only after the 1960s when civil rights movement became active (“Manifest Destiny” 48-49). It is because of this long neglect of the slavery issue in the “Benito Cereno” criticism that Robert Levine, for example, still had to say, in the late 1980s, “*Benito Cereno* now seems an obviously central literary meditation on the problem of slavery in antebellum culture” (*Conspiracy and Romance* 165).

This belated study of the slavery issue in “Benito Cereno” is also partly due to the narrative strategy Melville employs for his fiction. Since the story is narrated for the most part through the perspective of Amasa Delano, what he sees, asserts, speculates, or doubts cannot assure the reader about what is really going on. “Benito Cereno” is, in fact, another Melvillian story of deceptive appearance. The *San Donimick* commanded by a Spanish captain, Benito Cereno, is actually sea-jacked and directed by mutinous slaves, and the docility of Babo, who serves his master Benito, is a mere mask of “malign machinations and deceptions” (101).⁷ And the American captain Amasa Delano from Massachusetts, who offers generous help to release the Spanish from the predicament, proves to be another white prisoner of the dreadful plot. Here, the issue of class (captain/officer/sailor/servant) is so subtly entwined with that of race (American/Spanish; white/black) and of the slavery institution

(master/slave) that it is extremely hard to determine where the author stands; a careless reader might even suspect Melville's racism.

As is already pointed out, the primary difficulty in interpreting the story lies in the narration. Because the action of "Benito Cereno" unfolds almost exclusively from the viewpoint of Delano, a good-natured (upper-)middle class American with limited perception—just like the narrator of "Bartleby, the Scrivener"—and because Benito cannot speak his own ideas but the words invented by Babo, the story comes close to a Poesque detective tale, and the burden of decoding the mystery is placed on the reader as well as on Delano. The former is impelled to reread it to realize how ingeniously each piece of description is woven into the whole composition, while the latter vacillates between uneasy suspicion of some evil plot and benign trustfulness. What is tested here, therefore, is Delano's—and the reader's—epistemological range. "Benito Cereno" is, in a sense, a dramatization of Delano's failure to see through the veil of Babo's fiction.

3. Captain Delano's Problematic Perspective

From the beginning of the story, Delano's inability to see through the truth is symbolized by the mist that makes both the sky and the sea gray and impenetrable (Sale 153). In the morning, when the strange sail appears off the harbor of St. Maria where his sealer, the *Batchelor's Delight*, had safely anchored the day before, "[everything] was mute and calm; everything gray. The sea . . . seemed fixed, and was sleeked at the surface like waved lead. . . . The sky seemed a gray surtout. Flights of troubled gray foul, kith and kin with flights of troubled gray vapors among which they were mixed, skimmed low and fitfully over the water" (35). Not only do the "gray vapors" impair Delano's sight, but they also cause his ambiguous misgivings and foreshadow what is to follow when he gets on board the *San Dominick*: "Shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come" (35).

Delano's limited perception is the direct result of the play well manipulated by Babo, but a close reading of the story reveals that it is also due to Delano's own preconceptions: 1) his sense of authority as a captain, 2) the Anglo-Saxonism latent deep in his mind, and 3) his belief in America's expansion that he unconsciously combines with racism and anti-Catholicism. These factors do not work separately but are intertwined with each other.

What bewilders or disturbs Delano most as a ship-commander on board the Spanish slaver is the apparent lack of authority. Taking notice of “the noisy indocility of the blacks in general” and “the sullen inefficiency of the whites” (40), he concludes that what the *San Dominick* needs is “stern superior officers” (43). As Benito winks at the incident in which one of the black boys struck a white Spanish boy on the head with a knife, saying, “it was merely the sport of the lad” (47), Delano declares that if it had happened on his ship, the black boy would have had immediate punishment (probably of flogging⁸), and he advises the Spanish captain to keep all the slaves, especially young ones, employed and never to leave them idle. He even suspects that Benito is “one of those paper captains” and declares that there is “no sadder sight than a commander who has little of command but the name” (47). However, witnessing the apparent disorder on the *San Dominick*, Delano at times considers the influence of long suffering from want of water and provisions, because “[in] armies, navies, cities, or families, in nature herself, nothing more relaxes good order than misery” (40). In the end, he ascribes the “misrule” to Benito’s lack of power as a sea captain; despite all the “fair” considerations, he cannot deny the idea that if Benito Cereno had been “a man of greater energy, misrule would hardly have come to the present pass” (40). His firm trust in “good order” preserved by hierarchical power thus prevents Delano from probing further the cause of the surface disorder before his eyes.

Delano, meanwhile, prides himself on being a respectable citizen of the Republic and offers to distribute, instead of the Spanish captain, the water and food his men have carried to the *San Dominick*. He, “with republican impartiality,” doles out the water to “the oldest white no better than the youngest black.” His republican spirit, however, is soon overshadowed by his sense of class and race; he attempts to give Benito “extra allowance” and to reserve “the less wilted pumpkins” for the captain and “the soft bread, sugar, and bottled cider” only for whites (67). Yet he is unaware of his own contradiction and believes himself to be democratic as well as charitable. And he cannot control his inner displeasure with Benito who does not show due gratitude for his help.

While underestimating the Spaniard, Delano highly values the black slave Babo, who performs his duties for his enfeebled master with “that affectionate zeal which transmutes into something filial or fraternal acts in

themselves but menial” (40). To the captain of a sealer whose primary purpose is to make as much profit as possible, Babo’s industrial service looks quite desirable. However, it is evident that the satisfaction Delano feels with the black slave comes less from his incessant devotion to the offices than from his submissive attitude toward his white master. He admits later that he likes “negroes” when their presumably innate cheerfulness is combined with “the docility arising from the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind, and that susceptibility of blind attachment sometimes inhering in indispensable inferiors” (71). He recalls that he had often enjoyed, at home, watching a free black playing or working, and that, on a voyage, he would always be “on chatty, and half-gamesome terms” with a black sailor. However, his “weakness for negroes” is not based on philanthropic love, but on affection that a man inevitably feels for “Newfoundland dogs” (71).

It is, indeed, Delano’s unconscious racism that hampers his power to deduce a solution out of the given hints. There are occasions when he suspects some “wicked” imposture, but his suspicion always falls upon Benito and never upon Babo, because blacks are “too stupid” to be capable of any “evil design” (63). Thus, the dreadful shaving scene, in which the Spaniard’s life is entirely at the mercy of the slave with a sharp razor in his hand (See Figure 2), draws warm feelings toward the black out of the obtuse American in spite of the initial picture of “a headsman . . . and a man at the block” (72) he conjures up. In case of the mulatto, however, Delano’s racial thought undergoes a drastic change to the extent that he openly declares that a mulatto can be a “devil” (75) because the superior blood of the white race mixed with the African’s leads to no improvement, but rather to a detrimental effect on the latter.⁹ However, the hybrid steward, Francesco, passes Delano’s strict examination as a good mulatto exactly because of his “continual smiles” and excessive “genuflexion” (75).

Delano’s racism is related to “black animality,” as we have seen in his association of “negroes” with Newfoundland dogs. It becomes more conspicuous when he gazes at a black mother sleeping in the shade with a suckling:

His attention had been drawn to a slumbering negress, partly disclosed through the lace-work of some rigging, lying, with youthful limbs carelessly disposed, under the lee of the bulwarks, like a doe in the

shade of a woodland rock. Sprawling at her lapped breasts was her wide-awake fawn, stark naked, its black little body half lifted from the deck, crosswise with its dam's; its hands, like two paws, clambering upon her; its mouth and nose ineffectually rooting to get at the mark; and meantime giving a vexatious half-grunt, blending with the composed snore of the negress. (60; emphasis added)

Delano enjoys this scene as “a pleasant sort of sunny sight” (60), being momentarily released from his indefinable anxieties caused by the strange behavior of the Spanish. Yet it cannot be denied that he unconsciously takes sexual pleasure in seeing the carelessly exposed body (“youthful limbs” and “lapped breasts”) of the young slumbering woman. The animal images that fill this passage reveal not only his racist view of black people but also the deceptive discourse that transfigures his act of “peeping” into something natural, like a man’s affection for animals (a doe and a fawn). Unaware of his own racist and sexist views, he further enjoys the tableau of the black mother and her baby as she awakes and delightedly caresses her baby with kisses:

He was gratified with their manners; like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution; equally ready to die for their infants or fight for them. Unsophisticated as leopardesses; loving as doves. (61; emphasis added)

The animal image of a slave Delano conjures up in the two passages cited above is no more than the stereotypical one most white Americans projected upon the blacks in the 1850s when “Benito Cereno” was published. The idea of the racial inferiority of blacks was not only common among the mass of Americans but was being verified from the aspect of the human’s cranium. Josiah Nott’s *Types of Mankind*, published in 1854, was one of the most influential works to consolidate racial differences as scientific facts by means of measuring the size and shape of human skulls.¹⁰ Defining black people as the inferior race, closer to brutes than to men, was connected with the theory of human beings’ plural origins, and it provided proslavery apologists with the grounds for black slavery.

Reactionary to this was the theory of race as one. Thomas Smyth, for

instance, supported the idea of man's common origin in his *The Unity of the Races* (1850) (Emery, "Topicality" 314). Many antislavery magazine articles of the mid-fifties followed this to refute the pluralists who often compared blacks to wild animals.¹¹ *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, which Melville subscribed to, printed in 1855 the articles "Is the Human Race One or Many?" (September) and "Are We One or Many?" (October) to question Nott's ideas (Emery, "Topicality" 314). *Putnam's* also published similar articles, such as "Is Man One or Many?" in 1854 and "Are We One or Many?" in 1855. The December issue of the same year, in which the last installment of "Benito Cereno" was printed, contains the article "About Niggers" whose author asserts strongly that a negro is not an ape, but a man (Sale 152; McCall 60).

It is highly probable that Melville was familiar with this kind of racial discussion, and the animal image Delano attaches to the slave reflects the commonplace black image of his day. By showing how Delano's conceptions of black people are proved to be wrong, he challenges those of his readers: Babo was in reality an intelligent man whose head, a "hive of subtlety" (102), composed the whole plot; graceful and smiling Francesco proved to be a callous man who suggested poisoning Delano; and the black women, who seemed to have the most loving existence, showed vengeful sadism by encouraging their men to kill white people.¹²

4. Delano's Prejudice against the Spanish

Delano's racial prejudice is not limited to blacks but is directed toward the Spanish as well. Although the story is set at the end of the eighteenth century,¹³ it undoubtedly reflects the 1850s, a time when America had already succeeded in the annexation of Texas (1845) and had achieved victory in the ensuing Mexican War (1846-48), allowing it to acquire a new broad land in the West extending to the Pacific Coast. The story of an American mercantile ship rescuing/capturing a Spanish vessel drifting on the Pacific—the former exploring for treasure in the ocean and the latter loaded with slaves and other valuables—seems, then, to connote the era of America's national expansion. Allan Emery suggests that "Benito Cereno" is not so much about slavery as about American expansionism ("Manifest Destiny" 49-50). However, we have to pay attention to the fact that American expansionism and racism went hand in hand, as Reginald Horsman argues in

his book *Race and Manifest Destiny*, a thorough study of antebellum racial thought. The national expansion was not only “manifest” but was meant for the Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

According to Horsman, it was often implied that among the Caucasians, the Anglo-Saxons of England and America were supreme and therefore “destined to rule the world” (170). Further, maintaining the purity of the superior blood became equivalent to ensuring the continuous advance of civilization and progress. As a natural consequence, mixed blood (either between white and black people or between whites and Indians) meant an obstacle to human progress and to “the westward march of [American] empire” (224).¹⁴ When Benito gently restrains Delano’s harangue on the mulatto’s debased quality by calling it “your planter’s remark” and juxtaposing with it the case of “the Spanish and Indian intermixtures” (76)—thereby making the issue of race less definite—he stands closer to Melville.

The Mexican War precipitated the dissemination of the view of Mexicans as “inferior mongrel,” and the Spanish were often regarded as no better than Mexicans:

[The] Spanish-Mexican ruling class were themselves little better than Indians. . . . [The] Spaniards in Yucatan “were about equal to the Mexicans. (Horsman 247)

In the minds of many Americans, the Spanish were excluded from the supreme blood of the white people. Doubtless, Captain Delano shares this vision as he imputes Benito’s seemingly inconsistent behavior to his racial quality: “as a nation . . . these Spaniards are all an odd set” (66).

If blacks are associated with animals, then Spaniards are connected with feeble, delicate, and even effeminate images. Benito’s singularly rich attire and decorated sword signify the South American ruling class: “The Spaniard wore a loose Chili jacket of dark velvet; white small clothes and stockings, with silver buckles at the knee and instep; a high-crowned sombrero, of fine grass; a slender sword, silver mounted, hung from a knot in his sash; the last being an almost invariable adjunct, more for ornament than utility, of a South American gentleman’s dress to this hour” (45). To the eye of the American captain, the sumptuous costume and ornamental “adjunct” Benito wears do not match either the disorder all around him or

the pale face of the afflicted commander. They are so incongruous that Delano even imagines “an invalid courtier tottering about London streets in the time of the plague” (46). Since Delano attributes what appears strange in Benito to his nationality and race, he does not recognize that his toilet is a forced one.

Likewise, Benito’s delicate condition, symbolized by a fit of coughing or tremors, is regarded more as a lack of valor than a sign of long suffering. As a victim of both physical and mental debility, Delano thinks he seems “never to have been robust” (40). The term “robust” is used here to represent a healthy, practical, self-made Yankee in contrast to an enfeebled, whimsical Spanish aristocrat; Delano prides himself on being a native-born Northerner of Duxbury, Massachusetts. This racial comparison surfaces more explicitly in the exclamatory sentence, “How unlike are we made!” (49)—the words he silently utters when he sees Benito violently tremble at his mere reference to the body of the dead slaveholder Alexandro Aranda; Delano misunderstands Benito’s upset as a manifestation of his terror of a ghost.

Delano’s covert contempt for the Spanish captain assumes a touch of feminization of him. Watching Benito’s terror when Babo’s razor draws a drop of blood in the shaving scene, Delano thinks, “Poor fellow, . . . so nervous he can’t even bear the sight of barber’s blood; and this unstrung, sick man, is it credible that I should have imagined he meant to spill all my blood, who can’t endure the sight of one little drop of his own?” (73). In his imagination Delano almost compares Benito to a delicate lady fainting at a bloody sight while he denies the recurrent suspicion of his evil scheme. Around the time of the Annexation and the Mexican War, the image of Spanish/Mexican men as weak, lazy, and unable to control their women and country was disseminated among Americans, and served to justify America’s seizing and governing of the Spanish/Mexican territory in place of them (Horsman 227-48, 233-34). Delano’s view of the Spanish corresponds to the image.

In examining the Spanish image in “Benito Cereno” constructed through Delano’s perception, we must note that his racist discourse is also intertwined with anti-Catholicism. Lyman Beecher, Stowe’s father and a famous Calvinist minister in New England, had already expressed anti-Catholic sentiment in his *A Plea for the West* (1835), urging his audience to follow him in delivering the West from “feudal ignorance and servitude” of

Catholicism (Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* 146-47). The “great” migration of the Beecher family to Cincinnati, Ohio (still a part of the West at the time), had been intended to be a crusade against Catholic encroachment (Hedrick 68, 168). Emery remarks that America’s anti-Catholic sentiment reached its culmination during the 1850s “in conjunction with a rising Anglo-Saxonism and a ‘nativist’ dislike for all things ‘foreign’” (“Manifest Destiny” 56-57):

Catholicism was condemned for its “totalitarian” church structure, its “authoritarian” methods, its popularity among the “Celtic” races of Southern Europe, and its “imperialistic” commitment to world-wide evangelism. (57)

The *San Dominick* is full of monastery imagery. Seen from a distance, the ship—veiled in thick fog—appears to Delano like “a white-washed monastery . . . perched upon some dun cliff among the Pyrenees,” with “Black Friars pacing the cloisters” (36). Though it is a Spanish merchant ship of the first class, an air of oldness and decay is everywhere and its captain, Don Benito, “like some hypochondriac abbot” (40), suffers from lethargy. The antiquated and ruinous atmosphere signifies the fading relics of some mighty power of the past that was both secular and religious.

The embarking of the cheerful American captain upon the weather-beaten Spanish ship, therefore, marks a victory of democratic America over the despotic old world.¹⁵ It also implies the takeover of the emerging Anglo-Saxon-Protestant American empire of the declining Catholic-Spanish empire. And the persistent chase of the Spanish merchantman by the American crew represents another American sentiment of the 1850s—that of a new empire, replacing the old one and marching westward into the Pacific in pursuit of economic wealth. Captain Delano regards Benito’s entreaties not to chase the *San Dominick* as a renouncement of his right to it and commands his men to capture the ship and its cargo (including the slaves), which are “worth more than a thousand doubloons” (87).

5. A Southern Plantation named “San Dominick”

The Roman Catholic church was frequently linked with the Inquisition in Protestant Americans’ imagination, and it appeared in “popular accounts,

particularly in Northeast newspapers and journals,” as a symbol of opposition, or a dangerous threat, to “the ideals of republican liberty” (Levine, *Conspiracy and Romance* 202). Melville seems to recast this popular narrative of anti-Catholicism in the shaving scene Babo stages, because a scene of religious execution of an apostate is replaced by that of the daily act of shaving by a black barber—a scene so familiar in American life that Delano cannot perceive any danger except a momentary impression of the armchair as “some grotesque engine of torment” (70). The tableau of this pseudo-Inquisition mocks anti-Catholic sentiment, since the victim here is a Spaniard with an apron of Spanish flag tied around his neck, and Babo is the executioner, while Delano plays the role of the inquisitor himself, without knowing it, and *enjoys* the sight (Emery, “Manifest Destiny” 58-59).

As many critics point out, Spanish Catholicism, in association with totalitarian power and lawless punishment, was identified with southern slavery (Levine, *Conspiracy and Romance* 201-02; Kelley 121; Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* 148). The Inquisitional sadism displayed in a dark hidden place like a dungeon, as illustrated in Poe’s “Pit and Pendulum” (1842), suggested what was going on behind the planter’s resplendent mansion¹⁶. Theodore Weld had already exposed what the slaveholder’s arbitrary power could bring about in *American Slavery As It Is* (1839). Declaring his purpose in its introduction to prove the atrocities of American slavery, he gives a kind of summary of the savageries that are to be listed in the whole volume:

We will prove that the slaves in the United States are treated with barbarous inhumanity; that they are overworked, underfed, wretchedly clad and lodged, and have insufficient sleep; that they are often made to wear round their necks iron collars armed with prongs, to drag heavy chains and weights at their feet while working in the field, and to wear yokes, and bells, and iron horns; that they . . . have some of their front teeth torn out or broken off, that they may be easily detected when they run away; that they are frequently flogged with terrible severity, have red pepper rubbed into their lacerated flesh, and hot brine, spirits of turpentine . . . poured over the gashes to increase the torture; that they are often stripped naked, their backs and limbs cut with knives, bruised and mangled by scores and hundreds of blows

with the paddle, and terribly torn by the claws of cats, drawn over them by their tormentors; that they are often hunted with blood hounds and shot down like beasts, or torn in pieces by dogs . . . ; that their ears are often cut off, their eyes knocked out, their bones broken, their flesh branded with red hot irons; that they are maimed, mutilated and burned to death over slow fires. (9)

In his attempt to prove the inhuman brutality of slavery in the South, Weld gives numerous examples of unspeakable violence gleaned from personal confessions, letters, newspaper articles, and books, which contain, for instance, a case of a runaway slave who was captured and compelled to run back to the plantation after the overseer's horse for some fifteen miles, being whipped all the way. When he reached home, the slave was further whipped till his back was almost "mince-meat," and, this torture not being satisfactory yet to his master, his weary legs were burnt with hot embers, and he was found dead the next morning (70).

Weld's document is chiefly directed to the northern audience who would not believe the cruel treatment of slaves in America but who were ready to give credit to "the atrocities perpetrated by Ovando in Hispaniola, Pizarro in Peru, and Cortez in Mexico" (8). Weld equates the violence of America's South with that of Spanish (Mexican)-Catholic nations in South America. Extending this parallel, we can say that if Benito, the captain of the Spanish vessel carrying more than a hundred slaves, embodies a southern slaveholder, then Delano represents a Yankee visitor to the southern plantation (McCall 48; Yellin, *The Intricate Knot* 217) who sees nothing horrible behind the grand plantation house, behind "the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other" (Melville, "Benito Cereno" 45).

Delano, a proud Northerner, is against slavery, and voices his criticism of the slaveholder's unrestrained power as he hears Babo's "wailing soliloquy" (74) over the master's revenge on him for a little cut: "Ah, this slavery breeds ugly passions in man—Poor fellow!" (75) And yet he is not free from the idea of a slave as chattel and offers to buy Babo for fifty doubloons. He captures, in the end, all the mutinous slaves and sends them to their original destination, Lima in Chili, where they are destined to be auctioned and sold. He indeed supports slavery. This connotes that the North

conspires with its counterpart, the South, in maintaining the institution in the United States, and that America is no better than the ruinous Spain that had drained herself away by expanding her empire in company with slavery.¹⁷ Melville sees America's fate in the perturbed history of Spain (Emery, "Manifest Destiny" 66). As Joyce Adler suggests, Benito's farewell greeting uttered with unusual zeal just before Delano descends into his boat, "[Go], and God guard you better than me," can be interpreted as a prayer-like warning to America's future (107-08).

In this context the transposition of the figurehead of the *San Dominick* from Cristobal Colon to the skeleton of the slaveholder Aranda is symbolic of the shadow that gathers over the nation, since Columbus, who "discovered" America, and whom Americans have celebrated as a historical hero, was also the agent who introduced slavery into the New World (Kelley 120; Adler 105-06). The sentence painted on the pedestal of the figurehead, "*Seguid vuestro jefe*" (Follow your leader) (37), then, implies a triple warning: a disastrous end to those who follow the slaveholder, the Spanish empire, and the history initiated and written by Columbus acting for the empire. As long as America follows the example of Spain, the skeleton seems to caution, she is doomed to bear "a slumbering volcano" (56) that might explode at any moment like the bloody revolt on board the *San Dominick*.

6. Fear of a Slumbering Volcano

Melville places Benito's legal deposition at the end of the main narrative as if to present a solution to the mystery that has been unfolding on the *San Dominick*. This italicized deposition was unwelcome to Putnam's editor, George William Curtis, who regarded the document as "dreary" and complained that Melville had written the story "too hurriedly" (Newman 95-96; Robertson-Lorant 350). However, the deposition functions as a means to reveal its own unreliability as well, while it solves the mystery to some extent. It is, in the first place, only a "partial translation" of some extracts from the Spanish legal documents. Second, the deposition is written exclusively from the viewpoint of the Spanish captain Benito. It is also added that "*in some things his memory is confused, he cannot distinctly recall every event*" (96). Given the fact that Benito could not stand even to look at Babo in the court of Lima and that his surviving sailors, in revenge for black violence, killed

some of the slaves already bound to the ring-bolts on the deck after the capture, it is quite dubious if what the captain testified and his crew confirmed is objective.

What is more important as to the authenticity of the legal deposition, however, is the absence of black people's claims. Babo kept silent from the moment of his capture to the end: "Seeing all was over, he uttered no sound, and could not be forced to" (102). The side of the ringleader of the black mutiny is thus to be excluded forever from the tribunal records. As Eric Sundquist suggests, the deposition, working as a key to unlock "the complications which precede it," also "locks up the significance of the revolt" (*To Wake the Nations* 180). It exposes how wrong Delano's perception of the slaves has been and, at the same time, reveals the deficiency of the public records of the slave insurrection.

Babo's silence eloquently talks of the fact that formal history has been written by whites. To sense the full weight of this fact, it would be enough to recall the scene in Douglass's *Narrative* where he acknowledges that a black person's witness means nothing in court: "If I had been killed in the presence of a thousand colored people, their testimony combined would have been insufficient to have arrested one of the murderers" (105). Babo's attitude expressed in the words, "since I cannot do deeds, I will not speak words," conveys his understanding that, being a prisoner, the slave loses his voice and, without voice, is virtually dead. And he was dragged to the scaffold and "met his voiceless end. The body was burned to ashes; but . . . the head, that hive of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the Plaza, met, unabashed, the gaze of the whites" (102). Babo's "unabashed" meeting of the whites' gaze indicates his unabashed resistance, and this opens a loophole in the history written by white people. It also insinuates the "slumbering volcano" that can never be suppressed.

Before concluding his story, Melville inserts a short conversation between the two captains in which the lighthearted American tries to dispel the melancholy of the Spaniard who is possessed with a past apparition:

" . . . But the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, [the] bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves."

"Because they have no memory . . . because they are not human."

...

“You are saved,” cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; “you are saved; what has cast such a shadow upon you?”

“The negro.” (101)

This dialogue reveals that Delano has learned nothing from his experience or from the past. His optimistic thought (the past has passed, and the bright sun shines again) echoes Daniel Webster, who praised the Union when he succeeded in passing the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850: “A long and violent convulsion of the elements has just passed away, and the heavens, the skies, smile upon us” (qtd. in Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* 149). Benito, meanwhile, could not forget the past, because he had been put in the slave’s place, which had made him utterly voiceless, and he had learned what it is to be a slave and about the precarious and reversible master-slave relationship. His melancholy condensed in the two words “the negro” reflects the underlying menace of the suppressed black voice, which is tantamount to the “slumbering volcano,” which Delano cannot recognize to the end.

As is mentioned before, “Benito Cereno” is narrated almost entirely from the viewpoint of Delano, a good-natured American of the ruling class who shares much of the sentiment prevalent in mid-century America. The story is, in a sense, a counterpart of *White Jacket*, which is told by a sailor of the lowest rank who is capable of criticizing the social system more directly. When we note that the mildly antislavery *Putnam’s* was intended chiefly for middle-class readers in the North¹⁸ and that the theme of slavery had become an extremely touchy issue by the 1850s, it may not be difficult to understand why Melville chose a character of the propertied class for the main narrative perspective of his story. Or, as some critics point out, he might have worried about his father-in-law, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, who supported the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and who was determined to return the fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, to his master (Yellin, *The Intricate Knot* 215; Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* 176; Robertson-Lorant 351-52). Whatever the reason may be, this fictional device made the writer’s creative process, as well as the reader’s deciphering of it, far more problematic than in the case of *White Jacket*. Yet it is in this subtlety of the narrative that Melville succeeded in creating a new form of antislavery literature, different from

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that evokes the reader's empathy for the slave, or from slave narratives written by blacks that protest against slavery more directly by expressing their own voice.

