Harriett Beecher Stowe's Abolition Soundtrack in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

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Abstract

In her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: *or Life Among the Lowly* (1852), Harriet Beecher Stowe strategically included hymns and hymn singing within the narrative about Tom's life as a slave. She framed the novel with hymn-singing in Tom's cabin at the beginning and in the Shelby Great Hall at the end. Many of the hymns Tom sang were written by the Reverends Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley. These hymn lyrics articulated the arminian belief that all Christian believers were equal in God's sight in contrast to predestination belief that salvation was available only to the select few. Stowe, like earlier "social visionaries" who argued for including blacks as Americans, appealed to her readers' emotions to enlist their sympathy and their action on behalf of abolition. Specific hymns in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* affirm the slaves' humanity (in contrast to their status as chattel property), establish the slaves' equality, and legitimate the slaves' emancipation. Thus, this essay makes audible the "lost soundtrack" of nineteenth-century abolition.

Introduction

In her popular novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: *or Life Among the Lowly* (1852), Harriet Beecher Stowe strategically included hymns and hymn singing within the narrative. Hymns appealed to her readers' emotions, fueling their sympathy with the victims of slavery. This rhetorical strategy endorsed abolition; Stowe aimed to mobilize antislavery action. Singing hymns also established relationships among singers and their audience at the same time that hymn performance enacted communities across racial boundaries. Some of the hymn texts in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* previously had been embedded in other antebellum social visionaries' speeches, memoirs, essays, and newspaper articles.[1] These widely-known hymns in essence created a musical language or soundtrack for social action on behalf of the slaves' emancipation and of free blacks' inclusion in American society.

Sacred music and sentimental fiction

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sacred music participated in the cultural work of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction by affirming interpersonal relationships. Characters in this literary genre prized their emotional connections with others in the midst of a cruel, unyielding, impersonal world. Heroes and heroines broke down social barriers and reached out to others creating communities through their emotional alliances. In the antebellum United States with its

[1] This essay comes from a larger work that examines a number of pre-Civil War Americans who believed that both republican and Christian ideologies called for the inclusion of Blacks and Indians as Americans. These "social visionaries" included the Rev. Samson Occom, the Rev. William Apess, Elias and Harriet Boudinot, the Rev. Richard Allen, David Walker, Maria W. Stewart, Lydia Maria Child, William Lloyd Garrison, and William Wells Brown in addition to Harriet Beecher Stowe. All of them used Protestant hymn texts as part of their persuasive strategy to garner support for a multiracial America.

unpredictable economy and volatile politics, narratives that encouraged a stable and benevolent society attracted a broad spectrum of readers.[2]

Like sentimental fiction, hymns also affirmed interpersonal relationships. In the Beecher family before she married, Harriet joined her brothers and sisters singing hymns as a common past time—notably during the arduous trip as they migrated west to Cincinnati. Later, she and her brothers Henry Ward and Charles wrote and published hymn texts as a professional calling. Harriet and her siblings had sung hymns at church, in school, and at home during their childhood; as adults they inculcated the same appreciation for hymns in their families. Stowe knew: people who sang hymns together felt connected as they sang and they felt a common tie when they remembered singing.[3]

As the means of establishing and maintaining interpersonal ties, hymns created brief episodes or protracted experiences of equality among singers, moments of "egalitarian resonance." In the novel when whites and blacks sang together, they made an emotional connection, even if in some cases it was only temporary. Hymns also provided a bridge between readers and the characters. Readers of the novel who knew the music had an additional means to become emotionally aligned with the characters because they shared the same musical space.[4] By establishing emotional connections among characters and the readers, the text argued for valuing interpersonal relationships and therefore, for elevating black men and women from slaves to Americans.

Uncle Tom's Cabin included hymn lyrics written by the Reverends Isaac Watts, John Newton, and Charles Wesley; these hymns had become part of a musical soundtrack used by other social visionaries prior to the American Civil War. These hymn writers had crafted lyrics to articulate Arminian theology (that Jesus died for *all* people, not just the elect). Now Stowe and others used the same words to advocate for equality among all people regardless of color based on the idea that "all God's children" were equals. Social visionaries like David Walker, Maria W. Stewart, and William Lloyd Garrison found the language of oppressed individuals facing hostile opposition in these lyrics to be well-suited for their nineteenth-century campaigns for a multiracial America.

