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Under the Title



**Life Follows Fiction: Harriet
Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
and the American Civil War**

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Dedication 1

*This work is dedicated to my dear parents, brothers and sisters for their support to me
along my years of study.*

Dedication 2

I dedicate this work to my family, my colleagues in English department and all my friends name by name especially: Hadjer Khanousi, Nawari Samia, Ndjari Djoumaa and Omari Abdelbasset

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A special thanks with my deepest respect to my supervisor, who cannot consider but a friend and whom I see a role model for me, for his guidance, academic support and soft spoken advice.

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to investigate the claim that fiction is only a representation for human life but fiction also shapes human life. The American writer John Gardner advocates this position as he posits that “life follows fiction”. Because of its significance in the American culture, this paper considers Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, to evaluate Gardner’s claim about fiction. The novel is said to be a response to the institution of slavery in general and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in particular. It is hypothesized that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* crystallized the people’s views against slavery leading to the break of the Civil War in America.

By adapting the thematic based approach and historical approach relying on the documents, reviews and critical analysis it found that Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had an impact on the American antebellum society concerning the issue of slavery. Stowe’s portrayed the ordeal of slaves including: separation of families, physical abuse and the treatment of slaves as properties. This constructed a strong emotional appeal to those who read the novel.

Key Words: fiction, reality, rhetoric, slavery, sentimentality, reader response.

Résumé

Cette dissertation essaye d'investiguer la revendication que la fiction n'est qu'une représentation pour la vie humaine, mais la fiction aussi forme la vie humaine. L'auteur Américain John Gardner défend cette position comme il postule que " la vie suit la fiction". A cause de sa signification dans la culture américaine, cette article considère Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* à évaluer la revendication de Gardner à propos de la fiction. Le roman soit disant une réponse pour l'institution de l'esclavage en général et l'acte des esclaves comme Fugitifs de 1850 en particulier. C'est une hypothèse que *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a cristallisée les points de vue du peuple contre l'esclavage mène à la chute de la Guerre Civile Américaine.

Avec l'adaptation de la thématique basée sur l'approche et l'approche historique dépendant sur les documents, les revues et les analyses de critique on a trouvé qu' Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom Cabin* a eu un impact sur l'avant-guerre de la société Américaine concernant le problème de l'esclavage Stowe a peint l'ordalie de l'esclavage contenant: la séparation des familles, l'abus physique et le traitement des esclaves comme des propriétés. Cela a fait un appel fort et émotionnel aux lecteurs du roman.

Mots clés : fiction, réalité, rhétorique, esclavage, sentimentalité, réponse du lecteur.

نبذة مختصرة

إن هاته الأطروحة عبارة عن دراسة لوجهة النظر الفائلة بان الخيال ليس فقط استحضار للواقع بل ولديه القدرة على خلقه كذلك. الكاتب الأمريكي جون جاردنر أيد هذا الطرح بقوله إن "الحياة تتبع الخيال". نظرا لأهميتها في الثقافة الأمريكية، تتخذ الأطروحة رواية كوخ العم توم للكاتبة هاربيت بتشر ستاو كنموذج لتقييم مدى صحة إدعاء جاردنر بخصوص الخيال. قيل إن هاته الرواية جاءت كرد على العبودية بشكل عام وقانون العبيد الهارب الذي اصدر عام 1850 بشكل خاص.

اتضح أن كوخ العم توم كان لها تأثير على المجتمع الأمريكي فيما يخص مسألة الرق. صورت ستاو معانات العبيد بما في ذلك: تشتت أفراد العائلة، الاستغلال الجسدي ومعاملة العبيد كممتلكات خاصة. هذا ما خلف نداء عاطفي قوي لقراء الرواية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الخيال، الواقع، البلاغة، العبودية، العاطفة، استجابة القارئ.

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General Introduction

Because of its unruliness, it is hard to find an agreeable understanding of the concept of fiction, therefore, to establish a *modus vivendi*, this study takes fiction to mean the imaginative literature in its different genres. Within this framework, it is generally tended to contrast fiction with human life. Indeed, this contrast is true in regard to the distinctive entities of the two, but on the other hand it does misjudgement to connection between them when it denies fiction its claim of truth about human life.

A fiction work is made up out of imagination, deals with the lives of imaginary people, but it embodies a certain truth of human life within its imaginary facts. John Gardner, an American writer, though he uses the word fiction in broad sense, claims that relationship between fiction and real life transcend embodiment to creation. For Gardner, fiction has the power to shape reality and determine how human life goes. In Gardner's words, 'life follows fiction' this dissertation holds Gardner's claim about fiction considering Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a testament as it was claimed to have a hand in the American Civil War.

Seeking to uncover the theme of this paper, the study precedes with an analysis to the connection between fiction and the real life. Then, a historical background of slavery in the America is to be provided. Finally, a portion is devoted to examine Stow's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Regarding this, the following questions could be raised:

What is the link between fiction and real life?

How can fiction direct human life?

How was slavery in America?

How was it abolished?

How did Harriet Beecher Stowe portray slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

What was the contribution of the novel to the Civil War and the end of slavery?

As a methodology to conduct this research, the paper adapts a historical approach to provide a better understanding to the issue of slavery being the social and political context in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* emerged. Additionally, the analytical approach seems to be appropriate to investigate the impact of Stowe's novel on the American antebellum society based on related documents, reviews and critical analysis.

The significance of this dissertation lies in highlighting that how fiction is not only imaginative writings for pleasure and entertainment, but it is also a strong weapon that is capable of building civilisation as well as destroying them. Human life is full of conflicts that are originated from the differences of ideas before anything else such as race or ethnic. Fiction provides a way to settle these disputes as it is powerful to change people's minds.

The first chapter highlights the close the relationship between fiction and human life and the strategies authors use to empower their works of fiction. Then, the second deals briefly with the history of slavery in America providing an overview about the beginning of slavery in America, the way the American government handled the crisis of slavery and finally the abolition of slavery. The third chapter presents a literary analysis to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* examining the strategies used by Harriet Beecher Stowe to weave such influential novel, the different reading of the novel and the novel's impact on the American society.

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Chapter One

The Reality in Fiction

What a magnificent gift human beings are blessed with the minds are! Our minds enable us to create, describe, and tell stories and even construct whole imaginative worlds that exist just in our heads. Nevertheless, there are people who can give their mind-created worlds lives in papers using a pen. Fiction is a fabric of human mind and though it is based on imagination rather than facts, it has been a source of inspiration for humans in real life. The author creatively puts his ideas into his work of fiction, ideas not only about the past or the present, but even about the future. This work can become a force by which the author persuades his audiences into fostering his thoughts and his fancies about the future and which can come true to boot.

Fiction's capability of manipulating the reader's minds is attributed to the strategies the authors use to lay out their arguments. The following chapter discusses how fiction can shape human reality and determine the way life goes. Additionally, it examines the rhetorical strategies authors use to persuade the readers.

1.1. Fiction Shapes Reality

Although a work of fiction is born of human imagination, its join to the livable world is unbreakable. Many of our perceptions, beliefs and ideas about the world are generated by fictional works. The notion of fiction as a molder of human thoughts about their world is advanced by the theorist of history Robert Anchor. Anchor treats historical narratives as fictional works which were weaved for the purpose of providing the community with conventional realities. In his words ““historical narratives, no less

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than fictional narratives always serve in one way or another, to legitimize an actual or ideal social reality” (Hanne 10).

Beside the foundation of social realities, fiction is effective weapon to reinforce these realities or change them. This what the literary theorist Robert Scholes goes to when he highlights the role of traditional narratives, though they can be oral, in contributing to the preservation of a social convention or even change it. Indeed, the people’s perceptions of who they are, to which social group they belong and what is expected from them are instilled into them through those narratives. For Scholes “traditional narratives structures are ... part of a system of psychosocial dependencies that inhibit human growth and significant social change” (10).

