DEAR STOWE SOCIETY MEMBERS,

There is rarely a day that goes by that I fail either to reflect upon or compare the nineteenth-century unrest of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s time to our own, often wondering, “How would activists and writers likely respond to our current twenty-first century political and social climate?” It is helpful for me to be reminded that the climactic chapter of Uncle Tom’s Cabin when Tom is killed (aptly titled “The Martyr”) does not begin with Stowe lamenting about the horror readers at this textual point must expect to occur, and of course does occur, in the chapter. Rather, Stowe begins by reminding readers during the chapter’s first sentence that “The longest way must have its close—, the gloomiest night will wear on to a morning.” This reminder does not take away from the egregious and longstanding suffering experienced by specific characters like Tom in the novel—nor from the larger political and social suffering Stowe felt she was contending with when writing it—instead it seeks to remind readers even before they experience the novel’s lowest point that, for Stowe, suffering at once contains providential meaning and that suffering will always providentially end. Significantly, this understanding of suffering means for Stowe that she is obligated to do her part, no matter how difficult, to bring about this end. Yet first it is imperative to remind readers and perhaps herself that an end to suffering will eventually happen—that “the gloomiest night will wear on to a morning.” I invite members of the Stowe Society to take solace in Stowe’s hopeful words, that throughout all of our struggles in 2020, we can begin with this starting point of knowledge that there is still a “morning” ahead. The current times may be difficult, but our actions, our words, and the ways we choose to lead our lives have the potential to come together for good: we will see out of what feels like one of “the longest ways” in our Society’s and our nation’s history.

This 2020 newsletter, then, is filled with pages that see that end before us and anticipate hope for the future. It acknowledges the scholarship that Stowe’s writing continues to elicit, writing which encourages us all to care for each other, to think deeply about the complexity of our lives, and to strive consistently to be better humans. While Stowe may not always reach her goals, or we ours, feeling that a better world is worth expecting undergirds all the work in this newsletter. Within this document, you will find a guide to forthcoming and recently published books, articles, and chapters about Stowe. I especially call your attention to Joan Hedrick and Susan Belasco’s forthcoming Collected Works of Harriet Beecher Stowe as well as Stowe Society Treasurer’s Nancy Lusignan Schultz’s award-winning Phi Kappa Phi Forum article, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Krakow.” The newsletter also highlights our Up and Coming Scholar award recipient, Andrew Donnelly, as well as work recently published by past awardees—the latter of which I am happy to perceive of as promise being fulfilled. With so many of our current Society members’ teaching happening online or remotely, the pieces in our “Teaching Corner” might also be of especial interest to our audience. I look forward to 2020s “longest way closing” and hope that this year’s newsletter reinvigorates all of our members’ hope that 2021 will bring us all to a beautiful “morning.”

Warmly,
LuElla D’Amico
President of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Society

Inside the 2020 Newsletter

NEW COLLECTED WORKS
RECENT SCHOLARSHIP
HOWE SYMPOSIUM
TEACHING RESOURCES
STOWE CENTER EVENT
NEW FILM RELEASES
The first objective of this edition is to publish readable, scholarly editions of Stowe’s novels, travel writing, poetry, short stories and sketches, religious writings, and journalism. A secondary purpose is to publish an edition of Stowe’s letters.

Each volume in the *Collected Works of Harriet Beecher Stowe* will be printed in a hardback of 500-600 pages, depending on the volume contents. As with Oxford’s other editions, The *Collected Works of Harriet Beecher Stowe* will also be available by individual or institutional subscription through the Oxford Scholarly Editions Online series.

With the support of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, these scholarly editions will allow straightforward access to Stowe’s writing, with tools for scholars, allowing readers to see textual variants and move as seamlessly as possible between text and commentary.

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By examining classics of nineteenth-century American literature, Ashley Barnes offers a new approach to literary theory that encompasses both New Historicism and the ethical turn in literary studies. Couples like Huck and Jim and Ishmael and Queequeg have grounded the classic account of the American novel as exceptionally gothic and antisocial. Barnes argues instead for a model of shared intimacy that connects the evangelical sentimental best seller to the high art of psychological realism. In her reading of works by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Elizabeth Stoddard, Henry James, and others in the context of nineteenth-century Protestant-Catholic debates about how to know and love God, what emerges is an alternate tradition of the American love story that pictures intimacy as communion rather than revelation. Barnes uses that unacknowledged love story to propose a model of literary critical intimacy that depends on reading fiction in its historical context.