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[2] Joanne Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," *American Literature* 69.2 (1997): 268. Shirley Samuels in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth Century America* (1992) notes that "literary sentimentality had important implications for America's identity as a multicultural nation" and that emotional connections crossed "gender, race and class boundaries" as individuals identified with each other and with America.

[3] Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe, A Life*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 69. Harriet wrote to her friend Georgiana May about singing on the westward wagon and reminisced about singing together as girls. In 1855 Henry Ward Beecher with the help of his brother, Charles, edited *The Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes* that included three hymn texts written by Harriet. Nyal Z. Williams introduction to *A Concordance to the Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes*. ed. E. Bruce Kirkham. Heather Press, 1984, 11.

[4] Linda Clark describes hymns as conveyors of meaning among individuals who sing them and that the meaning is dependent upon the music as well as the words. "[A] hymn is a highly complex set of images, both verbal and aural, set in motion through singing." *Music in the Churches: Nourishing Your Congregation's Musical Life*. New York: The Alban Institute, 1994. 4-5.

Musical silence in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

While this paper focuses on hymns in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, music is notably absent from one of the novel's two narrative strands: Eliza's escape from enslavement north to Canada with her son, Harry. Eliza's harrowing journey (for example, crossing the Ohio River on the ice floes) invites music that expresses her emotions. She faces as much risk escaping north as Tom encounters when he is sold south, arguably even more because she brings along her son in her panicked flight. However, the text maintains a curious musical silence in Eliza's pages. After Eliza reunites with her husband George, the reconstituted family migrates from Canada to Liberia. Essentially, this narrative tracks the controversial option of colonizing freed American slaves in Africa.

Some of Stowe's contemporaries lambasted her for including colonization in her novel. The idea of whole-scale removal of American blacks to Africa had white racist proponents whose endorsement contaminated the strategy. Yet, some blacks articulated their belief that the white American populace was so racist that blacks would be unable to survive let alone succeed in the United States once slavery was outlawed.[5] By including voluntary colonization, Stowe acknowledged the vigorous debate among antebellum whites and blacks about the pros and cons of black migration and colonization outside the United States. But the colonization narrative ultimately appealed more to the head than to the heart of the novel's audience. Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through musical references, it becomes evident that Stowe's work is less committed to freedmen's removal to Liberia than to liberating and educating blacks to live as part of a multiracial American community. Sacred music articulates the novel's commitment to racial inclusion.

Hymns in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In contrast to Eliza's journey, Tom's story is full of sacred music. He sings with his family and friends on the Shelby Farm; he sings with Eva in New Orleans; he sings with the slaves on the Red River Plantation. Through music and its performances the novel appeals to its readers' emotions, but not simply to assuage guilt and endorse inaction. Again and again the novel directly condemns passive compliance with slavery. To fight slavery actively, according to Stowe in her final chapter, one must feel correctly and correct feelings come from emotional identification with slaves' oppression. One mode of emotional identification comes through music.

[5] . Cynthia Griffin Wolff notes that earlier nineteenth-century colonization movements were promoted by racist whites as the answer to the problem of America's multi-racial population. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, some African Americans had begun to articulate an interest in relocating to Africa as a way to assert their independence and autonomy from white oppression. Letters published in antislvery newspapers at the time that Stowe was writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflected an emerging black nationalist vision of emigration. "Masculinity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Quarterly*. Vol. 47, No. 4, December 1995, 606-607, 618 fn 45. To Stowe's credit, she reflects both possible solutions debated at the time of her writing: relocation as well as emancipation and enfranchisement. For another thoughtful perspective on Stowe's attitudes toward race and slavery, see Thomas Graham, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of Race" in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1980, 128-134.

