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# The Slaves' Foods: A Gastronomy Analysis in Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Andy Amiruddin<sup>1</sup>, Khairil Anwar<sup>2</sup>, Ferdinal<sup>3</sup>

*Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University, Limau Manis, Padang, 25175, Indonesia*  
E-mail: <sup>1</sup>heavendoor555@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>khan\_msi@yahoo.co.id, <sup>3</sup>fnu\_ferdinal@yahoo.com

**Abstract**— This paper discusses the foods eaten by the slaves from Uncle Tom's Cabin about the nature of slavery that happens in South America. There are two contrast setting of places in the novel—Kentucky and Louisiana—that each has different food presentations for the slaves, and each presentation can reveal the power relation between masters and slaves. In gastronomy, when food is done right in writing, certain scenes from fiction can get the readers to experience it with all their senses and strange cravings. The finding in this writing is that the slaves creatively change the scraps and leftovers into finely soul foods of in the first set of the place, Kentucky. The second setting is a place in Louisiana, the slaves cannot have the soul food because the lack of food itself has chained them forever in the slavery. Each of this food presentations has directly revealed the nature of power relation between masters and slaves.

**Keywords**— Gastronomy, Slavery, Soul Food, Uncle Tom's Cabin.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Uncle Tom's Cabin illustrates the slavery in South America, not only from the treatment from master to slaves but also from the trivial thing like food. Foods have become the analysis in the literature that it can provide a much wider interpretation of the story itself. The food can free people, and on the other side, the food can also enslave people. These two contrast things can be seen in the culinary from Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin.

## II. SLAVERY IN UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Harriet Beecher Stowe is considered by many to have written the most influential American novel in history. When she met President Lincoln in 1862, he reportedly called her the little lady who started this big war. Indeed, Uncle Tom's Cabin was the first social protest novel published in the United States. In analyses of Uncle Tom's Cabin, many critics feel that Stowe's writing was deeply influenced by the fact that her father, husband, and brothers were all ministers. Because she was a woman and therefore could not preach, Stowe let her Christianity inspire her first, most important and influential novel. Stowe was also inspired by her personal experience with the antislavery movement during her childhood on the northern side of the Ohio River, a border between slave states and freedom. With the urging of her sister-in-law, Stowe decided to use her writing skills to

further the abolitionist, or anti-slavery, cause. Thus, Uncle Tom's Cabin was born.

It began as a series of stories throughout 1851-52 for the National Era, a Washington abolitionist newspaper. Upon its publication in 1852 by the Boston publishing company Jewett, Uncle Tom's Cabin became so popular that it sold more copies than any book before that with the acceptance of the Bible. Stowe toured the United States and Europe to speak against slavery and wrote A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin a year later, in 1853, to provide documentation of the truth upon which her novel is based.

Today, Uncle Tom's Cabin is valued because it raises still pertinent issues of racism in the United States, as well as inspiring feminist thought on the role of women and the conjunction of race and sex. Some criticize the novel, however, for being racist because of its sentimental and stereotypical characterizations of slaves. The triumph of the novel is not that it shows the widespread experience of slavery in the South, but rather that it portrays the personal tragedies the system caused. So too, Uncle Tom's Cabin challenged Northerners to end their hypocrisy and recognize their participation in the propagation of slavery. Moreover, it argued that slaves were not property, but human beings with emotions like those of the readers. For this reason, Stowe chose to portray intimate stories to show the harm being done to individual humans. To the modern reader, Uncle Tom's Cabin may appear over-sentimental and preachy, but Stowe wanted to inspire a strong emotional reaction of indignation in her readers.

Uncle Tom's Cabin revolves around the life of a slave. In the beginning, a Kentucky farmer named Arthur Shelby faces the prospect of losing everything he owns because of large debts. Though he and his wife, Emily Shelby, have a kindhearted and affectionate relationship with their slaves, Shelby decides to raise money by selling two of his slaves to Mr. Haley, a coarse slave trader. The slaves in question are Uncle Tom, a middle-aged man with a wife and children on the farm, and Harry, the young son of Mrs. Shelby's maid Eliza. When Shelby tells his wife about his agreement with Haley, she is appalled because she has promised Eliza that Shelby would not sell her son.

However, Eliza overhears the conversation between Shelby and his wife and, after warning Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe, she takes Harry and flees to the North, hoping to find freedom with her husband George in Canada. Haley pursues her, but two other Shelby slaves alert Eliza to the danger. She miraculously evades capture by crossing the half-frozen Ohio River, the boundary separating Kentucky from the North. Haley hires a slave hunter named Loker and his gang to bring Eliza and Harry back to Kentucky. Eliza and Harry make their way to a Quaker settlement, where the Quakers agree to help transport them to safety. They are joined at the settlement by George, who reunites joyously with his family for the trip to Canada.

Meanwhile, Uncle Tom sadly leaves his family and Mas'r George, Shelby's young son and Tom's friend, as Haley takes him to a boat on the Mississippi to be transported to a slave market. On the boat, Tom meets an angelic little white girl named Eva, who quickly befriends him. When Eva falls into the river, Tom dives in to save her, and her father, Augustine St. Clare, gratefully agrees to buy Tom from Haley. Tom travels with the St. Clares to their home in New Orleans, where he grows increasingly invaluable to the St. Clare household and increasingly close to Eva, with whom he shares a devout Christianity.

Up North, George and Eliza remain in flight from Loker and his men. When Loker attempts to capture them, George shoots him in the side, and the other slave hunters retreat. Eliza convinces George and the Quakers to bring Loker to the next settlement, where he can be healed. Meanwhile, in New Orleans, St. Clare discusses slavery with his cousin Ophelia, who opposes slavery as an institution but harbors deep prejudices against blacks. St. Clare, by contrast, feels no hostility against blacks but tolerates slavery because he feels powerless to change it. To help Ophelia overcome her bigotry, he buys Topsy, a young black girl who was abused by her past master and arranges for Ophelia to begin educating her.

