

Stefka Mihaylova

## Raising Proper Citizens: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Sentimental Education of Bulgarian Children during the Soviet Era

In 1954, the Bulgarian state-owned publisher Narodna Mladezh published the first Soviet-era Bulgarian translation, from the English original, of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>1</sup> Between 1954 and 1998, this translation, made by the novelist and translator Anna Kamenova, underwent eleven editions and became a staple of the Bulgarian literature curriculum for middle school. The afterword to the second edition, written by the prominent translator and scholar of British and American literature Vladimir Filipov, prescribes an ideologically correct reading of Stowe's novel.

[*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] did more than the abolitionists' entire organized propaganda for engaging the people's masses in the struggle against slavery[. . .]. We must also note that progressive Americans were not the only ones who opposed slavery. So did also the bourgeoisie of the industrialized Northern states, who needed cheap wage labor [ . . . ]. We read *indignantly* about the cruelty of people such as Haley and Legree; about the slave markets where Negroes were sold like cattle; about the merciless separation of children from their parents [ . . . ]. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a realist novel that brightly depicts the lives of Negroes in slaveholding America of the mid-nineteenth century. But the book's value is not only historical. Today, too, [. . .] Negroes in the USA are in fact slaves. They are subject to all kinds of discrimination and persecution[. . .]. [Stowe's] narrative stirs in us *disgust* not only toward Haley and Legree but also toward their present-day heirs. And this [disgust] strengthens our will to fight against their efforts to enslave all other nations and thwart the building of our happy future. We will not let this happen.<sup>2</sup>

Over the next three decades, Filipov's interpretation of Stowe's novel was faithfully echoed in prefaces, afterwards, literary criticism, and instruction manuals for teachers. This renders his afterward truly programmatic. Three major interpretive strategies stand out there. First, Stowe is singled out as a voice of "the people's masses" (i.e., the workers and the peasants) against slavery. Next, the opponents of slavery in the United States are divided into progressives, who truly aspire to racial equality, and a bourgeoisie, who seeks to re-enslave black Americans as wage laborers. Finally, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is classified as a realist narrative that not only accurately depicts the history of black Americans as slaves but also, through inducing proper feelings, moves "us," progressive people from all nations, to a course of action against post-World War II U.S. imperialism and toward "a happy future."

Reflecting and reinforcing Kamenova's own translation choices, these strategies, common to all Soviet-era criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, helped convert Stowe's Christian sentimental novel into a socialist realist narrative. Underlying this conversion, I argue, is a theory of affect that sought to mold Bulgarian schoolchildren into proper subjects of Soviet internationalism, a political doctrine and practice that pursued the global spread of communism. In the course of this conversion, Kamenova's translation and the accompanying critical commentary also created lasting perceptions of racial difference. In fact, the novel has served at least three generations of Bulgarians as their primary source of information about the history of African Americans and race relations in the United States.

#### **UNCLE TOM'S CABIN BEFORE COMMUNISM: MODELING ENLIGHTENED CITIZENS**

Although the conversion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into a socialist realist narrative may seem radical, it was facilitated by the novel's pre-Soviet reception in Bulgarian culture, as well as by the transnational success of sentimental literature and sentimental political discourse. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first translated in 1858, while Bulgaria was still part of the Ottoman Empire. The first eight chapters were serially published in *Bulgarski knizhitsi* (Bulgarian letters, 1858–62), a popular periodical created to support the emergent modern Bulgarian literature and culture, as well as to inform Bulgarian readers of developments in modern science, culture, economics, and politics around the world. The inclusion of the first chapters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Bulgarski knizhitsi's* first volume is therefore emblematic, render-

ing the novel part of the Bulgarian Enlightenment project that sought to prepare the Bulgarian subjects of the Ottoman Empire for their future as citizens of an independent modern nation through exposure to the achievements of modernity, including exposure to famous works of modern world literature.<sup>3</sup>

Reading the preface and introduction to his translation alongside his introduction to *Bulgarski knizhitsi*'s first issue provides some clues as to why the novel's translator and *Bulgarski knizhitsi*'s founding editor, Dimitar Mutev, considered Stowe's narrative so suitable for the purposes of the Bulgarian Enlightenment project. "[*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] has had immense success all around the world. This success is accounted for in the following words from the introduction to one of the book's editions," Mutev writes. He then quotes extensively from an introduction that probably belongs to the 1852 London edition by Clarke and Company.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this book is to disabuse humanity of the notion that God, who let man rule over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle on the earth, has bestowed this rule only on some generations of a certain color, while including others in the rank of cattle [ . . . ]. Let us recall Brougham's words: "Do not talk to me of rights, do not tell me that the planter is a master of his slaves. I deny this right and reject this rule. Our natural feelings and principles rebel against them [ . . . ]. In vain are you telling me that laws make this ownership sacred [ . . . ]. According to [God's] eternal and unchangeable law, every man who detests rapine and bloodshed will be outraged by the criminal thought that a man can own another man."<sup>5</sup>

The author's reliance on "our natural feelings and principles" as the basis of his argument against slavery renders the preface an example of modern reasoning, even as the equal importance of feelings and principles (i.e., reason) also marks his argument as sentimental. In the author's mind, reasoning based on nature is clearly compatible with Christian ideology; hence, the argument belongs not to the anticlerical strand of Enlightenment philosophy that we find in thinkers such as Diderot and Voltaire but to the Protestant strand according to which rationality is fully compatible with Christianity because God created nature as a rational entity.<sup>6</sup>

While the intellectuals and merchants who wrote and funded *Bulgarski knizhitsi* were Orthodox Christians,<sup>7</sup> they were aware of Protestant ideas.

Mutev had most likely been exposed to modern Protestant thought while studying philosophy and physics in Bonn and Berlin in the late 1830s and early 1840s, and under his editorship, the journal published Protestant educational texts.<sup>8</sup> Such contacts with Protestantism seem to have reinforced the conviction, already present among Bulgarian intellectuals and political leaders, that Christianity and modern reasoning can be fruitfully aligned. This conviction was central to the Bulgarian nationalist movement that saw the struggle for an independent Bulgarian church and the effort to establish modern Bulgarian schools as equally important means to political independence. It was also central to *Bulgarski knizhitsi*. Accordingly, the journal's inaugural issue begins with a call to the Lord.

Glory and gratitude to God! Finally we, too, have a journal whose mission is to be a constant source of light and knowledge in our poor and dark fatherland. Oh, such an event is great for us and very consoling—because it is a special sign that we have begun understanding the usefulness of the sciences and their beneficial effects on the intellectual and moral powers of humanity; because it shows that we, too, have begun understanding how unfortunate a people is and how unable to reach its great and noble predestination when this people deprives itself of the sciences, education, and enlightenment.<sup>9</sup>

Following this introduction, Mutev offers his readers a hagiography of Saint Clement of Ohrid: a prominent disciple of Saints Cyril and Methodius—the Byzantine Greek missionaries who, in the ninth century, created the first Slavic alphabet and the first translation of the Bible into the Slavic dialects—Clement founded one of the first schools of higher learning in medieval Bulgaria. Having thus made an argument for the inseparability between the Orthodox Christian faith and modern knowledge (and before proceeding to an article explaining meteorology and its uses), Mutev further reassures his readers that “there will be always room for God’s word” in the new journal.<sup>10</sup>

This stance on the Enlightenment explains why Stowe’s novel, which presents Christian faith and education as inseparable from African Americans’ emancipation, found such a warm welcome in *Bulgarski knizhitsi*. Even more resonant would have been the novel’s contention that slavery is both un-Christian and indefensible by modern reason.<sup>11</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, a series of measures against slavery had drastically

reduced the number of Caucasian slaves, and most of the sultan's Christian subjects across the Ottoman Empire possessed economic and political freedoms that made their lives very different from those of slaves in the American South, yet the representation of Bulgarians as Christian slaves to the Muslim sultan was a major trope in Bulgarian nationalist literature.<sup>12</sup> Its rhetorical strength drew from the memory of *devşirme* (blood tax), a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century practice (vividly recorded in Bulgarian folklore) whereby Ottoman soldiers recruited and abducted Christian boys (typically aged from seven to ten), converted them to Islam, and enlisted them in the army and civil service.<sup>13</sup> As Betty Greenberg points out, this memory would have easily triggered Bulgarian readers' sympathy for Eliza as a mother who strives to save her child from being sold by the Shelbys.<sup>14</sup>

The story of Eliza saving her child from being sold into slavery is, of course, typical of the sentimental social novel that pits personal interest (that of the slave traders) against the public good (the intact Christian family) and defines virtue as an active stance for the public good.<sup>15</sup> By the 1850s, sentimentality was a mainstream literary and political discourse in the Western world, but the first Bulgarian sentimental works were just being written.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that Mutev's translation contributed to framing the pro-nationalist Bulgarian rhetoric in sentimental terms whereby Bulgarians were described as victims of the private interest of an unjust ruler.