The elevation from slave to American began with emotional connection; all people "can see to it that *they feel right*" Stowe insisted.[6] But the next step required strategic action. Protestant sacred music in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* established emotional connections and moments of egalitarian resonance in the process of three strategic goals: to affirm slaves' humanity, to establish slaves' equality, and to legitimate slaves' emancipation.

Affirming humanity: "Amazing Grace" and "When I can read my title clear"

Readers in the twenty-first century sometimes lose sight of the fact that much of the nineteenth-century audience had to be convinced that slaves were human beings, that they were not some different life form as chattel.[7] Throughout the novel, slaves act in identifiably human ways as they interact with their family members and respond to their life experiences. Since slaves in the novel sang hymns with full cognitive awareness, their musical activity also affirmed their humanity.

One way nineteenth-century Americans acknowledged a man's true character was to observe him under great stress. Prior action and hymn singing in Tom's narrative of the novel affirmed his status as more than chattel property: he had a wife and children; he was an acknowledged leader on the Shelby Farm; he managed the St. Clare estate and especially Little Eva's well-being. By the end of the novel, his confrontation with Legree asserted Tom's humanity with particular intensity. Even in the most brutal environment when treated worse than an animal, Tom showed that he, the black slave, was more human than the white slaveholder, Legree.

In Chapter XXXI upon finding Tom's Methodist hymnal, Legree proclaims that no "bawling, praying, singing niggers" would be tolerated on the Red River Plantation.[8] Shortly the narrative reveals that Legree's rejection of Christian expressions among the slaves was rooted in his rejection of his "fair-haired" New England mother. By rejecting the Christianity of both his mother and Tom, Legree links the power of their religious relationship. Both Tom and Mrs. Legree clearly and consistently articulated their Christian faith in their interactions with Legree. Both sang hymns. Both forgave Legree on their deathbeds. Their Christianity crossed boundaries of gender, race, and time.

Two crucial hymns in Chapter XXXVIII affirm Tom's humanity: "Amazing Grace" by John Newton and "When I Can Read My Title Clear" by Isaac Watts. Both of these hymns correlate with the strength of Tom's endurance—not the endurance of a mindless brute, but the endurance of a compassionate, tortured man. In his vision of Jesus—transformed from being "crowned with thorns, buffeted and bleeding" to being crowned with "rays of glory"—Tom has a

[6] Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly*. Elizabeth Ammons, ed. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994, 385. All citations in this essay come from this edition.
[7] Beatrice Anderson, "Uncle Tom: A Hero At Last" *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 5.2 (1991): 106.
[8] Stowe, 292.

heightened spiritual comprehension of personal sacrifice.[9] His deepened awareness is followed by part of Newton's hymn.

The three verses in the novel come from the interior of the complete lyric.

The earth shall be dissolved like snow,
 The sun shall cease to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
 Shall be forever mine.

And when this mortal life shall fail,
 And flesh and sense shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
 A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we'd first begun.[10]

Newton's career trajectory from slave ship captain to Anglican priest solidified his unofficial position as an anti-slavery cleric. Although he wrote many other sacred texts, "Amazing Grace" had long been associated with Great Britain's successful abolition of slavery in 1834. These verses in particular confirm Tom's humanity and his spiritual triumph. Tom's focus has shifted to his life after death. From this point in the novel, Legree can no longer intimidate Tom, even with unrelenting violence. Tom bears the weight of Legree's lash even as he demonstrates human kindness to the rest of the Red River Plantation slaves because he has acquired a renewed self-possession.

That self-possession is confirmed a few pages later when Tom sings "When I can read my title clear" by Isaac Watts. The lyric simultaneously gives Tom legitimate ownership of himself and of his Christian "mansions in the skies."[11] Most Southern states' laws prohibited slaves as chattel from holding title to property of value, but divine law gave Tom access to full humanity with all the benefits of a believer regardless of race.

When I can read my title clear
 To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
 And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul engage,
 And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
 And face a frowning world.

[9] Ibid., 340.
[10] Ibid., 340.
[11] Ibid., 341-2.

Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrows fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All.[12]

This lyric by Watts had been part of the social visionary soundtrack presented earlier in the antebellum period. The Rev. Samson Occom included it in his hymn compilation. This hymn figured significantly in the autobiography of The Rev. William Apess during the funeral of his spiritual mentor, Aunt Sally. David Walker also quoted Watts's lyric in his firey abolitionist texts. Self-ownership and eternal reward put Christian men and women, whether white, black or Indian, on equal footing with their fellow Christian believers. Singing these words confirmed and affirmed slaves' humanity.

Establish Equality: "And let this feeble body fail"

Throughout Stowe's novel, individual characters who interact across racial lines without distinctions establish their equality. This parity is particularly evident with Tom and Eva. By singing together, Tom and Eva share a spiritual camaraderie and thereby establish egalitarian resonance. After they solidify their equality as Christians, Eva then draws Topsy into an emotional relationship that culminates in Topsy's conversion to Christianity. At the same time, Eva becomes the model for Miss Ophelia's "conversion" to racial acceptance. By observing Eva's relationship with Tom now extended to Topsy, Miss Ophelia learns how she, too, can literally and figuratively embrace Topsy. This double conversion is Eva's greatest success and the process is a pivotal sequence in the novel. The chain reaction starts with Tom and Eva's equality.

Together Tom and Eva demonstrate the potential for an equal relationship between persons regardless of age, gender, and race. When Tom sings together with Eva, they experience peace and equality. Through hymns they celebrate their affinity with each other in this life and anticipate their reunion as spiritual equals to sing again in heaven someday. Blending their voices gives them egalitarian resonance.

In Chapter XXII Tom and Eva's egalitarian resonance emerges most vividly during their evening sojourn on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain at a time and place when conventional boundaries blurred. When this scene opens, Tom and Eva sit beside the lake at sunset, that transitional time between day and night when sun and stars share the sky. The sunlight "makes the water another sky,"[13] obscuring the horizon's usual boundary. It is Sunday evening after the day devoted to Christian worship and on the brink of the secular workweek. The setting amplifies Tom and Eva's liminality; both a black slave and a white girl stand on the margins of nineteenth-century southern society. This point in the novel reveals a moment of egalitarian resonance, a time of equality experienced within the context of singing music together.

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[12] Ibid., 420.
[13] Ibid., 226.

Music and conversation merge with each other during this exchange. Spoken comments prompt sung responses, which in turn evoke spoken musings. Inspired by the view, Eva talks about life after death, which she imagines as a brilliantly spectacular heavenly existence. Tom answers with a hymn that includes "Canaan's shore" –the border of the Promised Land in Old Testament Biblical history—and "the new Jerusalem"—a reference to heaven from the New Testament book of Revelation. These were the same chapters that Young George Shelby read at the class meeting in Tom and Chloe's cabin in Chapter IV. So, the scripture references spiritually connect Eva with Tom's biological family and the interracial gathering in his cabin at the beginning of the novel. Eva rhetorically speculates on the location of the New Jerusalem and she thoughtfully ponders Tom's singing. Then she asks him to sing again. The imagery impresses Eva so much that she repeats the last two lines of the verse and announces that she will soon go "to the spirits bright."[14]

I see a band of spirits bright,
Who taste the pleasures there;
They all are robed in spotless white
And conqu'ring palms they bear.

The "Prospect of Heaven" section of the 1849 Methodist Hymnal published the complete text of Charles Wesley's hymn that Tom sings and Eva reinforces.[15]

1. And let this feeble body fail
And let it faint or die;
My soul shall quit the mournful vale,
And soar to worlds on high:
Shall join the disembodied saints,
And find its long-sought rest,—
That only bliss for which it pants
In the Redeemer's breast.

2. In hope of that immortal crown
I now the cross sustain,
And gladly wander up and down,
And smile at toil and pain:
I suffer on my threescore years,
Till my Deliverer come,
And wipe away his servants' tears,
And take his exile home.

3. O what hath Jesus bought for me!
Before my ravished eyes
Rivers of life divine I see,

[14] Ibid., 227.
[15] "The prospect joyous" in *Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Revised Edition*. New York: Carlton & Porter, 1849, Number 958, 574.

