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# Editing Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Fluid Text of Race

Wesley Raabe

I suspect that many scholars begin to edit a work by accident: I begin with the anecdote of how I became an accidental editor of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in academic year 2002. I had read not a single work by Harriet Beecher Stowe when I was admitted to the Ph.D. program at the University of Virginia. During my first semester, I was often at Alderman Library's Special Collections floor to subject a copy of Delariviér Manley's *Memoirs of Europe* (1710) to bibliographical analysis. I was reading Stowe's work in another course, was already in Alderman for the Manley work, and so decided to look up the first edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852 by John P. Jewett. The catalog search showed that Special Collections also held an original newspaper copy of Stowe's work, which began its serial run the year before Jewett's edition, so I requested that too. The bound volume of *National Era* numbers with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in weekly installments made all "books" of my previous experience seem small, just as Stowe's authorial voice seemed more like one from a whirlwind than human. On beginning the dissertation prospectus, I was advised that the newspaper version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could form the basis for an intriguing type of digital edition. The first step, to imagine how a new edition could preserve some of the periodical's rich context, was one of many, and I have been editing Stowe's work since shortly after that push in the right direction, over seven years ago.

A digital edition of the *National Era* version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became a dissertation, and the project has been reconceived, now as a critical edition that will include at least six documentary versions of the text. As I transcribe and collate copies and versions, correct transcriptions and identify textual variants, assemble an editorial team, draft procedural guidelines, prepare grant applications, and plan the design of the digital project, other scholars edit *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with disconcerting frequency. In the past four years, Stowe's work has been published in six new or reissued editions for academic audiences: the Norton Annotated (2007) and the Bedford College (2008); two editions in 2009, the Harvard-Belknap and the Broadview; and two more editions

in 2010, the second Norton Critical and the Library of America.<sup>1</sup> Though valuable for their commentary and annotation, these reprints share a similar editorial approach: Jewett's two-volume edition, which by scholarly consensus is authoritative, forms the basis for the new versions. I admit that "chutzpah" is part of the reason for discussing such a prominent work under the heading "Editing Non-Canonical Texts," but the alternate "texts" of Stowe's work remain non-canonical even as reprints have made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a hyper-canonical work in today's scholarship. One version of the text is now essential reading in American literature, but other print forms are neglected. Scholars who read editions that neglect alternate print forms will not know that the work has embedded in its variant texts the author's engagement with the fluidity of racial identity, a characteristic that is best suited for study with new models for digital presentation. Basic digital reproductions (such as Google Books) address alternate textual versions no more effectively than barbed wire of apparatus, so scholarly editors can either ignore readerly resistance to apparatus or respond to it with new modes of presentation that encourage active engagement with alternate textual forms.

The latter approach is advocated by John Bryant, who argues that editors must develop paradigms for the presentation of the "fluid text" in print and on screen. In *The Fluid Text* (2002), he offers a theory of revision to guide editorial presentation of multiple-version works. A fluid text, as Bryant defines it, "is any literary work that exists in more than one version. It is 'fluid' because the versions flow from one to another." Bryant recommends two important shifts in editorial presentation. He insists, first, that editorial work is a form of pedagogy, that editors must write "revision narratives." Though editors must still identify documents and establish an authoritative record of texts, editors must also teach readers to interpret sites of textual variation. Second, editors must "showcase revision," that is, they must create "a map for reading shifting intentions as revealed through variant sequentialized versions."<sup>2</sup> Bryant affirms that such work is subjective: the editor announces a critical agenda and offers a narrative

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Hollis Robbins (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life among the Lowly*, ed. Stephen Railton (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008); *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life among the Lowly* (Cambridge: John Harvard Library of Harvard University Press, 2009); *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life among the Lowly*, ed. Christopher G. Diller (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009); *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. James M. McPherson (Library of America, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 1, 159, 164, 144.

interpretation of revision that can encourage debate. I apply the term *fluid* to racial identity in a parallel sense to that which John Bryant applies it to texts.

