

SHAKESPEARE AND MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Moby-Dick was two books written between February, 1850 and August, 1851. The first book did not contain Ahab. It may not, except incidentally, have contained Moby-Dick.¹

Moby-Dick was almost ready for the presses by late summer, 1850; but Herman Melville's monumental story of a whaling voyage was not published until October 18, 1851, which was almost a year and two months later. How can we account for such a delay? Since it was not Melville's practice to let a manuscript lie idle, the most plausible explanation, according to some critics, is that Melville undertook a radical revision of the novel. The comparatively few external evidences about the composition of Moby-Dick support this assumption.

On February 1, 1850, Melville returned to the United States from England, where he had arranged for the publication of White-Jacket. It is extremely doubtful that he had started on a new book before this date. There is no reference to the writing of Moby-Dick in the journal he kept on the trip.² If Melville had planned to begin his novel on a whaling voyage during his journey, in all probability he would have bought such books as Thomas Beale's The Natural History of the Sperm Whale in England, rather than wait until his return to America to purchase them.³ But we know that Melville, after his return, had Putnam's acquire such books for him in London.⁴ Since Melville, upon his arrival from England, would probably have an accumulation of business and social duties, Stewart suggests that Melville did not begin to write Moby-Dick until the middle of February,⁵ which is perhaps more accurate than Hayford's belief "that he plunged into the composition immediately upon his return from England early in February."⁶

The first bit of evidence concerning Moby-Dick is Melville's letter to Richard Henry Dana, Jr., on May 1, 1850. In the next to the last paragraph of the letter Melville makes two important statements about his novel, one concerning his progress and the other his difficulties:

About the "whaling voyage"—I am half way in the work, & am very glad that your suggestion so jumps with mine. It will be a strange sort of a book, tho', I fear; blubber is blubber you know; tho' you may get oil out of it, the poetry runs as hard as sap from a frozen maple tree;—& to cook the thing up, one must needs throw in a little fancy, which from the nature of the thing, must be ungainly as the gambols of the whales themselves. Yet I mean to give the truth of the thing, spite of this.⁷

By June 27, 1850, Melville seems to have progressed far enough to begin negotiations for the publication of his novel. On this date he wrote to Richard Bentley, his English publisher, offering him the publication of "a romance of adventure founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Whale Fisheries, and illustrated by the author's own personal experience, of two years & more, as a harpooneer." He assured Bentley that the book would be finished by late autumn.⁸

On August 7, 1850, Evert Duyckinck wrote his brother George that "Melville has a new book mostly done—a romantic, fanciful, and literal and most enjoyable presentment of the Whale Fishery—something quite new."⁹ Duyckinck, who had just visited Melville, writes as if he had seen the manuscript and perhaps read part of it. Even if he is merely quoting Melville, the evidence is still valid.¹⁰

Thus between February and August, 1850, Melville began and nearly completed his whaling book. The facts considered above refute the usual assumption that Moby-Dick was begun in the late summer of 1850 and completed at Arrowhead during the ensuing nine or ten months.¹¹ Naturally, the belief that Melville was nearly finished with his novel by August, 1850, hinges on these two pieces of evidence; therefore, there may be some doubt whether

Melville could have been really "half way in the work" on May 1, and whether he could have been "mostly done" by August 7. Stewart presents a convincing argument against such doubters, I believe.¹² His defense was initiated by Howard's suggestion, concerning Melville's letter of May 1, 1850, that it "was perhaps excessively optimistic as a reference to the amount actually composed."¹³ Stewart finds no reason to doubt the literal accuracy of Melville's statement, admitting that a novelist, in the middle of his novel, can not always tell how long the final product will be.

Stewart observes that, if Melville began around February 15, by May 1, 1850, he would have been writing for ten weeks. Interruptions, as far as we know, had been few, although he did have to read proof on White-Jacket, neither long nor laborious work. Howard calculates that in writing White-Jacket Melville composed at the average rate of three thousand words a day,¹⁴ a rate not excessive for a professional novelist. Assuming a six-day week and a three-thousand word day, Melville, Stewart believes, might have produced 180,000 words by May 1. In view of the fact that Moby-Dick as we know it contains about 220,000 words, Stewart then sees no reason to question Melville's statement on May 1. Assuming Melville was "half way in the work" by May 1, could he have finished by August 7? On this point, Stewart admits that Melville's time was considerably broken up during the summer. But he did have three weeks after May 1 when he could have written steadily, as far as we know. At his usual rate, he could have attained a total of 164,000 words by May 28, or about three quarters of the whole. Between May 28, when he left New York for the country,¹⁵ and August 7, it is safe to assume he did some writing, for he was under financial pressure and could not afford to waste his time. Figuring it another way, Stewart points out that the total elapsed time between February 15 and August 7 amounts to about 150 weekdays. To have

written a novel the length of Moby-Dick in that period, Melville had only to average a little less than 1500 words a day, half of what he averaged in producing White-Jacket.