After Tom has lived with the St. Clares for two years, Eva grows very ill. She slowly weakens, then dies, with a vision of heaven before her. Her death has a profound effect on everyone who knew her: Ophelia resolves to love the slaves, Topsy learns to trust and feel attached to others, and St. Clare decides to set Tom free. However, before he can act on his decision, St. Clare is stabbed to death while trying to settle a brawl. As he dies, he at last finds God and goes to be reunited with his mother in heaven.

St. Clare's cruel wife, Marie, sells Tom to a vicious plantation owner named Simon Legree. Tom is taken to rural Louisiana with a group of new slaves, including Emmeline, whom the demonic Legree has purchased to use as a sex slave, replacing his previous sex slave Cassy. Legree takes a

strong dislike to Tom when Tom refuses to whip a fellow slave as ordered. Tom receives a severe beating, and Legree resolves to crush his faith in God. Tom meets Cassy, and hears her story. Separated from her daughter by slavery, she became pregnant again but killed the child because she could not stand to have another child taken from her.

Around this time, with the help of Tom Loker, now a changed man after being healed by the Quakers, George, Eliza, and Harry at last cross over into Canada from Lake Erie and obtain their freedom. In Louisiana, Tom's faith is sorely tested by his hardships, and he nearly ceases to believe. He has two visions, however, one of Christ and one of Eva, which renew his spiritual strength and give him the courage to withstand Legree's torments. He encourages Cassy to escape. She does so, taking Emmeline with her, after she devises a ruse in which she and Emmeline pretend to be ghosts. When Tom refuses to tell Legree where Cassy and Emmeline have gone, Legree orders his overseers to beat him. When Tom is near death, he forgives Legree and the overseers. George Shelby arrives with money in hand to buy Tom's freedom, but he is too late. He can only watch as Tom dies a martyr's death.

Taking a boat toward freedom, Cassy and Emmeline meet George Harris's sister and travel with her to Canada, where Cassy realizes that Eliza is her long-lost daughter. The newly reunited family travels to France and decides to move to Liberia, the African nation created for former American slaves. George Shelby returns to the Kentucky farm, where, after his father's death, he sets all the slaves free in honor of Tom's memory. He urges them to think on Tom's sacrifice every time they look at his cabin and to lead a pious Christian life, just as Tom did.

In the real life, Uncle Tom's Cabin was written after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which made it illegal for anyone in the United States to offer aid or assistance to a runaway slave. The novel seeks to attack this law and the institution it protected, ceaselessly advocating the immediate emancipation of the slaves and freedom for all people. Each of Stowe's scenes, while serving to further character and plot, also serves, without exception, to persuade the reader, especially the Northern reader of Stowe's time, that slavery is evil, and intolerable in a civil society.

For most of the novel, Stowe explores the question of slavery in a fairly mild setting, in which slaves and masters have seemingly positive relationships. At the Shelbys' house, and again at the St. Clares', the slaves have kindly masters who do not abuse or mistreat them. Stowe does not offer these settings in order to show slavery's evil as conditional. She seeks to expose the vices of slavery even in its best-case scenario. Though Shelby and St. Clare possess kindness and intelligence, their ability to tolerate slavery renders them hypocritical and morally weak. Even under kind masters, slaves suffer, as we see when a financially struggling Shelby guiltily destroys Tom's family by selling Tom, and when the fiercely selfish Marie, by demanding attention be given to herself, prevents the St. Clare slaves from mourning the death of her own angelic daughter, Eva. A common contemporary defense of slavery claimed that the institution benefited the slaves because most masters acted in their slaves' best interest. Stowe refutes this argument with her biting portrayals, insisting that the slave's best interest can lie only in obtaining freedom.

In the final third of the book, Stowe leaves behind the pleasant veneer of life at the Shelby and St. Clare houses and takes her reader into the Legree plantation, where the evil of slavery appears in its most naked and hideous form. This harsh and barbaric setting, in which slaves suffer beatings, sexual abuse, and even murder, introduces the power of shock into Stowe's argument. If slavery is wrong in the best of cases, in the worst of cases it is nightmarish and inhuman. In the book's structural progression between "pleasant" and hellish plantations, we can detect Stowe's rhetorical methods. First she deflates the defense of the pro-slavery reader by showing the evil of the "best" kind of slavery. She then presents her own case against slavery by showing the shocking wickedness of slavery at its worst.

In 1851, after the enactment by the United States Congress of a Fugitive Slave Act (the effect of which was to return Africans and African Americans who had escaped from slavery in the Southern states and were living in the North, back into captivity), the editor of an antislavery periodical asked Harriet Beecher Stowe if she could supply him with a timely story or article. Stowe agreed to write a fictional piece about the lives of several slaves on a Kentucky plantation. It was a subject she knew a little about, having visited such a plantation briefly and having talked and corresponded with people who had a more detailed knowledge; moreover, it was a subject that moved her deeply. She expected that her story, printed in serial form, would run for three or four installments. In fact, it would turn out to be much longer and would require some hurried research, as Stowe's characters took her into places and situations of which she had little or no knowledge.

