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## Of squalls and mutinies: emergency politics and black democracy in *Moby-Dick* and ‘The Heroic Slave’

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### ABSTRACT

This article takes an object-oriented approach to the analogies between weather events and political events in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851) and Frederick Douglass’s ‘The Heroic Slave’ (1853), arguing that marine weathers in these maritime fictions take the measure of the political without being reducible to it. I integrate political-ecological theories of emergency and ‘emergence’ with the analogic poetics of both object-oriented philosophy and critical race studies to show how stormy weather in these texts carries a special charge in articulating an emergent politics of Black democracy.

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‘White squalls? white whale, shirr! shirr!’  
-Pip, in *Moby-Dick*

We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.  
-Frederick Douglass, ‘What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?’

It’s coming through a hole in the air.  
-Leonard Cohen, ‘Democracy’

Weather might not be the first thing readers notice about Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851), but there is a lot of it. Weather events punctuate key passages in the novel. There are violent storms, such as the Atlantic squall that follows Ahab’s rabble-raising quarterdeck speech, or the Pacific typhoon into which Ahab drives the *Pequod* in his ruthless pursuit of the white whale. And there are eerie, ‘deadly’ calms, such as the ‘intense copper calm’ in the Indian Ocean that ‘like a universal yellow lotus, was more and

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more unfolding its noiseless measureless leaves upon the sea'.<sup>1</sup> These 'noiseless measureless' environs set the stage for Ahab's brooding apostrophe to the 'black and hooded head' of a slain whale: 'O head! thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine!' But then calm and reverie alike are broken by a cry of 'Sail ho!' from the main-mast-head, indicating the approach of a ship and of the breeze that carries it. This change in the weather prompts one of Ahab's least characteristic lines in the novel: 'Well, now, that's cheering', he cries, as 'whole thunder-clouds swept aside from his brow'. The correspondence between the oncoming breeze and the sweeping aside of Ahab's stormy mental weather is important, because it precipitates another oft-quoted apostrophe: 'O Nature, and O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies. Not one atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind' (*MD* 312). For some critics, these lines suggest Ahab's anthropocentrism, measuring 'Nature' according to the instrument of his human mind. Bernhard Radloff argues that the 'linked analogy of mind and nature [...] is the condition of the conquest of nature', even if Ahab's intuitions also 'vibrate in sympathy with a mystery in nature which [...] science and technology cannot approach'.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, Elizabeth Schultz recognises in Ahab's apostrophe not 'objective science' but 'subjective transcendentalism'.<sup>3</sup> Yet what Ahab registers here is not so much the way nonhuman 'matter' is made objectively useful or subjectively significant, but rather the way the nonhuman illuminates the materiality and contingency of the human, in ways that cannot be given direct expression or 'utterance'. As Michael Jonik notes of an earlier, parallel moment when 'the playful allurings of [the] girlish air' momentarily 'charm' Ahab and disperse 'the clouds that layer upon layer were piled upon his brow' (*MD* 125), 'what is apparent here is an intricate play of materiality and mood, and of human and inhuman agencies'.<sup>4</sup> Ahab's energies and agencies, his moods and weathers, are, in atomic and atmospheric terms, of the same stuff as the nonhuman objects – and 'hyperobjects', to use Timothy Morton's term for vast space- and time-spanning systems such as climate (and climate change) – that surround him.<sup>5</sup> Analogy in *Moby-Dick*, then, is not just a tool for taking the measure of 'measureless' natural phenomena; it is also an indication of how 'nature' in its measurelessness takes the measure of us.

In this essay, I consider the 'linked analogies' between weather events and political events in *Moby-Dick* and in Frederick Douglass's novella 'The Heroic Slave' (1853). I ask what these analogies tell us about how these texts conceive of democracy and, more specifically, of Black personhood and political belonging in the antebellum period. In particular, I am interested in analogous forms of 'emergency' (in the double sense of 'emergence' as well as crisis), when the stormy energies of sea and sky correspond with the

volatile energies of shipboard subjects. Ahab's vow of vengeance on the quarterdeck stirs the *Pequod's* crew into a 'general hurricane' (*MD* 164) of belligerent enthusiasm that anticipates an actual storm several short chapters later – or what the Black cabin boy Pip describes with a shiver as a line of 'white squalls' (*MD* 178). Conversely, the emergency of the typhoon later in the novel precipitates a near-mutiny against Ahab's authority, a moment when the crew might resist but fatefully fails to. As I will argue, Pip provides an alternate barometer for understanding and navigating these weather events, and he holds a lingering political potential that, unlike this near-mutiny, Ahab cannot contain or suppress. In Douglass's novella, which reimagines the successful 1841 mutiny of enslaved Black Americans aboard the coastwise trader *Creole*, the 'heroic slave' of the title, Madison Washington, takes advantage of an 'apprehended squall' to carry out his rebellion and pilot the ship to safety and freedom in the British Bahamas.<sup>6</sup> Although ostensibly more heroic than the lowly and cowardly Pip, Madison in Douglass's telling is no less attuned to or contingent on the weather. Pip and Madison both manifest the kind of object-oriented perspective that Ahab registers in his analogic apostrophe; but in contrast to Ahab's anthropocentric monomania, their attentiveness to the objects around them provides the basis for an emergent democratic politics organised around collective action and being rather than the sovereignty of individual actors. Indeed, I want to suggest that Madison's and Pip's object-orientation models a different form of 'heroism' that points the way, however tenuously, toward a Black politics of coexistence and correlation with human and nonhuman others.

In advancing this argument about the political and sociocultural content of *Moby-Dick* and 'The Heroic Slave', I am also making a case for stormy weather in these antebellum maritime texts as doing more interesting poetic work than merely providing a dramatic backdrop for this content. Analogy offers a way of thinking and being with the weather and other non-human objects that goes beyond mining them for a functional utility or figurative significance. Admittedly, the analogic correspondence between human events and weather events in these texts does indicate their engagement with the popular antebellum political figure of the ship at sea, frequently used to evoke national destiny as well as natural law and divine will. But *Moby-Dick* and 'The Heroic Slave' unsettle the boundary between the figurative and the literal in their meteorological analogies, which do not express teleological narratives of political progress so much as the practical and ongoing work of 'democratic survival' that Bonnie Honig describes in her book *Emergency Politics*: 'we see democracy as a form of politics that is always in emergence in response to everyday emergencies of maintenance'.<sup>7</sup> The storm is not just a sign of divine will or a figure for the rights of man; it is also an expression of the contingency of human and nonhuman relations as well as their emergent or precipitant possibilities. Stormy weather in these

maritime fictions, I argue, takes the measure of the political without being reducible to it.

