

WHAT WOULD MOTHER DO?: BOYS AS MOTHERS IN HARRIET BEECHER
STOWE'S UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this thesis is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This thesis does not include proprietary or classified information.

Jessica Lauren Sims

Certificate of Approval:

Bert Hitchcock
Hargis Professor of
American Literature
English

James Ryan, Chair
Associate Professor
English

Hilary E. Wyss
Associate Professor
English

George T. Flowers
Interim Dean
Graduate School

WHAT WOULD MOTHER DO?: BOYS AS MOTHERS IN HARRIET BEECHER
STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Jessica Sims

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Arts

Auburn, Alabama
May 10, 2007

WHAT WOULD MOTHER DO?: BOYS AS MOTHERS IN HARRIET BEECHER
STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Jessica Lauren Sims

Permission is granted to Auburn University to make copies of this thesis at its discretion, upon request of individuals or institutions and at their expense. The author reserves all publication rights.

Signature of Author

Date of Graduation

VITA

Jessica Lauren Sims, daughter of Scott Sims and Bunnie Sims, was born September 3, 1983, in Charleston, South Carolina. She graduated from Auburn High School in 2001. She attended Central Alabama Community College for two years on a tennis scholarship, then entered Auburn University in September, 2003, and graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in May, 2005. She entered Graduate School at Auburn University in September, 2005. She plans to return to Graduate School in September, 2008 in hopes of pursuing her PhD in nineteenth-century American literature.

THESIS ABSTRACT

WHAT WOULD MOTHERS DO?: BOYS AS MOTHERS IN HARRIET BEECHER

STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Jessica Sims

Master of Arts, May 10, 2007
(B.A., Auburn University, 2005.)

54 Typed Pages

Directed by James Ryan

Harriet Beecher Stowe's ultimate goal in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is to create a matriarchal society of sons as mothers. By prolonging the differentiation stage in which the son will turn from the mother because she represents the gendered "other," the mother ensures that her shared ego with the child will become the offspring's only ego. As the son matures into a feminine identity characterized by the need *to* mother, he inevitably transforms *into* a mother. At this point in adulthood in which the son has entered the public sphere, any and all political and social conflicts will be resolved from a mother's perspective. The son's desire to nurture others as he has been nurtured is not only the answer to slavery's atrocities: it is the groundwork for the feminization of the public sphere.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. James Ryan for his enthusiastic assistance and guidance with this project, specifically the numerous draft readings. Thanks are also due to Dr. Hilary Wyss and Dr. Bert Hitchcock, for their keen commentary and cheerful greetings in the hallway.

This project could not have been completed without the love of my parents, brothers, and sister. To my Mom and Dad, thank you for your persistent encouragement to develop my academic talents to the best of my ability. Most importantly, thanks for understanding why I have tendency to never answer my phone. To Alex, Mallory and Jack, thank you for the picnics in the yard and chasing ducks at the park.

And to Matt, thank you for 5:00 on August 24th when you asked me what I was reading. Without you and your continuous support and encouragement, I never would have seen the end of this project.

Style manual used: Chicago Manual Style, 15th ed.

Computer software used: Microsoft Word 2003

WHAT WOULD MOTHER DO?: BOYS AS MOTHERS IN HARRIET BEECHER
STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

2008 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Nancy Chodorow's groundbreaking work *The Reproduction of Mothering*. First published in 1978, Chodorow's book hypothesized that mothering was not simply a psychological construction, but rather a social construction. Arguing against Freud and the problematic Oedipus complex, Chodorow contends that the mother's desire to nurture is not only internalized by her infant and child in the early stages of psychological development but can be recalled in adulthood by not just girls, but boys as well. Psychoanalysts such as Freud believed that the mothering trait could be recalled only by girls because only girls retain a preoedipal and oedipal attachment to the mother. This mothering trait, according to Freud, is smothered in boys because their preoedipal bond with mother is shortened due to their early entry into the oedipal stage. At an age in which girls still desire to be their mother, boys reject her influence because she is the mother, that gendered "other." Chodorow, however, argues that both girls and boys internalize and interpret the mother's desire to nurture and "mother" as their own, because mother and child possess the same ego before gender and personality differentiation. In this context, all people are capable of mothering because the feminine trait is reproduced during childhood in both sexes. Encourage the resurrection of the mothering trait in the son and suddenly mothering is

perceived as an act, not as gender. It is possible, in other words, for boys to become mothers.¹

The Reproduction of Mothering is not the only text celebrating a noteworthy anniversary. After 156 years, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* still captivates readers with its disturbing portrayal of race relations in the antebellum South. As Harriet Beecher Stowe's response to slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* meticulously explores the daily lives of those willingly and unwillingly bound to the slave system. Stowe's Southern stage is set with a wide range of diverse characters: Eliza, the faithful mulatto slave, whose master has sold her young son Harry to the immoral trader Mr. Haley; Mrs. Bird, an ideal mother and Senator's wife, who fights for and wins the right to assist fugitive slaves in her own home; and Uncle Tom himself, a devout Christian slave who chooses passivity rather than aggression against oppressors. And yet, no matter how diverse Stowe's characters may be in gender, class, and race, all of her characters are concerned with one primary consequence of slavery: the dissolution of family. Eliza flees the Shelby plantation at the threat of separation from her son. As a mother grieving over the death of and permanent separation from her own child, Mrs. Bird compassionately transforms her domestic sphere into a refuge for a fellow mother. Uncle Tom is sold from his family by the Shelbys and is exchanged from owner to owner until he meets his brutal death at the

¹ As *The Reproduction of Mothering* nears its thirtieth birthday, the book has made in recent years an enormous impact on current areas of research. In their book *From Klein to Kristeva*, Janice L. Doane and Devon Hodges have applied Chodorow's concepts of maternity to feminist theory as a means of exploring object relations between mother and child. Critics such as Jin Ok Kim in "Female Sexuality and Identity" have revisited Freud and his concepts of mothering and femininity in light of Chodorow's work. Just as importantly, Chodorow has begun to influence the study of African-American literature: Hilary S. Crew's chapter "Feminist Theories and the Voices of Mothers and Daughters" in *African-American Voices in Young Adult Literature* and Sally L. Kitch's chapter "Motherlands and Foremothers" in *Analyzing the Different Voice* have begun to research how African-American mother-child bonds have evolved over time.

hands of the despicable Simon Legree. Although the novel has been examined for its intense focus on race relations, the concentration on familial bonds has gone unexplored.

This concern for the family in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, therefore, links these two writers separated by a century. It is Stowe's theory about how the slave system can be abolished that anticipates Chodorow's radical twentieth-century concepts of the reproduction of mothering, 126 years before Chodorow's book was published. So, too, did Stowe seem to believe that it was not only possible for mothers to instill their feminine traits of mothering into their sons, but that the desire to nurture all living things would revolutionize a public sphere characterized by moral degradation and chaos. The willingness to separate families permanently insinuates a lack of remorse and compassion; most importantly, these actions indicate a lack of understanding. Men are not women—men, therefore, are not supposed to mother. The only way to abolish slavery, therefore, is for politicians, for men, to feel the acute physical, mental, and emotional pain of separation from fathers, mothers, and especially children. The desire to mother must not be suppressed, abandoned and forgotten: boys must become mothers.

In this context, Chodorow's psychoanalytic work and Stowe's anti-slavery novel complement one another and together must be revisited, explored, and celebrated in the twenty first-century for their revolutionary concepts of gender and family. *The Reproduction of Mothering* provides the terminology to trace the nineteenth-century bond between mother and child from birth to adulthood; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* solidifies the theory that mothering may be reproduced in both males and females. For Stowe, it is the current generation of politicians' willingness to suppress this mothering trait that convinces her to shift focus from men to boys. Those who cause the permanent

separation of families will continue to do so until they feel the suffering they are perpetuating. Forcing a mother and child apart is denying the mother the right to nurture and care for that extension of herself; it is eliminating a natural trait and desire found in us all.

Stowe's ultimate goal, therefore, is to create a matriarchal society of sons as mothers, a fantasy that Chodorow a century later believes possible after all. But this transformation is no easy task. Although the mother instills her feminine and mothering traits in her child during the stage in which the pair share the mother's ego, this unity is not meant to last psychologically or culturally. As the child—specifically the son—psychologically matures, he is to separate from his mother, differentiate himself from her, and create and develop an ego that symbolizes his own unique individuality and identity. This identity becomes gender specific: male. The ego that once represented the mother's capacity to physically, emotionally, even mentally provide for another is abandoned by the son in favor of an individuality that mirrors his father's. It is a duplicity that sickens the mother, especially Stowe's ideal mother.

