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Shades of True Womanhood for Slave Women in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

by

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Abstract

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a racially problematic novel, despite her goals to advocate for teaching Christianity to black people, eliminate slavery, and bring Christianity to Africa. In pursuing these goals, Stowe recreates a paternalistic whiteness modeled on paternalistic slavery.

Critics have long accused Stowe of romantic racialism and using well-known minstrel show stock characters as the inspiration for the slave characters, but I argue that these problems are a natural result of Stowe's goals for the novel. If black people can be seen as naturally subordinate to white people and reliant on white people for their Christian salvation, it can be said that they are not equipped for or suited to an equal place in American society, even if slavery is abolished. At the same time, because of white Christians' duties, slavery cannot continue to exist. Given this conflict, emigrating and bringing Christianity to Africa becomes the only option for free black people. As a result of Stowe's goals and her approach to them, sympathetic whites throughout the novel replace slave owners as representatives of the patriarchy without the sin of slavery.

In order to explore the novel's paternalistic whiteness, I will use white Christian womanhood as a lens to discuss the ways in which slave women are portrayed, perceived, and treated by Stowe. She uses white women as the standard for femininity and Christian womanhood, while slave women are split into two groups, based on the shades of their skin, each one fitting the description of a minstrel character. The minstrelsy serves as a distracting measure of intelligence and beauty, taking away the female slaves' humanity, equality, and womanhood, and making them into characters rather than people. My argument offers a new

viewpoint on both Stowe and the novel, acknowledging Stowe's anti-slavery intentions while recognizing the racial problems created by the way in which she attempts to achieve her goals.

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Introduction

In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe writes a letter to Frederick Douglass as part of an ongoing correspondence, asking for his help in a series she is writing. The letter shows that one of her main concerns with slavery, or the problem that she hopes to solve by writing this series, is the way that white people understand and practice Christianity. Stowe begins the letter by telling Douglass that she is writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, and follows this with a request for his assistance in finding someone who has been a slave on a plantation and is willing to converse with her. After the request to communicate with a slave or former slave, Stowe spends the majority of the letter expressing her disappointment in Douglass's beliefs and explaining why he is wrong about the church's role in slavery. She conveys her regret concerning Douglass's "sentiments on two subjects—the church—& African colonization," and goes on to describe the church as she sees it and its place of power in the abolitionist struggle (Stowe). In the article "Heroines in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," Elizabeth Ammons points out that after the novel is published, Stowe herself states, "This story is to show how Jesus Christ, who liveth and was dead, and now is alive and forevermore, has still a mother's love for the poor and lowly" (169). This is the description of the novel with which most readers are familiar.

The underlying reason for Stowe's focus on Douglass's view of the church as pro-slavery is her belief that slavery ultimately corrupts white people. Ammons addresses how Stowe came to her solutions for slavery, explaining, "In 1852, Stowe, thoroughly Romantic in this, locates the solution to slavery in a revolution of white values which will honor emotional verities above rationalized materialist schemes" (173). In writing the novel, Stowe uses

sentiment heavily, in part because of her own Romantic writing style but also because she believes the economy of slavery to be materialist while Christians should focus on the importance of the heart and emotion. Stowe believes the economy of slavery to be the downfall of white people, drawing them away from Christian values. In order to fix this, white people must restore those Christian values. Unlike Douglass, Stowe does not believe that Christianity and slavery are or can be complicit with each other. With her novel, Stowe advocates that white people's simple responsibility is to look inside himself or herself to see that they are each doing what is morally right.

The problem with Stowe writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from the standpoint that slavery puts white people's souls at stake is that black people become secondary. The focus is on white people's actions, on how they do or do not reflect Christianity, and on how those actions affect them as white people. Black people, on the other hand, are written as minstrel show stock characters, overshadowed by sentimental romantic racialism, rather than as rounded characters with believable human characteristics. And while this would have been a common belief and practice at the time, it is problematic that a novel so emblematic of the abolitionist movement would have lengthy but often flat and unrealistic character descriptions of black people. Critics have argued over whether it was Stowe's own racism or a common argument at the time, intended to make white people pay attention.

I argue that Stowe herself has a sense of white superiority over the slaves; very similar to patriarchal slave-owners who believed that they were white saviors and caretakers of black people. This attitude comes through in the novel in her voice and ultimately, in the voices and actions of all the white people in the novel, as well as in the way the black people are

portrayed and rendered essentially voiceless and used for their stories. Even when the slaves are the focus, they are secondary to their surroundings and what is happening to them, with little to no focus on how they might actually feel about it.

Stowe asks for Douglass's help in finding a former slave who has worked on a plantation because there are scenes in the novel that "will fall upon a cotton plantation" and she wants to write an accurate description of what that would look like (Stowe). She is not concerned with the personal story of her informant, but rather with getting the details of the stories right. Because of this narrow focus, the novel turns away from the slaves as people and toward the institution of slavery and its place within Christianity.

By focusing so heavily on the state of Christianity, how white people practice it, and how they can evangelize to black people, rather than dealing with the actual humanity of slaves, Stowe relies on a model of patriarchal slavery to gain the trust of white readers and to maintain a hierarchy between white and black people. Throughout the novel, the white characters are either inherently good or bad in response to their situation, but even good white people are still shown as benevolent guardians over the black people in their care, whether slavery is a factor or not.

In a hierarchy where white people can be morally wrong but well meaning, the humanity that Stowe is striving for gets lost when she describes black people. Part of the problem is that while Stowe is fairly unknowledgeable about black people, she is knowledgeable about Christianity, so that is where her focus goes. In an article titled, "Education and Access to Christian Thought in the Writing of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Anna Julia Cooper," JoJo Magno explains that while "Stowe was no expert in Southern life or

the true lot of the slave, she was undoubtedly an expert in Christian thought” (2). Magno goes on to discuss Stowe’s goals for black people to learn to read for the purpose of reading the Bible on their own. What Stowe writes is a system in which white people bring Christianity to black people, as they would in the best-case scenario of slavery or in colonial ventures outside of Europe. Unlike usual colonial efforts, however, in the case of antebellum slavery, black people are not on another continent, so Stowe’s efforts are to bring Christianity to black people in order for them to leave and take Christianity to Africa, as Topsy does.

Writing from a perspective in which Christianity trumps everything, Stowe both attacks and mimics patriarchal slavery. Severn Duvall’s article “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin: The Sinister Side of the Patriarchy*” explains the history behind patriarchal slavery and its Biblical roots. From the beginning of American slavery, the slave owner was expected to Christianize the African. And yet, converting slaves to Christianity inevitably moved them higher up in the hierarchy, leading slave owners to stop their efforts. However, Duvall explains, “To make the master responsible for his religious education, colonial clergymen taught that the slave was engrafted into the master’s family” (7). American slavery was turned into a form of paternalism, with slave owners believing themselves to be taking on a Christian responsibility to save the African and to care for him as they would a child. Duvall continues, “For the next fifty years the familial image (not, be it noted, without considerable foundation in the existing social order) became more and more central in the defences of “our peculiar institution”” (7). It is this institution and its twisting of Christian duty that Stowe is fighting back against. Carolyn Vellenga Berman writes about Stowe’s own views on patriarchal slavery in “Creole Family Politics in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.” Berman

states, “Depicting the “patriarchal institution in its most benign light in Kentucky, Stowe nonetheless unmasks the sentimental claims of slaveholders about the moral influences flowing from the relation of master and slave, and the moral feelings engendered and cultivated by it” (332). Even while using a best-case scenario of slavery, Stowe attacks the entire patriarchal institution, attempting to prove that the patriarchy is the main problem surrounding slavery, and that slavery is the biggest problem in American society.

While Stowe attempts to replace patriarchal slavery, her other focus, other than ending slavery, is elevating women’s place in society. She attempts to do this by maintaining the family structure even as it is changing. With this in mind, she replaces patriarchal slavery with matriarchal domesticity. In doing so, she takes on many of the same attitudes of patriarchal slavery, and instead of replacing the system with an equal one she replaces white men and the economy with white women and domesticity. In this system, Stowe uses key elements of slavery, such as the importance of owning property, hierarchies, and Eurocentric color consciousness to create a hierarchy among the women. White women are placed at the top, followed by multiracial slave women, with black slave women at the bottom. White women are then used as markers of True Womanhood with multiracial women grasping at their whiteness and womanhood, and black women left completely out of the equation with no chance at True Womanhood. Realizing this hierarchy is important because Stowe’s novel is often credited for the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and ending racism. However, Stowe herself believes in ending slavery as it pertains to the home and family, particularly white homes and families. Contrary to traditional popular belief, she does not write or attempt to write a novel about true equality beyond the home.

When Stowe replaces white slave owning men with white women who see themselves as guardians of womanhood, and replaces the economy of slavery with the system of domesticity, multiracial and black women are inevitably kept in a form of slavery. Without a place in domesticity, slave women cannot achieve True Womanhood and remain subservient to white women. Freedom is assumed to be for those who are human, which Stowe attempts to say is all people. And yet, the system she has in place throughout the novel, specifically with regard to the women, shows that she does not see all humans as equal.

Stowe ends up attempting to fix the Christian family by ending slavery while also trying to create a place for white women that is equal to white men. As a result, white feminists become the guardians of domestic politics. Matriarchal domesticity places white women in a position of power as Christian teachers and guardians over the family and black women. Gillian Brown's article "Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" explains where the feminist movement was at the time and how it affected Stowe's writing: "Contemporary activist women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony also discerned the bonds of patriarchal domesticity in the patriarchal institution and thus defined abolition as a feminist cause" (514). Stowe, on the other hand, attempts to use existing patriarchal domesticity and elevate white women's position within the patriarchy. This leaves no room for slave women to exist as women. Throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other feminist literature of the time, the terms "American" and "Christian" are made synonymous with "white," though modern scholars have interpreted white antebellum feminists as working in tandem with their "black sisters" (514). Truthfully, nowhere in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* does Stowe advocate for white and black women working together. White

women can provide guardianship, but the situation cannot be switched and the two will never work together on an equal plane.

From the time of its publication, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was understood to be a feminist text, which showed the value Stowe placed on womanhood and motherhood. White women in the novel cover a range of personalities and attitudes toward Christianity. The two women who show an understanding of Christianity are Mrs. Shelby, who acts as the benevolent wife, and the misguided, inadvertently racist Miss Ophelia. Both women exist to address issues with how Christianity is taught and what it demands of white women. However, both women are also shown in a position of ownership or guardianship over the slave women, whether literally or as spiritual mothers. The problem is that the characteristics in Mrs. Shelby and Miss Ophelia, which show a sense of benevolent superiority, are what make them good Christians.

Theodore Hovet explains in “Christian Revolution: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Response to Slavery and the Civil War” that Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an expression of her beliefs about Christian perfection and how it affected slavery, which she alludes to in her letter to Douglass. In the article, Hovet explains, “perfectionism in general was a religious revolution which touched almost all major reform movements in antebellum America,” and he quotes John L. Thomas, who states, “social evils were simply acts of selfishness compounded,” and who believed it was “the duty of the true reformer” to educate others, “making them models of good behavior” (Hovet 537). Religious perfectionism explains why Stowe writes certain white women in the novel as models of Christian behavior. It is their duty in striving for Christian perfection to educate those around them in order to create a more

perfect society. As religious perfectionism was a revolution that spanned the country, from pro-slavery Christians to abolitionist Christians, I believe that that is easy for Stowe to write well-meaning white women who believe themselves to be matriarchs over the slaves in their care, even after freedom.

Stowe's portrayals of good white women, multiracial slave women who aspire to be white, and childlike black slave women are continuous throughout the novel in the descriptions of a white matriarchy, flowing from good white women to slave women. While these character descriptions stem from Stowe's goals of eliminating slavery, bringing Christianity to black people, and using black people to take Christianity to Africa, they are also problematic for women as a whole because of the divisions that they create between them.

The women in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are all connected and affected by one recurring theme, which is Stowe's idea of a natural order. While Stowe writes for the purpose of the abolition of slavery, her descriptions of the seemingly natural differences between the women are problematic. White women are introduced first and used thereafter to embody True Womanhood. Multiracial slave women are introduced next, and lastly, black slave women are introduced, creating a hierarchy of those able to achieve True Womanhood, those who can strive for it, and those who will never achieve it.

In order to maintain a hierarchy between the women, Stowe uses her characters as visual representations of certain groups. They are each labeled, some of the labels being more problematic than others. In Ellen J. Goldner's "Arguing With Pictures: Race, Class, and the Formation of Popular Abolitionism through *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," she describes how some of

“Stowe’s racialized images became fetishes—magnets for antebellum cultural fascination—because they dramatized highly charged ambivalences about ‘race’ and nation, including anxieties over the increasingly national scope of politics and mass culture in a nation under strain” (73). Goldner describes a country in the midst of change, with people looking for answers to political questions that have the power to change the entire culture of the United States. Slave women particularly are used relentlessly to appeal to cultural fascination and to attract attention to the issue of slavery. In using the slave women as vehicles for individual stories to push her larger agenda, Stowe continues to perpetuate a system of inequality in which white people are naturally superior to black people, whether the latter group be enslaved or free. All of the slave women are lower than the white women in the novel, and regardless of their status as slaves or freed women they are inherently lesser than white women.

In his article, “Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of Race,” Thomas Graham argues that Stowe’s intention was to make her white readers see black people as human beings, rather than animals. He also makes the argument that she wanted them to see black people as equals, rather than lower forms of humans, stating that she, hoped to make her readers see Negroes as fellow human beings and to dispute the widely held belief that the Negro was either a separate species of man or some intermediate link between man and animal. She realized that the reason white Americans did not see slavery as cruel and unjust was their denial of the humanity of the Negro and their inability to sympathize with his plight (615).

While this is a popular belief for Stowe apologists, it is a stretch from what she actually believes. Stowe never says that black people are equal to white people. She says that black people are human and white people are wrong for owning them as property. Her goal is to help white people sympathize with black people, but not necessarily for them to interact as equals.

Graham's interpretation of Stowe's intention assumes ideas that are not there and in doing so, adds to the interpretation in a way that I do not believe Stowe intended. Graham includes an excerpt from Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which she writes, It is because the negro is considered an inferior animal and not worthy of any better treatment, that the system which relates to him and the treatment which falls to him are considered humane. Take any class of white men, however uneducated, and place them under the same system of laws and make their civil condition in all respects like that of the negro and would it not be considered the most outrageous cruelty (615).

Here, Stowe very clearly argues that black people are humans and not animals. However, she does not argue that they are "fellow human beings," as Graham suggests. Her point is that white people's action in owning slaves is wrong. Instead of making claims of equality, Stowe then moves to the topic of "cruelty," which we see often in the novel. This is an appeal to empathy, a popular abolitionist tactic of asking white people to literally put themselves in the space of black people, as if that is a different space than white people occupy. It is this tactic that Stowe relies on in place of a conversation on equality.

Because of the way in which inequality and hierarchical separations between characters in the novel clash with Stowe's efforts to bring freedom to the slaves, readers have

had a difficult time understanding what makes the novel racially problematic and why. It is important to note that Thomas Graham wrote “Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of Race” in 1973 because in it, he states, “For most of this century Harriet Beecher Stowe’s reputation as a humanitarian reformer has been in decline” (614). While the novel was untouchable for years, later movements began to push it out of its unquestionable spot as the most important abolitionist novel.

