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SENTIMENTAL LITERATURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY
AMERICA ON THE BASIS OF *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

BA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research paper is to show how Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a sentimental novel is an example of a text that provided middle-class women a way to enter the public sphere in the 19th century United States. 19th century women had little power outside of the domestic sphere, which is why sentimental novel became one of the mediums through which they could spread their ideas and beliefs – in Stowe's case, strong abolitionist beliefs against Fugitive Slave Law.

In the literature review, the thesis looks into the significance of sentimentalism, as well as significant terms, such as privatized femininity and public masculinity, household economy and public sentiments. Sentimental literature shares women's values in a male dominated public sphere and draws attention to things that women found important. It also shows how Stowe went against the social norms by publishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and why this is a significant accomplishment.

The empirical analysis provides a closer look into how Stowe has used sentimental literature to spread her ideas. The thesis analyzes Stowe's use of public sentiments and sentimental scenes to better understand how the influence of sentimentalism can make a novel significant. The analysis will take an in depth look into some of the paragraphs of the novel, to prove that the sentimental novel was, indeed, a significant genre that provided women with the possibility to enter the public sphere.

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INTRODUCTION

Uncle Tom's Cabin or *Life Among the Lowly* (UTC from now on), written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, is one of the influential works of literature that aims to fight against slavery through Christianity. It was first published in March 1852, and quickly became one of the most popular and influential books written by an American: “/.../ it sold ten thousand copies in the first week and within a year three hundred thousand had been sold in America and nearly one million in England” (Carabine 2002: V). As the novel gained great popularity quickly after its release it was translated to many foreign languages and adapted into theatre performances. As Keith Carabine (2002: V) states in his introduction to UTC, “it spawned numerous stage versions in several languages that were highly edited to emphasize the work’s melodramatic and sentimental effects”. Arthur Riss (2013: 34) argues that Stowe has come to be thoroughly identified with UTC, although she produced many other books and shorter works. UTC, however, remains as the text that defines her.

Stowe’s writing career was supported by her background and education. Joan D. Hedrick (1994: 29) shows that she was first educated at home and then attended the Litchfield Female Academy, followed by Hartford Female Seminary. Having finished her education, Stowe was set with “well-stocked mind” (Hedrick 1994: 44), but had no effective way of putting her talents to use. Stowe was part of the politically active community, but, as was customary of women of the time, she still lived in the domestic sphere, having children, and taking care of the household. Stowe, however, also wanted to be a part of the politically active community. Writing sentimental literature was her way of expanding women’s domestic sphere into the politically active sphere.

UTC is an example of Stowe's activism. Harriet Beecher Stowe came from an abolitionist family. The novel discusses resistance to slavery through sentimental power and religion, highlighting the moral values that Stowe found ideal, such as domesticity and virtuous religious devotion. These moral values also made her take a stand against slavery. Stowe was outraged by the Fugitive Slave Law and the inhumane ways slaves were treated (Riss 2013: 33).

The law even involved people who did not own slaves in the system that supported slavery:

/.../ Fugitive Slave Law commanded citizens 'to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required'; moreover, section seven stated that persons who gave shelter, food or assistance to an escaping slave were liable to a fine of \$1,000 and six months in prison. (Carabine 2002: VI)

Thinking about laws like this, Stowe later integrated her thoughts into UTC, chapter 6, arguing that it was hard, even impossible, to be a good statesman at the time because it was impossible to reconcile law, politics, and religion. By law statesmen were expected to assist in catching fugitive slaves, regardless of their moral values and beliefs.

As Joan D. Hedrick (1994: 202) has stated: "Male professors, male clergy, male politicians made the laws and shaped the public opinion of the land, and women who found themselves morally repelled by their work had little recourse." One of the means that women could use to express their political opinions was literature. Thus, UTC was a way for Stowe to voice her opinion about the enactment of such laws.

UTC has even been credited with starting the American Civil War. Riss (2013: 32) argues that "at one time *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was thought to be the single most powerful instrument for destroying slavery – an understanding illustrated by Abraham Lincoln's notorious yet apocryphal comment upon meeting Stowe: 'So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war'". So, UTC is one of the most influential and controversial

literary works of the 19th century and it has continued to be widely spread and read until the present day.

Harriet Beecher Stowe has been perceived as a sentimental writer, mostly focusing on domesticity and religion. In the 19th century, most of the female writers were white Christian women (Baym 1998: 335). Since social customs expected that woman be domestic beings, women mainly wrote of domesticity and religion through which they could comment on “household economy” (Tompkins 1985: 99). Sentimental literature, generally speaking, has been an undervalued genre. Sentimental literature has been seen as overly emotional and was described as a perfect pass-time for a housewife. While it is true that sentimental literature tends to appeal to emotion, this thesis disagrees with the statement that sentimental literature is insignificant. Instead, sentimental literature can also be seen as one of the few genres through which middle-class women were able to participate in public discussion in the 19th century. In the introduction of UTC Keith Carabine (2002: VIII) states that Stowe’s novel can be seen as “/.../ her passionate assertion of a white middle-class woman’s right and ability to intervene in the masculine, public world of politics and policy”. Through sentimental literature women were able to break out of the domestic setting and take part in public life.

This thesis will not focus on the matter of slavery as it has been widely researched in connection to UTC. Instead, the thesis will look into the sentimental aspects of the novel and how they have been analyzed by feminist critics. This thesis claims, through an analysis of UTC, that sentimental novel, as a genre, was in the 19th century a tool through which women could participate in the public sphere. In order to prove its point, it will first provide a literature review of sentimental literature, followed by the analysis of the use of sentimentality in UTC.