Therefore, so far as the time element is concerned, I see no reason to question Duyckinck's statement that the novel was "mostly done" by August 7, or Stewart's estimate of the time consumed in its composition. Let us now examine the above documents for information about the contents of the novel, which Melville had rushed to near completion by August. Melville's curt reference to the book in May—"blubber is blubber you know; tho' you may get oil out of it, the poetry runs as hard as sap from a frozen maple tree;—& to cook the thing up, one must needs throw in a little fancy"—and his summary of the book to Bentley in June—"a romance of adventure founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Whale Fisheries"—give no hint of the titanic, tragic Ahab or his demoniac hatred of Moby Dick, or of the permeative allegory that appeared beneath the finished Moby-Dick. Nor does Duyckinck's account of the nearly-finished novel in August—"a romantic, fanciful & literal & most enjoyable presentment of the Whale Fishery"—suggest the philosophic and symbolic depths which abound in the novel in its final form. That the "presentment" was "a literal account of the whaling industry, the fanciful but not unprecedented destruction of the vessel, the romantic element of suspense that anticipated it, and a most enjoyable style"¹⁶ can be deduced from these letters. But the vision of Moby-Dick, suggested by the information we have about it at its beginning, falls far short of anything displaying the dramatic intensity, the pervasive symbolism, and the depth of characterization of the Moby-Dick that finally reached the presses.

Thus the evidence considered shows that Melville had almost completed a book by August and that the subject matter of it appears to be something vastly

different from Moby-Dick as we know it. These facts point to two conclusions: first, that since the novel was "mostly done" by August, Melville could hardly have spent more than a year merely to finish the book, especially in the light of Howard's information that Melville averaged 3000 words a day in writing White-Jacket; second, that in view of the information we possess about the subject matter of the book at its beginnings, it must have undergone considerable revision and reworking after August 7, 1850.¹⁷

We also possess additional evidence that tends to verify these conclusions. On December 13, 1850, Melville wrote to Duyckinck, indicating that he had again plunged into the work of writing Moby-Dick, working five or six hours a day.¹⁸ The following June, 1851, Melville twice wrote Hawthorne, telling him that he was not finished with Moby-Dick¹⁹—further indication that he was creating from it a new and vastly different book than the one he had previously nearly finished—a Moby-Dick which led its author to speak of "the hell-fire in which the whole book is broiled,"²⁰ and to confess to Hawthorne: "I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb."²¹ These statements sound but little like the novel that Melville earlier spoke of as "a romance of adventure." In mid-July, 1851, Hawthorne wrote a passage in his Wonder Book: "On the hither side of Pittsfield sits Herman Melville, shaping out the gigantic conception of his white whale,"²² a remark that is of a quite different flavor than Duyckinck's characterization of the book as "a romantic, fanciful, and literal and most enjoyable" story of the whale fisheries. These remarks concerning Melville's creative activity after August 7 tend to corroborate the belief that he extensively revised his "romance of adventure" during this period.

I have attempted to explain how we can account for Melville's peculiar lack of progress in writing Moby-Dick, how a busy writer, nearly through with his work in August, 1850, could still be energetically laboring on his novel

in December, 1850, and still not finished in June, 1851. But the fact that Melville was rewriting Moby-Dick during this period, though important, is not the main subject of this thesis; it is rather the starting point, for we must carry the inquiry further and discover the reasons behind the revision.