It is likely that Stowe’s description of a hierarchy among the slaves and a fear of black people living in a free American society is due to her own Colonization beliefs at the time. In an article titled, “The Making of the North’s ‘Stark Mad Abolitionists’: Anti-Slavery Conversion in the United States, 1824-1854,” Jonathan Earle details the difference between those who were anti-slavery and those who were abolitionists. According to Earle, “Americans who did not consider themselves front-line abolitionists came to view slavery as the gravest threat facing the republic, a threat requiring their personal action” (4). In the footnotes, he explains that, “Historians have traditionally separated those proposing the immediate cessation of slavery as “abolitionists” and those favoring slavery’s eventual overthrow (or its geographical containment en route to its extinction) as “anti-slavery” (4). And while the novel clearly shows Stowe’s abolitionist goals, she was actually a Colonizationist at the time of its publication and therefore, likely to be influenced by anti-slavery sentiment. Typical of the contradictions Stowe often embodied, she cannot be contained to one group. Many abolitionists came out of the revivals of The Great Revival and the Second Great Awakening and “did so for religious reasons” (3) after religious conversions. Stowe, however, does not seem to have ever had any of those personal revival

experiences, despite her knowledge of Christianity and her own father's place in the Second Great Awakening. This most likely explains why Stowe would create a hierarchy between white women, multiracial women, and black women. She did not have an extreme experience to motivate her to believe in complete equality. Rather, she was attempting to make a reasonable argument against slavery, using Christian values and perfectionism. In contrast, people like Theodore Dwight Welds started out as Colonizationists but experienced religious revival and "embraced a religious philosophy based in opposition to the hierarchical structures and deference" (6). Because Stowe did not have an experience like this, she was likely in the group of those who still believed in a hierarchy and that free black people would eventually be a threat to the United States.

Jason Richards writes about the stagnant nature of the conversation surrounding *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in his article titled "Imitation Nation: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of African American Selfhood in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." In the article, Richards points out that previous scholarship argues primarily about whether or not the novel is racist. One of the reasons I find his argument so interesting is because in researching the novel, it quickly becomes futile to argue whether or not Stowe is racist. Her views and her writing change at times and she sometimes seems to address her own previous behavior and writing, but without an outright apology. So while she was a product of the times, she was also a real person who seemed to struggle with her own beliefs and what freedom would look like for everyone involved. Arguing about whether or not she was racist is difficult because she did not see herself as racist.

Much of the lingering discomfort with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stems from the problematic reproductions, such as plays and commercial portrayals of characters that sprang up after the novel was published. In her article “(In) Famous Spirituality: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom,” Irene Visser describes not only the early reception and popularity of the novel, but also its many reproductions, which were often racist and boiled Uncle Tom down to a racist caricature. I argue that it was Stowe’s hierarchical, slavery-inspired writing of the slave characters that left room for racist interpretations of all the slave characters, particularly the women.

Visser’s article is a good example of the tendency among academics who write about Stowe to portray her as an inspired writer who knew exactly what she was doing and made controversial moves with a full understanding of how and why she made them. Visser states that by choosing not to write the novel from a place of white superiority, “Stowe took the risk of compromising her own respectability” (6). This argument is similar to that of other critics like Linda Williams, author of “Playing the Race Card,” who believe that black critics like James Baldwin misunderstand Stowe and how she is “reacting against contemporary stereotyping such as the comic minstrel shows” (4). However, there is not enough evidence that Baldwin and others misunderstand Stowe, and definitely not in a novel where Stowe often interjects with her own opinions to make sure that the reader understands how they are supposed to read a passage. The stereotypes and minstrel characters are not addressed in the novel, and the slave women’s only way to escape them is through the Christianity that is brought to them largely by white women.

A far more likely explanation for the novel and for Stowe's clearly delineated hierarchy is her sense of duty in, and disappointment with, her own domestic life. While Stowe was a mother with a husband and six children who lived past childhood, her life was often more chaotic than tranquil. In the article, "At War With Herself: Harriet Beecher Stowe as Woman in Conflict within the Home," Mary Kelley explains that Stowe attempted to create a perfect domestic life, but was often disappointed with the results (28, 29). Knowing the amount of disappointment Stowe sometimes felt with her family life and the many people that she cared for, it is possible that she was writing out her anxieties and domestic fantasies in her characters.

Ultimately, Stowe writes the women to fit on a color scale resulting in a hierarchy among them. Richards's response to this circular discussion on race is a proposal "that we consider the novel as a product of the racially ambivalent antebellum movement" (Richards 204). He proposes thinking beyond whether or not the novel is racist and describes the characters and issues that inspired Stowe's writing. I take Richards's argument a step further and say that while some of the issues in the novel are a product of the times, they are also used in a way that resembles more of a hierarchical slave system than a free society. Like Richards, I will be addressing the problem of race in the novel, but will discuss why the problematic parts happen and how they impact the slave women.

Chapter 1: Stowe's Multiracial Women: Grasping at Whiteness

In this chapter, I will focus on multiracial women in comparison to white women. Stowe writes these two groups very differently, resulting in a narrow but significant gap between them. She dehumanizes female multiracial characters although her overall goal is to humanize the slaves and she does this by making them seem whiter, while their blackness nevertheless constrains them so that they can't achieve true womanhood. Thus, their proximity to whiteness is false and they are not quite women. Stowe treats them as though they could be like white women, but their blackness is what prevents them from being real women. Mrs. Shelby will be used to show Stowe's ideal woman. Eliza and Cassy will be used to show how Stowe perceives multiracial women and their place in society, as well as to foreshadow a difference between them and black slave women. While Stowe uses multiracial slave women as the heroines and as a method for gaining white readers' support, she also writes them in a way that compares them to white women and finds the multiracial women to be lacking in comparison. By doing this, Stowe creates characters who can be seen as white for the purpose of abolitionism, but who will not make white people uncomfortable. Multiracial slave women are safe characters for white readers to respond to because they cannot ever rise to the status of white women.

While readers have long interpreted the novel as an example of Stowe's desire to put the slaves on an equal plane with white people, this difference between the women shows that abolition and colonization are her main goals and that she uses the slave women to write toward those goals. As a result of being used for Stowe's specific purposes, the slave women are neatly kept out of the Cult of True Womanhood. In Barbara Welter's article titled, "The

Cult of True Womanhood,” she explains that “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues--piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (152). While none of the slave women are able to meet all of these virtues, the multiracial slave women meet some of them and in more ways than do the black slave women.

While Stowe does describe the multiracial women as very beautiful, they cannot compare to Mrs. Shelby’s comprehensive model of True Womanhood, upon investigation into their sexual histories, salvation, statuses, whiteness, intelligence, and maternal instincts. Even their beauty, though not inferior to white women’s beauty, is still problematic; it is different, and therefore suspect, and puts them at risk of abuse in a slave society. Stowe writes a world in which slave women have no place in a free America, regardless of whether they have white blood or not. And yet, multiracial women are convenient heroines for the novel because Stowe is able to use them as white slaves, as Nancy Bentley describes in her article, “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction.” In the article, Bentley describes multiracial men as being white slave heroes. Multiracial women, on the other hand, are generally tragic heroines. But Stowe does not make Eliza and Cassy into tragic mulattas. Instead, they take on the characteristics of the white slave hero, generally reserved for multiracial men. A number of abolitionist tactics from the time show that it was normal to use slaves who appeared white in order to gain the attention of white people. By using multiracial women as white slave heroes, the particular desire to protect white women was used in order to make white people understand the horrors of slavery, particularly in regards to women. Stowe’s slaves exist to propel the novel forward and she uses the female slaves particularly because their proximity

to True Womanhood will gain white people's attention. In this way, Stowe uses the slave women for her own gain, much as a slave owner would. This is problematic because her argument is intended to help end slavery and to reach both Northern and Southern readers by highlighting both the horrors of slavery, as well as the more insidious patriarchal system.

Stowe discusses the multiracial slave women's feelings from the perspective of white women, when at all, and she discusses their rights only in relation to their freedom. The indignities upon their womanhood are there but missing Stowe's usual commentary, leading the reader to conclude that Stowe is unaware that she has written them into the story.

Certainly, Stowe's intentions are admirable, but her creation and treatment of the multiracial women stems from a belief that salvation is the only thing that really matters in abolishing slavery and a belief in a natural order or a hierarchy amongst women of different races.

Regardless of her motivations, Stowe puts the slave women into a category separate from white women and goes one step further with multiracial women, placing them in a category separate from both white and black women.

There are a number of multiracial slave women mentioned throughout the novel, but the two Stowe focuses on most are Eliza and Cassy. In this chapter, I will look closely at the two women, comparing them to Mrs. Shelby. In the second chapter, I will periodically compare these women to the black slave women in the novel in order to show that Stowe places multiracial women into their own category, or a liminal space while black women are kept firmly out of True Womanhood. This chapter's focus will be on how multiracial women are shown in comparison to white women because it is there that their lower status in the hierarchy is obvious.

Stowe herself uses Eliza and Cassy as sympathetic characters, writing them with heavy sentimentality and even portraying them differently from each other, based on how much whiteness they have. She uses the two women to appeal to white readers who could not conceive of black people being freed or even human, and she focuses many of the bigger story lines on them. Because of the link between their whiteness and their beauty, intelligence, and maternal instincts, the women are characters that would have seemed familiar to a white audience while still garnering sympathy due to their status as slaves. Similar to multiracial slave children who were used to gain white attention and sympathy during slavery, Eliza and Cassy are used to garner empathy from potentially hostile white readers. However, while Eliza's and Cassy's beauty and intelligence bring them closer to white women, these characteristics do not put them on an equal plane with those same white women. Rather, their relative closeness to white women makes the divide even clearer. Stowe writes both Eliza and Cassy as pleasant to be around and pleasant to look at, unable to ever rise to the superiority of white women, not only because of their slave status, but also because of their blackness or their particular role as multiracial slave women.

Ultimately, multiracial women are used to move the story along while gaining the reader's sympathy. They hold responsibility for everything, from making white readers see slaves as human to showing the evils of slavery. At the same time, they do all of this work with no compensation for it. In Joanne Pope A. Melish's review of Paul Goodman's book, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, she states, "African Americans appear in this book collectively as a catalyst for the conversion of whites to immediatism—again, a crucial point; but thereafter, 'abolitionists' are white" (2). In the same way, Stowe

uses the multiracial female slaves in the novel as a catalyst. They are a convenient way to explore the idea of who is affected by slavery and to attract white people's attention. However, in the novel's actual discussions of slavery and freedom, they are completely ignored. There is no acknowledgement that they may have something to say. They are largely silent characters used only for the stories that they can give.

Two novels that may have influenced Stowe when writing the multiracial women in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are *The Quadroons*, published in 1842, and *Slavery's Pleasant Homes*, published in 1843. Both were written by Lydia Maria Child, an author who wrote stories about tragic mulattos and about quadroons who could only find peace in death. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the mulatto and the quadroon only find peace in freedom and separation from white people. The resemblance is there, as is the patriarchal idea that women, even if they are "white slaves," cannot live without some sort of protection.

Unlike Child's stories, Stowe does not create a world in which mixed-race people must die. However, she does create an alternative by sending them to Liberia. Eliza and Cassy both leave the country after they obtain their freedom, which is an easy solution for white women who do not want to deal with the mixed-race evidence of the male sin of slavery. As Nancy Bentley explains in "White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction," "the two most volatile images in antebellum America, North and South" were "the terrorism symbolized by the Haitian revolution and the racial mixing symbolized by the Mulatto" (502). In an attempt to address the concerns of "racial mixing," Stowe's solution to the mulatto problem is relocation to Africa. Multiracial women like Eliza and Cassy are easy characters for Stowe to write because they create sympathy in the reader but they do not make the reader

uncomfortable. The two women are kept securely in subservient roles, transitioning smoothly from slavery to freedom.

In Josephine Donovan's article, "A Source for Stowe's Ideas on Race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" she discusses Stowe's Colonizationist views throughout the novel and their impact on the African American characters. Donovan immediately addresses the fact that "Stowe's treatment of race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and the colonization scheme with which she ends the novel have long been its most controversial features" (24). She explains early reactions to the colonization message in the novel, citing the 1853 American and Foreign Anti-Slavery convention, which took place in New York and "condemned the novel's colonization ending" (24). And while Stowe "sent a note to the convention, in which she stated that she was not (or no longer) a colonizationist," Donovan questions the idea that merely changing the end of the novel would have solved the problem. The issues that plague slave women in the novel are rife with Stowe's personal beliefs and they affect the entire novel, not just the ending. Donovan states, "Stowe might readily have changed the ending of the novel, but her conception of Africans and African Americans as harbingers of a utopian future pervades *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and could not have been so easily erased" (24). Rather than providing an accurate description of the slaves as real people, Stowe makes their status as slaves into their identity. In doing so, the onus for a free American society is removed from white slave owners and placed onto the slaves. This sort of romantic racialism makes the slave characters less human and relieves white people of the guilt of slaveholding, which is contradictory to Stowe's goal to make slavery real for white people.

Stowe's personal feelings on the colonization of Africa rely heavily on multiracial slave women to make the point throughout the novel that slaves cannot be a part of free American society. While they are similar to white women in their pursuit of True Womanhood, multiracial women are firmly in the slave category and their glimpses into whiteness seek to make the reader comfortable with the idea that while slaves can be human, they cannot be a part of American society.

Both Eliza and Cassy are considered beautiful, but that perception is as seen through a white lens, as decided by white people, in comparison to white women. They are beautiful, but their beauty is flawed. Because they are multiracial, Stowe describes them in ways that are typical of the time and the perceptions of multiracial women. Their skin is lighter than the slaves who are not mulattas or quadroons, they are beautiful (largely because of their skin color), and their manners are closer to those of white people than those of their fellow darker-skinned slaves. They are described as being similar to the white women in the novel, in terms of their beauty, with lengthy descriptions of their appearances. Their beauty is used consistently to make the point that they are a step closer to white women than the darker slave women are. At the same time, their looks are mentioned consistently and in such a way that they become much more sexual characters than the white women, noticed for their beauty and for what separates them from white women.

Both Eliza and Cassy are smart, and their intelligence is enough to make them human, but it is not enough to constitute a status equal to white women. Similar to the descriptions of both women's beauty, Stowe injects long speeches into the novel, describing their feelings and families. They make strong decisions, but only when influenced and supported by others.

They are used as proof of what a good upbringing and Christian love can do, but there is an uncomfortable current of belief that a good Christian upbringing can overcome their supposed natural place in the hierarchy.

Unlike some of the other slaves in the novel, Eliza and Cassy are allowed to have love and children, but their romantic and maternal feelings are not given much more credence than those of the black slave women, despite their closeness to white women in both physical space and perception. Unlike white women, multiracial slave women are not allowed the same maternal feelings automatically afforded to white women. Stowe and the white women in the novel seem to have no problem with allowing Eliza and Cassy to love and have children, but they cannot be aggressive or passionate about those things. They must rely on white women to provide a space where they can have love and comfort and be grateful for it. Their maternal instincts are not taken seriously and are sometimes seen as a bother and proof that they are naturally more passionate and emotional than white women.

Early in the novel, Stowe introduces Mrs. Shelby as a model of True Womanhood. She is used to both prove and disprove a similarity between herself, Eliza, and Cassy, because even as a slave-owner's wife, she is a good Christian and an intelligent wife and mother. She is able to keep the multiracial slave women at a crucial distance by proving that True Womanhood is essentially possible, but it is only possible in a different way for multiracial women than it is for white women. By using Mrs. Shelby in particular as a model of True Womanhood, Eliza and Cassy are unable to completely achieve it, but they come closer to it than do any of the black women in the novel.

Stowe uses Mrs. Shelby to reach self-proclaimed Christians who have been raised in those patriarchal churches where the Bible is used as proof that slavery is a Christian institution. But Mrs. Shelby is also a window into how white women would have seen a slave like Eliza. It is Mrs. Shelby's status as Eliza's mistress that hints at Stowe's ideas of the black woman's natural status. And Mrs. Shelby never stops being patronizing toward her slaves. She seems to love Eliza, but she underestimates her in the beginning, though she eventually desires for her to gain her freedom. All of Chapter 6 is devoted to Mrs. Shelby's attempts to get the other slaves to help her in stalling Haley. She is able to lead the charge to keep Eliza from being caught, while the slaves actually carry out the actions. As a white woman, she holds an amount of power that Eliza does not have as the slave being chased, but that the other slaves also do not have. While they are the ones actually stalling the search party, Mrs. Shelby is given the credit for instructing them to do so.