SENTIMENTAL LITERATURE

As Glenn Hendler (2001: 35) states:

./.../ analyses of nineteenth-century sentimentality have too quickly categorized it as a form of feminization and a force of privatization. Feminine sentimentality, by the conventional argument, is defined in opposition to masculine rationality, and the two correspond to interdependent but distinct domestic and public spheres.

Women's lives were lived in the domestic sphere and governed by emotion, men's lives in the public sphere and governed by reason. The sentimental novel is addressed, first and foremost, to women and focuses on the concerns of domestic life.

This does not apply to all women the same way, however. Jane Tompkins (1985: 96) has stated that "sentimental novel represents the interests of middle-class women". In other words, working-class and peasant women did not have the luxury of leisure time to read novels in which the norms of feminine sentimentality were represented. Sentimental novels most notably appeal to emotion, being associated with "over-the-top-feeling" (Sodeman 2014: 3) that is under-valued in our society or even criticized as "foolish femininity" (Baym 1998: 335). For that reason, for a long time, the sentimental novel was deemed by academics as "sentimental rubbish" (Tompkins 1985: 83). This attitude is not new. The fall of the reputation of sentimental literature began already at the end of 18th century. According to Melissa Sodeman (2014: 3). "*./.../ by the 1780s, sentimental fiction no longer enjoyed its earlier cachet and had, by the 1790s, become something of a national literary embarrassment*".

Jane Tompkins (1985: 83) has stated that sentimental novel is something "whose chief characteristic is that it is written by, for, and about women". This statement has both positive and negative aspects, for sentimental novels were described as sob-stories written by overly emotional women and that only a women with poor education would be interested in reading such literature. However, from the positive perspective critics, like Tompkins and Hendler, have

claimed that women wrote of experiences and situations relatable to other women. Because of the strict separation of the public and private sphere for the 19th century middle-class readers, men did not have access to this world and thus found it uninteresting. Women who were excluded from the public sphere were looking for texts that would tell about their experiences. Because women's world was supposed to be governed by emotion, this need was filled by sentimental literature. It showed what women saw as valuable: experiences such as the life within the household, elaborating on the responsibilities women had, marital affairs, maternity and raising children. Women authors shared their every-day worries and chores showing what the life of a 19th century woman was like. Hendler shows that female writers were mostly seen as genteel and sentimental, writing of characters who would have been relatable to them, mostly white, middle-class, literate women, whose femininity was expressed through selflessness. Heroines of the stories were not meant to have complex and difficult personalities or internal lives. Rather, they were depicted as selfless role models.

/.../ writers did not simply presume that their mostly female readers would sympathize with their protagonists; the heroines themselves are characterized primarily by their own capacity to sympathize. Readers, along with the heroine, are witness not only to suffering itself but to numerous examples of the power of sympathy to relieve that suffering. They are then asked, often explicitly, to extend the chain of sympathetic identifications into the real world. That extension of sympathy is typical not only of those sentimental novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* whose concerns reach beyond the domestic sphere; even those novels overtly intended to reinforce women's domestic role deploy the same logic in trying to make their readers into more loving and sympathetic wives and mothers. In that sense sentimentality, at least in its literary manifestations, is a structure of feeling that is always oriented toward the public. (Hendler 2001: 38)

Death in sentimental novels is significant due to the trope of unfair destiny or suffering of the innocent. The death motif is also connected to the person's capability to sympathize, because women were usually depicted as witnesses to deaths and expected to provide emotional support to the survivors. Hendler has explained why death was commonly used as a storyline in novels: *".../* a sentimental death induces its survivors to redouble their efforts in whatever spiritual or social cause the novel is championing, inspired by the example of the virtually

angelic deceased. As such, it is a straightforward example of the way sympathetic identification transforms the most intimate experiences into public acts.” (Hendler 2001: 107-108) Thus the deaths of such suffering innocent characters are a way to unite the domestic and public sphere by making something very emotional and intimate serve a public purpose. In UTC, for example, the deaths of Uncle Tom or little Miss Eva, as will be shown below.

Sentimental literature did not only represent obedient women. In addition, as Glenn Hendler (2001: 106) has written, “sentimental fiction also figures alternative social identities for its readers, identities that may conflict with normative femininity”. Generally, femininity was deliberately associated with being submissive and selfless, in literature expressed through gentle heroines, but the characters of sentimental novels could actually go against the standards set for women by the society. Eliza went against the social norms in UTC, escaping from her master in order to save her family, as the next chapter will show. Another character, Cassy is perhaps the most rebellious character of UTC and the exact opposite of the selfless and submissive mistress, willing to fight for her freedom with no fear.

Furthermore, sentimentalism was not exclusively the domain of women. Hendler (2001: 133) has distinguished “privatized femininity and a public masculinity”. Thus, although men were expected to display public masculinity, they could have sentimental feelings privately. The domestic sphere was a place where men, too, could rely on emotions, but this had to be done in such a way as to not endanger their masculine identities. As Hendler (2001: 97) argues, “perhaps to contain the feminizing potential of sympathetic male reading, the writers of literary advice books consistently represent the relation between readers and authors and between readers and books as an affectively charged form of homosocial companionship”. As Charles Thwing (1883: 2 quoted in Hendler 2001: 97) writes, “the book is a friend who never fails to respond to every emotion” (Hendler 2001: 97). In other words, men, too, need emotional bonds, but they are

created between men, to ensure that men retain their masculine status as rational creatures. However, although sentimentalism was a broader term and men, too, participated in sentimental and sympathetic reading, sentimental literature remains a more prominent aspect of women's culture.