If daughters can remain attached to the mother long enough to incorporate the mother's parenting trait as their own, then so, too, can boys and sons. Equipped with the power and influence of the domestic sphere, Stowe's ideal mother seeks to maintain that mother-son relationship long enough during childhood for the son to identify the mothering trait as his own. By prolonging the differentiation stage in which the son will turn from the mother because she represents the gendered "other," the mother ensures that her shared ego with the child will become the offspring's only ego. As the son matures into a feminine identity characterized by the need *to* mother, he inevitably

transforms *into* a mother. At this point in adulthood in which the son has entered the public sphere, any and all political and social conflicts will be resolved from a mother's perspective. Using Augustine St. Clare, Simon Legree, and the young George Shelby, Stowe demonstrates for her readers the process in which boys become maternal: like St. Clare, an emotionally and psychologically intimate relationship with the mother must be established at birth and maintained during youth; unlike Legree, the father figure and his pressure to end the preoedipal stage quickly must be avoided; and following in the footsteps of Shelby, the son must perceive others as the child he once was in order to administer the maternal love and care bestowed upon him during childhood. The son's desire to nurture others as he has been nurtured, therefore, is not only the answer to slavery's atrocities: it is the groundwork for the feminization of the public sphere.

Although separated by more than a century, both Chodorow and Stowe would agree that the reproduction of mothering begins immediately with the birth of the child. From the moment of its arrival, the child is completely dependent upon the mother for the satisfaction of its needs, wants, and desires because it is incapable of fulfilling these needs. In this physically, emotionally, and psychologically vulnerable stage of development, the child's welfare is totally in the hands of the mother. With this newfound responsibility for the offspring, the mother is to treat the child as an extension of herself because of the infant's helplessness. Consequently, according to Chodorow, the mother's task is to "both mediate and provide its [the child's] total environment."² The mother is the source to whom the child turns for nourishment, the outlet through which the offspring interacts with its surroundings.

² Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 58.

It is this crucial point of dependency in the mother-child bond at which the child also perceives itself as that extension of the mother: in other words, if mother thinks, acts, and feels for me, then mother and I must be one in the same. In her discussion of this early developmental stage, Chodorow reminds us that “a human newborn is not guided by instinct, nor does it yet have any of those adaptive ego capacities which enable older humans to act instrumentally.”³ If the child is unable to satisfy its own needs, therefore, then the child has no sense of a personal individuality separate from the mother. As the resource for every imaginable need the child may have, the mother’s identity and ego is adopted by the child as its own. Chodorow asserts that this dependency that perpetuates the child’s attachment to the mother’s ego is absolutely necessary for healthy psychological growth: “as long as the infant cannot get along without its mother—because she acts as external ego, provides holding and nourishment, and is in fact not experienced by the infant as a separate person at all—it will employ techniques which attempt to prevent or deny its mother’s departure or separateness.”⁴ The child is not only too immature to separate from the mother—it desires to identify itself with the mother regardless of its maturation status.

The child’s cognitive vulnerability during this stage is the ideal window of moral opportunity for nineteenth-century mothers. If Chodorow is correct that mother and child share her identity during the ego attachment phase, then the child has begun to internalize her feminine traits, including the desire to parent and mother. The child craves an individuality that is an extension of the mother’s because the child perceives itself and the mother as the same human being. Nineteenth-century mothers understood that children

³ Chodorow, 58.

⁴ Chodorow, 59.

were especially influential during this attachment and often manipulated this shared ego from within their domestic sphere. Perceived by Nancy F. Cott as a “place of salvation,” the home represented the order and peace that contrasted the public “arenas” characterized by “selfishness, exertion, embarrassment, and degradation of soul.”⁵ Because the home was the epicenter for the development of familial relationships, especially those between mother and child, women manipulated this domestic power to their advantage. They sought to encourage a moral and spiritual growth crucial to all members within the family unit, but most importantly to the small children. Cott argues that “parents—particularly mothers—could decide their children’s fate” in that “early influences on a child directly and inevitably decided his or her later character.”⁶ Mothers, in other words, religiously and emotionally thrived or perished depending on their ability to integrate spiritual and moral ideals successfully into their children.

At a time when slavery continued to flourish, this power to mold children through principles of integrity and moral righteousness became especially important. Imprisoned within the home, children obeyed and upheld the mother’s domestic “laws” of love and compassion for not only fellow family members but all human beings. The absent father figure during childhood is simply an absent figure of authority, meaning that the mother is the only educational, emotional, and religious source to which the children could turn for the fulfillment of their basic needs. The ability to instill a sense of moral responsibility in children that would last a lifetime beyond the domestic sphere became the power to create in the next generation what Mary P. Ryan terms a “conscience.”⁷

⁵ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835*, 167.

⁶ Cott, 84.

⁷ Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*, 160.

Ryan believes that women's duties to maintain domestic order were underlain with the desire to use this clean, peaceful, hospitable space to create a conscience that would morally regulate the actions of the child once he left his mother's sphere. This conscience, Ryan argues, "would operate as a kind of portable parent that could stay with the child long after he left his mother's side and journeyed beyond the private sphere out onto the streets and into the public world."⁸ For every public, political, social, and religious conflict the child encounters, he is to stop and consider a solution that would not compromise the teachings of his mother inherited in the domestic sphere. Essentially, the son is to ask himself "What Would Mother Do?" before confronting the issue at hand. Although Ryan believes this conscience to represent the "mundane" and "bourgeois traits" of "honesty, industry, frugality, temperance, and...self control," the mother's attempt to instill these traits within her son through the creation of a conscience is what is most important here.⁹ Asking "What Would Mother Do?" is to contemplate how the feminine characteristics within the conscience can solve the immediate problem; it is to wonder, in other words, how the mother would address and handle such a crisis. Although the mother is limited to her domestic sphere, she is attempting to insert through her son's conscience her feminine traits necessary to bring political and social reform to a corrupt public world.

Stowe's obsession, therefore, is to encourage her female readers to instill this moral conscience into their own sons as the pair shares a single ego during infancy and childhood. Yet the mother figure's power to manipulate sentiments as a means of combating slavery has been criticized for its lack of social substance and inability to

⁸ Ryan, 161.

⁹ Ryan, 161.

contribute seriously to the literary discourse. Critics such as Ann Douglas recognize that “women and ministers alike were taking advantage of a revolution in the press” as a means of elaborating on private and public policies; but for Douglas, these social and cultural reflections were petty commentary that lacked any real literary contribution to imperative public, political, issues such as slavery.¹⁰ In their attempt to promote the absolute necessity of private values in the public sphere, novelists such as Stowe only reinforced the very social structures they sought to reconfigure with their female, motherly characters: according to Douglas, “the triumph of the ‘feminizing,’ sentimental forces that would generate mass culture redefined and perhaps limited the possibilities for change in American society.”¹¹ The mother’s compassionate weeping, emotional pleas for those oppressed by cruel masters, are simply that—tears. Although the sobbing is quite excessive, critics such as Douglas seem too quick in their dismissal of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as sentimental fluff. For critics such as Jane Tompkins, Stowe is confirming the barrier between the two spheres as she utilizes the presence of women in the domestic sphere, but she is simply relating women and mothers in terms most familiar to them. As Tompkins correctly notes, “out of the ideological materials at their disposal, the sentimental novelists elaborated a myth that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture.”¹² This feminine power and motherly influence became Stowe’s missing link in society’s attempts to resolve the issue of slavery.

¹⁰ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 81.

¹¹ Douglas, 13.

¹² Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*, 125. In response to those who perceive Stowe’s dependence on sentimentality and the domestic influence of mothers as insignificant, Tompkins argues that this critique is problematic because it derives from a twentieth-century feminist perspective. Instead, she asserts, the novel must be remembered as “not exceptional but representative” because it “belongs to a genre, the sentimental novel, whose chief characteristic is that it is written by, for, and about women” (124-5).

Arguably, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* can be read as an instruction manual for a female audience. Focusing intently on the relationship between white mothers and sons, Stowe experimented with the mother's power of influence over her son's psychological development. Just as Chodorow concentrates intensely on the preoedipal attachment between mother and child, Stowe also explores the possibility that the prolonging of this attachment in boys will result in an identity and ego that mirror the mother's but are no longer shared with the mother. Augustine St. Clare's relationship with his mother proves just how susceptible young sons were during a time in which the mother was the child's only resource for the fulfillment of needs and interactions with a world beyond the domestic sphere. Augustine comes from a mother characterized as possessing "no trace of any human weakness or error about her," who is the "direct embodiment and personification of the New Testament" (333). Due to this religious fervor, Mrs. St. Clare is compelled to nurture and care for those who have been denied a mother, beginning on her own plantation. Disgusted with the vile treatment of the slaves on her own property, she personally visits the overseer in an attempt to reprimand him for his misconduct. But it is important to note that she is not alone in these endeavors. In fact, Mrs. St. Clare hears of these atrocities not from her husband or the slaves themselves, but rather from her own son—Augustine. According to the adult Augustine, "I was a little fellow then, but I had the same love that I have now for all kinds of human things,—a kind of passion for the study of humanity, come in what shape it would" (336). Because Augustine is his mother's pet (334), the two would set off towards the fields together in the hopes of "hinder[ing] and repress[ing] a great deal of cruelty" (336). During this impressionable

stage in youth, Augustine has chosen to identify himself by those characteristics identified with his mother.

