3 Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Clarence*, Sentimental Kinship, and the Transnational American Novel of Manners

In the novel of manners, the depiction of marginalized and precarious subjects relies heavily on sentimentalist tropes to express ambivalent transnational belonging. Catharine Maria Sedgwick's novel *Clarence: Or, A Tale of Our Own Times* (1830), arguably the first novel of manners in the United States,[1] is riven with sentimentalist political strategies of sympathy-building in the interest of both abolitionism and anti-consumerism. In the context of Sedgwick's prolific career and her attention to several different but equally important social issues (including slavery, interracial relationships, trans-Atlantic trade and mobility, patriarchy, and consumerism), *Clarence* draws attention to two kinds of transnational genealogies: first, the trans-Atlantic kinship genealogies that connect the United States, the Caribbean, and England into a tightly-knit structure, a backdrop against which the formation of the US nation-state occurred via social, cultural, economic, and political structures; and second, the trans-Atlantic currents[2] that impacted the formation of novelistic genres in American literature, especially the formation of the novel of manners. These two genealogies converge in Sedgwick's *Clarence* in the form of a rampant discourse on American exceptionalism, especially since the very occasion of Sedgwick's experimentation with the novel of manners genre were British author Maria Edgeworth's insinuations that American literature lacked cultural finesse.[3] Still, Sedgwick's depiction of transnational kinship structures complicates assumptions about typically American socioeconomic phenomena.

Sedgwick encodes this ambivalent transnational belonging present throughout *Clarence* in the discourses on sentimentalism prevalent in the early nineteenth century. Following Joanne Dobson's contention that "Sentimentalism envisions the self-in-relation" (267) and that we can recognize sentimental literature "by its concern with subject matter that privileges affectional ties, and by conventions and tropes designed to convey the primary vision of human connection in a dehumanized world" (268), in this chapter I discuss how Sedgwick links what registers as US values with a transnational responsibility for the unequal distribution of social wealth accrued through America's trade relationships with the West Indies before and since the Monroe Doctrine (1823). In this

sense, Sedgwick's novel embraces the same affective-interpellative strategies as the domestic novel and thus conjures up readerly attachments to a national discourse that celebrates the prevalence of higher, American values that ultimately underwrite exceptionalism through the persona of the morally superior and amiable Gertrude Clarence, but at the same time calls to memory the colonial and exploitative economics of America's international trade relations and the moral responsibility of the genteel class who benefitted greatly from them. To be sure, Sedgwick does not engage in an exploration of the circum-Atlantic slave trade or the intersecting routes of coerced mobility of African laborers as depicted in Olaudah Equiano's *Narrative*. Instead, it depicts an emerging New York City upper-class whose historical connections to these trans-Atlantic economies are the conditions for their material wealth and, so the novel suggests, the moral basis for their responsibility towards less fortunate citizens. This ethics concerning the social distribution of wealth becomes most pronounced in Gertrude's decision to save her friend Emilie Layton from an arranged marriage to the Spaniard Pedrillo, presumably a merchant from Cuba (who—the reader learns towards the end of the novel—is actually a US citizen who defected to the West Indies in order to avoid criminal charges). Both the national and the transnational are expressed through the mode of sentimentalism as an aesthetic experience. As Karen Weyler argues, "The fortunes made, lost, and stolen throughout the novel almost all had their origins in the West Indies" (239), Sedgwick's novel suggests that "the degree to which the social and commercial worlds of New York depended on wealth generated in the Caribbean by shipping slave-produced goods" (239) and that the money that circulates as "the reader intuits, is tainted from its origins and continues to be associated as much with greed and sorrow as with joy and the independence that wealth can bring" (240). On the level of plot, the transnational nature of the United States' implication in complex relationships with the West Indies—once its fellow colony under British rule, now one of its primary sources of slave-produced commodities—becomes tangible through the disclosure of the Clarences' transnational kinship ties. Sedgwick's novel keeps a transnational conversation with the British novels of manners, and its adaptation of the genre to expand on the societal constellations of the American middle class carries significant valence.[4]

In what follows, I explore Sedgwick's aesthetic strategies of appealing to readers' national identification and transnational responsibility simultaneously.[5] I begin by addressing the affective work of sentimental fiction on its readers and its potential to serve as a community-building project precisely because sentimental literature engages both the reader's shared sense of kinship and their assumptions about sentimentalism. How do sentimental discourses and narrative patterns encode the family as a compelling stand-in for the nation-state, thus urging readers to think about governing structures of the nation-state in terms of family structures? How does Sedgwick's novel balance national community-building and

the notion of a transnational responsibility? In an attempt to address these questions fully, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first explores how sentimentalism, as an affective mode, establishes ambivalent transnational belonging by discussing how sentimentalism operates and how Sedgwick's equal embrace of national and transnational tropes complicates the sentimentalist social imaginaries dominant in later sentimental novels. In the second part, I offer an analysis of Sedgwick's partial adoption of an exceptionalist American discourse founded in, and honoring, morality and responsibility. Her particular American exceptionalism emerged out of a dialogue with English contemporaries, where Sedgwick counters English stereotypes about the absence of cultural significance in the United States. In the third part, I address aspects of Sedgwick's trans-Atlantic imaginary and her appropriation of the trope of kinship to construct a sense of community beyond the immediate family and beyond the nation-state. Finally, I attend to Sedgwick's use of death scenes not only as generators of affect in the sense of sentimentalist literary projects, but also as a plot device that intercepts the disclosure of the family narratives' inherently ambivalent meaning. The deaths in Sedgwick's *Clarence* prune down the complex family tree full of interethnic and transnational kinship ties into a nuclear family ideal through which the sentimentalist project can fulfill its nation-building mission.[6]

Sentimentalism and Affective (Trans-)National Belonging

Sentimentalism is the main affective idiom of seduction novels, domestic novels, and novels of manners, and therefore holds an especially important place in American literary history.[7] In particular, it is the micro-social contexts of sentimentalism's function and effect that yield specific insights into its cultural relevance. While sentimentalism pursues the project of binding citizens to the nation-state via affective interpellation, it is important to differentiate the nuances of sentimental identification that literary texts may generate. The regional differences between northern and southern authors of sentimental fiction, for instance, suggest a wide range of practices and emplotments of sentimentalism that ultimately produced different ideas about what constitutes the sentimental. For instance, Cindy Weinstein's project focuses on the idea that "sympathy is produced, dispensed, and received in a variety of contexts, whether regional, political, reformist, judicial, literary, that goes beyond the framework of the biological family [a]nd each of them helps constitute sympathy differently" (6). Weinstein's point that sympathy is all too often conceived of as a product of literary texts rather than a process of literary reading contextualizes the role of sentimentalism within the larger domain of aesthetic experience, and brings to the fore "alternative models of sympathy which, when examined, enrich our understanding of the multiple ways in which sympathy was imagined and practiced" (3).[8]

The sentimental political rhetoric of literary texts offers detailed accounts of domestic life that functions synecdochically for the American nation writ large. The societal constellations depicted in the domestic novel, for instance, are representational of larger political circumstances, and the domestic therefore needs to be understood as indexing both the domestic space of the household as well as domestic-national social and material conditions. Swooning ladies, tear-struck gentlemen, broken promises, and misplaced keepsakes are some of the staples of the hyperbolic expression of feeling we commonly associate with sentimental novels. They are also the very reasons why the literary and cultural merit of sentimental fiction was highly contested—in some cases even outright denied. But these hyperbolic expressions of feeling come in many guises—sentimentalism, sentimentality, sentimental political discourse, sentimental rhetoric—and have shifted from genre definitions (aesthetic qualities set against the American romance and plot scenarios set in the public realm) to definitions of readerly affect prompted by the text.[9] This affective work of sentimental literature has not only redeemed the consistently disregarded literary production of nineteenth-century women writers beyond the Douglas–Tompkins debate, but also redirected the focus of inquiry away from questions concerning genre properties[10] to concerns of aesthetic experience. This is noteworthy because New Criticism regarded sentimental literature as irrelevant for questions about aesthetics and form. For instance, Faye Halpern's *Sentimental Readers: The Rise, Fall, and Revival of a Disparaged Rhetoric* (2013) speaks of a "sentimentalist rhetoric" that focuses less on the genre-properties of sentimental fiction and more on the rhetorical strategies of sentimentalist political projects at large, asking important questions about the sentimental politics of readers and the communicative situation designed to elicit readerly affect. Similarly, Joanne Dobson's essay "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature" (1997) concludes by placing sentimental literature into a larger context of literary history or the history of thought, noting that it "is a crucial link between an older philosophical vision in which human relations are by and large infused with religious imperatives, certainties, consolations, and a modern literary worldview in which human bonds are seriously problematized—tenuous, fleeting, misconstructed" (280).