In accessible and impassioned discussions of literature and philosophy, this book reveals a surprising approach to the intractable problem of human contact. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Emily Dickinson rethought the nature of human contact, turning away from transcendentalist approaches and towards sympathetic ones. Their second and third works portray social masks as insufficient, not deceptive, and thus human contact requires not violent striking through the mask but benevolent skepticism towards persons.

They imagine that people feel real in a real world with real others when they care for others for the other's sake and when they make caring relationships the cornerstone of their own being. Grounded in philosophies of sympathy, this book shows that antebellum literature rejects individualist definitions of the human and locates the antidote to human disconnection in sympathy.


This article examines how abolitionists developed a rhetorical tradition premised on the neologisms colorphobia and Negrophobia in order to posit an affective basis for race prejudice. Exploring the forms this rhetoric could take, I demonstrate that while satire thus served as the dominant mode early on, phobia’s emphasis on fear soon began to inspire strategies of public health activism too. Political discourse in the U.S. began to incorporate scientific investigations of fear as a psychological state. I conclude by arguing that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Dred* is the most significant work of literature to respond to this rhetorical trend.


Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Clara Barton, Julia Ward Howe, and Sarah Josepha Hale came from backgrounds that ranged from abject enslavement to New York City’s elite. Surmounting social and political obstacles, they emerged before and during the worst crisis in American history, the Civil War.


Touching upon one of the novel’s important and precarious themes—the distinction between people and things—the aforementioned episodes not only contribute to our understanding of the novel’s gift economy but also invite us to revise the complex attitude to racial otherness in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. I claim that while pursuing a sentimental ideology of the gift that comes to support racist implications of its abolitionist rhetoric, Stowe’s novel also contains a radical potential of its critique embodied in the image of the poisonous gift of a slave child, Topsy, who figures as an unwelcome, wasteful, and repellent present.


Recent publications from two of our former HBSS Up and Coming Scholar award winners!


Cynthia tells us, "in 2018, I won the Stowe Society's 'Up and Coming Scholar Award' and had the opportunity to present my work on *UTC* and sentimental sailors at the American Literature Association where I received a great deal of support and helpful comments from the panel attendees. Shortly after ALA, I turned this dissertation chapter on Stowe into an article which is the one currently published by *ESQ*. Please tell the board members thank you for their support. I greatly appreciate the opportunities that the Stowe Society provides for graduate students."
Rape Culture and Silenced Women: Using Student Choice to Trace the Long Roots of Fear
by María Carla Sánchez, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

In the Women Writers survey I teach, students choose the last few weeks’ readings. This has led to choices that sometimes mark where our popular culture is (Twilight, The Hunger Games) and at other times surprise me (Tara Westover’s Educated). Last spring, they voted for literature from the #metoo movement, including She Said, about the effort to expose Harvey Weinstein; and Chanel Miller’s memoir Know My Name. This was tough but edifying reading, clearly striking a chord with a majority of the students. But teaching new material outside of one’s area of expertise can be a little terrifying! So I find ways to sneak in bits of my 19th century stalwarts. With the #metoo readings, the old friend I included was Stowe, and Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Think about it: Eliza “has been safe under the protecting care” of Mrs. Shelby, thus preventing her “beauty” from being a “fatal… inheritance.” Miss Ophelia’s failed intervention for Rosa is about preventing her whipping and her “brutal exposure” to a man. Before they’re sold, Susan and Emmeline discuss how to appear on the block; Susan tells her daughter to pull back her hair, though it “don’t look near so well, that way.” Emmeline doesn’t understand, and neither do my students. Then there’s Cassy’s story, which the students read in full. Suddenly lights begin to go on for some. For others, these excerpts from the novel are too understated. Students don’t understand that for hundreds of pages, the author has signaled carefully to readers the sexual vulnerability and assault that enslaved women faced every day. When Stowe reaches Cassy’s story, toward the novel’s end, the hinting fades: Cassy has been passed around, effectively transformed into sexualized prey. She has no means of fighting back legally against this abuse, because she has no legal being: under U.S. law, she is property. But in her own brilliant way, of course, she begins to #resist.

Bringing Stowe and her characters to class for the day helps students understand that despite the absence of a hashtag, American women always used what resources they possessed to protest what we now call rape culture. Slavery institutionalized that culture in obscene ways, a reality testified to in Caroline Randall Williams’ recent editorial ‘My Body Is a Confederate Monument.’

