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# The Sentimental Appeal to Salvific Paternity in Uncle Tom's Cabin and Moby



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# The Sentimental Appeal to Salvific Paternity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Moby-Dick*

*Debra J. Rosenthal*

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To some readers, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–52) and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) represent different worldviews: Stowe's world of progressive social reform, religious exhortations, noble slaves, maternal power, domestic parlors, and an angelic dying girl could not be further from Melville's world of seafaring men, madness, vengeance, whale hunting, and lengthy philosophical meditations about harpoons, tattoos, mat weaving, whale genitalia, spout holes, and leg stumps. To other readers, the two novels are akin: both engage with issues of race, gender, minstrelsy, domesticity, freedom, the role of the individual, capitalist enterprise, the use of commodities, concerns about labor and wages, ideas of Romantic heroism, models of masculinity, national reform, temperance, and, most significant for my concerns here, sentimental convention.

Recent critics<sup>1</sup> have moved away from earlier readers<sup>2</sup> who read Melville as disdaining the sentimental tradition thought to be the exclusive domain of women writers. For example, Kyla Schuller argues that "Melville's novel is a fully developed exploration of the deeply affective relationships that pre-industrial whaling ironically nurtured between whales and whalers through the very intimacy of the hunt. The multifaceted discourse of sentimentalism saturates and in fact structures his *tour de force*."<sup>3</sup> In addition, Elizabeth Schultz argues that although *Moby-Dick* valorizes masculine culture, the novel contains a "sentimental sub-text" that "works to reinforce and expand its nineteenth-century reader's awareness of the gender-structured domestic sphere as the locus simultaneously of anguish and of the tenderness that anguish calls up."<sup>4</sup> Schultz identifies many moments of sentiment in the novel, including several images of mourning mothers, particularly the novel's final scene where Captain Gardiner's the *Rachel* picks up the orphaned Ishmael, the only survivor of the *Pequod* mother ship. Schultz argues that Ahab's rejection of domesticity becomes displaced onto Captain Gardiner, who becomes a "grieving maternal figure."<sup>5</sup>

I would like to contribute to the conversation that locates *Moby-Dick* squarely in the sentimental camp by focusing on the novel's sentimental appeal to what I term salvific paternity. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was being published in serial form in 1851 in the *National Era*; *Moby-Dick* first appeared late in that year. Unbeknownst to each other, both authors created characters who utter almost the identical words in a sentimental appeal to the shared experience of paternity. I find it compelling and irresistible that both Stowe and Melville, writing seemingly opposite-themed novels at the same moment in literary history, crafted nearly identical sentimental lines about the redemptive power of paternity, the force of fatherly love to save a child's life or well-being.

I am very interested in this small question of Melville and Stowe penning the same sentence, and how this fact ramifies out to larger questions of literary aesthetics and reader reaction. I want to examine the phrase common to both novels in order to argue that Melville taps into and endorses the same use of emotion, sentiment, empathy, and shared family values that Stowe and other sentimentalists do. Far from rejecting sentimental identification, Melville's appeal to paternal compassion and intersubjectivity, especially when read against a writer renowned for her emotional appeals, elucidates Melville's commitment to private feeling and to the conviction that sentiment can be productive and efficacious.

What is the sentimental appeal to salvific paternity to which I refer that is common to both novels? In chapter 7 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza Harris clings to her son Harry as she jumps across the ice floes from slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Ohio. The slave catchers follow in hot pursuit behind her as she miraculously jumps from floe to floe without plunging into the icy water.<sup>6</sup> When she reaches free soil on the Cincinnati side of the Ohio River, Eliza recognizes a familiar man on shore. She urgently needs his physical assistance to scramble up the shore, as well as his assurance that he will not turn her over to slave catchers. The man's reaction will determine whether Eliza is property to be returned to the Haleys or a human to be valued. To secure his help and secrecy, Eliza issues a sentimental plea to the man's status as a father: "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy."<sup>7</sup> While Eliza's words could be understood as a true statement commenting on the fact that Mr. Symmes is indeed the father of a boy, she means the words to be felt as a plea that will "assimilate difference"<sup>8</sup> between black/white and slave/free, and thereby unite her and Symmes as parents with deeply sentimental attachments to their children.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, in "The Pequod Meets the Rachel," chapter 128 of *Moby-Dick*, Captain Gardiner of the ship the *Rachel* has lost one of his boats during a whale chase. On board the lost boat is his younger son. During a gam, Captain Gardiner boards the *Pequod* and proposes that Ahab's ship "unite with his own" to locate the missing crew. Stubb overhears this request and cynically wagers Flask that Captain Gardiner only wants to find the