### Democracy, ecology, and the poetics of relation

This sense of democracy as a politics of emergence is likewise registered by Edward Sugden, who argues in *Emergent Worlds* that the ship at sea in antebellum maritime literature is not a political metaphor so much as a localised site of the ‘oceanic geocultures’ that at once produced modernity and exposed the interstices and aporia within it. As Sugden writes: ‘oceanic geocultures are the spaces that allowed for the expression of this interstitial modernity, the median, uncodified zones in which a bewildering political potentiality took shape’.<sup>8</sup> I draw on Sugden’s sense of the emergent, if unrealised and uncodified, potentiality that antebellum writers articulated through their representation of marine environments, but I also move in a different direction by positing the emergent potential of the nonhuman alongside the human. In his own reading of the weather in Douglass’s ‘The Heroic Slave’ and Melville’s ‘Benito Cereno’ among other narratives of Black rebellion at sea, Sugden suggests that while ‘the gothic idiom of racialized revolution’ in this literature typically features cataclysmic events such as ‘hurricanes’ and ‘earthquakes’, ‘the calm might operate as a more apt metaphor than the storm for the often-suspended and tortuously delayed journey toward black statehood, black legitimacy, and black freedom’.<sup>9</sup> Yet the meteorological metaphors and analogies in these texts signal a more complex and vital relation between human and nonhuman, exceeding the anthropocentric reduction of the weather to an object for functional or figurative use by shipboard (or pen-wielding) subjects. They also signal that, in navigating marine environments as well as shipboard politics, those subjects act and react in collective and cumulative ways that are as contingent and changeable as the weather itself. They signal, in other words, that those subjects might be thought of as objects in a sea of other objects.

Another way of putting this is that the analogic correspondence between squally and mutinous energies in *Moby-Dick* and ‘The Heroic Slave’ reimagines the political not in terms of the sovereignty of subjects – be they populist authoritarians like Ahab or charismatic heroes like Madison Washington – but rather in terms of the relations between human and nonhuman objects. Jonik argues that the ‘ontology of relations’ in *Moby-Dick* generates an ‘ethopolitics’, that is, ‘a politics of dynamic and multiple bodies, of forces and material flows, of action and repose amidst turbulent events of collective emergence’.<sup>10</sup> By reading against ‘Ahab’s egotistical dominance’ and ‘anthropocentric *vanitas*’ and focusing instead on the ‘web of forces in which the characters [Ahab included] are imbricated’, Jonik reorients the novel’s political compass toward emergent forms that are at once radically democratic

and ‘inhuman’, troubling the distinction between human and nonhuman ontologies.<sup>11</sup> Jonik draws on political-ecological theorists like Jane Bennett, whose concept of ‘vibrant’ or ‘vital’ materialism emphasises the role of non-human ‘actants’ in the ostensibly anthropocentric field of politics: ‘the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogenous) “public” coalescing around a problem’.<sup>12</sup> *Moby-Dick* furnishes examples of the political agency of the ‘individual human’: not just Ahab but also those characters (Bulkington, Starbuck, Steelkilt) whose heroic mettle might provide a model or catalyst for democratic resistance to Ahab’s authoritarian energies. The more radical democratic energies of the novel reside not with these figures, however, but with an emergent ‘public’ that might be said to include storms and sails as well as lowly characters like Pip, who (in my reading) presents the greatest challenge to Ahab’s sovereignty precisely because of his object-oriented and ‘ontologically heterogenous’ perspective. Similarly, Douglass’s novella invokes the power of the squall not only to underscore the righteous and capable leadership of its titular hero but also to signal a radically new ‘public’ coalescing around the *Creole* when that squall is ‘apprehended’ by its human cargo as well as its crew – an emergent public that will come to include the Black British colonial soldiers in Nassau who play a pivotal role at the conclusion of the tale in claiming the humanity of, and thereby liberating, their Black American peers.

Indeed, among these precipitant ‘publics’, I want to anchor my reading of stormy weather in these maritime fictions by suggesting that it carries a special charge in articulating an emergent politics of Black democracy, both in the antebellum United States and in the wider Atlantic world. Black democracy presents a particularly contingent and urgent form of ‘emergency politics’ in these texts, not least because Black personhood was qualified by a complex of laws and institutions that more often read Blacks as objects of the law than as its subjects. Even when Black personhood was recognised (granting legal rights), racial difference was a bar to civic inclusion, leaving later scholars to trace what Ivy Wilson calls ‘the residues and outlines of black subjectivity in political spaces where they are ostensibly fractional entities or nonentities’.<sup>13</sup> In the maritime fictions of Melville and Douglass, these residues accumulate not only in the heated politics of the quarterdeck and forecastle but also in marine weathers and ecologies. Indeed, Tim Armstrong and Christina Sharpe have identified the weather as a powerful figure both for expressing the conditions and scope of US American slavery (as a sort of institutional ‘hyperobject’) and for articulating an emergent politics of Black resistance. Armstrong suggests that ‘race itself might be a meteorological object, ‘the function of a climate’, which is ‘both persistent and variable, as well as being collective’.<sup>14</sup> For Sharpe, amid a ‘climate’ of ‘antiblackness’, ‘[t]he weather necessitates changeability and

improvisation [...]; it produces new ecologies'.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, stormy weather is at once diagnostic and prophetic: it illuminates the contingencies of Black personhood and political belonging, suspended (as Sugden has suggested) between slavery and freedom, between objectification and subjecthood; at the same time, it also signals an emergent politics that does not simply accommodate Black civic participation within existing political structures but rather reimagines democracy beyond the limits of transatlantic modernity, white nationalism, and racial capitalism.