Stowe’s subtlety, the quiet knowingness with which she doesn’t call attention to her clues until the book is nearly done and its characters’ fates can be considered as a whole, eventually made sense to my students. Rape culture thrives in making women hesitant to talk, to fear not being believed. The long roots of that fear are visible when considering that Stowe doesn’t hesitate to call out hypocrisy, greed, bigotry, misuse of feminine wiles (hello, Marie!), and evil – but women’s sexual oppression must be adroitly, gently handled. It’s a stunning indictment of how hard the road to #metoo has been, but also some comfort to know that today’s women are not alone. They have an eloquent history behind them.

"Bringing Stowe and her characters to class for the day helps students understand that despite the absence of a hashtag, American women always used what resources they possessed to protest what we now call rape culture. Slavery institutionalized that culture in obscene ways, a reality testified to in Caroline Randall Williams’ recent editorial ‘My Body Is a Confederate Monument.’"

Nancy Lusignan Schultz’s (Salem State) article, "Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Krakow" just won the Gold Award for a feature article in the Excel Awards, Association Media & Publishing! It was published in Phi Kappa Phi Forum in 2019 and focuses on her experience teaching Stowe abroad.

READ MORE HERE
Teaching Uncle Tom’s Cabin Using Children’s Adaptations
by Laura Hakala, The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

In my 2000-level general education American literature survey, I’ve had success teaching Uncle Tom’s Cabin alongside the adaptations specifically designed for children. This technique allowed us to examine how the novel had a powerful cultural impact and how it encouraged children to take central roles in political and racial projects, both antislavery and proslavery. I have found this approach to especially appeal to college students; because of their age, they are interested in how young people can participate in political and racial debates.

We use digitized versions of the children’s texts on the Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture website, created by Dr. Stephen Railton at the University of Virginia. Some semesters, I have used versions produced in the 1850s to emphasize the novel’s immediate impact: Pictures and Stories from Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1853), adapted by Stowe and Stowe’s publishers Jewett and Company, and Little Eva: the Flower of the South (1853), an anti-Tom book. Other semesters, I have emphasized the novel’s long-lasting influence by using editions published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as The Story of Topsy (1908). Students tended to be more interested in the later editions because they tried to figure out why later editions are more racist than Stowe’s novel and that led them to make connections to the Jim Crow era. These discussions have produced some of the most engaged class sessions throughout the entire semester.

First, I assigned several chapters of Stowe’s novel, and I gave mini-lectures on the historical and literary context of 1850s America, covering topics such as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, sentimental literature, Ethnology and racial “pseudoscience,” and Romantic definitions of childhood. We analyzed the child characters in the novel in light of this contextual information, comparing Stowe’s descriptions of Topsy, Eva, and Harry. This exercise allowed students to recognize how Stowe uses childhood to delineate racial difference, and they could more easily notice this trope in the children’s editions. I typically devoted one or two class periods to the children’s adaptations. In small groups, students focused on a particular adaptation and prepared a short presentation for the class, explaining how their assigned book compares to the original novel; why it might be the same and/or different; and what ideas about race, gender, and/or Romanticism appear in the book.

Not only did this assignment encourage students to notice details and develop their close reading skills, but it also allowed them to learn about the complexity of race and childhood in the nineteenth century. Students often defaulted to stereotypical constructions of childhood, insisting children are and should be innocent, but Little Eva: Flower of the South challenges that notion. My students were often angry that this Eva is so racist, and they feel disturbed that children read about her.

We discussed how children are socialized into racist ideologies, and historically, children’s texts played a central role in that process. Students tended to make contemporary connections, discussing racist ideas in movies they watched as children. After class one day, a student was excited to show me pictures of an anime character that he thought was similar to Topsy. In my experience, the children’s editions enable students to understand how racism operates in more nuanced ways, and they see why studying historical literature matters, which is especially important for a general education class with a variety of majors.

https://nationalera.wordpress.com/
A Twelve-Year Old Key to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*: Teaching Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years A Slave* (1853) and The Life of Josiah Henson (1849) in the Context of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Sentimental Fiction

by Christopher Black, Auburn University

For the past three years in my Survey of American Literature (English 2250) course at Auburn University in East Central Alabama, I have been teaching Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years A Slave* alongside excerpts from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Josiah Henson’s autobiography *The Life of Josiah Henson*. This cross textual pairing emphasizes the rhetorical, political, and social means by which Stowe’s sentimental novel was employed by Henson, Northup, Frederick Douglass, and William Lloyd Garrison to authenticate and empathize with the autobiographical narratives of formerly enslaved persons.