missing ship because one of the crew likely made off with Gardiner's coat or watch. However, Gardiner emotionally explains that "[m]y boy, my own boy" is on the lost ship and he offers to pay Ahab for the use of the ship: "I will gladly pay for it, and roundly pay for it—if there be no other way—for eight-and-forty hours only—only that—you must, oh, you must, and you *shall* do this thing."<sup>10</sup>

The first auditor to be swayed by Captain Gardiner's speech is Stubb, who says, "[O]h, it's his son he's lost! I take back the coat and watch—what says Ahab? We must save that boy" (398). Gardiner's plea convinces Stubb to recant his begrudging comment that assumed the captain only wanted to recover material items. Stubb reassigns value from lost commodities to a lost son and deems the latter worthy of rescuing. Clearly the reader shares Stubb's point of view: we are impacted by the immediacy of Captain Gardiner's painful and emotional appeal, and we want to join the rescue. Melville narrates Gardiner's story further to make the situation even more lamentable: Captain Gardiner had "the earnest but unmisgiving hardihood of a Nantucketer's paternal love" and had thus sent his son "of such tender age" to sea on the same ship despite his fatherly "apprehensiveness and concern" (98). While hunting Moby-Dick as darkness fell, Gardiner lost two boats, each of which carried a son and thus "the wretched father was plunged to the bottom of the cruelest perplexity" (398) as to which son to rescue. He followed his chief mate's advice to pursue the boat that carried the most men. But that decision meant losing sight of the boat that contained "his one yet missing boy; a little lad, but twelve years old" (398).

Melville uses tender, sentimental language even in giving readers Captain Gardiner's backstory. Readers cannot help but feel touched at the wording "a little lad, but twelve years old." However, Ahab remains unmoved: he "stood like an anvil, receiving every shock, but without the least quivering of his own" (398). It is at this point that Melville brings out the metaphorical big guns of a sentimental appeal to paternity. Frantically trying to strike even harder, Gardiner makes his appeal go straight from his own private agony to Ahab's heart. He resorts to the appeal so familiar to Stowe and other literary domestics: go where the wound is most raw; appeal to the shared status of fatherhood. Gardiner then utters the line of concern to this essay: "For *you* too have a boy, Captain Ahab—though but a child, and nestling safely at home now—a child of your old age too" (398).

Thus, Stowe's line "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy" compellingly parallels Melville's "For *you* too have a boy, Captain Ahab." Both authors write bits of conversation that directly address a father by name and aim for a shared sympathetic identity by calling out the fact that he is the father of a son. Captain Gardiner even stresses the direct address, for in his plea "*you* too have a boy," the "you" appears in italics to show Gardiner's emphasis on Ahab.<sup>11</sup>

Eliza Harris and Captain Gardiner both utter sentimental appeals because Stowe and Melville understood the persuasive potential of sentiment. Stowe crafts Eliza in such a way that readers can link themselves to her (perhaps by locating similarity in her position as a woman, her devotion as a mother, her fear of losing a child) or sympathize with her plight as a slave (so familiar to antebellum readers). The scene on the riverbank elicits sympathy for poor Eliza's suffering. Eliza's direct address is simultaneously aimed at both Mr. Symmes and readers, who thus feel outrage and indignation at Eliza's imminent abuse and are moved toward the abolitionist cause. Through sympathetic identification, Eliza's sentimental appeal proves a worthy pedagogical strategy: by writing a scene of successful sociomoral instruction (Mr. Symmes does indeed aid Eliza), Stowe models for her readers behavior worthy of causing social change.<sup>12</sup>