According to Chodorow, the bond between mother and child is important to the reproduction of the mothering trait for three reasons: first, “the basic psychological stance for parenting is founded during this period”; second, “people come out of it [the bond] with the memory of a unique intimacy which they want to recreate”; and third, “people’s experience of their early relationship to their mother provides a foundation for expectations of women as mothers.”¹³ Chodorow believes that the founding of the “basic psychological stance for parenting” is the most important consequence of the parent and offspring relationship because the success or failure of the mother’s parenting skills is internalized by the child. Yet the recollection of the mother’s love and compassion and the desire to rekindle this relationship with others seem to be of equal importance. For example, Augustine remembers those times in which “mother’s exhortations” were “burnt into my very soul, with all the force of her deep, earnest nature, an idea of dignity and worth of the meanest human soul” (337). Because he is his mother’s pet, Augustine’s love for humanity, regardless of race, derives from his mother: “*we*, between us, formed a sort of committee for the redress of grievances. *We* hindered and repressed a great deal of cruelty...” (336, emphasis mine). The transference of the mothering trait to Augustine occurs because he has not yet established his own gendered identity that is expected to contrast the mother’s identity. The mothering trait has not yet been suppressed because Augustine continues to associate his own thoughts, feelings, and

¹³ Chodorow, 57.

actions with his mother's—he repeatedly refers to the pair as “we,” as if mother and child are one entity.

Augustine's ego attachment to his mother is that much more apparent when he describes his own youthful appearance. Whereas his twin brother Alfred was known for his “black, fiery eyes, coal-black hair, a strong, fine Roman profile,” Augustine was characterized by his “blue eyes, golden hair, a Greek outline” (334). Furthermore, he was often “dreamy and inactive” while Alfred “was active and observing” (334). Nothing in Augustine's description compares to the physical image of his twin. In fact, the twins could not be more dissimilar because Augustine is hardly painted as a boy at all; he is, in other words, a girl. For Chodorow, the appearance of these feminine traits and the desire to mother in a boy are not unnatural. The reproduction of the mothering trait begins before differentiation when the child internalizes its experiences with its mother: “it is aspects of the relationship to her that are internalized defensively; it is her care that must be consistent and reliable; it is her absence that produces anxiety.”¹⁴ Augustine's girlish qualities are a testament to the success of his mother's parenting. Mrs. St. Clare has nurtured and provided for her son so well that this success has been internalized in order to recreate this same mothering bond with another—the slaves on their plantation. If Augustine thinks and feels as a girl, woman, and mother, then his mother has begun successfully to instill that moral conscience within him.

Interestingly, it is within Mrs. St. Clare's bedroom after the twins have fought in which mother and Augustine are physically and psychologically closest. Sitting by her in this intimate setting, he “would lay my head down on her lap, and cry, and dream, and

¹⁴ Chodorow, 61.

feel—oh, immeasurably!—things that I had no language to say” (334). Because of his “morbid sensitiveness and acuteness of feeling” (334)—feminine traits yet again—Augustine was constantly driven to his mother’s bedroom as a shelter and protection from Alfred’s taunts and patronizing. In order to escape the men of the house who cannot comprehend a compassion for humanity, the females—Augustine and Mrs. St. Clare—find refuge in the bedroom, the heart of the domestic sphere. The deeper the two travel into the home, the more influential the mother becomes. His mother’s presence has become so intense that Augustine loses all ability to speak; he is so overwhelmed by the sudden rush of multiple emotions that he is unable to communicate his feelings to her. And yet, his mother seems to not only understand these complicated emotions but also encourages the loss of a vocabulary to voice them.

This moment of abstraction is caused by his mother’s organ playing, for she had an impeccable taste for “fine old majestic music of the Catholic church” (334). The music not only paralyzes Augustine’s ability to speak—it also paralyzes his ability to read. Note that before the music begins, he first remembers those times in which he “read in Revelations about the saints that were arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” (334): but with the touch of a few keys by a mother who coincidentally wears white dresses, Augustine is reduced to a boy/girl without the capacity to think or speak. Words can no longer be read from a page; words can no longer be formulated. In this context, Augustine bears a striking resemblance to that infant and child dependent upon the mother for its basic needs. Like the infant, he desires the mother to care for him, to stroke his hair and pet his head as he lies in her lap. This scene of vulnerability becomes Mrs. St. Clare’s prime opportunity to instill that motherly, moral conscience within her

son. It is by no means an accident that this moment within the bedroom occurs *before* the duo's expedition to the slave fields.

Although Augustine will eventually separate physically from his mother, the successful surfacing, rather than submerging, of his mothering trait will ensure that he will not completely separate from her psychologically. Therefore, from Augustine's inexplicable emotional moments within the mother's bedroom to the anti-slavery campaign on the plantation, it appears as if he is on the verge of permanently accepting his mother's moral convictions towards all humans and things. At an age in which the father figure becomes the idolized parent, it seems that Augustine has rejected this future image of himself: under his mother's care, he yearns "to be a sort of emancipator,—to free my native land from this spot and stain" (343). After countless afternoons of overhearing his father reprimand his mother for her interference in the plantation fields, Augustine is neither impressed nor swayed by his father's powerful presentation of patriarchal authority. Whenever his mother would plead for those on the plantation without a voice, she, too, was quickly silenced; after Mr. St. Clare listened "to the most pathetic appeals," he simply stated as a matter of fact that "all government included some necessary hardness [and] general rules will bear hard on particular cases" (337). With these words, the issue was always immediately dropped. This display of patriarchal power hypnotizes Alfred; it repulses Augustine. Although the mother must constantly battle that image of the father figure that the son desires to become, Mrs. St. Clare actually benefits from her husband's performances. Mr. St. Clare may have converted Alfred to his ideology with the promise of inheriting the power he possesses, but such ego trips in the home only convince Augustine to cling that much more to his mother.

Witnessing firsthand the man he is to become is enough to influence Augustine to turn permanently towards his mother, rather than from her.

And yet, at the pivotal age of thirteen, that age that straddles childhood and adolescence, St. Clare separates himself from his mother for reasons unknown; but these reasons are, in fact, of the least importance.¹⁵ As St. Clare correctly concludes, “if I had lived to grow up under her care, she might have stimulated me to I know not what of enthusiasm...a saint, reformer, martyr—but alas! alas!” (338). What is of the greatest importance in this moment is Augustine’s use of the word “if.” After years of mothering and countless experiences nurturing the slaves on their plantation, Augustine suddenly abandons his mother, his desire to mother, and his moral conscience. The prolonging of the preoedipal attachment was not extended long enough: for the mothering trait to become a permanent element of the son’s ego and consciousness, nineteenth-century mothers must extend the ego attachment until adolescence if possible.

Although it is a mystery as to why Augustine suddenly succumbs to the temptations of the public sphere and abandons his mother, Chodorow believes that there are psychological explanations for this desertion. It is undeniable that in order for the child to become an active member of society the child must divorce itself—to a certain extent—mentally, emotionally, and physically from the mother. As Chodorow states, “turning from the mother (and father) represents independence and individuation, progress, activity, and participation in the real world”; and to reinforce this assertion she

¹⁵ In her article “Doing It Herself: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Woman’s Role in the Slavery Crisis,” Jean Fagan Yellin has taken a similar interest in the mother-son bond and religious implications of that relationship. Yellin notes that “Stowe presents a series of free white Christian mothers (including St. Clare’s and Legree’s) who...attempt to influence their sons’ actions in regard to slavery” (91). But what puzzles Yellin the most is that it “is not that this pattern is repeated but that their influence is sometimes effective and sometimes not” (91). The answer is found in the son’s age at the time of acceptance or rejection of the mother’s moral conscience.

relies on Anna Freud's concept that "it is by turning away from our mother that we finally become, by our different paths, grown men and women."¹⁶ Although Chodorow thinks it acceptable to include the father as yet another parent from whom to "turn," Anna Freud does not, which emphasizes the importance of abandoning the mother and her concepts as the child establishes its own personal identity. The father, here, is not the only parent who is to encourage the child's individuality; so, too, is the mother expected to wean her child off of a sole dependency on her for basic needs, wants, and desires. The child is to learn how to satisfy itself as it explores its own thoughts and emotions. Not assisting the child on this journey could result in disastrous psychological consequences: Chodorow argues that if the mother "controls the environment and serves as an adaptive ego for too long, the infant is prevented from developing capacities to deal with anxiety."¹⁷ Furthermore, "those relational capacities and that sense of being which form the core of the integrative 'central ego' do not emerge."¹⁸ And yet, such a willing participation to encourage the child to develop its own ego as the child begins to differentiate itself from the mother, is entirely problematic for mothers of Stowe's era. Encouraging the child, especially the son, to explore his own identity is the equivalent to pushing him towards the masculine, public, identity his father symbolizes. Boys desire to become like their fathers; and by "turning" from their mothers, they are permanently adapting to masculine ideals that not only contradict the morals imposed upon them in the domestic sphere, but are the antithesis to progressive, positive change in the political arena.