The story, as it ran, was immensely popular, and when it was published in book form in 1852, it immediately became a runaway bestseller in both the U.S. and Great Britain. The effect of this emotionally powerful book was to galvanize public opinion against slavery in a way that no strictly moral or intellectual argument had as yet been able to accomplish. President Lincoln supposedly said, upon meeting Stowe in 1862, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that caused this great war." In a very real sense, he was right.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was first of all a popular book, effective because people identified with its sympathetic characters and thrilled to its incidents. Readers of all ages and levels of education, male and female, American and British, black and white (although the book was certainly intended chiefly for a white audience), made Uncle Tom's Cabin one of the most successful bestsellers to be published in the United States. And whether or not the average nineteenth-century reader agreed with the book, he or she had no trouble recognizing and understanding its language, assumptions, and fictional conventions. However, that is not the case with the average reader today. Stowe's novel presents modern readers with several problems that bear examination.

The first problem, ironically, is the book's reputation brought about by its early popularity. Dramatic versions over which Stowe had little or no control (and for which she received few or no royalties) appeared within months of its publication, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that Uncle Tom's Cabin, in one stage version or another, was one of the most frequently produced plays of the next half-century. Thus it was eventually better "known" from its dramatizations, which often departed wildly from the actual

novel, than from the book itself. The stereotypical "Uncle Tom," a gentle, white-haired old man; the comic Topsy, all pigtails and rolling eyes; syrupy-sweet and saintly Eva, these are the characters we remember, if we remember the story at all, and we may dread having to encounter them in the pages of the novel. Luckily, they are not Stowe's characters, as readers may be surprised to learn. The problem of the "Uncle Tom" stereotypes is soon overcome when we actually read the book.

A second problem, one with a real basis in the book, might be called one of "political correctness." There are probably very few white Americans, if the truth were known, who do not harbor some prejudiced (or, put less kindly, racist) ideas about black people, and especially about African Americans. This was no doubt equally true in the 1850s, although the ideas may have been different. We all tend to be so conscious today of this prejudiced condition (if not always of the nature of the prejudices) that most white writers would think it foolhardy to attempt a novel whose central characters are African Americans and would certainly not undertake to explain to readers the nature of the "African race."

Such considerations did not occur to Harriet Beecher Stowe. Not only does she use language that was polite in her time but is not in ours, and not only do her characters, even some of the sympathetic ones, say nigger all too frequently, but Stowe in her role as narrator often takes time out to tell her readers what black people are like: They are home-loving rather than adventurous, for example; they have admirable but highly exotic taste in clothing and décor; and, of course, they generally have simple, childish hearts. The fact that Stowe does not repeat, and obviously does not believe, the more repellent stereotypes, and the fact that her African and African-American characters often behave in ways quite counter to her explanations, will not save her from being sneered at by modern readers. Nor will the fact that she meant well; but we must offer that as one defense of her political incorrectness, another being that she lived in a less enlightened time, a third being that an examination of the errors she fell into might help lead us to recognize and correct our own.

Fashions in racial thinking and speaking are not the only ones that have changed since 1852. A third problem with Uncle Tom's Cabin for the modern reader is its sentimentality, which we may use as a sort of blanket term for the novel's literary style. In several ways, Stowe's book follows the models of Charles Dickens, with its two main plots, its several imbedded narratives, its grotesque and comic characters, its pairs of happy and unhappy lovers. Perhaps because Stowe not only published but also wrote the book in installments, the plots tend to wander and to be tied up eventually by a set of scarcely believable coincidences. The descriptions tend to be long: readers had more patience in 1852 than we do and less available visual entertainment. Above all, Stowe interjects her narrator's voice, speaking directly to the reader, far more often than we might like. To a student of the nineteenth-century sentimental novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin is, if anything, much less tedious than might be expected. But readers not used to these conventions should try to bear with them, suspend disbelief in some instances, and finally relax and enjoy Stowe's dry, often understated, ironic wit.

As one of the darkest periods in human history, slavery is the first form of historical exploitation in which a person belongs to the slave owner. In America, slavery has a long and complicated and tragic history. The dark history of slavery in America dates back to 1619, when the first African slaves arrived in Virginia.

Slavery has been accepted as a natural practice in the United States since the mid-18th century. Although it can last long enough, this forced labor institution always reaps contradictions, causes rebellion, triggers civil wars and social conflicts. Slavery became more widespread with the development of cotton and sugar cane plants in this region in the last decade of the 18th century. Cotton cultivation has turned out to be abundant profits for farmers in the South, plus the vast amount of land that can be processed into fields. They switched from growing rice, wheat and tobacco to growing cotton and sugar cane. With the expansion of agricultural land for the production of cotton and sugar, the need for Negro slaves increased sharply, and therefore, the sale of slaves brought enormous profits [1].

Slavery by itself is a brutal and coercive system. Collecting and separating families through individual sales is common. However, in the end the sharpest criticism of slavery is not about the employer's behavior towards slaves, but slavery violates the basic right of every human being to live freely. At first, slaves were a form of punishment for people who had committed criminal acts and violated applicable laws. A person who is condemned by law is forced to do anything that is ordered by his master or his ruler. However, over time the slaves were traded in general.

So there arose a slave trade that did not recognize humanity and the seas between the African-Americans was full of slave ships. The Negro slave trade peaked in the early mid-18th century (between 1720-1760) after in 1713 the Asiento agreement (el pacto del asiento de Negros) between Spain and Britain gave the British monopoly to import Negro slaves from Africa to America. Negroes get racial discrimination and prejudice that occurs against immigrants or black people from Africa who are made as slave workers and are the only ethnic groups who come to the United States voluntarily. They were taken by force from Africa, miles away only to be sold and made into slaves

Based on observations of Harriet Beecher Stowe who was born in an anti-slavery social environment. It was in this environment that Harriet heard horrific stories about the experiences of slaves such as the scattering of their family members, the cruelty of the estate overseer, the atmosphere of the slave auction, and the horror of being chased on their escape [2].