In line with this subtle style of narration, "Benito Cereno" suggests another complex, almost labyrinthine, relationship among the author, average reader/publisher, and ideal reader. Babo is at once an artist who creates a story that the average reader, Delano, is eager to read, and an imposter who camouflages the truth, the artist's dark imagination, by mimicking what he is expected to create. Benito is another artist who drops hints of the truth through the fine mesh of the textual design imposed by the publisher (or the average reader) and who patiently waits for a small number of ideal readers, if there is any, to decipher the truth. And his suffering as a hostage is a metaphor for the author's painful dilemma between what he really wants to write and the demands of the marketplace. It is indeed the reader's task to dissolve the extremely complicated "knot" that Melville has thrown toward him/her.

Chapter 11

Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig*

1. The First Novel by a Black Woman

Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* is a story of a free black girl in the North. Since the details of the author's life are extremely scarce, it is hard to determine whether the story is an autobiography or a work of imagination. However, many critics assert that it is an "autobiographical" novel.¹ *Our Nig* was published in Boston in 1859, two years before the outbreak of the Civil War. It attracted little attention even from black abolitionists, and had been buried in oblivion for more than a century until Henry Louis Gates, Jr., accidentally unearthed and reprinted it in 1983. As Barbara White notes, the discovery of the work dislodged Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892), "previously considered the first novel by an African American woman" (iii), and re-dated the emergence of black female novel three decades earlier all at once.²

Not only does the recovery of *Our Nig* dramatically alter the chronology of black women's writing, however, but it also expands the world of the early African American literature since the novel is far more complex than it first appears to be. Alice Walker emphasizes its "enormous significance" by saying that "[it] is as if we'd just discovered Phillis Wheatley—or Langston Hughes" (qtd. in Gates, "Preface" vii; White iii), while Ralph Ellison confesses that it reassured his "suspicion that there was more 'free-floating' literacy available to Negroes than has been assumed" (qtd. in Gates, "Preface" viii).

Highly evaluating Wilson as the first black woman to have published a novel in the United States, Gates remarks that the plot of *Our Nig* "has no parallel either in sentimental fiction generally or in Afro-American fiction" until the twentieth century in that the initial interracial marriage is the very incentive force for the ensuing incidents (*Figures in Black* 145). Ira Berlin also insists on the importance of the novel, declaring that it is "more complicated than any black novel" before Charles Chesnutt's *The House*

Behind the Cedars published in 1900, for, until then, scarcely had either the antebellum interracial marriage or relations of black men and women been articulated from the black perspective (154). In this sense, Gates calls *Our Nig* a “missing link” between the enriched tradition of black autobiographies (or slave narratives) and “the slow emergence of a distinctive black voice in fiction” (Introduction lii).

The uniqueness of *Our Nig* lies in the combination of the two received literary traditions: the slave narrative, employed chiefly by male black writers, and the sentimental novel predominant among works by white female writers in the nineteenth century. Yet *Our Nig* is more than a mere mixture of the two. In her struggle to voice the suffering of the black heroine, a free mulatto exploited and abused by a white family called the Bellmonts, Wilson seems to fuse the two literary conventions to create a new form to suit her purpose (Gates, Introduction lii).

Although Wilson makes it clear in her short preface that she wrote the book as a sort of “experiment” for sustaining herself and her child in destitution, the term “experiment” can also be metaphorical, for she attempts to find a way to express her long painful experience as an indentured servant. Following the traditional framework of sentimental novels, *Our Nig*, like Harriet Jacobs’s slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), diverts from the genre and thereby exposes its limits. The parentless heroine, Alfrado (often called Frado), grows into a young woman through countless harsh treatments by her mistress, Mrs. Bellmont, and her youngest daughter Mary, and yet the hardship does not promise her a comfortable and respectable life which is sure to be given to sentimental heroines; nor does the story end with a happy marriage, the expected “reward” for a pious lady who has gone through certain ordeals. Frado, like Linda the heroine of Jacobs’s narrative, remains homeless at the end of the story, and her religious belief—the most important element for a sentimental heroine—is ambiguous until the end.³

Indeed, as the title implies, Wilson is quite audacious in many respects in spite of her prefatory humble apology: “her inability to minister to the refined and cultivated, the pleasure supplied by abler pens”; “defects are so apparent it requires no skilful hand to expose them.” By naming her autobiographical novel “Our Nig,” the author challenges her contemporary northern readers, especially those abolitionists who believe that they are free

from the taint of slavery and who boast of democracy, reproaching the inhumanity of slaveholders in the South. The derogative appellation, “Nig(ger),” immediately implies racial prejudice against the black, and the possessive pronoun “Our” indicates the voice of the white family who “own” the heroine like a slave; the title might have repelled the white Christian readers to whom the book chiefly addressed.

What is more striking, or tricky, is the way Wilson presents the author of the book by offering her anonymous version, “By ‘Our Nig.’” In doing so, she follows the pattern of the slave narrative, whose authorship is often deliberately hidden for the author’s security, and yet must somehow be recorded to guarantee the truthfulness of the narrative by adding, for instance, “written by himself/herself,” as in the case of Frederick Douglass’s narrative (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*). While the titular name repeated in double quotes gives an impression that the following story narrated in the third person is in fact a true story—the effect that antislavery fiction as well as slave narratives generally aims at, it gradually makes the reader conscious of the ironic viewpoint of “Our Nig.” As Gates aptly points out, by using the debased name as her pseudonym, Wilson transforms the heroine, who is the “object of abuse and scorn,” into “a subject who writes her own thinly veiled fictional account of her life in which she transforms her tormentors into objects” (Introduction li). The reuse of the scornful appellation given by her tormentors reverses the perspective and grants the “passive” victim power to objectify them, while the person gazed upon and assessed becomes a gazer and assessor. *Our Nig* is, as it were, a story of this gazer/assessor who gains power by writing her own story.

2. Slavery’s Shadows in the North

Although pecuniary shortage was certainly the main factor that drove Wilson to “scribbling,” as it was often a hidden motive for the publication of domestic novels by women writers such as Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Our Nig* is another powerful antislavery novel of the 1850s when slavery was a national issue of paramount urgency; it was published only two months before John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry. Just as the title alludes the servitude of the black race, its long subtitle “Sketches from the

Life of a Free Black, in a Two-Story White House, North. Showing That Slavery's Shadows Fall Even There." further suggests the virtual existence of slavery in the North where the institution had been legally abolished. The phrase, "Slavery's Shadows," carries a double meaning. It signifies, in the first place, the prolonged unpaid labor and the relentless physical violence inflicted upon "our Nig"—Mrs. Bellmont's frequent whipping, kicking, or confinement, as well as continual verbal harassment. Wilson discloses in her preface the literal existence of slavery in "a two-story white house" hidden from the public eye: "My mistress was wholly imbued with southern principles."

However, "Slavery's Shadows" is also figurative. The author's indictment is not limited to an individual family or person, but extended to racism prevalent even in the northern free "democratic" states. Lydia Maria Child, a prominent abolitionist writer who edited Jacobs's *Incidents*, had seen through racism at the core of slavery as early as 1833 as stated in her abolitionist book *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (186-207). Wilson recognizes anti-black racism as the cause of slavery; she in fact almost equates racism with slavery itself: Mrs. Bellmont is so prejudiced against black people that she "hardly believed [Frado] had a soul" (86); religion is meant for white people alone, not for blacks; she cares not at all how ill Frado looks in consequence of overwork because "niggers are just like black snakes; you *can't* kill them" (88).

It must be noted that behind Mrs. Bellmont's skeptical comment on giving the black education lies her fear of racial reversal:

"I have let Nig go out to evening meetings a few times, and, if you will believe it, I found her reading the Bible to-day, just as though she expected to turn pious nigger, and preach to white folks. So now you see what good comes of sending her to school." (88)

The above citation echoes the well-known rhetoric Hugh Auld uses in Douglass's narrative when he excoriates his wife Sophia for teaching Douglass how to read.

Our Nig indeed inherits the tradition of the slave narrative. Frado's life is just like that of a southern slave. She was separated from her family when she was only six years old, though not as a result of being sold by a cruel

slaveholder, but of being deserted by her own white mother due to utter poverty. Except for the short period when she was allowed to attend a school for elementary education, she is a literal slave who toils under the control of Mrs. Bellmont. The portrayal of Frado's routine life reflects slave narratives: her drudgery lasts from early dawn until after all the other members have retired to their beds; she has to do everything exactly in the way she is directed, and "any departure from this rule [is] to be punished by a whipping" (29), just as any delay leads to the same result; her meal is a coarse scant one, "a bowl of skimmed milk, with brown bread crusts" (29), which she has to take within ten minutes, standing by the kitchen table; beside the scanty clothes, she is given no shoes and no headgear almost all through the year, so that she is always exposed to heat or cold; and, if she cries over her misery, she is sure to be whipped, for tears are regarded as "a symptom of discontent and complaining which must be nipped in the bud" (30).

Such heartless treatment by a white lady must have appalled the contemporary readers as women were regarded as the "angel in the house" and pedestaled as moral guardians of home in the context of what is called the "Cult of True Womanhood" in antebellum America. Wilson discloses the wide gap between the idealized middle-class woman and her reality. The "Two-story White House" in the subtitle is suggestive of this reality. While the phrase describes the actual house in which the protagonist stays, it implies a house divided by races. The white house of the Bellmonts, which most probably assumes a stately front, is divided between the "nicely furnished rooms" that amazed Frado, and the attic room allotted to her, "an unfurnished chamber over the kitchen, the roof slanting nearly to the floor, so that the bed could stand only in the middle of the room" (27).

The double-structured residence is symbolic of Mrs. Bellmont's hypocrisy; she plays the role of a middle-class mistress in the parlor, behaving perhaps like a respectable lady, but who becomes a "she-devil" (25) in the kitchen, where she enslaves the poor black orphan, applying a rawhide whenever the mood strikes. The compartmentalization of the house "produces a compartmentalized language deployed by the white woman, who speaks like an angel in the parlor but like a 'she-devil' in the kitchen" (Mullen 254). Mrs. Bellmont, as depicted by Wilson, is perhaps close to the reality of a plantation mistress, which is exemplified in Douglass's description of cruel mistresses like Mrs. Giles Hick who killed his wife's

cousin: “Mrs. Hicks, finding the girl slow to move, jumped from her bed, seized an oak stick of wood by the fireplace, and with it broke the girl’s nose and breastbone, and thus ended her life” (58).

Mrs. Bellmont’s brutality, however, does not come only from her wicked nature (“she-devil”), but it also includes class exploitation. She is an avid mistress who sees nothing wrong in extorting as much money from the oppressed as possible. It is suggested in the text that, before Frado became her servant, many hired young girls had fled from the house, one after another, because of the hard work there. Objecting to the idea of a religious servant, Mrs. Bellmont retorts to her husband who urges her to let Frado attend prayer meetings:

“Why, according to you and James, we should very soon have her in the parlor, as smart as our own girls. . . . If you should go on as you would like, it would not be six months before she would be leaving me; and that won’t do. Just think how much profit she was to us last summer. We had no work hired out; she did the work of two girls—” (89-90)

This quotation reveals the extent to which Mrs. Bellmont abuses Frado. It is quite ironic that her vindictive comment on Frado paradoxically tells us how able she is. Frado’s ability to manage the work of two girls, however, does not lead to the betterment of her condition, since Mrs. Bellmont’s strong sense of class distinction never allows the lowest working class to trespass the line that divides the parlor from the kitchen. Mrs. Bellmont ends the argument with her husband, saying, “I’ll beat the money out of her” (90) and she did beat the money out of her until Frado left the house at the age of eighteen, leaving her sick and lame as a consequence of many years of overwork, for which Mrs. Bellmont paid only “a silver half dollar.”

Mrs. Bellmont’s class consciousness is also expressed through her objection to her eldest daughter Jane’s marriage. She wished Jane to marry Henry, in prospect of the great riches that he would inherit from his father, and grew infuriated when Jane selected George, a much less wealthy man, as her husband. Her anger did not subside until Mr. Bellmont intervened in this matter for his daughter. A similar scene is repeated when Jack, the younger son, announces that he has married a woman who, according to him,

is “worth a million dollars . . . though not a cent of it is in money” (112). Regarding his wife as a disgrace to the Bellmonts, his mother tries to break up the marriage. The letters she manipulates for this purpose remind us of Jacobs’s narrative and Walker’s *The Color Purple*.

The financial/class rise and fall by marriage is another important element of this novel. Frado’s white mother Mag goes down the social ladder by marriage. Her story follows the conventions of a Richardsonian sentimental novel such as *Charlotte Temple*—seduction of an innocent young girl by a wicked man, his desertion of the girl and her baby, the coldness of her peers, and her utter poverty and desperation. However, the latter half, in this case, deviates from the convention of the genre with Mag’s second marriage to a colored man named Jim which introduces “amalgamation,” a taboo that makes *Our Nig* unique in the sentimental tradition.

Amalgamation is the object of the most vehement attack from the proslavery against abolitionism (F. Foster 29), although such attacks overlook the existence of children of mixed blood in the South as a consequence of “amalgamation.” Wilson challenges the reader, through Jim’s wooing, to reflect on the question of which is more awful, the cold shoulder those former white “friends” give, or the offer of help by a caring black man by means of interracial marriage:

“You’s hard trial of white folks, any how. They run off and left ye, and now none of ’em come near ye to see if you’s dead or alive. I’s black outside, I know, but I’s got a white heart inside. Which you rather have, a black heart in a white skin, or a white heart in a black one?” (12)

The story of Mag’s fall from her society and consequential poverty actuates that of Frado the protagonist, and the former somehow anticipates the latter. Like her mother, Frado is in a sense seduced by a self-proclaimed fugitive slave, bears a baby, and is deserted by him. She is compelled in the end to leave her child in a charitable family due to destitution. Frado’s never-ending suffering owing to poverty criticizes the hierarchical society based on race and class. Although Caroline Rush’s *The North and the South* (1852) is an anti-Tom proslavery novel,⁴ it somehow resonates with *Our Nig*, since Rush speaks for those poor working children, insisting that slavery exists in

the North as well and that poverty is the hardest master. She addresses readers, who shed tears over the fate of Uncle Tom, a masculine “Negro”: “where is the genius to paint the scenes that exist in our cities? To awaken a sympathy that shall give strength to the white, wearied, worn-out daughters of toil?” (23) *Our Nig* is, in a way, a critical response to the question Rush raises (Gates, Introduction xlv). Wilson has revised Rush’s story of poor white children in northern cities and created a story of a black working-class girl who is the very “wearied, worn-out daughter of toil.” *Our Nig* “transmogrifies the rhetorical devices of the sentimental ‘woman’s novel’ into an early Afro-American commentary on race, class, and poverty in mid-nineteenth-century America” (D. Davis).

3. The Invisible Men and Their Sexual Exploitation

While Mrs. Bellmont and her younger daughter Mary, who is a sort of copy of her mother, are the “monsters” who torture Frado, the male members—Mr. Bellmont, James the eldest son, and Jack—all seem to be gentle toward her. They often play the role of a mediator between Frado and those female “devils” in the house. Yet none of the males ever attempt to rescue the poor black girl out of servitude. Mr. Bellmont, for instance, is a sympathetic, humane man, but tends to evade the storm of anger of his shrewish wife, like Rip Van Winkle, and thus leaves Frado in her cruel hands. He even wished that Frado would never return when she once fled from the house. He acquiesces in his wife’s violence, saying that he cannot resist women: “How am I to help it? Women rule the earth, and all in it” (44).

Though Mr. Bellmont pretends that women are the law, a close reading of the story reveals that the patriarchal law rules the family. After the long familial controversy over Frado’s education, Mr. Bellmont declared in the end that “she should go to school” (30); the word once spoken by him “became the law” (31) and the objection of Mrs. Bellmont and Mary was silenced. He once advised Frado to try to avoid an undeserved whipping. This implies that he does not deny the act of whipping itself; he rather thinks that she should be whipped if she deserves the punishment.

The most important matters are thus determined by Mr. Bellmont, the head of the family. We may remember here that it was, after all, Mr. Bellmont who decided to let Jane choose her future spouse in the midst of the wife’s

fury. This patriarchal power is subtly suggested in the relationship between the Bellmonts. When Frado fled the house after Mrs. Bellmont's severe whipping, Mr. Bellmont suspected that his wife confined her somewhere. With a sense of humiliation, Mrs. Bellmont complained, "Oh, dear! I did not think it would come to this; that my own husband would treat me so." Tears gushed from her eyes, but "nobody but Mary seemed to notice" them (47-48). Yet, whenever she finds something uncontrollable about Frado, she appeals, the narrator comments ironically, to her husband: "Strange, when she was always foiled in this direction, she should resort to him" (87).

James and Jack, the future patriarchs, are not different from their father in that their kindness is limited within the structure of racial hierarchy. Even if James invites her to the parlor, it does not mean she can join the world of the parlor; the racial division is never dissolved. What Jack can do to protect her from his mother's tyranny is only to give her a dog which is to become her sole "friend" and to listen to her lamentations.

The dog called Fido signifies her double, as the sight rhyme of the names, Frado/Fido, implies (Johnson 106).⁵ It is a symbolic existence that reflects her situation, a pet among the Bellmont men. This is best expressed in a scene of the dinner table. When Mrs. Bellmont commanded her to eat from the plate she had used instead of a clean one, Frado called the dog to lick it. Jack enjoyed her witty counterattack so much that he threw a bright, silver half-dollar, saying, "There, take that; 't was worth paying for" (72). This reminds us of a scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where Mr. Shelby, a Kentuckian planter, and Haley, the slave trader, throw a slave boy raisins or a quarter of an orange to reward the amusement he gave them by his comic gestures. The analogy between the two scenes clearly tells us that Frado is not regarded as a family member; she is no more than a pet at best to Jack even though he is kind and sympathetic toward her.

When a slave is a "she-pet," however, that makes much difference, for it involves almost without exception sexual exploitation.⁶ Frado is described from the start as a beautiful mulatto girl and Jack urges his family to "keep her" in the house because she is "real handsome and bright, and not very black, either" (25). When James returned home after a long absence, his first question was, "Is this that pretty Nig, Jack writes to me about, that you are so severe upon, mother?" (47) Frado's body is the object of sexual desire of the men as well as of Mrs. Bellmont's monetary greed. Ronna Johnson even

suggests “rapes” behind the intimate, friendly attitude of the Bellmont males and Frado’s sudden boldness toward her mistress when she is sure of their presence (97). It is indeed probable that her occasional daring behaviors are supported by a sense of protection that comes from her closeted sexual ties with the Bellmont men, but the matter of sexuality is suppressed in the text. Throughout the story, Mrs. Bellmont’s (and Mary’s) brutality, both physical and verbal, is in the foreground, whereas the male members are put in the background and are almost invisible in the depiction of the heroine’s suffering.

Whether or not actual “rapes” compose a hidden sub-text beneath the surface narrative, the story discloses a wholly different aspect if we read sexual abuses in it. Mrs. Bellmont’s sadistic impulse of violence spouted on Frado may be better understood in this context (Johnson 109).⁷ When she makes Frado work outside without a hat to shield her head from the glittering sunlight, it is not only to torture her, but to make her sun-tanned and black enough: “She was not many shades darker than Mary now; what a calamity it would be ever to hear the contrast spoken of. Mrs. Bellmont was determined the sun should have full power to darken the shade which nature had first bestowed upon her as best befitting” (39). At another time, she quickly responds to James’s recognition of Frado’s beauty, saying, “I’ll not leave much of her beauty to be seen” (47). She actually tries to make her look ugly by cutting her glossy ringlets. Finding that his mother cut her curls out of jealousy, Jack remarks, consoling the victim, “Thought you were getting handsome, did she? Same old story, is it; knocks and bumps? Better times coming; never fear, Nig” (70).

Mrs. Bellmont’s tears of fury shed behind the backs of the men, which only Mary notices, assume much more complex layers of meanings than they seemingly show. It may be worth noting here again that Mary Chestnut insisted that the master’s indulgence in sexual pleasure extracted from his slave women was the “sores spot” of slavery (168-69), denouncing Stowe’s neglect of this point in her popular *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*; that Mrs. Flint in Jacobs’s narrative was so jealous of the slave girl to whom her husband was attached that she became mad enough to “[spend] many a sleepless night to watch over [her]” (31); or that the white mistress in Willa Cather’s last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), set in pre-Civil-War Virginia, schemes to make one of her nephews rape her slave girl to whom she suspects her

husband is sexually attached.

As Gates observes that “Frado’s complex relation to James . . . is a curious blend of religion and sexual desire” (Introduction xlix), the reader cannot but perceive certain sexual connotations affixed to her religious growth through his earnest guidance. It is evident that Frado’s religious awakening parallels her attachment to James. After he becomes ill and returns home to recuperate, she devotes herself to care for him, although she already has enough on her hands. Nursing sick James means further reduction of her rest at night: “Yet she insisted on being called; she wished to show her love for one who had been such a friend to her” (77).

It seems that Frado the servant girl most mourns over the approaching death of James; she weeps “like one inconsolable” (97). After the funeral, she wishes to be buried with him, and yet she mourns, at the same time, over “her unfitness for heaven” (99). Her aspiration for another world comes from her longing for James, as she herself admits, “*He* was the attraction. Should she ‘want to go there if she could not see him?’” (100). Even the minister advises her “to make Christ, instead of James, the attraction of Heaven” (103). The description of Frado’s emotional ties to James, thus, evokes a tone of romantic (and sexual) affinity.

James, on the other hand, takes a patriarchal attitude toward Frado, though his concern with her soul is earnest. He initiates his inculcation of Christianity, like a minister, with a sort of catechism, examining Frado’s possibility of salvation, while the female members, like Abby (Mr. Bellmont’s sister) and Rachel (James’s wife), help her to probe the religious being within herself by taking her to prayer meetings or reading the Bible with her. James sees in her a kind heart, capable of vast love, but he believes that “[a] kind, affectionate heart, native wit, and common sense, and the pertness” he perceives in her should be “restrained properly,” if they might ever serve for herself (69).

Frado’s religiosity is, as it were, tested and disciplined by her devotion to the sick James. The long ordeal she endures is similar to that of the heroine of *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), with the aim to make her a wife suitable to her future husband, John, the very man who guides and tests her religion. The long painful religious education, which serves to inculcate self-sacrifice in the heroine of the domestic novel, usually leads to the “reward” of a happy marriage in the end. In *Our Nig*, however, the long ordeal the heroine suffers

through her self-sacrificial caring of James brings about no such happy marriage. Frado is not good enough to be his wife. If she could be close to him in this world, it would have been only as his servant. Her sole hope in taking care of him lies in the possibility that James would take her to his home as a house servant when he should get well.

Harriet Wilson, emulating the framework of the domestic novel, discloses not only the limitation of the genre but also hypocrisy in white Christian religion. She tactfully reveals the problem of racism through Frado's religious education and voices her resistance to it as well. Unable to answer her "knotty queries" (51) of why God made the black and the white, James could only tell her to go to sleep. Even after she came to believe in "a future existence," a doubt persisted and she wondered if there was "a heaven for the black" (84). This echoes Mrs. Bellmont's racist assertion that "prayer was for whites, not for blacks" (94). And after the death of James, the narrator voices Frado's inner thought that she did not "wish to go" to heaven despite her hope of being near him, if Mrs. Bellmont was also going there (104).

James's concern over Frado's soul reminds us also of little Eva's compassion for the black orphan, Topsy, who is uncontrollable to all but the little white girl and who instinctively sees through the racial prejudice against the black in well-meaning Ophelia, her caretaker, and mourns deeply inside about her miserable situation: "No; she can't bar me, 'cause I'm a nigger!—she'd 's soon have a toad touch her! There can't nobody love niggers, and niggers can't do nothin'! *I don't care*" (409). Only Eva understands Topsy's inconsolable sorrow beneath her defiant attitude. Topsy sheds tears for the first time when Eva shows sincere compassion for her: "I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends;—because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good" (409-10).

James likewise sees through the deep grief hidden in Frado's wild spirit, as he one day told Abby that he had once overheard her lament:

"Oh! oh!" I heard, "why was I made? why can't I die? Oh, what have I to live for? No one cares for me only to get my work. And I feel sick; who cares for that? Work as long as I can stand, and then fall down and lay there till I can get up. No mother, father, brother or sister to

care for me, and then it is, You lazy nigger, lazy nigger—all because I am black! Oh, if I could die!” (74-75)

It seems probable that Wilson had Eva and Topsy in her mind when describing the relationship between James and Frado. There is no evidence that she had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, yet it is improbable, on the other hand, that she had not perused the best-selling antislavery novel even once before writing her own. However, if she reproduces Eva and Topsy in the portrayal of James and Frado, their relationship is sexualized with a tincture of patriarchy and her self-sacrificial devotion to him leads nowhere, as we have already seen. Frado thus remains a helpless black orphan, while Topsy is adopted and taken to the North by Ophelia to be educated as a Christian lady. Frado thus has to continue her struggle to find a way to be independent.

