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“Pray Also for the Heathen at Home:” Colonialist Rhetoric in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

William Tolbert

North Carolina State University

Abstract

Contemporary scholarship analyzing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is both vast and varied. Although scholars have applied many theoretical lenses, rhetorical analyses, character analyses, genre studies, and various philosophical approaches to *UTC*, they have focused much of their attention primarily on Stowe’s treatment of her black characters, and they have often come to the consensus that she treats them stereotypically and offensively. As valid and enlightening as many of these critiques are, their primary focus on black characterization has obscured the function of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* within the dialogue of growing American sectionalism in the 1850s and her equally simplistic and offensive portrayals of white Southerners. This essay contextualizes Stowe’s novel within the social and political maelstrom leading to and following the Compromise of 1850. I employ Sterling Brown’s framework for Negro stereotypes, in combination with Michael Meyer’s theory of character mirroring across races, to compare Stowe’s black characters to her white Southern characters and to argue that Stowe—through her depiction of Southern speech and her creation of stereotyped Southerners—reaffirms the North as the moral, religious, and cultural center of the nation. In effect, she echoes the ideas of other Northern writers in response to the Compromise of 1850 and expresses sentiments that are as much anti-Southern as anti-slavery. Stowe’s view of slavery is more Jeffersonian than egalitarian and her novel is filled with colonialist rhetoric that treats the South as a tropical colony of improvident, shiftless, and brutish subjects, and the North as a temperate center of Christian leadership.

Key words

Stowe, Emerson, Civil War, American South, Post-Colonialism

Popular culture has forever linked Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (*UTC*) with the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery. Abraham Lincoln is commonly quoted as saying to Stowe, “So this is the little lady who made the big War” (Masur 1993, 236). Because of the book’s momentous reputation, it has attracted scholarly attention continuously since its publication among increasingly varied fields of study. However, the scope of that criticism has remained limited by the connection of *UTC* to slavery. Although scholars have applied a multitude of methods, theories, and lenses, they have focused much of their scholarship on Stowe’s treatment of her black characters, and they have come to the consensus that she treats them stereotypically and offensively. As valid and enlightening as many of these critiques are, their primary focus on black characterization has obscured the role of *UTC* within the dialogue of growing American sectionalism in the 1850s and its equally simplistic and offensive portrayals of white Southerners. Placement of *UTC* within a complex “colonialist” context, in which she writes from the metropolitan North about a peripheral, tropical South, supports a more comprehensive understanding. Stowe’s depiction of Southern speech and her creation of stereotyped Southern characters reassert the moral, religious, and cultural center of the nation in the North. In effect, she echoes the ideas of many other Northern writers in response to the Compromise of 1850 and expresses sentiments that are as much anti-Southern as anti-slavery.

Many scholars have observed that Stowe’s novel exudes racism and have therefore discredited the novel’s abolitionist theme, but the argument that a white author in 1852 was racist is neither insightful nor innovative, and such a claim does not diminish the novel’s abolitionist purpose, as Michael Meyer (1994) suggests it essentially does. Meyer is correct that the novel carried profound “power, influence, and significance” in the fight against slavery, but his denial of Stowe’s racism leads to a false equivalency between emancipation and equality, an equivalency that was virtually absent in the United States until long after Stowe (236). Most of the white abolitionist writers of the 1850s were racist by today’s standards because few argued that black people were equal to white people, and still fewer argued for the integration of black people into free society. Thus, framing the Civil War, and the preceding events, as a conflict between a racist South versus an egalitarian North is an erroneous simplification. In fact, the inequality of blacks was one of the few topics that white Northerners and white Southerners agreed upon, most abolitionists included. When one reads the popular literature of the late 1840s and early 50s, one realizes the social climate in which Stowe wrote *UTC*, and one may be surprised that the North and South waited until 1861 to go to war.

The country came perilously close to disunion eleven years earlier with the political maelstrom surrounding the Compromise of 1850. In the four years before *UTC*’s 1852 publication, the terms “disunion,” “secession,” and “traitor” were

common in the nation's newspapers and the general geographic terms north and south became the names of two self-identified, distinct regions, the North and the South. The sectional animosity began to build toward climax in 1846 when Pennsylvanian congressman David Wilmot proposed an amendment to a funding bill which would effectively ban slavery in territories acquired at the end of the Mexican War regardless of their location north or south of the line established in the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The eponymous Wilmot Proviso did not pass but Northern senators reintroduced it several times until it was dismissed a final time as part of the Compromise of 1850. Southerners declared the Proviso an attack on Southern institutions and countless speeches and essays were written against it. Many framed the South as revolutionary colony and the North as the domineering mother country and used war-threatening phrases like, "*The South will not submit!*" (Holden 1849, 1). Such was the political and social atmosphere leading to the Compromise of 1850 and without its passage, which included a rejection of the Wilmot Proviso and an establishment of the Fugitive Slave Act, disunion and Civil War were not only possible, but probable.