Tompkins (1985: 83) argues that the "domestic novel of the nineteenth century represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from a woman's point of view". Sentimental literature shows what women found valuable in life. It also provided an intimate view into their lives. Sentimental novels were domestic and emotional, which was something that the general 19th century male written literature did not provide, for women to relate to. Sentimental literature might at first seem insignificant but when exploring the literary genre further it is evident that sentimental novels also expressed women's thoughts and ideas about social values, "household economy" (Tompkins 1985:99) and politics. Household economy focused on domestic affairs, such as fertility, providing children with good life and education. Marital affairs are also associated with household economy, emotional and financial support between the husband and wife as well as domestic labor that had to be done within the household. It could be argued that through depicting the "household economy" writers like Stowe showed the significance of women in 19th century society. Women dominated the domestic sphere where, in addition to the household chores and raising children, women were expected to provide emotional support to their husbands. Women were directly responsible for the well-being of their husbands, who managed the public sphere. Thus, even if women's influence on the public sphere was indirect, the influence still existed. For example, through *UTC*, Stowe could show what she deemed as an ideal political model, which was a devoted Christian family, a family of abolitionist Quakers.

One of the tools that women could use were public sentiments. Hendler (2001: 10) has explained the term “public sentiments” as follows:

.../ “sentiment” has existed in English since at least the fourteenth century to denote “physical feeling, and feelings of one’s own,” and these are still among the principal meanings of the term, whose earlier, etymological origins are in words meaning “to feel.” In current usage, “sentiment” primarily connotes private, interior, individual emotions. “Public sentiment” is thus something of an oxymoron.

Although “public sentiments” as a term seems contradictory, it is not. This term in the context of sentimental novel can be explained through the motif of death that was already discussed above. The representations of tragic deaths can be described as displays of public sentiments because the very private feelings such as grief and desperation over a character’s death can be expressed publicly by reading a novel. This provided the authors with a possibility to show what they deemed to be the correct response at such moments. In Stowe’s case, the representation of the death of innocent characters allowed her to create sympathy and also call attention to Christian and abolitionist values.

Printing and publishing novels became a domain that opened public discussion to women, among other things by providing a space for expressing public sentiments. Sentimental literature especially became a medium through which women could represent their private values to the public. Men practiced a more privatized form of sentimentalism; thus, they saw public sentimental writing as pass-time literature that was meant to make a person weep a lot, seeing no further depth in the works. That, however, was not necessarily the case. For example, Nina Baym (1998: 335) has stated that women in the United States published great quantities of literary works in many different genres and the books were not all the same. “Even if nineteenth-century women’s novels were in fact always and everywhere sentimental, sentimentalism as such certainly could not be predicated for the full spectrum of women’s published work” (Baym 1998: 336). Women wrote biographies, religious tracts, travel books, essays, and many other

kinds of literature (Baym 1998: 335). This does not mean that readers necessarily chose books for the educational aspects. As Baym (1998: 345) explains: “people read novels merely to be amused, not educated”. However, even books that were read for amusement could spread socially important messages and do so very effectively, because readers did not suspect that sentimental novels could also carry political meanings.

This can also be said about Stowe’s writing. Different authors (Tompkins 1985; Hendler 2001) have linked Stowe’s work to maternity and domesticity, giving her work characteristics of a sentimental novel. Yet, Stowe’s life experience also extended outside of the private sphere. Stowe was well educated and described as a bright mind by her teachers (Hedrick 1994: 29). Hartford Female Seminary, which Harriet Beecher also attended, “was one of a handful of female institutions where young women could get an education equivalent to young man’s” (Hedrick 1994: 35). After finishing her schooling in Litchfield Female Academy and Hartford Female Seminary, “Harriet Beecher lost no time in proving her readiness to enter the grown-up world” (Hedrick 1994: 27). These facts show that Stowe cannot be equated with the presumed “ill-educated and unemployed female readership” (Tompkins 1985: 83). Despite the education Stowe acquired, however, she still remained in the domestic sphere, like most women of her social class. As John R. Adams (1989: 1) states: “in the early nineteenth century, by law and by custom, males dominated politics, business, the professions, and the family”. Literature allowed women, however, some voice in the public sphere. Sentimental fiction, because it was associated with the domestic sphere, as shown above, was viewed as a women’s genre and one in which they could reach out to the public sphere, without breaking gender norms. Hendler argues that through sentimental fiction women could also express “political activism” (Hendler 2001: 127), in Stowe’s case, strong abolitionist beliefs against Fugitive Slave Law in.

Not all of the 19th century literature scholars agree on the feminist re-assessment of women's culture and the domestic sphere. For example, Keith Carabine has criticized Jane Tompkins's analysis in his introduction to Wordsworth Classics edition of *UTC*. Carabine (2002: XII) argues that switching between moral drama and an anti-slavery impulse is "bad writing" on Stowe's part. According to Carabine (2002: XII), the writing is bad in the sense that Stowe moves "from a vital interaction between realistically conceived characters to a moral drama". The novel has many references to religion and faith in God. Carabine (2002: XII) argues that these references are manipulative and that the "religiosity" of characters is used as "fakery" to trigger an emotional reaction from the readers. Carabine (2002: XVII-XVIII) accuses contemporary feminist writers, such as Tompkins, of ignoring the extent the novel, through the use of religion, supports "the patriarchal status quo", thus working against the aims of feminism.