Given that the humanity of Black characters like Pip and Madison is not taken for granted in these texts, the suggestion that we read them not as subjects but as objects coalescing into a 'public' with other (human and nonhuman) objects might seem counterintuitive. It may even appear to reify the object-status of Black individuals from the perspective of racial capitalism. But as Paul Gilroy has recently noted in an essay on what he calls 'offshore humanism', writers like Melville and Douglass (or Frantz Fanon and C. L. R. James, to mention other examples cited by Gilroy) used the status of Black individuals at sea as 'objects among other objects' to make a case for Black subjectivity in object-oriented terms that fundamentally challenged white hegemonic articulations of subjectivity and sovereignty. For Gilroy, 'Melville's passionate planetary ontology of labouring humans, marine life, weather, capital and objects [...] secretes in its poetics an argument about the elemental significance of racism and modern racial orders'.<sup>16</sup> As I have suggested, Melville and Douglass at once invoke the sovereignty of the subject in the figure of the hero and reveal the contingency of that figure within this 'planetary ontology'. And in the process, they articulate a new kind of 'hero' – a Pip or a Madison – that is attentive to (human and nonhuman) others without needing to control or possess those others. In this way, both writers use the weather in their texts not only to diagnose the contingency of Black personhood and political belonging in the period but also to articulate the potential for new forms of political and ethical relation to emerge.

This articulation happens not just at the level of a plot but also at that of poetics, which is why analogy provides such a generative tool for both writers to imagine these precipitant forms of relation. As a mode of cognitive approximation, analogy can be appropriative and anthropocentric, submitting objects to the mind of a human subject. But as Ahab's atomic analogy suggests, it can also articulate the relation between two objects, linked by an opaque correspondence that wavers somewhere between the figurative and the literal. Indeed, the name that Ahab gives to these correspondences within his own analogy is 'linked analogies', as if analogy were not just a rhetorical-cognitive tool but also the opaque relation that that tool attempts to measure. And in fact, for object-oriented philosophers like Timothy Morton, 'object-oriented rhetoric' (including analogy and metaphor) not only offers

indirect glimpses of objects; it also models the indirect means by which those objects relate to or ‘translate’ each other. Relation, Morton writes, is a ‘vibration’, ‘an emission from the opaque void of an object’.<sup>17</sup> Here we might recall Radloff’s insight that Ahab’s intuitions ‘vibrate in sympathy with a mystery in nature’. If we usually understand sympathy as a form of cognitive and sentimental appropriation – sympathy as a ‘moral sense’, in the Enlightenment conception – Radloff uses the word in an earlier, object-oriented sense: an ‘affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence one another (esp. in some occult way), or attract or tend towards each other’.<sup>18</sup> Sympathy here describes an uncanny correspondence between things, human and nonhuman alike. To ‘vibrate in sympathy’, then, is to register how ‘causality is mysterious’, in Morton’s words, suggesting relations between ‘things that are unspeakable or secret’,<sup>19</sup> like the ‘linked analogies’ between the human mind and nature that Ahab declares ‘far beyond all utterance’ (*MD* 312). Yet Ahab’s apostrophe also registers how object-oriented rhetoric, as Morton suggests, can give utterance to objects and their relations, albeit indirectly, by at once measuring and modelling their ‘vibrations’.

The object-oriented poetics of analogy is, moreover, a point on which ecological philosophers like Morton might be said to vibrate in sympathy with Black Atlantic writers like Gilroy or Édouard Glissant, who articulates a ‘poetics of relation’ in his book of that title (*Poétique de la relation*) based not on direct access or understanding but on mutual ‘opacity’.<sup>20</sup> Against the ‘Western’ prerogative to render otherness ‘transparent’, Glissant upholds ‘opacity’ as the basis for an emergent politics of relation without ‘grasping’ (*comprendre*) the other.<sup>21</sup> In language that resonates for both critical race studies and object-oriented approaches, Glissant writes: ‘Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics’.<sup>22</sup> And Glissant gives expression to this fabric through his own poetics. He begins the book with the figure of the ‘Open Boat’, which he uses both to revisit the historical and experiential ‘abyss’ of the Middle Passage and to imagine new possibilities emerging on the horizon: ‘the most petrifying face of the abyss lies far ahead of the slave ship’s bow, a pale murmur; you do not know if it is a storm cloud, rain or drizzle, or smoke from a comforting fire’.<sup>23</sup> This shipboard figure reflects the uncertainty experienced by the enslaved, but it also serves as the basis for a ‘Relation made of storms and profound moments of peace in which we may honor our boats’.<sup>24</sup> Glissant’s object-oriented rhetoric of storms and boats echoes Melville’s and Douglass’s maritime analogies in its expression both of the contingency of Black personhood and of the possibilities for new forms of political and ethical relation. Whereas Ahab is driven by a compulsion to grasp and penetrate the mysteries of causality and being, the Black ‘heroes’ that I consider here embody



Glissant's (and Morton's) suggestion that the fabric of coexistence can be woven between mutually opaque entities. In this sense, *Moby-Dick* and 'The Heroic Slave' resist the material and cognitive acquisitiveness of (white) anthropocentrism, which has proved so destructive to both Black lives and terraqueous ecosystems. And they do so not just by staging scenes of emergent shipboard politics amid storms but also by deploying analogy, which in its object-oriented poetics of relation may be the best tool we have for measuring and modelling the political possibility held in a breath or a breeze or a storm cloud.