4. Frado's Struggle to Be an Independent Woman

Neither of the two key elements of the domestic novel, marriage and home, are experienced by the heroine of *Our Nig*. True Womanhood, with its emphasis on piety, purity, obedience, and domesticity, is either unavailable to, or unable to support, a black woman in a patriarchal racist society based on slavery rules. The problem, then, focuses on the way the heroine establishes herself in such a hostile society. One of the chief themes of the story, in fact, lies in Frado's struggle to acquire independence. According to Harryette Mullen, nineteenth-century black women writers strived to incorporate “an oral tradition of resistance” into their literature, since the two traditional literary forms available to them—the male slave narrative and the white female sentimental fiction—are inadequate to express their experience (245). They assert oral power of black women to resist the oppressors and insist upon their selfhood, while male writers of slave narratives underscore the physical power to attain manhood as Douglass does in the scene of his fight with Mr. Covey. When submission and self-effacement were endorsed as female virtues, black women resorted to “orality”—talking back, arguing, or revealing secrets of their masters, all of which were regarded as “saucy” or “impudent” by the ruling class—to have their voice heard and thereby to establish their identity (Mullen 245-46).⁸

Frado is by no means a submissive girl as is expected of a heroine of

the sentimental fiction. She is characterized from the beginning as a jolly, resilient, sometimes even mischievous, child. The tyrannical act of the mistress at home does not wholly suppress her jaunty nature, which surfaces at school and pleases her schoolmates: "Her jollity was not quenched by whipping or scolding. In Mrs. Bellmont's presence she was under restraint; but in the kitchen, and among her schoolmates, the pent-up fires burst forth" (38). She even plays a prank to delight her friends in the classroom or performs an action of bravado to amuse the men around her. When jeered by the children at her winter attire, "a cast-off overcoat, once worn by Jack, and a sun-bonnet" (37), she displays enough toughness and verbal resource to retort them.

However, any natural expression of her feelings is suppressed by Mrs. Bellmont and Mary who regard it as a manifestation of discontent and defiance. When she was ill and unable to answer quickly enough to Mary's call, yet dragged herself toward her room, saying that she was coming as quick as possible, the little tyrant threw a knife at her, roaring, "Saucy, impudent nigger, you! is this the way you answer me?" (64). A similar scene is later repeated between the heroine and Mrs. Bellmont. As she could not accomplish the mistress's order to bring wood sticks as soon as she was expected to, Mrs. Bellmont aimed to strike her with a stick. Frado, this time, was determined not to be a passive victim of her violence; she instead tried to confront her boss with the force of words:

"Stop!" shouted Frado, "strike me, and I'll never work a mite more for you [,]" and throwing down what she had gathered, stood like one who feels the stirring of free and independent thoughts. (105)

This unexpected demonstration of defiance took Mrs. Bellmont aback and enabled Frado to go without any punishment. Frado's assertion of self is comparable to Douglass's in the fight with Mr. Covey. Just as his fight symbolizes the triumphant moment of his achieving "manhood," Frado's oral resistance signifies the discovery of power within herself: "She did not know, before, that she had a power to ward off assaults" (105). Though the difference in the physical or verbal strength of their resistance manifests the gendered characteristics, their attempt to express their own will leads to subduing the master's violence: Mrs. Bellmont became cautious about

resorting to violence, so that Frado came to have “fewer whippings” (106), while Mr. Covey never whipped Douglass again ever since the unanticipated counterattack from the slave and his consequent defeat.

The episode seems to mark the turning point in the course of Frado’s life, for, after this, she begins to think of fleeing the Bellmonts. Mapping the possible dangers of flight, however, she reasons to herself that she had better stay in the house until her period of service ends at the age of eighteen. She decides instead to use the time left, before parting for good from “the house of so detestable a plague” (108), educating herself so that she will be an independent woman worthy to live in society. For this purpose, she tries to make the best use of whatever little she possesses, or, has so far obtained: “her school-books were her constant companions, and every leisure moment was applied to them” (115-16). Susan, Jack’s wife, is pleased to see “her progress” and, as a reward for this, gives her a small book of Bible, which Frado had “always fastened open near her, where she [can] glance from toil to soul refreshment” (116).

By the time she leaves the Bellmonts, the relation between the master and the servant seems to be reversed. The author suggests a paradoxical inversion of Frado’s hard toil and her heightened ability, of Mrs. Bellmont’s tyrannical power and her total dependency on the black girl she has abused: “Mrs. B. felt that she could not well spare one who could so well adapt herself to all departments—man, boy, housekeeper, domestic, etc.” (116). The transformation of Frado’s miserable toil into the mark of her ability reminds us of Hester Prynne’s scarlet letter “A,” a mere token of her sin, which turned into a symbol of her ability, or even of her angelic nature. Mark Twain also reveals this reversed structure of the slave and the master, more than three decades later, in his post-bellum antislavery novel, *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894), in the relation between the fake master Tom and the usurped slave.⁹

Wilson further exposes, or makes fun of, the self-centeredness of the mistress by rendering her state that Frado is “ungrateful” to leave a home of “such comfort” (116). Given the fact that “ungrateful” was the term frequently used by planters or proslavery Southerners to accuse a run-away slave, Wilson’s reversal of the image of the white master seen from the servant’s perspective was rather bold at the time when slavery was still a lawful institution.

Although it is very hard for a black girl, whose body has become fragile due to overwork, to support herself in a racist society, Frado never turns from her determination to retain her independence. Sporadic kindness from some white people and her own capability to learn quickly such skills as sewing sunbonnets enable her to earn wages. But what is more important than the economic self-help is her spiritual and intellectual improvement of herself. Wilson emphasizes Frado's struggle to elevate herself after she has left the Bellmonts. With help from Mrs. Moore, one of the few kind white women, Frado comes to know "the value of useful books," and, reading them together with her, she felt "a new impulse":

She felt herself capable of elevation; she felt that this book information supplied an undefined dissatisfaction she had long felt, but could not express. Every leisure moment was carefully applied to self-improvement, and a devout and Christian exterior invited confidence from the villagers. (124-25)

While the last part of the quotation again reminds us of Hester Prynne, the whole passage focuses on Frado's earnest effort to elevate herself.

The stress on the heroine's self-improvement, however, comes to be fused with the advertisement of the book itself towards the end of the story, where the narrator-author suddenly addresses readers, seeking their sympathy, persuading them of her worthiness, and asking them to help her by purchasing a copy of the book: "Nothing turns her from her steadfast purpose of elevating herself. Reposing on God, she has thus far journeyed securely. Still an invalid, she asks your sympathy, gentle reader" (130). This concluding passage reverberates with the monetary purpose of the book as written in the preface, and with the endorsement of the author and her book in the appendix, including the three letters of recommendation, which composes of the integral part of *Our Nig*.

5. Black Literary Nationalism and *Our Nig*

The term "elevation" is frequently used in *Our Nig* to endorse its heroine, its anonymous author, "Our Nig," and consequently the book itself. The term assumes a special significance when employed by a black writer,

since the term was “a key word within black discourse for demonstration of the race’s capacity to produce literature” (Gates, *Figures in Black* 133). The belief that the future of African Americans depends on the emergence of black literature had been constantly expressed because the racist thought that black people were unable to produce any notable art, as is seen in Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785),¹⁰ was permeated in American society. Since the lack of black literacy closely associated with the discourse of racial inferiority is often employed to justify the slavery of African Americans, many black activists put special emphasis on their literacy: “The literacy of the black, long before Wilson published *Our Nig* in 1859, had even become a central, repeated theme of the slave narratives, black poems, and black fictions” (Gates, *Figures in Black* 130).

The fact that each chapter of *Our Nig* begins with a citation from a literary work is surely related to this. While it places the novel in the tradition of sentimental fiction, it demonstrates how well versed with literature the author is. The text’s epigraphs in fact verify Wilson’s broad reading of both American and English literature (Gates, Introduction xxxix) and its range of citation is “much greater than generally found in the slave narratives or in other black nineteenth century novels” (xl). The publication of a novel with such erudition could be a good illustration of the possibility of black elevation in the 1850s. Even toward the end of the nineteenth century, Frances Harper had to reiterate the theme, by making her heroine remark in *Iola Leroy* that every African American of unmixed blood “who succeeds in any department of literature, art, or science is a living argument for the capability which is in the race” (199), in order to dispute the Jeffersonian racist notion that only white blood can create fine arts whereas all that black blood can attain is the lowest form of art such as primitive music or poetry “below the dignity of criticism” (Jefferson, *Notes* 147).

Facing the national crisis of the 1850s, when the cause of black liberation seemed to be gradually silenced by force, as is seen in Fugitive Slave Law (1850), Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), or Dred-Scott Decision (1857), black abolitionists, like Douglass and Martin Delany, insisted that they should no longer allow their history, experiences, or their wants and claims, “to be written by those who ‘are not their representatives’” (Andrews 8). They were convinced that their stories should be written by themselves.

In this context, Wilson’s novel, *Our Nig*, had perhaps been an answer

to this call for black literature, for it is written almost entirely from the perspective of a black servant girl. Her direct appeal in the preface to “my colored brethren” for their patronage and her hope that “they will not condemn this attempt of their sister to be erudite” may imply her earnest hope, or even confidence, that her story will fully answer to the contemporary need of black literature; she was probably sure that she had successfully written her own story. What we have to ask finally, then, is the question of why it was neglected when African American leaders urged their brethren to write their own stories and eagerly collected works by them.¹¹

Except for circumstantial factors that might have allowed the work to escape their attention, there are three main elements immanent in the novel that will explain the contemporary critics’ silence.¹² The first one is the theme of miscegenation. *Our Nig* boldly violates the taboo of amalgamation, which would, without fail, have provoked much criticism and antipathy of white readers. It should be noted, moreover, that Frado’s mother Mag, a white woman, marries a black man not as a result of external forces but of her own choice. This must have shocked the readers at that time—the topic was the sorest spot that even abolitionists were most afraid of stepping on.¹³ The depiction of Mrs. Bellmont, a northern white lady, too, was probably beyond the limits of tolerance of general readers in the North. It is true that slave narratives at times refer to the anti-black prejudice prevalent in the “free” states, but most black writers were very careful not to anger white readers lest they should lose their sympathy. Therefore, it must have seemed extreme to equate a northern Christian lady (Mrs. Bellmont) with a cruel slaveholder in the South. Besides this, there is another factor to consider, that is, the background of the Bellmonts. Barbara White has worked hard to identify the origins of the Bellmonts, and managed to trace them to the Haywards in Milford, New Hampshire (iii-liv). According to White, Milford was the site of “an abolitionist stronghold and station on the Underground Railroad” (xxx) and the Haywards were closely associated with the Hutchinson Family Singers, a well-known group of musicians who supported the causes of abolition, women’s rights, and temperance (xxvi). If this is true, the exposure of abuse of a black girl by a family regarded as strong supporters of abolition would be scandalous and hamper the abolitionist movement.

What is even more perilous to the movement is perhaps Wilson’s

realistic presentation of a self-proclaimed fugitive slave, who seduces and discards the heroine. Frado's husband, Samuel, was "a fine, straight negro" who had "no marks of the lash" on his back (127). He occasionally left her for long "lecture tours," but later he disclosed that "he had never seen the South and that his illiterate harangues were humbugs for hungry abolitionists" (128). This may convey some truth involved in the abolition movement. Yet the black con man who preys on the abolitionist cause would be the last thing that black as well as white activists want to see in the pages of their documents and, hence, their neglect of *Our Nig*, and its oblivion of almost one and a half centuries. Harriet Wilson's novel, published too early to be assessed rightly, had to wait for its estimation until the late twentieth century.

Chapter 12

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

1. Linda's Story

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* reveals the complex sexual dynamics of interracial, cross-classed, and gender-based relationships involved in slavery. For her autobiography, Jacobs employs the sentimental convention in which a poor, innocent girl is exposed to the lasciviousness of a man of a higher class. She frames her story in the tradition of domestic novels that center on virtues of motherhood and True Womanhood, as Harriet Beecher Stowe does in her popular antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.¹

Yet her narrative also undermines these literary conventions. There is no possibility, in the first place, for the heroine to marry the seducer as in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, for instance. The possibility of (legal) marriage, which would signify the nullification of the seduced girl's "shame," is the pivot on which a traditional sentimental plot unfolds; the fate of the heroine is determined according to the state of her child, whether a "bastard" or a legitimate heir of the seducer. However, such possibility is closed to Jacobs's heroine from the beginning, nor can she ever acquire her own "home," the very center of female virtues in the domestic novel. Slavery precludes all that is anticipated from a sentimental heroine. *Incidents*, in fact, "dramatizes the exclusion of a female slave from the nineteenth-century category of True Womanhood" (Garfield 48) and thus exposes inadequacy and limitation of the ideology that governed nineteenth-century American middle-class women.

Showing how the dominant ideology is inadequate to slave women, Jacobs reveals that the patriarchal system is the true problem of slavery. Early in the narrative, Linda Brent, the narrator and persona who speaks for the author, introduces a symbolic episode that initiates the innocent girl of twelve and the "ignorant" reader into the reality of slavery. Soon after Linda began to work as a house servant for the Flints, she heard, for the first time

in her life, blows of a whip incessantly raining on a slave, with his “piteous groans” and entreating cries for mercy, “O, pray don’t, massa” (15). The next morning she witnessed the horrible traces of the cruel punishment in the work house, “the cowhide still wet with blood, and the boards all covered with gore” (15). Although many conjectures were whispered among the slaves on the plantation as to the cause of this punishment, the most likely one is that the whipped slave accused his wife within earshot of the overseer of having born a fair child of the master. In consequence of the conjugal quarrel that informed who the father of the child was, the slave couple were both delivered to a slave-trader. When the mother reproved the master for breaking his promise to treat her well, he said coldly, “You have let your tongue run too far” (16).

This incident epitomizes the structure of sexual vortex hidden in the southern slavery—relationships between the planter and the slave woman, the black man and his wife, and the slave woman and her white mistress—and the way how these human relationships interact with one another. Jacobs reveals not only that the sexuality of a slave woman, whether married or single, is at the mercy of her white master, but also that the slave must keep silent about his sexual abuse; she will be punished if she lets her “tongue run too far.” The black husband whose wife was raped by his master cannot protest against his wrong, and instead tends to blame his helpless wife for the sexual violence she has suffered; the poor flogged man “continued to quarrel with his wife” even after he had survived the punishment (15).

Another important factor in this multi-layered relationship is the presence of the plantation mistress to whom her husband is unfaithful. Although Jacobs does not refer to the mistress in the episode above, she relates a similar incident in which a slave girl gave birth to a child “nearly white” (16) immediately after the episode as if to compensate for the missing point. She emphasizes the mistress’s dark hatred toward the mother, who dies soon after the birth of the child: “You suffer, do you? . . . I am glad of it. You deserve it all, and more too” (16). As the dying mother thanked God that her child was dead and that they would be soon in heaven together, the vengeful mistress further slandered the mother, swearing that there would be no place in heaven either for her or for her “bastard” (16). The plantation mistress is certainly a victim of her husband’s immoral sexual intercourse, but she takes revenge on the female slave, the most helpless victim, rather than on her

husband, the victimizer, for the white mistress is also powerless to cope with the patriarch, her virtual master.

Here the paradigm of hierarchical structure is clearly illustrated: at the bottom end is a black woman, and at the other end a guilty planter who takes sexual pleasure. Through his misconduct he humiliates a slave girl, her partner, and her mistress, and at the same time enjoys economic profit by increasing his “property”—according to the southern law that the child of a slave mother inherits the mother’s state—or by selling the slaves who tell the secret (and, more often than not, even his own child), thereby “[putting] their values into his pocket” (15) and obliterating the marks of his sin from his estate.

Just as Mary Chesnut, wife of a southern wealthy planter, criticizes Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for missing “the sorest spot” (168) of slavery by making Legree a bachelor, the novel indeed fails to describe what the planter’s family suffer under slavery. Although Cassy, Legree’s lover, narrates a long history of being sexually exploited by white men in her life, her story sheds no light on what the white family undergo. Chesnut is right when she insists on the adverse effects of the planter’s sexual indulgence on the plantation mistress and her children. However, she does not seem to understand what a slave girl has to suffer when she is constantly threatened by the master’s sexual aggression and silenced about it. Much less does she question virtues of white ladies who have been traditionally idealized as “Southern Belle.”

Jacobs takes up sexuality as the central issue of her 1861 slave narrative. She presents the story of Linda who becomes, like Cassy, the object of her master’s sexual desires but who succeeds in avoiding him to the end by daring to become, by her own choice, another man’s lover. Linda’s triumph over the seducer and “autonomous” acceptance of a lover to protect herself (and her children) deviate her from the sentimental heroine in the domestic novel, similar to Cassy’s escape from Legree’s plantation that turns her into a heroine of potential radical feminism. Linda’s story is, in a sense, an externalization and extension of Cassy’s story.

2. Sexual Politics of a Slave Girl

As her gendered title suggests, Jacobs makes it explicit that her slave

narrative is different from narratives written by male predecessors such as Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, and William Wells Brown. Male authors generally put emphasis on possession, the process of how the hero struggles to own himself, his wife and his children. Their plot especially highlights the moment when the protagonist achieves manhood by exerting his masculine power, exemplified best by a scene in Douglass's autobiography where he beats the slave breaker, Covey. They underscore the individual development of the narrator from a slave to a master of himself. The plot of their stories is linear like that of initiation stories by white male authors. It reaches a climax in the hero's successful escape into a free state from the land of bondage. His "glorious achievement" is usually celebrated, or almost ritualized, by giving him a new name.

Jacobs's story, however, does not follow the linear progress from servitude in the South to freedom in the North. The geographical transference does not signify a dramatic change of her fate; she comes to know that, even in the North, she cannot be free from racial discrimination or sexual harassment. Her life of retreat continues until she is finally "purchased" by her abolitionist friend. The escape to the North is not celebrated by the act of renaming as in male slave narratives. As P. Gabrielle Foreman suggests, Jacobs uses names only as a means to disguise herself, while male authors relate naming directly to attaining one's true self: "Whereas the men transform from trickster to true-name-trusted author, the narrator of *Incidents* veils herself in more opaque layers of representation: she becomes the fictive character, Linda Brent" (86). This veiling by using pseudonym caused later critics to doubt her authorship.

In contrast with male authors who tend to focus on personal progress and power to recapture one's self, Jacobs values interdependency and cooperation among her family, relatives, friends, or neighbors rather than the development of her individual self. She introduces "a range of characters" (Yellin, "Through Her Brother's Eyes" 50) into her narrative to express the rich interrelatedness of human beings that has formed her present life (Goldsby 22). She includes, for instance, her grandmother who provided the poor orphan girl with food, clothes, and motherly love; a white southern lady who sheltered Linda, a fugitive, at the risk of her own social status; the black sailor who contrived a way to carry her to the North despite being a slave himself; and an abolitionist friend in the North who dared to leave her infant

baby to the fugitive so that, should she be captured, the news would reach the mother by way of the baby.

Jacobs's emphasis on collective help of people around her, both white and black, male and female, northern and southern, implies that the formula of male narrative is inadequate for female slaves. Jacobs insists on differentiating the suffering of women from that of men: "Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (64). Thus her narrative illuminates the darkest spot — sexual exploitation of female slaves.

Choosing sexual exploitation as the central topic of her narrative, however, brings about a painful dilemma to Jacobs since she has to appeal mainly to the audience of white middle-class women who endorse the virtues of True Womanhood—purity, piety, domesticity, and obedience (Welter 152)—whereas her experiences are full of impurity, disgrace, family separation, and resistance. Her difficulty is to speak the unspeakable to an audience whose ears are supposed to be too delicate for the unspeakable, especially sexual matters. Jacobs therefore repeats that they would never understand her anguish without experiencing slavery, while appealing to their sentiments of motherhood and domesticity to extract their sympathy.

The most difficult task for Linda the narrator is to account for her decision to choose Mr. Sands, a southern wealthy gentleman, as her lover in order to keep her "purity" and "self-respect" (46). She lists several reasons for this seemingly irrational decision: as Sands was not yet married, she would incite no hatred or jealousy in her white counterpart; since Sands was not her master, she believed he would make a better protector, for "there is something akin to freedom" in the relation with a gentleman who "has no control" (47) over a slave girl; receiving affection and kindness from a man superior in social status to her master, she felt triumphant over the sexual persecutor as well as flattered to some extent; and she wanted to avoid the worst prospect that she might have children as a result of Flint's sexual abuse and that they would be owned by him.

None of the reasons, except the last one, seems to account for her "headlong plunge" (47) into a concubine state. Even the last reason sounds illogical because her offspring, should she have any, is to be owned willy-nilly by Flint as long as she remains his slave, whoever the father is. Yet, in

the relation with the socially and economically “superior” Sands lies Linda’s desperate hope that he will buy her and her children to make them free; she is certain, on the contrary, that Flint will sell his own children of mixed blood immediately as he did in the past to evade his wife’s complaints and the town’s gossip.

Linda clearly articulates that she has “deliberately” chose to become Sands’s lover rather than Flint’s. In other words, it is the only self-determination allowed for a young slave girl like Linda in her mid-teens (Ernest 184). She entreats the white reader directly for understanding and sympathy:

O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; and I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to relate; but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery. (46)

Reminding the reader of the great difference between a white woman whose purity and home are protected by law and a slave woman regarded as a chattel and deprived of any human rights, Jacobs reiterates that the difference is not racial but environmental; she guarantees that slave women would achieve the same moral standard if only slavery should be abolished and, with it, attempts to deny the discourse of racial difference (that is, white supremacy) that permeated antebellum America.

Before relating the complex power politics surrounding a slave girl, her master, and her lover, Linda has already narrated the outcome of her romance with a young black carpenter. She explains how it is impossible for a slave girl to marry a man she really loves, whether he is a bondsman or a free black. Since Linda is subject to Flint, her prospective husband has no power to protect her; he may have to see his wife ravished or sold to a slave trader at any time. Furthermore, when they should be married and have children, the father is again quite powerless to protect them because they are Flint’s slaves and their fate is completely under his power. Not only the slave

mother but her free husband as well will have to face the likelihood of seeing their children whipped, even sexually abused, and sold by the master. With such prospects attached to her romance with the young carpenter, Linda decides to part from him and urges him to go to the free states. She marks the separation from her “true lover” as the end of her “girlhood” (37).

The quarrel of the married couple who were eventually sold to a slave trader, to which I have referred in the previous section, is a possible aftermath of Linda’s romantic love for the young man. The difficulty of maintaining spontaneous love between black girls and boys is later dramatized by Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*; when young Cholly was insulted in the midst of sexual intercourse with a girl by two white men armed with shotguns (two mean white men who happened to see the black couple, forced them to continue having sex for their amusement), his love for the girl turned to hatred: “Darlene put her hands over her face as Cholly began to simulate what had gone on before. He could no more than make-believe. . . . Cholly, moving faster, looked at Darlene. He hated her” (148). Cholly’s anger is directed at the girl instead of the white men who humiliated him, and his warped mind that ultimately leads to the tragedy, raping his own daughter, is suggestive of the course the young carpenter who proposed marriage to Linda might have taken. Given the psychological effects on the sexuality of black boys and girls resulting from the white tyranny, Linda’s words that appealed directly to the reader are worth repeating here: “O, ye happy woman, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection. . . . If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice.”

While trying to induce sympathy from white women, Jacobs simultaneously inculcates them to take the social/environmental “difference” into consideration and not “judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely” and, in this way, makes her “confession” of choosing Sands as her lover more acceptable to them. Even with this pre-warning, she still fears that her action may not be understood as she wants it to be understood by the implied reader, that is, white middle-class women idealized as the “angle in the house.” She then appeals vehemently to their sympathy as if to pray for God’s mercy:

Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have

the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another. . . . I know I did wrong. No one can feel it more sensibly than I do. . . . Still . . . I feel that the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others. (48)

The narrator's dilemma is evident here. Although she knows well that she had no alternative but to become Sands's lover, she debases herself as moral sinner from the viewpoint of white women, "I know I did wrong." But what she really attempts here is to make the self-righteous "virtuous reader" realize their own insensitiveness in applying their standards to the oppressed and despising them. When she says, "the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others," she is, in fact, challenging the virtues of white women. As is mentioned earlier, Linda declared to become Sands's lover in order to keep her purity. By "purity," she does not mean literal physical chastity as white women have traditionally valued, but spiritual autonomy.² She requires the reader to redefine the concept and the word of virtue.

3. The Mad Black Woman in the Attic

Contrary to her expectation, Flint would not cease his sexual pursuit or vengeful harassment toward Linda even after she had two children. The existence of the children, Benny (Benjamin) and Ellen, further complicates Flint's oppression because they are owned by Flint though Sands is their biological father. The mother attempts to persuade Sands to buy her son and daughter from Flint, the master, before he might sell them away to an unknown place. Flint, on the other hand, threatens to subject her to his will, taking hostage of her children. This terrifies and enrages the mother and leads her in the end to seven years of confinement in a small garret built in her grandmother's house. Thus Linda becomes a "mad woman in the attic" like Cassy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Jacobs again underlines the collective help that enables her to live a life of retreat in the garret. Her uncle, Phillip, who is a carpenter, makes a very small room with a trap door in the narrow space under the pent roof. Her grandmother sacrifices everything to protect her granddaughter from the enemies and provides her with every possible comfort, limited as it is. Her

aunt Nancy brings information about the Flints and other useful news. Even her son, only a small boy, helps to keep others away from her hiding place, sensing his mother is close at hand.

Whatever solace Linda receives from her family and friends, however, her life in the attic is far more painful than that of Cassy (and her surrogate daughter Emmeline) in terms of the conditions and period in which she was confined. The attic where Linda is placed barely allows her to lie down, but she cannot even turn over while sleeping, whereas Cassy and Emmeline in an upstairs storeroom can move relatively freely as long as they do not make noise. Unlike the gothic setting in which Cassy plays a ghost to frighten Legree, which has a tint of melodramatic—even slapstick— atmosphere, the description of Linda’s confinement is very graphic and realistic: stifling air, hideous heat, and bothersome insects in summer, and “the cold” in winter that “penetrated through the thin shingle roof” (93). While Cassy successfully outwits Legree and his men and escapes from the attic in several days, Linda has to repeat the same summer and winter seven times until she is almost crippled due to lack of exercise.

Narrow and confining, indeed, is her space, and yet it becomes an impenetrable fortress to Linda. It is at once a prison and an asylum, for the cramped walled den “renders [her] independent of her master” (V. Smith 226). This strength that the confinement paradoxically gives her manifests itself when Linda makes a small hole that she calls “loophole” (94).³ The loophole is a sort of window for her to spy on the outside world without being watched. Here, in this garret, Linda for the first time becomes the subject to watch her oppressors after many years during which she had been the object of their vigilant watching. Through the hole, she sees slave women victimized by their masters, like the one who jumps in the river and ends her life to escape the humiliating torture of being stripped and whipped; she observes Flint taking a steamboat for New York in search of her. And it is in this narrow space that she learns that Mrs. Flint cursed her son Benny when she knew that a dog had bitten him, saying, “I wish he had killed him. It would be good news to send to his mother.” (99).