Why did Melville discard a nearly-completed novel in August and undertake a time-consuming revision? He knew the price for abandoning his usual romantic and adventurous formula for a novel, as in Typee and Omoo; his recent Mardi, an imaginative and symbolic novel, ill-received by the public, had been a financial failure. What led Melville to gamble on another philosophical novel, one which might also be unsuccessful financially? The main answer to these queries, I believe, lies in his rediscovery of Shakespeare—as Olson puts it: "Above all, in the ferment, Shakespeare, the cause."²³

I propose that it was primarily Melville's response to Shakespeare's artistry and thought at this time that caused him to revise his novel after August, 1850. I believe that Shakespeare was instrumental, too, in the fruition of both Melville's artistic genius and his vision of life. Without Shakespeare's influence, Moby-Dick might have been Melville's best romance of the sea; but with it, Moby-Dick became one of the greatest literary achievements of the nineteenth century. Vincent's commentary on the ferment within Melville which engendered the remodeling of Moby-Dick suggests the importance of Shakespeare's influence:

That revolution may be seen in two parts: first, as the result of forces long gathering within Melville as he brooded on life and read Shakespeare; second, as the sudden and magnificent release of those Shakespearean forces when Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne.²⁴

This thesis proposes to evaluate the significance of "those Shakespearean forces" released in Melville which resulted in the revision of Moby-Dick. Briefly, this thesis will attempt to show the following: (1) that Melville was reading Shakespeare prior to the revision of Moby-Dick and was deeply

impressed with the great dramatist; (2) that Melville's study of Shakespeare, at least in part, motivated him to reconstruct his novel; (3) that the influence of Shakespearian art and thought in the revised novel is considerable; (4) that Shakespeare's view of tragedy made a profound effect upon Melville's own idea of tragedy and life. The first and second items will be considered in chapter 2. The growth of Melville's interest in the playwright will be traced through Melville's commentary on his reactions to Shakespeare's plays. Chapter 3 will attempt to show rather more conclusively what Melville's notes and comments indirectly suggest--that Shakespeare made a profound impact upon the new Moby-Dick. In this chapter I shall examine Moby-Dick for evidence of revision and shall attempt to show that much of the revised material is of Shakespearean derivation. Chapter 4 will consider specifically the influence of Shakespeare, the artist, upon Melville's art in Moby-Dick. Chapter 5 will consider in detail the debt to Shakespeare for Melville's tragic view of life and for his tragic conception of Ahab.

It must be said that this paper is by no means intended to encompass a complete analysis of Melville's debt to Shakespeare, for such a study would also include Melville's abundant use of Shakespearean materials in Pierre, The Confidence Man, and Billy Budd. However, for sake of emphasis, I have confined my study primarily to Shakespeare's influence on Moby-Dick.

Before considering Shakespeare's influence on Melville, I should like to review the difficulties involved in such an evaluation. As Hughes says of Melville and Shakespeare, "Even the most exacting scholar will admit points of contact between them, but it is a trifle difficult, even hazardous, to say definitely that this point or that bit of philosophy in Melville sprung from Shakespeare."²⁵ Regardless of how similar a passage in Moby-Dick may be to a passage in one of Shakespeare's plays, it cannot be definitely substantiated

that Melville had that particular passage in mind when he wrote the lines without Melville's own testimony. On the other hand, lacking such ideally-substantiated evidence, it is at the same time possible, through comparisons, logical speculations, and a gathering of such indirect evidence as we have, to suggest if not absolutely establish such influence. Moreover, the multiplicity of Shakespearean influences, present in Moby-Dick and other Melville novels, more than compensates for the inability to prove this or that idea or device a direct borrowing from the great playwright. Indeed, the mere fact that many possible influences cannot be absolutely proved, need not rule out the possibility that Melville had Shakespearean passages in mind as he wrote. I believe, in short, that the evidences of Shakespeare in Melville are too numerous to be disregarded as of no value.

One thing more must be kept in mind in approaching the study of Melville's use of Shakespeare. Matthiessen makes a key distinction between the right and the wrong approach to the study of a literary influence when he stresses:

We are not concerned with examining a "literary influence" in the sense in which that term has been deadened by scholarly misuse. The conventional assumption that you can find what produced a writer by studying earlier writers was refuted, long before the Ph. D. thesis was stillborn, by The American Scholar. Emerson knew that each age turns to particular authors of the past, not because of the authors but because of its own needs and preoccupations that those authors help make articulate.²⁶

This is especially true of Melville's study of Shakespeare, which will be considered in the next chapter. Melville turned to Shakespeare for justification of his own broodings over life, tragedy, and truth. He found that justification in Shakespeare's view of the tragedy of life, and with Shakespeare's sanction, came the decisive influence which brought about the supreme crystallization of Melville's creative genius.