### Pip's puns and prophecies

In an essay on 'American Political Symbolism' in *Moby-Dick*, Alan Heimert demonstrates the currency of the 'ship of state' figure in US political discourse in the years leading up to the Compromise of 1850, which saw the infamous Fugitive Slave Law passed in an attempt to mitigate sectional tensions over national expansion and the concomitant expansion of slavery. The Unionists in Congress who architected the Compromise had used the image of a ship imperilled by stormy seas as a figure for a nation brought to the brink of destruction, which their careful legislative piloting narrowly averted, or so they thought. But opponents of the Fugitive Slave Law, such as Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, employed this figure in a markedly different way. In a 'State of the Nation' sermon on Thanksgiving Day Parker thundered,

You may gather all the dried grass and all the straw in both continents; you may braid it into ropes to bind down the sea; while it is calm, you may laugh, and say, 'Lo, I have chained the ocean!' and howl down the law of Him who holds the universe as a rosebud in His hand. [...] But when the winds blow their trumpets, the sea rises in its strength, snaps asunder the binds that had confined his mighty limbs, and the world is littered with the idle hay!<sup>25</sup>

Parker reconfigures the stormy seas not as a figure for political conflicts within the nation's states and territories but rather as emblematic of God's law. To pass a bill as flagrantly defiant of natural law as the Fugitive Slave Act is as foolhardy and futile as attempting to chain the ocean with braids of grass; it might look successful while the ocean is calm, but the first storm will reveal it as so much 'idle hay'. The question is, what form will that storm take? We denominate this period 'antebellum', a retrospective and strangely fatalistic term, but of course at the time there was no knowing what sort of emergency might arise, if any, to 'snap asunder' the binds of an unjust law or the unnatural bondage of human beings denied their natural rights to liberty.

It is not difficult to read the fatalistic trajectory of the *Pequod*, as Heimert does, in these national-political terms, forecasting an emergency of Biblical proportions, a convergence of volatile natural forces (from squalls to whales) emerging out of the charged climate of slavery and expansionism. Indeed, Melville primes us for this reading even before the *Pequod* sets sail. In Chapter 9, 'The Sermon', Father Mapple (who Heimert argues is based in part on Parker) rehearses the story of Jonah and the whale, in which God summons an 'indignant gale' to pursue the fugitive prophet; when Jonah's shipmates toss him overboard, 'Jonah carries down the gale with him, leaving smooth water behind' (*MD* 46). The sermon foreshadows the Typhoon scene late in the novel, when the crew determines that Ahab's pursuit of the white whale is ungodly. In the electric fury of the storm, 'the corpusants' (or *corpus sancti*, the atmospheric phenomenon also known as St. Elmo's Fire) make it appear as if 'each of the three tall masts was silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar' (*MD* 505). Stubb's 'oath' – 'The corpusants have mercy on us all!' – prompts Ishmael to reflect,

To sailors, oaths are household words; they will swear in the trance of the calm, and in the teeth of the tempest [...] but in all my voyagings, seldom have I heard a common oath when God's burning finger has been laid on the ship; when His 'Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin' has been woven into the shrouds and the cordage. (*MD* 506)

Ishmael here recalls another Old Testament story of divine punishment, the 'writing on the wall' that appears during Belshazzar's feast; this cryptic phrase in Aramaic suggests that Ahab's reign, like Belshazzar's, has been measured ('numbered', 'weighed', and 'divided') by the Almighty, who will smite blasphemous Ahab, by squall or by whale. When Ahab's harpoon manifests the same spectral phenomenon, Starbuck declares, 'God, God is against thee, old man'. The crew then raises 'a half mutinous cry'; there is a potential for resistance here, but Ahab quashes it with his wrathful reminder that '[a]ll your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine' (*MD* 508). Ahab's words also remind us that 'oaths' are not just the stuff of sailors' superstitions but also 'the promises, covenants, and mutual pledges' through which people 'bind themselves' in a democracy, as Hannah Arendt describes the thinking of the 'founding fathers'.<sup>26</sup> Ahab's reign aboard the *Pequod* is no democracy, but in what Mark Patterson describes as 'a masterful fusion of democratic demagoguery and religious ritual',<sup>27</sup> Ahab persuades the crew to 'splice hands' and pledge to hunt Moby Dick (*MD* 163). Captain and crew are doomed to pursue this hunt to its fateful conclusion, just as the antebellum US 'ship of state', bound by its own legislative 'oaths' and compromises, seemed helpless to avoid the disasters attendant to its expansionism and its investment in slavery.

But if Ishmael, following Stubb and Starbuck, interprets the ‘corpusants’ as divine tools for taking the measure of Ahab, the novel suggests that reading such phenomena solely as signs of God’s law and judgment fails to take the measure of the weather. Ahab, for his part, interprets the corpusants and lightning as manifestations of that ‘clear spirit of clear fire’ that made Ahab in its own image, though this materialist relation serves only to reinforce Ahab’s ‘queenly personality’ (*MD* 507). Melville presents Ahab here as a Carlylean ‘hero’ or ‘great man’ of history, who ‘with his free force direct out of God’s own hand, is the lightning’ that will ‘kindle’ the ‘dry dead fuel’ of the world.<sup>28</sup> Except Ahab’s ‘lightning’ – the ‘fiery emotion’ with which he ‘shock[s]’ the crew in his quarterdeck speech – kindles not historical progress but destruction (*MD* 165). In Pip, however, Melville presents us with a different kind of hero, not the great man but the ‘small black boy’ (*MD* 178), who evades these theocentric and anthropocentric teleologies by considering his relation to marine weathers in more contingent terms. Like Ahab and Ishmael, Pip takes his own measurements of this relation; he analogises, he puns, and he prophesises. What distinguishes Pip’s poetics of relation is that they do not seek to grasp what Ishmael tantalisingly calls that ‘ungraspable phantom of life’ (*MD* 5). Pip’s measurements reflect his lowly position as a Black cabin boy, but they also constitute an object-oriented approach that, while it ultimately fails to rescue the *Pequod* from its fateful course, offers an alternative to the appropriative (and therefore destructive) impulses of white nationalism and transatlantic modernity.