The American way of thinking, especially those who lived without care. They even thought the slaves had no feelings. They separated the siblings, a child from his mother, wife from her husband: "The most severe of slavery, in my opinion, is the suppression of feelings and affection ... with the separation of family" (173-174). Then, a step-sister Stowe who was very anxious about the enactment of this law begged him to "write something that would make a whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is" [3]. Stowe immediately agreed. He is determined to show Americans what slavery looks like because in reality not all Americans have experience in contact with slavery practices and he wants to convince his readers that slavery is a sinful act so

slavery practices must end. Stowe believes that sin will be followed by all inhuman deeds.

The novel was controversial because Stowe let the black characters express their feelings about slavery. In doing so, she confronted southern slave-owners with the fact that their slaves might feel kindly toward them, but still yearned for their freedom. This particular emotion is shown at the moment when Augustine St. Clare asks Tom if he doesn't feel that he has been better off being a slave of a kind master than to have been free. Tom responds: 'No indeed, Mas'r St. Clare... Mas'r's been too good; but... I'd rather have poor clothes, poor house, poor everything, and have them mine, than to have the best, and have them any man's else'. The passage shows that Stowe in fact did believe that the black race had feelings, but that she saw them as emotional, spiritually gifted, loyal and childlike. This is emphasized in the preface of the novel, when she states: 'An exotic race, whose ancestors, born beneath the tropic sun, brought with them, and perpetuated to their descendants, a character so essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race'. With this, Stowe shows her belief in the otherness of the black race: weak, submissive, irrational, and in desperate need of education.

Very few novels can change history, Uncle Tom's Cabin is one of them. This book played an important role in fueling the spirit of anti-slavery in the United States to the outbreak of the Civil War in the 19th century. "So, you are the little woman who wrote the book that sparked this great war?" are words spoken by legendary United States president Abraham Lincoln to Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The main theme of Uncle Tom's Cabin is the problem of evil on several levels: theological, moral, economic, political, and practical. Almost certainly, Harriet Beecher Stowe, in writing the novel, set out to show not "the problem of evil" but the problem of a specific evil: the enslavement and use of human beings as the property of other human beings. In order to accomplish this goal in an effectively dramatic fashion, she could not merely present slavery as a monstrous wrong, chewing people up and spitting out what remained of them, physically and spiritually.

Slavery is a powerful wrong. It is said to be wrong, in all cases, notwithstanding fair individual treatment of slaves, throughout the novel, first by George Harris, later and at length by Augustine St. Clare, and always by the narrator, directly as well as indirectly through the use of irony. It is shown to be wrong from the beginning of the book, despite the relatively benign setting of Shelby's Kentucky farm; again, individual slaves in individual cases may be well treated and even happy in their situations, but the institution not only allows but is entirely based on the objectification of all slaves as commodities. Such objectification is evil, in the kind of actions it permits and supports and in the spiritual damage it does to individuals.

Throughout the novel, Stowe shows slavery as hurtful and harmful to individual slaves, physically and emotionally; she knows this will have a wrenching emotional effect upon her audience. Thus Harris's forcing George to kill his own dog, Eliza's painful and frightened flight away from the only home she remembers, Tom's heartbroken farewell to his wife and children, the separation of old Aunt Hagar from her last and only child, the brutal whippings endured by George, Prue,

Tom, all of these incidents are effective in showing the institution as it creates pain.

But even more terrible, from Stowe's point of view, is its creation of moral injury. Beginning subtly, with her sketch of Black Sam on Shelby's farm, whose morality is compromised by his need to promote himself as a favorite to his master (making him willing to help capture Eliza and her son if need be), Stowe shows slaves whose moral and spiritual soundness is damaged or destroyed by what happens to them. Lucy, on the steamboat, commits suicide despite Tom's efforts to help her. Old Prue, in New Orleans, tells Tom she would rather go to hell than to a heaven where white people are; she is in despair, and she dies in this condition. Cassy, too, is in despair; she has committed murder and attempted murder, and she is ready to kill Legree. St. Clare's slaves, who have learned to see themselves as materialistically as their owners see them, are morally degenerate. The thousands of slaves sold into sexual slavery or used sexually by their owners are in grave moral danger. Children like Topsy, raised to think of themselves as objects, of no value, are being set up, through absolutely no fault of their own, for morally barren lives, and worse, for lives of sin: the choice of evil over good.

Modern readers, who may have relatively little awareness of or respect for moral and spiritual matters, in comparison with matters physical and emotional, are apt to see these dangers as less important than they seemed to Stowe and her nineteenth-century audience. But to Stowe, the moral impact of slavery was among its chief evils, and to object that the moral responsibility belonged to the masters, not the slaves, who after all could not help themselves, would be a way of saying that these slaves were not adult human beings, people whose moral choices were their own to make. Yes, Stowe would agree that the masters were to blame for giving them nothing but difficult choices; but the moral choice for any action (or inaction) is made, she would say, by the person himself or herself. Slavery is evil because it attempts to reduce to objects people who cannot be so reduced.