The relationship between Eliza and Mrs. Shelby is not only one of the main cues that the reader has of the depravity of slavery, regardless of its form, but it is also the plot line that shows Stowe's hierarchical whiteness and its pervasiveness, through the way Eliza is written. As Mrs. Shelby's son, George, explains at the end of the novel, his father bought Eliza as a child and his mother raised her: "My mother had brought her up, and trained her as carefully, almost, as a daughter" (451). Eliza is modeled after Mrs. Shelby who acts as an example of what a woman should be. Stowe describes her as "a woman of high class, both intellectually and morally" (22). She is also used in the first time that Stowe mentions that recurring theme of what is "natural." Stowe writes,

To that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind which one often marks as characteristic of the women of Kentucky, she added high moral and religious sensibility and principle, carried out with great energy and ability into practical results. Her husband, who made no professions to any particular religious character, nevertheless revered and respected the consistency of hers, and stood, perhaps, a little in awe of her opinion. Certain it was that he gave her unlimited scope in all her benevolent efforts for the comfort, instruction, and improvement of her servants, though he never took any decided part in them himself. In fact, if not exactly a believer in the doctrine of the efficiency of the extra good works of saints, he really seemed somehow or other to fancy that his wife had piety and benevolence enough for two--to indulge a shadowy expectation of getting into heaven through her superabundance of qualities to which he made no particular pretension. (22)

Mrs. Shelby's "natural magnanimity and generosity of mind" are described as being a characteristic of the women of Kentucky, so Stowe states that those are natural to her, while her "high moral and religious sensibility and principle" are her own. She is not only a good example of a moral, Christian woman, but she is also an example to her husband and slaves. Eliza is not only modeled after her; she is also compared to her.

Both Eliza and Cassy are written similar enough to white women to inspire emotion and anti-slavery sentiment from readers, but they are not close enough to be real women, especially given that they are seen as converts to be won for Christ, rather than being born into Christianity, as women like Mrs. Shelby are. After she realizes that she really could lose Eliza to Haley, the slave buyer, Mrs. Shelby begins to question whether slavery can work with Christian beliefs. She questions Mr. Shelby about the trader who was at their home earlier, and he is clearly uncomfortable with her questions, due to his elevated opinion of her Christian morals and his own perceived shortcomings, like selling Tom and Harry. Here, early on in the novel, Mrs. Shelby shows she is a Christian woman with her disapproval of Mr. Shelby selling their slaves. In her frustration over the sale, she says,

This is God's curse on slavery!--a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!--a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours,--I always felt it was,--I always thought so when I was a girl,--I thought so still more after I joined the church; but 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!" (47-48)

If the reader is to believe Mrs. Shelby, her naturally good soul has always known that the ownership and sale of human beings is wrong. Here, Stowe attempts to make the point that no amount of goodness or kindness can make up for sin. Mr. Shelby responds to this speech by telling her, "Why, wife, you are getting to be an abolitionist, quite" (48). Mrs. Shelby counters with a speech that solidifies her stance as a reluctant participant in the slave system in which she grew up: "Abolitionist! If they knew all I know about slavery, they might talk! We don't need them to tell us; you know I never thought that slavery was right--never felt willing to own slaves" (48). Here, the reader sees Mrs. Shelby's natural proclivity for abolitionist views, based purely on what she has seen. As other slave-owners have not come to the same conclusion, the reader is left to conclude that Mrs. Shelby's Christian beliefs have opened her eyes to the evils of slavery. In "Christian Revolution: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Response to Slavery and the Civil War," Hovet again quotes John L. Thomas, who states that it was "the duty of the true reformer" to educate others, "making them models of good behavior" (537). And here again, Mrs. Shelby is put into an elevated position that Eliza can never reach. Mrs. Shelby is able to educate Eliza because of her position as a slave owner.

In order to further prove Eliza's whiteness and her resulting usefulness as a relatable character for white readers, she is described as a very beautiful quadroon. And yet, the details of her heritage are not mentioned initially, perhaps because simply stating that she is a quadroon lets the reader know she has white blood but removes the burden from anybody

closely related to the Shelbys or in the novel. Stowe describes her beauty again and again, and makes it clear that the reason for it is the fact that she looks white but has enough blackness to make her different from both white and black women. Stowe's description of Eliza is very close to Child's description of a young slave named Rosa, in "Slavery's Pleasant Homes." Similar to Eliza, Rosa is loved by her mistress and is described as very beautiful, which makes her mistress proud, rather than resentful or jealous. Child introduces Rosa by her beauty, just as Stowe does with Eliza. She describes Rosa as "a young girl, elegantly formed, and beautiful as a dark velvet carnation. The blush, so easily excited, shown through the transparent brown of her smooth cheek, like claret through a bottle in the sunshine ("Slavery's Pleasant Homes"). This passage shows the obsession that white abolitionist women have with the beauty of slave women and their desire to prove that white women and slave women can exist together in a hierarchical society. The first time Stowe brings Eliza into the novel, she interrupts a conversation between Mr. Shelby and Haley and is quickly assumed to be the mother of the little boy they are discussing. Instantly, the focus is on Eliza's beauty and her features, which mark her as black but not fully, black.

There was the same rich, full, dark eye, with its long lashes; the same ripples of silky black hair. The brown of her complexion gave way on the cheek to a perceptible flush, which deepened as she saw the gaze of the strange man fixed upon her in bold and undisguised admiration. Her dress was of the neatest possible fit, and set off to advantage her finely moulded shape;--a delicately formed hand and a trim foot and ankle were items of appearance that did not escape the quick eye of the trader. (16)

Here, Stowe uses the detached eye of a trader to describe Eliza's beauty, though the words seem to be Stowe's own, for although Haley is observing Eliza, he is not speaking during this passage. Stowe herself gives a categorical yet romanticized list of Eliza's appearance, focusing on her brown but light skin which flushes easily, the darkness of her wavy hair, and

the femininity of her body. This description is different from any descriptions of white women or black women, and the only other one that we see like it is when Cassy is introduced. The explanation of Eliza's unusual beauty exists to put her into an entirely different group of women, more beautiful than black women but too exotic to be a white woman. This separation from white women and this potential for sexualization creates a situation where even if Eliza met all the criteria for womanhood, it seems implausible that white women would accept her as a true woman.

Because of Eliza's appearance, she has attracted the "bold and undisguised admiration" of a man who would like to sell her and bring her to New Orleans. His attention is on her body and the characteristics that clearly make her a quadroon. He observes her with attention to her sexuality, and it is clear that this is his focus. So while her beauty takes away the invisibility that plagues the black slave women, it also sets her apart from white women whose appearance would not be considered as a point of sale and who would not be ogled so boldly. Stowe sets Eliza up to be seen as a slave who is loved and cared for by her masters because they accept her mixed race and her beauty and they shield her from the problems those things could cause. Yet, while Stowe is attempting to show that love for a slave cannot and does not pardon the sin of owning slaves, she seems unaware of her own participation in the system that holds up multiracial women as more beautiful than black women. She also seems unaware of the problems with the Shelbys' paternalistic attitude toward Eliza. The argument against slavery is so strong that there is no room for the argument against an attitude of ownership despite its strong presence in the relationship between Eliza and Mrs. Shelby.

Eliza's beauty is largely related to her whiteness, which the slave trader, Haley states clearly in this passage:

“Wal! white and handsome--well brought up. I'd a gin Shelby eight hundred or a thousand, and then made well on her.”

“White and handsome--well brought up!” said Marks, his sharp eyes, nose and mouth, all alive with enterprise. “Look here, now, Loker, a beautiful opening. We'll do business here on our own account;--we does the catchin'; the boy, of course, goes to Mr. Haley,--we takes the gal to Orleans to speculate on. An't it beautiful?” (81)

Eliza's whiteness here is what makes her beautiful but it also presents a danger to her, causing men like Marks to look at her, “alive with enterprise.” Stowe describes her beauty as something that attracts predators like the slave traders. Her whiteness has both allowed her to be well brought up, but it also means that none of those things matter as soon as a slave trader sees her.

Even in George Shelby's description of Eliza as a child, there is mention of her beauty. Though he says that Eliza was “about eight or nine years old,” just a child, his father “paid an extravagant sum for her... I suppose, on account of her extraordinary beauty” (451). Eliza was bought in New Orleans, her looks and her status as a multiracial woman being important to the transaction. It seems that Stowe is determined to mention the beauty of multiracial women, which is problematic because despite making Eliza into a sort of white slave, she herself romanticizes and sexualizes her beauty. With Eliza, it is always mentioned in conjunction with her privilege, but Stowe does not address that. At some point, Stowe's aim becomes unclear as she describes a child as extraordinarily beautiful, without explicitly mentioning the threat that her looks would pose to her in this situation.

And yet, unlike Cassy, Eliza is kept completely safe from any sort of sexual trauma. Also unlike Cassy, Eliza is one quarter black and is often described as looking white. Because Eliza is raised by a kind white family, and presumably because the reader would be upset by descriptions of an almost-white woman being sexually traumatized, she is safe from the ordeals that Cassy experiences. Stowe states that Eliza is a quadroon but conveniently makes it so that Eliza is bought from another slave owner at a young age, and therefore has no issues with her mistress concerning her parentage. Even though she leaves these issues out, Stowe replaces them with the portrayal of a natural maternal hierarchy between Mrs. Shelby and Eliza. Eliza's beauty puts her at risk any time she is away from a guardian like Mrs. Shelby. As a result, she can never be Stowe's ideal woman on her own strength.

The paternalistic whiteness affecting the relationship between Mrs. Shelby and Eliza is not only in Mrs. Shelby's ownership of Eliza, but also in the way that she treats Eliza like a favorite toy or a pet. It is because of Eliza's closeness to her in both appearance and behavior that Mrs. Shelby is so good to Eliza, and those reasons are why the reader is able to sympathize with Eliza. Mrs. Shelby acts as a sort of familiar friend who can recommend Eliza to the reader while reminding the reader that Eliza is not a full white woman. Eliza comes highly recommended to the reader because Stowe has put them at ease that there will be no competition or animosity between Mrs. Shelby and Eliza. Mrs. Shelby will always be the example of womanhood and Eliza will always be grateful and remember her place. This dynamic places Mrs. Shelby in True Womanhood, but keeps Eliza just outside of it. Though Mrs. Shelby is a sort of mother figure for Eliza, teaching her about Christianity, she cannot

and will not pull Eliza up into True Womanhood because no amount of teaching can make Eliza white.

Stowe does make it very clear that Eliza is a living being and not an object, but the beginning of the novel's second chapter states, "Eliza had been brought up by her mistress, from girlhood, as a petted and indulged favorite" (23). One of the marks of paternalistic slavery is a belief that the slave owner is helping the slave. Mrs. Shelby is no different. She, seeing herself as a mother figure for Eliza, teaches her Christianity, keeps her well dressed, and even helps her to get married. Stowe introduces Eliza by saying, "Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave" (23). These descriptions show Mrs. Shelby to be loving and maternal toward Eliza out of true love. When Eliza is married, Mrs. Shelby's role is that of matchmaker and mother of the bride. The description of the wedding places her in the middle of the preparations, stating, "her mistress herself adorned the bride's beautiful hair with orange-blossoms, and threw over it the bridal veil" (25). All of this makes it easy to forget that Eliza is an adult woman and not Mrs. Shelby's child. Not only is she an adult and unrelated to Mrs. Shelby, but she is Mrs. Shelby's slave, not her friend. While Stowe does seem to be critiquing this relationship between Eliza and Mrs. Shelby, she does not address that a relationship like this is bad for multiracial women. She shows that it is bad for white women to be complicit in owning slaves, but Eliza is described as being blessed to have escaped the *real* cruelties of slavery. By writing multiracial women in this way, Stowe makes them closer to white women while still keeping them securely in the slave class.

At the same time, Stowe uses this scenario to show the natural childlike quality that she attributes to the slaves. This recurring problem is caused by Stowe's belief in romantic racialism. In Donovan's article, "A Source for Stowe's Ideas on Race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," she continues to discuss where Stowe picked up these ideas. Donovan states, "As Frederickson has shown, the direct source of many of Stowe's racial theories was Alexander Kinmont, a Swedenborgian minister" (26). And though Stowe's orthodox beliefs would have ruled out "the more heterodox aspects of Swedenborg's theology," Donovan points out that Stowe "clearly picked up his views about Africans" (26), believing them to be childlike and less likely to question religion. Particularly, "Kinmont believed that "there is more of the child, of unsophisticated nature, in the Negro race than in the European" (190)" (27). It is this treatment of the slaves that make it impossible to truly see Eliza as a woman. She will always be like a child in comparison to Mrs. Shelby and there is no way for her to escape that, as Stowe believes it to be part of her nature. So while Eliza is portrayed as naturally good and pious, she is also like a child in comparison to Mrs. Shelby, making Mrs. Shelby the only true woman in the relationship.

Similar to the quote describing the relationship between Mrs. Shelby and Mr. Shelby, Eliza is often the voice of reason for her husband, George Harris. When George goes to see Eliza to say that he will be running away to Canada, she tries to convince him not to do so, and they argue about trusting God in their circumstances (27). Like Mrs. Shelby, Eliza has a responsibility to be a Christian, moralizing influence on her husband and she attempts to do so. In Welter's article, "The Cult of True Womanhood," piety is among the "four cardinal virtues." Welter references Mrs. Frances Osgood's poem, "The Triumph of the Spiritual Over

the Sensual” to describe one of the main ideas of the time, that “woman’s purifying passionless love” would bring “an erring man back to Christ” (152-153). Both Mrs. Shelby and Eliza are used to bring their husbands back to Christ, solidifying them as pious. However, Eliza’s role as a pious wife is less obvious than Mrs. Shelby’s.

Eliza does her duty to her husband and her religion by being pious and attempting to save her husband from his irreligion. As Welter states, “From her home woman performed her great task of bringing men back to God” (162). Eliza attempts to do this, just as Mrs. Shelby has, but Mrs. Shelby seems to have more of an influence over her husband, whereas George is intent on following his plans, despite Eliza’s protests. Even when Eliza imitates Mrs. Shelby, she is never quite a true woman. The way that Stowe describes the interactions between Eliza and her husband lack the authenticity that the Shelbys have and Eliza is unable to muster up the maturity and influence that Mrs. Shelby wields over Mr. Shelby. In the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Shelby, Mrs. Shelby lets Eliza run away and asks her husband repeatedly about their finances. It is clear that she has an amount of power to do these things and without making her husband angry. Though Eliza makes the decision and has the power to run away, she is forced to do so by the circumstances of her son being sold, and her power to leave is due to help from Mrs. Shelby.