With the recognition that race in present and in past American contexts is constructed culturally and contingently for individuals—and retains social power though its biological basis has been debunked—my agenda highlights textual fluidity among characters that Stowe identifies as black or Negro. From a fluid text perspective, the alterations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* add radical instability into the family of Uncle Tom, complicate the individual identity of Sambo and Quimbo, and reconfigure the Christian doctrinal development of the enigmatic Topsy. The racial fluidity of Stowe's texts has multiple dimensions—mixed-race characters like George and Eliza Harris blur racial boundaries—but I limit this discussion to characters identified categorically with blackness in the three earliest American publications of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: the *National Era* serial, Jewett's two-volume first edition (1852), and Jewett's one-volume paperback "Edition for the Million" (1852/1853).<sup>3</sup> These three versions are a subset of the planned project, which will also include the extant manuscript fragments, Jewett's illustrated edition (1853), and Houghton, Osgood, & Company's New Edition (1879), but translations, British editions, and reprints by publisher Houghton Mifflin and other late-century American publishers will be excluded.<sup>4</sup> Reprints are omitted to circumscribe the project within manageable limits, but artificial circumscription demands that the project be designed to allow future revisions, a version 2.0. One may doubt that late reprints hold significant interest for a study of Stowe as author, but experience shows that they cannot be dismissed. Editing brings to mind more often than wished Samuel Johnson's definition of the lexicographer, but drudgery is punctuated with exhilaration, such as the discovery that Stowe revised the Million edition. An extensive insertion alters Topsy significantly, a fact unnoticed during decades of scholarly interest in Stowe's text. I did not expect that Stowe had revised a reprint edition, but the discovery

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. H. B. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, *National Era*, June 5, 1851–April 1, 1852; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, 2 vols. (Boston: John P. Jewett; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1852); *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, Million ed. (Boston: John P. Jewett; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1852/1853).

<sup>4</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, illustrated ed. (Boston: John P. Jewett; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1853); *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, new ed. (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879). For the known manuscript pages, see "The Manuscripts of Uncle Tom," *Uncle Tom's Cabin & American Culture*, ed. Stephen Railton (Charlottesville: Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities; Electronic Text Center, 2006); <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/utcmshp.html>. For a brief review of the proliferation of late-century reprints, see Michael Winship, "The Greatest Book of Its Kind': A Publishing History of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *American Antiquarian Society* 109 (2002): 326–31.

affirms a principle that should guide all editorial work: you do not know until you check. My editorial agenda is to teach scholarly readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who almost always read a reprint of the 1852 Jewett edition, that this well-known version may not provide an adequate representation of Stowe's work nor of her attitudes toward race.

Uncle Tom, a black Everyman, his wife Aunt Chloe, and their children offer the initial model for an ideally constituted family, one which the slave trade tears apart when the trader Haley buys Tom. The names of the family's members, however, are unstable in the multi-version work. They vary between the *National Era* and the Jewett edition—and within variant printings of the book text. The serial's third installment has a curious variant: Chloe is misnamed "Sally" when she starts to "bustle about earnestly in the supper department."<sup>5</sup> Readers learn of Sally, a character who is mentioned but never appears, only through Chloe's statements. Sally is first descried as an incompetent apprentice, later said to be able to manage the household when Chloe wishes to go to Louisville, and finally chastised as incapable of selecting the proper tea-pot after Chloe returns.<sup>6</sup> Chloe's representations as to Sally's competence, which depend on Chloe's arguments for her own household dispensability, are a humorous minor theme, and the misnaming may be no more than an authorial slip or a compositor's error. Because most of the manuscript is lost, we cannot know. But a consideration of other members of Uncle Tom's family suggests that Stowe was not fully committed to particular names for the members of her emblematic slave family.

Of the family's three children, the two boys are Mose and Pete in the Jewett edition, but the name *Pete* is typically spelled *Peet* in the serial. *Peet* outnumbers *Pete* eight to one. The spelling *Pete* in the serial appears only with the discussion of Uncle Peter and could be corrupted by proximity to the elder's name.<sup>7</sup> The spelling change seems deliberate. Also intriguing, however, is the name of the toddler, who is *Mericky* when she first appears in the *Era*'s third installment.<sup>8</sup> That name survives into the Jewett edition, issued on March 20, 1852.<sup>9</sup> But the child's name in the first printing of the Jewett edition was

<sup>5</sup> *Era*, June 19, 1851; Jewett, 2 vols., 1: 42. Subsequent references to the *National Era* version are to Wesley Raabe, "Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: an Electronic Edition of the *National Era* Version" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2006); <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/wnr4c/index.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> *Era*, June 19, 1851, p. 97; *Era*, November 13, 1851, p. 181; *Era*, April 1, 1852, p. 53; also see Jewett, 2 vols., 1:42–43, 2:57, 2:305.