Louis O. Mink asserts the capacity of fiction to keep the knot between one generation and the next tied. In Mink’s view, narratives constitute reservoirs that contain cultures of societies and they guaranty the transmission of these cultures from predecessors to successors. Mink observes that “storytelling is the most ubiquitous of human activities and in any cultures it is the form of complex discourse that is earliest accessible to children and by which they are largely acculturated” (9).

We commonly think that the ideas we have in minds are originally ours and that we form them through the experiences we have in life, but in actual fact, fiction offers us a space- though in imaginative world where imaginative characters live- where we can trial the thoughts we already have, change them or even come out with new ones. Reading a work of fiction, a novel as an example, privileges us to violate the privacy of characters’ mind examining their ideas. In real life, we do not have this option of direct access to other people’s thoughts. R. D Laing points out that “your experience of me is invisible to me and my experience of you is invisible to you. I cannot experience your

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experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another” (Palmer 9).

What Laing tries to highlight is that when our interactions with each other in the life all what we got about each other are blurring images based on our behaviors as we cannot get into the heads of one another. Therefore, in real life, how reliable the pieces of information we get about each other depends on how able we are to accurately decode the other’s behaviors. Contrastingly, works of fiction enter readers into the head of characters presenting the readers directly the thoughts of the characters. For “being told what a variety of fictional people are thinking” is “one of the pleasures of reading novels” (10)

In works of fiction, characters interact in fictional worlds. Although these worlds are imaginative and in some cases contain things that cannot be true in the real world, fictional worlds are constructed representations of the real world. This link enables the reader to integrate the real world they live in with fictional ones. The fictional worlds in works of fiction provide the reader with possibilities about the real world. Palmer states that “Storyworlds are possible worlds that are constructed by language through a performative force that is granted by cultural convention” (34).

The possibilities of the fictional worlds create a landscape where thoughts about the real world can be negotiated. The experiences described in fictional worlds are not unbelievable for readers as they may encounter those events in real life. When reading a fictional work, the reader is taken on the current of the events developed along the plot. The reader crosses the boundaries between the realm of fiction and the realm of reality following the character’s thinking and behaviors. However, the reader does not passively adapt the ideas of the characters nor he does while evaluating their behaviors.

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On the one hand, the reader is exposed to the thoughts the characters and in the other hand; he has his own ideas shaped by his own encounter with the real life. Both thoughts are crossed in the mind of the reader, therefore, even if the reader does change the ideas he forms by his own experience in the real world, his experience in the fictional world will leave a mark in the reader's mind.

1.1. The reader response to fiction

Books and other press are especially directed to readers, yet attention is often focused on the text and the writer; for this purpose, the theory of the reader response exists. The theory of the reader response views the reader as the most important element that can judge the text. Thus, it has a close relationship to the ontology of a literary text (Abdullah and Al-Haba 84). The reader response theory helps the author develop in his writings. In this way, he can know the strength that must be adopted in his writings in order to present a beautiful text that is understood and useful (Tyson 170).

Opinions differ on the importance of the reader's response, some critics see that the text is fixed and whatever the reader response is, it remains ineffective “the New Critics believed that the timeless meaning of the text—what the text is—is contained in the text alone”(170).On the contrary, supporters of reader response theory argue that the text does not make sense without a reader's response and they believe in two things that: the Role of the reader's response cannot be ignored, and the text itself can be read in different ways according to the person who is reading (170). There is no doubt that the meaning of the text may change from one person to another depending on the culture of the reader and his way of thinking. However, what some do not know is that the same reader may look at the same text in different ways this depends on his psyche, mood, the new experiences he underwent, as well as the purpose for which he reads the text.

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Reader's response is an extended theory that includes five criticism approaches. Through his book *Critical Theory Today*, the writer Lois Tyson could explain these five approaches and presented them in a simplified manner.

The first reader response approach is called the transactional reader response theory. This theory is led by the professor and the researcher Louise Rosenblatt (1973). Transactional reader response theory admits both the role of the reader and the text in the representation of meaning. When reading a text, the reader evokes all his experiences, thoughts and beliefs in order to apply them on the text; this no doubt affects the way the reader understands the text.

Since meaning is produced through the transaction between the text and the reader, the aesthetic mode is important to make this happen. "In order for this transaction between text and reader to occur, however, our approach to the text must be, in Rosenblatt's words, aesthetic rather than efferent." (1973), efferent mode focuses on the information that occurs in the text; whereas, aesthetic mode maintains its attention to various things which allow the reader to make his judgments.

Affective stylistics is a theory led by Stanley Eugene Fish, it regards the text as: "an event that occurs in time—that comes into being as it is read—rather than an object that exists in space." (1975) thus, the theory supports the idea that says the text's meaning cannot be completed without the existence of the reader. In affective stylistics, the text is examined accurately to understand its effect on the reader.

The subjective reader response theory is adopted by David Bleich. It deals with the text as a symbolic object (1978). Because the text's treatment happened inside the reader's mind, he had better study the feelings and memories that make him interact during his reading. Indirectly, this theory means that the meaning of the text is just an

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explanation of the reader's own symbols and experiences; in another word, it is an explanation for the text that exists in his mind.

The psychological reader response theory is one of the five reader response theory criticism approaches. It was adopted by the Psychoanalytic critic Norman Holland (182). The psychological reader response means that the motivations that make the reader read the text affect the way he understands it (182). In other words, the unconscious is turned on when the reader reads a certain text, so his feelings easily drift especially when he remembers a specific event or person.

Fish also adopts the theory of social reader response which is related to the subjective reader response theory (185). Society shares with the reader all the individual interpretations that he makes for the text simply because he is a part of society. Moreover, the reader is made by society because the society instilled in him values and ideas that he possesses now. Tyson says the reader may belong to more than one society; while reading, he may unconsciously present them all.

The impact of works of fiction on readers can be attributed to the rhetorical strategies authors use to persuade readers. Those strategies are used by authors to support the argument they lay through their fictional works.

1.1. About Rhetoric

The word rhetoric with the Greek origins dates back to the fifteenth century (Kennedy 3). Plato has had the privilege of writing this word for the first time in his book (3). Over time, the art of rhetoric developed in the law courts and official occasions (3). The importance of this art lies in being very practical in the daily communication with both family and society members in general. In ancient times, the

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art of rhetoric came in multiple forms throughout the world (3); however, its purpose remains the same which is Persuasion and pleasure.

The Classical rhetoric backs to the Greek and Roman time; it was characterized by being primarily educational. Rhetoric gained a place within the school curriculum in the Greek and Roman periods, and teaching it became common and necessary (3). The main goals of the classical rhetoric were to persuade an audience/the reader and create a masterly speaker or writer. On the other hand, modern rhetoric differs from classical one in that it maintains the goals of classical rhetoric in addition to focusing on the writer/speaker and the writing/ speaking techniques as well (Sloane and Perelman).

In his book *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that there are three branches of rhetoric: judicial rhetoric, deliberative rhetoric, and demonstrative rhetoric; then he added that the audience is either a judge or not a judge of what is being said (Kennedy 4).

Judicial rhetoric contributes to making a person able to defend himself well and prove his innocence easily. Judicial rhetoric refers to any written or spoken rhetoric intended to achieve justice or to condemn the accused (4). Judicial eloquence is widely used in courtrooms. However, in everyday life, it can be used by anyone trying to justify his actions. Owing to the litigations court were very common in the Greek and Roman eras, the courtrooms were the first places where the judicial rhetoric has developed (3).

By contrast to the judicial rhetoric which focuses on the previous actions; the deliberative rhetoric emphasizes the coming ones. This kind of rhetoric takes the past as a rule to judge the future (4). It is supposed to be used a lot in discussions and speeches such as the presidential speeches. The deliberative rhetoric is mostly used to make the reader or the listener take a certain decision or give it up.

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The third rhetorical branch is called epideictic rhetoric; it is mainly directed to the listener/ the reader (4). In this case the reader/the listener is asked to be just a receiver. He does not have to make a decision. The writer/the speaker may follow certain methods in order to convey his thoughts such as blaming or praising.