When I introduce students to Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years A Slave*, I begin the discussion by stressing the fact that Northup dedicates his memoir to Harriet Beecher Stowe and refers to his text as “another key to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.“ I have students read Chapter 8 “Kidnapping” from Stowe’s *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and I provide an introductory lecture that shows how the sentimental novelist incorporated Henson and Northup’s narratives as source material for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Once students come to understand the moral conscience and Christian sentimentiality of the actual Uncle Tom character from Stowe’s novel, I have students read a packet of excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* which includes Chapter 15, Chapter 16, and Chapter 45. Students work in small reading groups to compare how Henson and Northup incorporate aspects of sentimentiality to cause readers to more fully empathize with their autobiographical narratives.

I also have students read the January 20, 1853 *New York Times* article which rhetorically compares Solomon Northup’s condition in slavery to that of Uncle Tom in Stowe’s novel. I conclude our reading of *Twelve Years A Slave* by screening key scenes from the 2013 film (Chapter 2, 4, 11, and 12). Comparing these scenes from the film to the corresponding chapters in Northup’s memoir demonstrates to students how the features of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction are employed in the film to cause the audience to empathize with the kidnapped slave as well as portray the narrator as a man of moral character and conscience.

Questions for Discussion:

- Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass employed the sentimental character of Tom to advocate for the equal rights and shared humanity of African Americans. Do you feel that sentimentiality could be as powerful a strategy for challenging pervasive racial stereotypes and advocating for civil rights today as it was in the 1850s?

- Josiah Henson in his autobiography fully embraces the language of sentimentiality to advocate for his status as a Christian and a full human being. Do you believe that Northup is as comfortable being compared to Stowe’s Tom as is Josiah Henson? Why or Why not?

- The 2013 film adaptation of Northup’s memoir clearly draws on the type of sentimentiality and Christian sympathy that Harriet Beecher Stowe employs in her novel. Considering the specific scenes, we watched in class, do you believe that the film is a valid and accurate portrayal of Northup’s memoir or an overly sentimentalized portrayal of the institution of slavery? How so?
Andrew Donnelly recently completed his doctoral degree in English at Harvard University. His dissertation, "Reconstructing Sexuality: The Politics of Sex and Manhood in the Civil War Era" tells the history of sexuality as deployed in the literature and politics of the Civil War era. He received the Suzanne and Caleb Loring Research Fellowship on the Civil War, Its Origin, and Consequences at the Massachusetts Historical Society and Boston Athenaeum, and he is currently a Mellon / ACLS Public Fellow at the National Book Foundation where he manages the Foundation’s education programs. He’s also the founder of the Freedom Summer Collegiate program which recruits and trains PhD students to teach college-bridge courses to high school students at the Freedom Projects in Sunflower, Rosedale, and Meridian, Mississippi.

His paper, "Stowe's Slavery and Stowe's Capitalism: Forced Reproductive Labor in Uncle Tom's Cabin," situates Stowe's critique of the market within the recent historiographic shift of linking slavery and capitalism. For some, Stowe has been a spokesperson of those links, but this paper argues that, by rewriting the historical facts of a market for forced reproductive labor within the libidinal depravity of individual slaveholders, Stowe helped crystallize the very understanding of slavery that made the scholarly shift toward the capitalism of slavery necessary.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS

Stowe Center free virtual event honoring 2020 Stowe Prize winner Albert Woodfox
Part 1: September 23 at 7 p.m. Available to stream through October 4. Part 2: Sunday, October 4 at 7 p.m. [LINK HERE]

“To learn, to teach, to serve, to enjoy”: The Legacy of Julia Ward Howe
The HBS Society is sponsoring a symposium at Boston University, June 11-12th, 2021. Keynote speaker will be Professor Megan Marshall. [LINK HERE]

In November 2021, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Society will have a special half-day session at the Society for the Study of American Women Writers conference. A Society tea, featured writers, opportunities for mentoring, and pedagogical practices will all be available, in addition to our regular Stowe panels.

In Summer 2022, the Stowe Society plans to host a standalone conference at Bowdoin College, home of the Harriet Beecher Stowe House. Please save this timeframe for your conference planning! [LINK HERE]

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