So what does it mean, in terms of sentimental identification, for Captain Gardiner to utter the exact same line as Eliza? Clearly readers are meant to feel emotionally engaged with Captain Gardiner through his persuasive appeal. We have already seen that Stubb is completely convinced and moved to action by Gardiner's appeal ("I take back the coat and watch—what says Ahab? We must save that boy"). Readers, particularly fathers, likely would also feel sympathy for the desperate ship captain, whose attempt to support his family through whaling led to his son's death. Referring to Melville's subsequent novel, *Pierre*, Cindy Weinstein points out that Melville clearly understood that powerful sentiment derives from the family unit being threatened: "*Pierre* reveals Melville's understanding of the radical origins of sentimental novels, which is to say that without the biological family in shards, such novels cannot work, and as much as protagonists mourn the family's wreckage, their very lives depend upon it."<sup>13</sup> Captain Gardiner and Captain Ahab both share the experience of their families being "in shards." Gardiner banks on this intersubjective realization to recruit Ahab's assistance because, as Weinstein further argues, "plots of many sentimental novels depend upon their protagonists' ability to create new affections based on choice, allowing the scope of the novel to extend beyond the limitations of consanguinity."<sup>14</sup> Captain Gardiner hopes that his emotional appeal to paternal sentiment will allow Captain Ahab to "create new affections" for his benighted colleague and thereby extend his "limitation of consanguinity" to include a fellow captain's sea-lost son.

Melville's male readers would identify with the stricken captain as fellow devoted fathers who feared losing a child. But we must keep in mind that the auditors of Captain Gardiner's emotional appeal are not only the novel's readers; Captain Ahab also listens to Captain Gardiner's petition. Therefore, the reader for the moment stands in Ahab's shoes, aligned with Ahab as a hearer who must decide on the worthiness of the distressed captain's petition. Although the distance between Ahab and reader

collapses the moment both simultaneously hear Captain Gardiner's pleas, the reader's sympathetic response will in most cases not be in accord with Ahab's negative reaction.

Stowe and Melville oppose each other in the effect on auditors of their similar lines of sympathetic identification because Ahab's response to Captain Gardiner's paternal appeal differs so greatly from Mr. Symmes's reaction. Stowe effectively demonstrates that filial pity and parental sentiment work to bridge racial lines and to effect social change. Although Stubb is swayed by Gardiner's sentiment, Ahab, the primary auditor, rejects Gardiner's appeal to fatherly tenderness.

As a father, Symmes reacts to Eliza's appeal in the way she hopes. To her utterance "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy," Symmes retorts, "So I have" and "kindly, drew her up the steep bank" and points the way to safety (52). Symmes models the ideal hearer of sentiment: he melds his feelings with Eliza's, identifies with her as a parent, and acts to help her. Melville, on the other hand, pens a different reaction for Ahab in "The Pequod Meets the Rachel." Desperate beyond measure to enlist Ahab's help, Captain Gardiner cries, "'Yes, yes, you relent: I see it—run, run, men, now, and stand by to square in the yards'" (398), as if he could envision and thereby enact Ahab's will. Unmoved by Gardiner's petition, Ahab retorts with "'touch not a rope-yarn'; then in a voice that prolongingly moulded every word—'Captain Gardiner, I will not do it. Even now I lose time'" in pursuing the whale (398). With this decisive rejection of such an emotional appeal, Melville destabilizes the confidence that sentimental writers place in sympathetic identification. Readers of temperance literature, for example, are accustomed to the convention of a reversal through sentiment: they expect that the emotional tears and entreaties of the drunkard's family will convince him to sign the temperance pledge and abandon his drinking habit. Ahab, however, demonstrates that emotional appeal is not enough to sway a man set firm in his course.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* concludes with the injunction to readers to "feel right." Stowe imagines that "an atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race" (385). Thus, when Eliza utters, "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy," she is confident that Mr. Symmes and the novel's readers will "feel right" and extend sympathy and understanding. In the novel's final chapter, Stowe mightily summarizes what she has been advocating all along: domestic sentimentality and moral religious feeling, rather than violence, should powerfully amend public attitudes about slavery.<sup>15</sup> Stowe, like other sentimental writers, believed that words could create an "atmosphere of sympathetic influence" sufficient to sway morality and peacefully activate social change. However, Elizabeth Dill points out that feeling *wrong* may also be a part of sentimentalism. She notes