Ishmael himself suggests that the cabin boy is a kind of hero when he first introduces ‘Black Little Pip’ in the second ‘Knights and Squires’ chapter:

On the grim *Pequod*’s forecandle, ye shall ere long see him, beating his tambourine; prelude of the eternal time, when sent for, to the great quarterdeck on high, he was bid strike in with angels, and beat his tambourine in glory; called a coward here, hailed a hero there! (*MD* 121)

In a compound prolepsis, Ishmael looks ahead both to Pip’s first appearance on the deck of the *Pequod* and to Pip’s tragic fate and glorious (or so Ishmael imagines) afterlife. C. L. R. James, in his reading of the ‘Knights and Squires’ chapters, suggests that ‘Melville intends to make the crew the real heroes of the book’, positioning the collective potential of the crew against Ahab’s monomaniacal will.<sup>29</sup> Jonik makes a similar argument in his ‘ethopolitical’ approach to the *Pequod*’s racially and ethnically diverse crew, insofar as their ‘common endeavours [...] express the heterotopic potential of different forms of collectivity’.<sup>30</sup> In focusing on Black democracy, however, I take inspiration from James’s further proposition that ‘[i]t is Pip who in the end will be hailed as the greatest hero of all’.<sup>31</sup> James echoes Ishmael’s own elevating language, but he also suggests that Pip’s heroism is already

discernible aboard the *Pequod* in his ability to unsettle the established hierarchies of rank and race. What is elided in Ishmael's prolepsis is not just Pip's own proleptic or prophetic capacity but also his sense of the shifting and provisional relations between the human and nonhuman objects around him, which registers both his particular contingency – as 'the lowest of the low in the America of 1851', in James's description<sup>32</sup> – and his receptivity to emergent possibilities and forms. It is this object-oriented perspective that makes Pip a hero not 'on high' but at sea-level, in the here and now of the *Pequod's* ill-fated cruise. Pip comes closest to averting that fate, not by raising 'a half mutinous cry' but by modelling a different politics and poetics of relation.<sup>33</sup>

Pip offers a uniquely object-oriented perspective from his first appearance in the playscript-like chapter 'Midnight, Forecastle'. The sailors on deck, still exhilarated from Ahab's speech, call on Pip to beat his tambourine so that they can 'have a jig or two' at the end of their watch. He responds that he doesn't know where it is, so one of the sailors tells him to '[b]eat thy belly, then'. Another sailor finds his tambourine, which he pounds so hard that its 'jingers' fall off; 'rattle thy teeth, then', a third sailor commands (*MD* 174–5). This festive (though already sinister) mood turns dark when the winds pick up and the sailors descry 'pitch black' storm clouds approaching. Daggoo, the African harpooner, quips that 'Who's afraid of black's afraid of me', which another sailor takes as an invitation for racist taunting, calling Daggoo 'devilish dark' and joking that a flash of lightning was just 'Daggoo showing his teeth' (*MD* 177). The volatile energies of the crew threaten to erupt into racial violence, but this shipboard emergency is eclipsed by the impending emergency of the squall, sending all hands to the halyards. Only Pip remains on the chapter's stage, '[s]hrinking under the windlass' as he delivers the concluding soliloquy; he identifies the weather not just as any squall but, 'worse yet', a series of 'white squalls', which he associates first with the 'white whale' which 'that anaconda of an old man swore 'em in to hunt', and then with 'thou big white God aloft somewhere in yon darkness', whom he entreats to 'have mercy on this small black boy down here' (*MD* 178). Pip thus measures his position according not to overarching teleological plots but rather to the circumstances – sociocultural, political, and meteorological – in which he finds himself at a given moment. Moreover, his punning revises the racial associations of the storm with Daggoo's fearsome blackness, suggesting that there is more to fear in whiteness. As a 'small black boy' before the 'big white God' in which a childhood in the antebellum United States has taught him to believe, he does not have the luxury of Ahab's 'queenly personality'. Ahab has convinced the other sailors to join him in his quest for Moby Dick, but Pip stands apart. Pip's vision, his orientation toward the world around him, isn't based on glory or greed; he is

simply trying to survive in a terrifying world in which his own position is especially contingent.

Pip's very personhood is called into question: not only as an object of entertainment whose body is read as coterminous with (or surrogate for) his tambourine; but also, later in the novel, as a body not worth rescuing during a whale hunt. Pip is a free Black boy – a 'native' of 'Tolland County in Connecticut' (*MD* 412) – but that doesn't prevent Stubb from telling him, after losing a whale when the startled boy jumps out of the boat, 'a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind, and don't jump any more'. Stubb's warning, suggesting that the body of a dead whale is far more valuable than Pip's life, reveals the precariousness of Pip's position. On one hand, he is treated like a member of the crew, if an inferior one, worthy of being saved; but on the other hand, his value is measured here as if he were an object to be sold rather than a human being. Ishmael speculates that Stubb thus 'indirectly hinted, that though man loved his fellow, yet man is a money-making animal, which propensity too often interferes with his benevolence' (*MD* 413). And indeed, when Pip jumps again, Stubb's calculation changes and he leaves Pip behind, where '[b]y merest chance the ship itself rescued him' (*MD* 414). Pip's precarious position, both in Stubb's boat and aboard the *Pequod*, reflects the contingency of Black personhood not only at sea but also in the antebellum United States – and not just for the enslaved but for free Blacks, who were vulnerable to kidnapping by 'slave catchers' emboldened by the Fugitive Slave Law. As Christopher Freeburg writes, Stubb's Alabama reference 'substantiates Pip's broader black exemplarity'.<sup>34</sup> Even Ishmael, when introducing Pip and foreshadowing his death in the same breath, exclaims, 'Poor Alabama boy!', an inconsistency that might be Melville's but which nonetheless suggests that Pip faces a particular fate among the *Pequod's* ill-fated crew, doomed to be measured according to his value on the auction block (*MD* 118). Little wonder, then, that Pip suffers a social and spiritual death before his physical one, following the trajectory of countless sailors, migrants, and slaves:

The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul [...] carried down alive to wondrous depths [...]. Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. (*MD* 414)

Pip's traumatic near-drowning, and his visions of an otherworldly submarine ecosystem, shatter whatever fragile sense of personality he had. As Sharon Cameron notes, this is an experience of 'isolation from, rather than [...] transcendence of, the human condition'.<sup>35</sup> Pip becomes the mad prophet of the *Pequod*, 'speaking' his godly visions – of the *Pequod's* 'old mast', for

example, covered with ‘bedded oysters for the shaggy bark’ (*MD* 435) – but he is forever lost to himself: ‘Pip’s missing’; ‘Who’s seen Pip the coward?’ (*MD* 522) In this way, Pip’s prophetic visions are not a departure from but an extension of his object-oriented perspective as a ‘small black boy’ navigating political and weather emergencies alike. Pip continues to measure himself relative both to other characters and to the sea’s creatures and currents and weathers. Ishmael does not have direct access to Pip’s experience, of course, and can offer only his own analogic projection of it. But even if we imagine that Pip does see ‘God’s foot upon the treadle of the loom’, what he ‘speaks’ is not transcendence but contingency and relation: the ‘fabric’ woven of converging ‘opacities’, to use Glissant’s figure.