Sentimental fiction famously eschews the details of physical environment and physical appearance (so dear to the realist novel), focusing instead on the virtuous protagonist's spiritual struggle as revealed through his or her actions.<sup>17</sup> As a late sentimental novel trying to rally specifically for the emancipation of black slaves in the United States, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is exceptionally rich in such detail. Appreciating the political importance of this richness, Mutev tried to convey the difference between black slavery in the United States and the Bulgarians' situation in the Ottoman Empire. When referring to Stowe's enslaved characters, he used the word *невольник* (*nevolnik*) to refer to a person without free will (from the Russian *невольник*, "slave, captive, prisoner"), in addition to *роб* (*rob*, "slave"), the more common Bulgarian word for "slave." He was especially careful to use the Russian-derived term where the narrative addresses the legal status of slaves in the American South, as when George Harris points out to Eliza, in chapter 3, that slaves cannot be legally married. Likewise, Mutev made an effort to convey the racial hierarchy in nineteenth-century America. The

word *Negro* was not known to his readers. The description “black” referred mostly to complexion and could connote both physical and moral ugliness. Hence, Mutev used another term derived from Russian: *негритянин* (*negrityanin*), a masculinized version of the Russian word *негритянка* (*negrityanka*), meaning “a black woman.” But Mutev struggled to convey the various terms used for mixed-race characters. While Stowe describes Eliza and Harry as “quadroons,” Mutev described them as “mulattoes,” perhaps deciding that the American range of terms for mixed-race people would confuse his readers. On another occasion, a character whom Stowe describes as “a colored boy” (45) becomes *арабче* (*arabche*), a variation of “Arab,” in Mutev’s text (41).<sup>18</sup> But while Bulgarians commonly referred to a person of African descent as *аралин* (*arapin*), the word also connoted a Muslim. This must have been confusing to Mutev’s readers, given that many of Stowe’s black characters are explicitly described as Christian. Mutev also struggled with finding Bulgarian equivalents for U.S. institutional and political terms, such as *senate*, *constitution*, and *state*. As a result, the political reality of living within the “peculiar institution” of American slavery became difficult to communicate.

Lawrence Venuti points out that translators are often tempted to play down some of the foreign aspects of a text in order to make it more appealing to their “domestic” target readerships.<sup>19</sup> But having introduced and defined (in footnotes and parentheses) a number of foreign terms, Mutev seems to have worried that his translation may alienate his readers. Hence, he “domesticated” (as Venuti would say) aspects of the world of Stowe’s characters, balancing out the untranslatable foreign ones. Thus, Stowe’s description of Aunt Chloe as “silent, and with a heavy cloud settled down on her once joyous face” (46) is translated as “[Aunt Chloe] was silent, gloomy, like the Balkan range.”<sup>20</sup> Likewise, instead of the cakes and biscuits eaten by Stowe’s characters, Mutev’s renditions eat *baklava* and *burek*.<sup>21</sup> Since Mutev had been exposed to foreign cuisines (especially German and Russian) through his travel and studies, the domestication of American food in his translation seems to have been intentional.

Bulgarian translations and editions from the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflect Bulgarians’ growing knowledge about the United States. This knowledge seems to have come from two major sources: journalistic reports about the Civil War, which the Bulgarian nationalist press avidly followed; and the establishment of American Protestant cultural and educational institutions in the Bulgarian lands.<sup>22</sup> This growing knowledge

is apparent in Ivan Govedarov's 1898 translation, the only unabbreviated Bulgarian translation of the novel to date. Mutev's 1858 preface describes the novel as a polemic against slavery in general; the expression "generations of a certain color," which he uses as an equivalent of the English original's "races of a certain color," does not communicate the biological understanding and social implications encoded in the American notion of race. In contrast, Govedarov's preface describes the book as an argument specifically against "the slavery of black people" in the American South.<sup>23</sup> Throughout his text, he refers to the enslaved characters as *незрци* (*negri*, i.e., Negroes); the word had evidently entered the Bulgarian vocabulary at that point. He also refers to them as "black," perhaps hoping that his readers' new knowledge about the American South will help them distinguish between "black" as a signifier for race and the more established Bulgarian meanings. Govedarov is also more specific about the Christianity of Stowe and her characters. In his preface, he describes Stowe's family as "evangelical" and her point of view as "Puritan."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, his translation strives to fully and accurately convey all elements of the novel's Protestantism, including hymns and rituals.

Importantly, Govedarov's preface shifts the focus of the ideal reader's identification from the enslaved black Americans, as Bulgarians' fellow oppressed Christians, to Stowe herself, as an exemplary modern Christian who has used both her position as a teacher and her faith to help the oppressed.<sup>25</sup> His preface is a short biography of Stowe, and it provides the minimum information about slavery and the Civil War that readers may need to appreciate Stowe's extraordinary service to humanity. Historically, this shift makes sense. In 1898, Bulgarians were no longer subjects of the sultan; since 1878, they had been citizens of a self-governing nation.<sup>26</sup> Hence, they no longer needed models of virtuous victimhood, such as Eliza or Uncle Tom, but instead required models of virtuous citizenship. Govedarov's choice of the evangelical Christian Stowe as such a model conveys a vision of Bulgarians as fully integrated in post-Enlightenment Christian civilization, the same vision that motivated the founding of *Bulgarski knizhitsi*. In fact, Govedarov's translation was part of a series that introduced Bulgarian readers to world-famous works, such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* (1896).<sup>27</sup> Yet, in inviting his readers to identify with Stowe rather than her enslaved characters, Govedarov also sets up a tendency for the future critical commentary about the novel, whereby the focus on Stowe once again obscures the particularities of living as a black slave in the antebellum South.

The implications of this shift are made apparent in the first Bulgarian edition prepared especially for children, D. Mavrov and G. Palashev's 1911 adaptation.<sup>28</sup> Their preface is also a biography of Stowe, though nineteen pages long compared to Govedarov's three. It is a tale of model modern Christian womanhood, culminating in the triumphal social and political success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book "written not for fame or money, but out of Christian love and fervent sympathy for the oppressed and the humiliated."<sup>29</sup> Imagining Harriet Beecher Stowe's life as the daughter of a Protestant pastor in America would have been as difficult for Bulgarian schoolchildren in 1911 as it is now. This is why Mavrov and Palashev make much of the early loss of her mother, her love of books and learning, and her dedication to teaching. The sentimental figure of the industrious orphan who gets richly rewarded is a staple of Bulgarian folktales.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, teachers enjoyed considerable respect in Bulgarian society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were expected to embody patriotic and modern values.<sup>31</sup> In Mavrov and Palashev's preface, the reward for the orphan-teacher Stowe is the immense public impact of her work. Not only did she prove "most convincingly that the Negro is human, equal in reason to his white brother, his suffering as unjust as that of any innocent person," but "the poor people, who had previously had only a vague understanding of the Bible," found her description of Tom's piety so impressive that "they started buying the holy book."<sup>32</sup> Stowe is thus presented as a model enlightened citizen: one who possesses modern and Christian virtues in equal measure. Three pictures portraying Stowe across her lifetime—in her youth (the target readers' age), as a married woman, and in her seventies—reinforce this narrative, further encouraging Bulgarian children (especially girls) to follow in Stowe's footsteps.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the preface gives black people little attention, both textually and visually. The only visual image of blackness in the preface is a picture of the chain-link bracelet that Stowe received from the Duchess of Sutherland in appreciation for Stowe's contribution to the abolitionist cause (fig. 21). Black Americans, omitted from Stowe's story, are thus synecdochically represented as slaves rather than as citizens.