And trees of Paradise:
I see a world of spirits bright,
Who taste the pleasures there;
They all are robed in spotless white,
And conqu'ring palms they bear.

4. O what are all my suff'rings here,
If Lord thou count me meet
With that enraptured host to' appear,
And worship at thy feet!
Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away,
But let me find them all again
In that eternal day.

Wesley's lyric for the most part attends to the experience of human illness and pain seasoned by the assurance of Divine deliverance after death. As the "Prospect of Heaven" title proposes, what happens in "threescore years" (or even fewer for Eva) will be far outstripped by eternal delights for the Christian believer. Both Tom and Eva ascribe to Wesley's lyrical vision that Christian salvation is available for all persons, not a select few. This Arminian perspective undergirds the novel's argument against slavery. In the nineteenth-century, numerous tunes were associated with hymn texts. One of these tunes, "Howland," mimics the conversational exchanges Tom and Eva share.[16] The first line repeats; then the second line of music is essentially higher notes before descending and finally the first line is repeated. Simple and repetitive, the melody provides an uncomplicated and balanced medium for the lyric's words. Like the tune, Tom and Eva's voices move back and forth smoothly and evenly, lower register then higher register and back to the lower tones. (See Figure 1.) Their conversation reveals their mutual respect as they trust each other's perceptions and share their religious insights. They resonate to each other's ideas and feelings as individual human beings, as equals.

7. Howland. C. M. (Double.) (958.)

1 And let this feeble body fail, And let it faint or die;
My soul shall quit this mournful vale, And soar to worlds on high;
D. C. That only bliss for which it pants, In the Redeemer's breast.
D. C.
Shall join the disembodied saints, And find its long sought rest:

Figure 1 "Howland" *The Revivalist: A Collection of Choice Revival Hymns and Tunes, original and selected*. Music ed. Rev. L. Hartsough. Troy, NY: Joseph Hillman, 1869, 9.

[16] "Howland." *The Revivalist: A Collection of Choice Revival Hymns and Tunes, original and selected*. Music ed. Rev. L. Hartsough. Troy, NY: Joseph Hillman, 1869, 9.

Later, in Chapter XXV, Eva extends the effects of singing together with Tom when she includes Topsy in their egalitarian community. In close, physical contact with the little black girl, Eva implores Topsy to change: "Why won't you try and be good?" Having internalized the prevailing racist idea that only whites could be Christians, Topsy says the only way she could try to be good is "[i]f I could be skinned, and come white." Once Eva puts her hand on Topsy's shoulder and proclaims "O Topsy, poor child, *I* love you!" the mischevious black child accepts Eva's proclamation that "Jesus loves all alike."[17] Then, Eva invites Topsy to become a Christian so that she can be one of the "spirits bright" that Tom sings about.[18]

Watching Eva and Topsy, Ophelia confronts her own racist reservations: her inability to touch Topsy as she observes Eva's healing touch. Ophelia could not effect Topsy's conversion by locking the girl in a closet with "a hymn to study."[19] It takes Eva's open and honest compassion in combination with her reference to Tom's singing that changes Topsy. Eva shows Ophelia how to literally embrace the black child. She becomes a Christ-like model for the middle-class, Northern white woman and her relationship with the abused black slave girl.

Ultimately, the scene enacts two conversions: Topsy gives up her trouble-making to become a Christian and Ophelia abandons her racism to care for Topsy unreservedly. Pairing the transformation of the black child and the white woman reinforces the equality that Tom and Eva enacted as they sang on the shores of the lake. Wesley's lyrical Arminian theology equally accepts all people regardless of race or gender. Music lies at the heart of all these interactions.