The loophole also enables Linda’s creative activities as it lets in light as well as fresh air—reading books and sewing clothes: “I contrived to read and sew. That was a great relief to the tedious monotony of my life” (93). Sewing gives her another function, the role of mother to provide her children

with clothes. A far more important activity, however, is writing. Using this supposedly “masculine power,” Linda becomes as manipulative as Cassy. By writing fictive letters which indicate that she is in New York, she sends Flint to New York several times to capture her and thus makes him spend much money in vain until, she hopes, he gives her up.

She is as resourceful and as astute as Cassy, who makes Legree and his men search for her and Emmeline in the swamp while she enjoys watching their hunting from the window of his house. In Chapter 25, entitled “Competition in Cunning,” Linda counters Flint’s canny tricks with her “superior” canniness. As is mentioned above, Linda fabricates letters to make her master believe that she is already in New York and Flint, without knowing that he is deceived, falsifies the letters from her and read them to her illiterate grandmother, intending to make her help him capture Linda. In this way, Linda continues to fabricate letters to him and enjoys seeing through his game. Here the female slave competes with her white master by means of her writing power, and makes a fool of him.

Outwitting her master and making him waste both time and money, Linda in the meantime contrives a way to rescue her children by buying their freedom through Sands. Linda’s “story of a loophole” involves a radical possibility of reversing the hierarchy of race, class, and gender just like Stowe’s gothic story of Cassy. However, whereas Stowe elides Cassy’s madness and cunning by her conversion to Christianity and thereby to True Womanhood in order to send her back “home,” Jacobs stresses that slaves should of necessity be canny in order to appease the possible reaction from the reader against unwomanly Linda: “Who can blame slaves for being cunning? They are constantly compelled to resort to it. It is the only weapon of the weak and oppressed against the strength of their tyrants” (82).

Even in the North where she works as a servant, Jacobs continues to be “cunning enough” to write her narrative in secret because she suspects her “master,” the employer, is sympathetic toward slaveholders. Unlike Stowe, who transforms Cassy from an enraged mother back into an angelic one toward the denouement of a happy family gathering in her newly-found daughter’s home, Jacobs does not end her narrative with happy marriage or with a dramatic scene of family reunion in a home. Rather, she makes Linda deplore her missing either of them:

Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage. . . . The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. (156)

By stressing the distance of her story from domestic novels whose frame she borrows, Jacobs attempts to direct the reader's attention to the fact that crossing the Mason-Dixon line does not signify the end of racial problems and that millions of sisters in the South are still suffering from slavery.

4. The Fallen White Angel in the House

The distance between Linda and Cassy that we have examined indicates Jacobs's criticism of the domestic novel that idealizes the woman as a nurturing gentle mother placed at the center of the home. Jacobs's representation of the black woman who falls short of this mother image does not simply mean that she seeks readers' compassion and help for the miserable black mothers, but that she aims to question the literary genre which "precludes discussion of sexual exploitation and miscegenation as subjects unmentionable in a white familial setting" (Gunning 134).

What is most unmentionable in the domestic novel, however, is the reality that white women, rather than slaves, the subjects of "sexual exploitation and miscegenation," are degraded from the standards of the domestic ideology. Revealing how cruel, vengeful, or vulgar most white Christian women can be under slavery, she subverts the traditionally accepted image of southern white ladies idealized as "Southern Belle." This is, in fact, more provocative than presenting poor black women being sexually exploited because it challenges the major audience, that is, white middle-class Christian women who are contented with their self-image of a good, pious, gentle wife/mother. *Incidents* attempts to problematize the virtues of white ladies in order to break up the restrictions of the domestic ideology, which is apt to generate a banal stratification of the oppressed black women to be pitied and the benevolent white ladies to help them. Jacobs urges the white female reader to see their own immoral, immodest, and un-Christian darkness behind the angelic veil.

The first mistress Linda serves is described as a kind, mother-like lady

except for “one great wrong” (11): she alienated Linda as property to her five-year-old niece in spite of the promise to emancipate her. The mistress was such a “kind” person as to teach Linda everything that an average mother would have done to her daughter—reading and writing, sewing, and religious morality—so that Linda loved her like her own mother, and yet the mistress treated her in the end as a mere chattel to be bequeathed to her niece. The introduction of this first mistress early in *Incidents* implies that even a kind mistress can be mercilessly indifferent to the fate of a black girl, which prepares the reader for the worse one.

The second mistress, Mrs. Flint, emerges as an illustration of how disgraceful and shameful a white mistress becomes toward slaves while she plays a delicate and decent lady in society. Mrs. Flint, “like many southern women,” is too fragile and delicate to perform domestic chores, but she is tough enough to “see a woman whipped till the blood [trickles] from every stroke of the lash” (14). She passes as a pious lady who regularly goes to church, and yet, when dinner is delayed, for example, she can display such vulgar, un-Christian behavior as to “spit in all the kettles and pans that had been used for cooking” to “prevent the cook and her children from [eking] out their meager fare with the remains of the gravy and other scrapings” (14-15).

Mrs. Flint’s cruel selfishness is most conspicuously represented in her treatment of Linda’s aunt, Nancy. Jacobs devotes one chapter to this motherly aunt whose life has been entirely consumed in serving Mrs. Flint. The mistress and Nancy are foster sisters nursed by Linda’s grandmother. As Linda once sadly ponders over the great difference in the futures of the two girls, a fair child and her sister slave, whom she happened to see playing together with joyous laughter, the fates of the foster sisters, Mrs. Flint and Nancy, are indeed the polar opposites. Linda even says that her aunt “had been slowly murdered” by Mrs. Flint. Just like Mammy made sleepless by selfish Marrie in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Nancy was made ready to answer to every request of her mistress and “always slept on the floor in the entry, near Mrs. Flint’s chamber door,” within her call (113).

Jacobs’s cutting criticism of the mistress reaches its peak in the funeral scene. When Nancy died after many years of “incessant, unrequited toil” (115), Mrs. Flint suddenly became sentimental and offered to bury her in the Flints’ burial-place, the “privilege” which no slaves were allowed. She

probably thought, Linda ironically states, that it would show to the world the beautiful image of affection between the slaveowner and the slave. She never considered what Nancy's mother wished to do with her own child who finally came back to her when she was dead: "It had never occurred to Mrs. Flint that slaves could have any feelings" (115). The mistress attended the funeral procession in a carriage and "dropped a tear" (116). This represents a typical sentimental scene in which a "tender-hearted" mistress grieved over her dear servant:

Northern travelers, passing through the place, might have described this tribute of respect to the humble dead as a beautiful feature in the "patriarchal institution;" a touching proof of the attachment between slaveholders and their servants. (116)

In contrast with such a beautiful story of the mistress and her slave that might have been written by a northern traveler, Jacobs offers "a different story" seen from within by slaves, which exposes Mrs. Flint's shallow sentiments and hypocrisy.

The mistress's cruelty is exacerbated by her feelings of jealousy and resentment that her husband's unbridled sexual desire engenders. When Mr. Flint begins to pursue his sexual desire toward Linda, Mrs. Flint becomes so jealous of her sexual rival that she maintains a vigilant watch over Linda and orders her to sleep in an adjoining room. She even abases herself by whispering "foul words" of her husband in the ears of Linda, who wakes up to see the frightening figure of the sleepless mistress. Willa Cather takes up this grotesque jealousy of a slaveholder's wife in her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), in which Sapphira the mistress keeps a vengeful watch on the young slave girl, Nancy, suspecting an affair between her husband and the slave. Cather might have drawn an inspiration for her novel from *Incidents*.

It is structurally common that the plantation mistress blames the slave girl, instead of her husband, for his sexual infatuation with the female slave; she is apt to regard the slave girl as a demonic seducer rather than her husband. This is partly caused by the racial prejudice against black people, as Thomas Jefferson betrays in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, that casts the blame on the "inferior" black women for seducing the "superior" white

men (145-46).⁴ The sexist/racist discourse reflects the fear of miscegenation on the part of the ruling class that the black race will pollute the superior blood of the white. Subverting the Jeffersonian racial discourse, Linda's narrative exposes the reality that a slave girl is doubly threatened by her master's lust and his wife's jealousy and hatred.

More problematic in this sexual/racial structure is the mistress's self-pity. Plantation mistresses tend to regard themselves as victims of slavery and find it hard to sympathize with female slaves harassed by their masters. They are certainly victims of slavery to some extent. Their life on the plantation is not so full of comfort and luxury as is usually imagined. Catherine Clinton emphasizes the hard work and duties the plantation mistress had to accomplish; in addition to the ordinary domestic chores of housekeeping and child-bearing, she was expected to take care of slaves: she provided slaves with food and clothes, played the role of a doctor or a nurse for the sick, and even became a sort of mediator between the cruel master—or overseer—and a slave punished by him.⁵ The management of slaves was generally so troublesome that the mistress was likely to regard herself as victim, cursing slaves instead of slavery (Clinton 185). Far more constricted than women in the North, most southern women are unable to see the bonds with black sisters; they try to get rid of stress and pains caused by their husbands' sexual license, blaming the victims (poor slave girls) rather than the victimizers (their spouses who neglect and insult them), taking solace in sweet sentiment of self-pity.

Linda protests that the mistress as a moral center of home "ought to protect the helpless victim," but that she has "no other feelings toward her but those of jealousy and rage" (26). Yet Linda understands the miserable situation in which the mistress has fallen when she gets married: a young innocent bride with "romantic notions" of marriage and home is soon disappointed to learn that the sacred marriage is contaminated by her husband's sexual indulgence; she has to see "[children] of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies" and she knows that "they are born unto him of his own household"; thus a devil of "jealousy and hatred" resides in her soul and her "flowery home" is destructed (32). Linda even sympathizes with Mrs. Flint who is the second wife of Mr. Flint, many years senior to her, and who finds her marriage desecrated, her dignity as plantation mistress debased, and her pride as wife injured. But Jacobs also

emphasizes the impossibility of drawing compassion for the most oppressed, the slave woman, from the white mistress: Mrs. Flint does not go beyond self-pity and never thinks of her own part in the oppression of the poor slave girl.⁶

5. The Body That Matters

Jacobs's vexation at southern ladies' insensitiveness to the suffering of black women (the Other), and at their obtuseness in understanding their own wrongs is also directed to the major readers of the narrative, white middle-class Christian women in the North. Using the frame of the domestic novel, Jacobs at the same time critiques the central ideology that the nineteenth-century popular literary genre endorses, because the domestic ideology is used to suppress the movement of radical feminism as well as it functions to raise women's status in home (Ernest 181).⁷ The cult of True Womanhood has raised women to spiritual existence close to heaven as if they had no physical aspect. The more women are etherealized, the harder it becomes for Jacobs to narrate her experiences under slavery, for at the very core of the patriarchal institution lies the matter of physicality—the body, the object of exploitation.

Jacobs therefore refuses to be spiritualized like white women and undermines the cult of True Womanhood by an image of “suckling.” Giving milk symbolizes the nurturing image of an angelic mother, but it is also suggestive of the female body. Given the historical fact that the female slave suckled her mistress's fair children as well as her own, and the fact that she was often sexually abused by her master and bore his children, the image of “suckling” becomes pregnant with sexual/racial exploitation of black women.⁸

Jacobs tells us that her mother and her mistress are foster sisters, like Nancy and Mrs. Flint, nourished together with her grandmother's milk. But her mother was weaned at three-months old to leave sufficient milk for the baby of the mistress whom her grandmother served. The episode illuminates well what the white woman has deprived the black female mother and her daughter of. The milk is visualized as a symbol of unrealized black motherhood and of the natural right of which black daughters (and sons) are deprived. Jacobs thus illustrates how gentle white ladies, the embodiment of

True Womanhood, are responsible for the exploitation of the black female body.

Stowe also inserts in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* an episode in which a poor drunken female slave, Prue, explains how her dear baby has died because of lack of milk:

[It] never cried,—it was likely and fat. But Missis tuck sick, and I tended her; and I tuck the fever, and my milk all left me, and the child it pined to skin and bone, and Missis wouldn't buy milk for it. She wouldn't hear to me, when I telled her I hadn't milk. . . . and the child kinder pined, and cried, and cried, and cried, day and night, and got all gone to skin and bones . . . [and] it cried itself to death. (324)

Stowe describes well the cruel selfishness of Prue's mistress, but she does not connect the milk directly with the black female body. The scarcity of milk was caused by an unavoidable sickness—though it was brought about by her mistress—and not by the tyranny of the white who took what belonged rightfully to the black woman and her baby. Prue's episode is unable to conjure up the picture of a white child, either a girl or a boy, sucking on the breast of a black woman, and thus veils the matter of the body involved in slavery.

Jacobs unveils what the white writers of domestic novels cover or fail to expose, and presents it to readers who are accustomed to sentimental spirituality and who tend to discuss slavery in abstraction. Carefully evading detailed descriptions of the female body to prevent them from falling into pornographic indecency, Jacobs never lets go of the issue of physical existence of a slave girl because it is the body that really matters in slavery.

[Part IV: Antislavery Literature after the Civil War]

Chapter 13

Lydia Maria Child's *A Romance of the Republic*

1. A Postbellum Antislavery Novel

Soon after the end of the Civil War, Lydia Maria Child began to think of writing an antislavery novel and, in the fall of 1865, announced the idea to her publisher, James T. Fields (Clifford 278).¹ The result was the publication of *A Romance of the Republic* in 1867. Although Child was confident in her romance and Fields highly favored it, the book did not sell as either of them had expected.² Carolyn Karcher, in her biography of Child, presents several reasons for the unpopularity of the novel, but the chief idea common to those reasons may be that Child brought back into focus the historical national sin—slavery—and the consequent price the nation paid—the disastrous war—at a time when Americans wanted to forget them (*The First Woman* 510) now that the institution had been finally abolished and all slaves had been emancipated.

Behind Child's enthusiasm for exposing the injustice of slavery once again to the public at a time when the issue was fading away from the consciousness of the war-weary people lay her indignation about the current Reconstruction developed by the then president, Andrew Johnson, whose "lenient" policies allowed the rebel states to drive the freedmen back to a state of "peonage" almost identical to their state of servitude before the war. Objecting to the bills that helped black people, Johnson made it easy for the southern states to return to the Union (Zinn 199). Under his presidency, white Southerners began "searching for a legal means to subordinate the black population and coerce it to produce plantation staples" (Clifford 278). They found a solution to this scheme in what were called "black codes." According to historian Eric Foner, the codes authorized blacks' rights to own property, marry, or sue and testify in the court, but "their centerpiece was the attempt

to stabilize the black work force and limit its economic options apart from plantation labor” (199). With the seemingly fair argument that the U. S. government had no right to interfere with state laws, Johnson contrived the anti-black movement increasingly rampant in the South (Karcher, *The First Woman* 489).

In the eyes of Child, who had fought for universal freedom ever since she took up a pen, the nation was misguided by the president. Comparing America’s political body to a ship at the mercy of a storm, she expressed her sense of crisis: the “Ship of State” was “drifting into a Niagara-current,” seemingly toward a catastrophe (Karcher, *The First Woman* 490). The metaphor of a ship reminds us of Walt Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!” in which the poet glorifies Lincoln, who led the ship of America through great turmoil to their goal, safe and sound. In contrast to this vision, Child’s criticism of Johnson is pungent when she deplores to Fields, “To have for Captain, in a storm, a man not fit for a cabin boy! I feel very anxious and despondent about the prospects of my poor protégées, the freedmen” (qtd. in Karcher, *The First Woman* 508).

As the image of the nation as figuratively described above—a ship in a storm drifting toward Niagara Falls—suggests, Child believed that slavery was not yet solved in a real sense, for it was evident to her that the abolition of the system alone was not enough to realize an egalitarian society and that, as long as racial prejudice persisted, the freed people would never truly be free. She later explained her motive for writing the romance in a letter to Robert Purvis: “[Having] fought against Slavery, till the monster is *legally* dead, I was desirous to do what I could to undermine Prejudice” (*Selected Letters* 483). *A Romance of the Republic* thus is, in fact, an antiprejudice novel of the Reconstruction period, as many critics point out. While the romance possesses all the characteristics of an antislavery novel, Bruce Mills remarks, it was meant to be “an antiprejudice romance responding to the cultural concerns surrounding Reconstruction” (*Cultural Reformers* 132). Child attempts in the romance to demonstrate her abolitionist view of how Americans can surmount the sentiment of white supremacy, and how they will be able to incorporate blacks into the nation as equal citizens and, thereby, to attain a truly harmonious and egalitarian society among diverse races and cultures.

Yet, *A Romance of the Republic* is an antislavery novel as well, for it

epitomizes all the sentiments and arguments about slavery and racism that Child expressed in the form of fiction, document, epistle, editorial, or political petition throughout her entire career as a writer and editor, from *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833) to *The Freedman's Book* (1865). As she devoted a chapter to the problem of racial prejudice in *An Appeal* ("Prejudice against People of Color, and Our Duties in Relation to This Subject"), her struggle against slavery was, at the same time, a fight against racial prejudice; she seemed to have perceived at the beginning of her authorship that "prejudice" lay at the center of slavery. As for prejudice against dark races, she dramatized in her very first romance, *Hobomok* (1824), the "Indian problem" in terms of coexistence when most white Americans regarded the extinction of the race as inevitable.³ *A Romance of the Republic* is, in this sense, a continuation of her lifelong struggle to end a slavocratic society built on a color/racial hierarchy.

The major topic Child adopted to focus her last romance on the subject of racial prejudice was, as in the first, interracial marriage. Dana Nelson states that Child was probably the earliest fiction writer to challenge the theme of cross-racial marriage and "she remained alone in this commitment for almost the entire century" (xvii). Interracial marriage, according to Karcher, was the only theme that nineteenth-century American antislavery writing evaded (*The First Woman* 514). Stowe did not directly deal with the theme in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the most popular antislavery novel, which elicited Mary Chesnut's critical comment, "Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot" (168). It is Child who did "hit the sorest spot" of slavery, and it is in this untrodden sphere that Child's postbellum romance contributes to antislavery literature and opens a new arena, in spite of its many conventional devices and stock rhetorics, for postbellum American literature to tackle.

2. Transcending the Tragic-Quadroon Plot

Contrary to the movement of *Uncle Tom*, the hero of Stowe's best-selling antislavery novel, who was sold down the river from Kentucky to New Orleans, the migration of the octoroon heroines of *A Romance of the Republic* traces the reverse direction, from New Orleans to the North or even to Europe, across the Atlantic. Unlike black Tom, they can escape what he

had to suffer in his last destination, the New Orleans plantation: there is no hard work or cruel whipping; they are mostly treated like white ladies, such that the early part of the romance assumes an aspect of the plantation novel rather than antislavery fiction. The difference, perhaps, comes partly from the fact that Child foregrounds sexual exploitation in slavery instead of family separation, which characterizes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The story opens with a scene in Alfred Royal's home in a quiet district of New Orleans, where the once-wealthy merchant lives with his two beautiful daughters, Rosa (Rosabella) and Flora (Floracita). The description of the setting gives an image of a tropical paradise: not only is its parlor full of flowers and objects decorated with floral designs, but the garden outside is also thick with the blooms of various plants and trees, among which a little fountain makes a trickling sound. It is to this dreamy paradise that Alfred King, a young gentleman from Boston, is invited, and he is charmed at once by the two "graceful and accomplished girls" (14), particularly by the breathtaking beauty and angelic singing of Rosa, the elder sister. Giving King no information of their background beforehand, Royal examines how his daughters impress him. Along with King, the reader is also invited to judge the refined girls "by their own merits" (18), not by the social codes attached to "negroes."

The Edenic image of Royal's dwelling comes to suffer a drastic change when the Georgia planter, Gerald Fitzgerald, King's rival in love for Rosa, reveals the "taint" in the sisters' blood—their mother was a quadroon—and degrades the paradise, equating it to a sort of Oriental harem by articulating his wish to possess both of them like the Great Bashaw. However, King finds himself no less attracted to Rosa and feels displeased with the southern planter's view of women. Fitzgerald's thoughts of sexual desire for Royal's innocent girls imply the reality hidden in the seemingly harmonious family, the patriarchal control over the women connected with sexual exploitation. Royal bought his beautiful wife, Eulalia, from a Spanish gentleman in St. Augustine, who, in turn, had purchased her mother, a beautiful slave, in the French West Indies. Although Royal insists on mutual love, he cannot deny the fact that he obtained Eulalia by means of money and that, by this act, he was involved in the pecuniary transaction in which the Spaniard sold his own daughter. He had failed, moreover, to manumit his idolized daughters as well as his beloved wife, under the excuse of a busy life devoted to business. As

is expected in antislavery fiction, these sisters, who can pass as white ladies, are to be further purchased by the lascivious Fitzgerald when their father suddenly dies bankrupt.

Trading women as property is thus repeated between patriarchal figures, fathers and husbands, from generation to generation. Child seems to illuminate the analogy between the institution of slavery and that of patriarchal marriage: in either system, women are controlled as property by the male “master” under the guise of protection. In such an equation as that of a woman and a slave, the male sexual pursuit is easily understood as a desire for power over women. When Fitzgerald proposed to marry Rosa, he unwittingly let slip the word “property,” which made the proud girl shrink from him for a moment; he later rejoiced at the thought of “[having] acquired complete control of her destiny” (67) through the marriage, which turned out to be nothing but an exclusive possession of Rosa through the act of buying her.

Even Royal, a gentle husband and father, is, at the same time, a slaveholder, though this sobering fact is likely to slip out of the reader’s consciousness because of his fatherly anxiety over the fate of his daughters. As Frederick Douglass affirms in his 1855 autobiography that a good slaveholder does not solve a slave’s suffering and discontent (198), a benign father/husband guarantees no real protection or freedom. Since the scene of the Royal family in New Orleans centers on the joyful aspect of the father-daughter relation, patriarchy is obscured, but its real fang manifests itself when Fitzgerald places the sisters in a cottage at the edge of his plantation. Karcher acutely sees through the parallel between the Royal and Fitzgerald households:

In the Royal household patriarchy had worn a benign face, and the patriarch’s true relationship to his womenfolk had lain hidden. In the Fitzgerald household, the meaning of patriarchy is spelled out. The patriarch discloses the face of the slavemaster, and the protective husband steps forward as the Grand Bashaw. (“Lydia Maria Child’s” 91)

Indeed, Fitzgerald merely copies Royal, though in a far worse way. Both of them construct the “home” based on an illegitimate marriage and conceal the

fact that the girls are slaves. While Royal secluded his daughters from society, taking much care not to expose them to the public, Fitzgerald essentially imprisons them, forcing them to hide their faces with veils if they should go out. As Royal's residence resembles a secret tropical paradise, so does Fitzgerald's plantation on a secluded island: Lily Bell, his legal white bride, exclaims at the sight of the island, "[It] seems like the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve had it all to themselves, before the serpent went there to make mischief" (127). As Tulee, the black servant, hints that there are many snakes on the island to watch out for, it becomes clear that it is no more a paradise than Royal's retreat surrounded by flowers and orange groves.

Tulee's caution of snakes to Flora is symbolic, for she is in danger of being snared by Fitzgerald, the slaveholder. While his sexual harassment leads Flora to flee and escape to the North, his legal marriage to Lily, the daughter of a rich northern trader, drives Rosa to extreme madness, during which she performs a pivotal act that transforms the story into a kind of mystery; Child does not depict the scene of her exchanging the two babies, Rosa's and Lily's, fathered by the same man, and this invisible action remains a sort of riddle such that the subsequent plot, in a way, develops through solving the riddle as in a detective story.

One of the contemporary reviews of *A Romance of the Republic*, "Two books by Mrs. Child," published in *The Nation*, a New York newspaper, finds the book's merit in the "episode of the exchanged Fitzgeralds," calling it "particularly artful," while expressing sympathy for the authoress because she wrote the novel in a disadvantageous situation—that is, she dealt with "a dead subject," slavery. About a quarter of a century later, Mark Twain was to employ this literary device in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). He might have been inspired by *A Romance of the Republic* to reproduce the incident of exchanged babies as the core driving force of the plot of his detective-story-like antislavery novel. However, the device was not Child's invention, as Jean Yellin traces its earlier use in Joseph Holt Ingraham's *The Quadroone* (1841), in which white and black babies are switched (*Women and Sisters* 198). Child, who was conversant with antislavery fiction, may have read the story.

What seems significant here, however, is not the "artful device," but the fact that Child does not make Rosa a pitiful "tragic mulatto" as she did Rosalie in "The Quadroons," published in 1842. As Child herself admits, the

story is “embarrassingly sentimental” (Karcher, “Lydia Maria Child’s” 84), aiming to draw out the readers’ tears in order to induce consideration of the problem of sexual exploitation in slavery: Rosalie was emaciated to death when her illegitimate husband deserted her to marry a white lady, and her daughter Xarifa was imprisoned in a tower, going insane after finding her lover killed by her master. Introducing a similar story in *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter*, at times borrowing passages verbatim from “The Quadroons,” William Wells Brown altered the tragic mulatto to a heroic one when he let Clotel choose death to escape slavery. As in *Clotel* and Harriet Jacobs’ slave narrative that she edited, Child no longer leaves her mulatto heroine utterly helpless, bathed in tears. Instead, she bestows fury akin to madness upon her. When we think of madness as a metaphor for women’s oppressed subjectivity and creativity, as has long been elucidated by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Goober’s feminist book, *Mad Woman in the Attic*, Rosa’s madness could indeed be the energy, like the madness of Cassy in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that rescues her from the state of a slave/concubine of Fitzgerald.