The Compromise momentarily eased political tensions and growing pressure toward disunion. Politicians from all over the country realized how close the country had come to disunion and most of them called for peace and quiet. President Millard Fillmore, in his first State of the Union address in December 1850, argued that the Compromise had rescued the nation "from the wide and boundless agitation that surrounded us," and had produced "a firm, distinct, and legal ground to rest upon" (Fillmore 1850, par.63). He told members of Congress that compromise was "necessary to allay asperities and animosities that were rapidly alienating one section of the country from another," and further implored them to keep constantly in mind that their duty was to "one and the same country" and not to one particular region (par. 60). Most politicians sounded similar tones of reconciliation. Political leaders in Boston and Philadelphia organized conventions imploring their states to uphold the Compromise and preserve the Union. The governments of Tennessee, Virginia, and New Hampshire likewise hosted "Union meetings" declaring secession unconstitutional and promoting compliance with the Compromise ("Monthly Record" 1851, 267-68). Henry Clay, addressing the Kentucky legislature, proposed similar hopes while discouraging the formation of section-based political parties, and Daniel Webster sent assurances to the Virginia Union Meeting stating that a majority in the North favored preservation of the Union (269-71).

A minority, however, voiced dissent. Virginia governor John Buchanan Floyd claimed that the North had grossly injured the South through the Compromise and that a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act would "demand at our hands a separation from those who use the relationship of brotherhood only for the purpose of inflicting upon us the worst acts of malignant hostility" ("Monthly Record" 1851, 267). The governors of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Florida delivered similar declarations stating that a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act was equivalent to a repeal of the Union and the governor of South Carolina, Whitemarsh Benjamin Seabrook, went so far as to request authorization from his legislature to produce weaponry: "the time has arrived to resume the exercise of the powers of self-protection, which in the hour of unsuspecting confidence, we surrendered to foreign hands" (268). Like his fellow South Carolinian, John C. Calhoun, Seabrook equated white Southerners with the American revolutionaries. Despite the pessimistic and hostile minority, most of the nation's politicians were happy with peace and agreed that the Union would endure as long as all upheld the Fugitive Slave Act. However, many writers of fiction and editors of newspapers, did not agree with this sentiment.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe were two of the most conspicuous anti-Compromise writers and both must have been aware of the other's work. In writing about Stowe's literary response to the Compromise, *UTC*, Emerson declared, "We have seen an American woman write a novel of which a million copies were sold, in all languages, and which had one merit, of speaking to the universal heart" (Greeson 2010, 193). Such praise from Emerson is not surprising as his speeches from the same period also used the subject of slavery as a premise for asserting Northern superiority and Southern backwardness. He delivered a series of these speeches throughout the North East in the early 1850s while Stowe was in the writing process for her novel.

Within most his speeches, Emerson explicitly rejected the conciliatory notions on the subject of the Compromise put forth by many of the nation's politicians. In his 1851 "Address to the Citizens of Concord on the Fugitive Slave Law," he describes slavery as "the greatest calamity in the universe," argues that slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law were preventing pure prosperity, and declares that all men are "in proportion to their power of thought and their moral sensibility, found to be the natural enemies of this law" (Emerson 1851, 264). Furthermore, Emerson bluntly accused Northern politicians of ignoring their moral principles and supporting the Fugitive Slave Act for economic reasons (268). Emerson's qualifier, "in proportion to their power of thought and moral sensibility," constitutes an indictment of Southern ignorance and immorality. It implies that those who support the law, most white Southerners and a few white Northerners who sympathized with the South, cannot understand the law's iniquity because they lack intelligence. Far from adopting the "peace and quiet" stance and the plea for regional reconciliation of President Fillmore, Emerson asserts the sectional division with language that becomes increasingly inflammatory and insulting to white Southerners.