Sentimental literature therefore contributed to the *Bildung* of white middle-class sensibility and proper American national identity at a time when the newly independent United States negotiated its simultaneous status as former colony and emerging imperial power, both internationally and within national relations to Native American and African American communities.[11] Sentimental literature depends on readers' ability to develop a sense of kinship with the narrative world as well as with what Lauren Berlant terms an "intimate public sphere" (*The Female Complaint* viii). The notion of an intimate public of a text, a form of aesthetic response that Jennifer L. Brady has termed "reading with feeling" (726), invites us to ask "how sentiment circulates" (721). Brady analyzes

the processes of aesthetic experience of sentimental texts and their implication towards a political public consciousness—that is, the effect of the text to motivate the reading public to act benevolently. Brady's argument is that the aesthetic response to sentimental literature, because it is read in the domestic sphere, occurs at the same time as the more general engagement with the public because the aesthetic object requires a certain public for its reception (such as an awareness that there must be other readers who are also reading the same sentimental text). Sedgwick's own work is paradigmatic of this social function of sentimentalism which, together with her notoriety in Eastern Massachusetts, made her an influential political agitator of her time.

To think of sentimentalism as a process of affective identification—and not primarily as a narrative genre—also points towards sentimentalism's larger political effect of consolidating the nation-state. This role of sentimental attachments and emotion in general connects feeling to citizenship. This connection exceeds its epistemological dimension as a feminized affective attachment. George E. Marcus's notion of the "sentimental citizen" (141), for instance, highlights the impact of emotions in the mobilization of the democratic electorate for participation in the nation-building process. Marcus argues that in the early Republic, sentiment, while initially pitted against reason, became a successful idiom for the unification of the American public.[12] For instance, James Madison urged in the *Federalist Papers* (1788) that reason and emotion ought to find a balance within state governance if the different feelings towards the nation-state were to become consolidated. Marcus argues that the various "attachments are partial, driven by interest and passion" and that "[p]assions are provincial" (23), which led to the conscious devise of political strategies "persuad[ing] the public to do the work of citizenship" so that "a better democracy will result" (26). In turn, sentimental literature provided affective structures through which citizenship could be practiced via the vicarious emotional experience of literary suffering agents.

Lauren Berlant calls families "affect-saturated institutions" ("Poor Eliza" 638). At the time of the American Revolution and throughout the antebellum era, authors employed families as the dominant setting in which American national and foreign politics resonated with the domestic life of many protagonists. In the history of the American nation, this was a time characterized by "a dialectic between the moment of union (in 1776 and 1878) and that of disunion (in 1861–65)" (Loughran, *The Republic in Print* xxiii). The idea of the family as the locus where public and private spheres converge is especially prevalent in sentimentalist literature. In this sense, the domestic novel and the novel of manners are suffused with gender and racial politics, and encapsulate the sentimentalist political rhetoric that aided in the consolidation of the American nation-state.

By attending to questions about belonging and identification, about family genealogy and kinship constellation, and about sympathy and recognition, gendered tropes such as the notion of "republican motherhood" (Kerber) and "true womanhood" (Welter) circulated in popular literature, especially in poetry, pamphlets and conduct books, and facilitated the dissemination of what Barbara Welter has identified as the "cardinal values" of respectable womanhood: "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Welter 152). While the historical novel and the romance devoted attention to the allegorical reiterations of the connection between the individual and the state, the domestic novel and the novel of manners explored the emotive qualities of relationships between and among individuals as metaphoric representations of state-directed affective attachments. Their primary affective attachments operated along the lines of sentimentalism.

Sentimentalist genres employ the rhetorical construction of family qua nation-state and vice versa *par excellence*. Kinship, in turn, is a particularly fruitful avenue into the analogous depictions of families as stand-ins for the nation-state. Kinship constellations include family genealogy as well as constructed notions of kinship articulated through feelings of belonging, responsibility, and identification, a range of affective desires that broadens the scope of sentimental political discourses. As Cindy Weinstein argues in *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2004), "To extend the meaning of family is to extend the possibilities for sympathy" (9) toward an affectively shaped literary imagination of kinship ties cutting across the lines of gender, class, and race.

As much as the sentimental political project aids in the consolidation of a national sense of unity, its affective structures equally interpellate transnationally. This is to be understood in line with a broader transnational reception of American literature and with American literature's interest in transnational topics.[13] The sentimental aesthetic appeal of nineteenth-century American domestic novels, seduction novels, novels of manners, and slave narratives also resonated with the political mood of European readers. Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimentalist urtext *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) provided a structure of feelings that resonated with various political concerns, both nationally and transnationally. Caroline F. Levander's argument about the transference of sentimentalism from the US abolitionist context to that of post-World War II Germany sheds light on the transnational and transhistoric basis of political identification employed by sentimentalist discourses centering on kinship constellations (*Where is American Literature?* 183–184). Large-scale transnational movements such as trans-Atlantic abolitionism are, of course, anchored to national governance. And while the English slave trade officially ended in 1804, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* succeeded in generating phenomenal international interest in the injustices of slavery. To this end, Levander notes that the

success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the United States (300,000 copies sold in 1852 alone) was matched by its international acclaim (1.5 million copies in Britain in the first five years) (52). However, the aesthetic effect of sentimentalist narratives is not to be mistaken for universalist sensual impressions. As Sedgwick's novel shows, sentimental political strategies prompt aesthetic experiences situated at the ambivalent crossroads of national and transnational heuristics.[14]

While the transnational reception of Stowe's novel suggests that sentimentalism translates across cultural difference and can interpellate readers outside the specific nation-building myths promoted by sentimentalist narratives, sentimentalism builds on nascent ideas about national belonging through cultural narratives of social order. In particular, Sedgwick's experimentation with the novel of manners needs to be understood as an act of patriotism to fend off British criticism of the American literary scene of the first decades of the nineteenth century. This tension between the establishment of an explicitly American literary genre adapted from British bestselling sentimental novels but evoking a decidedly transnational imaginary is symptomatic of Sedgwick's own ambivalence towards the US nation-building project and her fervent criticism of American colonization, slavery, and imperialism. A highly political author, she seemed to have an opinion on many of the cultural and political issues of her time: she wrote about the lives and morals of her time in a rural setting in *A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New England Character and Manners* (1822), the urban setting of New York City in *Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times* (1830) and the injustices of slavery in *Redwood: A Tale* (1824), often with the intention of excavating the American historical lineage to settler colonialism, as in *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times on the Massachusetts* (1827) or to the time of the American Revolution, as in *The Linwoods; or, Sixty Years Since in America* (1835), or on antebellum debates about (white, middle-class) women's role in society, as discussed in *Home* (1850) or *Married or Single?* (1857). She was well known in her time, especially as a member of a very prominent Berkshire region family, then almost forgotten—like many other female authors of the nineteenth century who were often rated second-best to contemporary male authors of romance novels, philosophical treatises, detective fiction, socially critical non-fiction, and adventure novels. Today, Sedgwick has regained some of her popularity, even though a large portion of her oeuvre is only available in unpleasant letter-page format, reproduced in multiple volumes, sometimes featuring damaged pages taken from antique originals, and has thus fallen victim to contemporary taxonomies of canon formation and dissemination strategies, both of which tend to reaffirm existing assumptions about early American literature.[15] However, her political project in *Clarence* and her other novels still endorses affective tropes and genre conventions, which ultimately index her exceptionalist belief in US moral superiority.

Clarence, Exceptionalism, and the American Novel of Manners

In her travel account *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), the English novelist Frances Milton Trollope offers an ambivalent and ultimately negative account of American social manners at the time of the early Republic. While she spends several long pages describing the beauty of the natural landscape of Pennsylvania and the friendly disposition of the many Americans she meets, she condescendingly offers a list of Americans' character flaws:

> The total and universal want of manners, both in males and females, is so remarkable, that I was constantly endeavouring to account for it. It certainly does not proceed from want of intellect. I have listened to much dull and heavy conversation in America, but rarely to any that I could strictly call silly … They appear to me to have clear heads and active intellects; are more ignorant on subjects that are only of conversational value, than on such as are of intrinsic importance; but there is no charm, no grace in their conversations. I very seldom during my whole stay in the country heard a sentence elegantly turned, and correctly pronounced from the lips of an American. There is always something either in the expression or the accent that jars the feeling and shocks the taste.
>
> (56)

Trollope's quips belong to an extensive cross-cultural debate about the value of American culture. Sedgwick entered this debate a decade before Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by making the historical and societal grandeur of American culture the subject of many of her novels, even before the "d___ed mob of scribbling women" lamented by Nathanial Hawthorne became an issue. In other words, it was not women's literature that was under attack, but American literature writ large.