Despite Eliza’s place in the hierarchy, there are moments when she rises in intelligence above the role of the slave and over her fellow slaves. On the night that she overhears Mr. and Mrs. Shelby talking about selling Tom and Harry, she grows up immediately and decides to run away with Harry. She goes to Tom and Chloe’s cabin and tells them, “I’m running away--Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe--carrying off my child--Master

sold him!” (51). She goes on to explain that Tom has been sold as well, but Tom cannot be persuaded to join them in running away, and Eliza leaves on her own. The change in her occurs literally overnight, as she goes from defending her mistress to George to “leaving the only home she had ever known, and cutting loose from the protection of a friend whom she loved and revered” (63). When she stays with the Quakers, Stowe writes,

It was plain to see how old and firm the girlish heart was grown under the discipline of heavy sorrow; and when, anon, her large dark eye was raised to follow the gambols of her little Harry, who was sporting, like some tropical butterfly, hither and thither over the floor, she showed a depth of firmness and steady resolve that was never there in her earlier and happier days. (148)

Whereas Eliza was flighty and trusting before running away, she really becomes a woman the night that she leaves. Here, we see the culmination of her maternal instincts, intelligence, and beauty turning her into a possible true woman. In contradiction to other problematic hierarchical examples, here it seems that Stowe is advocating for Eliza’s True Womanhood through a display of independence and ultimately, freedom. Here, we get a glimpse back to Stowe’s original abolitionist argument that freedom will bring True Womanhood. The problem is that these glimpses are too far apart and they are surrounded by textual evidence that Stowe does not believe that slave women will ever be true women in the same way that white women are.

Even after Eliza is married, she loses two babies, and Mrs. Shelby’s response is “gentle remonstrance,” and she attempts, “with maternal anxiety, to direct her naturally passionate feelings within the bounds of reason and religion” (25). Mrs. Shelby is unable to see Eliza as an adult with her own adult problems that cannot be fixed with reminders about Christian reason. This line also invites the reader into Stowe’s line of thought, which shows

multiracial women to be “naturally passionate,” dismissing the fact that Eliza has lost two babies. Mrs. Shelby downplays the loss and is patronizing of Eliza’s grief. This is particularly condescending because as Brown points out in “Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” at one point, Mr. Shelby “admonishes her for feeling “too much” about their slaves” and “Mrs. Shelby asserts the predominance of the emotions of the heart over the masculine economics of the mind: “Feel too much! Am I not a woman,--a mother” (I, 110)?” (516). While Brown makes the point that Stowe is advocating for the importance of maternal instincts and their place in a Christian home, it is too ironic to avoid that Mrs. Shelby’s role as a mother to slaves is more real to her than Eliza’s role as a mother to two children she has miscarried.

Slave women are not only property which cannot have property of their own, but they are also robbed of the same womanhood and feelings that white women in the novel assume to be their birthright whenever, wherever, and in whatever situation they feel like claiming it. It is interesting when looking at that quote about the two babies Eliza lost that Stowe does not linger on it. Given what we know of her writing style and her heavy-handed reminders to the reader, it would seem that this would be a good place to discuss the loss that slave mothers so often faced. And while we can be sure that Stowe did place that piece of information in there on purpose, there is something missing. The compassion and romantic appeal that we come to expect from her are conspicuously gone. Even after Harry is born, Stowe’s treatment of Eliza is flippant: “After the birth of little Harry, however, she had gradually become tranquillized and settled; and every bleeding tie and throbbing nerve, once more entwined with that little life, seemed to become sound and healthful, and Eliza was a happy woman” (25). The

miscarriages have been forgotten and Eliza is back on track to being pleasant. However, Stowe describes her as being obsessed with the child.

When Eliza goes to Mrs. Shelby to discuss the possible sale of her son, she is reprimanded for her perceived arrogance concerning her child. When she asks questions about her master selling Harry, Mrs. Shelby laughs at her for her concern and says that she is becoming too proud where he is concerned:

“Why, Eliza, child! what ails you?! said her mistress.

“O! missis, missis,” said Eliza, “there’s been a trader talking with master in the parlor! I heard him.”

“Well, silly child, suppose there has.”

“O, missis, *do* you suppose mas’r would sell my Harry?” And the poor creature threw herself into a chair, and sobbed convulsively.

“Sell him! No, you foolish girl! You know your master never deals with those southern traders, and never means to sell any of his servants, as long as they behave well. Why, you silly child, who do you think would want to buy your Harry? Do you think all the world are set on him as you are, you goosie? Come, cheer up, and hook my dress. There now, put my back hair up in that pretty braid you learnt the other day, and don’t go listening at doors any more.”

“Well, by, missis, you never would give your consent to--to--”

“Nonsense, child! to be sure, I shouldn’t. What do you talk so for? I would as soon have one of my own children sold. But really, Eliza, you are getting altogether proud of that little fellow. A man can’t put his nose in the door, but you think he must be coming to buy him”. (21-22)

Once again, Stowe makes no comment on Mrs. Shelby’s attitude toward Eliza, other than the obvious one that Mrs. Shelby has put herself into a situation where she trusts her husband completely and is in no position to tell Eliza what will or will not happen. What she says to Eliza is not addressed in the novel. So while Mrs. Shelby feels comfortable taking on a maternal role in regards to Eliza, whom she owns, she does not take Eliza’s role as a

biological mother to her child seriously. She calls Eliza a “foolish girl,” a “silly child,” and a “goosie,” and insists that Eliza is “getting altogether proud” of her son. Eliza’s feelings are made out to be a joke, with no acknowledgement of her as an adult who would have strong feelings for her child who may be sold from her. This is especially interesting because one of Stowe’s main techniques for gaining white sympathy is the picture of mothers losing their children. In the first chapter of the novel, the slave-trader, Haley describes how some slave traders separate the mother and children in slave sales: “‘I’ve seen ‘em as would pull a woman’s child out of her arms, and set him up to sell, and she screechin’ like mad all the time;--very bad policy--damages the article--makes ‘em quite unfit for service sometimes’” (17). Eliza, while capable of this depth of feeling, is not tested on it, as she is able to escape with Harry before he is taken.

It seems that Stowe wants to make the point that slave women should not have their children taken away from them, and as this is a part of slavery, slavery should be abolished. She attempts to put white women into the slave women’s shoes, saying,

If it were *your* Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, to-morrow morning,--if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o’clock till morning to make good your escape,--how fast could *you* walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom,--the little sleepy head on your shoulder,--the small, soft, arms trustingly holding on to your neck? (64)

Here, Eliza goes from being chastised by her mistress for being too affectionate toward her son to reverting to the role of a slave woman who might lose her mind over the loss of her child. Stowe seems to be unsure of what role to use for Eliza, white woman or black slave woman. This goes back to the fact that while Eliza is a good character to move the story forward and to embody Stowe’s beliefs and main points, she is unbelievable as a real woman

because the descriptions surrounding her are coming from white women. While Stowe is able to see the importance of motherhood, she seems unable to attach that role completely to Eliza.

Descriptions of Cassy show similarities to Eliza, but Cassy is used by Stowe to discuss the sexual abuse and mulatta stereotypes that Stowe does not address in Eliza. Stowe's own hierarchical attitude toward Cassy is immediately seen in the way that she stereotypically describes the woman's beauty and sexuality. In Chapter 33, when Stowe introduces Cassy, Tom notices her right away:

It was a woman, tall and slenderly formed, with remarkably delicate hands and feet, and dressed in neat and respectable garments. By the appearance of her face, she might have been between thirty-five and forty; and it was a face that, once seen, could never be forgotten,— one of those that, at a glance, seem to convey to us an idea of a wild, painful, and romantic history. Her forehead was high, and her eyebrows marked with beautiful clearness. Her straight, well-formed nose, her finely-cut mouth, and the graceful contour of her head and neck, showed that she must once have been beautiful... (373)

Like Eliza, Cassy's beauty is explained in detail, with attention to her build, as well as her features. From the beginning, Stowe introduces Cassy as "it": "It was a woman..." Later, she writes, "it was a face that, once seen, could never be forgotten" (373). Stowe does not say that hers was a face that could not be forgotten, but rather "it... could never be forgotten." This sort of casual dehumanization is a problem in a novel where one of the author's intentions is to show the humanity of the slaves. Cassy is beautiful, but it's the sort of beauty that only shows what might be done to her because of it. This beauty is a source of pain and abuse and does nothing to make Cassy more human or to align her with the default for womanhood, which is a white woman. Rather, it places her firmly in the space that mulattos and quadroons share, separate from white women and black women, and doomed to be used for their looks.

Similar to the first description of Eliza, Cassy's beauty is clearly in contrast to the black slave women in the novel. Her features are "delicate" and her clothes are "neat and respectable." Stowe uses her facial features to indicate her proximity to whiteness, stating, "Her straight, well-formed nose, her finely-cut mouth, and the graceful contour of her head and neck, showed that she must once have been beautiful" (373). The description of her facial features is an obvious nod to her whiteness. But there is also the dated categorization of her high forehead and the "graceful contour of her head and neck." All of these details serve to separate Cassy from the black slaves in the novel. And yet, because she is a mulatta with a sexual past, she cannot be in the same category as white women. This is interesting because while Stowe acknowledges that this is a consequence of the way that slavery treats women who look like Cassy, she seems to consider it a natural part of the relationship between black and white people. Cassy is written as more of a partner in the system than as its victim.

In reference to the single-minded focus on the bodily abuse that Cassy has suffered, it soon becomes clear that she is never able to achieve True Womanhood because of her sexual past. In a story that the reader would largely see as abuse today, Stowe often toes the line on pitying Cassy and trying to make her accountable for what happened to her. In a novel about why slavery should be abolished, Cassy's sexual history is one of the important areas to look at when considering Stowe's attitude toward the multiracial slave women she writes and thinking about what role she believes they do and will play in American society.

Cassy's sexual history is recorded in a way that Eliza's is not, with Stowe lapsing into a fascination for the love lives of mulattos. More importantly, her sexuality is discussed casually, in a way that the white women are not subjected to. While Cassy has a tragic sexual

history, Stowe describes Eliza early in the novel, saying “Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave” (23). So while Eliza’s appearance could be just as fatal as Cassy’s is to her, her owners protect her. In “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction,” Bentley argues that “In the case of the Mulatta heroine, if the problem of racial identity could not be resolved it could be displaced” (504). While Stowe provides no answers for how Cassy is supposed to identify, she does delve into the reasons that she believes are responsible for the abuse. In discussing mulattas, Bentley writes, “For her, miscegenation leads to a special species of slavery. As the logic of antislavery fiction has it, the sexual oppression that produces her Europeanized “beauty” also makes her the victim of the next cycle of abuse” (514). In a culture fascinated with multiracial women and their sexuality, Cassy’s abuse is easy to understand and is expected. Because of miscegenation, Cassy is expected to endure more abuse throughout her lifetime. Despite Stowe’s belief that it is wrong, she provides no other options for Cassy than to leave.

This is the main reason that Stowe provides for Cassy’s abuse. Because of the circumstances of her birth and her life, she has almost none of the privilege that Eliza grew up with. And so, sentimental again, Stowe’s first description of Cassy shows her face as being able “to convey to us an idea of a wild, painful, and romantic history” (373). The wording here is problematic because Stowe wants to convince the reader that looking at someone’s face can convey something of their personal history, specifically of their “romantic history.” There is really nothing about Cassy’s face, other than perhaps pain in her expression, which would show the viewer the details of her past. The idea that something in her appearance

would give hints to a “wild” or “romantic” past is one that oversexualizes a slave woman purely for her beauty and the assumes that a multiracial slave woman’s beauty is something “wild” and “romantic.” Also, given what we know of Cassy’s history, the idea that any of it is romantic is a disturbing one. No white women are lied to, raped, or sold in this novel. They are kept safe from sexual trauma, while a mulatto woman like Cassy is expected to have some sort of traumatic history that is also scintillating to a white reader. This idea of mulatta passion is then used as proof that multiracial women are naturally different from white woman and can only be tamed through Christianity.

In the chapter after Tom and Cassy meet, Cassy tells him her story. She tells Tom about the young lawyer who bought her, stating, “in short, though he didn’t tell me, he had paid two thousand dollars for me, and I was his property,--I became his willingly, for I loved him” (385). Black women in the novel are never described in this way, becoming sexual slaves to white men, so it is assumed that they are not as desirable to white men. White women are not seen as sexual at all as appearing nonsexual is a part of True Womanhood. Cassy describes how she wanted to marry the young lawyer who bought her, but he eventually sold her and their children. Even when Cassy belongs to Legree, Stowe describes her as having once had “smouldering embers of womanly feeling” for him before he bought Emmeline. Here, Stowe insinuates that though Cassy was a slave of both the lawyer and Legree, she had sexual passion for both of them at different times. By doing this, Stowe cuts Cassy completely out of True Womanhood, ensuring that the reader sees her as a passionate and willing accomplice to the sexual side of her slavery, at least for a time. Stowe particularly sexualizes Cassy, making her complicit in her own abuse at times. She also relies heavily on

stereotypes and problematic ideas concerning multiracial women, and Cassy is a casualty in that the reader is forced to see her as a sexual slave, rather than as an abused woman.

When the reader first meets Cassy, unlike Eliza, she gives her own account of her life and Stowe describes the rest. Here, she loses a bit of her status from the beginning. While Eliza is like a gentlewoman with history and breeding, Cassy is on her own, with no protectors and no family. From the beginning, the focus is on what has happened to her body, not necessarily her soul. Uncle Tom redirects all concern for her soul to the fact that she is not a Christian. As Bentley explains, “Keeping body and soul together, as it happens, is never the first priority in antislavery fiction (in marked contrast to the lives of most real enslaved African Americans” (505). Stowe is no different. Cassy’s soul is important to Stowe but only in that she needs to accept Christ as her savior and that focus creates an unrealistic character, leaving the reader to believe that “body and soul” were not important to real slaves either. Bentley goes on to say, “By definition, the tragic Mulatta is granted her most pronounced symbolic power by virtue of her worldly suffering” (505). By writing what white readers expect to see for Cassy, Stowe is able to avoid the question of miscegenation and what to do with multiracial women while endearing them to her. Unlike the black women in the novel, Cassy’s suffering has to do with “sexual exploitation” (505) and is what the audience expects to see. This way, Stowe is able to convince the reader to sympathize with her and to see themselves in her.

Cassy’s privilege is different from Eliza’s, possibly because she is a mulatta, and therefore, has less white blood than Eliza has, being half black, rather than a quarter black. When Cassy is introduced in Chapter 33, she is not compared to anyone in particular. She is

shown as being in worse straits than Eliza because she has had no one to look after, care for her, or stand up for her. Mrs. Shelby can still be used as an overall example of True Womanhood and what Cassy is supposed to be, but Cassy's circumstances are largely a result of being alone in a world of slave traders and masters. Her status is low because of her role as a slave woman, but also because she is a multiracial slave woman whom Stowe describes as being subject to indignities from which black slave women also suffer. After describing Cassy's beauty, Stowe writes,

her face was deeply wrinkled with lines of pain, and of proud and bitter endurance. Her complexion was sallow and unhealthy, her cheeks thin, her features sharp, and her whole form emaciated. But her eye was the most remarkable feature,--so large, so heavily black, overshadowed by long lashes of equal darkness, and so wildly, mournfully despairing. There was a fierce pride and defiance in every line of her face, in every curve of the flexible lip, in every motion of her body; but in her eye was a deep, settled night of anguish,--an expression so hopeless and unchanging as to contrast fearfully with the scorn and pride expressed by her whole demeanor. (373)

Despite Stowe's assertion that Cassy has lost her beauty because of "pain" and "bitter endurance," she describes her in a way that uses outdated ideas that physical features are proof of a person's social class. Though outdated, this description is similar to what Stowe might say about a white woman. By describing Cassy in this way, Stowe is emphasizing Cassy's whiteness. And yet, there is never any similar description for the black slave women, so it becomes clear that this is part of what Stowe sees as Cassy's white birthright; her beauty. Stowe describes her mouth and the contour of "her head and neck," and says that there is a "scorn and pride expressed by her whole demeanor" (373), showing that Cassy is born with an amount of status purely for her looks. While black slaves like Chloe are described as almost jolly, Stowe describes Cassy as a woman who is broken by her circumstances as only a white woman or a nearly white woman could be.