3. Transcending Racial Prejudice

A Romance of the Republic is, on one hand, an adventure story full of slaves’ captivities and narrow escapes, of melodramatic separations and miraculous reunions, but also a moral story, on the other, of how white Northerners should learn to overcome their own prejudices against blacks and to invite them to their dominant society as equal members. The emphasis of the fiction seems to shift from the former to the latter as the two sisters escape from the slavery of the South. If the book is an antiprejudice romance, as is already mentioned, then its protagonists are Alfred King and Lila Delano, another wealthy Bostonian, because their racism is probed through the process of helping Rosa and Flora. This is probably why the sisters seem to cease to be active agents of their own fates.

As Child revealed racial prejudice in the North in *An Appeal*, the target of her criticism is chiefly the Northerners who believe themselves to be liberal and democratic. “[Let] us not flatter ourselves,” she chides them in *An Appeal*, “that we are in reality any better than our brethren of the South” (186), for no existence of slavery does not mean absence of antipathy toward

black people. "Our prejudice against colored people," she goes on, "is even more inveterate than it is at the South" (186). Giving many incidents that reveal prejudice, she tries to prove her points with rational and objective arguments. These analytical arguments are dramatized in *A Romance of the Republic* chiefly through the two New Englanders, King and Delano, and their commitment to fugitive slaves.

Although King appears to be an ideal Bostonian who represents the spirit of American republicanism, he still needs to be educated in the matter of race. He considered slavery "a cumulative poison in the veins of this Republic" (24) but knew little of its realities until he visited the South. In New Orleans, quite a foreign world to him, he is at first bewildered to learn that such graceful girls as Rosa and Flora are excluded from society only because of the slight portion of black blood in them, whereas they would ornament it under other circumstances. However, when he thinks of the possibility of marriage with either of them, he has to admit his hesitation: "My good mother shares the prejudice. How could I introduce them to *her*?" (14). Being captivated by the charm of Rosa, King revolves the question in his mind of whether "the impediments [are] really insurmountable," but, once again, he remembers the "iceberg" of his Boston relatives (25).

King faces the realities of slavery in its direst sense when he is told that Rosa and Flora are slaves and that they are in danger of being sold as property: "'Is such a thing possible in this country?' he exclaimed. 'Girls so elegant and accomplished as they were!'" (163) He is exasperated, unlike Fitzgerald, at the word "property" being applied to the girls, saying, "Property! . . . Such a term applied to women makes me an Abolitionist" (164). Here, in the mind of Alfred King, the author's feminist and abolitionist views are combined, for he does not limit his antislavery sentiment to Royal's octoroon daughters alone, but extends it to women in general.

On the grounds of loyalty to his father's friendship with Royal, King determines it his duty to protect Rosa, now an opera singer in Europe, from the pursuit of Fitzgerald, who could, if he so desired, capture her at any time and take her back to the States as a slave. He spends all his time guarding her in secret, leaving his business in the hands of his hired men. He wonders what his dead "prudential mother" would say about his devotion to an opera singer who was—and still is—a marketable slave and who was "the victim of a sham marriage," but he concludes in the end that, since his mother is

now in “a sphere of wider vision,” she would see through to the “pure, good soul” of Rosa just as he does (246). Child here presents the triple obstacle a gentleman of the upper class must overcome: to marry an opera singer—a career generally “regarded as little more respectable than prostitution” in nineteenth-century America (Karcher, *The First Woman* 523; P. Davis 4); a slave woman placed at the bottom of the social and racial stratum; and a victim of a sham marriage like the “fallen” heroine of a seduction novel who is likely to be ostracized from society.⁴ The interracial marriage between King and Rosa, therefore, is Child’s bold challenge calling for equality among races, classes, professions, and females conventionally divided between good maidens and bad women who have been deserted or divorced or who have “fallen.”⁵ We must note here, however, that King’s marriage with Rosa becomes possible only when his mother is dead.

If King illustrates a model spouse, Lila Delano exemplifies a model mother. Her adoption of Flora, the younger daughter of her former fiancé, Royal, demonstrates how northern mothers of the upper and middle classes can partake in the nation’s reconstruction. The widowed Delano, possibly like King’s mother, was a member of “the iceberg” of Boston aristocracy, who want nothing to do with colored people and hold a strong aversion to antislavery agitation. Nevertheless, by adopting Flora as her daughter, she becomes deeply involved in what she had previously shunned. William Percival, an active abolitionist, expresses his astonishment, exclaiming, “*You, Mrs. Delano!*” (155) when he learns of her sincere commitment to a fugitive slave girl. Yet she is not a benevolent white person who gives support one-sidedly to helpless blacks. In order to avoid this conventional vision frequently depicted in the antislavery fiction of white (female) authors, Child details the process of how Delano acknowledges her own racism and how she becomes “half an Abolitionist” (261) by correcting her biased views.

Picturing Flora’s future husband, Delano inadvertently dwells upon a worldly idea: “what a splendid marriage her adopted daughter might make, if it were not for that stain upon her birth” (149). She realizes the next moment how “mean and heartless” it was to regard Flora’s African heritage as “stigma.” This correction of her prejudice leads her to think further about her own “splendid marriage,” arranged by her father, which had not made her happy at all; if she had been strong enough not to give up Royal, then a poor man, she continues to think, all the subsequent complications and

miseries could have been prevented. At the end of this chain of thought, she comes to determine that she “must try to write a better record on the present” (150).

Likewise, Delano’s effort to educate Flora in Boston aristocratic manners is, to some extent, checked by the girl’s natural way of acting—for instance, when in a gallery of paintings, Delano’s sense of “conventional propriety” is disturbed by Flora’s spontaneous shouts of pleasure in public at seeing beautiful pictures, and she is a little irritated by the attention they attract, but, at the same time, she understands that reproving the child’s behavior also creates a bad influence: “If I am always checking the child, I shall spoil the naturalness which makes her so charming” (151). On another occasion, when Delano admonishes Flora for her unladylike behavior of talking with a clerk in front of the house, Flora retorts that the clerk, Franz Bluemthal, is an old friend and that her father was also a poor clerk when Delano met him. Flora’s natural communication with others unwittingly teaches her new Mamita (mother) about democratic manners and how they can transcend class barriers. Thus, Delano admits to herself, “That darling child, with her strange history and unworldly ways, is educating me more than I can educate her” (269). She also endorses the marriage of Flora and Blumenthal by helping him financially to be promoted from a clerk to a business partner.

It is interesting that Child shows the sure transformation—and ostracism as well—of Delano by depicting some gossip exchanged between her old acquaintances. Mrs. Ton remarks that it is quite unlikely for Mrs. Delano, who “used to be the most fastidious of exclusives,” to adopt “nobody knows whom” and to help “that nobody of a clerk” (283). Then, Mrs. Style reports that her husband saw Mrs. Delano, and her *adoptée*, escorted by the clerk at an antislavery meeting, adding the following sadistic comment:

“Think of her, with her dove-colored silks and violet gloves, crowded and jostled by Dinah and Sambo! I expect the next thing we shall hear will be that she has given a negro party.” (284)

Phillip Lapsansky illustrates how abolitionist women were attacked in caricatured images. Since in such images abolitionism was always equated with amalgamation, Mrs. Style’s “negro party” must have sexual

connotations.⁶

Lily Bell, now a widow, is another aristocratic lady who experienced a “splendid marriage” that resulted in utter disappointment. Like Delano, she must confront the fact that her child has that “stain” in his blood, though she did not know the truth until Rosa confessed her past deed, the exchange of the babies. Unlike Delano, however, she cannot change her old manners and ideas. She would rather keep what she has obtained than redress it according to the newly discovered truth. She refuses to see her biological son, George, grown among slaves, the pure Anglo-Saxon descendant and rightful heir to the estate of the Bells, and insists that Gerald is her only son because she has “educated him to my own liking, and everybody says he is an elegant young man” (386). Although the African “stain” in Gerald is disgraceful to her, she does not mind it as long as it is kept secret. For her, as Karcher says, “appearances and forms are paramount” (“Lydia Maria Child’s” 93).

Yet Lily is not a hopeless, cold mother, for Child seems to allow some genuine motherly love in her adherence to the young Gerald: “But whatever you may say, he is *my* son. I never will give him up. He has slept in my arms. I have sung him to sleep. I taught him all his little hymns and songs” (362). She does not recoil, either, at accidentally seeing George’s mulatto wife, Henriette, and her baby, but instead is rather curious about them and wonders in the end, “What *would* my father say?” (422), as King once wondered what his dead mother would say at the prospect of his marriage with Rosa. There remains a slight possibility of her accepting the quadroon baby as her granddaughter.

Though it is interesting to the modern reader that Lily’s remarks indicate that maternal love is not innate but is, rather, formed by history and circumstance, the author’s emphasis probably lies in the appeal to readers, mostly white Christian women, that they are mothers of all children in a large family of the nation and, therefore, responsible for helping any poor child, especially a colored one. *A Romance of the Republic* is indeed full of motherly figures. Like Delano, Madame Guirlande, a French neighbor of the Royal family, plays the role of mother for the orphaned sisters and, with Signor Papanti, their Italian music teacher, adopts and educates Rosa to be independent through the profession of stage singer. Rosa, in turn, with King, virtually adopts Henriette, whom she educates to become a woman fit to middle-class standards.

This universal motherhood—and also fatherhood, in this context—suggests another significant factor in this novel—that is, the interrelatedness of the fates of Americans under slavery. If Rosa is a victim of patriarchy and slavery, so is Lily, who married Fitzgerald without knowing he kept a mistress. The switched children, Gerald and George, symbolize the complex entanglement of the slave and the slaveholder, of the black and the white, of the South and the North. Gerald was brought up in the North, away from slavery, and yet he shares the proslavery sympathy and racial prejudice of his grandfather, Mr. Bell, who makes a large profit on the trade with the South. When he is told by Mr. Bell to send back the two fugitives, George and Henriette, who attempted to escape to the North on his ship called Cotton King, Gerald feels only apathy toward them and is irritated by the trouble they have made.

However, the new knowledge of his black ancestry compels him to think about his half-brother, George, whose position he “usurped,” to use the term of the narrator of Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*,⁷ and whom he cruelly drove back into slavery. This is the moment when the pride of Gerald as a refined gentleman is crushed, as he says, “I shall not find it easy to endure the double stain of illegitimacy and alliance with the colored race” (357). Yet it is the moment when his eyes begin to open to the perspective of the fugitives, and to the injustice of racism. He could have been the fugitive himself and been sent back to the South as a slave. Under the American system of slavery, he now understands, the white and the black are replaceable. In meeting George later in the Union army as a soldier during the Civil War, Gerald learns from him what he never learned from his grandfather, who insisted only on “the rights of slaveholders” (406); he comes to question if they are really “rights” at all when slaves have to give all the wages they earn to their masters. He finds himself, moreover, much less useful and resourceful than George, an ex-slave. Like Delano, he has to admit that a perfectly “cultured gentleman” (Clifford 280) like himself is taught more than he can teach George, who received no formal education. This overturns the proslavery discourse of racial inferiority of the black race. It is also important that they look very similar to each other, just like a mirror image, for their resemblance intensifies the nonsense of the racial distinction between black and white.

In contrast to Gerald, who tries at least to “be free to become familiar

with my new self" (380), his grandfather, Mr. Bell, cannot change himself. He is the symbol of bigotry of the northern aristocracy. The most complicated outcome of the exchanged babies converges in the antinomy he encounters. When he had his ship's captain capture the fugitives, the two abolitionists, Percival and Jackson, tried to persuade him not to send them back to the South on the grounds of the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, that "every man has a right to personal liberty" (315). Mr. Bell counters their protest with the right to property that the Constitution is supposed to guarantee:

I think Southern gentlemen ought to be protected in their property; and that is sufficient. I stand by the Constitution, sir. I honor the reverend gentleman who said he was ready to send his mother or his brother into slavery, if the laws required it. That's the proper spirit, sir. You fanatics, with your useless abstractions about human rights, are injuring trade, and endangering the peace of the country. (317)

Mr. Bell's arguments encapsulate the anti-abolitionist sentiments in the North, and it is a great irony that he is ultimately sending his own grandson into slavery as he orders Gerald to return the poor fugitives to their slaveholder.

It is probably the most dexterous device Child uses in this antislavery romance that George marries a mulatto because, by this marriage, it becomes impossible for Mr. Bell to bequeath his property exclusively to a pure Anglo-Saxon descendant. He must face the dilemma that his property must go either to Gerald with "negro blood in his veins" or to George "who is a slave with a negro wife" (394). Thus, the laws concerning property that he has so stubbornly observed prove to be unable to protect his property, nor can they prevent amalgamation in his family. As Karcher hints, Child seems to suggest that "[integration] and amalgamation are inevitable . . . and the Republic's black children will eventually inherit their rightful patrimony" (*The First Woman* 518).

4. Toward a Harmonious Republic

Unlike Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which a possible war to come

was regarded as God's crusade against the nation's wrongs, Child's romance depicts the Civil War as a patriotic human struggle to redress the injustices committed against the colored race. This is why, even during the war, King and Rosa are busily engaged in helping George and Henriette in order to prepare for the postwar reconstruction.

However, the romance gives the reader an impression that it is, after all, King's financial power that solves the entangled knot caused by the exchange of the babies. He redresses the wrong by offering all the money that George might have received as the real son of Fitzgerald and as the rightful heir of the Bells. The octroon heroine seems indeed to recede to the background in the reforming, except in educating Henriette to be a spouse suitable for the position prepared for George. In contrast with enfeebled Rosa, King's paternal image is intensified. He serves as a surrogate father to those fatherless brothers, Gerald and George: not only does he advise Gerald never to "be a gentleman of leisure . . . the worst possible calling a man can have" (381), but he adopts George, providing him with the post of an agent at a European branch of his business, and preaches to him a stereotypical Puritan morality that stresses industriousness, temperance, and economy—the important factors for becoming rich. As Karcher points out, his vision of social mobility sounds anachronistic ("Lydia Maria Child's" 98), and his plan to support George and Henriette is one-sidedly decided without asking the couple's view of their future prospects (*The First Woman* 525). He does seem to begin controlling the novel while Rosa degenerates to helpless dependency (Karcher, "Lydia Maria Child's" 96), yet the author seems to be aware of the danger of his patriarchal power, for she refers to the "stiffness" of his character more than once in the story. Debased appellations given to him are "Yankee" and "Puritan." As if this was not enough, the author lets him make a great sacrifice in the war. Of all the male characters who fought for the Union, King is the only returned soldier whose body was mutilated: he lost his right leg.

The large amount of money he unsparingly uses for George, therefore, is merely a symbol that illustrates how the wealthy should repay for the liberated, who had long supported the nation by their unpaid labor. This is why both King and Delano, the two representatives of Boston aristocracy, express a similar sentiment about money: "Money really seems to me of very little value, except as a means of promoting human happiness" (222).

It is perhaps Joe Bright, the blacksmith, who speaks for the author at times more directly and explicitly than King or the other major figures of the fiction. Being a working-class abolitionist, he can say frankly what the other characters within the middle-class framework cannot. This may be one of the greatest merits Child has attained in this novel. If she could save it from being an “embarrassingly sentimental” story like “The Quadroons,” much is owed to the creation of Joe Bright.

Bright probably represents the healthy, robust, and cheerful character of the self-supported plain American that Child idealizes. The house in Northampton he offers to Flora’s family for the summer is not “stylish,” but it is neat and comfortable (319). Being a natural-born music lover, he believes that “there’s music hid away in everything,” but that “we don’t know how to bring it out” (293). He is a man who aims to bring out harmony in everything, finding instinctively a certain rhythm in anything he notices. As his name suggests, his sound buoyancy brightens up people around him, humor being the chief element of his brightness. He explains how he became an abolitionist in a humorous way. When he thought of teaching singing in a warm place in the South and looked over southern newspapers for advertisements for a singing-master, he found instead a shocking advertisement about the runaway mulatto named Joe who “has light sandy hair, blue eyes, and ruddy complexion” (322). The description of the slave fit him exactly:

“‘By George!’ said I, ‘that’s a description of *me*. I didn’t know before that I was a mulatto. It’ll never do for me to go *there*.’ So I went to Vermont to teach. I told ’em I was a runaway slave, and showed ’em the advertisement that described me. Some of ’em believed me, till I told ’em it was a joke. . . [That] blue-eyed Joe seemed to bring the matter home to me” (322)

The episode described above runs parallel with that of the exchanged babies. Bright illuminates in plain English the fact that any white person is in danger of being enslaved; as George exemplifies, slavery is not a problem only of the black race.

Bright’s humor is best displayed when he criticizes his rich neighbor named Stillham, a deacon from the South, whom Bright calls “Deacon

Steal'em" because the deacon made a huge fortune through the slave trade. He reveals in a very simple way the contradiction of the deacon's proslavery arguments: while "Steal'em" maintains that "the slaves are perfectly contented and happy," he at the same time insists that, without those cruel laws to control them, they would revolt and kill their masters; though he affirms that "blacks and whites won't mix any more than oil and water," he is afraid that, if the slaves are freed, they would marry white daughters (324). Bright's quick-witted speeches also illuminate how easily prejudice is formed by circumstance. When the deacon's little granddaughter jeers at him, repeating "You're a Bob-o-lith-o-nitht!" (367), he says, "They begin education early down South. Before the summer is out she'll be talking about the cuth o' Ham" (369).

Mrs. Bright also shares her husband's abolitionist sentiments. When she was a nursery governess in the South, she refused to be served by the slaves because she could manage her personal needs on her own. Like Ophelia in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she is proud of her New England independent ways and never minds being regarded as unladylike: "It's my theory that everybody ought to help in doing the work of the world" (339). Mrs. Bright's independent spirit implies a possible way in which Americans can achieve an equal society, without slavery or class distinction. This spirit is exactly what Child aspires to plant in generations to come to support a more democratic nation.

It is, in fact, not only racism but also class discrimination that Bright condemns. He frankly admits that he prefers Flora's and Rosa's families, who do not mind touching his rough hands, to Mr. Bell, who "treats mechanics as if he thought they all had the small-pox, and he was afraid o' catching it" (336-37). Through the incorporation of the Brights into the romance, Child attempts to undermine both race and class barriers that obstruct building a more egalitarian Republic. Connecting the patriarchal institution thus not only with race or women's problem but also with class differentiation, Child expands the "dead subject" to the more universal class struggle that is to become increasingly visible in postbellum America and, thereby, aims also to undermine the restrictions of the domestic novel that centers on middle-class values.

Child concludes her romance with a tableau of the new family. This tableau represents the new Republic after the Civil War:

Under festoons of the American flag, surmounted by the eagle, stood Eulalia, in ribbons of red, white, and blue, with a circle of stars round her head. One hand upheld the shield of the Union, and in the other the scales of Justice were evenly poised. By her side stood Rosen Blumen, holding in one hand a gilded pole surmounted by a liberty-cap, while her other hand rested protectingly on the head of Tulee's Benny, who was kneeling and looking upward in thanksgiving. (440)

The central figure, Eulalia (Rosa's daughter), upholds the emblem of the Republic, and her cousin, Rosen Blumen (Flora's daughter), holds the symbol of liberty in one hand, while, with the other on the head of Benny, indicating that the slaves are liberated. As Jean Yellin rightly points out, the picture is not completely free of the prejudice that Child attacks throughout the text: "this assignment of the role of liberator to the light-skinned girl and the role of grateful, kneeling ex-slave to the dark child" may lead to an endorsement of white supremacy (*Women and Sisters* 75). Karcher's critical analysis of the last scene also exposes the similar racial division between the light-skinned and the darker: "Here, the emancipators are themselves children of emancipated slaves, yet the class relations between the two groups persist. And once again, a hierarchy of color has reasserted itself" (*The First Woman* 526). Both Yellin and Karcher agree that there are limits to this harmonious vision of racial configuration and that Child fails in presenting a truly egalitarian society.

It is certainly true that *A Romance of the Republic* is still bound by the racial prejudice of the time to the eyes of the present reader with the vantage of the distance of some one hundred and fifty years. Dana Nelson, referring to the "improvement" of Henriette, states that the "black characters are embraced only as, and precisely because, *they* ('an imitative race') embrace 'white' middle-class values like chastity, manners, and republicanism" (xvi). Thus, Nelson maintains that the romance cannot present a radical vision of racial integration which embraces a black culture that is different from the white one (xvii).

Yet Nelson admits that, with all its defects, *A Romance of the Republic* was radical according to contemporary standards, comparing it with Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*, published in 1867, the same year as

Child's romance, in which Davis denies miscegenation based on natural repulsion between the black and the white (xvii)—an idea that Child attacks in her novel as proslavery discourse. If we remember that interracial marriage was the last sphere that nineteenth-century American writers would dare to tread in, it can be said that Child was, in a way, too advanced for the contemporary readers. In this way of thinking, the tableau assumes a different aspect.

The whiteness of Eulalia and Rosen is likely to make us forget that they are socially coded as black. The two light-skinned girls do not, however, symbolize the white-washed blacks who can pass as white, but the intermixture of races and cultures that makes the color/ethnic division itself meaningless. From the beginning of the story, Child invites us to the multiracial and polyglot world of the Royal family in New Orleans. Rosa and Flora inherit, besides the Anglo-Saxon American legacy of their father, a Spanish legacy from their grandfather, Señor Gonzalez, as well as the African and French heritage that comes from their grandmother born in the French West Indies and their mother educated in France. In addition, the two girls, though living in a small world, befriend the black servant, Tulee, always with her head covered by a colorful turban, an Italian music teacher, Signor Papanti, a French neighbor, Madame Guirlande, and Blumenthal, a German clerk at Royal's office. This intermixture of diverse ethnicities brings about a multilingual and multicultural family. Their daily conversation intermingles with phrases, names, and songs of manifold languages and accents. The parrot that Guirlande keeps is a comic creature that mirrors and amplifies this polyglotism while playing an important role in reuniting the separated sisters.

The new generation, Rosa's daughter (Eulalia) and Flora's children (Rosen/Rosa, Alfred, Lila), brought up in New England, merge the northern and southern cultures, and thus advance the integration of the races and cultures of their parents. The new Republic Child presents here in the portrait of a new family may suggest a melting-pot-like utopian harmony, failing to preserve the clear characteristics of each culture in the integrated version; yet, unlike *Hobomok*, in which almost any trace of the Indian heritage in the child of Mary Conant is annihilated, here the author is at least conscious, in her last romance, of retaining each component of the integrated races and cultures. Eulalia evokes her grandmother of the same name who was a

mulatto slave, and Rosen/Rosa, named after her aunt Rosa, retains her namesake's dark brown hair and brown eyes. In this context, the tableau proves not to be as simple as it first appears. As Stephanie Smith remarks, if we read Eulalia as a "white" beauty rather than as a confused figuration for "whiteness," we overlook her "African-American" heritage, implied by her name (68).

It is significant that Child ends the grand finale with the singing conducted by Joe Bright, now promoted to captain, leading the black members. Whereas there is again a racial hierarchy—the white leads the black—Bright's role here centers on bringing out harmony in the new Republic, as he invites "[all] the family, of all ages and colors" to the singing of "The Star-spangled Banner" (441). Thus, Child's romance of America consummates.

5. A Belated Work of National Literature

A reviewer of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* heavily praises *A Romance of the Republic*, calling it "the second *great* novel based upon slavery," Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* being the first, and applauds her achievement as follows: "What Hawthorn was unable to find, Mrs. Child has found in American life, viz.: the material for a thrilling and powerful romance" (qtd. in Karcher, *The First Woman* 531). This critic from an antislavery newspaper implies that slavery *is* the real material for American romance.

Abolitionist writers seem to share this idea. As I have mentioned in the introduction, Frederick Douglass, for instance, noted in 1855 that the present would be remembered by generations to come as "the age of anti-slavery literature" (361). In 1879, Wendell Phillips underscored the importance of biographies of ex-slaves, referring to the remark by Frederika Bremer, a Swedish novelist with whom Child was acquainted, that "the fate of the negro is the romance of your history" (qtd. in Mills, *Cultural Reformers* 141). By naming her last novel "A Romance of the Republic," Child responded to this powerful conviction about "authentic" American literature (141).

Child defends and glorifies, in a way, her attempt to write a national romance based on slavery through the words of various characters in the fiction. When the history of the Royal family was first disclosed, Rosa was

shocked by the fact that their grandfather sold his own daughter, while Guirlande commented, “The world is full of strange things, my child, — stranger than anything you ever read in story-books” (53). Percival, the abolitionist, expresses a similar feeling to Delano’s confidential confession about Royal’s white daughters, one imprisoned in a slaveholder’s cottage in Georgia, the other rescued and adopted by her: “I have long been aware that the most romantic stories in the country have grown out of the institution of slavery; but this seems stranger than fiction” (157). Finally, Joe Bright articulates his astonishment at the dramatic reunion of the sisters: “How romantic that you should come here to Joe Bright’s to find your sister, that you thought was dead” (337). As if to endorse the author’s writing itself, he assures that he would have written a story about Rosa and Flora if he had known the details of their history. By writing a romantic story of slaves, Child also indicates that she contributes to constructing truly American literature, and she is right in this, because a story of slaves is a story of the struggle for freedom out of bondage and, therefore, a story of everyone in America, as most antislavery writers believed.

If we remember that “the one common denominator” of those writers whom F. O. Matthiessen canonized in his *American Renaissance* was “their devotion to the possibilities of democracy” (ix), we can clearly see that Child epitomizes the very principle this distinguished critic prescribes. *A Romance of the Republic*, published soon after the Civil War and thus a belated antislavery novel, is also a belated work that aimed to partake in the creation of the national literature of America in the 1850s, as the title eloquently expresses. Yet, if we reflect that one of the representative works of the mainstream American literature, Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), followed this tradition of antislavery fiction, and that *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894), by the same major writer, reproduced the key literary device employed in Child’s romance, *A Romance of the Republic* can be regarded as the very medium that bound the antebellum and postbellum American literature together.

Chapter 14

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

1. Reading Slavery in *Huckleberry Finn*

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has suffered a long and critical controversy over its appropriateness as reading material in public places¹ ever since its publication in 1884.² Nonetheless, the work is considered one of the most significant novels in the history of American literature. It is well known that Ernest Hemingway extolled the book in *Green Hills of Africa* (1935): "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating. But it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since" (15). His assessment seems to have fixed the place of *Huckleberry Finn* in the history of American literature.