<sup>7</sup> *Era*, June 19, 1851, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> "Will be Ready March 20th," Jewett advertised in a previous issue (*Era*, March 11, 1852, p. 44). The edition may have been available two days earlier in Boston, the date of *Era* agent G. W. Light's advertisement ("Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Era*, March 18, 1852, p. 47).

inconsistent—Mericky in chapter 4, Polly in chapter 44.<sup>10</sup> The correction of stereotype plates imposed consistency on individual copies of the Jewett edition: *Polly* replaces *Mericky* in chapter 4, an authorial correction which the publisher completed before April 1.<sup>11</sup> The *Era*'s final installment of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared just less than two weeks *after* Jewett's edition went on sale, and Chloe's child in the April 1 installment is Polly, which matches the Jewett edition's corresponding passage and the corrected version of chapter 4. As the extent of corrections suggests strongly that they are authorial, Stowe must have been aware that replacing Mericky with Polly in the *Era*'s April 1, 1852, installment would be inconsistent with the serial chapter published on June 19 the previous year, but she did not impose consistency on the serial text. The belief that no readers would remember may be justified. Even if the failure to correct was accidental or cannot be assigned definitively to Stowe, textual fluidity in Chloe's child's name invites interpretive reading.

I offer the following as a starting point for debate: the initial name "Mericky" like Tom is a type of national Everychild character, a dialect rendering of "America"—she is an Every-Slave child. The name Polly, though repeated for other minor characters and thus a reminder that Polly could be sold away, explores an emblem of black identity as not fully human, a type of play with mid-century cultural resonance and well-known literary antecedents. Recall that Robinson Crusoe has as his first speaking companion the parrot "Poll," who will be superseded by Friday as his second talking companion.<sup>12</sup> Bird metaphors and similes, which highlight mimicry and objectify those so designated, are common for slaves in Stowe's work: she compares slave catching to hunting partridges and slave children to roosting crows.<sup>13</sup> In addition, concern for birds is prominent in the *Era* as a social marker for highly developed sensibility.<sup>14</sup> The paradox of concern for birds as a mirror to the concern for slavery is marked out in Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768), where Yorick turns his sympathetic interest to a caged starling because of his own fear of incarceration in the Bastille, an interest that contributes ultimately to a lively trade in the bird's distress but never its freedom.<sup>15</sup> Sterne's starling episode elicited Common Sense philosopher

<sup>10</sup> Jewett, 2 vols., 1:42, 2:306.

<sup>11</sup> See E. Bruce Kirkham, "The First Editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Bibliographical Study," *PBSA* 65 (1971): 367, 371, 374–75; Michael Winship, "The Greatest Book of Its Kind," pp. 313–14.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1996), 3rd ed. (London: Taylor, 1719), p. 131. Citations are to the 1996 edition.

<sup>13</sup> Jewett, 2 vols., 1:67, 1:106.

<sup>14</sup> "Debate on the Destruction of Small Birds," *National Era*, August 21, 1851, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, vol. 2. (London: Becket and De Hondt, 1768), pp. 22–28.

Dugald Stewart's reflections on the power of fiction to create sympathetic identification in the mind of the reader, a text that Stowe likely knew.<sup>16</sup> If this textual fluidity reminds readers of antecedents from English novels, the Mericky/Polly doubling slides between an emblem of America in racially marked language and the emblem of a subjected being whose ability to elicit emotional sympathy depends in part on the being remaining captive and thoughtless.