He utilizes more direct rhetoric in the final third of his address. Emerson states that Daniel Webster, once a "champion for the North East," has "crossed the line, and [become] the head of the slavery party in this country" (Emerson 1851, 270). He then explicitly distinguishes North and South and relies on colonialist rhetoric to assert that the North is not only different, but better:

Under the Union, I suppose the fact to be that there are really two nations, the north and the south. It is not slavery that severs them, it is climate and temperament. The south does not like the north, slavery or no slavery, and never did. The north likes the south well enough, for it knows its own advantages.(272)

The geographic determinism in Emerson's explanation of "climate and temperament" relies upon a common colonialist topography in which colonialist authors attribute inherent civility to temperate regions and inherent savagery to tropical regions. Emerson (1851) completes this scheme when he posits that "it is confounding distinctions to speak of the geographic sections of this country as of equal civilization" and describes Massachusetts as the "brain which turns out the behemoth"(275). He, in effect, identifies New England as the religious, cultural, and moral center of the nation. Not only does he thereby flout the advice of the President, various Congressmen, and other major political leaders, Emerson all but explicitly urges disunion, not only because of slavery, but because of the South's inferiority to the North. Several times in his conclusion, Emerson states that New England is, and will continue to resist contamination as long as it remains "true to itself" (275). Such messages pervaded Northern non-political writing.

Newspapers, the most popular medium of the period, provide the most salient examples of such messages. For instance, on April 10, 1852, *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* from Salem, Ohio, published two adjacent articles which may seem incongruous for an anti-slavery newspaper. The first, "Northern School Books," reprinted from the *New Orleans Courier*, proves that even children's books were not immune to the war of words between North and South. The article claims that textbooks all over the country are filled with anti-Southern rhetoric and endorses censorship of such books. The writer then claims that many of the school books prepared in the North are full of "covert hostility to Southern Institutions" and "insidious poison, even in the pictorial illustrations" (Robinson 1852a, 1). Children may not have heard Emerson speak or have read the newspapers, but Northern colonialist rhetoric of the North was so endemic in American media that they were inundated nonetheless.

Although a Northern anti-slavery newspaper voicing a Southerner's lamentations may seem odd, the following article helps to reveal *The Bugle's* satirical purpose. Directly after "Northern School Books," an article titled "Sweets of Southern Life," reprinted from *The Commonwealth* of Louisiana, begins by asserting that "It is only by a continued residence in the South, that any one can appreciate the real state of Southern life." The author then proceeds with a description of Southern life that is bitter and sarcastic (Robinson 1852b, 1). He explains that, while being waiting upon is considered in the South the "acme of happiness," a Southern planter must live in constant fear and mistrust of his slaves and often evolves into a tyrant. The Southern writer attempts to persuade the reader that being a planter is more work than it appears and that only Southerners can understand. His concluding paragraph echoes the sectional division that Emerson and the Northern school books all illustrate: "None but you in New England can enjoy, to its full extent, the luxury of waiting upon one's self, and the life in New England is the life for me—free from the cares, anxieties and responsibilities of a Southern plantation" (1). Although "Sweets of Southern Life" criticizes Southern institutions, the author maintains that Northerners cannot understand the real situation and justifies Southern traditions.

One following editorial comment then explains why these two articles are included on the front page of an anti-slavery newspaper. Directly under "Sweets of Southern Life," in the final line of the front page, *The Bugle* adds: "How foolish and fanatical to be an abolitionist!" (Robinson 1852b, 1). *The Bugle* republished these articles in order to elicit mockery rather than empathy. If one needs to be certain that *The Bugle* has no sympathy for white Southerners, one need only read the paper's tagline, "NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS" (1). Both of these articles display an important facet of the colonialist rhetoric that Northerners used against the South in the early 1850s. While Emerson argued directly and explicitly, *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, like many other newspapers, argued indirectly and sarcastically. Satire and insincerity were alive and well in the 1850s, and reading *UTC* requires recognition that the author is sarcastically hyper-pious, hyper-conciliatory, and hyper-didactic in regard to her Southern subjects. Stowe's novel is full of contempt, most of which she veils using the common techniques of anti-slavery writers of her time.