If Pip’s contingency suggests his relative powerlessness, his object-oriented perspective nevertheless contains a political charge that nearly derails Ahab’s iron will. Pip attracts Ahab, on one hand, in the way that the head of the slain whale does, that is, as a mysterious object that he wishes grasp: ‘I do suck most wondrous philosophies from thee! Some unknown conduits from the unknown worlds must empty into thee!’ (*MD* 529) After all, Pip has ‘seen’ what the whale has, and unlike the mute head, Pip does speak, albeit in analogic puns and prophecies, as when he likens the log trailing behind the ship to his own drowned spirit: ‘Captain Ahab! sir, sir! here’s Pip, trying to get on board again’. On the other hand, Ahab relates to Pip in sympathetic terms: ‘Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings’. And Pip reciprocates, touching and marvelling at the ‘velvet shark-skin’ of Ahab’s hand and wishing their hands could be ‘rivet[ed]’ together, ‘the black one with the white’ (*MD* 522). As much as Ahab wishes to grasp Pip, this is the kind of sympathetic binding that suggests not sentimental appropriation so much as the uncanny relation, or vibration, between mutually opaque objects. And this shared opacity generates the potential for a radically democratic politics that the rest of the crew cannot muster, for they have bound themselves to Ahab’s power in a way that Pip has not. Indeed, Ahab recognises the threat that Pip’s fellowship presents to his quest for vengeance: ‘There is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady’. Admittedly, Pip’s entreaty when Ahab moves to leave him alone in the cabin and resume the hunt on deck – ‘do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye’ (*MD* 534) – hardly seems a revolutionary gesture. It appears to reify Pip’s status as an object from the perspective of racial capitalism. As Sharon Cameron argues, however, Pip’s offer of himself as a prosthetic object for the mutilated Ahab’s ‘analogic completion’ is ‘wholly different’ from the prosthetic function that Ahab forces upon the crew, treating them as ‘appendages’ of his body and will.<sup>36</sup> Pip’s is an act not of submission but of ‘generosity’, Cameron writes. In place of Ahab’s impossible

desire to become ‘whole’ by knowing and appropriating what he is not, Pip offers instead ‘a substitution for this wholeness [...] in the form of analogy or relationship, in an acknowledged connection with other selves’.<sup>37</sup> Ahab ultimately rejects Pip’s analogic fellowship to pursue the white whale. But the potential of Pip’s object-oriented vision lingers in the very atmosphere, as *Ahab goes* and *Pip steps one step forward* to deliver his final soliloquy, which begins, ‘Here he this instant stood; I stand in his air, – but I’m alone’ (*MD* 534).

### Madison Washington’s heroic opacity

If Pip is the secret ‘hero’ of *Moby-Dick*, the titular ‘heroic slave’ of Douglass’s story is more overt. Douglass models Madison Washington on the historical figure of that name who led the 1841 mutiny aboard the *Creole*, during the ‘coastwise’ or domestic (and therefore legal) transportation of 135 enslaved Black Americans from Richmond, Virginia to New Orleans; the mutineers demanded to be taken to the British Bahamas, where they were tried and ultimately freed by British colonial authorities in Nassau. But Douglass also embellishes Madison’s character to cast him as a hero in the Carlylean mould – or, to use Emerson’s version of the type, as a ‘representative man’. Douglass’s Madison is ‘a sort of general-in-chief’ among the Blacks, ‘by that mesmeric power which is the invariable accompaniment of genius’ (*HS* 36). Like Ahab, he is magnetising, both in word and in deed. This heroic characterisation redresses Madison’s exclusion from ‘American annals’. Douglass wryly notes that ‘History has not been sparing’ in ‘blazoning [the] deeds’ of Virginia’s many ‘statesmen and heroes’, and that ‘even a man of ordinary parts, on account of the general partiality for her sons, easily rises to eminent stations’, and yet ‘[b]y some strange neglect, *one* of the truest, manliest, and bravest of her children [...] holds now no higher place in the records of that grand old Commonwealth than is held by a horse or an ox’ (*HS* 3–4). Denied legal personhood and political kinship on land, Madison claims both at sea. Madison manages not only to lead his fellow rebels in taking the *Creole* while the crew is distracted by the ‘apprehended squall’ but also to pilot the ship capably through the ‘dreadful hurricane’, while delivering a powerful oratorical performance to match his revolutionary leadership and nautical mastery: ‘Mr. mate, you cannot write the bloody laws of slavery on those restless billows. The ocean, if not the land, is free’ (*HS* 50).

This distinction echoes Theodore Parker’s figure of ‘the sea ris[ing] in its strength’ and ‘snap[ping] asunder the binds’ of the unjust laws of the land. Like Parker, Douglass reaches back to the discursive foundations of natural law, which distinguishes the eternal commons of the ocean, boundless and uncontainable, from the geopolitically bounded territories of the

nation-state, with its historically contingent social contracts, laws, and customs. This made the ocean a powerful emblem of natural rights in abolitionist discourse, as Carrie Hyde observes: 'Outside of the United States, abolitionists argued, the local fictions of the nation gave way to the laws of nature'.<sup>38</sup> The chastened mate, whose recounting of the mutiny 'in the Marine Coffee-house at Richmond' is the only version of these events that Douglass provides, reinforces this distinction when he defends himself from the opinion of another 'old salt' that 'that whole affair on board of the Creole was miserably and disgracefully managed' (*HS* 42). The mate responds that '[i]t is one thing to manage a company of slaves on a Virginia plantation, and quite another thing to quell an insurrection on the lonely billows of the Atlantic, where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty' (*HS* 44). As Gilroy puts it, the whites gathered at the Marine Coffee-house 'debate the thorny problem of how the change from strictly tellurian sovereignty to maritime authority and conditions affected the personality and spirit of enslaved Africans as well as those of their captors'.<sup>39</sup> The ocean functions here both literally as the extranational space in which natural law supposedly supersedes the positive laws and institutions of nation-states, and figuratively as a geophysical body whose 'restless billows' (like the 'mighty limbs' in Parker's figuration) suggest the physical and emotional energy of the enslaved in their struggle for freedom. There is a sympathetic correspondence between the sea and the enslaved that seems to guarantee the sundering of unnatural legal and institutional binds.