Sedgwick was aware of this criticism of American literature and culture because she was involved in a trans-Atlantic intellectual conversation with the Anglo-Irish bestseller author Maria Edgeworth, in part out of spite for Edgeworth's negative comments about American society. Their epistolary conversations document the intellectual debates Sedgwick had with Edgeworth, and also serve as a repository/archive of ideas for Sedgwick's novels, including *Redwood*, *Hope Leslie*, and *The Linwoods* (see Homestead, "Introduction" 19). Edgeworth, for instance, took note of Sedgwick's novels and, in her role as an Anglo-Irish bestselling author, issued some well-intended but ambivalent advice to Sedgwick. Like Trollope would a decade later, Edgeworth also felt that America had no "tradition" (73), and therefore was an unfit subject for historical

novels; she also advised Sedgwick not to attend to English subject matter, arguing that the perspective of a "transatlantick [sic] writer" (73) would lack the cultural insights and detailed depictions demanded by contemporary culture. Sedgwick and Edgeworth did not write to each other directly, but corresponded through an intermediary, the South Carolina schoolteacher Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, who forwarded the passages in which Edgeworth discussed Sedgwick's writing to her (see Homestead, "Introduction" 16-17). Through this correspondence, Edgeworth commented on Sedgwick's novels, which she—arguably in order to attract Edgeworth's attention—arranged to be published in London.

What Edgeworth and Sedgwick (via Lazarus) did not discuss in their letters—or at least there is no record of it—is Sedgwick's idea for *Clarence*. This is a curious absence because *Clarence* is closely modeled after Edgeworth's highly successful novel of manners, *Belinda* (1801, reprinted in New England in 1814). Sedgwick adheres to similar plot patterns, including such devices as masquerade and mistaken identities; a heroine negotiating a perilous marriage market; upper-class women who fall prey to consumerism; upper-class men prone to drinking, gambling, and dueling; and a redemptive plot turn brought about by the heroine's high morals (see Homestead, "Introduction" 21). Sedgwick even adopts the name of Edgeworth's male protagonist, Clarence Hervey from *Belinda*, to connect him in name to her female protagonist, Gertrude Clarence. All these maneuvers create an intertextual relationship between Sedgwick and Edgeworth and, by extension, between American and British literature. Edgeworth once commented that American novels are inferior because "there's no high life in them" (MacDonald 334); this commentary also appears in *Clarence* when a minor character argues that she "never read[s] *American* novels, there's no high life in them" (334, emphasis in original) and therefore counters Edgeworth's disregard for American literature as expressed in her letter to Lazarus and subsequently from Lazarus to Sedgwick. These meta-textual references about the quality of American literature are characteristic of Sedgwick's experimentation with the novel of manners in light of the intense trans-Atlantic conversation with British arts and literatures that shaped the literary scene of the early Republic. Her determination to capture the real life of upper-class New England and to demonstrate its espousal of high moral codices is also expressed in the narrative's ethnographic gestures.[16]

Nevertheless, the occasion of Sedgwick's writing, namely her defense of American artistic ingenuity and societal decorum, brings forth a stark exceptionalism that postulates the notion of an idealized American identity. This includes moments in the novel where the protagonists equate moral virtues with American identity, where they prepare for the inquisitive gaze of the English visitor Edmund Stuart, and where Gertrude's agency as a white, upper middle-class woman allows her to intercept an arranged marriage and thereby save her friend Emilie Layton from having to move to Cuba. In each of these examples, the Clarences are convinced

that it is their duty as wealthy Americans to help others, and thereby to sustain the moral codices that distinguish America's greatness among the world's nations. This association of American identity with moral goodness, much in the fashion of the Second Great Awakening, is also a central theme of the novel's meta-referentiality. As a novel of manners, which captures the manners and morals of Sedgwick's times—hence the subtitle "A Tale of Our Own Times"—*Clarence* includes a subplot where the standards of American middle-class life are being evaluated by an English visitor and addressed explicitly in the dialogues among the American protagonists.[17] The novel is riven with smaller references that define American taxonomies, including comments on social life and decorum, as well as American values important to—but not always honored by—Sedgwick's protagonists. In fact, one of Gertrude's first deeds as a young woman, three years after first her brother's and subsequently her mother's death, is to prepare the Clarence household for a visit by the English gentleman Edmund Stuart, whose visit to New England is the basis for a travel book he intends to write. Stuart's visit is met with a high degree of excitement and anxiety, as suggested by the preparatory instructions of the household staff over the menu and its proper British (rather than American) names. Gertrude's determination to fend off Stuart's "colonial condescension" (Buell, "American Literary Emergence" 417) materializes in the novel's exceptionalist rhetoric in order to name the specific characteristics of American culture, especially in contradistinction to British culture. One such issue is the linguistic variation of American English, a hot topic at the time of Sedgwick's publication of *Clarence*.[18] To the reported insult that Stuart emphasizes "how disagreeable Americanisms are to English ears" (156), Gertrude's father Charles Clarence insists on American independence by saying "do let us remember that in America we speak to American ears, and if any terms peculiar to us have as much intrinsic propriety as the English, let us have the independence to retain them" (156). The theme of American independence recurs several times in this chapter, starting with an evocation of Republican motherhood when the narrator refers to Mrs. Layton as "Our republican matron" (157), to the cursory mention of her son's names, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, and finally the connection between these two forefathers of the American nation and the chapter's closing paragraph in praise of America's splendor, naming it the "wide spread [sic] land of peace and plenty" (168–169), which easily withstands the "petty tourists, who, like noisome insects, defile the fabric they cannot comprehend" (169). This reification of a nationalist sentiment, especially through the evocation of references to the American Revolution and American independence, communicates a sense of national pride of the newly postcolonial United States.

These praiseful accounts of American culture must be understood as Sedgwick's indirect reply to British tourists' criticism of all things American. Sedgwick herself hosted such a tourist in the family home in Stockbridge,

Massachusetts, where the Sedgwicks had gained notoriety as political figures and in conjunction with the prestigious Williams College. Their guest, Captain Basil Hall, was touring New England in 1827–28 with the intention of writing a travel book. And while his *Travels in North America, in the Years 1827 and 1828* (1829) is prefaced with the open-minded credo that he wanted "to see things with [his] own eyes, in order to ascertain, by personal inspection, how far the sentiments prevalent in England with respect to that country were correct or otherwise" (qtd. in Homestead, "Introduction" 17), his accounts were full of the same colonial condescension Trollope's account exhibits, which Lawrence Buell posits as characteristic of the early nineteenth-century English–American relationship (see "American Literary Emergence" 418). Hall's criticism of democratic laws of governance and inheritance evokes the impression of a chaotic, poorly ruled American nation-state and echoes the fervent Tory rejection of America's claim to independence. Sedgwick's creation of the character of Edmund Stuart writes back at Hall's *Travels in America* and counters his subjective and biased depictions. Sedgwick here insists that English tourists

> come predetermined to find fault—to measure every thing [sic] they see by the English standard they carry in their minds, and which they conceive to be as perfect as those eternal patterns after which some ancient philosophers supposed the Creator to have fashioned to universe (168).[19]

The trans-Atlantic conversations Sedgwick maintained with English gentry therefore led to her experimentation with the American novel of manners precisely to account for the typically American domestic life and social virtues. It is noteworthy, however, that for all the American exceptionalism exhibited in *Clarence*, Sedgwick's characters remain civil towards their English rivals and therefore underscore the moral superiority Sedgwick claims for American society at large. In the end, this beau ideal of the American noble character resolves these tensions. Commenting on the perceived need to justify American manners against English preconceptions, Charles Clarence insists on the importance of valuing America's present and historic ties to England, and therefore juxtaposes English snobbery with American self-assuredness.

Such character traits also manifest in Gertrude's hospitality and charity. With Gertrude's wise and compassionate nature, Sedgwick counters the condescending behavior of the likes of Maria Edgeworth, who looked down on Sedgwick's literary efforts. Despite her upper-class status, Gertrude remains humble and moderate. Her suspicion towards marriage expresses her awareness of her suitors' financial interest in her. In an attempt to separate her personality from her social standing, Gertrude conceals her identity at a social gathering and puts Gerald Roscoe's intentions to the test. Gertrude's suspicion towards the

formative power for material gains ties in with larger issues about liberal consumer subjectivity enabled by postcolonial and domestic economies. Throughout *Clarence*, financial wealth is depicted as both "burden and responsibility" (410).

In "Manifest Domesticity," Amy Kaplan argues against the separation of the private and the public sphere, and proposes that nineteenth-century American literature discussed imperial expansion through domestic settings—domestic both in the sense of the nation-state and of the heteropatriarchal household.[20] Kaplan's essay contends that discourses of domesticity and of manifest destiny overlap, which can be seen especially well in the sentimental literature from the 1830s to the 1850s. Kaplan's notion of manifest domesticity refers to "the vexed and contradictory relations between race and domesticity as an issue not solely of individual morality nor simply internal to the nation but as structural to the institutional and discursive processes of national expansions and empire building" ("Manifest Domesticity" 583). Manifest domesticity is therefore a concept that interprets "narratives of domesticity and female subjectivity as inseparable from narratives of empire and nation building" (Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity" 584).