Stowe's veiled contempt and sarcasm is most evident in chapter nine of *UTC* in which Stowe responds to the Compromise of 1850, asserts Northern moral authority, and accomplishes both through a satirical and patronizing tone toward Southerners. In her chapter titled "In Which It Appears That a Senator Is But a Man," a Northern Senator defies a local fugitive slave law (Stowe 1852, 80). As ubiquitous as the Fugitive Slave Act was within American society in the early 1850s, Stowe must have been aware that many Southerners viewed such an action as a repeal of the Union. This passage alone would suffice to make her novel inflammatory. If her white Southern readers did not feel insulted by the Senator's actions alone, they would certainly feel insulted when she addressed them directly: "And you need not exult over him, good brother of the Southern States; for we have some inklings that many of you, under similar circumstances, would not do much better" (81). Within this context, Stowe's didacticism toward the "good brother[s] of the Southern States" is not genuine and well-meaning, but sarcastic and mocking. A claim that Stowe genuinely assumed that Southern readers might "exult" over Senator Bird's defiance of the Fugitive Sale Act would imply that Stowe was overwhelmingly oblivious to the political and social atmosphere of her time. Like her Northern counterparts, Stowe unapologetically degrades the South and galvanizes sectional tensions.

Her concluding chapter digresses from the narration and addresses her readers in the North and South directly. Like Emerson, Stowe entreats her readers to analyze their individual sympathies. She asks, "Are [your sympathies] in

harmony with the sympathies of Christ? or are they swayed and perverted by the sophistries of worldly policy?" (Stowe 1852, 398). In the next paragraph she then reasserts the North as the religious and moral center: "Christian men and women of the North! still further,---you have another power; you can pray! . . . You pray for the heathen abroad; pray also for the heathen at home" (398). Due to the ambiguity of this statement one must ask, who are the heathen to whom she is referring? Because Stowe uses this phrase at the end of a novel in which most of the black characters and all of the Northern characters display an affinity for the Bible and Christianity, the only "heathen at home" would seem to be white Southerners. Stowe's conclusion, along with the rest of *UTC*, repeats much of the colonialist rhetoric of Emerson and the many Northern newspapers in order to portray the South as a backward and immoral region and the North as the political, religious, and cultural leader of the nation. Contextualization of *UTC* within this colonial discourse is required to understand the novel's social implications, and scholars can also use such a contextualization to expand upon previous critiques of *UTC*.

Because most readers of *UTC* have either celebrated or condemned Stowe for her fight against slavery, much of the scholarly work devoted to *UTC* has focused on the treatment of black characters while the treatment of the South as an antagonist to the North has been mostly neglected. However, much of the work that scholars have done so far is useful for elucidating the North/South colonial dichotomy; the framing needs only to be expanded beyond the black characters to include white Southern characters. Scholars of *UTC* have most frequently addressed two related features of the novel: Stowe's depiction of dialect and her portrayal of black character. Ironically, both critics and supporters of Stowe's abolitionism have attacked both features as inaccurate.

Stowe seems to welcome critical inspection of her usage of dialect with the description of the slave trader, Haley, in *UTC*'s first chapter. After questioning whether she can even describe Haley as a "gentleman," Stowe describes him as pretentious, gaudy, and inarticulate. She then describes his speech as in "defiance of Murray's Grammar" (Stowe 1852, 1). Also within these opening pages, Haley drinks one glass of wine and another of brandy; questions the honesty of the novel's heroic main character, Tom; utters the novel's first usage of a racial epithet; and commodifies religion as a "valuable thing in a nigger" (2). Stowe juxtaposes Haley with Mr. Shelby, a man she explains as having "the appearance of a gentleman," links to Christianity, and labels a "Man of Humanity" in the title of the chapter. The most salient difference, however, is that Mr. Shelby speaks Standard American English (SAE). In creating this opening comparison between Haley and Shelby, Stowe quickly shows two properties that separate savagery from civility: language and religion. She also establishes a series of binary oppositions: good and bad, well dressed and inappropriately dressed, alcoholic and sober, religious and nonreligious, standard speech and vernacular. Regardless of Stowe's intention, one can logically assume that characters who look, dress, act, or talk like Haley belong on the same side of these polarities as Haley and are less civil than the characters who look, dress, act, or talk like Shelby.

This assumption complicates a reading of *UTC* as an egalitarian novel, because all of Stowe's phenotypically black characters speak in "defiance of Murray's Grammar." Although this fact may indicate that Stowe is racist, few critics have made this argument. Of those who discuss Stowe's representation of speech, most simply argue that her writing is inaccurate. Tremaine McDowell's 1931 article is the most commonly cited treatment of this kind. He argues that Stowe exhibits a "persistent inconsistency" in which dialect features appear on one page but not on the next (322). He also faults Stowe for creating too much "resemblance between the speech of her whites and that of her blacks," and for failing "in disastrous fashion, to record the changes which the negro wrought in the consonants." He concludes that "the very core of authentic negro dialect is slighted or ignored" (323). Others have made similar arguments and have added that dialect is problematically inconsistent among various black characters (Burkette 2001, 160).