¹⁶ Chodorow, 82.

¹⁷ Chodorow, 83.

¹⁸ Chodorow, 83.

This perpetual progression towards the father in the public sphere is not only considered the psychological norm—it was expected in the nineteenth-century. For boys of this era, “man” was defined by a lack of feminine sentiments and womanish qualities. Despite the absence of the father figure throughout childhood, boys could not escape his influence and the temptation to become like him; boys were enamored by the prospect of becoming like the father because the father was a member of the political sphere. To become like the father was to escape the domestic sphere, that boys increasingly identified as the woman’s, not man’s, space. As Mary P. Ryan notes, boys mimicked the thoughts and actions of their fathers: around mid-century in Oneida County, “boys as young as fourteen could affiliate with the Democrats as members of the Little Giants and face off against their miniature Republican opponents, the Wide Awakes.”¹⁹ Interestingly, these “political parties” never really debated against one another, but rather served as campaign supporters for their father’s political candidates during election time—Ryan remarks that both parties of boys could be seen and heard parading the streets “carrying the banners and shouting the praises of the candidates selected by their elders in the party.”²⁰ But the idolization did not end here.

Boys not only adapted the political and public views of the father but began to also mirror the physical image of that man absent from the domestic sphere. In local news presses operated by boys, the youthful editors often humored their subscribers by reminding them of those boys who “were under the delusion that a three cent cigar could make a boy a man.”²¹ As playful as the newspaper’s editorial may be, the association

¹⁹ Ryan, 164.

²⁰ Ryan, 164.

²¹ Ryan, 165.

between man and cultural status symbol is quite serious: throughout their youth boys have observed that to be a man, one must live the public life, in which men think and act according to politics. To be a man is to smoke expensive cigars, for the cigar represents the financial and social stability that result from hard work and labor in the public sphere. After all of the mother's moral and spiritual education, such lessons are abandoned in favor of the father's representation of practical power. As a boy transitioning into adulthood, the son desires to replicate his father's image as his own.

Augustine becomes this boy from Oneida County because he has successfully "turned" from his mother, an action that Chodorow argues is absolutely necessary for the development of an individual's ego and personality. But "turning" from the mother is exactly what Mrs. St. Clare has been fighting against. The key to progressing the anti-slavery movement is to instill within the son a conscience, a moral order, and most importantly an ego and identity that mirror the mother's own individuality. Sons are to speak and act like their mothers, so that they become mothers themselves—they are, in other words, an extension of their mother's ego. However, desperate times call for desperate measures. If the son is willing to turn from the mother, then the mother is willing to turn from the son. Refuse the mother's moral conscience, and you refuse the mother herself. Augustine's acceptance of the masculine perceptions and values she has courageously fought against throughout his boyhood divorces him from her and the intimate relationship that once thrived and prospered. Just as Mrs. St. Clare distances herself from Alfred, and he from her, because of his closeness to his father and his father's antebellum pro-slavery ideals, so, too, must she separate from her beloved St. Clare, who converts to the opposition of her political cause.

Augustine St. Clare's permanent decision to turn from his mother is an inevitable choice children are psychologically forced to make. For boys, turning from the mother is an initiation into the oedipal stage, in which the son perceives the mother as a sexualized other, rather than an ego-sharing counterpart. Although Chodorow notes that girls, too, eventually turn from their mothers, the consequences of this maternal abandonment contrast starkly for each sex. Chodorow argues that prior to the turning process, it is psychologically possible for mothers to pass down to their children—either girl or boy—the capacity for parenting. For the child to successfully mother or parent their own children later in life it must first experience a close bond with its own mother; the child will revert to this initial bond when attempting to understand how to meet and satisfy the needs and desires of their own infant offspring.²² Chodorow asserts, therefore, that “anyone—boy or girl—who has participated in a ‘good-enough’ mother-infant relationship has the relational basis of the capacity for parenting.”²³ In this context, women and men are capable of nurturing others as they have been nurtured during childhood. Yet there is an undeniable contradiction: “empirically, however, analysts assume that women will parent, and that the parenting capacities laid down in people of both genders will be called up in women only.”²⁴ It seems that although both daughter and son must turn from the mother to develop their own individuality and ego, the daughter mysteriously recalls what the son has repressed—although both sexes have successfully abandoned their mother's ego.

²² Chodorow, 87.

²³ Chodorow, 87-8.

²⁴ Chodorow, 88.

For nineteenth-century mothers frustrated with the immoral condition of their state and nation, such a contradiction between a daughter and son's recollection of the mothering trait ensures the continuation of slavery. To be a man was not to be a woman, the "other" gender designated for mothering; and for sons such as Simon Legree, permanently turning from the mother—thus turning from the mothering trait—often times meant turning to the father. Unlike St. Clare's youth, Legree's childhood was not marked by abstract and dreamy moments in his mother's domestic sphere. Although Legree was "cradled with prayers and pious hymns" (528), his youth is most notable for his father's persistent presence during those psychological stages of childhood development in which the mother and child are expected to bond. From birth, Legree is identified as a product of his father rather than mother: "born of a hard-tempered sire, on whom that gentle woman had wasted a world of unvalued love, Legree followed in the steps of his father" (528). Because Legree's birth is associated with his father—that sex that represses the desire to mother—Legree never fully experiences a mother's love and compassion. By interjecting himself as the owner of the child during Legree's most important stages of cognitive development, the father permanently disrupts the mother's attempt to construct a shared ego with her child. Despite his mother's best effort to train her son "with long, unwearied love, and patient prayers" (528), all of her attempts are "wasted" on a son who was never really her own.

However, the father's greatest accomplishment in this premature intervention between mother and son is not the eventual suppression of the mothering trait; rather, it is disintegrating the relationship so that the trait will not even exist. Chodorow argues that the concept of women only as mothers is problematic because the desire to mother

derives from the ways in which daughters and sons were nurtured and cared for by their mothers. Both sexes, she believes, long to mother as a means to recreate those joyful, pleasurable moments experienced as a child under maternal care. But by disrupting the “good-enough” relationship that Legree’s mother is attempting to create as the foundation for her son to one day mother, Legree’s father ensures that the trait will never be passed from mother to son’s ego because the trait cannot exist without a maternal bond. His mother’s attempts to instill that moral conscience, to maintain her son as an extension of herself, is futile because of the lack of a maternal claim to and relationship with her son. Legree is born of a sire, not of a mother.

Because the influence of the mother has been replaced by the presence of an unfeeling and tyrannical father, Legree has internalized those paternal traits that as an adult characterize him as “boisterous” and “unruly” (528). Legree is mesmerized by his father’s animal magnetism as he would have been hypnotized by his mother’s influence had he been permitted to forge a relationship with his mother. If Legree is denied a relationship with his mother during his youth, then he must search elsewhere for the necessary support from the outside world that guides his construction of his own individual ego. The next source, naturally, is the father. As Chodorow notes, a boy and girl’s attachment to their mother differs: whereas girls maintain a longer preoedipal attachment to the mother, the son moves swiftly into an oedipal attachment with the mother, in which the son’s “relation to his mother soon becomes focused on competitive issues of possession and phallic-sexual oppositeness...to her.”²⁵ As the son begins to differentiate himself from the female other who lacks the penis, the son turns to the sex

²⁵ Chodorow, 96.

that rivals his newfound masculinity and power—the father. During this oedipal stage, the son begins to compete with the father, who becomes “an object of his ambivalence” as the son “tries to consolidate his masculinity identity.”²⁶ As the son enters the oedipal stage, he perceives his mother no longer as an equal but rather as an inferior; no longer ego-sharing counterparts, the son has successfully turned from the mother only to turn to the father as the new idolized object of interest. The son’s desire to compete with the father so as to one day replace him increases tenfold for a son such as Legree, who rejects all maternal care aimed at counteracting the father’s influence.

With the mother and son bond in shambles, Legree’s father becomes the authority figure Legree seeks for psychological guidance. The power his father now obtains is unimaginable; already characterized as an image the son aspires to mirror, the father figure also controls the son’s internalization of the world around him. Known as a “sire” and brute, Legree’s father is sure to instill within his son not a moral conscience but rather a fear and hatred of those who attempt this moral instigation. Chodorow notes that under normal psychological development, boys begin to recognize that “dependence on his mother, attachment to her, and identification with her represent that which is not masculine; a boy must reject dependence and deny attachment and identification.”²⁷ Legree’s father cannot emphasize this maternal rejection enough. Under the influence of his father, Legree not only adopts his father’s traits but eventually “despised all her [mother’s] counsel, and would none of her reproof” (528). What Legree recognizes in his conversion to his father’s ideals is that siding with the father is the ultimate rejection of the mother; accepting the mother’s moral conscience as the tool to combat slavery is to

²⁶ Chodorow, 97.