In Sedgwick's novel, the fantasy of national expansion is an ambivalent one, especially in Gertrude's awareness that her material wealth is the result of exploitative labor. This ambivalence towards materialism is of particular interest in the context of women's agency within patriarchy. This is a well-established thought in the study of nineteenth-century materialism. In *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2000), Lori Merish contends that middle-class consumption provided for white women a dual function of liberation and constraint: "Consumption constituted a sociopolitical structure through which women were gendered 'feminine' and were defined as 'free' civil subjects" (19). The purchase by women of commodities to adorn the middle-class household displays aspects of both agency and subordination in relation to capitalism: their liberty to buy and acquire material goods allows them to participate in the arrangement of a domestic space that confirms their status of upward social mobility; at the same time, because their buying power is limited to the domestic space exclusively, this perpetuates their own association with and confinement in domesticity.[21]

The Clarences' suspicion that money spoils a person's morals is an implicit criticism of class mobility directed at the lower classes. The social critique Sedgwick articulates in *Clarence* is against consumerism and the corrupting effects of financial wealth, as Susan Harris suggests: "From the outset of *Clarence*, money, far from securing happiness and stability, drives families apart and often buys children either orphanages or early graves" (*19th Century American Women's Novels* 108).[22] For instance, Sedgwick introduces Dame Quackenboss, the owner of a New York City boarding house, with the words "Economy was a cardinal virtue

… *the* virtue, par excellence" (57, emphasis in original) and criticizes her absence of hospitality and empathy towards long-term tenants who are experiencing financial difficulty. Her refusal to take in ill lodgers for fear it might hurt the reputation of her boarding house also implies that she is motivated by economic rather than moralistic goals. This connection between moral values and class status is a recurring theme in sentimental fiction, which implies that, "To be able to feel ... is evidence of social status" (Sanchez-Eppler n.p.). A single woman whose sole income comes from the rooms she rents out becomes the foil for the novel's criticism of capitalist venture, and it is no coincidence that Sedgwick's revised 1848 edition of *Clarence* prefaces the introduction of Dame Quackenboss with a lengthy lament over the negative impact capitalist business structures had on Wall Street (see 56–57), anticipating the symbolism of Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853).[23] Disregarding Dame Quackenboss's own gender and class positionality, Sedgwick sets a negative example of female business drive, which ties in with Sarah Carroll's desire for more status and money, and Mrs. Layton's decision to marry off her daughter Emilie to the considerably older and villainous Spaniard Pedrillo.[24] The financial precarity of these women is not fully addressed in Sedgwick's plot development, leaving readers to interpret poor character traits into these women's strategies for economic survival. By contrast, Charles Carroll and his son Frank are depicted as morally rather than economically motivated characters, which underscores Sedgwick's ascription of poor character to either American women or Spanish, English, and Irish men, whose financial interest outweighs their virtues. Frank's speculation that money alters a person's character is evidenced by his observation "how different father has been ever since [the inheritance]" (113), which comes from a place of privilege: as Charles's only son, he would one day be the sole heir to the wealth he hopes will not alter his father's disposition. Frank's untimely death—announced with the "soul-piercing words, '*he is gone*!' " (118, emphasis in original)—at the end of Chapter 8 coincides with his sister Gertrude's fuller presence **on** the level of plot and within New York society. The Clarences' credo of morality over materialism also bespeaks class, race, and gender privilege.

Sedgwick's social criticism of American consumerism therefore encompasses two distinct aspects: "On one hand, she critiques the new national obsession with making and spending money, and, on the other, she explores evolving concepts of disinterestedness—an important civic notion she refines and applies socially across boundaries of class and gender" (Harris *19th Century American Women's Novels* 114).[25] This gives American readers "a view of the negative potential inherent in capitalist individualism and a vision of a community both more democratic and more generous than one governed by mere self-interest and competition" (Harris 114).

Sedgwick juxtaposes reckless spending and materialism with financial responsibility for one's kin and a moral commitment to put money to

a higher use. Gertrude's observations of the Laytons' reckless spending and criticism of ornate decoration of New York society homes must certainly be read in line with this idea. Gertrude describes New York City as "a noble city," which is at the same time characterized by "the vacuity, the flippancy, the superficial accomplishments, the idle competitions, the useless and wasteful expenditure" (360) of the upper class. Sedgwick's critique of materialism also becomes apparent through her characterization of Gertrude as sensitive with regard to the perils that irresponsible handling of money can entail. In the case of Gertrude's friend Emilie, Sedgwick raises issues about the financial dimensions of the marriage market: The arranged marriage between Emilie and the "villain" Pedrillo (355) is the consequence of Mr. Layton's gambling debts and Mrs. Layton's attraction to luxury goods. When Gertrude visits the Laytons in New York, she witnesses the nonchalance with which Mrs. Layton asks for fine clothes to be added to Pedrillo's bill under the assumption that, as Emilie's future husband, he would assume full financial responsibility in due time.[26] Her realization that the Laytons' debts are, in fact, the reason why the marriage to Pedrillo was arranged in the first place marks a pivotal moment in Gertrude's decision to intercept the arranged marriage by donating a large sum to the Laytons and by helping Emilie to elope with her love interest, Randolph Marion. The novel details Gertrude's abhorrence at finding out that expensive items such as "costly ornaments" are "the insignia of [Emilie's] slavery" to a man she does not want to marry (367).

Sedgwick's characterization of Gertrude's moral superiority comes into effect through her willingness to expose and counter Emilie's dependency on Pedrillo as a result of her family's financial predicament. Gertrude is an exceptional woman in the sense of Sedgwick's interest in depicting women who challenge gender norms. It is not the question of marriage that is at stake here, but rather the more general quality of non-conformism, such as is the case in Gertrude's responsibility for her friend Emilie.[27] The sentimentalism of the novel's main plotline revolves around Gertrude's assumption of responsibility for Emilie. The common sentimental plot element of the child in danger extends here towards the female child and the marriage market. Cindy Weinstein argues that "sentimentalism is about the relative merits of consanguineous and elective ties in the emotional life of a child, but the value and meaning ascribed to those ties is contingent upon the context in which those families are situated" (*Family* 8). In the late eighteenth-century seduction novel, the child serves as a symbol of the American nation-state, whose wellbeing depends on the adherence of young women to the ideals of republican motherhood and the moral codices that regulate female sexuality. In *Clarence*, the sentimentalist attention to the wellbeing of American society—in particular to the kinship ties among its white demographic—are emulated after the model of the seduction novel: both, Emilie's personal fate and the general integrity of American society are in danger due to the unjust

arrangement of a marriage contract with the novel's villain. This sense of responsibility towards Emilie Layton, her dear friend, whose family's financial distress leads to the plotting of an arranged marriage with the corrupted Pedrillo, characterizes Gertrude's particularly *American* values. To save Emilie from this arranged marriage epitomizes not only Gertrude's strong kinship bonds with her friend, but also her adherence to an idealized American culture that foregoes moral corruption due to materialist interests.

As indicated by Sedgwick's communication with Edgeworth over the nature of American society and the value of American literature, Sedgwick's elaborations of American national character emerge out of a trans-Atlantic cultural dialogue about the status of American society. Her experimentation with the novel of manners, its reception in England and its meta-references to America's position under English scrutiny are all aspects that contextualize the formulation of exceptionalist American characteristics and foreground the transnational dynamics in which they occur. The sentimentalist political project of Sedgwick's novel therefore positions the national and the transnational as inherently connected. How does the sentimental evoke an American exceptionalist sentiment and a sense of transnational belonging at the same time? How does this contribute to the larger conversation about how sentimentalist rhetoric functions? Ultimately, sentimentalism adopts the nation-state as the ultimate kinship paradigm, which can enable solidarity with others. The question I want to explore now is how Sedgwick interlaces the transnational into this sentimentalist project.

From Blood Kinship to Kinship as Trans-Atlantic Imaginary

Sociologists have pointed out at length that the myth about a stable family was introduced at times of social change. The patriarchal nuclear family gained valence in the early nineteenth century, despite the fact that many family relations were short-lived due to the high mortality rate (see Carsten 16–17). And while notions of family are culture-specific and constantly evolving, kinship as a category of analysis is sensitive to historical and social change; it is "an ideology of human relationships" and seeks to understand the "cultural ideas about how humans are created and the nature and meaning of their biological and moral connections with others" (Stone 9). This notion of kinship also resonates with aspects of sentimentalism. In this light, June Howard calls to memory that "[t]he term 'sentiment' marks the recognition that emotions are social and historical" ("Sentiment" 213).