that "there is also a notable dark side to be acknowledged, as sentimental works often link themes of self-destruction, erotic discipline, and the power of surveillance to formulations of agency and (often female) moral authority."<sup>16</sup> Ahab, the monomaniac bent on revenge no matter the inevitable self-destruction, could be said to "feel wrong" when he does not bend to Captain Gardiner's sentimental appeal to paternal empathy. Stowe's "atmosphere of sympathetic influence" encircles Captain Gardiner, who "feels right" about his loving duty toward his lost son, but the "atmosphere of sympathetic influence" does not encircle Ahab, who fails to be inspired by paternal empathy.

Or, Ahab might not be feeling wrong, per se, but he might realize that an excess of feeling may actually be threatening. Sentiment might not necessarily be the great equalizer that unites men in shared feeling; rather, Ahab might understand that "identification with powerlessness" is a "potentially debilitating experience." Following Elizabeth Barnes's ideas, one could argue that in "The Pequod Meets the Rachel," "sympathetic identification is revealed as virtually enslaving men in a 'bond of common humanity':"<sup>17</sup> if Ahab were to feel deeply Captain Gardiner's loss and heartbreak, he would feel an emotional "bond" that would enchain his sympathy and hence weaken his will to focus on the pursuit of the whale. Kristen Boudreau similarly argues that "[i]f sympathy could bring together radically separate individuals by means of a mobile, fluid perception that could be poured from one person into another, guaranteeing that we all judge in similar ways, it could also be seen as a way of taking individual perceptions captive in order to replace them with hostile, foreign ways of judging."<sup>18</sup> A bond of sympathy "poured" from Captain Gardiner into Captain Ahab would indeed guarantee that they would "judge in similar ways" the immediate need for the *Pequod* to aid the *Rachel*.<sup>19</sup> Ahab's unsentimental "touch not a rope-yarn" indicates that he does not want his emotional equilibrium to be hijacked and replaced with emotions that would deter him from his firm mind-set.

Sympathetic paternal unison would expose in Ahab "an emotional vulnerability that compromises manhood and reproduces the power dynamics that sympathy was ideally meant to overcome."<sup>20</sup> Barnes refers to this dynamic as a "morbid, fraternal melancholy—an identification with suffering that paradoxically alienates and/or emasculates the man who sympathizes."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Ahab's rejection of Captain Gardiner's heart-rending plea makes sense as an expression of Ahab's need to maintain emotional distance and authority; he cannot afford to be dragged down into a fellow captain's personal emotional wreckage.

Although *Moby-Dick* at this point seems to reject the notion that a sentimental appeal to the shared experience of paternity can unite men to save a child, Melville is not faulting sentiment entirely as a unifying strategy. *Moby-Dick* gains much traction from its investment in sentiment:

recall the blissful “marriage” of Ishmael and Queequeg, the joyful emotions when the sailors squeeze the spermaceti, the emotional ties that bind Ahab to Pip, the women who worry over and mourn their sailor husbands, and Queequeg’s rescue of Tashtego from the sinking whale’s head.