Possibly because the claim of inaccuracy has served both the purposes of those—including especially Southern whites—who have denied that Stowe is qualified to write about slavery and the purposes of those who have accused Stowe of misrepresenting black characters, the claim remained virtually unchallenged until 2001, when Allison Burkette used quantitative linguistic methods to resolve the dialect debate objectively. Before providing her data, she refuted many of McDowell's claims with more recently established sociolinguistic explanations of Stowe's dialect depiction. The research-based qualifiers that guide her argument are that African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) historically share many linguistic features, that not all black speakers use AAVE, that speakers of the same dialect do not always use the same features, and that speakers of a dialect normally use features of their dialect only around 70% of the time (Burkette 2001, 159-60). Thus, despite McDowell's claims of inaccuracy based on the same grounds, Burkette maintains that the inclusion of these features makes Stowe "remarkably accurate, both linguistically and historically" (158). To support her claim that Stowe's dialect representation is remarkably accurate, Burkette examines the first 2000 words of Aunt Chloe, a black slave; of Haley, a white Southerner; and of George, a mulatto slave. Aunt Chloe and Haley share many dialect features as well as frequencies of those features, while George's speech is hyper-standard and includes virtually no dialect features (164).

Burkette (2001) anticipates a counterargument that George's hyper-standard speech may prove that Stowe is inaccurate and unfair in her representation of black characters. She asserts that language within *UTC* reflects sociolinguistic studies showing correlations between "speaker variables" and "linguistic variables" and that education is the primary "speaker variable" the novel manifests (168). Meyer (1994) similarly finds no problem with George's speech and suggests that *UTC* "acknowledges blacks as a race with its own speech patterns" and that the novel shows the "accurate perception

of the wide variety of speech patterns among African Americans as well as among whites.” He adds that Stowe employs her depiction of dialect to reject the practice of “judging individuals . . . considered inferior on the basis of their language” (243).

However, Burkette’s (2001) and Meyer’s (1994) justifications of Stowe’s use of dialect do not explain the opening pages of *UTC* in which Stowe explicitly judges Haley for using nonstandard language (Stowe 1852, 1). Burkette’s interpretation also deviates from with the widely held belief among sociolinguists that a person cannot speak a language without speaking a dialect of that language (Adger, Wolfram, and Temple 2007, 2). Burkette’s assessment of Stowe’s portrayal of dialect is accurate in regard to the novel’s black characters, but it is erroneous in regard to the characters—mulatto characters and several white people—whose speech is implausibly hyper-correct.

When one compares the list of characters with nonstandard dialects to the list of characters who speak SAE, a trend emerges. The characters with nonstandard dialects include Haley, Tom Loker, the Kentuckians in the country hotel, Simon Legree, and all the phenotypically black characters. The characters who seem to conform to Murray’s Grammar include the Sheldons, the Birds, the Quakers, the St. Clare family and their cousin Ophelia, and the mulatto characters George, Eliza, and Cassy. Stowe strictly limits the set of characters who speak SAE to those who are at least part white and who sympathize with abolitionism. Thus, Stowe uses dialect distinctions to separate the “good” from the “bad,” but this fact alone does not imply racism. Upon closer inspection, the inclusion of George, Eliza, and Cassy in this list is odd, because Stowe gives all other slaves distinctly nonstandard dialects. As she could easily have chosen to make George, Eliza, and Cassy black instead of mulatto, Stowe implies that whiteness is a prerequisite for proper speech. In this respect, Stowe certainly seems racist, but her dialect discrepancies extend to her white characters as well. Many scholars have overlooked Haley, Loker, and Legree, as white characters who speak nonstandard dialects, and have failed to recognize that Stowe’s division of “good” and “bad” falls not only along racial lines, but also along geographic lines. One may look to social class for elucidation, but class difference cannot account for slaves who speak SAE.

Instead of defining racial or socioeconomic superiority, Stowe further establishes regional superiority. Characters associated with the North talk correctly while characters associated with the South do not. The three mulatto characters are constantly traveling northward and finally settle in Canada. St. Clare is from the North and shares Northern sentiments regarding plantation life. His cousin, Ophelia, only visits the South and later returns to the North. The Quakers never leave the North and even use the words, “thee,” “thy,” and “shall,” connoting language that is not only hyper-correct but also Biblical. Again, like Emerson, Stowe places the moral, cultural, and, in this case, educational center of the nation in the North and portrays Southerners as inarticulate and brutish. Similar results emerge when one applies a colonialist framework to the related issue of Stowe’s portrayal of her black characters.