This reductive representation of blackness continues in the text of Mavrov and Palashev's adaptation, as they cut much of the religious content from Stowe's text. For example, the debate between Miss Ophelia and Augustine St. Clare in chapter 19, over the compatibility of slavery with Christianity, takes up seventeen printed pages in the 2002 Oxford World's Clas-



Fig. 21. Reproduction of an engraving by Wat Drake depicting “the golden bracelet, imitating slave shackles, that the Duchess of Sutherland gave as a gift to the writer Beecher-Stowe in 1853, London.” (From Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Chicho Tomovata koliba*, adapted by D. Mavrov and G. Palashev [Sofia: Kartinna galleria, 1911].)

sics edition and only four in Mavrov and Palashev’s adaptation. Similarly, in chapter 9, where Senator Bird takes the fugitives Eliza and Harry to the safety of John Van Trompe’s house, Mavrov and Palashev cut Van Trompe’s confession that he changed churches because the pastor whose church he had previously attended defended slavery. While Stowe’s Christian and civic virtues may have made her pedagogically attractive, her Protestantism, schismatic and uncentralized, must have been deemed confusing and unsuitable for young readers. Even as Bulgarians appreciated American Protestants’ contribution to modern Bulgarian culture, many looked upon Protestantism as a tool for foreign interests.<sup>34</sup> By cutting religious content that emphasized the difference between Orthodox and Protestant Christian practices (especially the Protestant reading of the Bible without the guidance of an ordained priest, which occurs several times in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), Mavrov and Palashev made Stowe more acceptable. Yet they also impoverished Stowe’s depiction of blackness of much of its nuance, as Christian piety is one of the major refractions through which she repre-

sents black culture. This impoverishment is especially obvious in Mavrov and Palashev's treatment of the prayer meeting in chapter 4, "An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin." In Govedarov's edition, this scene takes up four printed pages and includes full translations of the hymns sung by the black congregation and of the testimony given by an elderly black woman. Govedarov also includes the following passage, in which Stowe tries to convey African Americans' specific racial characteristics:

There were others, which made incessant mention of "Jordan's banks," and "Canaan's fields," and the "New Jerusalem"; for the Negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature; and, as they sung, some laughed and some cried, and some clapped hands, or shook hands rejoicingly with each other, as if they had fairly gained the other side of the river. (34)

By contrast, Mavrov and Palashev summarize the entire prayer meeting in half a page, informing us, in the briefest possible manner, that the guests sang "church hymns," that George read "from a book with religious content," and that Uncle Tom led everyone into prayer. No commentary on "the Negro mind" is given.<sup>35</sup>

**THE NOVEL'S SOVIET-ERA TRANSLATION:  
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE MEETS MAXIM GORKY**

When the Bulgarian communist ideologues decided to include *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the middle-school curriculum in the 1950s (less than a decade after Bulgaria became a Soviet satellite), much of the groundwork had been laid for them by the pre-Soviet-era translators and adaptors. The novel had already been received as an argument against oppression and a model for civic virtue. It had already been translated with pro-internationalist objectives in mind; modern Bulgarians had to be at once patriotic and members of the enlightened modern world beyond the Bulgarian lands. Following the success of Mavrov and Palashev's adaptation, the novel had become established as a text for schoolchildren, its Christian content abbreviated.<sup>36</sup> A strong link between their adaptation and the Soviet approach to the novel is suggested by the fifth edition of their text, published in 1946, the year when Bulgaria became a "people's republic," by adopting a new constitution, and officially joined the Soviet sphere. In the preface to this edition, not only is

Stowe presented as a voice against oppression, but the defining influence of Christianity on her abolitionist work is deemphasized. Still, the preface mentions that many Christian churches supported the abolitionist cause. Throughout the text, many characters still describe themselves as Christian and call to God in times of distress.<sup>37</sup> It is also important to acknowledge the Russian influence on the pre-Soviet translations, the result of a centuries-long cultural exchange between the Bulgarian and Russian societies. Mutev's translation of Stowe's first name as "Garrieta" (which reflects the absence of the *h* sound in Russian) and his use of the Russian-derived words *неволник* (*nevolnik*) for "slave" and *негротянин* (*negrityanin*) for "Negro" suggest that he drew on the 1857 Russian translation of the novel.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Mavrov and Palashev's biography of Stowe in their 1911 preface draws heavily on the Russian author Ivan Ivanov's biography of Stowe, which was translated and published in Bulgaria in 1900.<sup>39</sup> In view of these factors, the Soviet-era appropriation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appears not as a radical break from the novel's earlier reception but as continuous with it.

Contributing to this continuity is yet another manifestation of sentimentality's longevity, the socialist realist novel that, from the 1950s on, dominated literary production and political rhetoric in Bulgaria. Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the socialist realist novel is a sentimental social novel despite the Christian ideology of the former and the anti-Christian stance of the latter; as Margaret Cohen remarks, "sentimental social novels voice ideas that cross the political spectrum."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, what defines a sentimental social novel is not the political point of view it takes but the conflict between individual freedom and collective obligation, inherited from Enlightenment political thought. In the general case, the sentimental protagonist sacrifices his or her own personal desires for the greater public good, whereas the protagonist in the sentimental social novel represents the suffering public; he or she is a member of a dominated social group victimized by the selfish interest of a socially empowered antagonist. This is precisely the position of Stowe's black characters. This is also the position of Pelageya Vlasova, the poor factory worker's widow from small-town tsarist Russia who is the central character of Maksim Gorky's 1906 novel *Mother*, which pro-Soviet critics considered one of the best examples of socialist realism.<sup>41</sup> Strictly speaking, Pelageya does not start out as a protagonist. Rather, she occupies the position of the ideal spectator who witnesses the protagonist's struggle and models actual readers' sympathetic responses. In the first part of the novel, the protagonist is Pelageya's son Pavel, a young factory worker, who

sees no meaningful future for himself in the typical life of a man from his class—a life of drudgery, drinking, and (most likely) a loveless marriage—and joins a socialist group. As he transforms from a dissatisfied youth into a leader for workers' rights, Pelageya, too, transforms from a witness of her son's socialist conversion into a socialist leader in her own right.

Numerous aspects of Pelageya's journey qualify it as a sentimental social narrative, from her double oppression as both a woman and a lower-class subject to her tragic end as a martyr for a just society, a cause entailing thorough legal and social transformation.<sup>42</sup> The narrative is also frequently interrupted by the mandatory tableaux, scenes in which the brutal domination of social norms is spectacularly embodied by members of the victimized group.<sup>43</sup> In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, such scenes include Tom lying smote under Legree's enraged blows and the iconic depiction of Eliza running from the slave catchers' hounds across the river, her child in her arms. Gorky's novel, likewise, includes at least two memorable tableaux. In the first one, Pelageya witnesses the cruel beating of the peasant leader Rybin at the hands of the tsarist police. This scene prefigures the final tableaux, where Pelageya herself dies a spectacular death from police violence, as workers, already awakened to the reality of their situation, gaze empathetically upon her suffering. Additionally, *Mother* upholds the sentimental value of active virtue that, in Gorky's novel, is equated with teaching through personal example. Pavel sees his path as a teacher of the socialist gospel. Pelageya, likewise, learns to read and then teaches others about the international brotherhood of all workers. Similarly, at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Topsy, the unruly black child entrusted to the Protestant Miss Ophelia, becomes baptized, "at the age of womanhood" and "by her own request," and leaves on a mission to Africa, where she becomes a teacher of "the children of her own country" (443).