The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle was the first to identify the three rhetorical appeals of persuasion which are pathos ethos and logos. Ethos is a term with Greek origins; it refers to the moral values and beliefs of a person, or even an entire culture (*Firestone*). The ethos appeal plays a very important role in the world of communication and it influences literature as well. Ethos addresses the soul of the listener /reader, his mind and heart alike. Aristotle claims that ethos appeal is shaped in three forms, in the speaker's/the author's character, the status that the listener is put in, and in the arguments that are presented (Dow 95). According to Aristotle, the listener/reader views the speaker as trustworthy only if he holds on three things which are: understanding, virtue, and goodwill; losing one of these three things can break this trust down (97). The listener/reader is more willing to accept the new arguments and ideas in case the speaker/ the writer has no personal interest in the subject and has no intention to harm him. In addition to that, the importance of the arguments appears in being supportive to the subject with a reliable source (97).

Pathos is also one of the three artistic means of persuasion. It can be identified as the use of emotions to convince listener /reader of something (*Firestone*). Pathos depends on manipulation of emotions rather than the search for logic and ethics. It is said that, never make a decision when you are angry, never make a promise when you are happy, these words show us how weak human being can be in front of his feelings. Pathos uses empathy, sadness, anger, happiness and every action can touch human's emotions. The speaker/the author may use the sensory organs of human in order to

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evoke the listener's /reader's emotion such as talking about the damage that can be caused to the human's body while practicing a certain activity in his daily life. In this way the speaker/the author can push the listener /reader to unconsciously experience new feeling maybe he has never tested before (Kennedy 33).

Words have latent energy that makes them easily affect people's emotions, that's why Aldous Huxley in his book entitled *Brave New World* says: "Words can be like X-rays, if you use them properly—they'll go through anything. You read and you're pierced" (72). The speaker/the author prefers to choose strong words rather than simple ones because they are more astonishing to the listener's /reader's mind. Dow states: "Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity..., through the agency of words, the soul is wont to experience a suffering of its own" (14).

Anecdotes are other methods the speaker/the author can use to impose his domination on the listener's /reader's emotion (Worthington 136-137). For example, a story about a tragic end of a lung cancer patient is more effective than giving a lecture about the need to quit smoking. Lectures may be boring for some, other may take the lecture's hall as a suitable place to sleep; instead, anecdote gives a closer image to what things will lead to if a person continues smoking.

Logos is the third rhetorical appeal identified by Aristotle; it means persuading with logic based on evidence and individual skills of reason (Firestone). In logos, the writer steps away from emotion and ethics. In the world of logos, the author uses evidence and logical proofs that directly address the mind. When dealing with logos, the speaker/the author have to present some claims and try logically to prove them and use a

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suitable language (Booth et al. 129). The speaker/the author also has to present some substantive arguments as a way to reassure the reader /listener.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, although fiction and reality are commonly seen to contrast each other, an investigation to people's thoughts and ideas reveals that the two concepts are strongly connected. Furthermore, fiction is capable of shaping and reshaping social realities. This is due to the special use of language authors are gifted with and the rhetorical strategies they implement in order to convince their readers.

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Chapter Two

The Battle against Slavery in the New World

The history of slavery has remained unknown, but there is no doubt that slavery began a very long time ago. The slaves had great credit for the construction of the most ancient civilizations in the world; the Greek and Roman Empires. The word slave has always been associated with harsh work, where slaves always had the largest share of it. Construction of palaces and high-rise buildings, agriculture and home service all were arduous tasks entrusted to the slaves. Getting a slave was not a difficult task in the past, the prisoners of wars, the kidnapped people, and the children who were sold by their parents because of poverty faced the same fate, which is enslavement.

Slavery has varied from place to place, but Islam has set limits and controls to guarantee the rights of the enslaved that they had never been set before. In the fifteenth century the slave trade flourished more to make it easier. As time went on, the suffering of slaves increased and their lives became pathetic. Despite the attempt to suppress them, the slaves often tried to obtain their freedom and rights as human beings; the American Civil War was the biggest proof of it.

1.1. The Origin of Slavery in America

“In its most basic sense, enslavement occurs when a subject is seized, often violently, thereby falling under the absolute dominion of another and often becoming the human property of another” (Kolchin 3). It is a social reality that had long been and always existed in almost every society known to man since ancient civilizations. The historian John Keegan notes, in his book *A History of Warfare* that no one knows how and when slavery and the slave trade began, but he speculates that it was probably, and it likely intensified with the advent of the war chariot in the second millennium BCE.

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When the British settled in the New World, they brought the natives and some white Europeans into servitude as indentured servants. It was a form of slavery under which the servant is promised freedom in return for his services for a number of years. In 1619, Jamestown, a British settlement in the New World, witnessed the advent of the first African slaves (Kolchin 3). They were brought to the colony by a Dutch man on a vessel. Shortly after their arrival, the African slaves were sold as indentured servants. John Rolfe, a British Jamestown settler, recorded in his dairy “A Dutch man of war that sold us twenty Negars came to Jamestown late in August, 1619” (3). Those slaves were set to work along with the white servants but with different position from that of the white.

The Africans were strong-bodied, knew how to work the land, and familiar with the hot weather. With those qualitative characteristics, they were favored by the colonists to be utilized as laborers in plantations in America. Accordingly, demand for African slaves escalated pushing slave trade to become recommended to meet that demand. Eventually, the number of the African slaves increased in America as slave trade grew highly profitable.

Slave trade was a commercial activity that linked Africa, Europe and America beginning around the mid-fifteenth century. African slaves were exchanged for commodities coming from Europe, and then shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to America to be set to work in plantations. That forced oceanic voyage of the African slaves is historically known as the Transatlantic Trade or the Middle Passage (D. Schneider 27). Shocking was that experience for blacks. “The Black Holocaust”, “the African Holocaust” or “le mort” are all terms reflecting the untold pain and the hardship the enslaved Africans had to endure over the course of the Middle Passage.

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In the ships the slaves were treated as a commodity, they were stocked in tight; hot vaults (33). The atmosphere was suffocating because of the lack of oxygen. The slave's legs clasped, their necks were tied together with wooden and iron tools (33). They were always chained and hungry, most of them died inside the ships; others died either because of thirst, disease or cold (Some of them were naked), in addition to spending hours, weeks, months and sometimes years of immobility (29). Most of the slaves suffered from psychological stress due to the harsh treatment they received (33).

The slaves rarely had the chance to board the ship. Cleaning the ship and dancing for entertaining the travelers were one of the most important tasks entrusted to the slaves during the voyage (D. Schneider 30). The slaves were obliged to eat certain types of food such as rice and porridge (D. Schneider 33). Even innocent children, women and elders were harshly exploited, women usually were not entitled to take their offspring with them (D. Schneider32).

The writer 'Olaudah Equiano' described his experience in one of the ships that he was obliged to get into when he was brought to America as slave:

This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable (Published in 1789).

Some slaves expressed their rejection of the harsh conditions and demanded their freedom, some of them decided to wage a revolution against their owners such as

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'the Amistad' rebellion in 1839, others preferred to go on hunger strike and some jumped to the sea (33). The slaves' revolts against their owners usually failed. The traders used whips to control the slaves and to forbid them from rebelling against them. Moreover; they used to throw some of the rebels at the sea, or to deprive them of food (35-34).

Slave rebellions and rejection of their miserable conditions have always been a source of concern to their owners. The slave owners had to find a way to control their slaves and eliminate this anxiety. Slave codes were the only way to control the huge number of slaves in America. In the 19th century slave codes appeared in all the American sections https (Slave Code). The content of these codes has differed from place to another and varied according to needs of each. However, there were some common codes in the American colonies and, later, in all the states.

Among the codes was that a child who was born of a free father and a slave mother became a slave (Slave Code). The slaves also had no right to own property or to married (Slave Code). The slaves were prohibited of gathering with each other unless there was a white person next to them. Self-defense, moving in the city without the owner's permission and possessing firearms all were considered as dangerous practices the slaves were punished for (Slave Code). Several methods have been used to make these codes valid such as killing, whipping, branding, and imprisonment (Slave Code).