Unlike Eliza, Cassy does not come highly recommended. She has a master, but no mistress, and nobody has ever truly loved her. Rather, the lack of love and attention in her life has resulted in her lowered status. Because there is not and never has been any mistress in her life to teach and care for her, she has been abused and left to deal with all that the world of slavery could deal to her without protection. Stowe has created a narrative where female slaves need white women slave owners to teach them and guide them onto the right path toward womanhood. When Cassy is introduced, she just appears with no background and no warning. Stowe writes that even Tom is confused, stating,

Where she came from, or who she was, Tom did not know. The first he did know, she was walking by his side, erect and proud, in the dim gray of the dawn. To the gang, however, she was known; for there was much looking and turning of heads, and a smothered yet apparent exultation among the miserable, ragged, half-starved creatures by whom she was surrounded. (373)

From the first introduction, Cassy is introduced as being very visible, with everyone knowing who she is. And yet, she has no friends or confidants amongst the other slaves because of her specific role as Legree's sexual slave. Whereas Eliza is introduced by her connection to Mrs. Shelby, Cassy is alone and therefore, does not have the automatic status that Eliza has. And while Eliza is a friend to the Shelbys' other slaves, Cassy's fellow slaves do not like her, have pity on her, or want to help her. Instead, they are happy that she has had to come out to the field with them. She is separate from them like a white woman, "erect and proud," but she is scorned by them because technically, she is one of them, though she has never had to do the type of work that they do. Stowe paints a picture in which Cassy's sexual servitude, which stems from her white heritage and looks, has given her some leverage over the other slaves and saved her from starving and field work, which they resent, given their "smothered yet

apparent exultation.” Cassy’s status is earned through her bloodline, but unlike Eliza, she is hated for it because she has no white people in her life to be her voice or to protect her.

Without a white woman as a mother figure, she is defined by the white men who abuse her, rather than taking care of her.

The other slaves go on to taunt Cassy, insinuating that her status as Legree’s sexual slave has made her too arrogant for fieldwork among the rest of them. She therefore has no protection from her own people. In this first description of Cassy, she is clearly in the field for the first time, possibly ever. The slaves working in the field clearly know who she is and have no respect for her. Unlike Eliza, Cassy is separated from the other slaves because of her role as Legree’s personal slave and possibly because of the nature of that role. And yet, she maintains an aloof attitude toward the slaves who do not accept her. She does not try to bond with them and she does not complain about their treatment of her. She shows herself to be naturally above them:

The woman took no notice of these taunts, but walked on, with the same expression of angry scorn, as if she heard nothing. Tom had always lived among refined and cultivated people, and he felt intuitively, from her air and bearing, that she belonged to that class; but how or why she could be fallen to those degrading circumstances, he could not tell. The woman neither looked at him nor spoke to him, though, all the way to the field, she kept close at his side. (374)

Right away, because Tom had kind masters before being sold to Legree, he recognizes and believes Cassy to be above him and the rest of the slaves in the hierarchy of slaves, with the “air and bearing” of a white woman. Stowe says nothing to disprove this idea and describes Cassy as if she is not only above the other slaves, but as if hierarchies and class are things that are natural and inherent. Cassy, as a multiracial woman, is part of that higher class, though

that is not enough to boost her into the white class or True Womanhood. Here again, Stowe is describing a role or a class that is unique to multiracial women.

Cassy's status becomes clear not only in her role as Legree's personal slave but also in her appearance or her ability to "pass." When Cassy and Emmeline run away from Legree, she poses as a Creole Spanish lady. On the other hand, Eliza walks directly on the road when she runs away because "she was also so white as not to be known as of colored lineage, without a critical survey, and her child was white also," so "it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected" (65). Cassy, on the other hand, cannot pass for white, but she can pass as a woman who is not necessarily an African slave: "Cassy was dressed after the manner of the Creole Spanish ladies,--wholly in black. A small black bonnet on her head, covered by a veil thick with embroidery, concealed her face. It had been agreed that, in their escape, she was to personate the character of a Creole lady" (448). Like Eliza, Cassy is able to escape, often in broad daylight, on her way to freedom. Her looks do not allow her to be confused for a white woman, as Eliza's sometimes do, but they are enough to get her away from slavery in a manner that is not available to the black slaves. While Cassy's appearance provides her with an amount of privilege in the hierarchy between slaves, she is already ruined in the eyes of many antebellum readers, completely cutting her out of True Womanhood.

Later, when Cassy goes to help Tom after he is beaten, he asks her read the Bible to him. When she does, he says, "I can see that, some how, you're quite 'bove me in everything; but there's one thing Missis might learn even from poor Tom... The Lord han't forgot us,--I'm sartin' o' that ar'" (383). Stowe shows Cassy as being above Tom, even before she accepts salvation. This is where her hierarchical thinking becomes clear. She attempts to

say that the only differences between the slaves are their upbringings, education levels, and whether or not they know God.

Cassy's intelligence is seen in the way that she plans her escape. Her escape is similar to Eliza's in that she leaves all of the slaves except one other multiracial woman. While Eliza takes Harry, Cassy takes Emmeline because they could all safely leave without arousing too much suspicion. And just like Eliza, Cassy leaves Tom, who makes it clear that he believes the two women are not meant to live in slavery. From there, she creates a plan all by herself to use Legree's fear that the garret is haunted in order to eventually get away. All throughout chapter 39, Cassy builds the story of the haunted garret. Finally, she still does not run away, but makes it look as though she has, and while she and Emmeline wait in the garret, the search party gives up. Finally, after pretending to haunt Legree, she and Emmeline actually run away. Stowe uses Cassy's intelligence to make her into a sort of model slave who proves that the slaves do want their freedom and that they are able to think for themselves. But it is problematic that only Cassy and Eliza seem able and willing to make escape plans and to carry them out. It is never even considered that any of the other slaves would join them, except for Uncle Tom, and he refuses each time.

Because of Stowe's prejudice against Cassy's sexuality, used when describing her background, Cassy is never able to come as close to True Womanhood as Eliza does. Only later in the novel does she regain some of her womanhood, being rejoined with her daughter, Eliza, and Eliza's family. Here, like Eliza, Cassy is able to have another significant piece of True Womanhood by regaining her status as a mother. After a few days with the family, Stowe writes of Cassy, "And, indeed, in two or three days, such a change has passed over

Cassy, that our readers would scarcely know her. The despairing, haggard expression of her face had given way to one of gentle trust” (456). After years of abuse and disappointment, it seems that Cassy is able to have her life back. And yet, she does not truly have her womanhood. The same passage states, “Indeed, her love seemed to flow more naturally to the little Eliza than to her own daughter; for she was the exact image and body of the child whom she had lost” (456). Despite the fact that Stowe generally shows what has happened to Cassy as abuse, she writes an ending in which Cassy is still unable to fully regain what she lost as a mother and a woman.

Slaves like Eliza and Cassy challenge Stowe’s picture of a matriarchal domestic utopia. Berman writes about the New Orleans culture of racial mixing and what that meant for slaves in her article, “Creole Family Politics in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”.” She writes that, “French fathers were more likely than their English counterparts to treat their slave mistresses as wives and their mulatto children as their children by freeing them and giving them an inheritance” (337). This meant that women like Cassy could have potentially been treated as an equal part in the system, during or after slavery. For Stowe, this would have endangered her picture of an Edwardian system where every person has a role within the hierarchy. Berman writes,

For Stowe, this French colonial tendency to enfranchise mixed-race slaves went hand-in-hand with the history of French slave rebellion. Mulatto slaves challenged the domestic ideology of the “patriarchal institution” when they claimed a birthright not as figurative but as biological children of their father/slaveowners. (338)

While Stowe wants to rid the United States of the patriarchal institution of slavery, she does not want the slaves challenging the status quo within her domestic matriarchy. Stowe is quick to point out the multiracial children’s biological rights to claim white fathers with her long

and descriptive classifications for multiracial slaves, but she is worried about a Haitian-styled uprising. By claiming their rights as sons and daughters, rather than staying in their place as illegitimate children, slaves like Eliza and Cassy would be able to carve an equal place for themselves in the system and Stowe's hierarchy would fall apart as the women eventually demanded True Womanhood by being equal to white women. In response to this fear, Stowe makes sure that there is no place for them in the hierarchy and sends them to Africa.

Chapter 2: Stowe's Black Women: The Impossibility of True Womanhood

Stowe dehumanizes female black characters by using romantic racialism consistently in her descriptions of them and making them into characters, rather than people. Unlike multiracial slave women, black slave women have no proximity to whiteness and therefore, have no way to achieve True Womanhood. Describing them in this way ultimately erodes Stowe's goal to make the slaves' stories believable and to make the slaves seem human to white readers. In some ways, it is confusing that Stowe uses black slave women as main characters, given the difference in their descriptions compared to the multiracial slave women. However, the black slave women exist to show the horrors and atrocities of slavery. They are recognizable characters for white readers who have preconceived notions about slaves, and they exist to elicit sympathy from those readers. Through the black slave women, Stowe can talk about the gruesome side of slavery in ways that she cannot do with the multiracial slave women, for fear that the white reader will not be able to differentiate between them and white women. Black slave women are used as the lowliest characters in the novel, their needs being nonexistent. When Stowe writes her letter to Frederick Douglass, she makes it clear that she needs stories from slaves. When she actually writes the novel, black women are seen only through the lens of slavery. They are never portrayed as realistically or as fully as the other women in the novel because while the reader can get close to them, entering their homes and slave spaces, the women's inner selves are closed off as if they do not exist.

In Welter's article, "The Cult of True Womanhood," she outlines the virtues of a true woman, and the black slave women have even less of a chance of achieving it than the multiracial slave women have. Once again, Welter writes, "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her

neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (152). Unlike multiracial slave women, black slave women in the novel often have no chance for domesticity and ultimately, no chance at True Womanhood. The other three virtues are attainable for these women but in ways that are different from how white and multiracial women practice them.

In this chapter, I will be discussing Chloe and Topsy, the two main black slave women in the novel, and how they are affected by Stowe’s paternalistic whiteness in regards to their womanhood. Miss Ophelia and Rachel Halliday are the two white women that Chloe and Topsy are set against, while as we have seen in chapter one, Mrs. Shelby acts as the overarching backdrop of True Womanhood with respect to Eliza and Cassy. Both Ophelia and Rachel Halliday are used to model True Womanhood as well as to aid Stowe in discussing her ideas of matriarchal domesticity. And yet, despite the model that these white women provide, neither Chloe nor Topsy are able to achieve True Womanhood. In some ways, they have more of the tools to be successful than Eliza and Cassy have, but their blackness keeps them securely in their roles as slaves. These very slaves who could be Stowe’s best case for abolition end up seeming like an afterthought. They endure some of the worst conditions of slavery in the novel and yet, are unable to move past those conditions, despite Stowe’s desire to humanize them for the reader.

While Stowe advocates for abolition, she is not advocating for black women’s equality with white women. Despite the fact that Cassy and Topsy are used as the lowliest of the women—their blackness, their womanhood, and their places as slaves working against them—Stowe does not attempt to pull them out of that role. Topsy particularly shows Stowe’s

ultimate goal, which is to create black Christian women and send them out to evangelize to the rest of the world, particularly Africa, which Stowe still sees as their proper home.

In order to understand the hierarchy that Stowe creates with the women in the novel and how it particularly affects black women, it is important to dismantle her use of white feminism. Much of what is considered to be racist in the novel is a result of white feminism, through which Stowe feels the need and the right to disregard patriarchy any time that she feels it threatens white women. As a result, black families like Chloe's suffer for the good of white women. Stowe writes that this will benefit everybody though it does not.

Part of the reason that women like Chloe and Topsy are at the bottom of the hierarchy is due to their lack of whiteness. In Stowe's world, there is no place for black women because they belong to black men, whom she perceives to be a potential problem in the patriarchy if they gain power. Therefore, she has to move them outside of the United States after white women have done their Christian duty to educate them. In the end, women like Chloe are inevitably dispensable. Chloe and Topsy are both dispensable because they have no whiteness to endear them to white people or to ultimately save them from Stowe's romantic racialism. They are not described as beautiful, and although their lack of sexuality is one of the marks of True Womanhood, it also keeps them from having realistic marital relationships. They are capable of salvation, but unlike Eliza, who has an understanding of Christianity, their relationship to religion is overshadowed by Stowe's romantic racialism. Black women have no status within the hierarchy as they are too far from white women and placed into a separate category from multiracial women. Throughout the novel, they lack both the intelligence and maternal instincts of multiracial or white women. Unlike Eliza and Cassy, Chloe and Topsy

are not traditionally maternal and are even further removed from the white standard of Christianity and femininity.

In many ways, Stowe's glowing portrayal of multiracial women and the eternal hope that they might reach True Womanhood makes the black slave women even less human. Nicholas G. Herbert's article, "Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852-1952" states the predicament simply: "The core of the Southern defense of slavery, like Aristotle's, was always that the slave was not as other men are; he was a child or a brute" (144). Stowe uses black slave women like Chloe and Topsy to paint a well-known, though inaccurate picture of slaves. By making the two into child-like figures, she can reach readers who are still skeptical of her claims that slaves are human as well. As children, they can still be human but they can also be non-threatening to white readers.

In "(In) Famous Spirituality: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom," Irene Visser looks at the character of Uncle Tom alongside an excerpt from W.E.B. Du Bois's "The Souls of Black Folk." In response to Du Bois's famous quotation concerning the double self of the black man, Visser questions whether Uncle Tom ever realized a "fullness of self" and if Stowe believed that the "integrated sense of self" was possible. When applying these ideas to Aunt Chloe and Topsy, the slave women who have the most in common with Uncle Tom, the same questions can be asked. In comparison to Eliza and Cassy, Aunt Chloe and Topsy's freedom looks different. This is problematic since Eliza and Cassy's freedom is essential to their closeness to True Womanhood. Unlike Eliza, Aunt Chloe loses her husband before she gains her freedom. And unlike Cassy, Topsy's rescuer is a white woman who must teach her how to be a Christian before Topsy is free to leave.

In all of the descriptions of Chloe and Topsy, Stowe leaves out the other self—the inner self. The only self that the reader is allowed to see is the slave’s outer performance, which takes away humanity and womanhood from both characters. This is particularly problematic because Stowe does not only differentiate between slave women and white women. Multiracial slave women are described in terms of their whiteness, putting them alongside True Womanhood, though not in it. Black slave women are written as completely different beings. In contrast to their slave sisters, they are found wanting, whereas the multiracial slave women are only found wanting in comparison to white women. With the introduction of black slave women and the comparison of their experiences to multiracial slave women’s, Stowe is clearly using a hierarchy based not only on status, but also on shades of skin color. In a system like this, black slave women’s freedom is still paramount, but the attention to their souls is almost completely missing, except in terms of salvation, which is already easier for Africans as they are defined by patronizing romantic racialism. Therefore, salvation is not a criterion of True Womanhood for the black slave women.

In contrast to Eliza and Cassy, who are described in great detail to show their similarity to white women, both Chloe and Topsy are described briefly, made to sound like caricatures or racist antebellum dolls. Their skin is black, not fair or flushed. At times, they are described as being shiny, resembling food or ceramic dolls, or as being heathenish, like devils or demons. The admiring overtones used so liberally with Eliza and Cassy are completely missing when Stowe describes Chloe and Topsy. While Eliza and Cassy are compared constantly to white women, most of the descriptions for Chloe and Topsy are in relation to their own blackness, like their glittering eyes and woolly hair. Beautiful is not a

word that is ever used to describe either one; rather, they are made to sound sneaky or intimidating. Stowe also creates a direct link between the women's lack of beauty and the fact that neither woman has any sort of sexual history or romantic scenes in the book, despite the fact that Chloe is both a wife and a mother. The novel does return to Topsy after she has grown up, but she becomes a missionary, and unlike the three other women I discuss, she never has a husband or children. As a result, both women are viewed through a lens of romantic racialism with Stowe assuming that their African heritage makes them oppressed (rather than white people oppressing them) and ultimately more childlike, with a greater propensity for accepting Christianity.