²⁷ Chodorow., 181.

deny completely the father's pro-slavery views. The son, in other words, cannot maintain a balance between the conflicting feminine and masculine ideals. What Legree's father comes to eventually instill within his son is more than a detestation of his mother—he teaches his son to first fear her before despising her feminine influence. Mothers are conniving, sneaky creatures, his father would argue, who are attempting to create a society of effeminate men. Legree must beware and be on guard at all times, at all costs.

Legree's mother and her domestic sphere symbolize a femininity that Legree loathes; if he desires to become the hard-hearted master and oppressor on his own future plantation then his mother's pressure and her influence within the home constantly threaten to soften his masculine ideals of dominance and cruelty. Sensing that his masculinity is in danger of replacement if his mother's moral influence creeps into his mind and soul, Legree abandons his mother "at an early age" in order to "seek his fortunes at sea" (528). Interestingly, out of concern for his masculine, pro-slavery beliefs, Legree travels as far from his mother as humanly possible. By traveling the seas, he is whisked farther and farther away from the domestic influence of his mother, for although he has converted to the father's ideals, she remains a threat through her domestic sphere to the masculine devil he becomes. Furthermore, there are no maternal spaces at sea to remind Legree of what he has abandoned on land. This move to the far-flung cities and environments on earth could be interpreted as a sudden relocation due to Legree's fear of transforming into an extension of his mother. It is true that Legree hates the image of his mother and the feminine sentimentality emblematic of this figure; and yet, it is an image that terrifies him more than anything else. His desperation to maintain his masculine persona is, in fact, evident in the one trip home during his ocean

adventures: after reuniting with his mother, she, “with the yearning of a heart that must love something,” pleads “with passionate prayers and entreaties, to win him from a life of sin, to his soul’s eternal good” (528). This scene of piety and religious faith is the exact emotional and moral interaction from which Legree has previously fled out of concern for his brutal masculinity.

But unlike those times in his youth in which his father was his immoral backbone that did not waver under the pressures of the mother’s moral righteousness, at this time Legree’s father is nowhere to be found. With the demonic father figure now absent from the household, Legree’s mother senses a vulnerability in her son that can no longer be defended by his father. A feminine response to his mother’s moral advances—an acceptance of that conscience—is a reaction that he has dreaded and combated since boyhood; and yet, he still senses that “good angels called him; then he was almost persuaded, and mercy held him by the hand” (528). Returning to the domestic sphere jeopardizes the masculine persona inherited from his father. As seen in the moment in which he experiences positive, feminine emotions within the mother’s home, only one day within that sphere symbolic of spiritual restoration, peace, and salvation is all the time the mother needs to bond with her estranged son.

Legree begins to experience his moral conversion not only because of his return to the domestic sphere but because of his physical and emotional interactions with an ideal woman and mother he has been taught to despise. As briefly felt as his mother’s love may have been during childhood, those few loving moments were enough to cause

Legree to struggle with a love and hate for this idealized human being.²⁸ As a means of rejecting his mother's feminine influence, Legree has attempted to associate hate, not love, with his mother because she represents the antithesis to his masculine identity. Thus, she becomes an idealization not of perfection, but rather evil manipulation. It is when Legree is on the verge of identifying himself with his mother's moral conscience that his most violent rejection of her occurs. Because he is pushed to an extreme level of morality never before obtained, his repulsion of that heightened religious conviction is just as extreme: in a moment of violence, and yet fear, "he spurned her from him,—threw her senseless on the floor" all because "his mother, in the last agony of her despair, knelt at his feet" to convict him of the sinful life he pursues (528). Pushed to the brink of denying his masculinity and accepting his mother's moral order, Legree reacts in the only way he knows—with violence.²⁹ He must protect, at all costs, the hate he possesses for the person who could restructure his entire identity. Admitting the love he feels for his mother would be a submission to her and a negation of his identity. Unable to resist a life of debauchery, Legree once again boards his ship, never to see or hear from his mother again.

Violently repelling his mother's spiritual advances divorces Legree from the mother herself; but unlike St. Clare's longing to eliminate the distance between him and

²⁸ According to Ann Dally, this conflict in emotions results directly in the idealization of someone or thing. In her book *Inventing Motherhood: The Consequences of an Ideal*, she notes that the process begins when the hate "is ignored and so kept from consciousness" (93), which results in an illusory love for the person or object. In turn, the ignorance of the one emotion transforms the fascination into an unrealistic obsession. Ignoring the hate is, in a sense, subverting the faults of the person with whom the infatuation exists, so that the person is transformed into a symbol of perfection. For Legree, this process of idealization has been reversed; not only does he not recognize her as what Stowe's readers would term the perfect mother, but his entire life's work has been centered on repressing his love for her.

²⁹ Dally notes that "if it is pointed out that hate is actually present alongside the love, angry reactions are liable to be provoked" (93).

his mother, Legree lives daily doing all he can to perpetuate an increase in the divide. If fulfilling the mother's anti-slavery work in the political sphere is an honorable occupation of justice and tenderness for an unprivileged race, Legree seeks to live the most atrocious and shallow life imaginable. As a grown man, he attempts to "drink, and revel, and swear away the memory" of his mother, for these activities contradict her perceived image of him as the effeminate savior of the slave race (529). In fact, owning slaves is a figurative second blow to his mother, similar to the first that sent her sprawling across the floor. Legree determines that the more sinful the life, the greater the distance between his role as the brutal masculine dictator on the plantation and the role of emancipator imagined for him by his mother.³⁰

This sinful life, unfortunately, is not a sufficient counterattack, for Legree is constantly haunted by the memory of his deceased mother. Even in death, the mother's spirit is still experienced within the home because the home is her source for the moral and religious power of influence over the son. Life within his own home conjures those moments in his mother's sphere in which she professed love and an unwavering religious devotion to her son. These are memories Legree seeks to suppress. Mary Jacobus, working from Freud's concepts of screened memories, argues that the "status of memory is put into question" because "instead of being a recovery of the past in the present it

³⁰ According to Thomas P. Joswick, Stowe approaches her audience with the reality that society has not only strayed from a religious community of followers but also from the religious language that fuses the community together and provides a communication tool between members. In his article "'The Crown Without the Conflict': Religious Values and Moral Reasoning in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," Joswick proposes that reentry into this world is simple. One must simply look inward at "one's heart [and] its own self-evident measure of good and evil, the measures each has by virtue of belonging to a family and knowing a mother's love" (268). By choosing to live a life of sin, Legree voluntarily separates from the motherly love that provides admittance into a community in which Legree desires no entry: he has looked inward, perceived the goodness of his heart as a threat to his masculinity, and intentionally sins as a means of combating his mother's, the community's, religious influence.

[memory] always involves a revision, reinscription, or re-presentation of an ultimately irretrievable past.”³¹ Although Jacobus is asserting here that memory is unreliable because we are constantly revising the details of our past, the concept of memory restructuring holds significant psychological implications for a man such as Simon Legree.

It appears that Legree possesses the power to alter his memories in the present as a means of escaping his mother’s moral influence. Yet Jacobus acknowledges that even this conscious alteration can lead to certain psychological consequences; she notes that “the past ceases to be the proper referent of memory; rather, memories ‘refer’ (improperly—that is, metaphorically or metonymically) to the unconscious.”³² The memories of his mother’s influence within his childhood home are in fact resurfacing due to his suppression of his love, rather than hate, for his mother. If there ever was a desire to bond with his mother, his father encouraged the suppression of such an emotion long before Legree ever developed into a man. Try as he might to ignore his memories of his mother’s love within his own home, the domestic sphere actually encourages the resurfacing of the love for the mother through the memories of her. The recovery of the son’s love for the mother from the unconscious is the answer to recovering the moral conscience instilled within the son in his youth. If Legree continues to remember his mother inside of the domestic sphere, then that love for her has not been completely lost. As Jacobus notes, “what gets repressed is precisely ‘the feminine’ or the child’s bisexuality—if you like, the mother’s desire in him as well as his desire for the

³¹ Mary Jacobus, *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art and Psychoanalysis*, 2-3.

³² Jacobus, 3.

mother.”³³ Through memory—an exploration into the unconscious—we can discover lost love and desire. This is exactly what Legree must continue fighting against.