If the ocean is a sort of symbolic home for Black emancipation and rights, however, it offers no harbour for a living human being. (Just ask Pip.) In this sense, the Black shipboard subject has left the land behind but not the legal or institutional binds of the 'ship of state', which in these narratives happens to be a literal vessel as well as a metaphorical one. Hyde underscores this point when she writes that 'the idealization of the ocean as a space of natural liberty was not an end in itself, but instead, and very explicitly, a model for reform within the United States'.<sup>40</sup> After all, Madison still needs to pilot the ship across the 'restless billows' to a 'land' – the British Bahamas – that is already 'free'. The coincidence of squall and mutiny lends a providential cast to Madison's revolutionary leadership, but achieving freedom depends on careful measurement and a practical understanding of his geopolitical position. After taking the ship, Madison tells the white crew, 'Do not flatter yourselves that I am ignorant of chart or compass. I know both. We are now only about sixty miles from Nassau'. This portrait of Madison as expert navigator and pilot – 'his keen eye fixed on the binnacle', meeting the squall 'with the equanimity of an old sailor' (*HS* 50) – is Douglass's invention, as is the squall itself, but it reinforces the geopolitical calculation of the historical mutineers. Moreover, as I have noted, Douglass emphasises that



the liberation of Madison and his fellow rebels depends on the intervention of ‘a company of *black* soldiers’, which the mate describes as follows:

These impudent rascals, when I called on them to assist me in keeping the slaves on board, sheltered themselves adroitly under their instructions only to protect property,—and said they did not recognize *persons* as *property*. I told them that by the laws of Virginia and the laws of the United States, the slaves on board were as much property as the barrels of flour in the hold. At this the stupid blockheads showed their *ivory*, rolled up their white eyes in horror, as if the idea of putting men on a footing with merchandise were revolting to their humanity. (*HS* 51)

Douglass uses the mate’s racism here to reveal the incoherence and inhumanity of the laws he cites. Just as the mate would reduce the rebels to the status of objects as readily possessed and traded as ‘barrels of flour’, his metonymic reference to the soldiers’ ‘ivory’ suggests that he sees them, too, in material or objective terms. At the same time, Douglass offers an alternative object-oriented perspective that, far from reifying the ‘object’-status that slavery depends upon, powerfully expresses the humanity of Madison and his fellows. The squall, the collective action of the mutineers, the navigational instruments with which Madison measures his position, the Black soldiers in Nassau: this convergence of human and nonhuman signals Madison’s contingency as both ‘hero’ and ‘slave’, as well as the potential of an emergent Black Atlantic politics.

This contingency and this potential are also registered at the level of form. Douglass purports to rescue his hero from ‘undeserved obscurity’ (*HS* 4), but as Hyde notes, the story itself is marked by ‘a structuring opacity’ through which Douglass at once ‘ironizes’ ‘the exceptionalist logic of the white revolutionary tradition’ and ‘forswears the possibility of fathoming Madison’s character’.<sup>41</sup> Madison slips from the narrator’s grasp (and ours) in the very process of analogic figuration:

Like a guiding star on a stormy night, he is seen through the parted clouds and the howling tempests; or, like the gray peak of a menacing rock on a perilous coast, he is seen by the quivering flash of angry lightning, and he again disappears covered with mystery. (*HS* 4)

In the passage immediately following this obscure introduction, the white Northerner Listwell hopes to unravel this ‘mystery’ when he overhears Madison’s sorrowful ‘soliloquy’ on his enslaved condition – Listwell ‘had long desired to sound the mysterious depths of the thoughts and feelings of a slave’ (*HS* 7) – but Madison recedes from sympathetic eavesdroppers and readers alike. Like Pip, from whom Ahab ‘suck[s] most wondrous philosophies’, Madison is presented less as a heroic subject than as an object from which we might extract some deep knowledge or truth. Yet he proves no less opaque than the nonhuman objects to which he is compared.

Hyde writes that the story ‘displaces biographical (or at least character-bound) expectations with unstable natural metaphors’, but what this passage suggests is not the displacement of character and agency so much as Madison’s analogic relation to the marine weathers and ecosystems that surround him.<sup>42</sup> In this reading, tempests and lightning do not obscure Madison per se; rather, they illuminate Madison’s ontological obscurity. These analogies illustrate how, in Morton’s words, ‘object-oriented rhetoric becomes the way objects obscure themselves in fold upon fold of mysterious robes, caverns, fortresses of solitude and octopus ink’.<sup>43</sup> This rhetoric suggests that what makes Madison truly ‘heroic’ is his opacity – or what Lloyd Pratt calls, in his reading of Douglass’s ‘political-aesthetic project’, ‘stranger humanism’.<sup>44</sup> In this way, Madison is at once like Pip and like Babo, the leader of the thwarted slave mutiny in Melville’s ‘Benito Cereno’ (1855), whose mute head, ‘that hive of subtlety’, remains unfathomable in death as in life, like the head of the slain whale in *Moby-Dick*.<sup>45</sup> But whereas Pip and Babo meet a tragic end, Madison is allowed to vanish into the rhetorical folds of Douglass’s story. The mate’s framed narration of the mutiny adds a further fold. His punning analogy of the ‘foul play’ of the rebels with the ‘foul weather’ at sea (*HS* 42) suggests a causal relation between mutiny and squall, but this is a causality of an uncanny kind. Hyde argues that ‘Douglass presents the revolt as an effect of nature – more fundamental, if also more fitful, than the actions of an individual agent’.<sup>46</sup> It is worth emphasising, however, that ‘nature’ as Douglass depicts it is not simply a transcendental force signalling divine will and natural law; it is also a material force that signals the contingency, and the collective possibility, of human and nonhuman relations.