Michael Borgstrom has advised that Stowe's abolitionist message leads her to resolve unsettling doubling: the effeminate valet Adolph, Augustine St. Clare's double, is sold at auction to foreground the work's antislavery message. An ineffectual example of manhood, Adolph ultimately doubles St. Clare's wife Marie, a failed black identity to correspond to her failed femininity. Adolph exits because Stowe's "text must forsake his body and its implicit threat to discrete identity categorization."<sup>17</sup> Though Borgstrom's attention to this suggestive doubling is salutary, attention to textual variation of Sambo and Quimbo, like that of Mericky as Polly's invisible double in the corrected Jewett edition, may invite us to consider anew whether Stowe's antislavery message should remain uppermost in our reading of the text, because to reveal the fluid text can expose the racist identity play that hovers near the text's surface. When Stowe's protagonist reaches Simon Legree's plantation, Sambo and Quimbo are yet another doubled pair, brutish overseers whose very names are derogatory stereotypes.

Stowe's derogatory linguistic markers are disturbing enough, but the interchangeableness of Sambo and Quimbo may have been a subject for private amusement. Legree's overseers are always paired: few readers remember that Legree purchased Lucy in New Orleans for Sambo, not for Quimbo, a fact that is consistent in the three versions.<sup>18</sup> But when the texts of serial and first edition are compared side by side, the overseers' names are exchanged three times. The first exchange is when Legree sends for Tom after the failed hunt for Cassy and Emmeline. The narrator interjects that Sambo and Quimbo "were joined in one mind by a no less cordial hatred of Tom." In both texts, Legree sends Quimbo. But after the narrator interjects, the texts differ on who departs. In the Jewett

<sup>16</sup> Dugald Stewart, *The Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Google Books, 1829), vol. 1. (Edinburgh: Strahan, Cadell, Creech, 1792), pp. 376–78. Citations are to the 1829 edition. For Stowe's familiarity with Scottish philosophy, see Gregg D. Crane, "Dangerous Sentiments: Sympathy, Rights, and Revolution in Stowe's Antislavery Novels," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51 (1996), 185–86; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2933960>. For Catharine Beecher's study of Common Sense philosophy and the Hartford Seminary, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 81–84.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Borgstrom, "Passing Over: Setting the Record Straight in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 1295, 1299, 1300; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1261465>.

<sup>18</sup> *Era*, February 5, 1852, p. 21; Jewett, 2 vols., 2:184; Jewett, Million, p. 129.



edition, Quimbo (the man whom Legree sent) departs. In the serial, however, “Sambo therefore departed.” In both cases, the overseer who departs returns with Tom: Sambo seizes Tom in the serial; Quimbo seizes him in the book.<sup>19</sup> Quimbo and Sambo are switched yet again after they beat Tom viciously. Sambo speaks first in the *Era*: “we’s been **rael** wicked to ye.” In the Jewett edition, Quimbo speaks a slightly variant version of the same line: “we ’s been **awful** wicked to ye!”<sup>20</sup> The initial pair of name switches could be one error made consistent by a correction, but the third switch suggests a pattern, which is most likely to be the author’s private fun with Sambo’s and Quimbo’s interchangeableness. The thin barrier that either book or serial text maintains between identity and difference—recall the “one mind” of Sambo and Quimbo—is permeable when the two texts are studied side by side. To speculate what Stowe intended is interpretive, but the three revision sites suggest conscious engagement with the racist trope that one black man is indistinguishable from another.

Stowe’s engagement is not limited to the serial and first book edition: she revised the character of Topsy in Jewett’s “Edition for the Million,” which was issued in December of 1852. This paperbound edition had no illustrations, very thin paper, small margins, and small type in two columns that squeezed the work into 166 pages. It sold for 37½ cents, a fraction of the two-volume edition’s cost, which was \$1.00 in its cheapest paperbound configuration.<sup>21</sup> The Million edition expanded the work’s audience: Jewett sold fifty thousand copies in December of 1852.<sup>22</sup> In chapter 20, St. Clare purchases Topsy, a neglected slave child, as a project for his Vermont cousin Miss Ophelia (see Figure 1). The efforts to train Topsy in behavior and Christian doctrine result in exasperating frustration for Ophelia and comic relief for many readers. Topsy exults in her special status: “I ’s the wickedest critter in the world.” In the Million edition, an exchange between Topsy and St. Clare follows:

“But I ’s boun’ to go to heaven, for all that, though,” she said, one day, after an *exposé* of this kind.

“Why, how ’s that, Tops?” said her master, who had been listening, quite amused.