Legree’s greatest move to trump his mother’s power, however, is to destroy the very place from which her power derives: the domestic sphere.³⁴ If the mother’s home represents the familiar epicenter of salvation and order, then Legree’s home symbolizes a masculine place of disgust and wretchedness, a home, in other words, deprived of a mother’s touch. The home “had been large and handsome,” characterized by the antebellum architecture of a “wide verandah of two stories running round every part of the house” (491); and yet, the beautiful qualities of the exterior are described in the past tense, for under Legree’s ownership the place now appears “desolate and uncomfortable” with informalities that betray the “coarse neglect and discomfort” of the home (492). Both house and inhabitants suffer because of the lack of domestic harmony, a structure and order of things around the house that provides relief from the disorderly world outside.

Chodorow believes that this extreme rejection of the mother’s sphere is a natural consequence of the son’s decision to duplicate his father’s image and behavior. The son not only “represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself” but also “rejects and devalues women and *whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world.*”³⁵ The son, in other words, is to reject all things feminine. As a means of reinforcing his masculinity, Legree destroys, not simply rejects, those objects that

³³ Jacobus, 3.

³⁴ According to Barbara Welter in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth-Century*, the home “was supposed to be a cheerful place, so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time” (31). Legree’s idea of a “good time” intentionally taints the “cheerful” domestic atmosphere that provides for a lively, yet clean and sin-free, time.

³⁵ Chodorow, 181, emphasis mine.

symbolize his mother's love and tenderness. The more sporadic the domestic arrangement of items in and around the house the less the home resembles an actual dwelling place; and as a means of distorting the archetypal household organization that produces positive energy for the benefit of the family, Legree transforms the domestic sphere into a degenerate environment of confusion. The sitting-room in particular reeks not only of a "peculiar sickening, unwholesome smell," but an odd mixture of work and leisure, for although it is the designated room for social visits and gatherings, the room contains "saddles, bridles, several sorts of harness, riding-whips, overcoats, and various articles of clothing" (524). In an attempt to destroy the mother's domestic influence, Legree brings into the home the chaos of the public realm, which in turn disrupts the peaceful atmosphere that beckons weary family members to enter and seek refuge from the confusion and corruption of the outside world. No longer a home of relief and refuge from chaos because the home is now chaotic, Legree reduces significantly the feminine aura of the domestic sphere that would tempt him to become a moral and religious human being. As close as the love for the mother may be to a psychological breakthrough into Legree's conscience, a reunion between his mother's spiritual presence and himself is not meant to be. Mother and son are forever separated; the father, in this case, is triumphant.

But what if Legree was not rushed so suddenly into an oedipal attachment to his mother and "phallic-possessive competition" with his father?³⁶ If the length of the preoedipal attachment to the mother did not differ for daughters and sons, what kind of mother would Legree, not to mention Augustine St. Clare, have been? What Chodorow finds so problematic about the preoedipal stage is that despite both sexes receiving the

³⁶ Chodorow, 97.

same “good-enough” relationship as a foundation for mothering, the prolonged preoedipal stage for girls ensures that only daughters will recall the trait later in life. Chodorow notes that both boys and girls are faced with a similar dilemma in which the offspring must give up the mother “as an internal or external love object”; no longer sharing an ego with the mother, the child is to no longer perceive the mother as an object of desire.³⁷ Both boy and girl are expected to shift this object-relationship to the father. But what complicates this process is the same unequal treatment of the boy and girl that Chodorow believes to define their separate preoedipal stages. When faced with the decision of which parent will become the boy’s love object, the son is choosing “between giving up his penis and giving up his parental object.” According to Chodorow, “he makes his choice fast.” With this decision, the son not only “opts for his penis,” but also chooses “repression, so that he will not be subject to castration by his father.” Out of fear of losing his masculinity, sons—such as Legree—permanently turn from their inherited mothering trait.

Daughters, on the other hand, are not so easily cut off from mother and rushed into an oedipal attachment with her. Due to a prolonged preoedipal stage, “there is no single oedipal mode or quick oedipal resolution, and there is no absolute ‘change of object’.”³⁸ Unlike the boy, the girl is unable to transplant completely her fixation on her mother to her father, so that she maintains oedipal attachments to both parents. For Chodorow, “these attachments, and the way they are internalized, are built upon, and do not replace, her intense and exclusive preoedipal attachment to her mother and its

³⁷ This quotation and all preceding quotes in this paragraph come from Chodorow, 127.

³⁸ Chodorow, 127.

internalized counterpart.”³⁹ Not faced with the boy’s crisis of masculinity and penis vs. femininity and castration, the girl is not required to choose so suddenly between parental objects as her male counterpart. And yet, since critics such as Chodorow explore why only girls have been thought to psychologically inherit this mothering trait through these multiple object attachments, it is also worth exploring whether or not the son is in as dire a need to choose between parents and personalities as psychoanalysts have previously thought. Prolonging this decision and separation from the mother could result in more morally responsible and caring men in the public sphere. The young George Shelby is a testament to this “boys as mothers” revolution.

Described as a “bright boy, and well trained in religious things by his mother” (78), Shelby maintains that close relationship with his mother throughout childhood, a bond that St. Clare and Legree eventually break. Interestingly, Stowe does not divulge into further details about this particular mother-son bond—there are no descriptions of the son’s wavering devotion to his mother’s ideals, no power struggle between parents for psychological control over their child. Shelby is simply the son of his mother; but most importantly, he chooses to maintain his intimate bond with his mother even as he approaches adolescence. If Shelby still abides by his mother’s moral teachings rather than turning against them because they represent the antithesis to masculinity, it is as if his decision between a masculine and feminine personality is not made as “fast” as psychoanalysts have previously believed. Like a girl, his attachments have not been made only to sever those maternal ties during his teenage years. Instead, Shelby’s bond with his mother is constructed for keeps.

³⁹ Chodorow, 127.

And yet, the decision that faces Shelby is not an easy one. During this stage of psychological development, boys such as Shelby are destined to perceive their mothers as a gendered other, as a means of defining their own masculinity, power, and superiority: “the boy’s ‘active attachment’ to his mother expresses his sense of difference from and masculine oppositeness to her, in addition to being embedded in the oedipal triangle.”⁴⁰ By making his choice of masculinity over femininity “fast,” the son is quickly pushed into an oedipal attachment that constructs a personality in which the mothering trait is permanently absent. It seems, however, that although Shelby is an active thirteen year old, he still identifies with his mother and her nurturing traits as if his attachment to her is still passive, or preoedipal. His relationship to his mother resembles that of a girl’s, for according to Chodorow, the daughter is not only “concerned with early mother-infant relational issues” but she “sustains the mother-infant exclusivity and the intensity, ambivalence and boundary confusion.”⁴¹ For example, Shelby longs to administer religiously to the slaves on the plantation as he has been religiously instructed by his mother: in one particular scene, “Mas’r George, by request, read the last chapters of Revelation” (78), and afterwards it is declared by young and old that ““a minister couldn’t lay it off better than he did”” (79). Like a daughter, Shelby desires to recreate with the slaves those religiously nurturing moments experienced with his mother as a child. He is reverting back to, in other words, that “good-enough” relationship. If Shelby is administering moral advice and guidance to others, then he is acting as an extension of his mother—he *mothers* as he has been *mothered*.

⁴⁰ Chodorow, 97.

⁴¹ Chodorow, 97.

What seems to be the surfacing, rather than suppression, of the mothering trait is simply the beginning of an internal conflict of attachments to both mother and father. Because Shelby has delayed his transition from preoedipal to oedipal attachment to his mother, thus delaying his penis vs. castration decision, he has become entangled in a relational triangle that involves both parents, a psychological spider web that mirrors the daughter's maternal and paternal entrapment. The inability for the daughter to detach herself completely from the mother in order to shift her focus to the father as the new love object creates a predicament for girls: according to Chodorow, the father is simply added to "her world of primary objects," so that the girl defines herself by a relational triangle that "is imposed upon another inner triangle involving a girl's preoccupation alternately with her internal oedipal and internal preoedipal mother."⁴² With all other preoedipal attachments still intact, the girl perceives the mother as an extension of herself when she is supposed to perceive the mother as a separate individual with whom she is expected to compete for the father's love and affection. The daughter is destined to mother like her mother, yet develop her own personality and individuality that attracts the opposite sex—the father. Nevertheless, the daughter is confused as to which parent becomes the love object during youth.

Likewise, George Shelby suffers from a similar confusion. As a teenager expected to become a plantation owner who will one day replace his father, Shelby still exudes maternal qualities. When asked to read from the Bible, he "very readily consented" (76), enthusiastic to read to those who cannot read themselves. Like his mother, Shelby is eager to instill a moral conscience and religious responsibility in those

⁴² Chodorow, 167.

who seek outside guidance as they construct their own individuality and ego. As a mother, he is manipulating his shared ego with his “children”—the slaves—to filter the outside world as the “children” develop their own egos. This desire to nurture, however, is counteracted by the temptation to mirror his father’s image.

