historical dimension and a trajectory that cannot be subsumed into the history of the white-cast Tom shows.

Black performers had more willing audiences in England, who had grown tired of the white blackface dramatis personae and were eager to see a cast of "real American freed slaves" play "themselves."[15] The veteran black performer Sam Lucas was among the first black performers to play the role of Uncle Tom, with Charles Frohman's company in 1878.[16] Lucas also appeared in a version of the play put together in 1880 by the Hyers Sisters, an African American singing duo. This version had a black and white cast, in which "whites [played] in white roles and blacks in black roles."[17] Lucas was also the first black actor to appear as Uncle Tom on film, in 1914. It wasn't until this period that any black women began to appear as Topsy in versions of the Tom Shows, though this was most likely infrequent.[18]

In Britain an explosion of Uncle Tom ephemera accompanied the novel and stage versions. In Britain the "Tomist phenomenon" included children's literature—primers, catechisms, storybooks—as well as songs, board games, dolls, and even Uncle Tom's Cabin wallpaper. Images of black children featured prominently in the growing toy industry, with Topsy's place most prominent.[19] This is a moment to consider the centrality of race in the formation of western ideologies of childhood and

testimonies of slavery's survivors, as well as the lectures and writings of anti-slavery activists. Both authors also drew from Weld's book. Weld "proves by a cloud of witnesses"—slaves, Northern visitors, slaveholders—that a plethora of tortures were produced and practiced under the system of chattel slavery. Many of the bloodiest renderings are from "the slaveholders themselves, and in their own chosen words."[45] In the 1890s the activist Ida B. Wells Barnett would use this strategy in her anti-lynching campaign, enlisting descriptions of post-reconstruction torture from the white press in her pamphlets, essays, and lectures.

Weld's book details the ways bodies were literally marked, written on in scars and gashes, particularly on the back, legs, and arms. These forms of demarcation were choreographed performances with a function, the inscription of ownership. Faces and backs were branded and striped, teeth were knocked out and fingers removed, to make those slaves prone to running away more easily recognizable. Ingenious tortures, invented to increase the pain of punishment, were given names. "Crosswhipping" kept the wounds from healing. When "cat hauling," the torturer was to "take a cat by the nape of the neck and tail, or by the hind legs, and drag the claws across the back [of the slave] until satisfied."[46] "Pickling" describes another torture: "The slaves are terribly lacerated with whips, paddles, & c.; red pepper and salt are rubbed into their mangled flesh;

hot brine and turpentine are poured into their gashes."[47] Weld may very well have drawn from the narrative of the escaped slave Mary Prince for some of these tortures. Having worked in the salt marshes, she repeatedly describes the torture of "pickling" a slave's wounds.

The narratives of survivors such as Mary Prince were key sources for Weld, as well as for Stowe and other authors of sentimental fiction. Prince escaped while in London with her masters. Having been a slave in Bermuda and Antigua, she reports particularly grisly abuses to herself and others, inflicted not only by her masters but also by her mistresses. Prince recounts how she grew to know "the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin, when applied to my naked body by her [mistress's] own cruel hand."[48] As in many slave women's narratives, whipping, flogging, beating, which Prince suffered most frequently, stand in as code for sexual abuse and torture. "My former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion. . . . [Although] Quite calm . . . Mr. D . . . often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with a cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes."[49] Reading Prince's graphic renderings, I wonder why it is that current criticism should find Frederick Douglass's description of Aunt Hester's suffering, however poignant at twice the narrative remove, the legitimating representative and most resonant moment of female slave

suffering.[50]

The currency of representations of violence, pain, and endurance was set to garner white liberals' charitable sensibilities. Personal testimonies were designed to prove to white audiences that black people had the ability to feel pain and suffering. Their sensate abilities were a kind of scientific measurement for how readily black Africans could be lifted up from their savage state.