Last but not least, socialist realism partakes in the sentimental credo that feelings and reason are equally important factors in forming a correct perception of reality and attaining harmony between individual freedom and the public good: "Socialist realism engages in a rational and emotional analysis of the relationship among past, present, and future," writes the Bulgarian Soviet-era critic Ivan Popivanov.<sup>44</sup> The same could be said of many sentimental social novels, but socialist realism is distinct for the specific affect that bonds together the members of the utopian community it constructs. In classic sentimental novels, the utopian community is built on empathy for the suffering protagonist, and the ideal sentimental spec-

tators are often shown as shedding empathetic tears. We find one such typical scene in chapter 9 of Stowe's novel, where Eliza tells the story of her escape with Harry to Senator Bird's family. As she talks, the narrator tells us, "every one around her" shows "signs of hearty sympathy." Then everyone present sheds tears—the children sobbing, their heads buried in Mrs. Bird's skirt; Mrs. Bird hiding her face in a handkerchief; the black servant Dinah letting tears stream freely down her face; and so on (90). By contrast, in the socialist realist novel, the affect bonding the utopian community together is joy. Sacrificing yourself for the public good is joyful, Pavel's socialist friends insist. "At times I feel such joy, such happiness," says Natasha, a teacher who has severed her connections with her well-off family and dedicated her life to the socialist cause. She continues, "If you knew—if you but understood what a great joyous work we are doing! You will come to feel it!"<sup>45</sup> And so Pelageya does. At the outset of the novel, she sheds tears and prays to Christ for the lives of hardship and peril that her son and his socialist friends have chosen. As she begins working for the socialist party, spreading leaflets with socialist messages among workers and peasants, she starts praying less and experiencing more spontaneous moments of joy. This joy covers a range as varied as the sentimental repertoire of shedding tears; usually uplifting, it can also be paradoxically sad and tormenting.<sup>46</sup> Even as Pelageya witnesses the painful death of Rybin and, finally, when she understands that she is going to die in the hands of the police, her faith in the joyous socialist future that she has helped build alleviates her distress. But most importantly, her immense capacity to feel deeply—to empathize with another's grief and inspire joy—renders her a model socialist. Social transformation "begins not in the head, but in the heart," the peasant leader Rybin contends in *Mother*.<sup>47</sup>

Proponents of socialist realism seem to be at least somewhat aware of the genre's kinship with sentimentality. "As is well-known," writes Popivanov, "socialist realism shares some features with romanticism"<sup>48</sup> (romanticism being the larger and more respected category within which sentimentality fits). At the same time, they are dismissive of sentimentality. "Occasionally [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] is tearfully sentimental, almost melodramatic," Anna Kamenova writes in an afterword to her translation of Stowe's novel.<sup>49</sup> In saying so, she blatantly disregards how her own commentary echoes the novel's sentimentality. "Today, too, readers approach [Stowe's] book with interest and feeling," Kamenova notes,<sup>50</sup> adding that "[Stowe] affectionately portrays the noble men and women who warmly and cordially welcome

fugitive slaves as their equals.”<sup>51</sup> The denial of socialist realism’s sentimental roots is widespread in Soviet-era criticism. Instead, Soviet-era critics measure the genre against the classic realism of Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert. These authors, too, Margaret Cohen writes, invested much effort in downplaying their indebtedness to the sentimental novel, whose codes they appropriated, “transvaluing [their] significance.”<sup>52</sup> What both socialist realism and classic realism claim as one major distinction from sentimentality is their arguably more rigorous social analyses. “[Stowe] was unable to evaluate and account for the social and economic aspects of slavery; instead she found it sufficient to emphasize only its moral aspects,” comments Kamenova,<sup>53</sup> for her, this is what renders Stowe’s novel “tearfully sentimental.” But *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* does address the economic and social aspects of slavery—for instance, in St. Clare and Miss Ophelia’s discussion of slavery in chapter 19, which Kamenova, like Mavrov and Palashev before her, radically abbreviates. In any case, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* provides as much (or as little) social and economic analysis of oppression as Gorky’s *Mother*.

Soviet-era critics tried to draw a firm line between socialist realism and sentimentality, against all objective evidence for their kinship, because of the Soviet ideological competition with the West in all spheres, including culture. Even pro-Soviet critics consider classic realism one of the most successful cultural achievements of modern capitalist societies. Socialist realism, intended as a proof of the Soviet Bloc’s superior culture, is supposed to excel at what classic realism does best: insightful social analysis expressed through detailed descriptions of physical environment and characters’ individual traits. Moreover, socialist realism aspires to surpass classic realism, venturing where classic realism will not or cannot go, drawing an objective picture of the ideal socialist future society. The conviction that this can be done derives from the Leninist premise that human history has been set on an inevitable course toward socialism and that the future can be scientifically deduced from socialism’s past and present accomplishments.<sup>54</sup>

Because socialist realism is burdened with such high expectations, Soviet-era critics appear particularly sensitive to any actual or imagined hints that the genre is a lesser realism. B. Emelyanov writes, “Nilovna [i.e., Pelageya Nilovna Vlasova] is one of the most astounding characters in world literature: her deep individuality is incontestable, and at the same time she is an epic character. Her joyless youth and difficult marriage [. . .] describe the fate of countless women.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, there is little individualism in Pelageya’s character. In *Mother*, Gorky rarely provides the specific

detail of physical environment and the access to a character's interior world through self-reflection, typical of realist characterization. Not only has Pelageya's life of poverty and victimization prevented her from forming personal desires (other than having enough food and not being beaten), but when such desires finally emerge, they are perfectly aligned with the public good. Ironically, she begins to approximate a realist character only when she moves into the middle-class home of the socialist intellectuals Nikolay and Sofya. As Sofya plays the piano and Nikolay shares his atlases and encyclopedias—objects that signify a middle-class status—Pelageya starts actively reflecting on her past, acquiring classic realist interiority. Hence, rather than surpassing classic realism, *Mother* only begins to approximate it when it submits to its “bourgeois” conventions. In contrast, Stowe frequently uses realist conventions. Detailed settings, including the eponymous cabin, are used to suggest personality features. The characters' aesthetic choices—such as Tom's neat clothes and Topsy's affinity at arranging flowers—are suggestive of individual traits. True, the interiority of Stowe's characters is constructed sentimentally, as a conflict between opposing ideals rather than as a conflict based on power struggles, but even sentimental conflicts are reduced to a minimum in *Mother*. Occasionally Pavel is shown gazing gently in his comrade Sasha's face, suggesting that he is not immune to the conventional feelings of attraction and intimacy. Yet he states that he is never to get married; his true family is the international brotherhood of workers. Likewise, when Pavel is first imprisoned, Pelageya worries that he may be tortured. Eventually, however, she is reconciled with his fate; she has accepted her role as the mother of the international brotherhood of workers. To this socialist utopia, individual destinies and traditional familial attachments simply do not matter.

But Soviet-era critics' insistence that socialist realist characters are individuals is not just misrepresentation; rather, it conveys a specific understanding of individuality. Consider Popivanov's following defense of the genre:

Bourgeois literary scholars often scornfully speak of socialist realism, describing it as monotonous, schematic, and propagandist. . . . Here is proof to the contrary. When our [Bulgarian] writers go abroad, foreigners tell them astonished: who could have imagined your poetry—so humane, so harmoniously encompassing the intimate and the social, so varied [ . . . ]. Socialist realism does not constrain our writers'

creativity—they write as their hearts command, and their hearts belong to the people and to the [Communist] Party.<sup>56</sup>

Underlying the last sentence of the preceding quote is not the Freudian understanding of individuality associated with classic realism but a Pavlovian behaviorist understanding. Just as Freudian psychoanalysis remains strongly associated with classic realism (consider, e.g., Freud's analyses of Ibsen's characters),<sup>57</sup> Pavlovian behaviorism is associated with socialist realism, both because the Bolsheviks gave Pavlov's theories a canonical status and because Gorky himself admired Pavlov's work and used his influence to provide Pavlov with optimal conditions to conduct research.<sup>58</sup> In classic realist characters, sentimental interiority is replaced by the unconscious—psychic space created through familial dynamics and social pressures to form a unique pathology. Socialist realist characters do not have an unconscious. Rather, they respond to something akin to the Pavlovian classic conditioning: specific stimuli produce specific responses. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Pelageya's character—from her thoughts to her posture—is described entirely as a response to poverty and domestic violence: "She was tall and somewhat stooping. Her heavy body, broken down with long years of toil and the beatings of her husband, moved about noiselessly and inclined to one side, as if she were in constant fear of knocking up against something."<sup>59</sup> As the stimulus changes—that is, as poverty and beating are replaced by poverty and communist proselytizing—a feeling of "universal kinship [with] the workers of the world [. . .] move[s] the mother, [. . .] straighten[s] and embolden[s] her."<sup>60</sup> As *Mother* demonstrates, in socialist realism, Pavlov's theory seems to tie in with the Marxist conviction that individuals and societies change for the better if their false consciousness is replaced with a proper, materialist view of the world. The materialist view here is the stimulus; individual and social change is the response.