The slaves themselves, of course, are not the only people whom slavery attempts to reduce and whom it thereby injures. The most obvious example of a slave owner destroyed by the institution is Marie St. Clare, whose narcissism is a result of her having been raised from infancy to believe that she is a superior kind of being. Marie's sadism is a natural result of her condition, as is her unhappiness: "If these people are not real, as I am real," Marie tells herself on one level, "then I may hurt them without guilt." But at the same time, she knows they are as real as she is, or that she is as unreal as they are, and this self-contradictory knowledge is the source of the imaginary pain she does feel and the very real pain she cannot. According to Stowe's lights, Marie is as doomed as Legree to a hell after death; meanwhile, she is in a kind of hell on earth, a different one from the one she subjects her slaves to, but a hell nonetheless. St. Clare himself, despite his role as one of the novel's chief spokesmen against slavery, has been morally injured by it; having found it easier to accept the institution than to combat it, he rejects spirituality for both his slaves and himself. Shelby and his wife are both shallow, callous people, as they must be if they are to continue owning slaves. At the physical center of the novel is St. Clare's nephew, the 12-year-old Henrique, shown to be potentially a kind, loving human being, who is being carefully trained and educated to be as meaningless to himself as Topsy, as soulless as Marie. Even Legree, who as

the personification of the institution is an almost inhuman villain, is someone whom slavery has allowed and encouraged to become truly evil, morally dead before he has died physically.

### III. THE SLAVES' FOODS AND THE SOUL FOODS

#### A. *The Slaves' Foods*

The food can enslave people, this is called the slaves' foods, and this is the culinary that the former slave Frederick Douglas has to faced. The life of Douglas begins on a plantation in Eastern Maryland in 1817 or 1818, he did not know his birthday, much less have a long-form birth certificate, to a black mother, from whom he was separated as a boy, and a white father, whom he never knew and who was likely the "master" of the house. He was moved out to serve different members of the family. His childhood was marked by hunger and cold, and his teen years passed in one long stretch of hard labor, coma-like fatigue, routine floggings, hunger, and other commonplace tortures from the slavery handbook.

At 20, he ran away to New York and started his new life as an anti-slavery orator and activist. Acutely conscious of being a literary witness to the inhumane institution he had escaped, he made sure to document his life in not one but three autobiographies. His memoirs bring alive the immoral mechanics of slavery and its weapons of control, which is food.

Hunger was the young Fred's faithful boyhood companion. "I have often been so pinched with hunger, that I have fought with the dog for the smallest crumbs that fell from the kitchen table, and have been glad when I won a single crumb in the combat," he wrote in *My Bondage and My Freedom*. "Many times have I followed, with eager step, the waiting-girl when she went out to shake the table cloth, to get the crumbs and small bones flung out for the cats."

"Never mind, honey, better day comin,'" the elders would say to solace the orphaned boy. It was not just the family pets the child had to compete with. One of the most debasing scenes in Douglass' first memoir, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, describes the way he ate:

"Our food was coarse corn meal boiled. This was called *mush*. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush, some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most, he that was strongest secured the best place, and few left the trough satisfied. [4]"

In truth, rations consisted of a monthly allowance of a bushel of third-rate corn, tainted pickled pork, and poorest quality herrings, barely enough to sustain grown men and women through their backbreaking labors in the field. Not all the enslaved, however, were so ill-fed. Waiting at the "glittering table of the great house," a table loaded with the choicest meats, the bounty of the Chesapeake Bay, platters of fruit, asparagus, celery and cauliflower, cheese, butter, cream and the finest wines and brandies from France, was a group of black servants chosen for their loyalty and comely looks. These glossy servants constituted "a sort of black

aristocracy," wrote Douglass. By elevating them, the slave owner was playing the old divide-and-rule trick, and it worked. The difference, Douglass wrote, "between these favored few, and the sorrow and hunger-smitten multitudes of the quarter and the field, was immense."

The "hunger-smitten multitudes" did what they could to supplement their scanty diets. "They did this by hunting, fishing, growing their own vegetables, or stealing," says Douglas. "In their moral universe, they felt, 'You stole me, you mistreated me, therefore to steal from you is quite normal.' " If caught, say, eating an orange from the owner's abundant fruit garden, the punishment was flogging. When even this proved futile, a tar fence was erected around the forbidden fruit. Anyone whose body bore the merest trace of tar was brutally whipped by the chief gardener.

### B. *The Soul Foods*

The food can also free people, it is called soul food. African slaves often had to feed their families with less desirable ingredients, yet they took those scraps and turned them into the delicacies we now know as soul food.

Slaves were forced to eat the animal parts their masters threw away. They cleaned and cooked pig intestines and called them "chitterlings." They took the butts of oxen and christened them "ox tails." Same thing for pigs' tails, pigs' feet, chicken necks, smoked neck bones, hog jowls and gizzards. Today, all of those parts, including smoked neck bones, ham hocks, bacon, fat back and salt pork, are still included in soul food menus, either as main dishes or to flavor foods such as vegetables and dried beans and peas.

These are the kind of vittles to indulge in like there's no tomorrow and then look forward to the leftovers because they're even better the next day. Potluck gatherings take it one step further because there's a variety of dishes. People usually take pride in a dish they've mastered because the recipe is a long family tradition.

During slavery, the meal ingredients were mainly leftover animal parts, dried beans, vegetables, wheat and flour. Cheese was expensive, and most blacks did not have access to it. As a culture, African-Americans made mac and cheese a creation of our own in some ways, because we do it so differently from other cultures. When blacks prepare macaroni and cheese, you can slice it into a square and hold it like a piece of cake.

Soul food is a coined term that brilliantly captures the humanity and heroic effort of African-Americans to overcome centuries of oppression and create a cuisine that deliciously melds the foods and cooking techniques of West Africa, Western Europe, and the Americas. Simmering beneath this triumphant history is a complicated mixture of endearing and polarizing perspectives. The mention of the words *soul food* conjures up glorious stuff, fried chicken, smothered pork chops, coconut cake, peach cobbler, and red drink, as well as hard-times foods, like greens with salt pork, or ham hocks, black-eyed peas, and cornbread, that has sustained generations. For many, these dishes celebrate a heritage of culinary genius, community-building, and resourcefulness. Yet there are some who reach the opposite conclusion and criticize soul food as an incredibly unhealthy cuisine that needs a warning label, or as slave food that is unworthy of celebration [5].