Before Shelby is asked to read from the Bible, the family energetically jumps to their feet to parade around the house, celebrating nothing else but their contentment and happiness with one another within their familial unit—and interestingly Shelby partakes in the festivities. Technically an outsider to Uncle Tom’s family, it is because of his designation on the plantation as the small master, son of the head master, that Shelby’s presence in this scene distorts the picture of a jubilant family and taints his image as an extension of his mother. Rising to his feet, Tom takes his baby girl and “set her on his broad shoulder, and began capering and dancing with her, while Mas’r George snapped at her with his pocket-handkerchief” (75). In this moment, the mother’s son morphs into the father’s son, as he mimics the typical slave master on the average plantation: as “Mas’r George,” a title that is used interchangeably with just the name George, the young Shelby role plays as the slave master; Tom’s youngest child represents the property that will be transferred from Old Shelby to George when George takes over the plantation; and the snapping of the handkerchief mocks the striking of a whip.

For critics such as Barbara Love and Elizabeth Shanklin, this foretelling scene is rather unsurprising. As “property of the father,” the young George Shelby is to transition from young master to plantation owner when the time arrives for the father to cede power

and control of the plantation to his son.⁴³ As a “wise and pious” (85) man who believes that slavery is a necessary institution, Mr. Shelby would nevertheless encourage the little slave-and-master play his son and Uncle Tom perform. As the sole legal guardian of his son, fathers such as Mr. Shelby “might apprentice the child, determine how and whether it was educated, and make all decisions relative to its well-being and health—in opposition to the preferences of the mother and child.”⁴⁴ Mr. Shelby would have been delighted to have witnessed first hand his son’s “apprenticeship” in Uncle Tom’s cabin. The young Shelby’s acceptance of the role as slave master—and as a grown man physically performing the slave play that is enacted here—is an acceptance of power and control that corrupt the religious principles of compassion instilled within the son by the mother.

Shelby’s participation in this relational triangle intensifies when Uncle Tom is sold from the plantation. Possessing masculine and feminine personality traits from his attachment to both parents results in dramatic emotional and psychological mood swings. In one moment he is snapping his handkerchief at Tom’s baby girl; in the next, he is crying hysterically at Tom’s departure. Discovering late into the morning that Tom has been sold, Shelby races into town intent on seeing his beloved Tom for possibly the last time: as Tom sits in the wagon outside the shop awaiting Haley’s return, he recognizes the sound of horse’s hooves on the road and “before he could fairly awake from his surprise, young master George sprang into the wagon, threw his arms tumultuously round

⁴³ In their article “The Answer Is Matriarchy,” Love and Shanklin assert that “mothers bear children for nine months within their bodies, and labor—even at the risk of their lives—to give birth to their children.” This labor only amounts to a separation of mother and child as the child “becomes the property of the father” (276).

⁴⁴ Love and Shanklin, 276.

his neck, and was sobbing and scolding with energy” (170-1). As an adolescent freshly introduced into the teenage phase of his youth, Shelby’s reaction is slightly childish and completely feminine. Shelby’s emotional reaction to Tom’s departure occurs not because one of the family’s slaves has been sold but because a member of the family has been sold. Although patriarchy ruled the nineteenth century as it rules the twenty-first century, it is a system capable of dramatic change—enough to exchange the patriarchy for a matriarchy.⁴⁵ Hence, Mrs. Shelby has begun the matriarchal revolution by instilling within her son’s moral conscience the desire to nurture, provide and care for those who cannot care for themselves.

By fondly referring to Tom as “Uncle,” the young George Shelby identifies Tom as a blood relation and marginalizes him from the entire race of dehumanized slaves classified as property. Shelby is the son who finally comprehends a mother’s pain when separated from her child—a mother, in other words, who is no longer permitted to nurture her own child. As Philip Fisher has noted, “sentimentality, by its experimental extension of humanity to prisoners, slaves, madmen, children, and animals, exactly reverses the process of slavery itself which has at its core the withdrawal of human status from a part of humanity.”⁴⁶ With Shelby’s insistent use of “Uncle,” he has replaced the human qualities into the slavery system that current and past generations of politicians and public leaders have intentionally removed to avoid personal attachments with the slaves.

⁴⁵ For Love and Shanklin, a matriarchy is the foundation for a nurturing society that cares deeply for all of its members, regardless of sex, race, and class. In their concept of matriarchy, mother and child are not separated from one another; rather, the child turned individual “is nurtured deeply in a secure relationship with her/his mother.” The nurtured will eventually become the nurturer. As matriarchy provides “the basis for the elimination of the patriarchal state” through “the liberation of the maternal function from subservience to warrior institutions,” the system simultaneously passes the nurturing trait down from mother to child, generation to generation (280).

⁴⁶ Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*, 100.

Uncle Tom is no longer a “thing”—he is a man, and just as importantly, Shelby’s intimate companion and family member.

Under the religious teachings and anti-slavery influence of his mother, Shelby constructs familial bonds with those he cares for the most, even if these existential members are not directly related to the Shelby family. Raised by an exemplary mother who champions love and compassion for others through the intimate relationships established with “inferiors”—such as slaves—Shelby constructs this close, familial bond with Tom within Tom and Aunt Chloe’s domestic sphere, just as Mrs. Shelby bonds with George within her domestic sphere. This love and affection, Alice C. Crozier argues, is a product of both familial bonds and the mother’s Christian influence: under the religious direction of the mother, children are taught that love originates from Christ and that others should be loved the same as Christ loves them and everyone, everywhere. Similar to the matriarchy, if families and communities practice this spiritual love, then, according to Crozier, “there will be no possibility of conflict” among society.⁴⁷ This love is “socially as well as spiritually efficacious”; and it is this Christian humanity, accompanied with Love and Shanklin’s concept of nurturing, that mothers such as Mrs. Shelby religiously instill within sons such as George, who will spark the spiritual revolution in the public sphere.⁴⁸

Furthermore, Gillian Brown asserts that “Stowe replaces the master-child relation with the benign proprietorship of mother-child, transferring the ownership of slaves to the mothers of America.”⁴⁹ With this transfer, slaves are now “synonymous with children

⁴⁷ Alice C. Crozier, *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 19.

⁴⁸ Crozier, 19.

⁴⁹ Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*, 32.

because they lack title for themselves”: because Shelby identifies Tom as a child—rather than slave—he constructs the appropriate familial bond with him as he role plays as “mother” or guardian, and loves him as a “mother” in mourning when he is robbed of his “child.”⁵⁰ To complicate matters further, it is his separation from Tom that shows Shelby the truly ugly condition of his state and nation.⁵¹ Throughout breaks in the sobbing, therefore, Shelby exclaims “It’s a nasty, mean shame! If I was a man, they shouldn’t do it,—they should not, so!” (171). In this proclamation there is a bizarre mixture of feminine sentimentality and bold masculine declarations, for Shelby is both emotionally ravaged—as a woman and mother—and enraged—as a man—at the discovery that Tom has been sold for the property his father perceives him to be. Interestingly, this is not the first and last declaration of its kind: when Haley exits the shop and discovers Shelby next to the wagon, shaking compulsively with anger and disgust, Haley remarks that “ ’tan’t any meaner sellin’ on ‘em, that ‘t is buyin’!,” to which Shelby replies “I’ll never do either, when I’m a man” (173). This time, there is no weeping, no hesitation in Shelby’s prophecy. Drying his tears, he shifts from the unconfident language of “*If I was a man*” and “they *shouldn’t* do it” to the determination that “I’ll *never* do either, *when I’m a man.*” With this proclamation at thirteen, Shelby confirms his entry into adolescence, and eventually adulthood, with a complete adoption of his mother’s moral conscience, choosing to remain within her domestic sphere—unlike Legree and St. Clare—as he

⁵⁰ Brown, 32.

⁵¹ Stephanie A. Smith pays particular attention to the moral condition of nineteenth-century America in her book *Conceived by Liberty: Maternal Figures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. “For Stowe,” she notes, “the hypocrisy of American independence, the ‘vain-glory’ of a country that condemned the despotism of Europe while enslaving a whole people, could be righted once under the peaceable influence of a motherly Christianity” (91). Such hypocrisy confronts Shelby now.

prepares to fulfill his word as man of the deepest compassion, love, and faith, battling the evils of slavery.

But more importantly, the tears and the heartache mark the moment in which Shelby's relational triangle is resolved. Chodorow argues that daughters will resolve this internal conflict only when they become mothers themselves: "given the triangular situation and emotional asymmetry of her own parenting, a woman's relation to a man requires on the level of psychic structure a third person, since it was originally established in a triangle."⁵² A child replaces the daughter's mother as the missing but sought-after element in the relational triangle. Furthermore, the child enables the daughter to maintain "a new place in the triangle—a maternal place in relation to her own child."⁵³ Thus, the reproduction of mothering is complete, successfully passed from mother to daughter, generation after generation. Yet it is possible for the mothering trait to take a permanent place in the son's ego. Shelby solidifies his own son turned mother transformation in this relational triangle when he experiences the loss of his own child—Uncle Tom. It is not until Tom is sold that Shelby realizes the significance of their relationship: it takes the loss of the "child" to prove that Shelby had a child from the beginning. With Tom's forced departure, the "mother and son" bond is ruptured before the "child" is ready to develop at its own pace its own ego and individuality separate from the mother. In Shelby's case, there is no satisfaction in the resolution of his relational conflict because just as the bill of sale confirms his maternal status, it just as quickly divorces the "child" from the "mother." Shelby is faced with yet another

⁵² Chodorow, 201.