Many critics have pointed to Stowe’s reliance upon banal stereotypes for her portrayal of her black characters. In his 1925 essay, “The Negro in American Literature,” William Braithwaite asserts that “the moral gain and historical effect of Uncle Tom have been artistic loss and setback. The treatment of Negro life and character, overlaid with these forceful stereotypes, could not develop into artistically satisfactory portraiture” (30-31). Richard Yarborough (1986) agreed and advances the opinion that Stowe established a “level of discourse for the majority of fictional treatments of the Afro-American that were to follow—even for those produced by blacks themselves” (46). Sterling Brown’s (1933) delineation and explanation of the most common Negro stereotypes, in his essay “Negro Character as Seen by White Authors” (1933), provides a framework for understanding Stowe’s black characterization. Brown’s main observation is that “easy pigeon-holing of an entire race into . . . small compartments is a familiar phenomenon in American Literature” and that white authors often use stereotypes to emphasize “the Negro’s divergence from an Anglo-Saxon norm” and to justify racial proscription (Brown 1933, 179-80). Brown argues that seven stereotypes of Negro character deserve separate classification: the contented slave, the wretched freeman, the comic Negro, the local color Negro, the tragic mulatto, the exotic primitive, and the brute negro.

If Stowe creates stereotypical black characters, one could logically define *UTC* as a racist novel by a racist author. Many scholars have pursued this line of argument only to produce interpretations with flaws similar to flaws in the common argument about dialect representation. This is largely due to scholars’ focus on only some of the black characters rather than on all of the novel’s characters, both black and white. However, a comparison of Stowe’s black characterization to her Southern white characterization yields comprehensive conclusions that again support a reading of *UTC* within a colonialist discourse. Stowe not only creates black characters that fit Brown’s stereotypes, but also matches each black stereotyped character with a corresponding stereotyped white Southerner.

UTC centers upon Brown’s first category, the contented slave, as the eponymous main character seems nothing but contented in his cabin on the Shelby plantation. Brown (1933) even uses Uncle Tom as his primary example of a character with plentiful provisions and a private garden-plot (181). Uncle Tom never yearns for freedom but only for restoration of his life on the Shelby plantation where he lives a secure and happy life under the paternal guidance of his master.

George Harris serves as both the tragic mulatto and the wretched freeman although he is not technically free. Stowe’s novel is notably absent of free black characters, although she could have drawn inspiration from many free black men and women who lived throughout the North at the time of publication. This conspicuous absence may be due to Stowe’s support for colonizing American blacks in Africa rather than integrating blacks into white society (Stowe 1852,

399; Ammons 2007, 4-5). Regardless, George serves as foil to the contented slave, Uncle Tom, as George occupies a liminal space in society and must remain disguised, carry weapons for protection, and constantly live in fear of capture (Stowe 1852, 96; 102; 172-4). Because of his racial liminality, he also fits the tragic mulatto stereotype. The major characteristic of the tragic mulatto, is a “divided inheritance; from his white blood come his intellectual strivings and his unwillingness to be a slave; from his Negro blood come his baser emotional urges, his indolence, his savagery” (Brown 1933, 194-5). George is the most intelligent character in the novel and Stowe even compares him to the founding fathers, yet he is quick to anger and twice requires interference from white men who warn him against hasty use of firearms (Stowe 1852, 10; 99; 169; 176). Stowe’s mulatto characters are the only ones to whom she attributes a suppressed indignation, implying that they are the only ones who understand their degraded social position.

Another of Stowe’s mulatto characters, Cassy, embodies the role of the exotic primitive. The exotic primitive usually signifies sexuality, rhythm, savagery, and a link to an exotic world. The briefest description of Cassy exhibits all of these traits: the narrator first describes her as a dark, wild face at the window; she is Simon Legree’s former sex slave; she speaks a language no other characters understand (French; likely a link to the Caribbean); she often breaks into impassioned, raving fits of insanity that fill Legree with a superstitious horror; and Legree believes her to be connected with the supernatural (Stowe 1852, 312; 321; 332; 352). By simultaneously creating Cassy as a tragic mulatto character, Stowe suggests that miscegenation is a common practice in the South, a practice that most readers in the 1850s would find immoral.