Notes for Chapter I

1. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), p. 35.
2. George R. Stewart, "The Two Moby-Dicks," AL, XXV (1953-54), 418.
3. Olson, p. 36.
4. Olson, p. 36.
5. Stewart, p. 418.
6. Harrison Hayford, "Two New Letters of Herman Melville," ELH, XI (1944), 81.
7. Hayford, p. 79.
8. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 77. Bernard R. Jerman, in "'With Real Admiration': More Correspondence between Melville and Bentley," AL, XXV (1953-54), 310, n. 18, observes: "Among the Bentley papers in the British Museum is the agreement between the author and the publisher, dated Aug. 13, 1851, for the publication of 'an original work...descriptive of an American Whaling Voyage with its accompanying adventures more particularly described in a letter of said Herman Melville to said Richard Bentley.'" As Jerman suggests, it is unlikely that the letter referred to is that of June 27, 1850, a letter containing a description of Melville's novel which does not appear to be "more particularly described" than the description in the agreement. If such a letter existed, it is now regrettably lost.
9. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), pp. 24-25. It is also quoted in Olson, p. 35; Hayford, p. 81; and Stewart, p. 418. Hayford notes that Luther S. Mansfield, in Herman Melville: Author and New Yorker (unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1936), although correctly deducing from Duyckinck's letter that Melville must have begun Moby-Dick soon after his return from England, assumes that the book mostly written by the fall of 1850 was Moby-Dick as we now have it. This assumption is extremely doubtful.
10. Stewart, pp. 418-419.
11. Hayford, p. 82. See R.M. Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic (New York, 1921), pp. 306, 311; John Freeman, Herman Melville (New York, 1926), p. 50; Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville (New York, 1929), pp. 146, 154.
12. Stewart, p. 420, n. 4.
13. Leon Howard, Herman Melville: A Biography, (Berkeley, 1951), p. 153. It is quoted in Stewart, p. 420, n. 4.
14. Howard, p. 134.
15. I have been unable to locate the source for Stewart's belief that Melville left New York for the country on May 28. Only one biographer, Lewis Mumford, p. 135, says that Melville left in the spring; most are vague on this matter, usually stating that he left in the summer of 1850. Both Jay Leyda, in The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891 (New York, 1951), I, 378, and Howard, p. 154, state that Melville arrived at Pittsfield in mid-July. However, this does not weaken Stewart's argument, for if Melville remained in New York until mid-July, he would have had at least six more weeks after May 28 in which to write steadily. At only half his usual rate, he could have written 54,000 words during this period, which added to his previous output would give him a total of 218,000 words, or almost the length of Moby-Dick as we know it. It is very possible, then, that Melville may have nearly finished his original version of Moby-Dick before he arrived at Pittsfield in July.
16. Howard, "Melville's Struggle with the Angel," MLQ, I (1940), 200.
17. There is evidence in Moby-Dick itself for this theory of an early and different version of a whaling voyage. There are details, especially in the first part, which fail to harmonize with the rest of the novel. This evidence

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will be considered in chapter 3.

18. Stewart, p. 419. The December letter to Duyckinck does not state specifically that Melville was working on Moby-Dick, but such an assumption is logical. Melville says: "Do you want to know how I pass my time?—I rise at eight—thereabouts....My breakfast over, I go to my work-room & light my fire—then spread my M.S.S. on the table—take one business squint at it, & fall to with a will. At 2½ P.M. I hear a preconcerted knock at my door, which (by request) continues till I rise & go to the door, which serves to wean me effectively from my writing, however interested I may be" (Herman Melville: Representative Selections, ed. Willard Thorp, New York, 1938, p. 383). An allusion to time in chapter 85 of Moby-Dick suggests that Melville was writing this chapter on December 16, 1850: "...and yet, that down to this blessed minute (fifteen and a quarter minutes past one o'clock P.M. of this sixteenth day of December, A.D. 1851 [1850]), it should still remain a problem, whether these spoutings are, after all, really water...." Hence we have evidence suggesting that Melville was only two-thirds through a novel he had almost completed four months earlier. If the novel was actually near completion by August 7, only a radical revision can account for this evidence. Sometime during the spring Elizabeth Melville made the following memoir, which gives additional evidence that Melville was hard at work on the novel following August 7: "Wrote White Whale or Moby Dick under unfavorable circumstances—would sit at his desk all day not eating anything till four or five o'clock—then ride to the village after dark—would be up early and out walking before breakfast—sometimes splitting wood for exercise" (Leyda, I, 412).