⁵³ Chodorow, 201.

dilemma—how to recover the “child” that is to bring the satisfaction Chodorow describes.

The young George Shelby’s maternal love and devotion are confirmed after Mr. Shelby’s death and upon the arrival of Ophelia’s letter that Tom’s new location and whereabouts are unaccountable. Upon the news that St. Clare’s lawyer has no record of Tom’s living conditions, Mrs. Shelby and George reach a remarkable conclusion: “Neither...could be easy at this result; and, accordingly, some six months after, the latter, having business for his mother, down the river, resolved to visit New Orleans, in person, and push his inquiries, in hopes of discovering Tom’s whereabouts, and restoring him” (587). Here, Shelby has become both a literal and figurative extension of the mother; on the one hand, he is traveling from home to settle business accounts for his mother, the now “sole executrix” (587) of all the Shelby estates. On the other hand, because Shelby is his mother’s “constant and faithful assistant” (586), he is appointed the task of drifting away from the domestic sphere in order to rescue Tom and restore him to a system of humanity.

Just as importantly, the decision for Shelby to leave home in order to rescue Tom is a joint decision made by the pair. Mrs. Shelby does not instruct George to leave, nor does George authoritatively tell her that he is on a mission to recover his lost “child.” Without any discussion at all, mother and son simultaneously understand what must be done to rebuild their broken family. In this instance, it is as if Mrs. Shelby and George have reverted to that preoedipal stage in which mother and child are one entity, the only difference here being that the mother and child roles are reversed. Jessica Benjamin asserts that during this stage, the mother attempts to link “the newborn’s past, inside of

her, with his future, outside of her, as a separate person”; in other words, she is anticipating the child’s future beyond this initial relationship in which the child is solely dependent upon her to satisfy all its needs.⁵⁴ Mother speaks, thinks, and acts for baby until baby can speak, think, and act himself. Yet Mrs. Shelby has successfully instilled within her son a conscience, an “invisible mother,” that will control George’s decisions and actions. She has created a moral extension of herself. Because Mrs. Shelby cannot cross into the political sphere to retrieve Tom herself, her son is sent in her place, the man who will now speak, think, and act on behalf of the reunited couple. As the mother naturally understood the needs of her child, so does the child comprehend the desires of the mother, for their desires and needs are now the same. Hence, we arrive at a moment in the novel in which George and his mother acknowledge what actions must be taken and what decisions must be made without even engaging in conversation.

Under the direction of his mother, Shelby successfully uncovers the mystery surrounding Tom’s living arrangements; and it is a discovery that pulls the most emotional, excruciating reactions from the depths of Shelby’s heart and soul. Similar to his passionate, yet heated, outbursts as a boy—which, incidentally, mock his mother’s emotional reaction to his father’s news that Eliza and Harry have been sold—Shelby once again mirrors that image of his youth as he mourns for Tom on behalf of his absent mother *and* out of his own maternal love for his “child.” His interactions with Tom develop into a series of sentimental lamentations: when Shelby first enters the shack, “he felt his head giddy and his heart sick” (589); as Tom praises God for Shelby’s appearance, Shelby cries out with “impetuous vehemence” that “You shan’t die! you!

⁵⁴ Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*, 13.

Mustn't die, nor think of it!" (589); and as Tom breathes his last, Shelby cannot suppress his grief any longer as he exclaims, "O, don't die! It'll kill me!—it'll break my heart to think what you've suffered" (590). With each passing moment, Shelby's emotions become that much more intense; and yet, each feminine response to Tom's earthly demise complements Shelby's masculinity.⁵⁵

Shelby's sobbing is, in fact, shedding tears that "did honor to his manly heart" (589). It is his compassion that consequently ignites the hatred for Legree until Shelby loses his composure and "with one indignant blow, knocked Legree flat upon his face" (592). It is the love and compassion instilled within Shelby that fuel his matronly desire to avenge Tom's untimely and unjustified death by attacking Legree. If Shelby failed to retain his mother's ideals, surely it is safe to assume that his feelings for Tom would have lacked that familial intimacy. In fact, without his mother's compassion, Shelby would have never searched for Tom in the first place, for he would have lacked the love that enables him and his mother to identify slaves as people, not property, worth fighting for.

This compassion extends to the ultimate gesture on the Shelby plantation: freeing all the slaves in order to hire them as laborers, Shelby accredits Tom for the decision, stating to the free slaves to "Think of your freedom, every time you see Uncle Tom's Cabin; and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps, and be honest and faithful and Christian as he was" (617). Shelby's tender, maternal bond with Uncle Tom influences his political decision to uphold the promise made to Haley with Tom serving as witness—that he would never own a slave as a grown man. The emancipation

⁵⁵ In his article "The Moral Aesthetics of Sentimentality: A Missing Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," Gregg Camfield asserts that because the current generation of public businessmen failed to fuse domestic and political sentiments, Stowe implies that "reason's inability to resolve doubt...prevents moral action" (342). Reason, therefore, is virtually ineffective without an emotional investment in the particular issue.

of the slaves on the Shelby plantation is only the beginning of a much larger social movement, for, as Amy Kaplan posits, domesticity and the mother's influence have become "more mobile and less stabilizing"; and although the destabilization is presented by Kaplan in negative connotations, the positive message within the "more mobile" phase suggests that the mother's army is on the move.⁵⁶

With George Shelby's successful transformation into a mother, he both literally and figuratively expands the mother's empire over male-dominated society and culture. Under his mother's influence, Shelby incorporates into the public realm the moral convictions and religious ideals necessary to advance the anti-slavery movement. Because the novel concludes on this high note, Stowe's final farewell implies that emancipation rests first in the mother's hands before that power is transferred to the son. Furthermore, she proposes a concept that is not fully researched until the twentieth century by psychoanalysts such as Chodorow: that when boys are treated as girls throughout infantile psychological development and the preoedipal stage, boys will choose to remain their mother's extension as adults. And like the mother, the son will only find satisfaction in life only when he in turn becomes a mother—a mother to slaves. It is through the sentiments in the novel that Stowe encourages her mother readers to oppose a system that has long been corrupt and ignored; just as importantly, she proves through her mother characters and their relationships with their children, specifically their sons, that they are capable of completing the work that men in the public realm fail to finish. Even though mothers and women are prevented from participating in political activism outside the home, they are, however, empowered within their sphere to instill

⁵⁶ Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity": 583.

their anti-slavery convictions into those who will labor for the abolition cause on their behalf—the son. For Stowe, boys *will* become mothers.

Works Cited

- Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Random House, 1988.
- Brown, Gillian. *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- Camfield, Gregg. "The Moral Aesthetics of Sentimentality: A Missing Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 43 (December 1988): 319-345.
- Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.
- Crew, Hilary S. "Feminist Theories and the Voices of Mothers and Daughters in Selected African-American Literature for Young Adults." *African-American Voices in Young Adult Literature: Tradition, Transition, Transformation*. Ed. Karen Patricia Smith. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1994. 79-114.
- Crozier, Alice C. *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. New York: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Dally, Ann. *Inventing Motherhood: The Consequences of an Ideal*. New York: Schocken Books, 1983.
- Doane, Janice L. and Devon Hodges. *From Klein to Kristeva : Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992.
- Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977.

- Fisher, Philip. *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Jacobus, Mary. *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Joswick, Thomas P. “‘The Crown Without the Conflict’: Religious Values and Moral Reasoning in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 39 (December 1984): 253-274.
- Kaplan, Amy. “Manifest Domesticity.” *American Literature* 70 (September 1998): 581-606.
- Kim, Jin Ok. “Female Sexuality and Identity: Freud, Klein, and Chodorow.” *Journal of English Language and Literature/Yonggo Yongmunhak* 45 (Winter 1999): 935-54.
- Kitch, Sally L. “Motherlands and Foremothers: African-American Women’s Texts and the Concept of Relationship.” *Analyzing the Different Voice: Feminist Psychological Theory and Literary Texts*. Ed. Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998. 141-65.
- Love, Barbara and Elizabeth Shanklin. “The Answer Is Matriarchy.” *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*. Ed. Joyce Trebilcot. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984. 275-83.
- Ryan, Mary P. *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Smith, Stephanie A. *Conceived by Liberty: Maternal Figures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994.

- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.
- Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Yellin, Jean Fagan. "Doing It Herself: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Woman's Role in the Slavery Crisis." *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. 85-105.
- Welter, Barbara. *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1976.