One other sentimental strategy that Melville employs is what Tara Penry calls “redemptive deaths and tokens.”<sup>22</sup> Penry refers to the convention in sentimental novels of melodramatic, drawn-out, affecting religious death scenes that are meant to bring readers to heaving sobs and thereby redeem the wayward soul. In addition, an associated token that represents the absent loved one, such as a lock of hair or a personal letter, comes to play a significant role in the sentimental convention. Penry argues that Queequeg’s coffin serves as a symbol of redemption in *Moby-Dick* and thus firmly places the novel in the contemporary literary tradition that relies on the sentimental purchase of death tokens. The coffin literally saves Ishmael’s life in the novel’s final scene and serves as a reminder of the fraternal bonds between the two men.<sup>23</sup> Ishmael becomes a substitute for Captain Gardiner’s lost son when Gardiner’s ship the *Rachel*, “in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan” (427) and picks up Ishmael instead.

I am also very interested in the fact that the line of paternal empathy penned by both Stowe and Melville is composed of words spoken in a dialogue. They are part of a conversation, or what Sarah Robbins calls “domestic didactics.”<sup>24</sup> Robbins argues that “Stowe learned how to use a tutelary voice in print to create layers of conversation-centered learning in her narratives—to help position readers as participants in a mother-to-learner talk *about* the text’s own vivid verbal tableaux of domestic, conversational pedagogy in action.” By deploying this strategy of using dialogic exchange to attempt to shape morality, “Stowe was adapting for her antislavery narrative a recognizable approach she had already exploited in earlier domestic didactic stories.”<sup>25</sup> Scholars of Stowe have readily identified the way Stowe uses language to create a mutually supportive sphere of warmth and to bind readers and writer conversationally together in a sentimental, domestic, instructive mission.

This line in question also ramifies to Stowe’s larger challenge of a woman assuming a tone of power and consequence in a culture that ennobled a man’s sermonic voice. As a woman, Stowe was not enfranchised to give moral instruction to men; the writer George Frederick Holmes even took Stowe to task for violating scripture by not remaining silent and for usurping authority by attempting to teach men.<sup>26</sup> From her minister father, Stowe acquired an appreciation of the way that sensational rhetoric bullied parishioners to conversion and the way that language, however flexible or fictional, could be used to bring about truths. Yet she struggled with a woman’s lack of cultural permission to similarly arouse listeners with exhortations.

The nineteenth century evidenced ambivalence about the role of the speaking woman. On the one hand, Stowe abided by the nineteenth-century convention of the demure woman: even when she toured Europe in the 1850s, she did not speak before mixed crowds.<sup>27</sup> Stowe knew that abolitionist rhetoric represented a challenge to the prevailing authorities. Therefore, Eliza's imploring that Mr. Symmes save her child by recalling his own status as a father is radical in many ways: by being placed in a tutelary dialogue it demonstrates a woman teaching a man, it establishes a cross-racial alliance, and it encourages violating the Fugitive Slave Act.

According to Michael Gilmore, "Measures, often violent, to censor abolitionist agitation as seditious and 'incendiary' (the preferred adjective) brought home the potentially lethal energy of words to all the antebellum authors, including those, like Hawthorne, who were themselves alarmed by the threat that anti-slavery oratory posed to the Union."<sup>28</sup> But by later claiming that God wrote the novel, Stowe cannily distances herself from masculine (especially her father's) disapproval of her outspoken ideas.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, if Eliza's uttering "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy!" constitutes part of a "dialogic exchange" that "attempt[s] to shape morality," one could argue that Melville similarly uses dialogue in a tutelary manner. By placing his sentimental appeal to fatherhood in a back-and-forth conversation between two ship captain-fathers, Melville partakes of this nineteenth-century method of conversational instruction and thereby tries to "teach" his readers. However, what is he trying to teach?

We can attempt to answer that question by looking at chapter 132, "The Symphony," and examining the final lines of "The Pequod Meets the Rachel." "The Symphony" shows that Ahab is indeed capable of feeling. While looking over the side of the *Pequod* and mulling over "the step-mother world, so long cruel," Ahab "dropped a tear into the sea" (405). This display of feeling is extremely rare; Melville claims that "nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop" (405). As rich as that drop may be, it does not seem to enable Ahab's ability to feel for another father's plight.