Whatever the imagined black body conveyed, it ran under the skin, flowed through the blood and nervous system, and rang in the bones. The arguments against slavery were couched in bodily terms not simply as a sensational ruse, but because rituals of punishment and control were the language the system spoke in. "I have been a slave and I know what a slave feels," Prince repeats. "I can tell by myself what other slaves feel." The sensate is also the language through which forms of resistance were articulated.[51]

What is striking in firsthand accounts and slave narratives is the attention to the feet, hands, and limbs. This may seem self-evident, as they are the main moving parts of the working body. "Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone," wrote Prince of her working life in the salt ponds.[52] Images of the limbs swelling to the point of exploding are frequent. Tortures were often designed for the hands and feet. As in the case of

Jonathan Walker's branded hand, abolitionists described slaves' hands and feet as Christ's, situated slaves as God's innocent martyrs.[53]

Sometime in the 1860s after emancipation a Republican rally was held in Camilla, Georgia; it ended in violence. A twelve-year-old girl was in attendance with a relative when a white man, John Gaines, attacked her and "took her hand and split each finger from its end to the center of the hand."[54] This incident reminds us that there were civic bodies in struggle also. But why would a man devise this particular torture? What was threatening about a young girl's hand, palm up? The emphasis cannot be reduced to simple sensationalism. Hands and feet have great metonymic power. Control of the hands was key to bonded labor, and unchained hands were symbolic of freedom.

In survivor narratives hands and feet take on symbolic resonance for self-preservation and liberation, for freedom and as the practical means of escape. "Feet don't fail me now" is a call for agility and stamina in dancing, but it refers to the power of escape and the jubilation of post-emancipation mobility. Feet and hands articulate extraordinary beauty and grace. Ida Forsyne describes the artistic qualities she admired in Abbie Mitchell. "She was rapacious. She absolutely—spoke. Her body spoke. Her hands—spoke." Such expressive articulations meant more than what they said.

As the fugitive slave Lewis Clarke

illustrated, slavery alienated people from their own bodies. Clarke writes, "The slaves often say, when cut in the hand or foot, 'Plague on the old foot' or 'the old hand! It is master's—let him take care of it. Nigger don't care if he ever get well.'" In his narrative Clarke relates his escape. "At daylight we were in Canada. . . . Not till then did I dare to cherish, for a moment, the feeling that one of the limbs of my body was my own." Escape, relocation, meant to re-inhabit one's body, reclaim the life in one's limbs. "My hands, my feet were now my own," are the key words with which Clarke describes the feeling of freedom.[55]

In Stowe's novel and Aiken's play, Topsy receives the harshest blows. As a figure of low farce she is associated with gruesome violence, which she survives and which she is seemingly inured to. Upon her first introduction to the "*corps de ballet*," as Stowe words it, she is dirty, blue-black, and welted, indelibly scarred by the repeated whippings of her previous owners. On her back and shoulders stood "great welts and callused spots, ineffaceable marks of the system under which she had grown up."[56] The rhythms of the whip have marked her body—the callused welts on her back are a composition of slavery's history. Black flesh is marked by rituals of (mis)recognition at the hands of the civilized. The repetitive performance of violence on her small body has left her disturbingly callused and perverse. St. Clare explains that "whippings and abuse are like laudanum, you have to double the dose as the

sensibilities decline."[57] Rituals of contact were performative interactions through which the coercive relations of power between conqueror and subject were consolidated, even while they sometimes staged themselves as forms of benevolent guidance.

Topsy's bloody insensibility resonated on the comedic stage. Several songs were written for her in the over fifty years that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* plays were staged. Her first and signature song is "Oh! I'se So Wicked," written for Mrs. Howard in Aiken's play. The second stanza reads:

> She [Miss Feely] used to knock me on de floor,
> Den bang ma head again de door,
> An' tear ma wool out by de core:
> Oh! because I wuz so wicked![58]

The second stanza from another version, entitled "Little Topsy's Song," written by Eliza Cooke, is even more sadistic:

> Whip me till the blood pours down
> Ole Missus used to do it;
> She said she'd cut my heart right out
> But neber could get to it.[59]

The sadism in the lyrics can be read as slapstick from popular stage convention and street performance. I argue that these imagined acts of violence also come from the historical moment in which they were composed and performed, drawing specifically from the lexicons of discipline and torture developed out of U.S. chattel slavery.