The resulting socialist realist take on individuality and social change applies equally to workers across cultures. "For us there is no nation, no race," Pavel's comrade the Little Russian tells Pelageya. "And, Mother," he continues, "the Frenchman and the German *feel* the same way when they look upon life, and the Italian also. We are all children of one mother—the great, invincible idea of the brotherhood of the workers of all countries over all the earth."<sup>61</sup> Again, the same (correct) worldview produces the same (joyous) feelings across cultures. In this Pavlovian-

Marxist theory of subject formation, the sentimental emphasis on affect is socialist realism's signature contribution. Popivanov's defense of socialist realism is a variation on the same theme: writers who partake in the same Marxist philosophy, whether Bulgarian or not, feel the same about the world; consequently, they all uphold socialist realism as the best aesthetic to describe it.<sup>62</sup> Socialist realism does not constrain their creativity, because their creativity is already aligned with socialist realism through both reason and feeling.

Thus socialist realism replaces the sentimental transnationalism of sympathy with a joyful communist internationalism, the communist project for a union among nations, driven by the shared interests of their working classes. It is not to be confused with Western "bourgeois cosmopolitanism" that, Soviet theorists claim, seeks to recolonize the world through global political and financial institutions.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, socialist realism is expected not to just uphold the tasks of socialism and communist internationalism but to actively help fulfill them. As Popivanov further writes, socialist realism "prepares the moral and psychological basis of communism."<sup>64</sup> Hence, its function is performative; it does not seek just to reflect on reality (as classic realism has controversially claimed to do) but sets out to engender the socialist utopia. Soviet-era criticism similarly views its functions as performative. Pages can be written examining the feelings of provincialism and cultural inferiority in Popov's image of the astonished foreigner awakened to the true power of Bulgarian socialist creativity (a stock figure in communist propaganda), but the gist is that the communist critic's mission, just like the communist writer's, is to help those of weak faith move toward the truth.

Anna Kamenova and the Soviet-era commentators on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* understand their objective similarly: to align the novel with socialist realism and the internationalist ideology it serves. To do this, Kamenova removes from Stowe's text as many references to Christianity as possible. For instance, whereas Mavrov and Palashev briefly summarize the prayer scene in the cabin, Kamenova completely eliminates it. From the debate between Mrs. Bird and Senator Bird over the morality of the fugitive slave law, Kamenova erases Mrs. Bird's Christian objections to the law that specifically refer to the Bible. In Kamenova's translation, Mrs. Bird's position against slavery derives "naturally" from her being a woman and mother. Kamenova does not edit Senator Bird's point, early in the discussion, that his support for the law is "no more than Christian and kind" toward his slave-owning

brethren in Kentucky (84), as this reference usefully aligns Christianity with capitalist oppression.

Predictably, Kamenova's most extreme editorial intervention is in chapter 40, "The Martyr," where, following Tom's refusal to reveal Cassy and Emmeline's plans to escape, Legree beats Tom to death. In the original, Legree's plantation becomes Tom's Calvary, and Tom's beating is the counterpart to crucifixion. I discuss some characteristic passages here. Having been summoned to talk to Legree, Tom knows that his refusal to betray the fugitives will bring Legree's murderous rage upon him: "But he felt strong in God to meet death, rather than betray the helpless" (419). Kamenova translates this sentence as "But he would rather go to death than betray the two helpless women."<sup>65</sup> Next, Stowe tells us that Tom "sat his basket down by the row, and looking up said, 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Though hast redeemed me, oh Lord God of truth!' and quietly yielded himself to the rough, brutal grasp with which Quimbo seized him" (420). In Kamenova's version, Tom "sat his basket down, looked up, and let himself be brutally taken away by Quimbo."<sup>66</sup> Finally, before he dies in the original, Tom forgives the seemingly incorrigible Sambo and Quimbo for having beaten him, and they are so moved by his forgiveness, as emblematic of Christ's mercy, that they profess belief. The magnitude of Tom's act is further supported by Stowe's description of his final facial expression as "that of a conqueror." "Who,—who,—who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he asks rhetorically (quoting Romans 8:35), before he passes away with a smile on his face (427). In Kamenova's version, Tom is too weak to talk; hence, he does not forgive anyone, and no one gets converted. Tom simply smiles and dies.<sup>67</sup> Because Kamenova cuts most of the Christian references that comprise much of what Tom says in his final hours, her translation presents Tom's exceptional stoicism as completely unrelated to religion and, hence, not unlike the stoicism that communist guerrillas from countless socialist realist stories display as they die by the hands of the capitalist police.

Despite Kamenova's efforts, she could not entirely eradicate Stowe's foundational Christian theme without destroying the novel. Enough of this theme remains to enable moments of resistant reading. For instance, in a footnote to chapter 13, "The Quaker Settlement," Kamenova defines the Quakers as a "sect," using a Bulgarian word that strongly connotes religious fanaticism.<sup>68</sup> This definition makes little sense in view of the Quakers' favorable portrayal as supporters of fugitive slaves, which Kamenova retains. As a result, a strong positive manifestation of Christianity remains in the

Bulgarian translation, creating a possibly productive ambiguity. Commentators have taken it upon themselves to resolve such ambiguities, including the major one: that a Christian author created such a powerful condemnation of oppression. To do so, they have presented Stowe as a victim of her environment. As the daughter of one pastor and the wife of another, Stowe could not have thought of religion in any other way but as “a force capable of transforming people and eradicating social inequality and evil,” Filipov writes in his afterword. This conviction, he continues, explains the “improbable” transformation of the slave catcher Loker into “a good person” under the Quakers’ influence.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, Filipov concedes, “Stowe unwittingly, albeit indirectly, exposed the disgraceful role of the church,” which supported slave owners by teaching Negroes to be meek and docile.<sup>70</sup> Thus, in Filipov’s account, Stowe undergoes a transformation somewhat similar to Pelageya’s in *Mother*. Both start out as Christian—a moral defect caused by their environment—but a non-Christian truth eventually starts speaking through them. Just as Kamenova attempts to do in her translation, Filipov omits the information that there are numerous Christian denominations within the United States, only some of which supported slavery, and that Stowe’s anti-slavery Christian stance was not exceptional in the Northern states.

Filipov also strategically downplays the centrality of Tom’s fate to the novel’s anti-slavery message. Stowe’s religious worldview, he contends, instills Tom with “passivity and resignation,” which makes him “the least persuasive [. . .] character.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, from Stowe’s Protestant point of view, Tom’s martyrdom—his ability to win souls for Christ through the example of his death—is anything but passive. For Filipov, however, because Tom believes in a better life hereafter, he cannot be the book’s moral center. Instead, the novel’s moral center is embodied by “all Negroes in the United States,” represented by characters such as Eliza and George Harris, “who fight for their freedom and happiness.”<sup>72</sup> In Stowe’s original, both Eliza and George are Christian. George wavers early on, as he faces the dilemma of either escaping from his master (thereby running the risk of never seeing his family again) or staying with him (as is arguably his duty) and partnering with a woman of his master’s choosing, but he seems to have recovered his faith by the end of the novel. In his letter announcing his intention to relocate his family to Liberia, he specifies that he sees Africa’s future as “essentially a Christian one” (442). Kamenova erased George and Eliza’s Christianity, however, to offer Bulgarian readers positive non-Christian black charac-

ters. Filipov takes the additional step of downplaying their individuality by claiming that they represent “all Negroes.”<sup>73</sup> This is a typical socialist realist move, not only in asserting the value of the collective (a social group, a people, etc.) over that of the individual, but also in deemphasizing race (“For us there is no nation, no race,” intones the Little Russian in *Mother*).<sup>74</sup> Even as they stand for “all Negroes,” George and Eliza are fair-skinned blacks. “I might mingle in the circles of whites, in this country [Canada], my shade of color is so slight, and that of my wife and family scarce perceptible,” George writes in his final letter (440). Thus, fair-skinned and prepared to “fight for their freedom and happiness,” they are ready to be reimagined as members of the international brotherhood of workers, their middle-class aspirations notwithstanding. This is precisely the direction that Filipov takes as he slips from “Negroes” to “progressives” in the last sentence of his commentary: “[Today] Negroes and all progressive people in the USA are fighting against the American capitalists” who strive to “enslave all other nations.”<sup>75</sup>