In his 1852 speech ‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?’, Douglass echoes Parker’s 1850 sermon, expressing the need for ‘a storm’ to sweep away the nation’s racist laws and institutions. The storm that Douglass summoned was not an act of God, however, but a rhetorical and oratorical ‘whirlwind’ of ‘scorching irony’ and ‘blasting reproach’ to ‘rouse’ the nation’s ‘conscience’, to ‘expose’ its ‘hypocrisy’, and to ‘denounce’ its ‘crimes against God and man’.<sup>47</sup> Ivy Wilson links Douglass’s speeches to those of his fictionalised ‘heroic slave’, calling attention to speaking as ‘an aesthetic and political practice’ that involves both ‘rhetoric and voice’, breath and sound carried on the air.<sup>48</sup> As Morton writes, ‘the voice, an object with its own richness and hidden depths, translates the words it speaks’ as if ‘it were summoning forth an obscure dimension of language’.<sup>49</sup> I suggest that we understand Douglass’s squalls and mutinies in similar terms, as a poetics and a politics of emergency that at once denounces injustice and provides the rhetorical means to articulate what justice and democracy might look in object-oriented terms, not summoned from heaven but carried like an electrical charge in the atmosphere.

Douglass and Melville use natural phenomena as figures for thinking about the politics of ‘emergency’, but they both resist reducing human and nonhuman objects to legible signs and wonders. Their texts are ultimately less interested in grasping these objects than in conveying the relations between them, that is, the ‘fabric’ of coexistent opacities. For these writers, it is the measurelessness of these objects that holds out the possibility of democratic survival.

## Notes

1. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1988), p. 311. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *MD* with page number.
2. Bernhard Radloff, *Will and Representation: The Philosophical Foundations of Melville's Theatrum Mundi* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), p. 323.
3. Elizabeth Schultz, ‘Melville’s Environmental Vision in *Moby-Dick*’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 7.1 (Winter 2000), p. 98.
4. Michael Jonik, *Herman Melville and the Politics of the Inhuman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 34.
5. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
6. Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave: A Cultural and Critical Edition*, ed. Robert Levine et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 50. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *HS* with page number.
7. Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, and Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. xvii. Honig presents ‘emergency’ not as a threat to democracy (what Carl Schmitt termed the ‘state of exception’) but rather as democracy’s ongoing condition. She thus proposes a political reorientation away from the sovereign subject who ‘decides’ the exception (in Schmitt’s figuration) and towards the ‘democratic energies’ on which ‘the so-called state of exception’ depends (87).
8. Edward Sugden, *Emergent Worlds: Alternative States in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), p. 16.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 90.
10. Jonik, *Melville and the Inhuman*, pp. 23, 21.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
12. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 108.
13. Ivy Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5.
14. Tim Armstrong, *The Logic of Slavery: Debt, Technology, and Pain in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 184.
15. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 106.
16. Paul Gilroy, “‘Where Every Breeze Speaks of Courage and Liberty’: Offshore Humanism and Marine Xenology, or, Racism and the Problem of Critique at Sea Level’, *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, 50.1 (2018), p. 5.

17. Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality* (Open Humanities Press, 2013), pp. 75, 93.
18. 'sympathy, n.1.a.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
19. Morton, *Realist Magic*, p. 17.
20. This is also a point on which Bennett's 'vibrant' materialism, which posits a more direct relationality between objects or 'actants', slightly stumbles. In questioning the extent to which nonhuman actants could come to constitute a 'public' Bennett asks: 'What is the difference between an ecosystem and a political system? Are they analogs? Two names for the same system at different scales?' (*Vibrant Matter*, p. 94) Bennett's materialism cannot resolve this tension between the figurative ('analogs') and the literal ('the same system'). For Morton (and for Glissant, in slightly different terms), this tension need not be resolved because it does not exist as such; 'object-oriented rhetoric' not only gives us indirect access to objects but it also models the indirect relations between objects.
21. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 193.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
25. Quoted in Alan Heimert, 'Moby-Dick and American Political Symbolism', *American Quarterly*, 15.4 (December 1963), p. 508.
26. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1963), p. 181.
27. Mark Patterson, *Authority, Autonomy, and Representation in American Literature, 1776–1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 206.
28. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), p. 16.
29. C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2001), p. 18.
30. Jonik, *Melville and the Inhuman*, p. 64.
31. James, *Mariners*, p. 19.
32. *Ibid.*
33. It is worth noting that other non-white characters perform similarly unsettling roles in *Moby-Dick*. Sugden notes of Queequeg's unpredictable striking of the loom as Ishmael weaves in the chapter 'The Matmaker', 'It not only gestures toward a series of suppressed narratives about Pacific life, those associated with contingency and chance, but also, more radically, alters the very composition and structure of the historical frame through which we might understand such counternarratives' (*Emergent Worlds*, p. 40).
34. Christopher Freeburg, *Melville and the Idea of Blackness: Race and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 52.
35. Sharon Cameron, *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 26.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

38. Carrie Hyde, 'The Climates of Liberty: Natural Rights in the *Creole* Case and "The Heroic Slave"', *American Literature*, 85.3 (September 2013), p. 477.
39. Gilroy, "'Where Every Breeze ...'", p. 6.
40. Hyde, 'The Climates of Liberty', p. 478.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 486–8.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 487.
43. Morton, *Realist Magic*, p. 85.
44. Lloyd Pratt, *The Strangers Book: The Human of African American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 1. Pratt notably draws on Glissant's theory of 'opacity' in his articulation of 'stranger humanism'.
45. Melville, 'Benito Cereno', in Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall and G. Thomas Tanselle (eds), *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces, 1839–1860* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1987), p. 116.
46. Hyde, 'The Climates of Liberty', p. 493.
47. Douglass, 'What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?' *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 9th edition, vol B, ed. Robert Levine (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), p. 1239.
48. Wilson, *Specters of Democracy*, p. 18.
49. Morton, *Realist Magic*, p. 84.

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