"The Symphony" develops Melville's interest in paternal influence, for the chapter features another father trying to convince Ahab to place his paternal devotion and responsibility above his commercial or vindictive interests and to turn the *Pequod* back toward Nantucket. Ahab confesses to Starbuck that he feels "deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise" (406). In this despondent state, Ahab, himself orphaned as an infant, has a vision: "I see my wife and my child in thine eye" (406). Starbuck seizes upon this vulnerable moment to make a sympathetic connection to their distant home and hearth based on their shared tender feelings as fathers. Starbuck cries, "Away with me! let us fly these deadly waters! let us home! Wife and child, too, are Starbuck's—wife and child of his brotherly, sisterly,

play-fellow youth; even as thine, sir, are the wife and child of thy loving, longing, paternal old age . . . O my Captain, would we bowl on our way to see old Nantucket again!" (406). For a moment Ahab seems convinced by Starbuck's nostalgic vision of home. He imagines that his "boy vivaciously wakes; sits up in bed; and his mother tells him of me, of cannibal old me; how I am abroad upon the deep, but will yet come back to dance him again" (406). Starbuck resonates with this picture Ahab paints, for it seems to describe Starbuck's wife perfectly: "'Tis my Mary, my Mary herself! She promised that my boy, every morning, should be carried to the hill to catch the first glimpse of his father's sail!" (406).

This tender scene, again placed in a back-and-forth conversation that seems to model a proper exchange of feeling and a best-practices outcome for sentimental suasion, unites captain and mate. Sentiment here is successful in "soothing intersubjective divisions"<sup>30</sup> between ranks by presenting both men as fathers. Due to a reciprocity of feeling, all differences seem to be paved over. Robyn Wiegman's claim applies here that male bonding diffuses "cultural hierarchies of difference" between men.<sup>31</sup> Starbuck feels confident enough to conclude, "It is done! we head for Nantucket! Come, my Captain, study out the course, and let us away! See, see! the boy's face from the window! the boy's hand on the hill!" (406). But Ahab, unmoved by Captain Gardiner, remains unbowed by Starbuck. Instead, Ahab mulls over "what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare?" (406). In other words, Ahab seems to recognize that he does have a "proper, natural heart" that has "natural lovings and longings," yet some other inscrutable force prevents him from heeding his natural heart. Perhaps such a natural heart would be swayed by sentiment, but instead Ahab feels forced to continue "pushing, and crowding, and jamming" himself on, heedless of feeling and emotional bonds.

This examination of a conversation in "The Symphony" between two fathers that fails as an act of patrifocal sympathetic conversion takes us back to the ending of "The Pequod Meets the Rachel." Ahab concludes the gam with "Captain Gardiner, I will not do it. Even now I lose time. Good bye, good bye. God bless ye, man, and may I forgive myself, but I must go" (398). By hoping that he will forgive himself, Ahab suggests that he does indeed have a "proper, natural heart" but that sentiment is not strong enough to challenge the "inscrutable force" that drives him. Ishmael notes that Captain Gardiner despondently "more fell than stepped into his boat" to return to the *Rachel*, and continues his search for his lost son by tacking back and forth in the wind in a hopeless survey of the ocean's expanse. In the chapter's last line, Ishmael reflects, "But by her still halting course

and winding, woful way, you plainly saw that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because they were not" (399).

"The Pequod Meets the Rachel," therefore, ends on a note of lament: Ishmael links Captain Gardiner's ship to the biblical Rachel who weeps for her descendants' suffering and exile. The chapter's conclusion also alludes to the novel's final scene, that of the desperate *Rachel* still wandering the seas looking for the lost Gardiner boy, and the last word of the epilogue, "orphan" (427). As readers, we sympathize with Captain Gardiner's horrible loss and we disagree with Ahab, whose decision to refuse assistance helps cast him as mad or as a tragic figure so bent on revenge that he closes himself off to the world of sympathy and relations. In the chapter's last line, Ishmael distances himself from Ahab's harsh decision and instead sympathizes with the bereaved Gardiner. Ishmael's conclusion that "you plainly saw that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort" (399) suggests that there is a homologous relationship between his recognition of pain and readers' sympathy. The ending of "The Pequod Meets the Rachel" shows that Ahab rejects sentimental appeals and that Melville and readers regret such a rejection. Far from condoning Ahab's decision to "touch not a rope-yarn," Melville ends the chapter on a sentimental note with the image of a forlorn ship and grieving captain searching in a "woful way." Although Ahab sheds a solitary tear in "The Symphony," the *Rachel* is seen even more effusively as "weeping for her children" (399). Ahab's madness, therefore, can be partially attributed to his refutation of paternal sentiment and tenderness.