Legitimate Emancipation "Come Saints and Sinners Hear Me Tell" and "Blow Ye the Trumpet Blow"

The gatherings of blacks on the Shelby Farm to sing hymns together with Young George Shelby frame the novel and ultimately legitimate manumission as a response to institutional slavery. When the Shelby Farm workers sing hymns at the outset and conclusion of the novel, they sustain their community and celebrate the hope for reunion of family and friends in this world or in life after death. Their ideal community articulated in song welcomes participants of any color. Responsive readers, , either through remembering the songs or by actually singing along, shared the hymns with hymn-singing characters and thereby modeled the redemptive new American community the novel proposed. At the local level the Shelby Farm demonstrated the potential for a multi-racial society writ large.

Before the heartless economics of slavery fragments slave families at the beginning of the novel, Tom and Chloe host the Methodist class meeting. Singing, praying, and reading together shows the integrity of the family and community in Tom and Chloe's home. In the penultimate narrative chapter, the newly freed African Americans on the Shelby Farm respond to their emancipation with prayer and music. Young George actively participates in both events, making the gatherings multiracial and egalitarian.

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[17] Stowe, 245.
[18] Ibid., 246.
[19] Ibid., 243.

In Chapter IV the class meeting that takes place in the interior space of Tom and Chloe's cabin creates a communal celebration among the Shelby Farm slaves. Class meetings were informal gatherings of Methodists for worship or study held during the week. John Wesley intended them to facilitate individual spiritual growth within a like-minded group.[20] Once the class meeting starts at Tom and Chloe's cabin, group singing commences with everyone's enthusiastic participation. "The words were sometimes the well-known and common hymns sung in the churches about, and sometimes of a wilder, more indefinite character, picked up at camp-meetings."[21] The informality of both camp-meetings and class meetings blurs the distinctions of hierarchical relationships and facilitates egalitarian resonance.[22]

One song that figures in the meeting preparations is "Come Saints and Sinners Hear Me Tell." Tom and Chloe's sons present a rambunctious version. The tight rhyme and the "call and response" style of the tune make it lively and easy to remember. In a more serious vein, however, the original words endorse the idea of community without distinction of status or wealth, a "union" of all humankind. The narrative trajectory of the lyrics also reveals the liability from a lack of union.

1. Come saints and sinners, hear me tell
The wonders of Immanuel
Who saved me from a burning hell
And bro't my soul with him to dwell
And gave me heav'nly Union.

2. When Jesus saw me from on high,
Beheld my soul in ruin lie,
He looked on me with pitying eye,
And said to me as he passed by,
"With God you have no union."

3.Then I began to weep and cry;
And looked this way and that to fly;
It grieved me so that I must die;
I strove salvation then to buy
But still I had no union.

4.But when I hated all my sin,
My dear Redeemer took me in,
And with his blood he wash'd me clean;
And oh! What seasons I have seen
Since first I felt this union.

5. I now with saints can join to sing,

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[20] Albert Raboteau *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press 1978).
[21] Stowe, 24.
[22] Graham, 128.

And mount on faith's triumphant wing
And make the heavenly arches ring
With loud hosannas to our King
Who brought our souls to union.[23]

At class meeting the slaves are temporarily free from the expectations of Mr. and Mrs. Shelby. Yet, their gathering is not restricted by race; they welcome Young George's presence and invite him to participate with them. The class meeting members willingly create a community of believers that crosses racial lines. George reads from chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation: the Bible passages claim all people—regardless of race—will enjoy the riches of eternal life in heaven based on their religious faithfulness, not on their earthly status. Before the evil power of slavery fractures the collective, the Shelby Farm workers celebrate their ties to each other in Uncle Tom's cabin as they anticipate their eventual freedom in heaven.

A demonstration of egalitarian community on the Shelby Farm opens the novel and also concludes the narrative. In the last scene the Shelby farm slaves gather again. This time everyone congregates in the "great hall" of the Shelby Farm, not in the slave quarters. Young George who is now an adult appears and unexpectedly presents each slave with his or her "certificate of freedom." Assuring them that they can continue to work on the farm for mutually negotiated wages, George invites them to stay and learn how to use their rights as free men and women under his guidance. He addresses them as "my friends" and encourages them to express their thanks to God. Following an elderly black man's prayer, the group sings "Jubilee." The idea of home-coming dominates this festival of emancipation

The year of Jubilee is come,—
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.[24]

The novel quotes only the chorus: the last two lines of the hymn, the final idea that the lyric impresses upon the reader. The complete hymn appears in the Methodist Hymnal of 1849.[25] Written by Charles Wesley and published in the "Provisions and Promises of the Gospel" section, the hymnal version includes the repeated refrain.