In the American South, as well as in the North, slave owners controlled the amount of food that enslaved African-Americans received. Generally, on a designated day of the week, each slave was allotted five pounds of a starch (cornmeal, rice or sweet potatoes), a couple of pounds of dried, salted, or smoked meat (beef, fish or pork, whatever was cheapest), and a jug of molasses. That's it. So, the enslaved had to figure out ways to supplement their diet by fishing, foraging, hunting, gardening, and raising livestock with farming knowledge passed down from West Africa, and new knowledge shared by their European slavers, neighboring poor whites, and indigenous people of the area. On the small farms and in cities, master and slave ate out of the same pot, but at different tables. On the large plantations, separate crews were formed to cook and feed the master's family in the Big House and the field slaves.

The term soul food became popular in the 1960s, after Alex Haley recorded Malcolm X's life story in 1963. To Malcolm X, soul food represents both southernness and commensality. Those who had participated in the Great Migration found within soul food a reminder of the home and family they had left behind after moving to unfamiliar northern cities. Soul food restaurants were Black-owned businesses that served as neighborhood meeting places where people socialized and ate together. Early influences included African and Native American cuisine [6].

However, the actual origins of soul food trace all the way back to slavery. A large amount of the foods integral to the cuisine originate from the limited rations given to slaves by their planters and masters. Slaves were typically given a peck of cornmeal and 3-4 pounds of pork per week, and from those rations come soul food staples such as cornbread, fried catfish, BBQ ribs, chitterlings, and neckbones.

Slaves needed to eat foods with high amounts of calories to balance out spending long days working in the fields. This led to time-honored soul food traditions like frying foods, breading meats and fishes with cornmeal, and mixing meats with vegetables (i.e. putting pork in collard greens). Eventually, this slave-invented style of cooking started to get adopted into larger Southern culture, as slave owners gave special privileges to slaves with cooking skills.

## IV. GASTRONOMY IN *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

The Compromise of 1850 included The Fugitive Slave Law, a law forcing non-slaveowners in the free Northern states to return escaped slaves to their Southern masters and participate in a system they did not believe in. The reaction to this cruel governmental act is that "the nation's growing guilt and apprehension is tangible in the overwhelming response to Uncle Tom's Cabin". It seems hard to believe that people could find no wrong in making it a law to return humans as if they were property. In fact, Stowe wrote her most famous work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, at a most opportune time, indeed, she wrote it in response to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law.

Knowing her audience would be primarily white women, Stowe played on their feelings of uneasiness and guilt over the treatment of slaves, especially those of the Northern white women who could help with the Abolitionist movement, by introducing her readers to seemingly real characters suffering

from the injustice of slavery. This can be seen even in the style in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written, Stowe directly addresses her readers, forcing them to consider slavery from the point of view of the enslaved. "Expressive of and responsible for the values of its time, it also belongs to a genre, the sentimental novel, whose chief characteristic is that it is written by, for, and about women". *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a sentimental novel, it was meant to appeal to the unsettled emotions that existed in the reader's mind, creating and sense of guilt and injustice, making them see how slavery destroys human lives and families. Through the introduction of these Southern families, Stowe demonstrates how slavery corrupts and ultimately eliminates domestic stability.

Although the two kitchens Stowe introduces, Aunt Chloe's and Old Aunt Dinah's, are opposite in order and structure, both kitchens cannot achieve true domestic freedom, the ability to establish a safe, loving environment untouched by slavery, within the physical and psychological confines of this institution. What better image to use to symbolize domesticity than the heart of a home, the kitchen. Through these kitchens, Stowe tries to reveal how slavery destroys the sentimentality and emotion of the domestic sphere. Stowe had to figure out how to tell a slave story in a way that white people would honestly listen and relate to. Stowe cleverly crafted a novel founded on something that was important and relevant to female Americans, families and homes. As mentioned, Stowe used *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to convince Northern white women to support the Abolitionist movement [7].

#### A. Aunt Chloe Kitchen in Kentucky

Throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe shows how slavery invades the home and because Southerners just accepted it as a way of life, all domestic stability is eliminated. Stowe immediately begins the novel with kitchen imagery, suggesting that this will remain an important symbol throughout the novel. She introduces the work with a look at two men who have been severely influenced by slavery. Being raised in a society where slavery was an everyday occurrence, the two men accept and support it, as described in the following scene:

Late in the afternoon of a chilly day in February, two gentlemen were sitting alone over their wine, in a well-furnished dining parlor, in Kentucky. There were no servants present, and the gentlemen, with chairs closely approaching, seemed to be discussing some subject with great earnestness. (41)

With further reading, the content of the men's conversation is revealed. Haley is a slave trader who looking to buy slaves from Mr. Shelby, the plantation owner. This scene is the ultimate representation of slavery's invasion of the home and should no doubt offend Stowe's reader. Home, supposedly a place of love and sentimentality turns to a harsh commercial environment in the presence of such a system. From the very beginning of the work, business and money take prevalence over human lives. Mr. Shelby is in debt and sees no other way out but to sell his slaves, he only sees "the necessity of the thing" (85).

Like many other people who did not believe in slavery, Shelby, apparently a fair and honest master, finds he cannot

do anything but adhere to the patriarchal society that surrounds him, is ingrained in his mind, and has forever altered his sense of right. Stowe wastes no time establishing slavery as a patriarchal institution in which, as Mrs. Shelby states, "she was a fool to think she could make anything good out of such a deadly evil" (84). Stowe wanted her white female readers to share Mrs. Shelby's view of slavery. Mrs. Shelby, who lives according to the Cult of Domesticity as strictly as possible in the South, tries to teach her slaves how to raise a family and establish home, but her husband's business transactions destroy the emotions she has tried to instill in her slaves, her one chance at domesticity on the plantation.