Unlike Eliza and Cassy, Chloe and Topsy have no real status in the novel. Chloe does believe herself to hold a higher place in the hierarchy, but it is still due to her circumstances, not herself. Topsy eventually works her way up the hierarchy, but she is only able to do so because of Miss Ophelia and the opportunities afforded to her through that relationship. Only the graciousness of white women and Christian salvation can bring them a sort of status and peace. Through the salvation and the guidance of their white patrons, they are also both able to achieve an amount of intelligence. However, neither one is ever described as having the same sort of maternal instinct that comes naturally to the white and multiracial women in the novel. This places them completely outside of Stowe's criteria for the ideal woman.

Similar to Mrs. Shelby, Miss Ophelia is a white woman who shows a possibility for change and the need for it, even amongst abolitionists and northerners. Coming from Vermont, Ophelia is an abolitionist, but having never been around black people, she turns out to be racist toward them and disgusted by them, as she learns from her interactions with

Topsy. From the time that she meets Topsy, Ophelia is disgusted by the girl and is only persuaded to help her by St. Clare's ideas of "missionary work" (255). She attempts to teach Topsy how to be respectable, but the lessons are unsuccessful until Eva talks with Topsy and Topsy reveals that she knows she disgusts Ophelia. She states, "'No; she can't bar me, 'cause I'm a nigger!—she'd 's soon have a toad touch her!'" (300). Overhearing this, Ophelia is chastised by St. Clare, who tells her "'It puts me in mind of mother... It is true what she told me; if we want to give sight to the blind, we must be willing to do as Christ did,—call them to us, and *put our hands on them*'" (301). Ophelia responds by admitting, "'I've always had a prejudice against negroes... and it's a fact, I never could bear to have that child touch me; but I don't think she knew it'" (301). Ophelia is Stowe's concession to some of the hidden racism even in the abolitionist community. In this passage, Stowe uses patriarchal slave rhetoric from St. Clare to remind Ophelia of her Christian duty. And yet, the reasoning is not questioned and Stowe once again does not seem to be critiquing the patriarchal attitude.

Initially, Topsy is given to Ophelia as a slave, signed over to her by St. Clare so that Ophelia can teach her all of the things she should have learned in order to be a good Christian. At this point, Ophelia has seen the love of Christ in Eva and is determined to be more like her in her attitude toward Topsy. Eva is used as the truest example of white womanhood and everyone, including Ophelia, wants to be like her. She is not only an example of True Womanhood, despite her status as a child, but she is gracious to the slaves and they aspire to be like her as well. But despite Ophelia's good intentions, she becomes a replacement for Eva as the white female Christ figure in Topsy's life. This scene in the novel is generally understood to be Ophelia's transformation, as only the love of Christ can transform. However,

concern for Topsy always comes back to the crime that she was not taught Christianity by the white people who should have taught her. Her only value comes when she believes in Christianity, which is explained to her and maintained in her by white people. Even upon being freed, she must rely on Ophelia to be her guardian and continue to teach her how to be a Christian. From there, she becomes such a good student that she is sent away to Africa as a missionary; another one of Stowe's casualties to the colonization of Liberia.

The relationship between Ophelia and Topsy is a major part of the novel that shows Stowe's ignorance of her own paternalistic tendencies, particularly when Ophelia is reformed and changes her attitude toward Topsy. While Stowe's intentions are undoubtedly inspired by her faith and her concern for the way white people are practicing it, her approach is problematic. It is possible for Ophelia to desire Topsy's freedom and it is possible for Topsy to gain her freedom. But Stowe is unable to imagine Topsy as a full woman without Christianity and without the spiritual guidance of a white woman.

By the end of the novel, Ophelia is a model Christian woman and takes Topsy home with her, doing such a good job in raising her that Topsy becomes a perfect Christian and is sent as a missionary to Africa. Here, Stowe introduces a new kind of whiteness that allows Topsy to be technically free but still reliant on Ophelia to be her guardian and Christian mentor before Topsy can be independent. While the idea of an abolitionist buying and freeing a slave is not racist, the fact that Ophelia must buy Topsy in order to make her into a Christian shows a lack of understanding for how black people would become not only free, but independent. And just as Mrs. Shelby did with Eliza, Ophelia takes Topsy on as a responsibility for the purpose of saving her and sending her to Africa. Once again, Stowe is

very clear on Ophelia's early faults, but she is unaware of the flaws that still show up after Ophelia is reformed. At the end of chapter 25, Ophelia is so moved by Eva's love for Topsy that she states, "'Well she's so loving! After all, she's no more than Christ-like... I wish I were like her. She might teach me a lesson'" (301). And yet, earlier, when St. Clare gives Topsy to Ophelia, she accepts, but only in order to be a missionary to Topsy. Even when they leave the South, before Topsy is actually freed, Ophelia continues to raise her in Vermont, in a situation very similar to slavery. Ophelia's new status as a slave owner and eventually guardian is described as a maternal sort of care for the girl, but the fact is that Topsy is still not independent for years.

In comparison to Ophelia, both Chloe and Topsy are incapable of ever fully achieving True Womanhood. Ophelia is the personification of respectability politics and how they affect black women. And yet, Stowe does not seem to be making that point. She shows the problem without realizing it.

From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Chloe is not in the same category as Eliza and she is nowhere near Mrs. Shelby either physically or in terms of womanhood. Her entire appearance is like nothing the reader has seen yet in the novel, but it is very familiar to readers who have seen minstrel shows. In descriptions of Chloe's looks, Stowe seems to be unaware of her prejudice and of the unflattering way in which she describes her. In the very first description, Stowe writes Chloe in food and blackface metaphors:

A round, black, shining face is hers, so glossy as to suggest the idea that she might have been washed over with white of eggs, like one of her own tea rusks. Her whole plump countenance beams with satisfaction and contentment from under her well-starched checked turban, bearing on it, however, if we must confess it, a little of that tinge of self-consciousness which becomes the first cook of the neighborhood, as Aunt Chloe was universally held and acknowledged to be. (34)

In comparison to the descriptions of the white women and of the multiracial slave women, Chloe can barely be seen as a woman. It sounds as if Stowe is describing a mammy figurine, “black” and “shining.” She is large, and though she is a slave, she “beams with satisfaction and contentment.” From the reader’s first introduction to her, it is as though Chloe has no feelings at all. But Stowe makes sure that she is presentable, with her “well-starched checked turban.” Chloe is oddly vacant and resembles home-cooked food in her appearance. Her entire being is like comfort food, easy for white readers to swallow. In opposition to the goal of making slaves seem human, Chloe seems almost empty. It is as if Stowe doesn’t understand that slaves often put on a mask in front of white people for their own protection. And yet, she does refer to a mask of sorts, with Chloe’s face being “so glossy as to suggest the idea that she might have been washed over with white of eggs.” While *True Womanhood* does not have descriptions of beauty, the ideal woman is clearly beautiful in a Eurocentric way, as the reader can deduce from the descriptions of characters like Eliza, Cassy, and Mrs. Shelby. Chloe is described in a way that is not feminine and is barely even human.

Other than the fact that Chloe is married and has children, there is no discussion of her sexuality. Instead, she is described in an asexual sort of way, neither beautiful nor sexual. In theory, this should bring her closer to *True Womanhood*, as sexuality is a hindrance to it. In reality, the lack of sexuality and beauty stems from Stowe’s use of romantic racialism when describing Chloe. Because Chloe is more of a childlike character, sexuality is not even an option for her, taking away her adult qualities.

Similar to Eliza and Cassy, Chloe has some amount of status within the slave hierarchy. However, she is not in competition with either multiracial woman or with Mrs.

Shelby, the only white woman in her life. Instead, Chloe is in a hierarchy with the other black slaves. Her status comes from her role as the plantation's cook. The first time she is introduced in the novel, the reader sees her home first. Then they are informed of her role as a slave, and finally, her appearance is described.

Before the reader sees Chloe, Stowe writes about the cabin that she and Uncle Tom share. In the article, "At War with Herself: Harriet Beecher Stowe as Woman in Conflict Within the Home," Kelley uses another one of Stowe's novels, *The Minister's Wooing*, to state the importance Stowe placed on the home and what that means for the status of women. Following the model of "The Angel in the House," Stowe believes that the home is "the appointed sphere for woman, more holy than cloister, more saintly and pure than church and altar... Priestess, wife, and mother there she ministers daily in holy works of household peace" (23). According to this Victorian idea, women were meant to stay in the home, making it a peaceful and moral place for their husbands to return to. However, Chloe's home is not her own. Stowe describes it as being very lovely and having "a neat garden-patch, where, every summer, strawberries, raspberries, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, flourished under careful tending" (33). And yet, the abundance of food and the comfortable cabin do not put Chloe above her fellow slaves. Instead, her status as the cook, toiling for other people and living in a cabin that her master owns, means that she has no real life of her own. She puts the master's family above her own, and there is an understanding that despite all of her domestic work, nothing is her own, taking another element of womanhood away from her.

Stowe goes on to describe the cabin in flowery language despite its humbleness. In total, the description of Tom and Chloe's cabin comes to 11 lines, while the description of Chloe herself comes to 8 lines. And yet, it seems that the description of the cabin may also be a description of Chloe. Stowe writes,

The whole front of it was covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multiflora rose, which, entwining and interlacing, left scarce a vestige of the rough logs to be seen. Here, also, in summer, various brilliant annuals, such as marigolds, petunias, four-o'clocks, found an indulgent corner in which to unfold their splendors, and were the delight and pride of Aunt Chloe's heart. (33)

The cabin itself is made of "rough" logs but is so covered with flowers that the logs are barely visible. Similarly, Chloe is not described as beautiful, but she is clean and presentable. This cabin is used to give her an amount of dignity while also keeping her firmly in the slave class. While it is true that she is a slave, Stowe's use of the cabin as an extension of Chloe's status comes up empty and leaves the reader feeling that without the protection of her masters, Chloe would be even lower. While Eliza and Cassy gain status from their beauty, Chloe gains it from the lifestyle that she has been given. Similar to her descriptions of the multiracial women in the novel, Stowe describes the cabin that Chloe does not own in sentimental language, while her description of Chloe is neither beautiful nor substantial.

Along with the descriptions of Chloe's surroundings and appearance, her status as a slave is dependent on her role as the cook:

A cook she certainly was, in the very bone and centre of her soul. Not a chicken or a turkey or duck in the barn-yard but looked grave when they saw her approaching, and seemed evidently to be reflecting on their latter end; and certain it was that she was always meditating on trussing, stuffing and roasting, to a degree that was calculated to inspire terror in any reflecting fowl living. (34)

Here, Stowe attempts to be funny, describing how Chloe is “always meditating on trussing, stuffing and roasting” the fowl in the yard, “to a degree that was calculated to inspire terror in any reflecting fowl living.” And yet, in a passage meant to describe who Chloe is, in “her soul,” a mockingly humorous description of her thoughts on what she can cook and how is jarring. Whereas Stowe provides pages of descriptions on Eliza’s thoughts and feelings, Chloe seems to be written like a humorous interlude, at least in the way Stowe introduces her.

While Eliza is privy to a discussion early on in the novel about the sale of Henry and Tom, Chloe is physically left out of the picture. While this is likely and probable, given that Eliza is a house slave and Chloe is the cook, it still places Chloe outside of the circle of womanhood made up of Mrs. Shelby and Eliza. This description also places Chloe immediately into the role of slave. While we know that she is a slave, this is interesting given the fact that she is in her cabin, the one place that Stowe might have been able to take her away from the prying eyes of white people. Instead, she is still defined by her role as the cook. Even as she is cooking for her family, the slave-owning family’s son is free to come into her cabin and make demands concerning the meal that was meant for Chloe’s family. So her role as a slave becomes her identity, giving her status amongst the black slaves, but stripping her of an identity as a woman in her own right.

Christina Zwarg’s article, “Fathering and Blackface in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” explains why even Chloe’s kitchen in the Shelby’s home cannot bring her status:

Aunt Chloe’s “kitchen” in the big house provides something of the same kind of subversive space; Chloe knows, for example, that she is “in the right” (73) when she dismisses Mrs. Shelby from her kitchen. Nevertheless, Chloe’s kitchen is too subsumed by its function within the larger slave-owning community to be the ultimate model for Stowe. From her kitchen Chloe actually “serves” the capitalist system. (276, 277)

If Chloe's role as the cook gives her status, it is expected that her kitchen is the place where she is truly a woman. However, there is no way out of the fact that she is a slave to the system. This seems obvious, but Stowe seems to try and give Chloe a role, a sense of purpose, and a sense of self through her role as the cook. If "her" kitchen is not her own and is actually the site where she serves the slave system, then Chloe has nowhere to be herself and Stowe has not written any sort of reprieve into the novel for her.

Stowe goes on to describe Chloe's soul, but it is still in reference to her job. After describing Chloe's cooking and baking, Stowe states,

The arrival of company at the house, the arranging of dinners and suppers 'in style,' awoke all the energies of her soul; and no sight was more welcome to her than a pile of travelling trunks launched on the verandah, for then she foresaw fresh efforts and fresh triumphs. (34)

Here, Stowe attempts to display Chloe's femininity through her domestic role. However, she ignores the fact that this is Chloe's job. This is not her home and the guests are not her guests. "Fresh efforts" do not lead to "fresh triumphs" (34) when the efforts are not for her own home.

The description of the interior of Chloe's home is much more humble and comes across as mocking. Stowe describes the humble home with "a piece of carpeting" by the bed. She states,

On this piece of carpeting Aunt Chloe took her stand, as being decidedly in the upper walks of life; and it and the bed by which it lay, and the whole corner, in fact, were treated with distinguished consideration and made, so far as possible, sacred from the marauding inroads and desecrations of little folks. In fact, that corner was the drawing-room of the establishment. (34)

While Eliza's room is written in a normal tone of voice, it seems here that Stowe is mocking Chloe. Chloe has attempted to make the one-room shack into more than what it is and Stowe

invites the reader to laugh with her about it. The carpet and the imaginary drawing room are a remnant of someone else's life and an attempt at rising out of their station. And yet, the unrealistic nature of the drawing room is what puts Chloe squarely back in her place. She can only dream and seems content to do so, with no aspirations for a cabin of her own. Here, Stowe provides a glimpse into Chloe's thoughts, but the reader can still only guess at her motivations and feelings. Rather than marking the difference between the two women's living situations, Stowe mentions them but treats Chloe as if she is unaware of her circumstances, stating that Chloe believes herself to be "decidedly in the upper walks of life" (34). It is clear from the descriptions of Mrs. Shelby's living quarters and Eliza's rooms that Chloe is not in the upper walks of life, so the reader is left to wonder if Stowe believes that this is good enough for Chloe or if she is making fun of the woman's ignorance.

Unlike Eliza and Cassy, Chloe is not white. Stowe makes sure to describe her as black and nothing else. Correspondingly, she does not have a close relationship with any white women. However, Stowe does write a few scenes where Chloe and Mrs. Shelby have conversations and she also uses Rachel Halliday as a white version of Chloe. As Ammons describes in "Heroines in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," "For Stowe, Rachel Halliday's beauty issues from her perfection as a mother and from the way she uses her power in what is in practice a matriarchal (because completely home-centered) community" (166). Stowe is able to see beauty in Rachel Halliday, despite the fact that she is not as physically beautiful as Eliza. With Rachel, Stowe shows the importance of the matriarchy and of maternal figures. And yet, Chloe, the woman most like Rachel, is never described as beautiful. Instead, she is found severely wanting next to Rachel's example. Here again, where Stowe could have made one of

the slave characters human and believable and equal to a white character, Stowe very purposely makes Chloe look foolish next to Rachel, who should have been her counterpart.