1. Blow ye the trumpet, blow
The gladly solemn sound;
Let all the nations know,
To earth's remotest bound,
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

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[23] *The Revivalist*, Number 42, 27. Frederick Douglass included a parody of this hymn in *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass* to lambast Methodist apologists for slavery. Its appearance in both works suggests it was widely known.
[24] Stowe, 380.
[25] "Blow ye the trumpet blow," in *Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Revised Edition*, 1849. Number 300, 180-181.

2. Jesus, our great High Priest,
Hath full atonement made;
Ye weary spirits, rest;
Ye mournful souls, be glad;
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

3. Extol the Lamb of God,--
The all-atoning Lamb;
Redemption in his blood
Throughout the world proclaim;
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

4. Ye slaves of sin and hell
Your liberty receive,
And safe in Jesus dwell,
And blest in Jesus live;
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

5. Ye who have sold for naught
Your heritage above,
Shall have it back unbought,
The gift of Jesus' love;
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

6. The gospel trumpet hear,--
The news of heavenly grace;
And, saved from earth, appear
Before your Saviour's face;
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home.

Wesley initially published this text in his small collection, *Hymns for a New Year's Day* in 1750; the four, six-syllable iambic lines followed by two lines of eight syllables give it a brisk pace.[26] Although camp-meeting enthusiasts often added refrains to hymns and songs, in this case the refrain was Wesley's concept. "Return, ye ransomed sinners, home" invited those who had gone away to come back and reestablish their familial relationship. Like the repetition in the hymn quoted before the camp meeting, "Come Saints and Sinners Hear Me Tell," the repeated lines of "Jubilee" provide a structural continuity for the entire hymn.

[26] William Reynolds, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 248.

While Wesley originally wrote his lyric for embattled Christians facing worldly trials, encouraging them with images of their heavenly home, his words also spoke to the weariness of black slaves who despaired of their emancipation before they received their freedom. In terms of the novel, once the ransom has been paid (Tom's faithful life and death), the redeemed captives celebrate their freedom (Jubilee) and reunion by returning home. The initial and final musical moments in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contrast with the mournful dirges and plaintive laments of the music in the novel's interior. Home begins and ends as a place where family members share joyful songs.

Like new religious converts whose lives are re-formed, the Shelby freedmen faced an overwhelmingly radical new life. Everything changed when Young George gave them their liberty. Although the great hall of the Shelby Farm cannot compare with the jewel-encrusted New Jerusalem recounted in song and scripture, its setting allowed the freedmen to enact an earthly counterpart to a heavenly reunion as they sang. What had been space for the white Shelby family and their black house slaves now became democratized by all of the Shelby farm residents. In the novel, Uncle Tom's sacrifice made an earthly reunion possible for those who survived enslavement. Once Young George made his vow on Tom's grave and manumitted his slaves, Shelby Farm became home for blacks and whites alike.

Conclusion

Young George took his grief over Tom's death and transformed it into social action by freeing the Shelby farm slaves. The slaves, in turn, participated in a new social structure by choosing to stay on the Shelby Farm and live within a multi-racial community. The hymns in the class meeting showed the joy of the united family and the singing in the great hall revealed a broken family reunited. This unified community of whites and blacks is the final stage in the process Stowe proposes for abolishing slavery.

By affirming slaves' humanity, by treating people as equals regardless of race, and by legitimating slaves' independence, the hymns in Tom's narrative in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* formed an abolitionist soundtrack. To support her vision, Stowe relied upon Arminian lyrics by Isaac Watts, John Newton, and Charles Wesley that had been quoted previously by other social visionaries in early nineteenth-century who imagined a multi-racial America. The ideas embedded in *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* Christian hymns crossed divisions of race, gender and time to propose an inclusive American society.

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