Like its opening, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* closes with kitchen imagery. Mrs. Shelby is sitting at the dining table when she hears the news of Tom's death. It is only at this point in the novel that the Shelby plantation can experience domestic freedom, only after the legalization of the freedom papers bundled in George's hand. Only after a home is freed from the limitations and prejudices of slavery, free from its acceptance and blind continuation, free from its separate spheres and hierarchical structure, can domesticity founded on emotion and family exist. Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with a purpose, she wanted to see action and, although restrained by her sex, she tried to make the biggest impact on American slavery as possible. "In fashioning her abolitionist protest as a defense of nineteenth-century domestic values, Stowe designates slavery as a domestic issue for American women to adjudicate and manage. The call to the mothers of America for the abolition of slavery is a summons to fortify the home, to rescue domesticity from shiftlessness and slavery" [8].

The notable thing in aunt Chloe kitchen is the food, as mention in the soul food previously, aunt Chloe changes the scraps of corn into the delicious food, Griddle. It happens when Aunt Chloe is cooking dinner for Tom and the children. Shelby's son, young Mas'r George, is teaching Tom how to write the letter G. They laugh and talk, bantering about, then eating griddlecakes and discussing pies. Aunt Chloe's rickety table and cracked teapot, are made to contrast with the fine foods she prepares and serves in the master's well-appointed house.

Eating time is a truly wondrous event. Even the knives and forks themselves make a "social clatter" as they go onto the table, and the ham and the chicken, says Stowe, have "a cheerful and joyous sizzle in the pan, as if they rather enjoyed being cooked than otherwise." However, Mrs. Stowe has no time to supply her curious readers with recipes for these delectable breakfast foods. But all is not lost for those who can't bear to read about griddlecakes with a "true, exact, golden brown tint of perfection" without at least having a nibble themselves [9].





TABLE I. GRIDDLE, SLAVES' CORN CAKES

Though Stowe later felt that she had not written "Uncle Tom's Cabin" herself but had been inspired for every influential word, the powerful novel (1851-52) was far from her only socially conscious work. In 1869, with her sister Catherine Beecher, Stowe published a masterwork on "domestic science," a concept they introduced to elevate the "honor and remuneration" of traditional women's work.

In this compendium of practical hints and moral counsel entitled "The American Woman's Home," I caught a glimpse of the attitudes that made Stowe so praise the Quaker kitchen. And in a companion work, "Housekeeper and Healthkeeper," by the prolific Catherine alone, I was delighted to find recipes for exactly those savory dishes served with such grace by Eliza and George Harris's brave hosts. Catherine Beecher solves the ever-recurring problem of what to serve for breakfast with an absolute store of practical and appealing recipes. Mary Halliday's golden griddlecakes, historically minded cooks will discover, are rich and easy to prepare.

### B. Aunt Dinah Kitchen in Louisiana

Stowe introduces Old Aunt Dinah's disastrous Louisiana kitchen, rooted in the Deep South, to show another example of how the patriarchal institution of slavery, with its hierarchical structure and separation, deny the existence of domestic stability. This kitchen allows Stowe's readers to view how slavery prevents Southern women from creating an orderly kitchen. Old Aunt Dinah's kitchen looked as though "it had been arranged by a hurricane blowing through it" (311) with "the rolling-pin under her bed, and the nutmeg-grater in her pocket with her tobacco" and "sixty-five different sugar bowls, one in every hole in the house . . ." (317). In this chaotic environment Dinah tries to establish true domesticity. This is seen with her occasional "clarin' up times." However, as the reader can see, she cannot escape the ideas of slavery, which have pervaded her thoughts her whole life, her "clarin' up times" fail to change the chaotic state of her kitchen. The system of hierarchy described in Dinah's kitchen directly contradicts how a "proper" kitchen should be [10].

Seated around her were various members of that rising race with which a Southern household abounds, engaged in shelling peas, peeling potatoes, picking feathers out of fowls, and other preparatory arrangements, Dinah every once in a while interrupting her meditations to give a poke, or a rap on the head, to some of the young operators, with the pudding stick that lay by her side. In fact, Dinah ruled over the wooly

heads of the younger members with a rod of iron, and seemed to consider them born for no earthly purpose but to "save her steps" . . . It was the spirit of the system under which she had grown up, and she carried it out to its fullest extent. (311)

The "spirit of the system under which she had grown up" refers to her family's beliefs that have been structured and formed by slavery. Dinah has been raised in slavery and it is impossible for her, like many slaves, to establish her own way of thinking. It seems obvious that slaves would structure their kitchens around the ideas of social status, separate spheres, and violence since these are the foundations of slavery and the only ways they knew. "In objecting to the slave market's violation of the family, Stowe holds the market accountable for a failure of sentiment, for impeding or perverting the process of sentimental relations" [11]. Stowe hoped to create a passionate sense of injustice in her readers, so they would blame the marketplace for the corruption of domesticity and set out to destroy it.

Hoping to prompt her white readers into action, Stowe uses Aunt Dinah's kitchen arrangements to continue her demonstration of the dominance of patriarchal slavery within domesticity. The disruption and chaos of Dinah's kitchen appeal Miss Ophelia, who is used to the clean structured kitchen in New England, free from slavery. When Ophelia, representative of Northern women, enters the kitchen and starts asking Dinah where certain utensils are, Dinah first tries to explain that things are how she wants them, then becomes impatient stating, "what does ladies know 'bout work, I want to know?" (314) This statement suggests that Miss Ophelia could not possibly understand Dinah's kitchen or way of nondomestic life because she had not grown up in the midst of slavery. As Brown suggests, "the contagion of the market has already entered the Southern home where Ophelia finds desire and disorder, the impetus an pulse of the marketplace, in the kitchen" (505).