Brown's article, "Getting the in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," describes the "ideal kitchen," according to Stowe's sister, Catherine Beecher, author of *Treatise of Domesticity*. Using Beecher's book, Brown explains that "The ideal kitchen in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* functions smoothly under the aegis of "motherly loving kindness" (I, 196)" (512). Rachel Halliday runs a kitchen that best reflects Beecher's ideal domesticity: "Rachel embodies and dispenses that spirit of love, 'diffusing a sort of sunny radiance' over meal preparations (I, 204)" (512). It is the "abundance and generosity" in Rachel's kitchen, in conjunction with the "Christian 'spirit of love'" (512), that makes her kitchen an example of Christian domesticity. Brown also compares Rachel Halliday to Ophelia, referring back to Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where Stowe explains that "despite her 'activity, zeal, unflinching conscientiousness, clear intellectual discriminations between truth and error, and great logical and doctrinal correctness,'" she "represents one great sin': the lack of the Christian 'spirit of love'" (512). However, I would like to compare Rachel Halliday to Chloe. Chloe has some of the abundance and some of Rachel's kindness, but not a true Christian spirit of love. She is childish, uninterested in God, and she holds grudges in her kitchen. Stowe makes a comparison between her and Rachel Halliday, but does not acknowledge that Chloe's experience is different. While Rachel Halliday lives in Stowe's dream-like "utopian domestic economy" (512), and runs her own kitchen, Chloe is a slave, managing Mrs. Shelby's kitchen. And while Stowe has written Chloe as lacking in realistic feeling, she holds her to the same standard that Rachel Halliday represents. Here, Chloe is

failing at True Womanhood in the same area that she defines herself by, which is her role as a cook and her comfortable home with abundant food and beauty. Because she cannot reach Rachel Halliday's status, she is pushed back to the bottom of the hierarchy while Stowe continues to write, seemingly unaware of the problems within the narrative.

Salvation is a continuous, recurring problem with Chloe. While the true woman is expected to be pious, Chloe struggles with piety. Her actions are often not pious, and her husband continuously reminds her that her attitude is not Christian either. When Eliza runs away, Chloe takes on the attitude of Mrs. Shelby in despising Mr. Haley and refusing to help hurry the search:

Though Mrs. Shelby had promised that the dinner should be hurried on table, yet it was soon seen, as the thing has often been seen before, that it required more than one to make a bargain. So, although the order was fairly given out in Haley's hearing, and carried to Aunt Chloe by at least half a dozen juvenile messengers, that dignitary only gave certain very gruff snorts, and tosses of her head, and went on with every operation in an unusually leisurely and circumstantial matter. (67)

While the other slaves are treating the scenario as a joke, Chloe is serious about her duty in refusing to do anything that might help Mr. Haley. And yet, once again, it seems as though Stowe is mocking her seriousness, just as she did with the so-called drawing room in Chloe's cabin. Here, Chloe takes control of her domestic duties, refusing to do them quickly on principle, but also to aid in Mrs. Shelby's cause. She is also very un-ladylike, with her "very gruff snorts, and tosses of her head." It is difficult here to know if Stowe will do anything for a laugh from her readers or if she truly does not see how much of a caricature Chloe is, even in serious moments.

Soon, Chloe has an audience in the kitchen, as she begins to relate the Bible to Mr. Haley. When little Jake says that Haley will "go to torment, and no mistake" (68), Chloe

replies by stating, ““He deserves it!” and ““he’s broken a many, many, many heart,—I tell ye all!”... “it’s like what Mas’r George reads in Revelations,—souls a callin’ under the altar! and a callin’ on the Lord for vengeance on sich!—and by and by the Lord he’ll hear ‘em—so he will!”” (68). Upon hearing this, Uncle Tom enters the kitchen and tells everyone there, including Chloe, that they shouldn’t wish that on anyone. Chloe argues with him and cries, only for Tom to say, ““Pray for them that ‘spitefully use you, the good book says”” (68). Unlike Mrs. Shelby or even Eliza, Chloe’s husband chastises her and he is the one to remind her of how Christianity requires her to act. In a reversal from those wives and their husbands, Chloe is the one to tell her husband that forgiveness is too difficult while he continues to remind her that they must do it.

On the day that Uncle Tom is taken away, Chloe once again must be reminded by him to trust God. She is the one who begins to complain about him being taken away and makes pointed statements about what is expected of them as slaves while also questioning the idea that they should accept it. Bringing God into the conversation twice, she asks how the Lord expects her to “be resigned.”

“S’pose we must be resigned; but oh Lord! how ken I? If I know’d anything whar you’s goin’, or how they’d sarve you! Missis says she’ll try and ‘deem ye, in a year of two; but Lor! nobody never comes up that goes down thar! They kills ‘em! I’ve hearn ‘em tell how dey works ‘em up on dem ar plantations”. (107, 108)

Tom tells her, ““There’ll be the same God there, Chloe, that there is here”” (108). She responds by saying that ““de Lord lets drefful things happen, sometimes. I don’t seem to get no comfort dat way”” (108). The two argue about the Lord for another page, with Tom once again playing the role that a wife is supposed to play in True Womanhood, bringing his wife

consistently back to Christianity and piety. Here, though the reader is given a glimpse into Chloe's real thoughts, Tom's reprimand renders those opinions useless and un-Christian.

At the end of the novel, when young George tells Mrs. Shelby and Chloe that Tom has died, Mrs. Shelby is the one to remind Chloe of Christ. After Chloe goes to leave the room, Mrs. Shelby draws back and Chloe apologizes for crying on her: ““O Missis! ‘scuse me, my heart’s broke,—dat’s all!”” (464). Instead of treating Chloe as a woman who has just lost her husband due to the Shelbys’ own money problems, Mrs. Shelby tells her, ““I know it is... and *I* cannot heal it, but Jesus can. He healeth the broken hearted, and bindeth up their wounds”” (464). While there is nothing wrong with Mrs. Shelby’s statement in terms of Christian belief, it once again ignores that Chloe is a real woman. Chloe is reminded again to turn to Jesus, with no apology for what the Shelbys’ sin of slave owning has cost her. She is found wanting once again when compared to Mrs. Shelby and to her now-deceased husband. Here, Stowe’s concern for the status of white women is most clear. Stowe is completely unaware that it is wrong for Chloe to have to appease or comfort Mrs. Shelby, instead of the other way around.

As a black woman, Chloe is treated in much the same way that her children or the younger Topsy are treated. As a result of her childlike identity, she is told what to do by almost everybody, leaving the reader no room to imagine how Chloe would fare if slavery were abolished. Even young George is able to invade Chloe’s home and time, while Stowe gives her no agency or legitimate emotion. Stowe portrays a world that is unrealistic by allowing young George into Chloe’s home, but describing no displeasure from her. Instead, Chloe welcomes “young Mas’r George, a smart, bright boy of thirteen” (35) into her home during her family’s dinnertime, although she has already made dinner for the masters’ house.

George stays to teach Uncle Tom to write, eat dinner, and lead a prayer meeting, while Chloe dotes on him above her own children and husband. Despite the fact that she is supposed to be making dinner for her family, when George asks about dinner being ready, she tells her children, ““Here you, Mose and Pete! get out de way, you niggers! Get away, Mericky, honey,—mammy’ll giver her baby some fin, by and by”” (36). Then she tells him, ““Now, Mas’r George, you jest take off dem books, and set down now with my old man, and I’ll take up de sausages and have de first griddle full of cakes on your plates in less dan no time”” (36). Stowe makes clear points about the amount of power that the child of a slaveholder has, but ignores the possibility that Chloe would have an opinion on a child master invading her home and time with her family. In general, Chloe has few opinions of her own, though she does make a few comments about slavery, only to be reprimanded by Tom, who tells her to act more Christian.

Even as George is helping Tom with the alphabet, both Tom and Chloe marvel at how smart he is. Chloe even says, ““How easy white folks al’us does things!”” (35). She goes on to praise George, saying, ““The way he can write, now! and read, too! and then to come out here evenings and read his lessons to us,—it’s mighty interesting!”” (35). The mood in this scene is uncomfortable, as Stowe does not attempt to correct anything that Chloe is saying. There is no mention of Chloe having her own feelings or being at work, as she would likely be. Instead, this attitude is written as if these are her real feelings. It becomes unclear what Stowe is trying to accomplish here by writing Chloe, an adult woman, as a dotting slave in awe of a white child.

In “Heroines in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” Ammons quotes Alice C. Crozier, saying that, “the novel characterizes mothers as “the real saviors of society,” and writes about Stowe’s focus on maternal characteristics and their relatedness to Christian characteristics. However, Chloe is the only mother in the novel who does not display the maternal instinct seen in the other women. From the beginning of the novel, when Chloe’s boys are running wild and she pays little mind to them to the conversation when she asks Mrs. Shelby if she can be hired out, her children are never a major concern. It is Mrs. Shelby who asks Chloe if she minds leaving her children, and Chloe insists that they’re old enough to take care of themselves, despite the fact that they are just children. By Stowe’s definition, Chloe’s carelessness as a mother means that she is not a full woman, as she is not fulfilling her most important duty as a woman and a Christian. She fails as a woman because Stowe writes Mrs. Shelby as the mother figure over Chloe, while Chloe is set up for failure. She will always act like the child, rather than an adult woman and mother.

In the article, “Imitation Nation: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of African American Selfhood in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” Richards argues that the entire introduction to Chloe and her children constitutes blackface. If so, it makes sense that Chloe would never be able to be truly maternal. Her own children “represent the irrepressible, disorderly minstrel slave” (207). The only complete scene in Chloe’s house with her family is a minstrel show. In the reader’s first introduction to Chloe as a mother, she is a joke.

The article by Ammons shares Stowe’s definitions of femininity and womanhood, all hinging on motherhood. Ammons uses the argument that Chloe and Mrs. Shelby work together as maternal figures to save Eliza. But white women in the novel are described more

fully and more positively than the slave women. While Chloe works with Mrs. Shelby to save Eliza, the act begins when Mrs. Shelby orders it. Mrs. Shelby is always in charge of the slave women on the plantation, no matter how Christian her actions.

From that first time Stowe introduces Chloe in her cabin with George there, Chloe takes care of him before her own children, making her seem to be less of a mother than Eliza, who puts her son before everyone else. Chloe feeds George first and then feeds her children only after he is finished:

Master George had arrived at that pass to which even a boy can come (under uncommon circumstances, when he really could not eat another morsel), and therefore, he was at leisure to notice the pile of wooly heads and glistening eyes which were regarding their operations hungrily from the opposite corner. (39)

Apparently, during the long conversation about Chloe's cooking and George eating until he cannot eat anymore, Chloe's own children have not been fed from the meal she is supposed to be cooking for them. From there, it is George, not Chloe, who feeds the boys, "breaking off liberal bits, and throwing it at them; "“you want some, don't you? Come, Chloe, bake them some cakes”" (39). It becomes clear that Chloe has allowed George to eat all of the food with no concern for her own children. Then she allows him to treat them like dogs, throwing his scraps of food to them. The entire time, Stowe gives no glimpse into realistic maternal thoughts happening in Chloe's head. Finally, Chloe feeds the baby and the boys, but the boys prefer the food thrown to them by George. This passage is full of stereotypes and it is uncertain what Stowe is trying to accomplish. Stock character descriptions flow throughout the passage, unchecked, while the difference between Chloe's mothering and Eliza's is fresh in the reader's mind.

As the night wears on, George is invited to the meeting, but Chloe tells her own children to go to bed. Only when George tells her to let them stay does she allow it. The boys are rowdy as they get ready for the meeting and Chloe tells them, ““Come now, be decent, can’t ye?”” (41). But George joins the boys in laughing and “the maternal admonition seemed rather to fail of effect” (41). It is clear at this point that George has more control of the situation with Chloe’s children than she herself does.

The other character written like Chloe is Topsy. She is also a black slave, but unlike the other women I have described, Topsy is introduced as a child and much later, as a woman. Topsy is written as a slave to her race who can only be saved by Christianity. Stowe’s descriptions of her are as a heathen, but the proof for that is often in her appearance: her blackness and her physical body. In Visser’s article, Topsy is mentioned as being “transformed” like Tom is in reproductions of the novel, like the plays that often took artistic license with the original text. Visser argues that in these reproductions,

Topsy was reduced to a clownesque, ridiculous type, without any psychological resemblance to Stowe’s original Topsy, who attains a sense of belonging and selfhood despite her initial sense of alienation, memorably expressed by her words, “never had no father nor mother, nor nothin’... I spect I grow’d”. (Visser)

But this sort of description attempts to simplify and redeem Stowe without real proof. The argument is not about whether Stowe is racist, but rather, whether there are racial problems in the novel and how they show a sense of paternalistic whiteness toward the slaves. Stowe’s description of Topsy *is* “a clownesque, ridiculous type,” with her redeeming quality being a willingness to accept Christianity and take it to Africa. It is Stowe’s willingness to write Topsy in this way at all that is troubling to modern readers because it shows Stowe’s Christ complex as a white woman who could only imagine saving the slaves because Christianity

demanded that she do it and because only Christianity could save them from their wild and heathen nature.

Chapter 20 begins with St. Clare introducing Topsy as a gift for Ophelia. Stowe's description of the girl is different from descriptions of every other woman in the novel, including Chloe. Stowe writes,

She was one of the blackest of her race; and her round, shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room. Her mouth, half open with astonishment at the wonders of the new Mas'r's parlor, displayed a white and brilliant set of teeth. Her wooly hair was braided in sundry little tails, which stuck out in every direction. The expression of her face was an odd mix of shrewdness and cunning, over which was oddly drawn, like a kind of veil, an expression of the most doleful gravity and solemnity.

In this passage, Stowe introduces Topsy by her blackness and goes on to describe her as more of an object than a human girl. Her eyes are "glittering as glass beads" showing no emotion. Stowe even describes her teeth, which is an interesting choice, given that slave traders also checked eyes and teeth for signs of health before buying both slaves and animals. Finally, even Topsy's expression is lacking signs of human life, with "a kind of veil" over it. Instead of giving a description of Topsy's inside thoughts, Stowe addresses her vagueness but makes it a part of her, rather than a fault with the writing. Stowe goes on to use words like "odd and goblin-like" and "heathenish" (253) to describe Topsy's appearance. It becomes clear that she is described as wild because of her lack of Christian values, mimicking the minstrel character most incapable of thought and least likely to have a conscience. There is no acknowledgement from Stowe that her character is taken straight from a minstrel show. Instead, Topsy is used as an example of what black people are like without Christian guidance from white people. It is very clear here where modern readers have found fault with Stowe and with the novel. But to

describe this passage as simply racist ignores the fact that this was an acceptable and recognizable way of seeing slaves at the time. It actually feels more familiar than the long, drawn-out descriptions of the multiracial women, in which Stowe spends paragraph after paragraph describing their beauty and their relation to whiteness. Here, it feels as though Stowe became lazy, which is problematic when describing a main character with whom readers are expected to relate and understand. The descriptions are so stereotypical that it is hard to believe that the reader will read deeper into them after having descriptions of the multiracial women handed to them and explained by Stowe.