Sedgwick's sentimentalist narrative strategies include the prominent plot twist of the resurfacing long-lost kin, the imperiled relative, and the imbedded pathos-laden letters, which interlace genre characteristics of the epistolary seduction novel and the domestic novel. Sedgwick therefore holds a particularly interesting place in American literary history:

between the seduction novel and the domestic novel. *Clarence*'s place between two Elizas—Eliza in Hannah Webster Foster's epistolary novel *The Coquette; or, The History of Eliza Wharton* (1797) and Eliza Harris in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852)—demarcates the shift away from epistolarity to realist narrative discourse and at the same time a shifting understanding of sentimentalism. In the seduction novel, to be sentimental was a bad thing, which could lead to the young heroine's doom; in Sedgwick's work, it is already a worthy human quality that equips individuals with a sense of community and compassion (as is also true for Stowe). The epistolary style was pivotal to the seduction novel of the late eighteenth century in its attempt to teach American (female) readers about the importance of republican motherhood. Its didactic function to the reader comes from the particular narrative situation of reading a novel in letters, where we function as stand-ins for the internal readers (the recipient of the letters),[28] and where the moral advice we receive is not only a lesson in respectable womanhood but is intended to preserve the livelihood of young, sentimental readers in danger of seduction, illegitimate sexuality, and possibly death.[29] Sentimentalism in the domestic novel focuses on personal redemption through exemplary female virtue. While the heroine in the seduction novel served largely as the antithesis of respectable womanhood, the heroine in the domestic novel sets the moral standards for compassionate citizenship. In both cases, the ground of affective interpellation is the wellbeing of the American nation-state and the sustenance of American cultural values. This affective attachment towards a national ideal is also part of Sedgwick's sentimental political project.

The transnational comes into being as a transnational differential in Sedgwick's American adaptation and modification of established British literary tropes. While Sedgwick certainly pursues the project of inventing an original American literary art form in her development of the American novel of manners (which she formulates in response to Edgeworth's allegations that America does not have much of a literary scene), her literary imagination of the families and societies depicted in her work evoke a transnational world. She includes what Anna Brickhouse terms a "*trans*american literary imagination" (6, emphasis in original) in the novel's subplot about the transnational origin of the Clarences' wealth.[30] Sedgwick's novel is an anti-novel to Edgeworth's because it imagines Gertrude as a highly agentic and powerful (because she is wealthy) young woman, in contrast to Belinda Portman. What Sedgwick also changes in relation to Edgeworth's strictly domestic London setting is the transnational mobility of the Clarence family. In particular, her integration of England and Jamaica as additional locales—especially of the family history told in an extensive flashback—extends the geographical realm of her novel. This literary triangulation acknowledges the presence of a trans-Atlantic and hemispheric cultural world that shares a strong historical lineage, both through trade and commerce and through embodied

cultural practices. In the transnational narrative of the Sedgwick family genealogy, family and kinship relations are mirrored in economic relations; in tun, Edmund Clarence's stay in Jamaica as a trade commissioner and his interracial affair mirror the linkages between capitalism and liberalism.

The complicated family history of the Clarences moves beyond a valorization of blood kinship and towards a trans-Atlantic kinship imaginary. True to the sentimentalist genre conventions that Sedgwick employs, including the serendipitous appearance of long-lost kin and the reliance on intuitive knowledge that leads towards a reunification of disparate family members, the novel's plot moves from a state of absence and loss to one of myriad interconnections. The transnational subplot precedes the novel's subsequent focus on Gertrude and offers insights into the family genealogy of the Clarences, the origin of their wealth, and the roots of their profound sentimentalism and morality. The novel begins with young Frank's cordial relationship with an old man who turns out to be his grandfather. The pathos-laden setting positions this rediscovery amidst moments of crisis (including poverty, illness, and death), so that the reunification scenes set at the death bed of the lost grandfather also justify his fleeting presence in the novel's overall story. The suspense stems from the concealed identity of the involved parties: Frank, the young son of Charles Connell and brother to the main heroine, Gertrude, does not bear the same name as his grandfather, Edmund Clarence. Nevertheless, the boy and the old man seem to recognize each other as kin and are described as connected by a "bond of nature" (53) as the basis of their friendship. This bond of nature, in turn, motivates Frank to implore his parents to take in the ailing Edmund Clarence and provide him with a good home, a wish that his parents—albeit reluctantly in the beginning, but finally with all their moral goodness—grant him. This closeness within the same domestic space then serves as a condition for the disclosure of Edmund Clarence's most intimate secrets, a traumatic life narrative that, so the novel intimates, is the reason for his deteriorating health. Disclosing that he is actually Charles Connell's father, Clarence narrates their traumatic separation, which occurred some 30 years earlier: Edmund Clarence lived in Jamaica at the time and had to send his son, with whom the climate did not agree, back to England since the boy's mother had already died. However, one of Mr. Clarence's servants, John Savil, abducted the boy and took him to New York, where he placed him in an alms house and absconded with the considerable amount of money Clarence had provisioned for the son's stay in England. While Savil and the boy went to the United States, the ship to England they should have been on was wrecked at sea, leaving Clarence to believe that his son had perished.

In addition to the recovery of the father–son relationship initiated by the grandson's good-natured acts of hospitality, the flashbacks into the 1790s setting of the family narrative also address additional complex erotic entanglements. There is a love triangle between Mr. Clarence,

his wife and his brother Francis that led to Edmund killing his brother and abandoning his adulterous wife, Mary, who subsequently died "in misery and penitence" (84). There is also an interracial romance between Mr. Clarence and 'Eli Clairon, a French-Jamaican freed slave, at a time when Edmund was still married to Mary and not in a position to marry 'Eli. When 'Eli is sent on a reversed Middle Passage across the Atlantic, she drowns herself, leaving behind her young son, Marcelline, who became one of Mr. Clarence's house slaves and then died a decade later when he protected Mr. Clarence from a Spanish intruder in the house. Marcelline discloses as he is dying that Mr. Clarence is his father. In his youth, Marcelline was involved "in an affair in which his reputation and life were at hazard" (86). Mr. Clarence blames his late brother's son, Winstead Clarence (at the time his only living kin), for the affair and subsequently disrupts all ties with him. Mr. Clarence settles in New York, where he at some point also reconnects with John Savil, who has taken on the name John Smith, and recovers the possessions he bestowed upon him some 20 years earlier.

Sedgwick employs a complex notion of kinship to include both family relationships where individual members are related by blood or marriage, and kinship ties that depend on social contracts, including servitude, employment, and a shared sense of commitment. Each of these differentiated notions of kinship spans the moral spectrum from loyalty and responsibility to treachery and extortion. These are established tropes of sentimentalism, which are depicted through excessive outpourings of emotions in the narrator's or the protagonist's reactions to such events and their (belated) discovery. That these kinship ties span hemispheric and transhemispheric routes is, in part, the condition for the plot twists that add to the novel's suspense. Just as in the case of the long-lost grandfather Edmund Clarence and the happy reunion with his only son, the novel introduces another disclosure of mistaken identities towards its climax. In the midst of Pedrillo's scheming to take Emilie Layton to Cuba with him without pursuing the previously arranged marriage, it becomes clear that Pedrillo is actually Mr. Flint's son, and goes by the name Isaac. Isaac, so his father explains, joined a band of criminals at age 14 and had since led a criminal life in exile in Cuba. Pedrillo is therefore American, and his wealth is not, as the protagonists initially assume, the result of his trade enterprise. This reversed plot twist—not in the spirit of a family reunion but in the form of a belated confrontation with kin gone astray—also does not end in the transference of financial assets but in the refusal to claim the "tainted" money Pedrillo leaves behind after his death.

Under the guise of affect-laden plot turns lies a complex, capitalist structure of imperialism, slavery, and the exploitation of natural, human, and financial resources in the triangular relationship between the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe. Through the dispersal of kin, Sedgwick connects New York City life to settler colonialism in the mid- to late eighteenth century, and connects the 1810s of the novel's

present setting to America's colonial past. Sedgwick implies historical depth to this hemispheric plotline by setting the Jamaica episode in the 1790s, several decades before the contemporary setting of *Clarence* in the 1810s. At that time, the United States was a newly formed nation-state, while the West Indies remained under European colonial rule, creating an interesting relationship between the two former fellow colonies. Critics have detected Sedgwick's own kinship ties to Jamaica (where one of her ancestors was sent by Oliver Cromwell) as well as literary precedents as impetus for her inclusion of a hemispheric plotline in *Clarence*.[31] In addition, her critique of the institution of slavery found expression in Clarence's interracial love relationship to a free woman of color. In this sense, Sedgwick's imagination of Jamaica serves as a foil for her critique of slavery in the United States, which is given much less space in *Clarence* than it is in some of her other works, and is almost entirely set outside the US nation-state.[32] As Sean Goudie observes in *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (2006), "the West Indies functions as a surrogate, a monstrous double for urgent political, cultural and economic crisis, not least among these slavery" (10). Through their shared colonial history, the United States and Jamaica are thus also in a kinship constellation, and claiming these kinship ties acknowledges America's own colonial past while underscoring its newly postcolonial nation formation.