Carabine believes that Tompkins over-interprets the feminist aspect of *UTC*. He argues that "Lydia Maria Child, a leading nineteenth-century feminist" (Carabine 2002: XVIII) did not consider Stowe a feminist writer, "whereas modern feminists such as Ammons, Brown, Tompkins, and Cynthia Griffin Woolf seize on the radical implications of the evangelical, domestic agenda" (Carabine 2002: XVIII). For Carabine, Tompkins' attempt to call increasing attention to sentimental novels as "a monumental effort to recognize culture from woman's point of view" (Carabine 2002: XVIII) is an example of a "radical agenda" (Carabine 2002: XVIII). Carabine (2002: XVIII) argues that Stowe saw domestic settings as an ideal for women, while Tompkins believes that home provides no shelter from political and economic worries. For Carabine, this argument seems to forget the aims of feminism. He argues that if *UTC* "praises women's influence within the domestic sphere" (Carabine 2002: XVIII) then it is "working against societal change" (Carabine 2002: XVIII) as it suggests that women already have

sufficient voice within the existing system and thus there is no need to change it. Carabine (2002: XX) states that

Tompkins recognizes that an ideal world based on household economy is conservative, but maintains that Stowe's very conservatism ... is precisely what gives her novel its revolutionary potential, because applied universally not just to one segregated corner of civil life, but to the conduct of all human affairs, Stowe means to effect a radical transformation of her society.

Carabine thinks that this is mistaken, and he concludes his criticism by stating that UTC "does not finally endorse a radical form of political activism" (2002: XXII). This argument, however, seems to indicate that Stowe only followed the Bible and her Christian faith, disregarding the fact that Stowe was a well-educated woman with her own perspectives on public affairs. Also, Carabine seems to believe that there is only one type of feminist activism and disregards the subversive elements that can also be found in the domestic context. Tompkins (1985: 100) emphasizes that even if women's influence is domestic, their "influence spreads out in ever-widening circles", because their "spiritual, economic and moral" beliefs influenced those around them as well. Tompkins does not state that the conservative family model is all that women need to aspire to but only argues that Stowe has cleverly used UTC to show that "domestic science is in no sense a shelter from the stormy blast of economic and political life" (Tompkins 1985: 100). It could be argued that, already by publishing a novel, Stowe successfully inserted herself into public discussion, showing her political activism against slavery. Carabine's argument that Tompkins's analysis "demeans" women overlooks the fact that Tompkins is arguing about the importance of domesticity as a potential space of women's power but not suggesting that it is the only context in which women should have power. She draws attention to the fact that personal is political even in the 19th century. "Stowe relocates the power in American life, placing it not in the government, nor in the courts of law, nor in the factories, nor in the marketplace, but in the kitchen" (Tompkins 1985: 100). Tompkins's

analysis shows that Stowe attempted to show women's significance in society, even if they were confined within the walls of domesticity. Tompkins seems to have a better grasp of 19th century women's literature, understanding that while Stowe's ideas of an ideal family are conservative, the fact that Stowe decided to open herself to criticism by publishing a very controversial book for her time, still makes *UTC* a political statement by Stowe that went against the conservative norms.

While it is true that *UTC*, in its nature, is sentimental, there is depth to the novel. Carabine (2002: XIV) has shared the idea of Kenneth S. Lynn in his introduction to *UTC* that Stowe "brought to the sentimental novel such an unprecedented seriousness of purpose as to turn an escapist genre into an instrument of social upheaval". Stowe has combined her views of politics and household economy into *UTC*, and has expressed her values through different characters from the novel. This will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

SENTIMENTALITY IN UTC

UTC is a 19th century slave narrative, with a strong focus on maternity, devotion to Christianity and the unfortunate fate of mistreated slaves. The story introduces a virtuous slave, Uncle Tom, who, despite going through many hardships in his life, remains faithful to his God and loyal to his masters. Despite the novel's title, most of the activities do not take place within the cabin of Uncle Tom. Instead the story shows the readers the households of different masters, slave markets, cotton plantations and a route to Canada. Although Tom is a loyal and hard-working slave, he is sold by his kind master due to monetary problems. The same happens to little Harry, a son of another slave in the household named Eliza. While Tom complies to the devastating news of being sold, Eliza rebels and, hoping to save her son, takes on a dangerous route to escape to Canada. Through the story of Eliza, Stowe has inserted her ideas of an ideal family and political beliefs a virtuous Christian family should have. The story shows readers two perspectives, one of an escapee family and another of compliant slave. It shows the dangers of escaping due to Fugitive Slave Law, which put a bounty on the heads of the escapees, and also the reality of being sold to a cruel master.

Uncle Tom ends up being sold to multiple masters. The first is a rather nice man, Mr. St Clare, the father of Miss Evangeline, who becomes one of the key characters in the sentimental analysis of the novel. Due to his master's untimely death, however, Tom ends up being sold again, this time to a cruel and inhumane master. Even in his most disheartened state, Tom remains faithful to God and kind towards other slaves. Tom dies through the hands of Simon Legree, his cruel third master.

UTC portrays a particular code of values that emphasizes "the sanctity of motherhood and the family" (Tompkins 1985: 91). For example, we can see it in the relationship between

George, Eliza, and their little son Harry, especially in the strong motherly love Eliza feels for Harry. At the beginning of UTC Eliza is depicted as a slave woman who has a reasonably good life, especially compared to the life on plantations. Her master and mistress were kind and cared for her. She was allowed to marry a slave man owned by a different master, George, and they had a young son, Harry. George was a brilliant man; his master, however, did not appreciate his slaves being bright and independent, so he took away George's freedom to work and see his family in order to break down his character. As it is described in UTC “/.../ Eliza was a happy woman up to the time that her husband was rudely torn from his kind employer, and brought under the iron of his legal owner” (Stowe 1995:14). Although Eliza was a slave, she too, was a mother and a wife, taking care of her husband and nursing her son were the most important to her. Being separated from her husband, Harry was all Eliza had. When Eliza learned of her master planning to sell her son, Eliza had no other option but to escape. The ideal of a family had already been taken from her, motherhood was all Eliza had left and she was not willing to give that up. It shows a perspective where a woman is willing to risk everything to save her family. Stowe herself had lost a child to cholera (Hedrick 1994: 186), so she sympathized with slave mothers whose children were taken away from them and sold most of the time.