As Elaine Scarry elucidates, the ability to feel pain functions in melodrama as proof

of one's humanity. Tom's sustained suffering, as with Christ's crucifixion, leads to transcendence. Topsy's seeming invulnerability to the whips and scorns of time appears to render her as incontrovertibly savage. Topsy's defiant invitation for abuse is retained in Aiken's stage version and several of the filmed versions. To Miss Ophelia's despairing cries as to how to discipline her, Topsy replies, "Law, missis, you must whip me; my old missis allers whipped me. I ain't used to workin' unless I gets whipped."[60] When Miss Ophelia tries "the recipe," Topsy acts out accordingly, "screaming, groaning and imploring." Soon afterward, before an audience of slave children perched as usual on the balcony, she scorns the soft lashes of her new mistress. "Law, Miss Feely whip! Wouldn't kill a skeeter, her whippin's. Oughter see how old mas'r made the flesh fly; old mas'r know'd how!"[61] Topsy's hardened condition is the result of continued abuse, yet in her appalling resilience something else resides. Topsy is impervious to the whip, her wailing a hyperbolic satire of its intended effect. Her callousness, meant to signal her dehumanized condition and her precivilized nature, also signals her escape from violent forms of discipline and coercive regulation. She has not escaped from suffering, rather she has escaped *through* it; it is her absolute woundedness that has made her body malleable enough to wind through the pain. Everything, and nothing, can now touch her, as she exists in

a space beyond suffering. Topsy's imperviousness to pain, her callousness, shows her body to have become resistant to violent claims of ownership. Topsy creates herself through, against, and in spite of the disfigurement her body has been subjected to. In her performance it is as if each contortion, each unholy sound erupts from an ulcerous welt. Each of her odd guttural cries is a reverberation, a twisting out of flying flesh.

Saidiya Hartman examines the connection between terror and enjoyment in slavery's use of the captive body. Slavery engendered a "nexus of pleasure and possession."[62] In the "obscene theatricality" of the slave trade, the "agonizing groans of suffering humanity had been made music."[63] In Hartman's assessment, the captive body was made "an abstract and empty vessel, vulnerable to the projections of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion."[64] The black body is "fixed" by repetitive acts of terror and dominance. The slave's sense of self, her subjecthood, is constituted solely through the discursive processes of legal language and the reiterative rituals of inflicted pain.

Hartman's dismal reading is useful for understanding rituals of oppression as performative acts, by which racial assignation is stabilized and relationships

of power affirmed. But such literal pessimism only holds firm if the power of the word is given sole dominion over the physical being. The fixity of discursive claims over the corporeal can never be complete, and these claims are always open to challenge. A body is never an abstract and empty vessel. Nor can individual gestures be completely controlled. Topsy's hyperactive and mercurial kinesis cannot be conscripted by language. Her mimetic faculties absorb the power of what they reflect; the objects of her interpretation pass through the alembic of her body, distilled into moments of sublime expressivity. It is through these forms of self-possession that the "truth in these limbs" is evident; a body can never truly be owned.

As Elaine Scarry elucidates, pain requires a "shattering of language."[65] But what Topsy accesses in her artistry is not "a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned."[66] In the beleaguered body's play lies another discourse that is not recoverable in language. Physical gesture is anti-linguistic, resisting language, whose laws would spell her as a body owned and dependent on its terms to free her. Language affords nothing in the kind of truths, comments, impressions, and expressions only found in rituals of dance, song, and music.

Dance in this sense offers a critique of the very idea of ownership. Dance affirms an individual's entitlement to the body's

grounds; it affirms a right of habitation. The body is inhabited, “theirs” in that sense, but not as the result of conquest, purchase, trade, or exploitative control. My analysis here assumes a humanist concept of the individual’s natural right to the body, but a tempered version. It does not assume that the body can be excavated from an exploitative system whole or intact, nor that the theoretical end game is to find it directed and governed fully by some integrated entity. The body can neither be completely wrested from the inhabitant nor governed by the inhabitant in some space free of discursive claims. This suggests that we can find a way to retain a humanistic ethical field of concern while we guard against reinstating totalizing claims of governance based on acquisition.

DOING TIME

Stowe’s text is a product of a transnational moment in theatricality, ethnographic notions of race, and colonialist mythos. The plantation is a transnational site and the New Orleans plantation of Augustine St. Clare a romantic Orientalist fantasy. The environs are presented in the text as if they were a stage set, “the galleries that surrounded the court were festooned with a curtain of some kind of Moorish stuff.” The big house is an ancient mansion, likened to an ancient feudalist state, with a “court in the inside. . . . Galleries ran all around the four sides, whose Moorish arches, slender pillars, and arabesque ornaments, carried the mind back, as in a