“Why, Miss Feely ’s boun’ to go, any way; so they ’ll have me thar. Laws! Miss Feely ’s so *curous* they won’t none of ’em know how to wait on her.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Era*, March 11, 1852, p. 41; Jewett, 2 vols., 2:271.

<sup>20</sup> *Era*, March 18, 1852, p. 45; Jewett, 2 vols., 2:275.

<sup>21</sup> *Era*, April 1, 1852, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Winship, “The Greatest Book of Its Kind,” p. 315.

<sup>23</sup> Jewett, Million, p. 96.



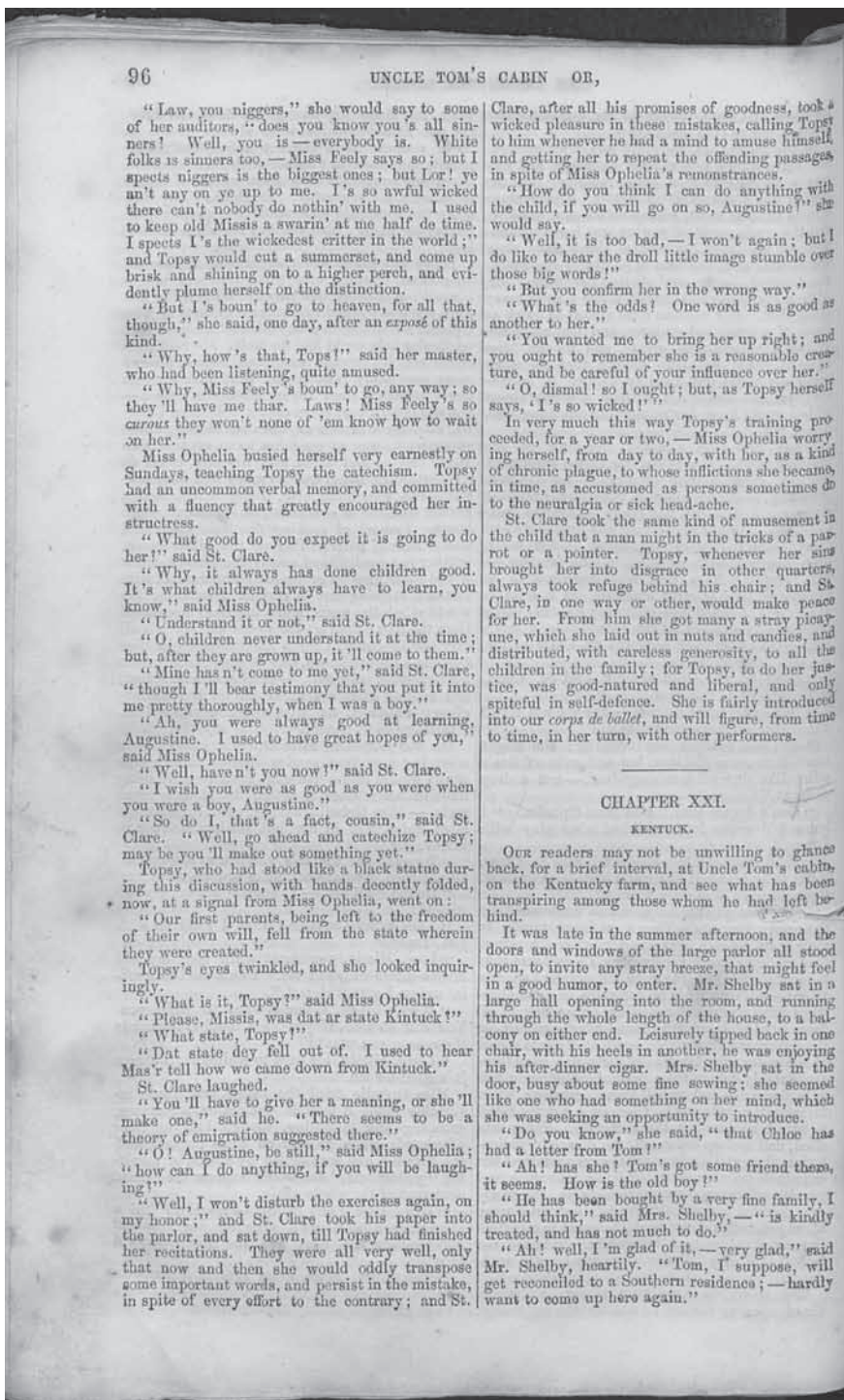


Figure 1: Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life among the Lowly*, Million ed., (Boston: John P. Jewett; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1852/1853), p. 96. Original page size, 15.0 cm × 23.8 cm. Personal copy.