Filipov’s critique of Christianity and his blurring of the line between race and class are typical of virtually all other analyses of the novel.<sup>76</sup> So is his emphasis on the feelings the novel evokes. “Stowe’s characteristic pathos and dramatism contributed much to the novel’s popularity,” Victor Sharenkov remarks.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Filipov draws attention to the novel’s ability to evoke indignation and disgust—the affects that, in his view, will most effectively move readers against American imperialism.<sup>78</sup> Like sentimental novelists, Soviet-era critics believed in the centrality of emotion to moral education and political action. They also viewed the teaching of literature as the most suitable tool for creating an effective alignment between emotions and a correct ideological worldview. In the middle-school literature classroom, Milan Enchev writes, “we must raise the emotional temperature of literary education [ . . . ]. We must fight [any tendency toward] passionless analysis.”<sup>79</sup> Literary analysis, Enchev continues, is always at once ideological and aesthetic, and training good readers entails “helping them acquire a communist worldview and aesthetic taste, enriching their emotional range, and developing their intellect.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, the literary education of Bulgarian children during the Soviet period was truly a sentimental education. A 1982 manual for teaching literature to grades 4–6 even includes lists of feelings to be taught in each particular grade. The list for the fourth grade—in which *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was taught—includes such feelings as endless sorrow, anxiety, despair, indignation, hatred for the enemy, hope, exultation, rapture, enjoyment, delight, astonishment, magnanimity, mother’s cour-

age, brotherly love, love for the socialist fatherland, love for the USSR, and “the people’s gratitude to Lenin.” Students’ understanding of these feelings is supposed to accompany the introduction of historical concepts such as slavery, Ottoman slavery, fascism, and the USSR.<sup>81</sup>

As such manuals suggest, Soviet-era ideologues thought of identity as constructed. But unlike late twentieth-century theorists of constructed identities, such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, who propose that identity is continually influenced by social processes but that no single individual or group can willfully shape another person’s identity, Soviet theorists formulated a Pavlovian hypothesis of social engineering: proper education will mold anyone into a good socialist subject, provided that every social and historical concept is matched with an appropriate feeling. Theorists who view identity as constructed are typically materialist theorists, and Soviet critics and educators thought of themselves as materialist. But how materialist is their hypothesis?

Consider an experiment that Bulgarian scholars conducted to test the success of their method of teaching literature. In the experiment, students were asked to choose one episode from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that they found particularly moving and to think about why they found it so. One female student chose the scene in chapter 25, “The Little Evangelist,” in which Eva, sensing her imminent death, says good-bye to her family, including the slaves. (Predictably, Kamenova removed from the text Eva’s plea to the servants to be good Christians.) The student describes Eva

leaning back on a pillow, her hair falling on her face, her cheeks burning. Her big blue eyes focus intently on each visitor. And the visitors are the Negroes, slaves on St. Clare’s plantations, who have come to see their beloved little mistress and receive locks from her gorgeous hair. Even in her last hours, she has not forgotten them, because her small heart has gathered much love for the poor Negroes.<sup>82</sup>

The description suggests that the scene spoke louder to the reader’s heart than to her mind. Though moved by the sentimental imagery—Eva’s face burning with fever, her big blue eyes looking intently, much love in her small heart—the student misunderstood an important detail: though St. Clare owns slaves, he does not own a plantation, let alone plantations. Because he abhors the backbreaking toil to which plantation slaves are subject, he has given his share of the family plantation to his brother. Precisely

this kind of misunderstanding would support antisentimentalist fears that sentimentality encourages readers to substitute sympathy for true understanding.<sup>83</sup> Yet the researchers conducting the experiment are not troubled by the student's mistake. "The scene described by the student," they write, "is one of the emotional climaxes in the novel [ . . . ]. The reader experiences little Eva's death as failure of the black slaves' illusion of the 'good master's noble nature.'"<sup>84</sup> Clearly, the researchers' interpretation here has little to do with the student's description of Eva as the slaves' "beloved little mistress." Even more important, the researchers' interpretation is not just inaccurate; it is typical of this kind of research. (Recall Popivanov citing the made-up anecdote of the astonished foreigner as "proof" for the high literary qualities of socialist realism.) What such examples demonstrate is not a materialist approach to evidence but its willful manipulation so that the researchers' hypothesis—that by evoking strong feelings, socialist realism enables readers to form a correct perception of reality—may appear confirmed. Such willful manipulation is not necessarily a sign of cynicism. Rather, the researchers' approach to evidence reflects the teleology of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy on which they drew. According to this philosophy, history is on an inevitable course toward communism; humans have started on an unalterable path toward a "proper" (i.e., Marxist-Leninist) understanding of the world. By the same logic, one day the reader will come to see Eva's farewell as the failure of capitalist illusion, simply because the researchers' communist credo does not allow for any other interpretation. Logically faulty as it may be, this is an idealist position.

#### LESSONS (NOT) LEARNED

Just as the Soviet socialist realist novel inherits the transnational sentimental tradition of the nineteenth century, the Soviet-era use of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for Bulgarian children's moral betterment follows in the steps of a larger, transnational educational trend. According to Suzanne Keen, British Victorian thinkers, just like Soviet-era pedagogues, explored "the malleability of the reading mind, especially as regards readers' morals," and hoped that it could be improved through literary education.<sup>85</sup> Psychologist Darcia Narvaez identifies the same faith in narrative's ennobling powers in the late twentieth-century American primary and middle-school literary classroom. Her empirical research suggests that though reading stories that illustrate core values improves students' academic performance, they have

no significant effect on students' behavior and attitudes.<sup>86</sup> So how successful was the Bulgarian communist cooptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in instilling the moral values of Soviet internationalism? Unlike Narvaez, I have found no reliable empirical research to help me answer this question. Likewise, I have found only one study examining race relations in communist and post-communist Bulgaria: the 2005 collection *Immigration in Bulgaria*.<sup>87</sup> In her essay in the collection, Denitsa Kamenova outlines the history of the African community in Bulgaria from the 1960s, when the Bulgarian communist state began subsidizing higher education for African students as part of the Soviet Bloc's effort to gain supporters in the developing world. Kamenova's conclusion is unequivocal: being black in Bulgaria is hard. She cites regulations from the 1960s that introduced a curfew for African students (arguably for their own security) and interviews with African immigrants who report their experiences of systemic prejudice, discrimination, and racial violence while living in Bulgaria during the early twenty-first century.<sup>88</sup> There are several reasons why such research is still scarce and incomplete twenty-six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the official end of communism in Eastern Europe: the refusal on the part of pro-Russian political factions to make parts of the Soviet-era archives available to the public, the public's fatigue with stories about communism's evils, and, most important, the relatively recent interest in race as an analytical category among Bulgarian social scientists.<sup>89</sup> In this sense, the Soviet-era translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the related coverage of Western racism in the Soviet-era press did not create an understanding and respect for racial difference—which is not surprising, since neither understanding nor respect was the real objective.

Nevertheless, as part of the Soviet-era curriculum, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was extremely influential in giving Bulgarians a vocabulary for talking about blackness. Unaware that the novel's taxonomy of blackness—from black through mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon—has been denounced as racist in the United States and elsewhere, most Bulgarians use these terms as if they were racially neutral. For instance, in informal conversation, former U.S. president Barack Obama is sometimes referred to as “the mulatto president.” The two generations of Bulgarians who grew up during the communist regime also correctly saw the novel's translation as the propaganda tool it was meant to be. To pro-Soviet and pro-Russian Bulgarians who have spoken negatively of the United States, other Bulgarians have often responded, “Yes, in America the Negroes are getting beaten,” meaning

“Your communist-style anti-Americanism is quite transparent.” Bulgarians who use this expression are aware that racism in the United States has not been eradicated. But for Bulgarians today, acknowledging the continuing racial inequality in the United States is tied up in doublethink: to assert the fact that American blacks are being beaten is to be perceived as parroting communist-style anti-Americanism. This doublethink, in turn, originates specifically in the communist interpretation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, as taught to generations of Bulgarian middle-school students. Since Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007, there has been much talk about the need to change the literature and history curricula for public school, so that they may better represent the increasingly diverse world in which post-communist Bulgarians live. So far, however, Anna Kamenova’s translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* remains the literature curriculum’s only work that directly represents race.