Minor characters fill the other stock roles. Shelby’s slave Black Sam also embodies two stereotypes—both the comic Negro and the local-color Negro. Writers used the comic Negro to show that slavery could not possibly be so wretched (Brown 1933, 188). They generally used the local-color Negro to depict the culture of a geographic location through the use of speech, clothing, and customs (196). Stowe describes the clothing of most characters in detail, but none of them receives as much attention as Black Sam. Stowe also utilizes him to give insight into the customs and culture of a specific area, and pairs him with the contented slave to suggest that slavery is not wholly bad (Stowe 1852, 39-41). Black Sam’s actions on the Shelby plantation give insight into slave culture and behavior that characterize local color sketches, and his continuous jokes make him seem perpetually happy. He simultaneously provides a stark contrast to Simon Legree’s overseers, Sambo and Quimbo, who fit the brute Negro stereotype. Legree trained his black overseers, Sambo and Quimbo, “in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bull-dogs” (Stowe 1852, 311).

All of Brown’s stereotypes appear in Stowe’s novel and she never develops anything close to what Braithwaite (1925) would describe as “artistically satisfactory portraiture.” Although the presence of both the contented slave and the brute Negro within the same text may imply diversity within the black race, none of Stowe’s black characters evolve past their prescribed characteristics. However, a contradiction remains unresolved. One cannot deny that most of the “good characters” of *UTC* are the black characters. Stowe compares George to American Revolutionary heroes, childlike Tom braves multiple beatings without relinquishing his morals, and Sambo and Quimbo recognize their transgressions. As with the dialect argument, the scholarly analysis of character analysis has been too narrow and the conclusion that Stowe is racist is too simple to encompass all the characters and all the events in *UTC*.

Meyer (1994) also observes that a myopic focus on racial stereotypes in *UTC* limits an understanding of the novel and proposes that Stowe uses mirroring techniques to compare her white and black characters. For example, Stowe employs reflective naming between races. She creates two Georges, two Toms, and two Harrys. The first two pairs may also expand into trios with an implied inclusion of George Washington with the two Georges and Thomas Jefferson with the two Toms (241). Stowe also duplicates life experiences across races. Uncle Tom, Emmeline, Prue, and the St. Clares all lose their children. Meyer then counters James Baldwin’s (1949) scathing critique of the passivity of Stowe’s black characters by demonstrating that white as well as black characters are somewhat passive, but Stowe’s white characters are passive in a far more destructive way. He points to St. Clare’s apathy, Senator Bird’s duality, and Shelby’s unwillingness to resist the slave trader (Meyer 1994, 248). Meyer’s effect demonstrates that the primary target of Stowe’s social critique is not black characters but white characters. To extend his idea of mirroring, one can apply Brown’s framework for stereotypical Negro characterization to Stowe’s characterization of white Southerners.

With the exception of the wretched freeman, Stowe creates a corresponding white character for every stereotyped black character in *UTC*. The contented slave corresponds to the contented slave owner, Mr. Shelby. Stowe portrays Mr. Shelby in his pastoral setting as happy with the system as it exists. The slave trader Haley mirrors the comic Negro. Haley is subjected to constant mockery, he is less intelligent than the other characters, and he battles with his comic counterpart Black Sam in the most humorous sketch in the novel (Stowe 1852, 39-43). Stowe presents the local-color Negro’s white counterpart in the “small country hotel” in backwoods Kentucky. For this chapter, Stowe even employs a mode of exposition that would later become a common feature of local-color writers of American Realism. She introduces a small isolated setting before describing a group of people as an ethnographer might: “Your Kentuckian of the present day is a good illustration of the doctrine of transmitted instincts and peculiarities” (93). The white counterpart of the tragic mulatto, a character occupying a liminal social position, is St. Clare, who is from a Northern family but is a plantation owner in the South. He is not welcome in the North because he owns slaves; he is not completely welcome in the South, because he treats his slaves too well. His philosophical struggles over slavery express his duality. St. Clare’s wife, Marie, mirrors the exotic primitive, Cassy. She is attractive yet uneducated and Stowe consistently sexualizes her by describing her in a prone

position, under a silken mosquito curtain, in a tropical environment. Stowe uses Marie's thoughts about slaves to pair the savage and sexual sides of this stereotype. Marie's physical separation of environment and sentiment makes her exotic and strange to Northern readers. Finally, Stowe mirrors the brute Negro stereotype in the brute Negro's owner. Simon Legree is responsible for the most depictions of brutal violence in the novel as well as for the death of the novel's hero.