Slave codes helped the owners to control their slaves, thus the demand for slaves increased. Slave trade had perfectly contributed in refreshing the American economy; it witnessed an unprecedented activity between 15th and the 19th centuries (Housden Focus on the slave trade). Over time, the number of slaves highly increased in America. Generally, there were 12 million Africans brought to America to be enslaved (Housden Focus on the slave trade).The fertile soil of the southern states made it a

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suitable place for agriculture. The Southern states exclusively relied on tobacco and rice trades. Therefore, slavery was firmly established there. At the end of the 18th century, tobacco trade was on the edge of a cliff. However, in 1793 the cotton gin (special machine for processing cotton) was invented which made cotton production easier (D. Schneider 50). Growing demand for cotton by northerners and Britain has saved the situation (Locke and Wright 11). Cotton prices rose and the number of slaves in the south rose as well. By 1860 the residents of the south of America rushed to get as many slaves as possible to make them work in the Cotton gin.

Unlike the Southerners, The Northerners relied on industry. The tariffs on imported goods helped the northerners; instead, it was a big problem for southerners (Mortensen1). The Northerners stood against slavery. After America's independence, slavery began to wane in the north of America what had worsened the relations between the south and the north.

1.1. The Abolition of Slavery in America

“All men are created equal.” Thomas Jefferson. Americans, as Jefferson proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, hold the United States to be founded on liberty and equality, but the reality goes differently. Chattel slavery the Africans suffered from remains an indelible blot in the American history. It was an exploitative system under which a human being became a private property of another human. This system was dominant and legal in the British America by the eighteenth century.

In fact, “Most of the founding fathers were large-scale slave owners, including George Washington, father of his country, even after the separation from Britain, the cruel institution of slavery remained functioning pervasively in the American society and became entrenched component of its order. Indeed, eight of the United States’ first

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twelve Presidents, in office for forty-nine of the new nation's first sixty-one years, were slaveholders." Slavery did not end overnight in America. The successive events on the subject of slavery led to a great bloody war, it marked the beginning of the end of slavery in America; starting from Missouri Compromise of 1820, to the Reconstruction of 1865. However, the impact of slavery has deep roots that continued years till after the reconstruction.

Despite the fact that America gained its independence in 1776, the issue of slavery remained unresolved. After the independence war, new states were added to America, some of them came as a result of wars won by America, and others were joined after signing treaties and agreements. Opinions differed whether or not to extend slavery to new states. March 6, 1820 the Missouri Compromise was signed as a solution to calm the situation between the north and south (Missouri Compromise of 1820 Vermilya). Through this Compromise, Missouri was considered as a pro-slavery state; by contrast, Maine was among the states that rejected slavery. Officially, the borders of Missouri had been adopted as a dividing line between the pro-slave states and the states that rejected it. Every state that wanted to join America had to respect that dividing line according to its location. If it was located the south of the Missouri line it had to be anti-slavery, and if it was in the north of this line it had to be for (Missouri Compromise of 1820 Vermilya). Despite this compromise, there was no radical solution to the problem of slaves in America.

At a time when America was divided over the issue of slavery, some bloody events have made matters worse like Nat Turner Revolt 1831 and the bleeding Kansas in 1854. On August 1831 an American slave called Nathaniel Turner led a bloody revolt known as Nat Turner Revolt (Gray et al. 1). Turner was born in Virginia and had been educated there. Nathaniel Turner received a religious education; over time, he became

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more religious (1). Turner had been convinced that he had the ability to see some divine signs; he considered the solar eclipse of 1831 was a divine sign that the time for the uprising was ripe. In February 1831, Nathaniel recruited some black men and armed them.

On August 1831, Nathaniel Turner and his friends carried out an attack in which 55 white people were killed starting from his owner Mr. Joseph Travis and his family despite being nice to him (1). After this revolution, Turner hid for one month and a half, but in November 1831 he was arrested and strangled (16). The rebellion created a great panic to the slave owners in the south, whereas it was pride for American slaves. Since then, strict laws were passed against the slaves.

Again, After the Mexican war, the United States entered into a new struggle that concerns the new lands. The new lands acquired by America as a result of the Mexican war opened a discussion about the annexation of these lands to the antislavery states or to pro-slavery states (Mason 6). The Congress led by Henry Clay, U.S. senator from Kentucky decided to make a compromise 1850 (6). The legislation gave the new lands the opportunity to choose their situation either to be a free or a slave state, solved the problem of taxes, and officially ended slave trade in Washington. Moreover, the Fugitive act was passed as part of this compromise which came as a result of southern politician's pressure to the Congress.

As a result of southern politician's pressure on the Congress, the Fugitive Slave Act was first passed in 1793 and it was again imposed on September 18, 1850 (Fugitive slave). This law forced the northerners to help the southerners regain their fleeing slaves to the north; moreover, the people who helped the fugitive slaves were punished as soon as they were caught. The northerners had strongly criticized this law and tried to breach it. This law has had a significant impact on American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe

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Who wrote her famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852 (Fugitive slave). The novel was derived from Harriet own experience. The Novel was widely popular among the northerners while, it provoked great anger among the southerners.

Four years after passing the Fugitive Slave Act, The Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854 took place (Fugitive slave). It was an act led by Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas in 1854 (wunder and ross 14). Through this act Douglas accepted to construct a transcontinental railroad. This project was important for unifying the country. In order to achieve that, Douglas repealed the Missouri Compromise throughout this act to gain the southerners support since the railway passes in west of Missouri. The abolition of Missouri Compromise had been a source of outrage for the Northerners. The southerners voted for The Kansas Nebraska project while the northerners voted against it. That caused a big dispute between northerners and southerners which resulted in blood shedding. This event became known as The Bleeding Kansas Nebraska, it served as an alarm for the coming war (Fugitive slave).

The abolition of Missouri Compromise had not been the only wrong decision taken by the American government, in 1857 the American Supreme Court took a famous decision called The Dred Scott Decision (Cohen 145). It is known to be the worst decision in the history of the American Supreme Court. Dred Scott was a slave owned by an army man, permanent traveler named John Emerson. John Emerson took Dred with him to several states including those which were against slavery. After the death of his owner Dred Scott tried to purchase his freedom in 1846, however Emerson's widow refused to sell it (145). Both of Dred and his wife Harriet rose lawsuits on this matter, considering that their previous residence in free states freed them. In 1850, Dred was declared as free (145). However, in 1852 this verdict had been annulled by the Missouri Supreme Court arguing that the Africans who were in America

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regardless of their situation they were not American citizens, and they had no right to sue (146). Moreover, Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

The decision gave the southerners the right to keep their control over their slaves even in the free states. The judgment provoked a wave of anger among northerners who saw it as a victory for the southerners (147).

The anti-slavery uprisings in America did not end with Nathaniel's death. On October 19, 1859, John Brown (an American anti-slave) incited a great uprising against slavery in Virginia along with his followers. However, the uprising failed and Brown was executed. For the Southerners, the event was a warning that northerners were ready to use force for the sake of ending slavery in America. The conflict between the North and the South continued in America even the official events became an arena for this conflict and this is exactly what happened in the Presidential Election of 1860.

Both northerners and southerners tried to cling to their view to slavery therefore; they sought to choose a candidate to represent them. At first, there had been a split among the Democrats; the northern Democrats nominated Douglas (Sinha 59). However the Southern Democrats chose John C. Breckenridge. The Republicans exploited this dispute, so they agreed on choosing Abraham Lincoln (59). The democrats' votes scattered due to the dispute, and Lincoln became the new President of the United States.

Lincoln's victory in the elections of 1860 created a new split inside the American society. In the same year, in December, Carolina announced its withdrawal from the union⁶¹. Washington tried to present a compromise, but to no avail. Shortly after, another six Southern states separated from the Union Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The Separate states formed a new independent government the Confederate State of America (61). Over time, the number of separated states increased to eleven.