These transnational kinship constellations between the United States and Jamaica contribute to the novel's depiction of a chosen kinship, which operates on the premises of a shared sense of belonging and accountability. Claiming these kinship ties through a hemispheric and trans-Atlantic subplot not only explains the reasons for Gertrude Clarence's domestic economic prosperity in the sense of the domestic space but also in the sense of the US nation-state. The sentimental tropes that facilitate these ties—as serendipitous and contingent as they are in *Clarence*—also challenge readers' ability to recognize these myriad, complex connections. This might be true for sentimental fiction in general.[33] Still, the transnational kinship constellations allow Sedgwick to connect her novel's didactic intent with regard to respectable womanhood to a critique of consumerism and, ultimately, to the circum-Atlantic slave economy.

With the character of Pedrillo, an American who defects to Cuba for legal reasons, the novel problematizes its own depiction of American culture's moral suasion and explicitly addresses the violent practices of colonial exploitation, which protagonists like Emilie Layton and Gertrude Clarence associate with Pedrillo's assumed Spanish national identity. When Emilie confides in Gertrude that she is loath to accept his marriage proposal, the main reason she mentions is his unethical gains of wealth in Cuba:

> He is very kind, and generous to me; he gave me these splendid bracelets; but Gertrude, when I put them on I could not help thinking

> of the natives of Cuba, you know, who thought, poor simpletons, that the Spaniards were only decorating them with beautiful ornaments, when they were fastening manacles on their wrists. (214)

With the strong insistence on American values and the formulation of American manners in contrast to English society, Sedgwick's emphasis on the transnational structures that implicate US culture give equal weight to the national and the transnational. If sentimental literature's cultural function is to make readers feel the pain of others vicariously in an effort to teach them morals and values, how does Sedgwick navigate the simultaneous evocation of national and transnational paradigms? How does her novel direct readerly affect through the ambivalent characterization of US culture? And finally, what literary strategies does it employ in order to elicit readers' sense of recognition so they may embrace the sentimental political gestures performed by Sedgwick's protagonists?

Readerly Affect and Sentimental Kinship Formation

When Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* famously ends with the imperative to "feel right" and to "see to your sympathies," it evokes a readerly response to be cultivated in the domestic sphere inherent to the practice of novel reading (as opposed to theater and performance culture) and put to use in the political arena of antebellum abolitionism. The simultaneous qualities of private and public are detrimental to the social function of the sentimental novel and its inherent political projects. In this vein, in the introduction to *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2001), Glenn Hendler sets the theoretical foundation for this reading of public sentiment. At the basis of Hendler's project is the question of how literature can evoke the right kinds of feelings with the reader, namely the feelings that the novel wants to convey as part of the cultural work it performs. Hendler discusses these aspects by introducing two concepts: feeling right and feeling publicly. Feeling right means that nineteenth-century novels mediate feelings in a triangular fashion in the sense that a character (figural perspective) mediates their feelings about the pain and sorrow they see another character experience. In turn, feeling publicly means feeling a sense of belonging to an intimate public (Berlant *The Female Complaint* 6). Following Hendler's understanding of the structures on which public sentiments depend, the sentimental politics of affect reflect on the relationship between reader and sentimental heroine.

What interests me here is the notion of feeling right; I want to argue that this depends, among other things including a general adherence to a shared ethos, on the reader's literacy in the culture of sentimentalism which enables them to make sense of the feelings mediated through the narrative form of figural perspective. Cindy Weinstein argues that sympathy in nineteenth-century American literature is "produced,

dispensed, and received in a variety of contexts, whether regional, political, reformist, judicial, literary, that goes beyond the framework of the biological family" (6) and that, despite the fact that an emergent sense of American identity became available and attainable at the time, the heterogeneity of American culture also meant that there could be many different takes on sympathy. In other words, just because a reader may be able to decode the sentimental nature[34] of a narrative does not mean they will automatically embrace the ideological stance presented through sentimentalist rhetoric and aesthetics. Given the ambivalent depiction of the United States as both morally superior and morally corrupt in Sedgwick's novel, what affective attachments might readers cultivate in response to her sentimentalist narrative, and how can they express national and transnational belonging at the same time? Like all aesthetic responses, sentimental identification with the text's ethos is not entirely controllable, just like aesthetic objects, following Jacques Rancière, are both heteronomous and autonomous.[35] Sedgwick's ambivalent characterization of American society through discourses of exceptionalism and an embedded criticism of American imperialism and social inequalities may produce oppositional reactions with readers. The question that is important to ask at this point is how Sedgwick strategically interlinks the critique of the US nation-state with the overall celebration of its grandeur. In this context, her depiction of several deaths of plot-driving effects merits attention.

Deaths figure as intercepted opportunities, which would clarify the ambiguities Sedgwick sketches. Some deaths are depicted in detailed and lengthy passages, deathbed monologues, and descriptions of pathos-laden death scenes. The kinship constellations, which include long-lost kin, servants, and financially dependent protégés, ultimately resolve into the normative ideal of the nuclear family: Edmund Clarence dies, his servant and at one point Charles's legal guardian dies, and the family friend and starving artist Louis Seton dies; Gertrude's brother Frank and her mother Sarah die; Pedrillo dies; and Edmund Clarence's wife Mary Temple dies, as does his mistress 'Eli and their son Marcelline. Because these deaths are depicted at length in the novel, they provide the basis for sentimental recognition and affectively bind readers to the pathos-laden plotline. They do so on two levels. First, they generate sentimental affect, such as in the case of 'Eli's suicide. Following sentimental literary traditions, her premature and tragic death is narrated by her former lover, who implies that she died of a broken heart. His foregrounding of the potentially romantic motivation of her suicide precludes other interpretations, such as the causal link to the horrors of slavery evoked in her reversed Middle Passage, or her precarious life as a racialized subject in France, where she was sent by her father. 'Eli's death, und subsequently Edmund Clarence's, preclude further clarification of this ambivalent story.

Second, deaths are also strategies to prune the family tree by cutting off all transnational links and illegitimate and interracial kinship ties. The happy ending-driven plotline leaves the white middle-class family

constellation intact and affirms a normative ideal of the nuclear family. Unsustainable allusions to social realities and death of the narrating protagonist and the object of narration preclude the establishment of closure to further disambiguation. Marcelline, the son borne out of Edmund Clarence's relationship with 'Eli, also dies at a young age. Again, it is part of Edmund Clarence's analeptic account of his life in the West Indies that frames the story about Marcelline. Clarence only briefly mentions that Marcelline is his son, and that Marcelline sacrificed his life in order to protect Clarence. Marcelline's death contributes to the story's sentimental character, but it also conveniently caps the transnational and interracial plotline and a further address of the fact that Clarence had—up to that point—the boy live among his house slaves. It is not that such kinship ties are rare in nineteenth-century American literature. On the contrary, Nancy Bentley argues that the "Creole American family [is] a form of kinship that is not a conjugal household but a system, descended from New World slavery and colonialism, linking all kinds of licit and illicit families" ("Creole Kinship" 98). But with regard to Sedgwick's strategy of interlinking the national with the transnational, this pruning of the family tree privileges the United States for context, plotline, and—ultimately—affective interpellation. Marcelline's death, and much later that of Pedrillo, return the focus of narration to a US setting.

Readers' vicarious experience of suffering is one of the hallmarks of sentimental literature that, together with serial publication, affectively interpellate readers. The deathbed scenes are paradigmatic in this context. On his deathbed, Edmund Clarence confides in his son his "wrongs and sufferings" (87) and, besides the overwhelming extent to which prior coincidences disrupted the bond between Edmund and his family, these passages are riven with excessive feelings. For instance, Edmund explains to his son Charles: "Frank's striking resemblance to you at the period when I lost you revived my parental love—a deathless affection" (87). This passage expounds in detail the emotive state Edmund was in when he discovered the existence of his son, who he thought dead; subsequently, he gauged whether he would be able to bear the intense sentimentalism of their possible reunion. To his son Charles, he explains, "Forgive me, my son, for so long concealing the truth from you; it was not merely to strengthen my convictions of your worth, but I deferred emotions that I doubted my strength to endure" (87). This sentimental climax of locating a family reunion immediately before the demise of the newly recovered long-lost kin provides affective structures for readers' sentimental identification. This pivotal scene about the Clarence family history is spoken in one long monologue and staged as Edmund's final message to his son.