As Meyer (1994) suggests, the mirroring is extensive, but his claim that it leads to a rhetoric of equality between blacks and whites is as myopic as Baldwin's (1949) claim that Stowe is racist. Although Stowe compares some black characters and some white Southern characters, she does not necessarily portray either group positively. Furthermore, the white representatives of the stereotypes evoke disgust and contempt rather than respect and pity like their black counterparts. Shelby and St. Clare both die without releasing their slaves; Legree refuses to reform his attitude or his plantation; Marie remains obdurate, ignorant, and frail; and Haley continues his villainy. As a result, Stowe's black characters—along with the child, Eva, and the Northerner, Ophelia—are clearly the heroes of the novel while her white Southern characters are villains.

Thus, Stowe's use of generalized negative stereotypes supports the same theme as her depiction of dialect: people associated with the North speak correctly and are virtuous while white Southerners speak poorly and are immoral, shiftless, and brutish. To argue that *UTC* is primarily about race is anachronistic. Most white Americans in the 1850s were at least paternalistically racist and mostly unconcerned with equality for black people. Most of them were preoccupied with the growing territory of the United States and whether the slave states or the free states were to govern it. Within this context, the jumbled racial ideology makes sense because it can remain secondary. *UTC* contains an argument against slavery, but *UTC* is equally, if not more, an argument against the South.

An anti-Southern reading of *UTC* brings the arguments for dialect and character misrepresentation together with many other plot points of the novel. As Tom travels south, conditions worsen. Tom seems to travel not only geographically southward but temporally and culturally backward. He moves from the modern Shelby plantation with a seemingly socialist, or at least anti-industrialist, environment, to the tropical and capitalist plantation of St. Clare, to the agrarian-based feudal society of Legree's plantation. The similarly named slave hunter, Tom Loker, experiences a reciprocal reversal of fortune. His life improves as he travels northward. Loker becomes the only redeemable white Southerner because he changes his hate-filled slave-hunting ways, but only after he becomes a Northerner. Senator Bird would be wholly "good" if Southern politics and the Fugitive Slave Act had not corrupted him. Even so, he repents and makes amends. The Quakers, who represent the Northern religious abolitionists among whom Stowe would count herself, are the only group who are wholly "good," as they speak SAE, help all, and encourage others to be better.

Stowe (1852) makes her intended audience explicit in her final chapter, "Concluding Remarks": "To you, generous, noble-minded men and women, of the South,—you, whose virtue and magnanimity and purity of character, are the greater for the severer trial it has encountered,—to you is her appeal" (397). As with her commentary on Senator Bird's actions, one should notice Stowe's patronizing tone and suspect her sincerity. One should do the same when reading her address to the North on the next page: "The people of the free states have defended, encouraged, and participated; and are more guilty for [slavery], before God, than the South, in that they have not the apology of education or custom" (398). By allowing the South the "apology of education and custom," she labels white Southerners unintelligent and backward. Her final note to Northerners recalls Emerson: each Northerner should individually ensure that "*they feel right*" (398). Like Emerson's speech, Stowe's novel also reaffirms the North as the moral, political, and cultural center of the nation.

Because this novel is so complex, scholars should not focus on any one facet. As Meyer (1994) asserts, a focus on the troubling aspects of Stowe's novel has often overshadowed her good intentions and because of such myopic approaches, scholars have overlooked many other possibilities for analysis. Scholars cannot avoid Stowe's inflammatory portrayal of race, and any argument that implies sympathy for an admittedly irredeemable antebellum South is somewhat problematic. However, Northerners' treatment of the South as a colony, combined with the colonialist rhetoric some Northerners have employed to portray the South as lesser, was about more than slavery, started long before Stowe, and has lasted ever since. *UTC* is a powerful and influential novel and a focus on race alone limits its power. A reading that frames *UTC* as more anti-Southern than anti-slavery addresses all facets of the novel and gives it a voice within the growing American sectionalism of the 1850s.

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Author Bio

William Tolbert is a candidate for a Masters in American and British Literature at North Carolina State University. His research focuses on patterns of oppression and cultural control as exhibited in literature and popular media. This essay is part of an ongoing project on the American North's treatment of the American South as a "colony" from 1850 to the present. He lives in Durham, North Carolina, with his wife Megan.