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In 1861 the same Confederate attacked the Fort Sumter of Charleston in South Carolina (Lynch). This event marked the beginning of the American civil war which lasted for four years; the main objective for this war was maintaining the union. The northerners relied on diverse economic sources such as industry, transport, and telegraph. Unlike the northerners, the Southerners relied on slaves as an essential economic and military power. In the first of January 1863, the president Lincoln added a new objective to the civil war which was abolishing slavery (Sinha 61).

On 19 November 1863 Lincoln delivered his speech in Gettysburg, in which he motivated his citizens to fight up for democracy (61-62). Black slaves fought alongside white men to ensure their freedom, many of them fled from the Confederacy to the Union. The continued withdrawal of slaves from the Confederation reduced the chances of southerners to win the civil war and gave a great support to the northern states. On April 19, 1865, The American Civil War ended; the nightmare of slavery ended and the American States were united; however, the war left a huge destruction.

After the destruction caused by the civil war, there was a great need for reconstruction. The reconstruction focused on the national unity and the settlement of slave conditions. In (1865) The Thirteenth Amendment was passed. In this amendment, four million slaves were freed and slavery was officially abolished in America (Reconstruction). In The Fourteenth Amendment of (1868), the Americans of African descent were given the American citizen ship; and in the Fifteenth Amendment of (1870) they were given the right to vote (Reconstruction). Despite all these reforms, they remained words on paper especially in the south. The newly freed slaves had to start from zero. In 1865, the Congress established Freedmen's Bureau to help the newly freed slaves; however, the southerners exploited the conditions of former slaves and they employed them with low wages.

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The reconstruction gave the African Americans the chance to put their marks in politics particularly in the south. The law of freeing slaves and giving them an independent life was not easy for American society. The implementation of this resolution took a long time.

1.1. Slaves Narratives

Art is a means of self-promotion. Through it, one can express his fears and share his bitter experiences with the others. Methods may vary from drawing to writing, singing and acting, narrating...etc, however the goal remains the same. Slave narratives were among the most important arts that emerged in America before the abolition of slavery. It was one of the ways that some former slaves, as well as anti-slavery activists followed in order to share their experience with the others, and deliver humanitarian messages in an artistic manner that touches people's feelings, which made greatly contribute to the abolition slavery in America. The writings varied in their styles.

The slave narrative is a genre of literature that emerged during the sixteenth century and continued even post-civil war (Andrews). This type of literature has received great acclaim in the hearts of the American people especially the northerners (Scott). Slave narrative was not only limited to Americans, it reached Africa, Spain, and some Muslim writers as well (Andrews). This type of literature is based on either written narratives or oral narratives told by slaves personally. The writings varied in their styles. These narratives included of painful factual events lived by the slaves either during a passage to America or during the years that they spent as slaves (Scott).

Slave narratives were widespread, especially in the period before American civil war, one hundred slave narratives were published as books or pamphlets between 1760 and 1865, and approximately another one hundred following the Civil War (Scott). The

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slave narrative reached the height of its influence and formal development during the antebellum period, from 1836 to 1861 (Scott).

The classification of African writers was the most important challenge that faced this type of writing, it was almost impossible to classify those writers according to affiliation (*Graham and Ward 27*). The anti-slave trade, the antislavery movements and religion helped the African American writers write and present themselves as original Africans (55). The Bible encouraged blacks to regain confidence in themselves as humans; it encouraged them through giving them equality and supporting literacy.

After a great deal of trouble, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw attained the name of the first author to be presented an “African”, after the publication of his book *A Narrative of The Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw* in 1772 (Andrews). Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw opened the field for his colleagues of his kind to go out into the open like Olaudah Equiano who wrote His autobiography by himself 1789 to be the first international slave narrator. The writings of the black African Americans were published under the supervision of white Americans, this made some critics question whether some details have been omitted or not (*Graham and Ward 53*)

Slave narrators tried to keep abreast of the events that were taking place in the United States. Among the most important events was the fugitive slave’s act, which made many anti-slavery and former slaves seek to change the reality through their novels and writings. Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain are two among the writers who were against fugitive slave’s act and they wrote two important famous novels *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

The effect of the narrative on the American society had been clear, and it had gradually reduced the level of passive dealing with slaves (Scott). The Saint Domingue

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Revolution (1791–1804) was a source of inspiration for the Pioneers of slave narrative to struggle for slave's (*Graham and Ward 67*). Highlighting the sufferance of the slaves was one of the most important methods that were followed by the slave narrators as a means of abolishing slavery.

Even the vocabularies that were chosen by the writers were carefully selected. "The vocabularies of collective black resistance and reform – acting as a familiar refrain in much of what may be considered as African American creative and political expression for the better part of the nineteenth century – take center stage during this period" (*Graham and Ward 66*). The Narration of Equiano had the chance to access to the British Parliament in which it contributed in the abolition of the British slave trade, despite the fact that his writings drived him to danger, he continued his war against slavery. His book was translated into German, French, and Dutch; through which he gained high fame (*Graham and Ward 92*). After Douglas's success, anti-slavery societies and publications continued to publish the autobiography of the slaves, which contributed greatly to its abolition.

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Conclusion

Having seen the previous events and how many acts were imposed by the government concerning the issue of slavery, proves that slavery really existed and created a great problem in America. Slavery was a stigma in the American history. For a long time, it had been the wheel of economy in the south; therefore, it created a great schism within the American society.

As a writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe is keen to be part of this conflict and contribute to the abolition of slavery by using her famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stow could do what the other slave narratives authors could not do; she became “the little lady who started the Great War”. In addition to the beautiful language and the sentimental rhetoric that Stowe used in her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was special because it was written by the hands of a white writer.

The solutions provided by the government failed to resolve the problem of slavery America. Finally, it ended with a bloody civil war. The official abolition of slavery in America could not take it off from the American society. Due to the practice of slavery for many years, old negative habits towards black people have been firmly established in American society.

Old habits die hard; for a long time, black Americans have been suffering from the problem of racial discrimination.

Regardless of the achievements they have made and the reputation they have gained, the Americans of African descent have remained outcasts and invisible in American society just as Ralph Ellison explained in his novel *Invisible Man* " I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads

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you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass" (Published in 1952).

Chapter Three

Sentimental Discourse in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In the first chapter, we digest that the difference in the entity between fiction and life does not break the tie between them. This connection may exceed to put life in subordination to fiction. Peoples have always had and expressed various opinions over the numerous issues they encounter in life. For John Gardner, it comes as no surprise that these different views can be changed by a work of fiction. Authors implement diverse techniques of using language with the aim of convincing, influencing or pleasing the audiences.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is among the works of fiction with great cultural significance for the Americans. The novel was the embodiment of the antislavery voice and it has been given credit for its contribution to the abolition of slavery in America. *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* success in shaping the public opinion about slavery is due to its rhetorical richness.

1.1. An Overview of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

1.1.1. The Context

Harriet Elizabeth Beecher was born in Litchfield, Connecticut on June 14, 1811 for Lyman and Roxana Beecher. Being a daughter of a Reverend father, religion was a cornerstone in Harriet's upbringing. The daughter also fell under the influence of her eldest sister, Catherine, as she was a student at Hartford, a school established by the sister, and where Harriet herself became a teacher. In 1832, the Beechers moved to Cincinnati, Ohio where Harriet married Calvin Ellis Stowe, a professor of biblical literature, on January 6, 1836. Harriet's first publications were in 1833, albeit she had

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begun writing in the mid-1820s. Among her publications: short stories written for the *Western Monthly Magazine*, *The Mayflower or Sketches of Scenes and Characters among the Descendants of the Pilgrims* in 1843, and her masterpiece *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was fathered by the national crisis the United States of America went through during the 1850s. A political conflict grew between the North and the South as the government attempted to determine the position of Africans in new territory the United States won after her war with Mexico (Bloom 13). The government wanted to join the newly acquired land to the Union; however, the status to be given to these areas became a case of dispute. There was a call that joining the Union should be under the status of free states. On the other hand, slaveholders, seeking to make use of their slaves as hard labor, contended for a slave state status.