19. Stewart, p. 419. In the first of these letters, written sometime in early June, Melville says: "But I was talking about the 'Whale.' As the fishermen say, 'he's in his flurry' when I left him some three weeks ago. I'm going to take him by his jaw, however, before long, and finish him up in some fashion or other." Earlier in the letter Melville says: "In a week or so, I shall go to New York, to bury myself in a third-story room, and work and slave on my 'Whale' while it is driving through the press. That is the only way I can finish it now,—I am so pulled hither and thither by circumstances." In the June 29 letter to Hawthorne, Melville again speaks of the "Whale": "Not entirely yet, though am I without something to be urgent with. The 'Whale' is only half through the press; for, wearied with the long delays of the printers, and disgusted with the heat and dust of the Babylonish brick-kiln of New York, I came back to the country to...end the book by reclining on it, if I may....Shall I send you a fin of the 'Whale' by way of a specimen mouthful? The tail is not yet cooked....This is the book's motto (the secret one), Ego non baptiso te in nomine--but make out the rest for yourself." (These passages are quoted from Metcalf, pp. 108, 109, 111.) Melville must have finished by July 20, for on this date he wrote Bentley that "I am now passing thro' the press, the closing sheets of my new work..." (Leyda, I, 417).

20. Metcalf, p. 111.

21. Metcalf, p. 129.

22. Leyda, I, 416.

23. Olson, p. 39.

24. Vincent, p. 25.

25. Raymond G. Hughes, "Melville and Shakespeare," SAB, VII (1932), 103.

26. F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London, 1941), pp. 101-102.

CHAPTER II

MELVILLE'S STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE

The tragic vision, involving as it does both the heart and the head, the total man, was what Melville had grown to by 1850. But...Moby-Dick was first written from the more limited approach of the author of Redburn or White-Jacket, only to demand a complete reshaping as a result of Melville's new self-consciousness. It was as though he had begun to construct a whaleboat, only to find that what he was compelled to create was a three-masted whaling ship.¹

"Dollars damn me," Melville complained to Hawthorne. "What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches."² Thus Melville described a problem familiar to all professional men of letters: the conflict between the dollar and the creative process. Melville's own comments attest to the severity of this struggle within himself. As Melville began writing his whaling story, experience told him to write what the public wanted; his soul told him to write what he felt compelled to write. Bitter experience had taught him the price of releasing his imagination. Mardi had not been accepted by the public. It did not pay, so after Mardi Melville did two quick books for the market: Redburn and White-Jacket. His fancy still had play, but the freedom of Mardi was gone. The novels were enjoyable, adventurous, and romantic; but if we can judge from Melville's letter to Lemuel Shaw on October 6, 1849, he was not happy with his work:

For Redburn I anticipate no particular reception of any kind....As for the other book [White-Jacket], it will be sure to be attacked in some quarters. But no reputation that is gratifying to me, can possibly be achieved by either of these books. They are two jobs, which I have done for money—being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood. And while I have felt obliged to refrain from writing the kind of book I would wish to; yet, in writing these two books, I have not repressed myself much—so far as they are concerned; but have spoken pretty much as I feel.—Being books, then, written in this way, my only desire for their "success" (as it is called) springs from my pocket, & not from my heart. So far as I am individually concerned, & independent of my pocket, it is my earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to "fail."³

Public pressure and monetary needs had forced Melville "to refrain from writing the kind of book I would wish to." These comments to Shaw reveal that although the dictates of Melville's pocket were in control of his pen, his conscience was urging him "to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail.'" William Shakespeare was to side with this inner desire in a struggle against its enemies. Moby-Dick was to become the battleground. Shakespeare became the decisive factor in the eventual victory of Melville's heart and imagination over the "materialisms" of public demand and making a living. This chapter will consider, then, the importance of Shakespeare in this victory.