The idea of slavery seems to upset Ophelia more than it does Dinah because she does not have the imprints of slavery on her soul. While discussing slaves with St. Clare, frustrated and confused Ophelia says, "this is perfectly horrible! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" (319). Stowe used Ophelia's condemnation of the slavery system to show Northern females that others feel the same guilt and doubt about the institution that they did. Despite Miss Ophelia strong objections to slavery, she, like the others in Uncle Tom's Cabin, don't believe they can do anything about it. Instead, Ophelia goes about straightening Dinah's kitchen, a useless effort because, as Dinah seems to have realized, order is not possible when inundated by slavery. Stowe wants her readers to see the ineffectiveness of trying to fix slavery, stronger efforts, like the Abolitionist movement, are necessary. "Kitchen problems cannot be remedied without reference to the system the kitchen articulates in its modes of household production" (Brown 504). The only way to save the home is to abolish the marketplace, in other words, abolish slavery.

Apparently contrasting Aunt Dinah's chaotic kitchen, Stowe describes Uncle Tom's cabin set in "a neat garden patch" to represent and ultimately erase the mythical vision many Northerners had about slave plantations which caused them to accept slavery's social structure and prejudice. Instead of facing the terrible truth and ugliness of the institution, many Northerners were convinced that slave



life wasn't so bad, that slaves like Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe could establish a happy, domestic life on a plantation. This cabin is the place where Aunt Chloe, who serves as the head cook, attempts to establish a structured family environment (66). Aunt Chloe's delicious food and happy, confident countenance seem to have a genuine domestic quality, but with closer examination, the evidence of slavery ingrained into the minds of all slaves exists. In this kitchen, although efficient and orderly, Stowe mentions a kind of hierarchical structure. "Aunt Chloe, who presided over its preparation as head cook, has left to inferior officers in the kitchen the business of clearing away and washing dishes . . ." (66). This militant imagery of social rank or status seems oddly out of place in this serene, positive setting, especially the words "inferior" and "business." These terms better describe the public marketplace. Although Aunt Chloe is doing her best to prevent the world of slavery from entering her home, she can do nothing about its entrance into her mind. Slaves spent their whole lives engulfed in slavery, therefore, shaping one's beliefs around a system, however unjust or opposing, cannot be prevented. Although slavery was morally wrong, it was so common to everyday life in 19th century America, ingrained in the heart of the country, that people, including slaves, just accepted as a way of life. Stowe wanted to show the danger of inaction, Northerners could no longer ignore or make excuses for the events of the South.

Using Aunt Chloe's illusionary kitchen image, Stowe further shows how slavery erases all hope of a constant domestic life where families can have stability and control in their lives. Uncle Tom, the claimed hero of Uncle Tom's Cabin, sits at a kitchen table when he is introduced to the story. The reader's first glimpse of Uncle Tom is in a kitchen, which seems to suggest that he is safe in his home with his family, that the cruelty of slavery cannot break his spirit. However, this false sense of security is shattered; the reader knows that while Tom is enjoying dinner with his wife and children in his loving, domestic kitchen, Mr. Shelby is planning his separation from them. It is this contradiction that Stowe creates to show the incompatibility of domestic life and slavery and to give the Northern reader a reason to fight slavery. Stowe purposely contrasts Chloe and Dinah's kitchens. One is an outright demonstration of slavery's negative effect on the Southern home, while the other is disguised with false images of domesticity. However, Stowe wants the reader to realize that both homes display an ingrained belief and acceptance of slavery, separate spheres, social structure, lack of control, and limited sentimentality, all of which deny domestic freedom within their walls.

## V. CONCLUSION

Using Aunt Chloe's kitchen, Stowe shows how slavery erases all hope of a constant domestic life where families can have stability and control in their lives. Uncle Tom, the claimed hero of Uncle Tom's Cabin, sits at a kitchen table when he is introduced to the story. The reader's first glimpse of Uncle Tom is in a kitchen, which seems to suggest that he is safe in his home with his family, that the cruelty of slavery cannot break his spirit. However, this false sense of

security is shattered, the reader knows that while Tom is enjoying dinner with his wife and children in his loving, domestic kitchen, Mr. Shelby is planning his separation from them. It is this contradiction that Stowe creates to show the incompatibility of domestic life and slavery and to give the Northern reader a reason to fight slavery. "The sacred ties envisioned in Stowe's cabin scene are swept away by Master Shelby's debt and its resolution in the sale of slaves who have been nurtured as family." Stowe purposely contrasts Chloe and Dinah's kitchens. One is an outright demonstration of slavery's negative effect on the Southern home, while the other is disguised with false images of domesticity. However, Stowe wants the reader to realize that both homes display an ingrained belief and acceptance of slavery, separate spheres, social structure, lack of control, and limited sentimentality, all of which deny domestic freedom within their walls.

In the final pages of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe directly addresses the reader: But what can any individual do? Of that, every individual can judge. There is one thing that every individual can do, they can see to it that they feel right. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being, and the man or woman who feels strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! (624) Uncle Tom's Cabin spoke to each individual Northerner who read its pages, forcing her to view slavery from a new perspective, sympathize with the slave characters, and relate the novel to things she knew all too well, family, sentimentality, and the Cult of Domesticity. Above all, Harriet Beecher Stowe wanted her white audience to take action against slavery.

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