John C. Calhoun, a proslavery senator from South Carolina, with the support of the slaveholders, put pressure on the government by threatening that the South would secede if the states were claimed free states (Bloom 13). Looking for freedom, black Africans started escaping to the free states with the help of abolitionists. Therefore, slaveholder wanted a way to restrict their slaves and retrieve the escaped ones. In Kentucky, Henry Clay, proslavery senator, gained passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in the Compromise of 1850 (Bloom 13). The act outlawed aiding the runaway slaves and gave the masters the right to get their escaped slaves back.

As the Beechers moved to live in Cincinnati, Stowe became an eye witness to the agony African suffered from under the institution of slavery, the institution to which the American government gave its blessing in the antebellum south and to which the northerners remained indifferent. Nothing but heartache could Stowe have felt as she inquired: "Pray what is there in Cincinnati to satisfy one whose mind is awakened on

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this subject?”, “No one can have the system of slavery brought before him without an irrepressible desire to do something, and what is there to be done?” she continued (Hedrick 109).

The Fugitive Slave Act disturbed Miss Stowe. In one of her letters to Calvin noted that what prevented her from publically expressing her feelings was the lack of time (Parfait 15). Gamaliel Bailey, an editor of *The National Era*, offered Harriet the chance of expressing her feeling on slavery in the periodical. (Parfait 15). The periodical was an “organ of the American and Foreign Antislavery Society” (Parfait 17). Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was first published as a series in the *National Era* (Parfait17). The novel translated Stowe’s view to the institution of slavery in general and her reaction to the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in particular.

1.1.1. Characters and Plot Summary

Uncle Tom’s Cabin is weaved around characters inspired from the Southern antebellum American society with its various segments: slaveholders, slaves, traders and men of law. Uncle Tom, the protagonist, is a black slave owned by the Shelbys, white kind plantation owners. Mr. Arthur Shelby and his wife Emily also own Eliza who is a black girl married to George though he has another master. The couple has a little boy named Harry. In the novel we encounter Haley the trader doing business with Mr. Shelby. The Birds is another white family in the novel. John Bird and Mary are a husband and wife from Ohio. Being a senator, Mr. Bird is committed to his public duties.

Augustine, Marie, Evangeline and Ophelia are all member of the Clare family. Augustine is a slave owner who generously treats his slaves. He has bought Topsy, a black girl to save her from the hard circumstances she was passing through. Marie is Augustine’s wife, but, unlike him, she is harsh with the slaves as she hates them.

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Evangeline, also nicknamed Little Eva, is the Augustine's and Marie's kind daughter. Ophelia is Augustine's cousin. She is invited to look Little Eva who suffers from a morbid illness.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is set in the 1950s, Kentucky. The novel tells the stories of three slaves: Tom, Eliza and George. The three of them live in Kentucky, yet their lives paths go differently. Overhearing her master, Mr. Shelby, negotiating the sale of her son, Harry, with Haley, a trader, Eliza escapes to save her little child from being sold. Despite all the perils she faces, the runaway slave manages to reach a free territory with the help of the Bird family. George, Eliza' husband, flees too for different reason. He cannot bear the mistreatment he receives from his master any more. George makes it to Canada where he can be free, and then he and Eliza reunion as a family.

Unlike his two fellows, Tom does not run away, but he is taken south away from his family by Hadley, the trader. Tom is sold first to Augusttine St. Clare who is kind master and whose daughter, Little Eva, becomes a close friend to Tom. St. Clare sales Tom again to a cruel man named Simon Legree. Tom faces his death under the hands of his new mater. Tom helps two female slaves Cassy and Emmeline who are owned by Legree to escape. After discovering that, Legree punishes Tom harshly and whips him until death.

1.1. Critical Receptions

Uncle Tom's Cabin translates Stowe's criticism to the American antebellum society. The novel had a considerable readership nationally and internationally. However, Stow's bestseller became an object of controversy as it was read differently. Articles have been written by Northerners, Southerners and even non-Americans analyzing the social issues discussed in the novel.

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1.1.1. The Success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The selling figure of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* testifies that the novel achieved palpable success in seizing the reader's avidity. According to Adena Spingarn, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold 300,000 copies in the United States in its first year of publication, adding to that the portion of Britain, the number mounts to a million copies. The novel echoed overseas as it was translated into various languages (Spingarn 2). Considering the total of the copies sold, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century (Spingarn 2).

The Literary World, an American periodical, magnifies the success *Uncle Tom's Cabin* achieved. In its volume of the 4th December 1852, it described the novel as “a phenomenon in the literary world, one of those phenomena which set at naught all previous experience and baffle all established and recognized principles.” This appraisal is grounded in the domestic record in the sale Stow's novel held within a short time from its publication, and the impressive figures of the copies sold internationally especially after translations came out.

The author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rose to fame as the woman who started the Civil War in America. It is reported that while a visit to the White House, President Abraham Lincoln greeted Harriet Beecher Stowe saying: “so you're the little woman who wrote that book that started this great war!” (Hedrick)

1.1.2. Abolitionist and African American Response

Abolitionists along with African American venerate Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; however, their praises were tinged with reprovals for some peccadilloes within the novel (G. Diller 563). On the hand, Abolitionists and American African behold the publication of the novel as a “Godsend” in their struggle against the institution of

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slavery in America for its rhetorical sway over the readers and its popularity (563). On the other hand, the two groups express their dissatisfaction with the novel for two reasons. The first account is the way Stow's portraits the character of Tom which, for them, bespeaks that "blacks should passively endure their sufferings while waiting for a change of heart of the white majority" (563). The second reason is the closing of the novel which for, Abolitionists and Black, advocates returning the blacks to Africa (563).

In his review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, William Lloyd Garrison, a prominent American Abolitionist, demonstrates his acclaim for the "emotional power" and the "moral authority" of the novel (563). He notes that the expressiveness of Stowe's novel is powerful that its "effect upon all intelligent and human minds coming in contact with it..., cannot be estimated" (654). Besides that, Garrison exposes the flipside of Stowe's novel. He sees that Stowe has sketched the character of Tom as a Christ like person who endures his agony considering it a fate or "willing to be led as a lamb to be slaughtered". For Garrison, the passivity of Tom suggests that blacks "are required by the Bible to put away all wrath, to submit to every conceivable outrage without resistance, to suffer with Christ if they would reign with him" (565).

William G. Allen, a professor of classics at New York Central College, wrote a review of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this review, he shows how the novel earns his admiration; nevertheless, he criticizes Stowe's representation to Uncle Tom (566). Allen admits that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is rhetorically rich that "its descriptions stir the blood, indeed almost make it leap out of the heart!" (566). As Diller notes, Abolitionists and African Americans were not fully satisfied with the way Uncle Tom is sketched. His character suggests that "blacks should passively endure their sufferings while waiting for a change of heart by the white majority" (563). Allen disaccords with Stowe's "non-resistance". He believes that backs must redeem themselves by brute

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force. In his words “it is not light the slaveholder wants, but fire, and he ought to have it. I do not advocate revenge, but simply, resistance to tyrants, if need be, to death” (567).

“She knows nothing about us” (570) is the statement made by the Black Nationalist Martin Delany in regard to Stowe’s publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Delany shared the editing of the abolitionist paper, *The North Star*, with Frederick Douglass (569). Delany’s earlier statement reveals his abomination to Stow’s novel despite its popularity. He looks at the originality of Stowe’s novel with suspicion as it was plotted out based on accounts written by slaves in the South. Indeed, in a letter, Stowe tells Douglass about her desire to “gain information from one who has been an actual laborer on one (cotton plantations) and it occurs to me (Stowe) that in the circle of your (Douglass) acquaintance there might be one who would be able to communicate to me some such information as I desire” (Stowe). Delany contends that “Our (blacks) elevation must be the result of self-efforts, and the work of our own hands.” (G. Diller 569).