Similar to descriptions of Chloe, Topsy is never described as beautiful. After her initial description, there are consistent references to her looks being heathenish and evil. The next belabored passage describing Topsy's appearance puts her next to Eva:

There stood two children, representatives of the two extremes of society. The fair, high-bred child, with her golden head, her deep eyes, her spiritual, noble brow, and prince-like movements; and her black, keen, subtle, cringing, yet acute neighbor. They stood the representatives of their races. The Saxon, born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence; the Afric, born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice! (261)

This is the first time that Topsy has been treated like a child, despite the fact that Stowe says in the beginning of the chapter that she is "about eight or nine years of age" (253). In contrast to Eva, Stowe once again writes that Topsy is not beautiful. Where Topsy is "black," Eva is "fair," not white. Where Topsy is "keen," Eva is "high-bred." Topsy is "subtle," but Eva is "high-bred." And Topsy is "cringing, yet acute" while Eva is described by her beauty and her "noble brow" (261). The descriptions of the two are not parallel where they should be parallel, and Eva's beauty is described while Topsy's lowliness is described. Stowe also includes an interestingly inaccurate opinion on white and black people's origins, stating that white people

are “born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence.” This phrase places no time frame on the claim that white people have always been physically and morally superior and ignores Stowe’s entire argument that white people need to fix the sin of slavery. She goes on to describe black people as being “born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice.” She seems to have no understanding that black people existed before slavery and they had their own societies, cultures, and traditions. This is one of the most blatantly racist statements in the novel, assuming that Africans were inferior in every way before white Christians took them in as slaves. Stowe also describes Topsy as a product of slavery, once again completely disregarding Africans as people with their own cultures and heritages outside of slavery.

After Eva’s kindness to Topsy, Stowe writes that these were “the first words of kindness the child had ever heard in her life; and the sweet tone and manner struck strangely on the wild, rude heart, and a sparkle of something like a tear shone in the keen, round, glittering eye; but it was followed by the short laugh and habitual grin” (262). Like an animal, Topsy is described as having a “keen, round, glittering eye” and a “short laugh and habitual grin.” She resembles a hyena here, with nothing approachable or realistic behind her face. Unlike the description of Cassy, where her wild face represented a tortured soul inside, Topsy has a “wild, rude heart.” There is nothing human or approachable about her. While Stowe is trying to make the point that Topsy has never felt love, she still compares her to Eva with beautiful descriptions of Eva’s nature and ugly descriptions of Topsy’s nature and appearance.

In one of the novel’s most famous scenes, Eva is talking to Topsy about Jesus, with Eva being like an angel or Christ and Topsy being the heathen. When St. Clare and Miss

Ophelia look in on the two girls, Stowe describes them first by their appearance: “There sat the two children on the floor, with their side faces towards them. Topsy, with her usual air of careless drollery and unconcern; but, opposite to her, Eva, her whole face fervent with feeling, and tear in her large eyes” (300). After expressing her love for Topsy, Eva expresses sympathy for her and tells her about Jesus. After Topsy tells her, ““’Couldn’t never be nothin’ but a nigger, if I was ever so good... If I could be skinned, and come white, I’d try then” (300), Eva responds to this with Christian platitudes, disregarding Topsy’s despair. Stowe ignores the immediate problem that the two girls are not treated equally and that Topsy has been made out to be a heathen:

“Poor Topsy!” said Eva, “don’t you know that Jesus loves all alike? He is just as willing to love you, as me. He loves you just as I do,— only more, because he is better. He will help you to be good; and you can go to Heaven at last, and be an angel forever, just as much as if you were white. Only think of it, Topsy!— you can be one of those spirits bright, Uncle Tom sings about. (301)

While Eva does make reference to Topsy being equal to white people, it only happens in heaven, where Topsy’s deceased self would be allowed to achieve angel status, just like white people. Here, we see Stowe making no distinction between white people and Christians, an occurrence that happens several times throughout the novel.

Everything that Stowe writes in her descriptions of Topsy’s appearance is negative and a source of concern for the white women around her. In addition to having no discernable femininity, beauty, or intelligence, Topsy’s shortcomings are all described as being due to her lack of Christian training. She is described as droll because of her blackness, while all the descriptions of feeling and emotion go to Eva.

From the very beginning of Topsy's part in the story, Stowe makes it very clear to the reader that Topsy has no whiteness in her and she is completely separate from white people. From the description of her appearance to Ophelia's reaction to her, Topsy is a racist caricature taken from the minstrel shows. In contrast to the white people around her, Topsy's actions seem irredeemable. While it can be argued that Stowe is attempting to prove that slavery dehumanizes people, there is still no glimpse that Topsy is a real person at all. She has apparently been so affected by slavery as to believe that she is worthless and inherently wicked, Stowe even places Topsy inside the joke with Mr. St. Clare, who Stowe describes as "a mischievous fellow," and who gives Topsy to Ophelia because he "appeared to enjoy her astonishment" (254). He uses Topsy as a sort of prank on Ophelia, and while Stowe's disgust is apparent, Topsy is the one who suffers. As a main character in the story, she is used as the butt of a joke in a novel meant to make white people think. But they are not thinking about her. They are thinking about the debased man who would find this bad behavior amusing.

Unlike Eliza, Cassy, and even Chloe. Topsy has no one to give her status. She is one of the lowliest characters in the novel, but St. Clare rescues her because he feels sorry for her. Unlike the other characters, she has no pretensions of being part of higher class, and no one else attaches any sort of status to her. Instead, they are either disgusted by her or feel sorry for her. When St. Clare explains to Ophelia why he bought her, her says,

"Why, the fact is, this concern belonged to a couple of drunken creatures that keep a low restaurant that I have to pass by every day, and I was tired of hearing her screaming, and them beating and swearing at her. She looked bright and funny, too, as if something might be made of her;—so I bought her, and I'll give her to you. Try, now, and give her a good orthodox New England bringing up, and see what it'll make of her". (255)

Here, we see Stowe's intent to bring even the lowliest black slaves out of slavery. Unlike other slaves, Stowe seems to find no beauty or even humanity in Topsy. Instead, she is "bright and funny." And the real crime is the way that the "drunken creates" treat her. It seems that Stowe is unable to find many redeemable qualities in slaves like Topsy, so she puts the responsibility on white people to have sympathy for the slaves.

Even Miss Ophelia cleans her up; Topsy is described in a way that none of the other slaves are ever described. It seems to be Stowe's intention to draw attention to the horrific indignities that she has faced, but it merely succeeds in stripping more dignity from Topsy. In one of her personal interjections, Stowe tells the reader, "It is not for ears polite to hear the particulars of the first toilet of a neglected, abused child" (256). She spares the white reader the real indignities of Topsy's condition but attempts to frame it as giving Topsy her dignity. However, her focus is "ears polite," meaning that her concern is for white people who are not participating explicitly in slavery and will be unused to the horrific results of neglect. And yet, Stowe goes on to talk about "great welts and calloused spots, ineffaceable marks of the system under which she had grown up thus far" (256). Here, Topsy is more of a symbol than a real child. There are none of the tears that spring up sporadically throughout the novel, and everyone reacts more in disgust than in real pity.

Another problem that separates Topsy from all the other slaves is that she has no idea where she came from. She tells Ophelia, "Never was born," and "never had no father nor mother, nor nothin'. I was raised by a speculator, with lots of others" (257). Jane goes on to explain to Ophelia, "'Laws, Missis, there's heaps of 'em. Speculators buys 'em up cheap, when they's little, and gets 'em raised for market'" (257). Here, Stowe resorts again to writing

in the style of a slave owner, using Topsy shamelessly to prove her point that slave owners have abused and degraded the slaves. And yet, to do so, she writes Topsy as being completely ignorant of what has happened to her, with none of her own feelings about it and only Jane to speak up for her and to tell what has happened to her.

Topsy's status and lack of Christian training are closely related throughout the novel. Upon first meeting Topsy, Ophelia asks St. Clare why he has given Topsy to her. He tells her, "For you to educate—didn't I tell you? You're always preaching about educating. I thought I would make you a present of a fresh-caught specimen, and let you try your hand on her, and bring her up in the way she should go" (254). From the beginning, Ophelia is placed in the position of good Christian woman and educator. And Topsy is wicked because of a lack of training. But once again, Topsy is described as an animal, St. Clare describing her as "a fresh-caught specimen." The way that Stowe continues to describe her as an animal and something to be contained makes it seem as though this is a natural state for her, not something that has been imposed on her. Instead of bringing out the good in Topsy, Ophelia will have to create it. After Ophelia has cleaned the girl up, she asks,

"Have you ever heard anything about God, Topsy?"

The child looked bewildered, but grinned as usual.

"Do you know who made you?"

"Nobody, as I knows on," said the child, with a short laugh.

The idea appeared to amuse her considerably; for her eyes twinkled, and she added,

"I spects I grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me" (257).

Here, Topsy is described as being a sort of heathen, from Miss Ophelia's point of view. She is not only ignorant of the concept of family, but Stowe is also making a point that she doesn't understand Christian beliefs at all, with the comment that, "nobody never made me" (257). After Ophelia realizes that Topsy has no training or upbringing at all, St. Clare tells her, "You find virgin soil there, Cousin; put in your own ideas,—you won't find many to pull up" (257). Because of this, Topsy is able to be Stowe's success story. Instead of addressing the realistic human issues that come from abuse and violence, Stowe chooses to make Topsy empty. A little girl who had been abused would be very tragic and might have irreparable damage. But an empty child would be ripe for salvation, if only good white women like Ophelia would put in the time. In this way, Topsy is described as a pet who can be trained, rather than as a child who can be taught and educated.

Topsy does have a form of intelligence, but it is not the kind of intelligence that respectable white people would have approved of. Upon that first meeting, St. Clare and Topsy are described as working together to pull a prank on Ophelia. When St. Clare gives her to Ophelia, the woman is horrified and shocked. St. Clare tells Topsy, "Topsy, this is your new mistress. I'm going to give you to her; now see that you behave yourself" (254). In response, Topsy says, "Yes, Mas'r,' ... with sanctimonious gravity, her wicked eyes twinkling as she spoke" (254). Stowe at times tries to show the soul of a person purely through the expression on their face, as she does with Cassy. And here, she says that Topsy's "wicked eyes" are "twinkling" (254). The reader is left to conclude that Topsy truly is wicked all the way to her soul. So, while she may have a sort of intelligence, it is wickedness, in Stowe's opinion.

Even when Topsy attempts to steal Ophelia's things, she suddenly changes from a quiet and almost confused child to being very smart. After putting the glove and ribbon into her sleeve, the ribbon hangs out of one sleeve and Miss Ophelia sees it. Suddenly, Topsy has excuses and reasons, and she is more cunning than she has been up to this point. She responds by saying, "'Laws! why, that ar's Miss Feely's ribbon, an't it? How could it a got caught in my sleeve?'" (259). Even after Ophelia tells her that she is lying, Topsy insists that she did not steal the ribbon, saying she "'never seed it till dis yer blessed minnit'" (259). So while Stowe paints Topsy as a child who does not know any better, she is actually capable of telling elaborate lies, making her more dangerous to Ophelia than the simple child that St. Clare says she is.

Stowe's descriptions of Topsy's intelligence tend to come across as veiled criticisms or backwards compliments. While she works with Ophelia, she is described as "smart and energetic in all manual operations, learning everything that was taught her with surprising quickness" (264). But a page earlier, Stowe says that Topsy was quick to learn to read, "but the sewing was a more difficult matter" (263). She describes Topsy as being

lithe as a cat, and as active as a monkey, and the confinement of sewing was her abomination; so she broke her needles, threw them slyly out of windows, or down in chinks of the walls; she tangled, broke, and dirtied her thread, or, with a sly movement, would throw a spool away altogether. Her motions were almost as quick as those of a practised conjurer, and her command of her face quite as great. (263)

Stowe perceives Topsy to be quick and smart like a monkey. While she has a quick mind, it is only used for mischief. Right away, Topsy fails at sewing, which is one of women's primary domestic duties. If Topsy not only fails at sewing, but also has no interest in it, she cannot be the ideal woman. Though Stowe makes it clear that she believes Topsy's personality and

actions to be a result of neglect and abuse, she forgets that humans are humans, regardless, and people do not have to be taught to feel. By writing Topsy in a way that compares her to an animal and literally calling her a monkey, Stowe makes it impossible for skeptical readers to see deeper into the possible soul of Topsy, as Stowe has not written one for her. After Topsy is caught cutting Ophelia's bonnet into dolls' jackets, St. Clare does call her a monkey, while being "amused at the child's expression," her eyes being full of "apprehensiveness and their usual odd drollery" (299). Stowe uses Topsy's upbringing or lack of it, to make her appear inhuman, which in turn makes Topsy's transition to adult woman almost unbelievable. Stowe wants to tell the reader that education and Christianity have the power to transform people, but instead, she uses the slave owners' argument that slaves like Topsy aren't really people anyway. In "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of Race," Graham writes that, "The Topsy story also illustrates her insight into the subtleties of racial oppression, for Topsy's predicament is not simply a result of brute oppression; it is also caused by her internalization of the valuations made by the master" (619). While this sounds plausible, it only makes sense if the reader believes that the way a person is treated can strip them of their humanity and soul.

Eventually, Topsy is able to gain a form of womanhood. The end of the novel states that after Miss Ophelia took her back to Vermont, she was trained up as a Christian and "rapidly grew in grace and favor with the family and neighborhood" (460). Stowe states that

At the age of womanhood, she was, by her own request, baptized, and became a member of the Christian church in the place; and showed so much intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world, that she was at last recommended, and approved, as a missionary to one of the stations in Africa; and we have heard that the same activity and ingenuity which, when a child, made her so

multiform and restless in her developments, is now employed, in a safer and wholesomer manner, in teaching the children of her own country. (460)

While Topsy does reach “the age of womanhood,” Stowe never says that she actually reaches True Womanhood. Instead, Topsy is “baptized” and becomes “a member of the Christian church.” Stowe immediately moves on to Topsy’s salvation when she cannot make claims about True Womanhood. She goes on to describe how Topsy has never lost the habits of her childhood, but has instead reformed them to work within her new Christian status. All of her “intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world” are related back to her calling as a missionary. But the subject of womanhood is completely forgotten. Also, by calling Topsy’s new home in Africa “her own country,” Stowe shows that Topsy and slaves like her were unable to achieve True Womanhood as it pertained to white women. Only in returning to a country they had never seen could the slaves be put in their place, leaving white women content that they had fulfilled their Christian duty to teach.

Stowe effectively removes the voices from Chloe and Topsy, forcing the reader to read both characters through the eyes of white women and the lens of white feminism and True Womanhood. In taking away their voices, Stowe employs romantic racialism and defeats her own purpose to make them seem more real to white readers. While she makes it clear that she believes the two are human, she portrays them in a way that is so far below white people that it seems impossible for them to be human in the same way that white women are human. Neither Chloe nor Topsy inspires deep sympathy or personal connection and they are used to describe a system of oppression, but they are not written as distinct and individual women. By using black slave women as emblems of slavery, Stowe effectively cuts them out of womanhood, making them into a separate group.

Ultimately, Stowe leaves the reader wanting more from the slave women. For readers wanting a peek into the reality of slave life, Chloe and Topsy are a disappointment. While Stowe provides detailed descriptions of the main white characters and multiracial characters to a point, reading Chloe and Topsy feels like watching a minstrel show and being told that this is what black people were like during slavery. The biggest disappointment is that Stowe lives in a time when she could ask any number of slaves or former slaves about their experiences. But she relies on descriptions of the system of slavery, rather than true experiences from the slaves. More so, she relies on memories from a day trip to Kentucky and an unproved previous connection to a spot on the Underground Railroad to tell her all she thinks she needs to know about black people. In “The Origins of Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” Charles Nichols writes, “it is well known that she exaggerated the extent of her personal contact with slavery. Her trip to Kentucky was a one-day excursion. Although Harriet gave the impression that the Stowe household in Cincinnati was a stop on the Underground Railroad, the evidence is lacking” (329). It never occurs to Stowe that black people may hide emotions, feelings, and thoughts from white people as a form of self-preservation. And yet, she claims to have credibility in knowing and understanding them. By portraying black people as lacking in real human emotion and feeling, Stowe’s purpose folds in on itself until the only thing remaining is a call to free the slaves in order to rescue the otherwise tainted and damned souls of white people.

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