### Notes

1. An earlier translation compatible with Soviet ideology was made from Russian in 1949. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Chichovata Tomova koliba* [Uncles Tom’s cabin], trans. Marko Marchevski (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1949).

2. Vladimir Filipov, “Za Hariet Bicher-Stou” [About Harriet Beecher Stowe], in *Chicho Tomovata koliba* [Uncle Tom’s cabin], by Harriet Beecher Stowe, trans. Anna Kamenova, 2nd ed. (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1956); my translation and italics.

3. Under Dimitar Mutev’s tenure as editor, *Bulgarski knizhitsi* also published Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. See Betty Greenberg, “*Bulgarski knizhitsi* and the First Bulgarian Translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” in *Essays in American Studies: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Madeleine Danova (Sofia: Polis, 2001), 40.

4. Vladimir Filipov, who discusses Mutev’s translation in his study of the Bulgarian reception of English and American literature in the nineteenth century, suggests that Mutev borrows the quote from an English-language edition, which Filipov was unable to identify. See Vladimir Filipov, *Pronikvane na angliiskata i amerikanskata knizhnina v Bulgaria prez Vazrazhdaneto* [The spread of English and American literature in Bulgaria during the Bulgarian Revival period] (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 2004), 38. The most likely source is Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Negro Life in the Slave States of America, with Fifty Splendid Engravings* (London: Clarke, 1852). “[T]he purpose [of this book],” reads its preface (iii–vi), “is to disabuse large communities of mankind of the belief that the Lord our God, when He gave dominion to men ‘over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle,’ bestowed this dominion only on prospective races of a certain color, and included under the designation ‘cattle’ other prospective races of another color [. . .]. ‘Tell me not of rights,’ said Lord Brougham, ‘talk not of the property of the planter in his slaves. I deny the right, I acknowledge not the property. The principles, the feelings of our common

nature rise in rebellion against it [ . . . ]. In vain you tell me of laws which sanction such a claim [ . . . ]. [B]y [God's] law, unchangeable and eternal, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they will reject with indignation the wild and guilty phantasy that man can hold property in man." The Lord Brougham mentioned is the British politician Baron Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868), a dedicated abolitionist.

5. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Chicheva Tomova koliba* [Uncle Tom's cabin], trans. D. Mutev, pt. 1 (Tsarigrad-Galata: V knigopechatnitsata na D. Tsankova I B. Mirkova, 1858), 2–3; my translation.

6. Musicologist James R. Gaines provides a succinct explanation of the reconciliation between Enlightenment thought and Christianity in the German philosophical tradition, in *Evening in the Palace of Reason: Bach Meets Frederick the Great in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 153–55.

7. Orthodox Christianity is the most popular Christian denomination in the Balkans and in Russia. Doctrinally, it is closest to Catholicism, from which it split in 1053, in the first step of the formal separation (the so-called Great Schism) between the Greek East and the Latin West. Bulgarians accepted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century. After the Ottomans conquered the Balkans in the fourteenth century, the Bulgarian Christians were placed under the jurisdiction of the (Greek) Constantinople patriarchy. Fearing Greek cultural assimilation through religion, nineteenth-century Bulgarian nationalist leaders defined the struggle for an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church as integral to the struggle for an independent Bulgarian state.

8. See Greenberg, "Bulgarski knizhitsi," 43.

9. *Bulgarski knizhitsi* (Tsarigrad-Galata) 1.1 (1858): 1–2; my translation.

10. *Ibid.*, 15; my translation.

11. There is both direct and indirect evidence about pro-nationalist Bulgarians' interest in the novel. Todor Shishkov, a translator and literary critic, prepared a complete translation of the novel from the French but seems to have been unable to publish it. See Greenberg, "Bulgarski knizhitsi," 1. The publication of Mutev's translation as a separate book edition in the same year as its publication in *Bulgarski knizhitsi* suggests that the serialized translation was popular among readers. See *ibid.*, 50.

12. See Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1901* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 43–62.

13. *Ibid.*, 1–11.

14. Greenberg, "Bulgarski knizhitsi," 51.

15. See Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 35.

16. An early example is Teodosii Ikonomov's comedy *Lovchanskiat vladika* [The bishop of Lovech], written in 1857 and first published in 1863. It tells the story of a corrupted Greek bishop who seduces the Greek wife of a Bulgarian clockmaker. Written in support of the Bulgarian struggle for independence from the Greek Orthodox Church, it aimed to expose the alleged debauchery among the Greek clergy.

17. Cohen, *Sentimental Education*, 145.

18. Stowe, *Chicheva Tomova koliba*, 41.

19. Lawrence Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), 482.

20. Stowe, *Chicheva Tomova koliba*, 42; my translation.

21. Ibid., 23–24.

22. In the 1860s and 1870s, American Protestant schools were established in several major Bulgarian cities, including Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Sofia, and Samokov. The Protestant Robert College in Istanbul, established in 1863, is emblematic of American missionaries' contribution to the development of modern culture and politics in the Ottoman Empire. Numerous Bulgarians received higher education there, and some joined its faculty.

23. Ivan G. Govedarov, "Henrieta Bicher Stou," in *Chichovata Tomova koliba, ili zhivotat na negrite v Amerika* [Uncle Tom's cabin; or, The lives of Negroes in America], by Harriet Beecher Stowe, trans. Ivan G. Govedarov (Sofia: Ivan G. Govedarov, 1898), iv.

24. Ibid., iii.

25. "Immersed, from her very childhood, in an atmosphere of philanthropic and religious ecstasy," writes Govedarov, "[Stowe] was still a young woman when she distinguished herself for seriousness of character, Puritanical sympathies and viewpoints, and a fervent—yet productive—devotion to serving God and the suffering Mankind. She was only fifteen when she began her hard-working [professional] life as an assistant in her older sister's teaching activities" (ibid.; my translation).

26. In 1878, part of the Bulgarian lands became a tributary state under the name "Principality of Bulgaria." Another part acquired administrative autonomy within the Ottoman Empire under the name "Eastern Rumelia." In 1885, the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia declared their unification, which was accepted by the nations of Western Europe. In 1908, the unified state finally declared complete independence from the Ottoman Empire.

27. See Ani Gergova, *Bulgarska kniga: Entsiklopedia* [Bulgarian literature: An encyclopedia] (Sofia: Pensoft, 2004), 128.

28. In their preface, Mavrov and Palashev specify that their adaptation is based chiefly on Govedarov's translation and that they have also consulted Russian, French, and Swedish adaptations of the novel for children. See D. Mavrov and G. Palashev, "Kak se e poiavila knigata 'Chichovata Tomova koliba' i belezhki za zhivota na avtorkata" [Origins of the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and notes about the author's life], in *Chichovata Tomova koliba* [Uncle Tom's cabin], by Harriet Beecher Stowe, adapted by D. Mavrov and G. Palashev (Sofia: Kartinna galleria, 1911), 21.

29. Ibid., 3; my translation.

30. In one well-known story, *The Golden Girl*, an orphan is driven away into the woods by her stepmother. There, she finds the hut of an old woman who takes her in. Impressed by the orphan's work ethic and homemaking skills, the old woman dips the girl into a golden stream and gives her a pot of gold before sending her back to her village. See Anguel Karaliichev, "Zlatnoto momiche" [The Golden Girl], in *Imalo edno vreme* [Once upon a time] (Sofia: DPK "D. Blagoev," 1979), 53–68.