Following Hemingway's laudation, T. S. Eliot, in his introduction to the 1950 London edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, admired the book as a masterpiece even more wholly than his predecessor; he reevaluated the last "cheating" part, as well, in which Tom Sawyer appears to rescue Jim, by insisting that it is the right ending because it "[brings] us back to that [the mood] of the beginning" (353). By maintaining that two elements, "the Boy and the River," make *Huckleberry Finn* great (348), Eliot seems to indicate what should comprise an American hero and what substantiates authentic American literature—the male drama engaged in an arena between nature and civilization. Although Leo Marx attacks Eliot's (and Trilling's) uncritical approval of the ending as an act eager to justify everything of a work that "has been admitted to the highest canon of literary reputability" (16), he, too, regards the book as a masterpiece in spite of its concluding structural failure and underscores the hero's spiritual growth through his adventures in the Mississippi Valley; he likely agrees with Hemingway's view: "The rest is just cheating. But it's the best book we've had."

Even though we take the rhetorical emphasis into consideration, Hemingway's laudatory comment on *Huckleberry Finn* seems to reflect his wish to nullify the literary tradition that modern American literature may well have inherited ("All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before"). Hemingway and the white male writers and critics who follow him try to conjure an image that the "masterpiece" appeared suddenly from nowhere. What they are anxious to sever it from, in a sense, paradoxically testifies its definite influence. When Eliot says, for example, "the *style* of the book . . . is what makes it a far more convincing indictment of slavery than the sensationalist propaganda of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (350), he reveals the two important factors that connect *Huckleberry Finn* to the nineteenth-century best-selling novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe: the subject of slavery and the legacy of antislavery literature.

As Jane Smiley points out, referring to Nina Baym's feminist essay, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," *Uncle Tom's Cabin* failed to occupy a place in the canon of American literature because the traditional canonization was limited to "a very narrow range of white, Protestant, middle-class male authors"; it regarded "the struggle of the individual against society" as the only worthy subject of American literature and dismissed "all other themes and modes of literary expressions" as "un-American" (Smiley 361). Thus, *Huckleberry Finn* was not only isolated from its ancestral work *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the rich cluster of antislavery works, but one of its major themes, slavery, was blurred and reduced to a mere background component while the focus was shifted to the protagonist's heroism in escaping to freedom from civilization that is represented by the female-dominant domestic life.

Considering that the novel is set in the 1840s South, it would be significant to reexamine *Huckleberry Finn* in the context of slavery, for this kind of reading will lead to relating Twain's work to the long literary tradition of antislavery literature that dates back almost to the beginning of the American republic. From this reading, we can see that the issues related to slavery (and race) are not dead ones but they remain existent in the heart of the mainstream American literature.

2. Is Huck a Slave?

Since the adventures are narrated in the first person by the fourteen-year-old orphan with little education, who prefers a carefree life in wild nature to restrictive manners of a civilized life, and his tone is generally humorous, the reader is apt to forget that the whole story is developed in the southern society under the strict slavery system and to fail in taking the issues of slavery seriously. The book is, in fact, replete with scenes and episodes that imply slavery. The narrator-hero Huck was adopted by Widow Douglas and educated by her sister, Miss Watson, who owns at least one slave, Jim. The Grangerfords, whom Huck visits after the raft is smashed by a steamboat, run many farms with more than one hundred slaves; it is taken for granted that each member of the family has a slave to wait on him or her, including Huck, a temporary guest, who is not familiar with being served and commands “his slave” to do almost nothing, while Buck, the youngest boy of the family, works his hard. “My nigger had a monstrous easy time,” Huck says, “because I warn’t used to having anybody do anything for me, but Buck’s was on the jump most of the time” (126). Huck’s slave, however, works hard to help Jim hidden in a swamp, a typical locale of hiding for fugitive slaves, and leads Huck to the reunion with Jim.

Huck and Jim later come to serve the frauds who invade their raft—the king and the duke—passively like slaves. The late Peter Wilks, whose bereaved blood relatives are one of the targets of the two frauds’ swindling, was also a wealthy planter whose slaves were all sold by the king separately and out of town, so that the auction presents a heartrending scene of screams and tears to the extent that Huck feels sick to see them, even though he is aware that they will be reunited because the sale is not a legal transaction. We may remember here that the repeated scenes of separation of slave families are characteristic of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and are integral to the novel’s power to induce readers’ sympathy for the cause of abolition. Even the idyllic Phelps’s place is “one of these little one-horse cotton plantations” (228) and it is in this plantation that Jim is imprisoned; its head, good-natured Silas, a farmer and a preacher, is a slaveholder and keeps Jim in a locked cabin until he gains two hundred dollars by returning him to his supposed master. Moreover, Tom’s “romantic” scheme to free Jim actually incites a slave hunt that involves a group of neighboring farmers armed with

guns and hounds.

Only a few episodes are necessary to illustrate the society of slavery in which Huck's adventures take place. If we further examine their implications, we will be able to see how deeply the issue of slavery is rooted in the novel, especially in the relationship between Huck and Pap, his despotic father. Although Huck's journey down the Mississippi is generally interpreted as an escape from civilization, the immediate factor that sends him into a fugitive life is the mad violence of Pap. As many slave narratives expose that severe whipping by a master is everyday occurrence within a plantation, Huck is often whipped in the hut where he is confined, while Pap's violence gradually increases: "by and by pap got too handy with his hick'ry, and I couldn't stand it. I was all over welts" (37). For Pap, his son is merely his "property" and he thinks it his right to take up everything Huck has, and this idea leads Pap to pester and press Huck for money.

Uneducated himself, Pap does not allow his son to learn how to read or write; he even tries to obstruct Huck's schooling. Whatever Huck says, except for a docile "yes," signifies impudence to his father, just as answering back by a slave, whatever just reason he or she has for it, was always regarded as a sign of "sauce," dissatisfaction, or resistance:

"Starchy clothes—very. You think you're a good deal of a big bug, *don't* you?"

"Maybe I am, maybe I ain't," I says.

"Don't you give me none o' your lip," says he. "You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're educated, too, they say; can read and write. You think you're better'n your father, now, don't you, because he can't? *I'll* take it out of you. . . ." (31)

While education of black slaves was unlawful in the antebellum South, it is often seen in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and many slave narratives that a white master who is jealous of his servant's talent treats him or her even more cruelly than he usually does.³

Pap's anger is directed not only at literate slaves but at any black person who is better off than he is. Whenever he is drunk, he resorts to attacking the government that lets him remain as he is, a poor miserable

vagrant, while leaving free blacks to have everything in their own ways. His raging harangue about the free mulatto from Ohio is worth citing here:

There was a free nigger there, from Ohio; a mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat . . . And what do you think? they said he was a p'fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything. And that ain't the wust. They said he could *vote*, when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? . . . And to see the cool way of that nigger—why, he wouldn't a give me the road if I hadn't shoved him out o' the way. I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?—that's what I want to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said he couldn't be sold till he'd been in the State six months, and he hadn't been there that long yet . . . They call that a government that can't sell a free nigger till he's been in the State six months. (39-40)

We can see from the passage above that Pap makes no distinction between a free black and a slave; a “nigger” means a slave to him and should accordingly behave like a slave (he must give the road to a white person). A learned black is the most detestable; according to Pap, he should be sold at once in a slave market to know his place. Pap's prejudice against blacks was widespread throughout the white South before the Civil War, as antislavery literature attests. His sentiment toward free blacks perhaps reflects the backlash in the post-Reconstruction period when the novel was written. I will refer again to this issue later in this chapter.

In *Was Huck Black?* Shelley Fishkin demonstrates that Huck's narrative reflects African American voices and, thereby, proves how much Twain had been influenced by African American speeches and culture. However, her discussion does not include a thematic analysis from the viewpoint of antislavery literature. A close reading of the novel shows that not only does Huck speak like other black characters shown in the novel, but he is also treated like a slave. We may ask, “Is Huck a slave?” instead of “Was Huck black?” Although many critics identify racism in the stereotypical description of Jim as similar to the comic blackface in minstrel shows—his ignorance, gullibility, and superstitiousness, in particular—they

tend to fail in detecting similar characteristics in Huck.

At times, Huck's innocence is almost synonymous with ignorance. He takes what others say literally. When Miss Watson told him, for instance, that he would get whatever he asked for if he should pray every day, he prayed hard for fishing hooks in vain. Calling him a fool, she explains that she meant that he would obtain "spiritual gifts" by earnest praying. In Tom's gang play, too, a comic tone is engendered as Huck takes what Tom says literally; when Huck complains that he saw no Spanish merchants or rich Arabs on camels as Tom had pictured but only "a Sunday-school picnic," Tom said with scorn, "if I [Huck] warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called 'Don Quixote,' I would know without asking" (24-25). Similarly, Huck rubbed an old tin lamp till he was exhausted to death, for Tom told him about a genie who would appear out of a lamp to serve the person that rubbed it.

Such ignorance/innocence is connected with superstitiousness. Huck is, in fact, as superstitious as Jim. When a spider that Huck flipped off fell into the flame of a candle and was killed, he was very scared because he believed it was a sign of bad luck: "I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away" (16). On another occasion, when he turned over a saltcellar at breakfast, he quickly threw some of the salt over his left shoulder in order to avoid bad luck and was severely scolded by Miss Watson for the mess he had made.

Huck and Jim share characteristics other than innocence/ignorance, the tendency to believe others, and superstitiousness. Both of them are outcasts in a strictly hierarchical society and become fugitives travelling in the darkness at night and hiding in nature during the daytime. Though socially weak as those considered to be lowly beings, they are both resourceful to survive dangers latent in nature as well as in the racist society, resorting to the instinctive wisdom that comes from practical experience rather than intellectual knowledge. Huck knows well that he can expect many blessings when the river rises and is alert enough to catch a drifting raft necessary for the escape, while Jim builds on the raft a "snug wigwam" to keep off the blazing sunlight and rain, and makes a high floor to keep things dry (75). They are good at handling people around them, too; finding that the lost raft is in the hands of several slaves, Jim convinces them that it belongs to him and Huck, giving them each ten cents, and repairs it for

resuming the journey again while Huck manages to get through the crisis of Jim's capture at the hands of two white slave hunters by means of telling a lie in an instant and even obtains forty dollars from the men who become sympathetic about the trouble Huck has fabricated.

3. Slavery Discourses in the Adventure Story

As we have examined in the previous section, Huck and Jim share many things in common and they help each other in face of difficulties. The two runaways, thus, enjoy a journey for freedom together. However, Huck is, of course, not a slave, but a white boy. Though an innocent child, he has somewhat internalized the prejudices against blacks prevailing in the society where he lives.⁴ Whatever low social tier he belongs to, his position is quite different from Jim's. The definite distinction between their experiences that are brought about by their racial difference makes itself manifest immediately as the two frauds intrude into their journey on a raft; it is taken for granted that the king and the duke occupy the relatively comfortable beds in the wigwam, while Huck takes the third best, "a straw tick—better than Jim's . . . a corn-shuck tick" (144). However, the stern reality of slavery has been already disclosed in the episode in which Huck, despite Jim's opposition, gets into a ferryboat wrecked on a rock, where he finds three robbers—two of them are about to kill the other one who has betrayed them. Their raft being lost by this point, Huck and Jim will fall into the same destiny of imminent death with the robbers unless they steal or borrow the criminals' boat before the ship sinks. They have a narrow escape, and when they are safe again on their raft, Huck and Jim tell each other what they respectively experienced:

I told Jim all about what happened inside the wreck, and at the ferryboat; and I said these kinds of things was adventures; but he said he didn't want no more adventures. He said that when I went in the texas and he crawled back to get on the raft and found her gone, he nearly died; because he judged it was all up with *him*, anyway it could be fixed; for if he didn't get saved he would get drowned; and if he did get saved, whoever saved him would send him back home so as to get the reward, and then Miss Watson would sell him south, sure. Well,

he was right; he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger. (86; emphasis added)

The passage is very significant because it suggests three important elements of the slavery discourse in this novel: 1) the racial difference in their journey, 2) the double bind situation of Jim, and 3) Huck's initiation into the knowledge of the reality of slavery. There is a large difference, in the first place, between the degrees of risk that Huck and Jim take. Huck wanted to explore the wrecked ship because it was an "adventure" a boy like Tom would never have missed. However, it was "a matter of life and death" for Jim, as Frederick Douglass puts it in his 1845 narrative in describing terrible dangers that await a runaway slave (98). Jim wants "no more adventures," for he believed he met his demise when he found the raft gone; if he did not get a helping hand, he would surely be drowned to death, and if he was saved by someone, he would be sent back to his owner who would likely sell him down the river—a punishment tantamount to a death sentence for many slaves. This double bind situation in which Jim is placed elucidates the frightful reality of slavery. Having heard Jim voicing his thoughts, Huck begins to comprehend what it means to live as a slave and what an awful risk Jim is taking in running away—it is truly no "adventure."

The scene of Jim's recapture towards the denouement of the story illustrates how a fugitive slave was actually treated when captured in antebellum South. The village men are "very huffy" and some of them insist on hanging Jim "for an example to all the other niggers around there" so that they will not try to run away as Jim did (287). The only thing that mitigates their cruel impulse is the price that they would have to pay to Jim's owner if they were to kill him: "the people that's always the most anxious for to hang a nigger that hadn't done just right, is always the very ones that ain't the most anxious to pay for him when they've got their satisfaction out of him" (288). The evident irony in the quotation is the author's, rather than Huck's. Even after the first bout of excitement had cooled down, the men terribly cursed Jim, freely hit him on the side of his head, and chained his hands and legs. If the doctor had not defended Jim by explaining how he was instrumental in curing injured Tom at the sacrifice of his chance to run away, Jim would have been even more heartlessly treated.

Twain tries to illuminate slavery's reality more effectively by having

a good-natured Southerner make a heartless comment on blacks. Aunt Sally presents a typical case. She is a warm-hearted, motherly woman who cares very much for the Sawyer boys and spends a sleepless night worrying over Tom's (Sid's) late return, whereas she does not care at all about a black person, even if he or she is killed:

“It wasn't the grounding—that didn't keep us back but a little. We
blowed out a cylinder-head.”

“Good gracious! anybody hurt?”

“No'm. Killed a nigger.”

“Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt. . . .” (230)

Here, Huck surely makes his speech conform to the view of blacks prevailing in the South, when he says that no one was hurt except for “a nigger.” He knows that he should be careful not to arouse suspicion by showing sympathy for blacks especially when speaking to a stranger; it is mostly safe, in other words, to express a racist sentiment in the slavery South.⁵ As is expected from a “good” Southerner, Aunt Sally expresses no sympathy for the black victim, saying “it's lucky” because no people were hurt. Clearly, blacks are not included in “people.”

Huckleberry Finn reveals the cruel society that admits no humanity in African Americans; this is underscored by showing Jim's humanity, how Jim, a black runaway, is a human being just as a white person is. Twain's depiction of Jim has been repeatedly criticized for being stereotypical. As David Smith suggests, Twain's use of stereotypes may be a natural consequence of the genre of humorous writing: “Frontier humor relies upon the use of stock types, and consequently racial stereotypes are just one of many types present in *Huckleberry Finn*” (95). Toni Morrison points out that Jim is described as a black man who is “unassertive, loving, irrational, passionate, dependent, inarticulate,” and who assumes that a white person, even a child, is superior to him (*Playing in the Dark* 56-57). It is certain that Jim is presented as a stereotypical black person of the time: gullible, superstitious, and always obedient to white people. Yet, he is no mere comical fool like the stereotype presented by blackface minstrelsy, for he evinces shrewdness, rich human feelings—such as compassion, sorrow, joy, resistance, and anger. “Twain's strategy with racial stereotypes is to elaborate them in order to undermine

them” (D. Smith 95).

As he became the victim of Tom’s prank, for example, in the second chapter—Tom hung Jim’s hat on a limb of a tree while he was asleep and left a five cent for the candles he stole—Jim did not remain a mere superstitious victim but made use of it as his special experience by creating a story: “the witches bewitched him and . . . rode him all over the State” (19). The story was stretched every time he retold it, showing the five cent that he hung from his neck as a sign of his contact with the devil. Jim became famous among black people, some of whom came from afar to hear his story, and he grew awfully proud of himself to the extent that he was “most ruined, for a servant, because he got so stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches” (19). He is not a simple gullible fool, but exhibits quick wits to exploit whatever he has to raise himself in his limited world. A similar example is seen when Huck asks him to tell his fortune. Jim makes Huck pay a quarter by saying that the “hair-ball” sometimes “wouldn’t talk without money” (29). Jim is shrewd enough to earn money without demanding it directly, while Huck is also witty to offer “an old slick counterfeit quarter” because the hair-ball “wouldn’t know the difference” (29).

Through their journey for freedom on the raft, Huck and Jim construct an egalitarian relationship and Jim expresses his true feelings within this framework. When Huck could safely join Jim, for instance, on a heavily foggy night after the long trial to catch his raft, he tried to fool Jim into believing that he had been dreaming and that there was no separation. Jim was upset by Huck’s tricks and reproached him hard for slighting his deep feelings—his worries about Huck’s safety and unthinkable delight to see him again:

[My] heart wuz mos’ broke bekase you wuz los’, en I didn’ k’yer no mo’ what become er me en de raf’. En when I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun’, de tears come en I could a got down on my knees en kiss’ yo’ foot I’s so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin ‘bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren’s en makes ’em ashamed. (95)

The outburst of emotion in the above speech eloquently demonstrates his

intense feelings. This short speech made Huck feel ashamed; after some hesitation, he apologized to Jim for his “mean tricks.” It is important to note here that it was unusual for a white person, even a child, to apologize to a black person in antebellum America: “It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger—but I done it, and I warn’t ever sorry for it afterwards, neither” (95). Doing justice to Jim is Huck’s first heroic moral decision—the act that, he declares, he has never regretted. Moreover, it denotes Huck’s spiritual growth.

Jim’s deep feelings become manifest when he soliloquizes the memory of his little daughter, whom he once hit hard because she would not obey his order, without knowing the fact that she had become “deaf and damn” as the aftereffect of scarlet fever. He sheds tears thinking of his daughter whom he had left at home. As Toni Morrison remarks, Jim’s tale is “one of the most moving remembrances in American literature” (Introduction 389), and it can be a fine piece of fiction by itself.⁶ While Jim can express sorrows, he easily laughs at trivial and humorous incidents, such as Huck’s dropping off the raft into the river after being hit by a sudden spray of water: “It most killed Jim a-laughing. He was the easiest nigger to laugh that ever was, anyway” (144). Furthermore, he can reason well, as he argues with Huck about both the biblical figure Solomon and the French language, until the white boy has no other recourse than to utter defensively and silently (to the reader), “you can’t learn a nigger to argue” (90).⁷

By giving a voice to Jim, *Huckleberry Finn* thus undermines the stereotype of a meek, grinning slave that is servile to white people. It is, to be sure, only when Jim and Huck are alone, that Jim’s voice is forwarded,⁸ but his voluble affectionate voice demonstrates that a black slave is no chattel like cattle but a human being with affluent emotions, wisdom, and a powerful voice and thereby subverts the basis of the proslavery notion that black people are subhuman.

4. Violence in American Society

It is true that *Huckleberry Finn* is not a story for boys like *Tom Sawyer*,⁹ as it includes many depictions of violence and satire on bigotry of Christian—that is, “civilized”—people in the South. Miss Watson, supposedly a model Christian who tries to civilize the protagonist, owns a

slave and thinks of selling him for the sake of money. The Grangerfords are all respectable aristocrats like Widow Douglas; Colonel Grangerford, above all, is a perfect gentleman, always well dressed and hospitable to a visitor like Huck, and yet he is merciless to the Shepherdsons, the family's old enemy. They are "pious" Christians, too, and go to church every Sunday, carrying guns with them and, in spite of all the customary killing and being killed between the two families for the reason they have already forgotten, they are impressed with the minister's sermon on "brotherly love" and talk about "faith, and good works, and free grace, and preforeordination [predestination]" (129). Twain's satire on hypocrisy of "respectable" Christians is evident.¹⁰

Although human lives are treated very lightly in the Grangerford family, the actual killing is so vile that Huck feels too sick to tell anyone of what has happened in the shooting; he cries when he finds Buck killed and pulls his body up from the shore, covering his face. Men, young and old, and young boys lose their lives in meaningless fights. This is not restricted to the privileged people alone. Monstrous violence follows Huck wherever he goes in the American South. In a small town in Arkansas, which appears poverty-stricken, men loaf about the stores along a mud street, doing nothing but chewing tobacco or bullying pigs and dogs; they set a few dogs on a pig, which runs away "squealing most horrible," or even "[put] turpentine on a stray dog and [set] fire to him" (156). The climax of their cruel joy is the appearance of drunk Boggs who thoughtlessly challenges Colonel Sherburn to a duel. Although it is apparent to all that Boggs is really a good man and that his reckless rampage is only a harmless show, Sherburn ruthlessly shoots him as if exterminating an annoying fly. Huck witnesses the murder and describes it realistically:

They laid him on the floor, and put one large Bible under his head, and opened another one and spread it on his breast—but they tore open his shirt first, and I seen where one of the bullets went in. He made about a dozen long gasps, his breast lifting the Bible up when he drew in his breath, and letting it down again when he breathed it out—and after that he laid still; he was dead. (159)

The practical use of two large Bibles here may also indicate some innuendo

to southern Christianity. At the death of good-natured Boggs, the bystanders become a raging mob and rush to Sherburn's house to lynch him; they are, however, driven away, being overwhelmed by the murderer's menacing speech.

The world of *Huckleberry Finn* is indeed full of violence like the western frontier of outlaws. It presents many implications of lynching. Not only did Huck witness a scene of lynching, he also came close to be lynched as well. This surely reflects the antebellum South in the 1840s when the novel is set, but also mirrors the 1870s and the 1880s when the work was composed¹¹— the period from Reconstruction to post-Reconstruction when Jim Crow laws were expanded and enforced. In theory, the Jim Crow laws exhibited a “separate but equal” legal doctrine for African Americans, but in practice, enforced racial segregation based on the idea of white supremacy and condemned black civil rights (Hansan). They inherited principles of the Black Codes that aimed to undo various reformatory changes established during the Reconstruction era and to “[get] things back as near to slavery as possible” (Foner 199).

Against this social background of white backlash emerged the notorious Ku Klux Klan. Founded in 1866 “as a Tennessee social club,” the Klan had spread into “nearly every Southern state” by 1870, causing “a *nameless terror* among negroes” and the Republicans who supported the civil rights for them (Foner 342). “It aimed to reverse the interlocking changes sweeping over the South during Reconstruction: to . . . reestablish control of the black labor force, and restore racial subordination in every aspect of Southern life” (426).

Violence swept across the post-bellum South. Countless cases of lynchings, rapes, property destruction (often by burning), mysterious murders, enforced evictions, and other heinous crimes were reported: in 1868 in New Orleans, for instance, “a mob destroyed a local Republican newspaper” and killed 200 black people on the plantations around it (Foner 342); William Luke, an Irish teacher at a black school in Alabama, and four black men were lynched in 1870 (428); Page Wallace, an African American in Virginia, accused of the alleged rape of a white woman, was killed by lynching in 1880 (Wolfe and Baker). As Eric Foner states, leaders of the Ku Klux Klan included the “most respectable citizens” like “planters, merchants, lawyers, and even *ministers*” (Foner 432; emphasis added). Their violent actions were

conducted in the dark while their faces were masked by white hoods.

Given this social background against which Twain's adventure story was written, there is no denying that it indeed reflects the violence thriving throughout the South in the post-bellum era. Here, it is worthwhile to quote Sherburn's long speech in order to show that Twain's satire is directed also at his contemporary society. Colonel Sherburn attacks the mob who has come to lynch him:

"Do I know you? I know you clear through. I was born and raised in the south, and I've lived in the north; so I know the average all around. The average man's a coward. In the north he lets anybody walk over him that wants to, and goes home and prays for a humble spirit to bear it. In the south one man, all by himself, has stopped a stage full of men, in the day-time, and robbed the lot. Your newspapers call you a brave people so much that you think you *are* braver than any other people—whereas you're just *as* brave, and no braver. Why don't your juries hang murderers? Because they're afraid the man's friends will shoot them in the back, in the dark—and it's just what they *would* do.

"So they always acquit; and then a *man* goes in the night, with a hundred masked cowards at his back, and lynches the rascal. Your mistake is, that you didn't bring a man with you; that's one mistake, and the other is that you didn't come in the dark, and fetch your masks. You brought *part* of a man—Buck Harkness, there—and if you hadn't had him to start you, you'd a taken it out in blowing.

"You didn't want to come. The average man don't like trouble and danger. *You* don't like trouble and danger. But if only *half* a man—like Buck Harkness, there—shouts 'Lynch him, lynch him!' you're afraid to back down—afraid you'll be found out to be what you are—*cowards*—and so you raise a yell, and hang yourselves onto that half-a-man's coat tail, and come raging up here, swearing what big things you're going to do. The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any *man* at the head of it, is *beneath* pitifulness. Now the thing for *you* to do, is to droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole. If any real lynching's going to be done, it will be done

in the dark, southern fashion; and when they come, they'll bring their masks, and fetch a *man* along. . . .” (162)

Sherburn's speech provides a good analysis of the collective psychology of mob violence as well as a persuasive argument for the judiciary's inability to control the murderers—juries are afraid of unlawful retaliation. It also condemns “the southern fashion” as the “pitifulest thing”—the masked attack in the dark, directly evoking the image of the Klan's well-known methods. It is interesting that he equates a mob with an army, since both are organizations that rely on the power of a mass and their individual members being cowards. An embodiment of outlawry himself, Sherburn exhibits the truth of the lawless South. Through this character, Twain criticizes the increasingly violent and inhuman southern society; his sentiment regarding it is summed up by the sentence that Huck pronounced when he saw the king and the duke being lynched: “Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another” (239).