1.1.1. Proslavery and Southern Response

Writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was an attempt from Harriet Beecher Stowe to reach out to Southerners and offer them an emotionally comprehensible image of the system of slavery. She assured that she had no “invidious feeling towards those individuals who, often without any fault of their own, are involved in the trials and embarrassments of the legal relations of slavery” (573). Nonetheless, the Southerners responses were hostile towards not only the novel but even the writer herself. They rejected the novel believing that it did not represent the reality of slavery (573). The Southerners held Stowe to be at fault for exaggerating the cruelty of slavery, though she

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was not familiar with it (573). They also criticized her for over idealizing black characters in the novel (573).

On October the 21th 1852, The New York Observer, a religious publication, published an article in which Stowe along with her novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, receives a frontal attack (573). The Observer notes that Stowe's novel is "a fiction in every sense of the word. It is not only untrue, but it is untruthful. It conveys erroneous impressions; it introduces false conclusions. It is not, as it purports to be, a picture of slavery as it is" (574). The article argues that Stowe deliberately weaves her novel from three dark side of slavery creating a false image about the institution and Southerners.

Firstly, in her novel, Stowe exaggeratedly portraits the treatments slaves receive from their boorish masters as inhuman cruelty. Slaves are dehumanized and even reduced into ownable things. Thus they are considered as properties of the slaveholders, and treated as such. It is not unusual for a slave like Uncle Tom to be whipped until death for no any obvious reason. A reward is to be offered for recovering a runaway slave dead or alive (574). For Stowe, these maltreatments the slaves experience are approved by the law. In the words of Miss Ophelia: "he (the master) who goes furthest and does the worst only uses within limits the power that the law gives him" (237).

The article denies the brutal practices Stowe accuses the slaveholders to exercise against their slaves and even if there are some occasional cases, the Southern courts have made laws punishing the masters who abuse their authorities. According to The Observer, in Virginia, a year before the publishing of the article, the General Court deemed killing a slave by his owner under torture to be a first degree murder regardless whether or not it was the intention of the master to kill that slave. Additionally, within the same state, Virginia, the Governor Johnston declared amnesty for a slave who killed his brutal master (G. Diller 575).

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Similarly, the state of Louisiana introduced the Civil Code as a set of rules to regulate the relationship between the masters and slaves (575). These rules prevent the slaveholder from treating their slaves inappropriately. According to the codes, the master may become compelled to sell his slave if the master is found guilty. Among these codes:

- 1- "The slave is entirely subject to his master, who may correct and chastise him, though not with unusual rigor, nor so as to (maim) or mutilate him, or to expose him to the danger of loss of life, or to cause his death" (575).
- 2- "When the master shall be convicted of cruel treatment of his slaves, and the judge shall deem proper to pronounce, besides the penalty established for such case, that the slave can be sold at public auction, in order to place him out of the reach of the power which his master has abused." (575).
- 3- "If any person whatsoever shall willfully kill his slave, or the slave of another person, the said person being convicted thereof, shall be tried and condemned agreeably to the laws." (575).

The second dark aspect of slavery the Observer holds Stowe to have depicted in her novel is the separation of children from the mother and scattering of families. In fact, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* opens with the deal of selling Eliza's, whose husband has recently escaped because of his master's maltreatment, eight years child being discussed. It is not the first time for Eliza to lose a son, but she has already lost two children been sold away from her. Miss Ophelia is not in a better condition than Eliza's. She has been kept "to breed children for market", and they are sold "as fast as they got big enough" (Stowe 231).

The Observer notes Stowe must have not known about the laws standing against selling children apart from their mothers, otherwise she would not have molded the way

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she has done (G. Diller 575). As stated by the Observer, the statute book of Louisiana includes norms regulating the market of the mothers and children slaves (G. Diller 575) these norms prohibited selling a slave child whose age is less than ten years away from his mother or a mother of less than ten years old child apart from her child. The norms also put retribution varying between finding and prison for violating them. Among the laws the Observer points at, there are:

1. "Every person is expressly prohibited from selling separately from their mothers, the children who shall not have attained the full age of ten years" (575)
2. "Be it further enacted, that if any person or persons shall sell the mother of any slave child or children, under the age of ten years, separate from said child or children, or shall, the mother living, sell any slave child or children of ten years of age shall be fined not less one thousand or more than two thousand dollars, and be imprisoned in the public jail for a period of not less than six months nor more than one year" (575).

3.1. Sentimentality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Brooks and Warrant define sentimentality as "the emotional response in excess of the occasion; emotional response which has not been prepared for in the story in question." This definition highlights the quintessential quality of sentimental literature. As the word sentimental suggests, sentimental literature addresses the feelings and emotional states of the audiences seeking their sympathy. According to Brycchan Carey, woe stories occupy great part of sentimental literature. Through their works of fiction, Sentimentalists seek to cultivate sympathy and benevolence in the reader through inflaming and directing feelings within those readers. Characters are made to go

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through moments of distress and suffering, and when one or more of them start weeping, the reader is supposed to weep too. With the view of bringing the reader around, sentimental writer use strategies known as sentimental rhetoric or the rhetoric of sensibility.

1.1.1. Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments

Sentimental literature emerged as an implementation to philosophical movement during the eighteenth century fostering moralities and sentiments. In a previous philosophical view, taking interest in other's concerns has often been interpreted to be self-interest considering human beings to be naturally selfish. This is the view Thomas Hobbes upholds claiming that "human nature is ultimately self-interested, forever driven by appetites and desires" (Csengei 33). In the early eighteenth century, new considerations to human nature dawned as opposed to Hobbes's "epicurean account". The later posits that human's emotional bonds to others are not mere expedients to meet selfish needs, but a rather genuine concern for their well-beings. Adam Smith is one among philosophers who gave great interest in the moral significance and the social purpose of human emotions. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith centers his moral philosophy on the element of sympathy.

In the chapter "Of Sympathy" Smith states the way he understands the concept of sympathy. He points out that "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it" (Smith 11). In these few sentences, Smith frames five dimensions to the concept of sympathy: the origins, the motivation, the altruism and the rewards of it (Lauren 12). For Smith, sympathy is human's capacity to share other's experiences and understand their feelings, thereby identifying with them. This capacity is an inborn

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privilege humans are endowed with. It is our unselfish desires that instigates by our sympathy for others without expecting anything in return.

Additionally, Smith draws attention to the notion of imagination in relation to sympathy. He admits that the accessibility to other people's feelings is limited there is "no immediate experience for what other men feel" (Smith 11). However, he suggests that in our imagination we change the place with suffer thereby we can access to their feelings. For Smith sympathy and imagination are correlated, that is sympathy cannot be elicited until one consciously imagines himself in situation of the other person with whom he wants to sympathize. In Smith's words:

It is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his (suffer) sensations ... By the imagination we place ourselves in his (the suffer) situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence from some idea of his sensation, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them (12).

Smith considers the cognitive feature of sympathy. He proposes that sympathy "does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it" (Smith 14). Sympathy is not a mere response to the emotional cues that represent someone's passion, such as crying or smiling, but it is rather situationally induced as one conceives the situation which precipitates these emotions. In other words, sympathy does not elicit from the physical expression of crying or smiling in itself, but it what we conceive of as the motivating circumstances for the crying or the smile that finagles our sympathy. To put it another way, our sympathy is responding to our imagination by conceiving of a situation in which we might respond as the other

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person is responding, which will be any situation in which we feel the other person's response would be sensible.

1.1.1. Sentimentality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Stowe's resolves that sentimentality is more powerful than any other social languages to make people understand how awful the institution of slavery is. In her *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she implements moral sentiment as a guiding principle in her abolitionism holding Smith's consideration of moral sentiment to be a universal faculty by which humans feel sympathy for others. Stow's endorsement of moral sentiment is dramatized in the twelfth chapter entitled *Select Incident of Lawful Trade* where two genteel women have a debate over slavery. For its "outrages on the feelings and affections" (Stowe 135), one of them manifests her condemnation to slavery. The woman understands the agony of blacks under the system of slavery and identifies with them because she has encountered slave families being scattered to the four winds and mothers separated from their children as she has "lived many years in Kentucky and Virginia both" (135).