As for where the main setting for the plot, it follows the description of Tompkins (1985: 97) according to whom: “man-made institutions – the church, the courts of law, the legislatures, the economic system – are nowhere in sight. The home is the center of all meaningful activity, women perform the most important tasks, work is carried on in a spirit of mutual cooperation, and the whole is guided by a Christian woman”. Although UTC takes the reader to places such as slave markets, the focus is on the emotionally devastating circumstances the slaves have to endure in their personal lives, in order to make their lives more relatable to the middle-class readers, especially women, whose lives focused on the domestic sphere. This is why general

activities in the novel are still described in the domestic setting, such as the household of Mr. and Mrs. Shelby, the cabin of Uncle Tom, the household of St Clare. Stowe had described her idealized idea of domestic household in chapter 13, where she introduces a Quaker family, that takes Eliza's family in for hiding.

The next morning was a cheerful one at the Quaker house. 'Mother' was up betimes, and surrounded by busy girls and boys /.../ who all moved obediently to Rachel's gentle 'Thee had better', or more gentle 'Hadn't thee better?' in the work of getting breakfast /.../.../ Everything went on so sociably, so quietly, so harmoniously, in the great kitchen – it seemed so pleasant to everyone to do just what they were doing, there was such an atmosphere of mutual confidence and good fellowship everywhere /.../ and when George and Eliza and little Harry came out, they met such a hearty, rejoicing welcome, no wonder it seemed like a dream. (Stowe 1995: 130-131)

As mentioned above, Stowe saw abolitionist Quakers as an ideal social type. In the quotation above, Stowe has described the Quaker household with words like “harmonious” and “pleasant” to indicate the goodness of their home. Not only is the household itself perfectly functioning, they kindly take in fugitives and provide them with food and shelter, although it is a risk for the Quaker family as well. This shows that Stowe believed that faith and morals should be put above the law. Stowe has put the mother into the center of activity, preparing breakfast. The passage shows the gentle nature that an ideal mother was expected to have. It also shows the importance of women's part in the household, as she takes care of the children and prepares the breakfast, an important meal for starting the day, while her husband can get ready for his day without distractions.

In my discussion, I will focus on chapters 24 to 27 that cover the foreshadowing and aftermath of the death of little Miss Evangeline (later referred to as Eva), chapter 28 in relation to the death of Eva's father Augustine St Clare. Chapters 40, 41 and 43 of the novel discuss the death of Uncle Tom and its aftermath. These chapters were chosen because they all focus on death, a source of public sentiments in sentimental writing, as shown above. The analysis will elaborate on how Stowe has used her novel to speak for the values of women and to have them

heard publicly. In addition to the chapters that focus on the subject of death, I will also compare the maternal relationships between Eliza and her son, and Marie St Clare and Eva, to analyze the how Stowe has portrayed motherhood in two very different families.

Little Miss Eva is the daughter of the St Clare household. Her death is inarguably one of the key events that gives UTC the sentimental characteristics it has. Both Carabine and Tompkins have used Eva's death as an example of the sentimental aspects of the novel. This thesis argues that the deaths in this novel, death of Eva included, are not only sentimental but can also be regarded to be displays of "public sentiments". This can be seen in how Eva was depicted: as an angelic perfect daughter who was pure and deeply devoted to Christianity and her deathbed was surrounded by her loved ones.

Stowe has established Eva's character by having her show compassion and love for everyone around her, showing the strong bond Eva had with her household. Eva's father, Augustine St Clare, seems to be the dominant parent of her life, with Eva's mother being sickly most of the time. The love between the father and daughter is evident in the foreshadowing of Eva's death in chapter 24 where Eva asks her father if he could set all their slaves free.

'Papa, you are such a good man, and so noble, and kind, and you always have a way of saying things that is so pleasant, couldn't you go all round and try to persuade people to do right about this? When I am dead, papa, then you will think of me, and do it for my sake. I would do it, if I could.'
'When you are dead, Eva,' said St Clare, passionately. 'Oh, child, don't talk to me so! You are all I have on earth.' (Stowe 1995: 257)

This example shows how Stowe has shared her abolitionist views through Eva, a child sick with a disease that will soon claim her life. Eva's unfortunate fate is used to trigger a sympathetic reaction from the readers. Not only did Stowe speak to the fathers of the country, who could potentially set their slaves free, Stowe spoke to her female readership as well. By spreading her influence Stowe could encourage other women too, to plead their husbands to set their slaves free. The interaction between the child and the father can also be interpreted as sentimental

because it expresses the love between the daughter and her father, and this passage shows how men also are depicted having sentimental feelings in the private setting. The novel appeals to male readers by stressing that men, too, should be kind and they should also think about freeing their slaves and persuading others to do so as well.

Innocent suffering of children is used not only for sentimental purpose but also to give the children power to make a change. This power of influence is noticeable in chapter 25 through the interaction between Topsy, a mischievous slave child, and Eva. Shortly before Eva's death, Topsy argues that she could never be loved, because she is a motherless black child.

'But people can love you, if you are black, Topsy. Miss Ophelia would love you, if you were good.' Topsy gave the short, blunt laugh that was her common mode of expressing incredulity.

'Don't you think so?' said Eva.