Thus, a comparison of Stowe's line "O, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy" with Melville's "For *you* too have a boy, Captain Ahab" and attendant issues of salvific paternity, sentimental identification and its potential dangers, auditor's reactions, reader reaction, and tutelary didactics, suggest that the worldviews of the two novels are closely aligned. Far from rejecting sentimentality, *Moby-Dick* endorses a model of manhood and masculinity that values family life and the restoring of a son to his father's side. Captain Ahab's rejection of Captain Gardiner's sentimental paternal plea at first seems to destabilize nineteenth-century confidence in the ability of feelings to sway conviction; however, the final line of "The Pequod Meets the Rachel" laments Ahab's decision and restores readers to a Stowe-inflected "right feeling" about a grieving father. Gardiner's emotional appeal and Ahab's unyielding refusal serve as conversational instruction to reinforce to readers the value of family bonds and the worth of abiding by one's "proper, natural heart," and to teach the hazard of rebuffing it.

## NOTES

1. See Elizabeth Barnes, "Fraternal Melancholies: Manhood and the Limits of Sympathy in Douglass and Melville," in *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays Relation*, eds. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Rita Bode, "'Suckled by the Sea': The Maternal in *Moby-Dick*," in *Melville and Women*, eds. Elizabeth A. Schultz and Haskell S. Springer (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006); Tara Penry, "Sentimental and Romantic Masculinities in *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*," in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, eds. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Kyla Schuller, "Specious Bedfellows: Ethnicity, Animality, and the Intimacy of Slaughter in *Moby-Dick*," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 12.3 (Oct. 2010), 3–20; Elizabeth Schultz, "The Sentimental Subtext of *Moby-Dick*: Melville's Response to the 'World of Woe,'" *ESQ* 42 (First Quarter 1996), 29–49; and Cindy Weinstein, "We Are Family: Melville's *Pierre*," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 7.1 (March 2005), 19–40. Bode points out that "[i]n sharp contrast to the male-dominated whaling ship, populated for the most part by adult males, Melville's daily life in the years leading up to the publication of *Moby-Dick* was filled with pregnant women, births, newborn babes, and mothers, young and old" (Bode, "Suckled," 189).

2. Most notably, Ann Douglas in *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977). Leland Person summarizes the masculinist reception of the novel: "Critics have generally agreed that *Moby-Dick* is a man's book and that Melville's representation of sea-faring manhood inscribes a patriarchal, anti-female ideology that reinforces nineteenth-century gender separatism—a manhood based on differentiation from women." Leland Person, "Melville's Cassock: Putting on Masculinity in *Moby-Dick*," *ESQ* 40 (1994), 1.

3. Schuller, "Specious Bedfellows," 4.

4. Schultz, "Sentimental Subtext," 29. Many critics have addressed Melville's disapproval of the dominant literary tastes of the market, and his own difficulty in deciding whether to write popular works that would sell, or to write more deep, brooding, philosophical novels, such as *Moby-Dick*, that would not be well received. Ann Douglas writes of how Melville both exploited and resisted exploiting market conditions. He would give readers what they wanted, but would not be "absorbed" by their taste.

5. Schultz, "Sentimental Subtext," 41.

6. See Jessica Lang's essay, "Retelling the Retold: Race and Orality in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Arizona Quarterly* 66.2 (Summer 2010), 35–58, for the ways this important scene of Eliza jumping on the ice floes while carrying Harry repeats many times in the novel and reveals the democratizing importance of storytelling.

7. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 52. Hereafter, all references to Stowe's novel will be cited parenthetically.

8. Kristen Boudreau, *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 207.

9. A well-known part of Stowe's biography is that she herself lost her baby Charley in a cholera outbreak. In a letter to Eliza Cabot Follet, Stowe revealed a most personal link between motherhood and abolition: she wrote that she "often

felt that much that is in [the book] had its root in the awful scenes and bitter sorrows of that summer . . . It was at [Charley's] dying bed and at his grave that I learned . . . what a poor slave mother may feel when her child is torn away from her" (quoted in Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 444).

10. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 1851, eds. Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2002), 398. Hereafter, all references to Melville's novel will be cited parenthetically.

11. The question of fathers and sons is particularly salient for Melville. Melville lost his own father when he was eleven years old; the subsequent loss of his older brother, Gansevoort, made young Herman the oldest male in the household.

12. Two essays that have proven very influential for elucidating the links between sentiment and abolition are Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition," and Laura Wexler, "Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform." Both are included in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

13. Weinstein, "We Are Family," 21.

14. *Ibid.*, 19.

15. P. Gabrielle Foreman would classify this strategy as "sentimental abolition," which she argues "coincides with, and borrows from the power of the extended domestic spheres popularized in reformist communities and culture in the 1830s and 1840s; it stresses the affectional over the authoritative, emphasizing that the heart is the only true site of change and redemption. Sentimental abolition's emphasis on the affectional also distances it from political reform, but these terms are not dichotomous" (150). See her essay "Sentimental Abolition in Douglass's Decade: Revision, Erotic Conversion, and the Politics of Witnessing in *The Heroic Slave* and *My Bondage and My Freedom*," in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, eds. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

16. Elizabeth Dill, "That Damned Mob of Scribbling Siblings: The American Romance as Anti-Novel in *The Power of Sympathy* and *Pierre*," *American Literature* 80.4 (December 2008), 707-38, 711.

17. Barnes, "Fraternal Melancholies," 235.

18. Boudreau, *Sympathy*, 9.

19. Robyn Wiegman usefully discusses Melville and male bonding in her "Melville's Geography of Gender." She writes that Melville "has been perceived as *the* American master of male bonding narratives and sentimental renderings of life among men" (735). She insightfully discusses how Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" reveals the ways that "the rhetoric of the male bond is forged across a discourse of sexual difference that functions to veil class and race hierarchies among men" (736). P. Gabrielle Foreman identifies how Frederick Douglass in *The Heroic Slave* uses "the male couple as a figure of an inherently democratic union of equals which could serve as the basis for a new social organization" (157). For more on male bonding in Melville, see Joseph A. Boone's "Male Independence and the American Quest Genre: Hidden Sexual Politics in the All-Male Worlds of Melville, Twain, and London," in *Gender Studies: New Directions in Feminist Criticism*, ed. Judith Spector (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986); Leslie Fiedler's classic *Love and Death*

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in *the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1960); and Robert K. Martin's *Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

20. Barnes, "Fraternal Melancholies," 325.

21. *Ibid.*, 235.

22. Penry, "Romantic Masculinities," 237.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Sarah Robbins, "Gendering the History of the Antislavery Narrative: Juxtaposing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and 'Benito Cereno,' *Beloved*, and *Middle Passage*," *American Quarterly* 3.39 (1997), 531–73, 535.

25. Robbins, "Gendering," 543.

26. Dawn Coleman, "The Unsentimental Woman Preacher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Literature* 80.2 (2008), 265–92, 265.

27. Coleman, "Unsentimental," 289.

28. Michael T. Gilmore, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the American Renaissance: The Sacramental Aesthetic of Harriet Beecher Stowe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59.

29. Thomas Gossett discusses Stowe's claim to divine inspiration. See Thomas Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 59, 93–97.

30. Boudreau, *Sympathy*, 206.

31. Robyn Wiegman, "Melville's Geography of Gender," *American Literary History* 1.4 (Winter 1989), 735–53, 735.