In this passage, Topsy too is a suggestive double for St. Clare: her unconscious (or knowing?) mockery of Ophelia's emphases echoes his. In Topsy's questionable Christian doctrine, she charts a route to heaven through temporal service to a heaven-bound mistress. Since Ophelia's path to salvation must rest on her obsessions with order and neatness, Topsy believes that her own path must depend on service to Ophelia. Topsy's doctrine, though comical, is a subversive critique of Ophelia's emphasis on procedure and rules rather than love. For readers of this edition, Topsy echoes other faulty Christian doctrine in the text, such as slave trader Haley's determination to leaven his cruelty with humanity so to gain "a better chance for comin' in the kingdom at last" and slaveholder Shelby's delusion that he might gain heaven by his wife's "superabundance of qualities to which he had no particular pretension."<sup>24</sup> This revision of Topsy, unnoticed during thirty years of intense interest in the work, is so complex that it must be attributed to the author. Furthermore, the Million edition's variants must be reviewed as potential authorial alterations of the text. Our own moment's reimagination of scholarship in digital form, when joined with the reimagination of editorial presentation along John Bryant's fluid text paradigm, offers an opportunity to reconsider what for scholars has become the "standard text" of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: presumptions about the stability of racial identity on the basis of a single text of the work are made problematic.

From my current point in "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Digital Critical Edition," I can offer four recommendations for others who may consider a similar project. But before practical recommendations is a more general advisory: scholarly editing is not a hobby. The enthusiasm that begins a project must resolve into dogged determination to complete it properly and truthfully, because "scholarly editions make clear what they promise and keep their promises."<sup>25</sup>

First recommendation: Future editors should study systematically the theory, practice, and tools in the fields of bibliographical, editorial, and digital scholarship. Graduate students who would consider scholarly editing should choose an institution with a traditional or a newly prominent emphasis in these fields. Institutions that are strong in at least two of them include the University of Virginia, University of Nebraska, University of Washington, University of South Carolina, Boston University, University of Maryland, and Brown University. Scholars beyond graduate study, but without extensive experience in editorial work, should read widely from bibliographies of the field.<sup>26</sup> The study

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 28, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Committee on Scholarly Editions, "Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions," Modern Language Association, [http://www.mla.org/cse\\_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines).

<sup>26</sup> Dirk Van Hulle and MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions, Annotated Bibliography: Key Works in the Theory of Textual Editing, "Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions," Modern Language

of editorial theory and practice should be supplemented by training in standards and technologies, such as the Text Encoding Initiative. Workshops are offered by Rare Book School, Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria, NINES, and Brown University's Women Writers Project.<sup>27</sup> Editors at any career stage can seek out colleagues at conferences of the Association for Documentary Editing and the Society for Textual Scholarship.

Second recommendation: As editorial and digital scholarship are collaborative, ambitious projects must be imagined to continue even in the absence of the original scholars who shaped them: reminders of editors' mortality are often found in dedicatory statements of late print volumes from large-scale projects. When a project grows larger than one scholar, seek collaborators and institutional support. Throughout this project, Natalie Raabe, my spouse, has aided in transcribing and proofreading. Over the years I have benefitted from dissertation advisors, enlisted fellow graduate students with similar interests, and established an editorial board. Les Harrison recently joined the project as a co-editor, and we are actively pursuing funding support for additional interested scholars. Institutional support is essential. As an early-career faculty member, I have benefitted from Kent State University's support through the auspices of the Institute for Bibliography and Editing, the Research Council, and the English department's program for undergraduate research assistance.