5. The Tradition of Antislavery Literature

Set in the social and historical context of the American South, Huck's dilemma about helping Jim, a runaway slave, becomes more realistic and persuasive to modern readers who have no difficulty in understanding that the “wicked” things the protagonist is afraid of are the right things to do. It was hard for a southern white to express any sympathy for blacks. Douglass also notes this point in the passage of his narrative that describes the problem of suing white offenders when he was assaulted by several young white workers and was awfully injured: “it was impossible to get any white man to volunteer his testimony in my behalf, and against the white young men. . . . It required a degree of courage unknown to them to do so; just for that time, the slightest manifestation of humanity toward a colored person was denounced as abolitionism, and that name subjected its bearer to frightful liabilities” (105).

The idea of helping a fugitive slave weighs heavily on Huck's “conscience” from the start and it no doubt reflects the psychological fear Douglass had depicted. While agreeing never to tell anybody about Jim, he worries that “[people] would call me a low down Abolitionist and despise

me for keeping mum” (55). As the raft approaches Cairo, the gateway to freedom, both of them become restless for different reasons. Jim gets excited and thinks of what he will do in a free state, whereas Huck worries about his not doing his “right” duty to inform Miss Watson of her slave. When Jim even refers to a possibility that he will ask “an Ab’litionist to go and steal” his children, Huck is appalled at Jim’s sudden audacity, saying like a slaveholder, “give a nigger an inch and he’ll take an ell” (110)—the words that remind us of Douglass’s master, Hugh Auld. Moreover, when he must decide whether he should divulge the whereabouts of Jim, his anxiety reaches its peak. His final declaration to help Jim, “All right, then, I’ll go to hell” (223), therefore, demonstrates that his heroic determination is greater than we assume it to be and marks a superb abolitionist statement.

Reconsideration of *Huckleberry Finn* from the perspective of slavery discourse proves that this classic adventure story is also an extension of antislavery literature. As the title of Douglass’s second autobiography, “My Bondage and My Freedom,” implies, the subject of slavery can be applicable to every person, regardless of skin color, on a metaphoric level. The dilemma between social restriction and individual freedom is indeed a universal problem. This is perhaps the reason why records of suffering slaves appeal to us still. However, if we reduce the affluent constellation of antislavery discourses into a singular, abstract story of bondage and freedom—even if we replace the former word with exploitation, oppression, persecution, or subjugation—we will be in danger of losing the rich sources of postbellum and modern literature.

Huckleberry Finn is an offspring of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and slave narratives, despite Hemingway’s statement, “there was nothing before.” It is interesting to remember that the period when Mark Twain composed the novel (1876-1884) corresponds with the years when he lived near the house of Harriet Beecher Stowe in Hartford, Connecticut.¹² The prospective great writer might have discussed racial problems and increasingly money-oriented violent American society with his next-door neighbor who had already attained celebrity as the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Conclusion

We have examined how the antislavery literature, represented by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), formed a kind of new literary genre and flourished in the 1850s, the very period when such "major" writers as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Melville published masterpieces one after another, which F. O. Matthiessen later referred to as the American Renaissance. We have also seen that the flourishing of the antislavery literature was no less conspicuous than the contemporary literary creations canonized by Matthiessen. Taking various forms such as fiction, slave narratives, propagandistic booklets, and political speeches, the works of antislavery literature all explored the possibilities of American democracy, the very parameter Matthiessen employed in assessing the canon of American Renaissance. Thus, we can call the upsurge of the antislavery literature "another American Renaissance."

However, antislavery writers pursued possibilities of democracy in ways quite different from the representatives of the classic literature. Instead of nature/wilderness where the individual, predominantly a white male, seeks freedom and an integrated self, or where his ability and ingenuity for survival is tested, they tackle the social problem of slavery, the cause of the largest national crisis that threatened to disintegrate the antebellum American society. In the process of condemning and analyzing the reality of the patriarchal institution, they simultaneously explore the possibilities of democracy, struggling to envision a more inclusive, egalitarian republic. In this sense, they pursue another authentic "American" subject worth the name of national literature, as George Eliot suggests in her review of Stowe's *Dred*. Their works inevitably involve issues of race, gender, and class. They delve into the problem of slavery, exposing what the arbitrary power of the ruling class can do to those unprotected by laws, brutal treatments of human beings, the slave trade, and its consequent destruction of slave families, thorough exploitation of human labor, cruel violence imposed upon human bodies, and sexual abuses. Moreover, this antislavery movement encompasses a far greater range of districts than that confined almost within male elites in Concord (and New York). Since its authors are diverse in terms of race and

gender and their audience is necessarily large and multiple, we can assume that the antislavery literature had much more impact on the antebellum American society than we imagine.

We have also observed that the literary movement against slavery was never a transitory one, which suddenly arose with the rise of the national crisis of disunion, and terminated at the end of the Civil War, but was a rather long one that emerged in the late 1820s and early 1830s, reached its culmination in the 1850s, and was bequeathed to later American literature. Placing works such as David Walker's *Appeal* and Richard Hildreth's *Slave* as examples of the early antislavery literature before the publication of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Part I presented the characteristics of the abolitionist discourses of this period. Although there are many other important abolitionist texts, a special emphasis is placed on the two books, because *Appeal* contains the chief political arguments to expose the contradiction in American democracy, and *The Slave*, the main plot patterns of antislavery fiction.

Part II examined Stowe's antislavery novels, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Dred* (1856), and *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), and the consideration of the transition of her abolitionist views through the three novels has made it clear that, although Stowe's belief in women's power to reform society remains firm to the end, her descriptions of the heroes are different. The black hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is idealized as a Christ-like martyr able to transcend the secular law, the property rights. In *Dred*, Stowe creates a more aggressive and rebellious hero, reflecting harsh critical views of the passive hero of her first novel as well as the increasing tension between the North and the South, which seems to find no solution but armed force. In the third novel, *The Minister's Wooing*, she sets the story in late-eighteenth-century New England, as if retreating from the turmoil and turbulence of the real society. However, in the framework of a historical novel, the author attempts to envision a more egalitarian community, while shifting the focus from the traditional patriarchal figure of Dr. Hopkins to a young woman, Mary, whose religion is based on Christ's love.

Part III focused on various antislavery writers in the 1850s to demonstrate that this antislavery literature movement developed and proliferated, with Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a sort of catalyst. As mentioned in the introduction, I have included Lincoln's speeches because

Stowe and Lincoln seem to have lived in a similar social and cultural climate. W. W. Brown's *Clotel* was an immediate response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Borrowing the traditional framework of domestic fiction similar to Stowe's, Brown presents a different world of slavery seen from blacks's perspective. Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) is still another different story narrated by an ex-slave, which depicts the experiences of a black man under the southern slavery system and the process of how he overcame the hardships as a slave, regained manhood, and became a useful member of the community. Melville's "Benito Cereno," published in 1856, is based on an actual slave revolt at sea. Inciting the terror of slave insurrections, it appears to disclose the author's racism, or "Negrophobia," which had permeated antebellum America. However, by narrating the story from the viewpoint of a white ruling-class man, Melville deftly masks the deep running abolitionist speech with stereotypical images of blacks, both meek and savage, and thereby evades the reader's immediate repulsion. "Benito Cereno" thus implies a new and complex mode of antislavery fiction.

Our Nig (1859) by Harriet Wilson and *Incidents* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs expose extra difficulties added to those that slaves generally share, that is, the sexual exploitation of female slaves. Although the heroine of *Our Nig*, a northern slave/servant, is reticent about it, sexual harassment becomes the main subject of *Incidents*. Both authors shed light on cruel mistresses as well as masters and expose the sexual and racial exploitation built into the structure of slavery. While examining each of the five texts, I have tried to elucidate the similarities to and differences from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The analysis of these texts reveals the diversity and fecundity of antislavery writing.

Part IV took up Lydia Child's postbellum antislavery novel, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) to illustrate the continuation of this literary tradition. The two examples demonstrate that the rise of antislavery literature is not an ephemeral phenomenon peculiar only to antebellum America but has formed a genre incorporated into the mainstream of American literature. Its fundamental issues such as democracy, race, gender, class, and, above all, "bondage and freedom," have become America's "authentic" literary subjects. Indeed, this movement was such a great literary movement that later generations would, as Douglass suggested, remember the 1850s as "the

age of anti-slavery literature.”

Reconsidering the history of American literature from this perspective, we notice a great range of influence that antislavery literature bequeathed to later works to come. As examined in Chapter 14, Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which marked the beginning of modern American literature, according to Ernest Hemingway, can be reinterpreted as an offspring of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and many slave narratives published in the antebellum period. This is not simply because *Huckleberry Finn* is set in the South under slavery, but also because the central theme of the novel is bondage and freedom, or society (system) and individualism (“inalienable” rights), which composes the core story of antislavery works.

Episodes of slaves’ escape to freedom also present a type of adventure stories that are more thrilling than traditional ones like James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* since they narrate literal struggles of life and death. They are also more realistic, often being based on real experiences. When captured, those fugitives would be hung after severe whipping, or “sold down the river,” which is almost identical to a death sentence. They suggest various major motifs of American adventure stories, such as hair-breadth escapes, terrible human hunting by fierce hounds, bloody fighting, witty deceptions and strategies to defeat enemies, and rare but sure brotherhood/sisterhood that aids heroes or heroines.

Since the adventure of escape to freedom is only the last part of their long suffering, for the most part of their narratives, protagonists of antislavery literature reveal inhuman oppression, violence, and sexual abuse that they have experienced. Slave narratives often depict an unspeakable dark world beyond human imagination, such as slow burning alive of rebellious slaves, amputation of their ears or arms, pulling out of their teeth and eyeballs, and so on. They also reveal another dark world behind the genteel surface, what the master’s unbridled sexual desire leads to. In this sense, antislavery literature resonates with gothic stories. For example, what Edgar Allan Poe created in his gothic fiction seems to have a powerful and realistic impression in terms of slave narratives. His thrilling tales with a scene of a man being buried alive, of a drunkard’s cutting out an eye of his pet black cat, or of helpless mother and daughter assaulted and ruthlessly mutilated by a monster, assume a frightful tone of reality when put in the context of slavery. Both literary genres share sensational stories,

psychological horror as well as terror of cruel violence inflicted upon the human body, or immoral sexual abuse. The sensation they engender in either genre is involved with the audience's curiosity to peep into the horrid, the uncanny. We cannot deny the possibility that American gothic fiction was inspired to some extent by antislavery literature, and a close examination will reveal much intertextuality between them.

However, the greatest heritage of antislavery literature lies in the deep scrutiny of the problematic issue of "one-drop theory." In his discussion of Brown's *Clotel, or The President's Daughter*, Robert Levine remarks that the work shares much with its two contemporary novels, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and Herman Melville's *Pierre* (1852), in that they all "[challenge] to cultural memory by raising questions about fathers" ("Cultural and Historical Background" 15): a leading father of American democracy, a prominent Puritan forefather, and a patriotic figure of the Revolutionary War. While Colonel Pyncheon, whose portrait is "enshrined" in the ancestral house, may have been a violent deceitful forefather, Pierre's father, the late respectable patriarch of the wealthy Glendinnings, like *Clotel's* father, may have had extra-marital sexual relations with a woman, possibly even a black woman.

Pierre's tragedy results from his sense of responsibility for and attraction to his self-proclaimed half-sister. Although there is no evidence to prove their blood-relatedness, the possibility alone drives him out of the estate he has inherited. While *Pierre* presents shadows about the seemingly glorious parentage whose history remains unclear to the end, antislavery literature like Brown's *Clotel* and Child's *A Romance of the Republic* more explicitly presents the ironic "contrasts between official and unofficial history" (Levine, "Cultural and Historical Background" 15).

A society that values a pure-blooded lineage always subsumes fear of invasion of the dissimilar. The more one seeks purity of white blood, the harder it becomes for one to keep it from being "tainted" by dark blood. In *A Romance of the Republic*, Lily's bigot father, Mr. Bell, who would never accept any African blood in his Anglo-Saxon dynasty, comes to a dead end where he finds no heir to whom he should bequeath the enormous wealth he has accumulated for his descendants. One of his two grandsons, George, Lily's legitimate son, married a black woman, and the other, young Gerald, brought up and educated as Mr. Bell's successor, turned out to be a slightly

colored scion. Mr. Bell anticipates Thomas Sutpen, a focal character of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), who aimed to build a great dynasty of white gentlemen only to be ruined by the "invasion" of black blood in its lineage.

"Amalgamation" was the greatest taboo in nineteenth-century America, though this frequently happened chiefly due to slaveholders' sexual indulgence in the South. In a society based on the "one-drop theory," where a person with any African blood is strictly defined as black, however white he or she appears, the two things persist and thrive: incest and passing. Since slave children were likely to be torn from their parents and siblings and excluded from the patrimonial lineage, they are in danger of falling into incestual relations without knowing it. For example, in *A Romance of the Republic*, young Gerald is attracted by his own mother, who, in turn, tries to hinder his engagement to Eulalia, his half-sister.

Even the knowledge of close blood ties does not seem to prevent incest under slavery, probably because family ties are scarce if there are any, and also because slaveholders do not regard their children by slave women as their own sons and daughters. In Hildreth's *The Slave*, the master sexually approaches his own daughter Cassy, and she and her half-brother Archy love each other. Pierre's attraction to his half-sister Isabel somewhat echoes Archy's love for innocent Cassy whom he marries, knowing she is his half-sister. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), it is a stark irony that Charles Bon, the son of Sutpen's first wife in Haiti, Eulalia, whom Sutpen discarded immediately after he knew she had African blood, seeks engagement to Sutpen's daughter, Judith. This ultimately drives the only white heir, Henry, to madness and ultimately terminates Sutpen's grandiose dream of building a white kingdom on a Mississippi plantation.

The theme of incest is often handled with "miscegenation" in antislavery literature; in many cases, incest alone does not cause a tragedy, but when it includes racial intercourse, the issue becomes problematic and even tragic. Child's *A Romance of the Republic* has made a head-on exploration of this problem by letting "octoroon" Rosa exchange her baby for the lawful wife's (Lily's) baby. This pivotal crime becomes the momentum for the following action of the novel, and it develops toward a resolution to the confusion that her crime has caused. Similarly, in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), the story revolves around the complex knot that

Roxana's impulsive action of swapping babies has brought about. Both stories deal with the theme of swapping racially different babies, and the theme ironically shows that the white and the black are replaceable.

The motif of "passing," so often used in antislavery literature, is based on this idea of replaceability, which in turn undermines the grounds of racial discrimination. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, George Harris passes as a Spanish traveler, and "quadroon" Cassy escapes to a free state, passing as a Creole Spanish lady. This repeated motif developed into a passing narrative in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929). It is true that "passing" is not limited to race but is extended to gender and class. Gender passing, usually followed by cross-dressing, has a long history in literature, as is seen in Shakespeare's plays. We can find a typical example of class passing in Twain's *Prince and Pauper* (1881). Racial passing, however, seems to cause more tragic results than the others and, therefore, more explicitly reveals the ambiguity, arbitrariness, or even ridiculousness of such divisions.

Tracing the antislavery themes and motifs, we find them in many works of American literature after the Civil War. In a more recent novel, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), we encounter a modern variant of the slave narrative. Depicting a black family who ran away from a Kentucky plantation and crossed the Ohio River to a free state, like Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Morrison uses many of the familiar motifs of antislavery literature for her narrative. The core story of an infanticide, based on the incident of Margaret Garner's killing her own daughter in 1856, immediately reminds us of Cassy's infanticide to protect her child from living as a slave. Sethe's persisting memory of her robbed milk, described in several flashbacks, echoes the scene in Jacobs's slave narrative where a slave baby was weaned early from her mother's breast so that her foster white sister could have enough milk. Being set in a haunted house, *Beloved* also suggests the affinity between antislavery literature and gothic fiction. Morrison's *Beloved* is only an example of modern variants of the antislavery literature, and we will continue to find modern variations, which opens new avenues for expanding and enriching the literary genre.

Notes

In this study, the term “America” refers to the United States of America; its adjective, American, is also indicative of the same nation. Although the term “black(s)” should be expressed as African American(s), I often use it following its usage in the nineteenth-century texts I discuss. Similarly, I use the term “slave (slaves)” instead of enslaved person (people) in my discussion about the antislavery literature. For those of mixed-blood, I often use such terms as mulatto(es), quadroon(s), and octoroon(s), following the texts I deal with.

Chapter 1

1. Linking the differences in appearance of the white and the black with the matter of racial hierarchy, Jefferson tries to prove that the black is inferior in beauty to the white:

Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan for the black women over those of his own species. (145)

The passage adumbrates the idea deeply permeated in antebellum America that blacks are the missing link between human beings and animals.

2. As for Walker’s mysterious death, many believed that he was poisoned because his aggressive protest created many enemies. In his brief sketch of Walker published in 1848, Henry Highland Garnet also refers to the opinion that he was killed by means of poison, but he says that it is not certain. However, he adds the following passage, suggesting the possibility of murder:

He had many enemies, and not a few were his brethren whose cause he espoused. They said that he went too far, and was making trouble. So the Jews spoke of Moses. (n. pag.)

3. Many of the plantation novels described happy slaves faithful, or even grateful, to their masters to show their contentment with their present condition under the slavery. See, for example, Mary Eastman’s *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin*.

4. For the characteristics of American jeremiad, see Sacvan Bercovitch’s *The American Jeremiad*.

5. Crockett roughly divides the antislavery movement between the pre-1830

reformers and the post-1830 abolitionists (305).

Chapter 2

1. According to Brandstadter, *The Slave* sold more than 7000 copies and was apparently well known among Garrisonians (167). Although the number seems quite small compared with that of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it is actually not so modest a figure when we remember that, in the case of Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* published in the same year, 1836, only 500 copies were made and distributed almost exclusively among his acquaintances.

2. Howells speculates that *The (White) Slave* was recognized in its time since "I used to see it in Italian and French translations on the bookstalls" (85).

3. For the relation between women writers and domestic novels, see Nina Baym's "Melodramas of Beset Manhood."

4. A mulatto is a person born of a black and a white parent, but this term is often used to refer to any black person with white blood in his/her family line.

5. For the possible texts that Stowe might have consulted in writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Joan Hedrick (211-13, 218, 230, 235, 252). It is generally believed that Stowe's Uncle Tom is modeled on Josiah Henson. Though Stowe herself confirmed this in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), it seems an ex post facto matter, for she met him for the first time after she had written *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Nichols 330).

6. Abzug remarks that, though the fear of slave violence was not a new idea, the freshness of Garrison's rhetoric lay in the combination of the idea and the immediate emancipation and that this combination was made possible by the principles of evangelical religion (15-18).

7. Brandstadter thinks that the background of the battle fought here signifies the War of 1812. If this is right, then the novel is set around the turn of the nineteenth century after the Revolutionary War. However, Hildreth's criticism is of course directed against the slavery of his day (164).

8. Archy notes that teaching a slave to read was not a "crime" yet at that time (9). As is mentioned above, the background of the novel may be America some years after the Revolutionary War. It was mostly after the rebellion of Nat Turner that it became a crime to be punished in the South.

Chapter 3

1. The wording of the line differs a little among biographies: in the biography written by Stowe's son Charles and grandson Lyman, for instance, it is "So you're the little woman who made this big war?" (203) But in other cases, "you're" is replaced by "this is," or "woman" by "lady," or "big war" by "great war" (F. Wilson 484; E. Wilson 3; Fields, "Days with Mrs. Stowe" 291). The words with which Lincoln was reputed to have greeted Stowe were perhaps based on what Stowe or her son told their family and relatives. Most of the biographers and critics who referred to the episode thereafter seemed to depend on Charles's biography. According to Thomas Gossett, however, it was probably not Charles, who was present at the dramatic scene at the age of twelve, but Stowe's daughter named Harriet, who was twenty-six years old at that time. Harriet also visited the White House but was not allowed to join the audience; she spread the story as one she had heard from her mother afterward (314). Either way, this legend-like episode appears

to have been talked about long in the Stowe family. It was in 1897, a year after her death, when the episode was first published in the biography by Annie Fields (Gossett 343-44), who introduces it as a story she heard from Harriet, adding that what really happened there is known only to Stowe and her son, Charles (269). The son who had witnessed the interview published his mother's biography in 1911 in which he records the historical incident about half a century before; he depicts Lincoln standing up clumsily from the chair to welcome Stowe and the humorous expression that appeared in his eyes when to speak the quoted words (C. Stowe 202-03). The description may reflect or copy what Stowe herself told her family.

2. John Van Trompe, who helps fugitive slaves, says to Eliza, after having heard her story of escape, "That's natur now, poor critur! hunted down now like a deer, —hunted down, jest for havin' natural feelin's, and doin' what no kind o' mother could help a doin' !" (160; emphasis added).

3. It might be reasonable, as Kenji Kobayashi suggests, to determine that Douglass was influenced by Stowe since the famous speech by Douglass was delivered on July 5, 1852, after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It is more likely, however, that the rhetoric to compare slave resistance or revolts to the American Revolution was pervaded among the abolitionists by the mid-nineteenth century and that Stowe elaborated and dramatized it so that common readers could better understand its logic.

4. Donovan suggests that Tom and Legree present "two heavy antithetical principles, goodness and evil, Christ and Antichrist" and that Tom is the "first Christ figure in American literature," referring to Lawrence Buell's idea (Uncle Tom's 101).

Chapter 4

1. For the enlightenment philosophy and its feminist interpretations, see Linda Kerber ("The Republican Mother" 187-96).

2. Douglass also criticized Stowe's stance toward Christianity but she would never change her views about Christian religion (Step 141-42).

3. I summarize here Jefferson's racial views written in the Query XIV in *Notes* (137-55).

4. Although the rumor that the father of Hemings's children was Jefferson was proved true with high percentage by recent DNA examination (Levine, "Cultural and Historical Background" 16; Akashi 334-44), the episode of them being sold is Brown's creation; the fact is that Jefferson directed that they should be freed after his death (Levine, "Cultural and Historical Background" 14). We cannot, however, deny the possibility that some of his children were sold since he emancipated only two of the five children by Sally (Akashi 141-42).

5. Josephine Donovan recognizes a misogynist and fulminating tone in Baldwin's strident criticism, though she admits at the same time his insight into "a theological terror" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Uncle Tom's 19).

Chapter 5

1. Stowe does not use the word "higher" but only says that the production of a work of art is "not the only nor the highest object" of the writer. But it is clear that she means that the moral object is higher than the artistic one.

2. Richard Boyd refers, for example, to the case where northern reporters called

proslavery partisans “drunken ourang-outans,” echoing the southern rhetoric which debased the northern abolitionists as “the filth, scum and off-scourings” (52).

3. For the relationship of the sectional conflict in Kansas with Stowe’s writing *Dred*, see Hedrick (256-58), F. Wilson (399-410), Karafilis (27), and Grüner (3).

4. Harriet Martineau, a Victorian English writer, praises *Dred* in her letter to Stowe, assuring that *Dred* is “far superior to” *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Fields, *Life and Letters* 233).

5. Natasha Sujé, in her feminist approach to *Dred*, argues that Nina’s death is a necessary result of the transformation from coquetry into True Womanhood since the latter element deprives Nina of her freedom.

6. For an analysis of Eastman’s *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin* as anti-Uncle-Tom novel, see also Yoshiko Yamaguchi (“Anto Firisu” 239-44).

7. Brophy emphasizes the importance of *Key*, calling *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Key* and *Dred* a trilogy (1158).

8. Gail Smith, for instance, refers to this scene as a moment when Clayton learns to interpret slavery from the perspective of the other (296).

9. Miller highly values the characterization of Dred as far more complex than he appears to be to those critics who have quickly dismissed him as “an absurd concoction of the literary imagination” (95).

10. Crane also suggests that the revolutionary discourse gives the oppressed a sense of the right to fight the ruling power and, as a result, guarantees that this violent rebellion makes them legitimate Americans.

Chapter 6

1. Stowe had already compared slavery and capitalism in the eloquent speech by St. Clare in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (331-41).

2. Presenting a better solution of slavery than the mere emancipation of slaves described in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, William Wells Brown emphasizes in *Clotel* (1853) the education of slaves and a solid way to help their self-help. Stowe was probably influenced by this first novel by an African American and inserted in her next antislavery novel, *Dred*, a slaveholder’s illegal and brave experiment in educating slaves.

3. Although Ezra Stiles, on whom Stowe’s fictional one is modeled, was not a proslavery minister, Stowe seems to have altered the historical fact in order to put stress on Hopkins’s justice (Harris, Introduction xiii; Harris and Conger 336).

4. For the historical figure of Samuel Hopkins, see Laurence Buell.

5. Although Stowe inserts the scene as an episode Truth told, it is not certain whether Stow created it for the *Atlantic* essay, or Truth herself changed and dramatized her earlier version, because the 1850 narrative tells that Truth went close to the mourning room and overheard what had happened to the mistress’s daughter, and then returned without even seeing the grieving mother (Truth 38-39).

6. Many autobiographies and letters written by women in the nineteenth century reveal how hard they worked and how much time they spent sewing, knitting, or crocheting. See, for example, *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*.

7. It is well known that Abraham Lincoln had to defend himself against the innuendoes of his endorsing “amalgamation” when he made speeches in opposition to the expansion of slavery.

8. Makiko Wakabayashi sees Stowe’s criticism of the traditional sentimental novels in this subplot of Burr’s attempted deduction of Virginia.

Chapter 7

1. Constance Rourke, for example, writes that Stowe achieved immediately with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* what the leader of the abolitionist movement, Garrison, was able to accomplish only after more than twenty years of "arduous labors": "Unwittingly she had written an abolitionist manifesto" (80).

2. The *National Era* is actually a magazine, but it is in the form of a weekly newspaper (Reynolds 8).

3. For the serialization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *Era*, see F. Wilson (259–78).

4. Though the episode of their meeting in the White House is well known, what really happened there or what the two said to each other remains uncertain, for Stowe recorded almost nothing about it. The only available information seems to come from Stowe's son, who witnessed the interview as a child and who wrote about it decades later.

5. This is a charcoal drawing created by Townsend in 1911.

6. Lyman Beecher criticized radical abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Philips for their extremism, comparing them to men "that would burn their houses down to get rid of the rats" (C. Stowe 140). Garrison, for example, went so far as to publicly declare that the United States should be dissolved to keep the North from being contaminated by the sin of slavery (141). He even burned a copy of the Constitution, which allowed slavery, though in an ambiguous way (Reynolds 78).