The vicarious experience of loss and detriment resonates especially with female readers of Sedgwick's time and their own positionality as both victims and perpetrators of white patriarchal societal norms. The affective attachments at work in sentimental identification with human suffering direct readers' sympathy to follow the example set by the sentimental

heroine. Following Glenn Hendler's argument, a mediated and triangular relationship between the witness, the sufferer, and the reader allows the reader to potentially identify with the sufferer or the mediator. From a psychoanalytical perspective, this sympathetic identification relies on the coincidence of two similar egos because otherwise the ego would have to be suppressed in order to be able to perform the function of acting sympathetically. Hendler asserts that sentimentalism relies precisely on this ability of the reader to slip into the role of the sympathetic listener and to follow the example of the mediator who witnesses the pain of the sufferer: "As soon as it is experienced, anything—even or perhaps especially an emotion, whether felt directly or vicariously—is in this view 'a social material process,' " (11) a process that materializes in the world of the novel in the form of sensory and sensational immediacy implied by the narration of a character's feelings. These affective attachments are not to be misunderstood as masochism per se. As Marianne Noble argues in *The Masochistic Pleasure of Sentimental Literature* (2000):

> The masochism in nineteenth-century sentimental literature is not simply a symptom of or polemic against women's oppression by men (though it is both); it is also a rhetorical device, wielded with mixed benefits. White middle-class women—the intended readers of sentimental literature—were hardly powerless in the nineteenth century, and the failure to recognize their complicitous use of power sanitizes or whitewashes their actions.
>
> (11)

In "Poor Eliza," Lauren Berlant theorizes the connection between sentimentalism and the liberal capitalist subject in her analysis of the afterlife of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the formation of what she terms sentimentalism's "unfinished business" (636). This unfinished business connotes how "in the United States a particular form of liberal sentimentality that promotes individual acts of identification based on collective group memberships has been conventionally deployed to bind persons to the nation through a universalist rhetoric not of citizenship per se but of the capacity for suffering and trauma at the citizen's core" (836). Stowe's sentimentalist urtext affectively interpellates white readers in their capacity to feel the injustice at the heart of institutionalized racism and the slave economy, and to mobilize them politically for the support of the abolitionist movement. Stowe's sentimentalism draws on the Christian morals and ethos that readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may share in their subscription to democratic principles and their belief in an exceptional US nation-state that honors these principles. Recruiting individual readers to join an imagined community of ethically responsible citizens occurs via the texts' sentimentalist aesthetic tropes.

To this end, Sedgwick's *Clarence* depicts ambivalent transnational belonging as a result of the transnational origin of US social and economic

wealth by placing the project of US nation-building in a triangular relationship with England and the West Indies. As a newly independent nation-state, it reflects on its own colonial history in flashbacks to the 1790s trade routes of the novel's recent past and the Monroe Doctrine of the time of its publication. In order to mark a difference from the English imperial center, Sedgwick's novel presents a strong exceptionalism. Still, the moral superiority of the US upper-class is characterized by a strong feeling for the exploitation of slave labor but as a reminder of the United States' transnational ties. Kinship ties mirror these connections and extend the notion of who counts as kin. Nevertheless, the novel's narrative strategy directs the affective response in favor of the plotline of the Clarence nuclear family without any miscegenation or transnational kinship to England or the West Indies, and therefore conditions the intended white middle-class audience of sentimental fiction into empathizing with the marginal subjects as part of a larger project of solidifying a sense of national identity. Sedgwick's initial mention of transnational kinship ties is ultimately whitewashed through a sustained favoring of white middle-class perspectives and an upholding of a white middle-class ideal of sympathy which does not query and challenge the implication of the United States in the social, political, and economic effects of its imperial operations.

This sentimental affiliation of kinship with nation-state-based ontologies does not, of course, end with Sedgwick. As the following chapters will show, there are different iterations of the same themes that can be traced throughout American literary history, genres, and aesthetic practices. Equiano's depiction of ambivalent transnational belonging in empire and liberalism, as well as Sedgwick's narrative of sympathy and consumer consciousness, resonates with later projects on transnational solidarity, most notably with regard to the continued struggle against racism and systemic oppression in the novels of the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights movement, and anti-colonial independence movements.

As the next chapter demonstrates, in the era of Gilded Age cosmopolitanism, Henry James's work adds another dimension to this conversation through the use of culturally biased and essentialist figural narrative perspective on the question of American taxonomies.

Notes

1 See Carolyn L. Karcher's essay "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History" (2003). For instance, Karcher makes the case for a reconsideration of Sedgwick's marginal status within the canon of nineteenth-century American fiction. She argues that Sedgwick's contributions are multiple: "we can now recognize Sedgwick as the founder of the homegrown novel of manners tradition that American literature has long been erroneously supposed to lack; a pioneer in the development of realism, which has customarily been dated after the Civil War and credited to male writers; a prolific and trendsetting author of short fiction; and [in the case of *Clarence*] an early architect of the urban novel that Howells, Crane, Dreiser, and Wharton would later perfect" (5). The many firsts

of Sedgwick's works include her exploration of a communal ethos that departs from the American individualism prevalent in the American romance, her depiction of interracial relationships, as in *Hope Leslie* (1827), her commentary on the injustice of slavery in *Redwood* (1824) and the hemispheric American axes of identity negotiation in *Clarence*. Karcher cites these as examples of reasons why we should consider Sedgwick "an early political novelist" (8).

2 For a comprehensive discussion of the trans-Atlantic influences on the formation of the American novel, see Paul Giles's "Transatlantic Currents and the Invention of the American Novel" (2011).

3 See, for instance, Patricia Larson Kalayjian's essay "Disinterest as Moral Corrective in *Clarence*'s Cultural Critique" (2003) and Susan K. Harris's *19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies* (1990) for a discussion of *Clarence*'s contributions to the emerging genre of the novel of manners and its significance for the genre of the New York City novel. Both critics contend that *Clarence* has been mislabeled domestic fiction in the same ways that many nineteenth-century novels by female authors have unjustly been termed thus. Kalayjian's and Harris's respective projects assert that to label *Clarence* domestic fiction unjustly glosses over the larger political implications addressed by Sedgwick.

4 The didactic function of sentimental fiction coheres with a larger interest in female education in the service of solidifying the newly independent nation; the depiction of republican motherhood played an important role in the dissemination of "the right" morals. Besides Linda Kerber's groundbreaking article "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—an American Perspective" (1976), see also Rosemarie Zagarri's "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother" (1992).

5 The aesthetic dimensions of sentimental literature have been defended by critics such as Joanne Dobson, who considers sentimentalism's use of conversational language one of its particular aesthetic strategies to enable readers' recognition. Extending Dobson's argument, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon suggests that, regardless of the ways in which modernist literature has discarded sentimental literature, a nineteenth-century perspective on these texts would see aesthetic value in them. In part, Dillon recalls Schiller's idea of aesthetic education, Scottish commonsense moral philosophy, and sentimental literature to connect to a more general culture of sensibility that values sensory impression as a salient marker of *Bildung*.

6 Sedgwick's novel dialogues in an interesting way with Lenora Sansay's *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808) and would make for a rich comparative analysis; however, this exceeds the scope of this project.

7 I am not drawing a clear distinction between domestic and sentimental fiction here. Instead, I am taking cues from Marion Rust's assertion that republican motherhood defines the domestic space as a "site of authority through the bearing and rearing of future citizens" (281). One of the very helpful things in Rust's essay is her distinction between *sentimental* as a genre and *domestic* as a trope of the sentimental; it is "the rendering of social cause as emotional effect or … of cause as affect" (295).

8 Weinstein's notion of sympathy within sentimentalist political projects in general and sentimental fiction in particular departs considerably from established discussions of sentimentalism, including the infamous "Douglas–Tompkins

debate" (Wexler 94), which ensued among feminist literary recovery projects. Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977) and Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (1986) are two groundbreaking feminist recovery projects on the role of early American fiction, especially women's literature. For Douglas, the feminization of American culture signifies the proliferation of "rancid" literary texts full of individualist emotive expressions and with little regard for the community-oriented ethos of Calvinist writing. Douglas's characterization of popular American literature's adoption of sentimentalist rhetoric as essentially "feminizing" (13), and in and of itself conducive to low-brow mass entertainment, was later critiqued by Tompkins's appreciation of the cultural value of all literary texts for the insights into cultural practices they afford contemporary readers. Where Douglas sees a feminization through sentimentalism, Tompkins sees an archive of representations of women's agency within the domestic settings on which the novels center. Many more recent projects have built on this debate. See, for instance, the 1999/2000 special issue in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, especially Philip Gould's "Revisiting the 'Feminization' of American Culture. Introduction" and Dana D. Nelson's "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism." See also June Howard's essay "What is Sentimentality?" (1999), Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (2000), and Glenn Hendler's *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2001).

9 Much of affect studies has contributed to a fuller understanding of sentimental fiction and its effect on the establishment of affective ties between readers and the nation-state. In *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic* (1998), Bruce Burgett focuses on the embodied responses to sentimental literature. See also Robyn Wiegman's *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (1995) and Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987).