'No; she can't bar me, 'cause I'm a nigger! – she'd's soon have a toad touch her! There can't nobody love niggers, and niggers can't do nothin'. *I don't care,*' said Topsy, beginning to whistle.

'O Topsy, poor child, *I love you!*' said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder; 'I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends – because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while; and it really grieves me to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good, for my sake; it's only a little while I shall be with you.'

The round, keen eyes of the black child were overcast with tears; large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand. Yes in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love, had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! (Stowe 1995: 261)

As Tompkins (1985: 88) has described Stowe's writing saying that "words like "kitsch," "camp," and "corny" come to mind". It is true that Stowe's writing style is overwhelmingly emotional. This passage shows, however, how in addition to the sentimental bursts of emotion, Eva affects Topsy in a way nobody else has been able to. With her kindness Eva has started a process of redemption for Topsy that can be spread from one heart to another, thus having effect around the world (Tompkins 1985: 88). After this interaction Topsy becomes more obedient and genuinely tries to be better and this, eventually, leads to Miss Ophelia's acceptance of Topsy. Although Eva's wish to set all slaves free was not granted, she could save one slave child. With this Stowe stresses that saving one life is better than none.

These interactions were private, but the entire household is present at Eva's deathbed. Not only did the women of the household participate, but so did the head of the family, Mr. St Clare. Mr. St Clare allows himself to forget the rationality for a moment to be swallowed by emotion. Upon Eva's last breaths St Clare is put at the center of attention. "'O God, this is dreadful!' he said, turning away in agony, and wringing Tom's hand, scarce conscious what he was doing. 'Oh, Tom, my boy, it is killing me!'" (Stowe 1995: 274). In the "household economy" women had to witness such events and provide emotional support for their loved ones. Through Eva's death, Stowe both challenges the "particular code of values" and deals "with cultural conflict" (Tompkins 1985: 91) by showing Mr. St Clare in a public display of emotion. In a desperate moment, like the death of a child, the father is not afraid to show his emotion in front of others.

After Eva's death, Marie, Eva's mother, accuses her husband for not caring for her feelings. "'St Clare did not shed a tear,' she said; 'he didn't sympathise with her; it was perfectly wonderful to think how hard-hearted and unfeeling he was, when he must know how she suffered.'" (Stowe 1995: 278). It is clearly shown in the novel that St Clare was not an unfeeling and a hard-hearted man. Thus, this passage shows the social norms for women and men. While the mother could express her grief publicly and vocally, the father had to suffer silently. St Clare, however, felt more comfortable communicating his feelings to Tom, a trustworthy servant, who also cared deeply for Eva, than to his wife. St Clare declares: "'Oh, Tom, my boy, the whole world is as empty as an eggshell.'" (Stowe 1995: 279). This passage supports the claims of Hendler that, men, too, needed emotion, but they preferred to participate in it with other men in order to protect their masculinity. Through the aftermath of Eva's death Stowe shows the contrasting social roles of men and women. While Marie stayed home crying and mourning, St Clare "walked the streets busily, and strove to fill up the chasm in his heart with hurry and

bustle, and change of place /.../' (Stowe 1995: 278). This shows that men could escape into the public sphere while women had to resolve their feelings domestically.

Eva's father dies shortly after her death. The death of a grieving father in itself can be deemed sentimental. St Clare's death is tragic because he was the master of the house and a caring man. Before his unexpected death, St Clare tries to fulfill his daughters wish to set uncle Tom free. This, however, never happens, because St Clare receives "a fatal stab in the side with a bowie-knife" (Stowe 1995: 293) in a cafe brawl. The scene of St Clare's death shows Eva's influence once more. When St Clare lies on his deathbed, he hums a tune to which the doctor declares "His mind is wandering" but St Clare states "No! it is coming HOME at last!" (Stowe 1995: 295). St Clare was not a truly devoted Christian during his life, but in his death, he accepts Christ, because both Eva and Tom wished him to put his faith in god.

The mother of Miss Eva, Marie St Clare, is another character that Stowe has used to further share her ideas about the politics and household economy. Marie St Clare is a middle-class woman who is well off and has slaves to do work for her. Marie has all she needs to enjoy her motherhood but instead she spends most of her days lonely, pitying herself. Eva's connection to her mother is scarce, as she spends most of her time outside with Tom, or in the house with the household servants. As it was described "Tom had general orders to let everything else go, and attend to Miss Eva whenever she wanted him" (Stowe 1995: 166). Thus Tom was more available for the child than her own parents at times. When Eva gets sick, her mother is the first to dismiss the seriousness of Eva's condition. "'Cough! You don't need to tell me about a cough. I've always been subject to a cough, all my days. /.../ Oh, Eva's cough is not anything.'" (Stowe 1995: 253). When Eva dies, however, Marie accuses St Clare of not understanding her motherly grief. "It was the first principle of Marie's belief that nobody ever was or could be so great a sufferer as *herself*" (Stowe 1995: 253). Stowe has clearly made Marie

out to appear as a dislikeable character to emphasize Marie's failure as a mother because of her inability to care for others and put their needs before her own.

Eliza, on the other hand, has the opportunity of motherhood taken from her, because, by law, her son is a possession of another man. Through Eliza, Stowe has shown an idealized version of motherhood, putting her child first regardless of their circumstances. It is well depicted when Eliza escapes from the Shelby household to save her son.