My third recommendation, which speaks to future hopes rather than past experience, is to seek out grant-based funding from organizations like the NEH and NHPRC. I will rely on more experienced colleagues and the aid of specialists in proposals and budgeting. And the final recommendation is to set deadlines, which are defined by the project's internal logic and are enforced by external factors, such as the deadlines for conference presentations, grant proposals, article submissions, and reappointment and tenure applications. A colleague reminds me periodically of Samuel Johnson's arch praise for deadlines: "when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."<sup>28</sup>

More generally, so not a recommendation, editorial work like all

Association, [http://www.mla.org/cse\\_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines); G. Thomas Tanselle, "Introduction to Bibliography: Seminar Syllabus" and "Introduction to Scholarly Editing: Seminar Syllabus," Rare Book School, <http://www.rarebookschool.org/tanselle/>.

<sup>27</sup> Rare Book School, <http://www.rarebookschool.org>; Digital Humanities Summer Institute, University of Victoria, <http://www.dhsi.org>; NINES: Nineteenth Century Scholarship Online, <http://www.nines.org>; Women Writers Project Workshop on Text Encoding with TEI, <http://www.wwp.brown.edu/encoding/workshops>.

<sup>28</sup> James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, vol. 3, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. and enl. ed., L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 167.

scholarship is contingent on the state of the field. Editorial work on Stowe joins a conversation with scholars who have offered major reconsiderations of the publication history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of its history of illustration and visual adaptation, of revisionary response novels, and of dramatic adaptations in England and America.<sup>29</sup> The new electronic edition will focus scholarly attention on the textual forms most close to the author. At the project's current stage, the variants in the paperback edition have been reviewed but not systematically analyzed, but the 1853 illustrated edition and 1879 New Edition still remain to be closely examined. These two texts are part of the project's current work, but other potentially significant texts are likely to remain outside of the project's scope. Nineteenth-century publishing formats for the work included binding Stowe's novel with the companion *Key*, which invites us to think again about the interrelation between story and documentation.<sup>30</sup> Stowe's adaptation for dramatic reading echoes the Topsy revision in the Million edition.<sup>31</sup> And Houghton Osgood's 1879 New Edition, which reused illustrations from Nathaniel Cooke's 1853 London edition, may have a text inflected by the British reprint.<sup>32</sup> Research and work published by others has the potential to reshape the project, though options become fewer as deadlines approach.

For a work so culturally pervasive as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the nineteenth century, there can be no definitive edition. So a digital edition is the best way to address textual fluidity among the daunting proliferation of forms, especially into the future. Since scholarly interest includes the work's interaction with the larger culture, the project will be submitted to federated collections like NINES.<sup>33</sup> Our project's limitation to texts most closely associated with the author for American

<sup>29</sup> Claire Parfait, *The Publishing History of Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852–2002* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2007); Joy Jordan-Lake, *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); Jo-Ann Morgan, *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Visual Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007); Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* [and] *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: John P. Jewett; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1852/1853); *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* [and] *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, vol. 2, Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe. 16 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896).

<sup>31</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Christian Slave, A Drama. Founded on a Portion of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Dramatized by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Expressly for the Readings of Mrs. Mary E. Webb* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1855), p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly; A Tale of Slave Life in America* (London: Nathaniel Cooke, 1853). On source of illustrations, see Parfait, *Publishing History*, pp. 128–29.

<sup>33</sup> NINES, <http://www.nines.org>.

publication reflects a belief that scholarship would benefit from a comprehensive effort to undermine the authority of the two-volume Jewett edition as the only authorial version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If this project can make scholars aware that the text of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is fluid, scholars with interests in any of its cultural iterations could respond to its deficiencies with their own efforts. A study of the *Key*, the *Cooke* edition, or any of the hundreds of editions—for example, another early American version, the German translation published by Jewett<sup>34</sup>—may lead another scholar to conclude that this project does not adequately represent important forms in which Stowe's work was disseminated and read. Let other scholars take up the challenge and show that the project's inadequacies demand a new editorial effort, one which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a world cultural phenomenon—children's abridgments, theatrical and cinematic adaptations, translations, and reprints into our own day—richly deserves. But even if the author's role is not the primary concern, the work's textual fluidity, especially its role as a fundamental text for engaging concepts of race in American and European contexts from the nineteenth century into our own, can be brought into interpretive focus with the digital tools of our own and of future times.

<sup>34</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Oheim Tom's Hütte: oder, Das Leben bei den Niedrigen*, trans. Hugo Rudolph Hutten. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853).