7. Stowe began to write the novel in January 1851, and the first installment appeared on the *Era* in June (Papashvily 68–69). Heren Papashvily also refers to Stowe's anxiety about her new long novel: although she wrote to Bailey that the story "may extend through three or four numbers" (68), it "grew to forty before Mrs. Stowe finished her task" (69).

8. Charles Foster suggests that "the power and appeal of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" cannot be fully appreciated unless we understand Stowe's ability to describe "those facts of American experience and those moods of the popular mind which waited on the verge of expression" (57). He also introduces a passage by a Swedish novelist, Frederika Bremer, that implies that slavery is the very subject American women writers should take up: "I can not understand why, in particular, noble-minded American women, American *mothers* who have hearts and genius, do not take up the subject, and treat it with a power which should pierce through bone and marrow, should reduce all the prudential maxims of statesmen to dust and ashes, and produce a revolution even in the old widely-praised Constitution itself" (57).

9. Elizabeth Ammons indirectly suggests that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could be considered in the same class as *Moby-Dick* by a comparison between Eva and Pip ("Heroines" 168).

10. Lincoln maintained for a long time that the Constitution approved of slaves as property and that this legitimized the Fugitive Slave Law, but he later seemed to change his view of the Constitution, arguing that it never says clearly that slaves are property.

11. As many critics observe, the logic of George's protest is reflected in Douglass's jeremiad delivered in Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" as seen in the following passage:

I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in

which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. . . . This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn. (155-56)

12. Elaine Showalter, for instance, suggests in her seminal work, *Sister's Choice*, the symbolic image of quilting as sisterhood.

13. Many critics regard the Quaker settlement as Stowe's ideal matriarchal community. Jane Tompkins, for instance, calls Rachel "the millenarian counterpart of little Eva" and asserts that her kitchen, where breakfast is prepared, represents "the ideal society" that has "no competition, no exploitation, no commands" but is "[motivated] by self-sacrificing love" (142). Agreeing with Tompkins, Donovan refers to the same scene as an illustration of Stowe's notion of utopia, characterized by "its egalitarian humanism" (*Uncle Tom's* 68). Elizabeth Ammons interprets this egalitarian community in a broader sense: not only does it symbolize a "maternal paradise" centered on "home," but it also signifies "America's salvation," showing the superiority of "cooperativism over capitalism," of love over power ("Stowe's Dream" 168-69). In terms of economy, Ellen Moers maintains that Rachel's cooperative household shows Stowe's solution to the question of how it can be managed "without either hired or enslaved domestics" (136).

14. Crèvecoeur envisions in his well-known passage an ideal America based on free labor: "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and prosperity will one day cause great change in the world. . . . Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor; his labor is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest* . . ." (70).

15. In *Social Criticism of Nineteenth-Century American Fictions*, Robert Shulman suggests that the screen set by the narrator of "Bartleby, the Scrivener" signifies a class division between the employer and the employed in a capitalist world (6-27).

16. The passage by Lincoln quoted below illustrates one of the most compact and superb antislavery discourses:

If A. can prove, however conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B.—why may not B. snatch the same argument, and prove equally, that he may enslave A?—

You say A. is white, and B. is black. It is *color*, then; the lighter, having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.

You do not mean *color* exactly?—You mean the whites are *intellectually* the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.

But, say you, it is a question of *interest*; and, if you can make it your interest, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you. (91-92)

17. For Jefferson's racial prejudices, see Alexander Boulton and Frank Shuffleton.

18. Tompkins points out that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a typical jeremiad, criticizing Bercovitch for ignoring the novel, and she even declares that Stowe's novel presents "the most obvious and compelling instance of the jeremiad since the Great Awakening" (140).

Joan Hedrick agrees with Tompkins, observing that “Stowe speaks in the voice of an Old Testament prophet,” though she moderates the “theological terror of the Calvinism in which she had been raised” (215).

Chapter 8

1. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was “the first American novel ever to sell over a million copies” (Tompkins 124) and the best-selling novel throughout the nineteenth century. For its commercial success and popularity, see Ann Douglas (9), Richard Yarborough (45–46, 63), Moira Reynolds (11–12), Josephine Donovan (*Uncle Tom’s* 11), Edmund Wilson (3, 32–33), Eric Sundquist (Introduction 4–5), Charles Warner (66–67), and Yoshiko Yamaguchi (“Janarizumu” 261–85).

2. Thomas Jefferson was said to have begotten several children by one of his female slaves, Sally Hemings. By the time James Callender, a journalist from Scotland, publicly circulated the rumor for the first time in the *Richmond Recorder*, it was already well-known gossip among the black people surrounding Jefferson. This rumor was revived and expanded during the 1830s, partly by British and American abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison. For the details of the rumors concerning Jefferson and Hemings and their children, see Levine (“Cultural and Historical Background” 8–17) and Akashi (139–62).

3. Though Douglass praised Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on the whole, he criticized her on the two subjects of (1) African colonization and (2) Christianity. According to Robert Stepto, Stowe does not argue against Douglass’s criticism on the first subject but she does defend the second passionately (141).

4. A quadroon is a person whose parents are a mulatto and a white person and who is therefore one-quarter black by descent. As in the case of “mulatto,” this term is also often used to signify a black person with white blood, as the title of Child’s story “The Quadroons” indicate: she calls both Rosalie and her daughter Xarifa quadroon even though the latter should strictly speaking be called octoroon, since Xarifa is a child of a quadroon and a white person.

5. Though more than 130 black autobiographical works were published in America by the end of the Civil War, only 16 were written by women (Taves 210). In this sense, too, female black writers with few literary predecessors must have had greater difficulty in expressing their own experiences as slaves.

6. Fukuko Kobayashi sees radical feminism in Cassy’s power to rescue herself and Emmeline from slavery (48–63).

7. The gothic setting of Legree’s plantation is also comparable to that of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Noguchi, “Edoga Aran Po” 127–38).

Chapter 9

1. The first issue of the *North Star* appeared in Dec. 1847. Douglass changed its name to *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* in June 1851. William S. McFeely implies the editor’s stronger sense of independence in the new appellation of the paper (*Frederick Douglass* 169). As is discussed later concerning the title of his second autobiography, the possessive tone seems to announce his authorship and editorship.

2. For Stowe’s letter to ask for Douglass’s help, see Joan Hedrick (218).

3. McFeely briefly refers to this episode, suggesting that the black character Stowe might write is the reason for his negative reply (*Frederick Douglass* 166), but it surely

must have been more problematic for him that the white female author would appropriate and interpret the details that he gives.

4. For the background of Smith, see Edwards (Endnotes 369; Introduction xxviii) and Wald (74).

5. Contrary to this view, McFeely, a biographer of Frederick Douglass, evaluates most highly the *Narrative*, which “seems to have simply sprang from a man who had been telling the same story in much the same language from the antislavery platform for four years,” and states that the character and the plot remain unaltered in the two later autobiographies despite the difference in details because “speaking comes easier than writing for Douglass” (McFeely, “The Writing of the *Narrative*” 134).

6. Douglass calls his *Narrative* “my pamphlet” in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (272) and seems to differentiate it from the latter. This is suggestive of the differences between the two works.

7. David Blight points out that Douglass’s description of the identity of his father diminishes gradually through the three autobiographies; his repetition of the possibility that his father might be his master in the *Narrative* is reduced to a more uncertain tone since he is “shrouded in a mystery” in the second text, and he finally discards the possibility itself in the last text by stating bluntly, “Of my father I know nothing” (*Narrative*, note 3, 42).

8. McDowell applies a feminist approach to the *Narrative*, and puts special emphasis on Douglass as a participant because “sexualization ‘resides in the very act of looking’” (178).

9. Thomas Jefferson is opposed to slavery in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, chiefly because of its bad influence upon white children, and not for the sake of slaves themselves (168-69).

10. The only self-centered plantation mistress in this novel, Marie, insists that “it’s we mistresses that are slaves, down here,” and that slaves are the “plague” of her life, while she pushes her slave close to sleeplessness to take care of her (260-61).

11. This is reminiscent of the gothic scene in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in which Cathy threatens Legree by spreading a rumor of ghosts so that he would not approach the “haunted” attic.

12. This scene might have influenced *Dred* by Stowe, in which she describes a scene at a camp-meeting where the proslavery minister Bonnie is critically watched by the heroine.

13. Harriet Jacobs, for example, introduces in her slave narrative a couple who were sold to a slave trader because they let others know who the father of the wife’s baby was.

14. Douglass finally offers the details in his last autobiography. See Douglass (*Life and Times* 197-214).

15. Good examples of this are James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* and one of the most popular scenes in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that of Eliza crossing the Ohio River.

16. For details about the rebellion, see Robin Mac Donald and Sundquist (*To Wake the Nations* 115).

17. This characterization of Madison Washington is similar to that of Dred. “The Heroic Slave” appears to have influenced Stowe, in turn, when she wrote her second antislavery novel, *Dred*.

18. This is the phrase Stephen Douglas used to support the Kansas-Nebraska Bill,

which advocates letting the residents decide whether a state will become a free state or a slave one.

19. For the 1840 split of the Garrisonians, see Benjamin Quarles (42-56) and Ronald G. Walters (3-18).

Chapter 10

1. This work is sometimes expressed as *Benito Cereno* since, being rather long for a short story, it can be better treated as an independent novella. However, as I have mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the story was included in *Piazza Tales* soon after it was serialized in *Putnam's*, and was never separately published. Therefore, I put its title in quotation marks instead of italicizing it.

2. Though publishing a story anonymously was "the established custom" of this magazine (Scudder 502), Lea Newman states that the author of "Benito Cereno" was well guessed, referring to the New York *Dispatch* which identified the story as Melville's (95).

3. For the details of the two slave revolts, see Andrew Delbanco (232-33), Michael Rogin (320), and Maggie Sale (163). Sidney Kaplan remarks that not only slave revolts in the plantations but also black rebellions on the high sea were familiar topics to Americans because they could read about them "in their daily press or in the pamphlet literature of the slavery controversy" ("Apology" 168). According to Sale, the New York *Sun*, one of the most influential penny newspapers, for instance, had very extensively covered the *Amistad* case (171). She suggests, moreover, that the *Amistad* affair had more influence on "Benito Cereno" than Delano's *Voyages* on which the story is based (148).

4. The terming of the phrase differs a little among the authors who use it: Kaplan introduces the idea "the slave insurrection panic of 1856," borrowing the words by Harvey Wish, a historian ("Apology" 168), and later expresses the same idea as "the slave insurrection panic of the middle fifties" (170), which Newman cites in her book on Melville (104); Mark Eaton quotes this phrase as "the slave revolt panic of the 1850s," referring to Newman's book (213).

5. For Melville's view of black people, see Kaplan's "American National Sin."

6. For the shift of the criticism of "Benito Cereno," see Rosalie Feltenstein, Sale (147), Kaplan ("American National Sin" 332-36), and Levine (*Conspiracy and Romance* 165-66).

7. All the references to Melville's text of "Benito Cereno" are from *Melville's Short Novels* edited by Dan McCall.

8. The *Voyages* by the historical Delano records his punishment of sailors by whipping: "[My] crew were refractory; the convicts were ever unfaithful, and took all the advantage that opportunity gave them. But sometimes exercising very strict discipline, and giving them good wholesome floggings; and at other times treating them with the best I had . . . I managed them without much difficulty during the passage across the South Pacific Ocean" (Scudder 505; emphasis added).

9. This devil image of a mulatto reminds us of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, where Douglass, a racially mixed slave, was called "You yellow devil !" (100), when he was about to be dragged to a prison after a failed escape.

10. Reginald Horsman analyzes the racial ideas of the time in detail (116, 129-31, 151-55).

11. For the information of the articles about race published in the American magazines of the mid-fifties, see Newman (104-05), Emery ("Topicality" 309-14), Sale

(151-52), McCall (60), Sundquist (*To Wake the Nations* 144-45).

12. Some critics refer to the possibility of rapes on the deck of the *San Dominick* behind the brutality of black women (Karcher, "Riddle of the Sphinx" 212, 217; Robertson-Lorant 350).

13. Many critics have already pointed out that Melville changed the date of Delano's voyage from 1805 to 1799 and the name of the Spanish ship from *Tryal* to *San Dominick* to invoke the violent slave revolt of Santo Domingo that happened in 1799. For the detailed differences between "Benito Cereno" and its source book, *Voyages*, see Scudder (530-31), and Newman (98-100).

14. For the argument on interracial mixture, see Horsman (116-38).

15. Emery suggests that Delano achieves "a kind of annexation" when he adjoins the Spanish ship to his *Bachelor's Delight* ("Manifest Destiny" 53).

16. Many of Poe's gothic romances are set in feudal Europe, but the gothic horror in them begins to assume awful reality if they are reconsidered in the context of southern slavery.

17. My understanding of the parallel of the fate of America with that of Spain owes much to Joyce Adler's insightful analysis of "Benito Cereno."

18. For the character of the magazine, see Edward Chielens (328-33), Levine (*Conspiracy and Romance* 165), Delbanco (230), Yellin (*The Intricate Knot* 216), Sale (151-52), and Robertson-Lorant (352).

Chapter 11

1. Although most critics regard *Our Nig* as an autobiographical fiction, the emphasis they put on facts and imagination differs. Barbara White, who has traced the origins of the Bellmont family to the Haywards, seems to hold that *Our Nig* is, for the large part, based on Wilson's experiences (iii-liv). The recent research by Gates and R. J. Ellis asserts that the work is a fiction (xxvi).

2. Elaine Showalter identifies Harper's "The Two Offers" in *The Anglo-African* (1859) as the first story by an African-American woman writer (*A Jury of Her Peers*, 121). Although a new discovery may update the history of African-American woman literature, Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* is the first novel by a black female author at present.

3. Harryette Mullen regards Frado's religiosity as "a partial conversion to Christianity" (257).

4. An "anti-Tom novel," a shortened phrase for "anti-*Uncle Tom's Cabin* novel," is a proslavery novel written in response to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Thomas Gossett introduces and explains in detail the major anti-Tom novels in *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (212-38).

5. My understanding of the implicit sexual exploitation in *Our Nig* is indebted to the analysis of the text by Johnson.

6. Wilson mentions twice that she "omitted" certain matters in her story, first in the preface and, then, in the closing part of the text, saying that God only knows it. Johnson sees in this elision sexual abuse: "indeed, from *Clarissa* to *The Color Purple*, confidence entrusted by women in narrative to 'the Omniscient God' have signified sexual violation" (97). She is certain that sexual violence means rape when a black woman is placed in servitude comparable to slavery (97). Elizabeth Sparks, an ex-slave, illustrates Johnson's implication in telling her memory of slavery:

Old master done so much wrongness, I couldn't tell you all of it. Slave girl Betty Lilly always had good clothes and all the privileges. She was a favorite of his.

Might as well quit looking at me. I ain't going to tell you any more. Can't tell you all I know—old Shep might come back and get me. Why, if I was to tell you the really bad things, some of them dead white folks would come right up out of their graves. But can't tell all! God's got all! (28-29)

It is clear that “the really bad things” about which Sparks mentions evasively signifies rapes.

As for the reality of northern black slaves (or servants), *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (1850) is also suggestive. Its amanuensis, Olive Gilbert, writes that she had better remain silent about the certain wrongs Truth had received: “the most thrilling incidents of this portion of her life are from various motives suppressed” (20). And the silenced wrongs imply sexual abuses (Noguchi, “Narrative” 6-9).

7. Johnson also sees in Mrs. Bellmont's vengeful violence the fixed pattern caused by patriarchy that white mistresses tend to punish “black female victims of rape” for the “sexual transgressions of their white men” (109).

8. Mullen clarifies the difference in this “orality” between male and female slave narratives by comparing Douglass's 1845 narrative with Jacobs's: the former does not allow his Aunt Hester to utter any protesting words except her shrieks while the latter lets a slave woman disclose the master's sexual desires when punished by him (251).

9. Twain dexterously describes the consequence of the switch of the slave baby and the master's heir, now called respectively Tom (the fake master) and Chambers (the usurped child):

Tom got all the petting, Chambers got none. Tom got all the delicacies, Chambers got mush and milk, and clabber without sugar. In consequence Tom was a sickly child and Chambers wasn't. Tom was ‘fractious,’ as Roxy called it, and overbearing; Chambers was meek and docile. . . .

In babyhood Tom cuffed and banged and scratched Chambers unrebuked, and Chambers early learned that between meekly bearing it and resenting it, the advantage all lay with the former policy. . . .

Outside of the house the two boys were together all through their boyhood. Chambers was strong beyond his years, and a good fighter; strong because he was coarsely fed and hard worked about the house, and a good fighter because Tom furnished him plenty of practice—on white boys whom he hated and was afraid of. Chambers was his constant bodyguard, to and from school. . . . (77-78)

10. After stressing the inferiority of physical appearance of blacks, Jefferson further assures their inability to utter “a thought above the level of plain narration,” or to create poems worth criticizing (147). His assurance of white superiority is evident to the extent that he holds that it is the white blood that produces anything deserving the name of art. It is also seen in his statement about the mixed blood:

The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one, and proves that their

inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life. (148)

11. Gates remarks that the novel “receives almost no commentary” between 1859, when it was published, and 1983, when it was rediscovered by him (*Figures in Black* 140). He further points out that even Child, who referred to this book in her private letter in 1878, seemed interested only in the fall of Frado’s mother (*Selected Letters* 142-43). Gates also says that it is curious that *The Liberator*, William Garrison’s weekly organ, was silent when it “reviewed or reprinted reviews of hundreds of books by and about blacks” (*Figures in Black* 133).

12. For the reason behind Wilson’s *Our Nig* being forgotten for more than a century ever since its publication, Gates points out the boldness of her themes and the loathsome epithet, “nig(ger),” in both the title and the author’s name (Introduction xxix).

13. It may be worth remembering here that Lincoln was often greeted with jeers as being pro-black, so that he had to repeat in his speeches that he had no sexual interest in black women or was no advocate of “amalgamation.”

Chapter 12

1. The heroine of Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple*, for instance, believes almost to the end that her seducer will marry her and, by this possibility, she, and the reader as well, hopes that her parents and society will forgive her past misconduct and accept her and her “unborn child” (84).

2. Foreman suggests that Jacobs distinguishes rape, the forced transgression, from seduction which allows some self-determination and that the author is proud of having never given in to the seduction of Mr. Flint and thereby kept her purity (92).

3. For the various possible meanings of “loophole,” see Donald Gibson (170).

4. For Jefferson’s racial prejudice against African Americans, see “Query XIV” of *Notes* (137-55), and also Shuffleton and Boulton. In her book *Ain’t I a Woman* (1981), bell hooks, a feminist and social activist, analyzes the structure of racism and sexism in America. She points out that “sexual exploitation of black women continued long after slavery ended and was institutionalized” in various ways of devaluing them (59). And she repeats the idea that “the white public justified white male sexual assault of black females by arguing that the women invited sexual abuse by their lack of morals” (56; emphasis added).

5. Clinton’s *The Plantation Mistress* is an important work which has surveyed the life of plantation mistresses in several aspects. For their daily toilsome chores, see Chapter 2, and for their hard lot to deal with slaves, see Chapters 10 and 11.

6. Clinton’s analysis of the reason why southern plantation mistresses are hard to recognize themselves as victimizers is rather suggestive (184-96).

7. It is well known that Stowe’s sister, Catharine Beecher, advocated domestic feminism that urges women to reform society through their ideal domesticity, and was critical of radical feminists like the Grimké sisters who supported women’s public activity.

8. According to Clinton, many southern upper-class women did not “breast-feed their babies themselves” (154) and had, instead, white wet nurses or slaves do the task (155). Clinton suggests that the image of a baby being “suckled at black breasts” conveys sexual connotation. She also points out significantly that the image implies that black women are reduced to “an animal-like state of exploitation: Mammies were to be milked, warm bodies to serve white needs” (202).

Chapter 13

1. Although Child told Fields that she planned to write a novel, she did not let him know what kind of novel it would be (Clifford 278).
2. We can surmise that both Child and her publisher thought that the book would sell from the facts that she chose a “ten percent share of the royalties” instead of the \$1,000 he offered at first for the novel, and that he accepted her condition (Clifford 279). Her bitter disappointment at the cold response from her New England friends paradoxically shows her pride in the fact that she had written a very good novel, for she confided in her letter to her friend, Louisa Loring, “When I had completed the book, I felt as if I could write another and a better novel, and was full of earnestness to set about it; but the apathy of my friends took all the life out of me, and has made me feel as if I never wanted to put pen to paper again” (Karcher, *The First Woman* 530).
3. For a discussion concerning the fate of native Americans, see Lucy Maddox (15-49).
4. It is well known that Child was ostracized by the Boston aristocratic circle when she published her *Appeal* (Karcher, *The First Woman* 192).
5. According to Karcher, Child was sympathetic to those “fallen” women called prostitutes and equated herself with them as sisters (*The First Woman* 320-55).
6. Lapsansky, for example, introduces some pictures illustrated to show how antislavery women are sexually attracted by black men (225-29). See Figures 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3.
7. The narrator actually calls Tom (the false son of Mr. Driscoll) the “usurper” (73).

Chapter 14

1. *Huckleberry Finn* was banned in some public libraries first for its indecent language and was later condemned and criticized for racist aspects. For the censorship of this novel, see Thomas Cooley (Preface vii), Leo Marx (7), and James Cox (“A Hard Book to Take” 87-88).
2. *Huckleberry Finn* was first published in December 1884, in England and Canada; the American edition was delayed by about two months because of the misplacement of one of the illustrations for the novel. For details, see John Gerber (95-99; 102-03) and Victor Doyno (343-44).
3. George Harris in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for instance, is a very talented mulatto; because of this very gift, his master tries to change him from a factory worker to a field hand with much harder labor. This makes him decide to escape from slavery into a free land.
4. Huck’s speech clearly reflects the social assumption that blacks are inferior to whites as is seen in his comments towards Jim, including “he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger” (86) or “you can’t learn a nigger to argue” (90). Yet, this is also Twain’s device for revealing the widespread presupposition as groundless.
5. Tom also uses this strategy when he tries to deceive a servant of the Phelps in order to perform the plan of rescuing Jim. Giving him a dime, Tom then looks at Jim and says as if he had seen him for the first time:

“I wonder if uncle Silas is going to hang this nigger. If I was to catch a nigger

that was ungrateful enough to run away, *I* wouldn't give him up, I'd hang him." And whilst the nigger stepped to the door to look at the dime . . . he whispers to Jim, and says:

"Don't ever let on to know us. And if you hear any digging going on, nights, it's us: we're going to set you free." (245)

6. While highly evaluating the episode, Morrison, however, criticizes Twain's way of silencing the protagonist, keeping Huck from responding to the sad moving story Jim has confessed (Introduction 389).

7. David Smith suggests that Huck could not refute Jim's argument well in the scene and that the humor in Huck's concluding comment, "you can't learn a nigger to argue," arises from the reader's recognition that "Jim's argument is better than Huck's" (98).

8. Referring to the last part in which Jim is "reduced almost to a parody of the ever faithful, long-suffering, mindless, and stupid darky," Michael Hoffman remarks that it is "a matter of circumstances." With Huck alone, Jim can show his humanity, but in other occasions he has to "play the slave" (41).

9. Smiley suggests that Mark Twain himself recognized, while writing *Huckleberry Finn*, it was not "a boy's novel, like *Tom Sawyer*, but a man's novel, about real moral dilemmas and growth" (356).

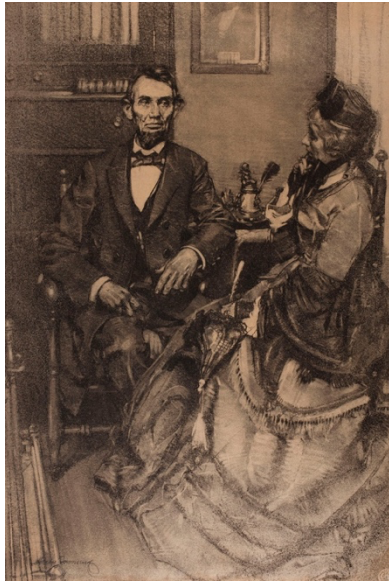
10. Hoffman sees in the feud between the two aristocratic families "an elaborate game with unquestioned rules" that are similar to wars, including the Civil War (36-37).

11. For the period when *Huckleberry Finn* was composed, see Laurence Holland (84), D. Smith (91-92), and Gerber (95-103).

12. Twain lived for seventeen years (from 1874 to 1891) in the Hartford house located adjacent to the brick house where Stowe spent her last twenty-three years (1873-1896). For Twain's biographical information, see Albert Paine's *Mark Twain*, and for Stowe's, Forest Wilson's *Crusader in Crinoline* and Joan Hedrick's *Harriet Beecher Stowe*.

List of Figures

Figure 1



A charcoal drawing by Harry Everett Townsend (1879-1941) entitled "Lincoln with Harriet Beecher Stowe" (1911) owned by New Britain Museum of American Art.

Figure 2



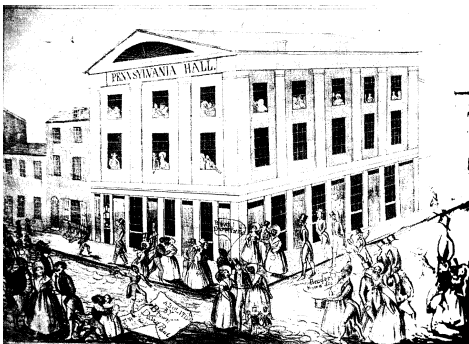
Anthony Imbert. Wrapper illustration for "Life in Philadelphia" (ca. 1829-30). Elise Lemire, "'Murders in the Rue Morgue': Amalgamation Discourses and the Race Riots of 1838 in Poe's Philadelphia," in *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy & Liliane Weissberg (Oxford UP, 2001), p. 187.

Figure 3-1



Practical Amalgamation

Figure 3-2



Abolition Hall

Figure 3-3



Johnny Q. Introducing the Haytien
Ambassador to the Ladies of Lynn

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