It seemed to her as if strength poured into her in electric streams, from every gentle touch and movement of the sleeping, confiding child. Sublime is the dominion of the mind over body, that, for a time, can make flesh and nerve impregnable, and string the sinews like steel, so that the weak become so mighty. (Stowe 1995: 48)

Stowe has depicted motherhood as the very thing that gives Eliza strength in her mission. Eliza is so immersed in saving her son that she even refuses to eat before she has ensured the safety of her child as little Harry tries to "wedge some of his cake into her mouth" (Stowe 1995: 49). Eliza feels as if she is choking on the food. "No, no, Harry darling! Mother can't eat till you are safe!" (Stowe 1995: 49). Not only is Eliza a good mother, she is a good wife as well. Her softness and support is evident in every interaction with George, being an encouraging wife even in the hardest of moments. When George's spirit was broken by his cruel owner, regardless of her own worries, Eliza comforts him. "Oh, George, we must have faith! /.../" (Stowe 1995: 18).

With this comparison Stowe has emphasized the unfair nature of the slave system, where middle-class white women had servants to care for their children. Slave women who wished to care for their own children were first expected to care for the children of their masters and have their own children taken and sold. Stowe has emphasized the selfishness of Marie, because an ideal mother figure was supposed to be gentle and self-sacrificing in her nature, but Marie is depicted as the exact opposite of that. She is also not supportive towards her husband. With the

selfishness of a middle-class white woman Stowe has paired an ideal mother figure, selfless and kind slave woman Eliza. Not only is Eliza a slave but she has far more complicated circumstances to be a mother. She still manages, however, to be a better mother and a wife than Marie. With this Stowe is trying to emphasize that not only were the slaves humans in the same way their owners were, but furthermore, the slaves, to some extent, had better morals than their owners.

Tom is the main character through whom Stowe spreads her thoughts throughout the novel. Putting a slave man in the center of the story was most probably Stowe's choice due to the 19th century readership. Putting a woman in the place of Tom might have been perceived as too radical. With focusing her story on a slave man, however, Stowe was able to show the evils of slavery through the perspective of Tom, selling of children and separating families. As Stowe (1995: 115) has written in UTC: "The most dreadful part of slavery, to my mind, is its outrages on the feelings and affections – the separating of families for example." Not only is Tom used to portray the evils of slavery, through Tom the readers can also see that a slave man had better morals than his owners. Stowe has given Tom all the morals and virtues a Christian could have and throughout the novel Tom has been spreading the word of god. Tom portrays a selfless kindness expected from a truly devoted Christian. As Tompkins (1985: 91) has stated: "This novel does not simply quote the Bible, it rewrites the Bible as the story of a Negro slave." Thus, Tom could be compared to Jesus. Tom's sacrifice is seen in chapter 4, called "The Martyr". Two slaves of Tom's master, Simon Legree, have escaped and Tom refuses to join the search party.

The escape of Cassy and Emmeline irritated the before surly temper of Legree to the last degree; and his fury, as was to be expected, fell upon the defenceless head of Tom. When he hurriedly announced the tidings among his hands, there was a sudden light in Tom's eye, a sudden upraising of his hands, that did not escape him. He saw that he did not join the muster of the pursuers. (Stowe 1995: 379)

The catching of the escapees would have ended with the killing of Cassy and a harsh punishment to Emmeline. Tom took it upon himself to receive the punishment, instead of going to hunt for the fugitives. The search party fails to catch the fugitives and Legree takes out his fury on Tom, accusing him of helping the slaves escape. Legree demands Tom to give up any information he has.

'I han't got nothing to tell, mas'r', said Tom, with a slow, firm, deliberate utterance.

'Do you dare to tell me, ye old black Christian, Ye don't know?' said Legree

Tom was silent.

'Speak!' thundered Legree, striking him furiously. *'Do you know anything?'*

'I know, mas'r; but I can't tell anything. I can die!' (Stowe 1995: 382)

Even when Legree has declared he will kill Tom, Tom shows compassion to his master, saying that killing Tom will hurt Legree's soul more than it will hurt Tom. The character of Legree can be seen as yet another way of depicting the evils of slavery, because Legree does not believe in God, has no redeeming qualities, and is depicted as evil to the core. Tom is the exact opposite to Legree. Tom's influence on others is almost instant. After the horrible beating Tom receives, two accomplices of Legree, slaves Sambo and Quimbo, regret what they have done to Tom. "Oh, Tom!" said Quimbo, 'we's been awful wicked to ye!' 'I forgive ye with all my heart!' said Tom faintly." (Stowe 1995: 384). The two slaves ask Tom to tell them of Jesus and Tom does. With the help of Tom men understand their sins and feel sorry. "Why didn't I never hear this before?" said Sambo; 'but I do believe! – I can't help it! Lord Jesus, have mercy on us!" (Stowe 1995: 384). Thus, through his beating, Tom has helped to fugitives escape and has helped turn two men into Christians.

Sambo and Quimbo tried to nurse Tom back to health my dressing his wounds, making him a bed and giving him a drink of brandy, but to no avail. Moments before Tom's death, George Shelby, a son of Tom's first owner, arrived in Legree's farm, wishing to buy Tom back. When Legree takes George Shelby to fatally wounded Tom, Stowe depicts another display of

public sentiment as George weeps. “Tears which did honour to his manly heart fell from the young man’s eyes, as he bent over his poor friend” (Stowe 1995: 387). This setting is of course sentimental because George arrives too late to save Tom. With this scene Stowe has shown that George is not afraid to show his affection and that the friendship between him and Tom is more important to George than his public masculinity. This public sentiment does not damage George’s reputation, George leaves with Tom’s body to give him a proper burial, Legree’s slaves plead George to buy them, because they, too, wish to have a caring master. Tompkins (1985: 89) has stated that not only is this interaction emotional, it points to “salvation, communion, reconciliation”. Tom’s death has perhaps the strongest effect on George Shelby and through George Tom has brought salvation to the conflict of slavery, although not entirely, but at least to some extent.