10 For instance, early feminist recovery projects of nineteenth-century women's literature emphasized plot characteristics to demarcate the difference between sentimental literature and the American romance. Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America, 1820–70* (1978) offers the following definition: "the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world … At the outset she takes herself very lightly—has no ego, or a damaged one, and looks to the world to coddle and protect her … To some extent her expectations are reasonable—she thinks that her guardians will nurture her … But the failure of the world to satisfy either reasonable or unreasonable expectations awakens the heroine to inner possibilities. By the novel's end she has developed a strong conviction of her own worth as a result of which she does ask much of herself. She can meet her own demands, and, inevitably, the change in herself has changed the world's attitude toward her, so much that was formerly denied her now comes unsought" (19). As Baym's definition shows, the concept "woman's fiction" privileges the plight of the female heroine, the novels' didactic function, and the emergence of a

female sub-canon within the literature of the young American Republic, a sub-canon that, for a long time, was deemed aesthetically inferior.

11 See Michelle Burnham's essay "The Periphery Within: Internal Colonialism and the Rhetoric of U.S. Nation Building" (2003).

12 In a project on sentimental masculinity, Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler similarly contend that presidential outpours of emotions over the fate of the American nation-state is an established affective register legible for American audiences from the early Republic to contemporary political debates (9).

13 In lieu of an extensive footnote on publications of nineteenth-century American literature and the transnational, I am listing Johannes Voelz's essay "Transnationalism and Nineteenth-Century Literature" (2017) for cues about five different typological phenomena of transnational American literature: (1) world literature; (2) transnational social movements; (3) the international novel; (4) hemispheric frameworks; and (5) literature and American imperialism. The inherent transnational character of nineteenth-century American literature is also the subject of Jared Hickman's essay of the polemic title "On the Redundancy of 'Transnational American Studies' " (2012).

14 See Heike Paul's "Mobility Between Boston and Berlin: How Germans Have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery" (2009).

15 This is a larger argument about the dynamics of knowledge production regarding the literature of the early American republic and the contribution made by publishing companies in their curating of special editions, compendia, or even the reprints of individual texts. In her essay " 'A Tale of Our Own Times': Early American Women's Novels, Reprints, and the Seduction of the Familiar" (2013), Karen Weyler notes the dominance of the seduction novel in the canonization of the literature of the Early Republic over the then equally popular historical novel. Weyler contends that contemporary readers remain too much "seduced by the seduction novel" (241). The seduction plot's availability to extrapolate more thoroughly about gender, class and societal norms stems from contemporary reading markets' tastes for such narratives and tropes of, for instance, regulated femininity and maternal mortality, despite contradictory evidence indicating that death in childbirth was not as frequent as the seduction novel's formulaic plotlines of such long-time favorites as Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797) and Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791) make readers believe. Weyler surmises that the absence of such plot development from other popular novels, including Sedgwick's *Clarence*, is the reason for the lack of availability in the same accessible reprints as Foster's and Rowson's bestsellers. And as difficult as teaching (with) rare editions and unshapely reprints certainly is, her urge directed at teachers of American literature to include more of the less readily available editions and books in order to support the reissuing of such texts is convincing.

16 Nancy Bentley's argument in *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton* (1995) that the late nineteenth-century novels of manners presented a combination of ethnographic observation and fictional narration in order to establish the dominant master discourse on "culture" can also be extended to Sedgwick's pioneering work on the novel of manners.

17 Philip Gould discusses Sedgwick's attention to manners and conduct, prime issues depicted in the literature that was popular at the time, including the

success of conduct books as media through which to establish "behavioral norms" ("Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Cosmopolitan Nation" 237).

18 Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary* was published in 1828 after several decades of detours, methodological errors, and a lack of submissions from the American vernacular Webster solicited from the citizens of the new republic. Webster's efforts to establish an American orthography coincided with other linguistic-national projects such as Sequoyah's notions of a Natural Alphabet and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet's efforts towards sign language. For a discussion of these and other phenomena of early American language systems, see Jill Lepore's *A is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States* (2002).

19 Sedgwick also recorded Hall's critique of American governance in her journal. See Mary Kelley's *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick* (1993).

20 The 1998 *No More Separate Spheres!* special issue of *American Literature* was the cornerstone for Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher's edited collection *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (2002). Kaplan shows how in seminal feminist recovery projects such as Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), the link between the domestic and the national was clearly pitted against the foreign.

21 When addressing the discrepancy in the particular case of Sedgwick's *Home* (1852), Merish suggests that "domestic writers like Sedgwick seem to counsel that it's fine to shop and buy things; but once at home, be sure to take the price tag off" (134). This ties in with Merish's larger observation that, "while feminine consumption was central to emerging forms of class, race, and national power, it also provided a new civic role and responsibility for (some) women, and consolidated while circumscribing their position within civil society" (18). The sentimental narrative, therefore, also expresses "the unspoken investments and stakes of the bonds of sympathy and register their political effects, especially their gendered contradictions of the forms of political deference and political entitlement they enable" (27).

22 Critics have pointed out the similarity between Melville's short story and Sedgwick's passages in the revised edition, which was a popular and well-known text at the time. See, for instance, Carolyn L. Karcher's "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History" (2003).

23 Pedrillo is, in fact, the name the American Isaac Flint assumed once he separated from his family and embarked on a criminal life at age 16. This fact is later revealed during one of several moments of disclosure towards the novel's climax.

24 On the connection between gender and likeability in wealthy protagonists in American and British novels of manners, see Elsie B. Michie's *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses, Materialism, and the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James* (2011).

25 Maglina Lubovich argues that, for Sedgwick, being an exceptional woman is most important—more important than the distinction between married or single. Female exceptionalism, as depicted most forcefully in *Hope Leslie* and *Clarence*, applies to characters who, according to Lubovich, "trouble gender, who are difficult to define, and who challenge the status quo by embodying a radical sense of individuality" (27).

26 The distinction between internal and external readers comes from Janet Gurkin Altman's seminal study *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (1982).

27 Sarah Robbins cites Sedgwick's awareness of the particular kind of audience who would read her works and, according to some statements she made along those lines, adjusted her use of genre to better address her intended audience. This interaction between form, audience, and authorship is important to remember in the process of classification of her texts in the sense that it validates classifications (e.g. juvenile literature, sentimental novel and others), which "would obscure the productive cross-fertilization of genres going on in antebellum middle-class homes, where discussion of a newspaper essay, a novel, and a magazine sketch might easily take place in the same evening" (4). Into the same vein fall comments by Sedgwick contemporaries, including William Cullen Bryant, who underscores the didactic nature of Sedgwick's texts through the use of sentimentalism (which apparently also moved some of her male editors to tears, according to Bryant [6]).

28 Anna Brickhouse notes that the trans-American literary imaginary in the US public sphere operated on ambivalent premises: while the boundaries of the nation-state became malleable through a variety of antebellum inter-American policies and texts, inside the country, the nation-state borders that regulated the lives of non-whites hardened (7).

29 Sedgwick writes about Robert Sedgwick's appointment to Jamaica by Oliver Cromwell in her autobiography (see Kelley 45). Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* also includes a hemispheric plotline through the character of Juba, a black slave on a Jamaican plantation. Juba was edited out of later editions of Edgeworth's novels, but Sedgwick is likely to have read the 1801 original or the 1802 second edition, which included the interracial relationship that caused a scandal in England (see Homestead, "Did a Woman Write").

30 *Redwood* or *The Linwoods* features more extensive critiques of slavery.

31 Cindy Weinstein, for instance, argues that "either the novels written by women are cast as ahistorical, fatally conservative, and self-centered, or they are celebrated for plots and characters critical of dominant ideology in the ways available to a woman in the antebellum period. Unfortunately, this dichotomy leaves very little room for novels to do what they do best, which is to take a straight-forward situations and reveal its complexities in ways that challenge readers to rethink their assumptions" ("Sentimentalism" 212).

32 Colloquial language is one of the aesthetic strategies employed by sentimental literature in order to further readers' recognition. For a discussion of sentimentalism and aesthetic education, see Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's essay "Sentimental Aesthetics" (2004).

33 Jacques Rancière argues that aesthetic objects in part depend on the audience's reception process and are therefore heteronomous; he also contends that they exist outside of the context of reception of a particular viewer and are therefore always also autonomous. See his "The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes: Emplotments of Autonomy and Heteronomy" (2002).

34 Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (1986) largely redeemed novels by early American female authors by pointing out the politics of publication, reception, and circulation that were pivotal in making novels like Susanna Rowson's and Harriet Beecher Stowe's novels such smash hits with American reading publics. Their

publication in serial format was also an important part of their success. For a discussion of seriality in nineteenth-century American literature, see Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith's edited collection *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America* (1995).

35 Glenn Hendler draws here largely on Freud's work on the function of the Ego.