The other woman voices pro-slavery claims and sees that black slaves are "better off than they would be to be free" (135). In response to this claim, the first woman asks "Suppose, ma'am, your two children, there, should be taken from you, and sold?" (153) This resonant question is to elicit the feelings of woman approving slavery in a like situation of that of slaves, the feelings that she abnegates to have in the case of the black race: "we can't reason from our feelings to those of this class of persons" (135). The first woman admits to the pro-slavery lady that her denial is pardonable because she has never been exposed to a situation where mothers and children are torn apart.

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Moving to the ninth chapter entitled *In Which It Appears That a Senator Is But a Man*, Stowe embodies the emotional response she seeks from her reader in the scene in when the fugitive Eliza arrives at the house of the Bird family. In this scene, the Birds hold different viewpoints over the issue of slavery. Mary emotions are the bases of her position while John posits a rational argument considering his senatorial responsibility. The appearance of the fugitive slave, Eliza at the Birds' house tips the scales. Seeing the ordeal of Eliza, Mr. Bird is not only pushed into changing his mind after, but even moved to help her escaping. It is the transformation of the Bird Mr. Bird what Stows wants to see on her readers by making slavery emotionally comprehensible to them.

The Birds are introduced to us as a domestic, middle-class white family living in the ordinary way in the antebellum American society. In the opening of the chapter, they are sitting in their cozy parlor to have their tea. Mr. Bird has just arrived home from his senatorial duties. He is "drawing off his boots, preparatory to inserting his feet in a pair of slippers, which his wife had been working for him while away on his senatorial tour."(Stowe 89) Mrs. Bird is busy arranging the afternoon tea while the children playing around. She appears in the parlor "superintending the arrangement of the table, ever and anon mingling admonitory remarks to a number of frolicsome juveniles, who were effervescing in all those modes of untold gambol and mischief that have astonished mothers ever since the floor." (89)

While sitting together, Mary and John Bird strike up a conversation about the passing of a new law prohibiting aiding runaway slaves. It is a surprise to Mr. Bird that this conversation has been initiated by his wife asking "what they have been doing in the Senate?" (89) Mary has always devoted herself to the family keeping a distance from the ongoing political discussion. This is what the narrator confirms telling that

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“Mrs. Bird does not usually trouble her head with what was going in the house of the state,” (89) but she rather considers that “she had enough to do to mind her own.” (89)

According to Catharine E. O’Connell, Mrs. Bird voices the emotional and private attitude a faction of the American antebellum society holds towards slavery (16). Mrs. Bird acknowledges the cruelty of slavery and passing a law that prevents giving shelter to fugitive slaves is not the right decision; however, she does not “give a fig” (Stowe 90) for politics. A considerable portion within the antebellum American society, especially in the north, shares the same passive attitude Mrs. Bird does. They do avow that slavery is an inhuman institution and it should be stopped, but the objection does not go beyond to translate into an action. The worst of all is that even that little help provided to the slaves by some abolitionists has been outlawed by the enactment of The Fugitive Slaves Act.

Catharine holds that, unlike Mary, Mr. Bird personifies the reasonable public action. Being a Senator, Mr. Bird believes that the priority of the public interests takes over the private feelings. In other words, for Mr. Bird, the priority is to preserve the union between the North and the South not to help slaves. He recommends to Mrs. Bird not to “suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it’s a matter of private feeling, there are great public interests involved- there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings” (Stowe 91). In the 1850’s America, decision makers viewed the issue of slavery the same way Senator Bird does. They favored to maintain the union between the North and the South. Thus the Fugitive Slave Act was passed.

The appearance of Eliza carrying her child in the scene disturbs the domestic tableau of the Bird family. She arrives at the house of the family with her slender body exhausted and terrified, dressed in “garments torn and frozen, with one shoe and the

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stocking torn away from the cut and bleeding foot” (93). Knowing that Eliza is owned by a good mister and she escaping, the Birds ask “What could induce you (Eliza) to leave a good home, then, and run away, and go through such danger?” (95) Eliza does not center her defense on theoretical arguments; instead, turning to Mrs. Bird, Eliza asks “have you ever lost a child?” (95) When Mrs. Bird acknowledges that she has, Eliza confidently asserts that “you will feel for me” (95). Stowe addresses a sentimental message through Eliza’s question not only to Mrs. Bird but also to all the readers among whom mothers who have lost their children. The question gets the readers involved in the scene as it drives them to recall the experience of losing someone close to them so that the sentimental message is effectively transmitted.

The appearance of Eliza with her child at the Birds house is emotionally compelling that the debate of the family over the Fugitive Slave Act comes into a close with a new consensus between the Senator and his wife. They are both susceptible to Eliza appeal. Mrs. Bird’s argumentation against the act is already based moral intuition even before meeting Eliza thus her sympathy with the runaway slave is anticipated. However, Mr. Bird abandons his rational argument over the act as his ideas of law are re-grounded in the moral sense expressed by his wife. As a result, Senator disregards his professional commitment and help Eliza escaping.

Depravation of black children from their mothers is one dreadful aspect of slavery Stowe portrays in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Mothers like Mrs. Bird and readers who have lost children are predisposed to respond emotionally to what the slaves are suffering from. The experience they share- losing a child- becomes a common ground from which sympathy is elicited. In classical psychology, those painful experiences, undesirable emotions and unresolved conflicts are suspended in the unconscious. Once

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the unwanted experience is recalled, the pain felt before is likely to reoccur. Eliza's situation opens the wounds of the readers therefore they sympathize with her.

Unlike his wife, the public responsibilities Senator Bird is trusted with developed impediments for him to see the Fugitive Slave Act from emotional angle though his is a father for a lost child. Instead, he chooses to bring a rationalistic argument to bear on the topic of the act. Anna Freud, a psychoanalyst, would regard the Senator's behavior as rationalization. It is a defense mechanism which involves finding good reasons for what one is doing. Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies the unconscious uses to avoid the unwanted thoughts or feelings.

Senator Bird admits to his wife that her "feelings are all quite right", but he unconsciously forced not to rely on those feelings taking his senatorial duties as justification. However, the appearance of Eliza breaks the Senator's defense. Confronting the "magic of the real presence of distress" Senator Bird is founded to be merely a husband and a father who is moved by the agony of the fugitive slave. As a result, Mr. Bird abandons the position he holds as a Senator and aids Eliza as he feels that he is compelled to do so.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, the high readership of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seems to prove that Harriet Beecher Stowe successfully made her voice against slavery heard. Raising the discussion over this social issue in the American antebellum society, Stowe used sentimental discourse to target her readers' hearts. The novel left various impressions among readers. For some, the novel was touching thought it was about unreal characters. Others rejected it claiming the hideous events in the novel do not meet with the reality. But in overall view, it is historically proven that slavery was a reality in antebellum America which led the country towards national crisis in 1850s. Stowe's work of fiction, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, offered the Americans a space to reconsider the issue from emotional perspective.

General conclusion

Generally, fiction has connotation of the unreal what misleads to cut any connection between fiction and human life, but in the contrary the two overlap with each other despite of their differences in entity. This paper proves that John Gardner's claim that "life follows fiction" is true. Fiction can take over real life as it can change ideas on the personal level and on broader one.

The historical proof asserts that slavery was a social reality in the antebellum America. In the 1850s discussion over slavery grew to the point that country almost dredged into a national crisis. Opinions varied between legitimizing the institution of slavery and calling for bringing it to an end. The laws enacted by the government tilted the balance in the favour of the proslavery. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was one of law introduced by the government and in accordance with the law, people are required to help catching fugitive slave and bringing them back to their masters.

In 1852, *Harriet Beecher Stowe* wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* responding to the law made by the government concerning slavery. The novel received a wide readership and became an influential work of fiction as it changed the views of most people over slavery by telling the stories of slaves providing the readers with an image showing how hideous and inhuman slavery was. Therefore, Lincoln won the presidential election of that time as he promised to abolish slavery.

The change Stowe brought upon the American society testifies that fiction is a strong weapon. If it is used appropriately, it can lift vocalizations promising a better future.

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