When George Shelby has laid Tom to his grave, he declares: “I will do *what one man can* to drive out this course of slavery from my land!” (Stowe 1995: 390). After some time following his return, George surprises the household slaves with papers “containing a certificate of freedom” (Stowe 1995: 405). Stowe has used George, an admirable young master, as an example to other slave owners. Through seeing the horrible circumstances slaves have to live by, George, although he is a good master himself, decides to set his slaves free. It would have been hard for the slaves to enter the world of free men with slavery still being lawful. George’s offer to have his former slaves live on his estate and work for him for pay, yet again shows Stowe’s ideals. UTC concludes by George asking his former slaves to remember Uncle Tom, telling them to: “Think of your freedom, every time you see Uncle Tom’s Cabin” (Stowe 1995: 406). The Cabin of Uncle Tom becomes a symbol of freedom and thus, George Shelby has brought “salvation”, “communion” and “reconciliation” to his slaves, all that due to Tom’s influence on him.

CONCLUSION

By working through many texts on sentimental literature, it can be concluded that sentimental literature, as a genre, was in fact significant for both men and women in the 19th century. As the analysis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's UTC shows, she combined intense emotion with political messages. Sentimental genre remains more prominent to women. Although in the 19th century women were confined to the domestic sphere, the sentimental novel was a way for them to participate in public life. This suggests that the significance of the sentimental novel should not be overlooked, as it allowed women to participate in public sphere.

Stowe introduced the topic of slavery to her audience and shared her ideas about society and politics. Although Tom is the central character, he is always accompanied by the stories of women. In the Shelby household it is the story of Eliza, in St Clare's it is the tragedy of little Miss Eva, and in the farm of Simon Legree it is the story of Cassy's and Emmeline's escape. Tom bears witness to the interactions of the women and thus, Stowe was able to share the stories of women, through the eyes of a slave man who embodies the Christian values that she thinks should be shared by her audience as well. It could be said that Stowe was successful in her attempt to enter the public sphere, because her novel was read not only by women but by men too and she successfully drew public attention to issues she felt were most relevant.

This thesis thus, proves that UTC was not only a sentimental novel meant for middle-class housewives, but it was also Stowe's way of entering into the public sphere. Stowe used UTC to spread her abolitionist beliefs, but she also shared her views on household economy, public sentiments and politics. Ultimately UTC showed that sentimental novels, too, could carry a meaningful message.

This thesis supports Tompkins's argument that the 19th century sentimental novels helped to recognize culture from women's perspective. The thesis also supports Tompkins's claim that UTC is an example of Stowe's political activism. Even if Stowe's text was governed by emotion, it still spoke for the values of women, as can be seen in the comparison between Eliza and Marie St Clare. Although Stowe's views were religious and thus conservative to a modern reader, for 19th century social standards, it was a bold move on her part to write such a controversial novel. UTC shows that women, too, were important in society, as mothers and the ones who care for their husbands. Ultimately UTC shows that emotion also had an important place in people's lives alongside the public masculinity that governed the life outside of the domestic sphere.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Susanna Homuha

Sentimental Literature in the 19th Century America on the Basis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Sentimentaalne kirjandus Ameerikas 19. sajandil teose “Onu Tomi onnike” näitel

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Annotatsioon:

Käesolev töö uurib 19. sajandi sentimentaalse kirjanduse väärtust läbi Harriet Beecher Stowe'i “Onu Tomi onnikese”. Uurimuse eesmärk on näidata sentimentaalse kirjanduse tähtsust 19. sajandi naistele. Sentimentaalset kirjandust kui žanri on peetud liigselt emotsionaalseks ning lihtsaks. Kuna keskklassi naised olid tolle aja sotsiaalsete normide tõttu koduperenaised, oli sentimentaalne kirjandus üks viis, kuidas nad said avalikust elust osa võtta. “Onu Tomi onnike” on hea näide sellest, kuidas sentimentaalne kirjandus võimaldas ka naistel poliitilistel teemadel sõna võtta.

Kirjanduse ülevaates arutletakse sentimentaalse kirjanduse kui žanri eesmärgi ning olulisuse üle. Peatükk toob esile mõned olulised mõisted: privaatne naiselikkus, avalik mehelikkus, avalik sentiment ja kodumajandus. Kuna sentimentaalset kirjandust kirjutasid suures osas keskklassi naised, käsitlesid romaanid sageli koduseid situatsioone.

Töö analüüsib süvitsi “Onu Tomi onnikese” peatükke, kus Stowe on kasutanud sentimentaalsust ning emotsionaalsust, et tähelepanu juhtida ühiskonna pahedele. Samuti vaadeldakse seda, kuidas väljenduvad Stowe'i sotsiaalsed ideaalid. Stowe kasutab emadust näitamaks, et orjad on samuti inimesed ning neil võivad olla kõrgemad moraalsed standardid kui nende omanikel. Stowe tunneb eriti kaasa orjadest emadele, kes oma lastest lahutati.

Töö tõestab, et Stowe'i puhul väljendub tema poliitiline aktiivsus tugevas vastuolus orjapidamisele. Stowe on “Onu Tomi onnikest” kasutanud, et võidelda süsteemi vastu, mida ta peab ebaetiliseks. Samuti rõhutab Stowe romaanis naiste olulisust ühiskonnas läbi emaduse ja abielu ning tõi selle idee oma romaani avaldamise kaudu ka avalikku ruumi.

Märksõnad: ameerika kirjandus, sentimentaalne kirjandus, sentimentaalsus, Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Onu Tomi onnike”

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