31. One of the most memorable characters of Ivan Vazov's immensely popular novel *Under the Yoke* (first published in 1894, only four years before Govedarov's translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), is an orphan (raised in a convent) who becomes a teacher in a school for girls, falls in love with a leader of the historic 1876 April Uprising against the sultan, and dies in the uprising. While *Under the Yoke* is a realist novel, this character is clearly influenced by sentimentalism. See Ivan Vazov, *Pod igoto* [Under the yoke] (Sofia: Bulgarski pisatel, 1980).

32. Mavrov and Palashev, "Kak se e poiavila knigata," 8, 16; my translation.

33. See *ibid.*, 5, 9, 13. Mavrov and Palashev do not include information about the sources of the images, but I was able to identify the first image (presumably of Stowe as a young woman) as her 1853 portrait by Francis Hall.

34. Vladimir Filipov analyzes nineteenth-century Bulgarians' suspicions of Protestantism at length in *Pronikvane na angliiskata i amerikanskata knizhnina v Bulgaria prez Vazrazhdaneto*. The prejudice against Protestantism as a tool of foreign interests persisted in the twentieth century. See Maria Koinova, "Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Bulgaria," *SEER: Journal for Labor and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 2 (1999): 155–57.

35. Stowe, *Chichovata Tomova koliba*, adapted by D. Mavrov and G. Palashev, 27; my translation.

36. At least three more adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for children, by different translators and adaptors, were published between 1911, when Mavrov and Palashev published their first edition, and 1944, when the Soviet army occupied Bulgaria and imposed the communist regime: *Chicho Tomovata koliba* [Uncle Tom's cabin], trans. unknown (Sofia: St. Atanasov, 1919); *Chicho Tomovata koliba*, *razkazana za deca* ot H. E. Marshall [Uncle Tom's cabin, adapted for children by H. E. Marshall], trans. R. Markov (Sofia: T. F. Chipev, 1932); *Chicho Tomovata koliba*, *iliustr. Sakr. Izd. Za deca i unoshi* [Uncle Tom's cabin, illustrated edition. Abridged edition for children and young adults], trans. D. Simidov (Sofia: Zlatna biblioteka, 1935). All these adaptations introduce further cuts.

37. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Chichovata Tomova koliba* [Uncle Tom's cabin], trans. D. Mavrov (Sofia: Hemus, 1946), 5–10.

38. See Greenberg, "Bulgarski knizhitsi," 45.

39. Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, *Uchitelka na vyzrastnite i drugarka na decata: Bicher-Stou* [A teacher of adults and a friend of children: Beecher Stowe], trans. Ts. Kalchev (Turново: Knizharnitsa na E. P. Hristov, 1900).

40. Cohen, *Sentimental Education*, 136.

41. See, for instance, Boris I. Bursov, "Maika" na Maksim Gorki i vaprosite na *socialisticheskia realizam* [Mother, by Maxim Gorky, and the characteristics of socialist realism], trans. Ivan Tsvetkov (Sofia: Bulgarski pisatel, 1952).

42. Unlike classic sentimental novels, sentimental social novels frequently present marriage as an oppressive system rather than a positive moral duty. See Cohen, *Sentimental Education*, 128.

43. *Ibid.*, 143.

44. Ivan Popivanov, "Esteticheski problemi na socialisticheskia realizam" [Aesthetic characteristics of socialist realism], in *Aktualni problemi na socialisticheskia realizam* [Topical questions about socialist realism], ed. Stoyan Iliev (Sofia: Bulgarski pisatel, 1985), 46; my translation.

45. Maksim Gorky, *Mother* (New York: D. Appleton, 1921), 42.

46. The range of socialist realist joy is demonstrated, for instance, in the scene in which Pelageya learns of Pavel's decision to lead a worker's demonstration at his factory: "A great ardent thought burned in her bosom, animating her heart with an exalted feeling of sad, tormenting joy" (Gorky, *Mother*, 174).

47. *Ibid.*, 76.

48. Popivanov, "Esteticheski problemi," 41; my translation.

49. Anna Kamenova, "Za knjigata i neinia avtor" [About the book and its author], in *Chicho Tomovata koliba* [Uncle Tom's cabin], by Harriet Beecher Stowe, trans. Anna Kamenova (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Otechestvo, 1985), 309; my translation.
50. *Ibid.*, 308; my translation.
51. *Ibid.*; my translation.
52. Cohen, *Sentimental Education*, 12.
53. Kamenova, "Za knjigata," 309; my translation.
54. See Popivanov, "Esteticheski problemi," 53, 65.
55. B. Emelyanov, "Gorki I povestta *Maika*" [Gorki and the Novella *Mother*], in *Maika* [Mother], by Maxim Gorky, trans. Stoyan Karolev (Sofia: Narodna kultura, 1963), 349; my translation.
56. Popivanov, "Esteticheski problem," 45; my translation.
57. In his famous essay "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work" (1916), Freud analyzes Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm*. See Sigmund Freud, *On Creativity and the Unconscious: The Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, and Religion*, ed. Benjamin Nelson (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 84–110.
58. See Daniel P. Todes, "Pavlov and the Bolsheviks," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 17.3 (1995): 392, 402.
59. Gorky, *Mother*, 12–13.
60. *Ibid.*, 47.
61. *Ibid.*, 47–48; my italics.
62. Popivanov's examples of socialist realist authors include writers as aesthetically diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Pablo Neruda.
63. Merle Kling, *The Soviet Theory of Internationalism* (Saint Louis: Washington University Press, 1952).
64. Popivanov, "Esteticheski problem," 66; my translation.
65. Stowe, *Chicho Tomovata Koliba*, trans. Kamenova (1985), 287; my translation.
66. *Ibid.*; my translation.
67. *Ibid.*, 291.
68. *Ibid.*, 113.
69. Filipov, "Za Hariet Bicher-Stou," 394; my translation.
70. *Ibid.*, 395; my translation.
71. *Ibid.*, 394; my translation.
72. *Ibid.*, 395; my translation.
73. *Ibid.*, 395.
74. Gorky, *Mother*, 47.
75. Filipov, "Za Hariet Bicher-Stou," 396; my translation.
76. See, for instance, Viktor Sharenkov, *Amerikanska literatura* [American literature] (Sofia: Nauka I izkustvo, 1961), 74–81; Georgi Rashkov, "Hariet Bicher-Stou," *Rodna rech* [Native speech] 6 (1962): 42–43.
77. Sharenkov, *Amerikanska literatura*, 80; my translation.
78. Filipov, "Za Hariet Bicher-Stou," 394, 396.
79. Milan Enchev, *Izgrazhdane na teoretiko-literaturni poniatia, v IV–VII klas* [Building literary theoretical concepts, for the fourth through seventh grades] (Sofia: Darzhavno izdatelstvo "Narodna Prosveta," 1987), 4; my translation. At the time, Bulgarian middle schools encompassed grades 4–8.

80. Ibid., 4–5; my translation.

81. Iskra Kotova, Milan Enchev, and Nevena Mateeva, *Literaturno obuchenie i razvitie, 4–6 klas* [Literary education and development, from fourth to sixth grade] (Sofia: Darzhavno izdatelstvo “Narodna Prosveta,” 1982).

82. Ibid., 162; my translation.

83. Cohen, *Sentimental Education*, 68–69.

84. Kotova, Enchev, and Mateeva, *Literaturno obuchenie*, 162; my translation.

85. Suzanne Keen, “Introduction: Narrative and the Emotions,” *Poetics Today* 32.1 (2011): 3.

86. Darcia Narvaez, “Moral Text Comprehension: Implications for Education and Research,” *Journal of Moral Education* 30.1 (2001): 43–54; Keen, “Introduction,” 11–12.

87. Anna Krusteva, ed., *Imigraciata v Bulgaria* [Immigration in Bulgaria] (Sofia: Mezhdunaroden Centar za izsledvane na maltsinstvata, 2005).

88. Denitsa Kamenova, “Africanskata obshtnost v Bulgaria” [The African community in Bulgaria], in Krusteva, *Imigraciata v Bulgaria*, 56, 62–65.

89. Kamenova, for instance, writes that she was unable to establish the number of Africans and Bulgarians of African descent currently living in Bulgaria (ibid., 59).

# Uncle Tom's Cabins

*The Transnational History of  
America's Most Mutable Book*

Edited by Tracy C. Davis and Stefka Mihaylova

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