I

Melville began reading Shakespeare seriously for the first time in February, 1849. Although he had previously come into contact with the dramatist, Melville enthusiastically revealed his new acquaintance with Shakespeare in a letter to his friend Evert Duyckinck on February 24, 1849:

I have been passing my time very pleasantly here. But chiefly in lounging on a sofa (a la the poet Gray) & reading Shakespeare. It is an edition in glorious great type, every letter whereof is a soldier, & the top of every "t" like a musket barrel. Dolt & ass that I am I have lived more than 29 years, & until a few days ago, never made close acquaintance with the divine William. Ah, he's full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired. I fancy that this mount [?] Shakespeare in heaven ranks with Gabriel Raphael and Michael. And if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakespeare's person.—I am mad to think how minute a cause has prevented me hitherto from reading Shakespeare. But until now, any copy that was come-atable to me, happened to be in a vile small print unendurable to my eyes, which are tender as young sparrows. But chancing to fall in with this glorious edition, I now exult over it, page after page.—⁴

So profound was Melville's impression of the great playwright that he attributed to him Messianic qualities at the first opportunity he had to write of his new discovery. His comparison of Shakespeare with Jesus shocked Duyckinck by its seeming irreverence,⁵ but perhaps the reason for it was Melville's belief in Shakespeare's ability to perceive truth, a belief he later expressed in "Hawthorne and His Mosses." Furthermore, the comparison was also

the result of his immediate excitement of having found a man with ideas that confirmed his own. In fact the letter is so noticeably pervaded with **exuberant** praise of Shakespeare that nowhere can there be found specific critical comment. This came later, after Melville had more time to reflect upon his reading. The prolific marginal notes and markings Melville made in his edition of Shakespeare attest to the sincerity of his ardor.⁶

Melville's statement in the letter that he "never made close acquaintance" with Shakespeare until his readings in 1849 is undoubtedly true, but it needs to be qualified. This was not Melville's first meeting with "divine William." Shakespeare's plays had been in vogue on the New York stage for many years before Melville undertook Moby-Dick; and in view of the fact that he spent considerable time in New York during these years, he very likely attended many of the productions of the dramatist's plays.⁷ Melville also had purchased two books concerning Shakespeare prior to his acquisition of the seven-volume edition. He bought a copy of Shakespeare through the publisher John Wiley in New York on January 18, 1848.⁸ He also purchased James Boaden's An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Various...Portraits Of Shakespeare... in New York on June 27, 1848.⁹

Howard, in his biography of Melville, gives us information about Melville's literary activity during his youth:

He was also surprisingly literary for a boy whose early interests were supposed to have been entirely commercial and whose most recent studies had been devoted to engineering. Much of his erudition was mere pose, indicating that he made affected use of such volumes as Lindley Murray's English Reader....But he referred knowingly to Byron, and his quotations from Hamlet were not from "select" passages which normally would be included in collections of Shakespeare's "beauties."¹⁰

Allusions in Mardi and Redburn suggest that Melville had a good knowledge of several Shakespearean plays. Melville refers to Antony and Cleopatra in chapter 22 of Mardi.¹¹ He alludes to Richard III in chapter 84 of Mardi:

"There be many who deny the hump, moral and physical, of Gloster Richard."¹² Macbeth is twice referred to in Mardi: to "old Scone in days of Macbeth" in chapter 60 and to Banquo's ghost in chapter 68.¹³ In Redburn, chapter 49, an allusion is made to Macbeth: "Again—what blasted heath is this?—what goblin sounds of Macbeth's witches?"¹⁴ These references to Macbeth and Richard III, plus the fact that Melville did not mark them in his edition of Shakespeare, suggest that Melville previously had read or seen them presented, and did not feel the necessity of a critical rereading. There are also references to Shakespeare's plays in two letters Melville sent to John Murray.¹⁵ In the first, dated October 29, 1847, Melville alludes to The Merchant of Venice: "—Under the circumstances I can hardly say with Shylock that 'I am content'—nor would it be a happy allusion, while thus upon money matters, likening myself to a Jew." In the second, written March 25, 1848, he refers to Hamlet:

—Have care, I pray, lest while thus parleying with a ghost you fall upon some horrible evel [sic], peradventur[e] sell your soul ere you are aware.—But in tragic phrase "no more!"—only glancing at the closing sentence of your letter, I read your desire to test the corporeality of H— M— by clapping eyes upon him in London.

Thus Melville had knowledge of at least six plays before buying the edition with the "glorious great type." But the point of this digression is that while Melville had at least an average knowledge of Shakespeare prior to 1849, he nevertheless felt the need for a concentrated reading and study of most of the dramatist's plays, as his markings show in the seven-volume edition.

Melville continued reading Shakespeare. After his son Malcolm was born on February 16, 1849, Melville had two months of leisure to make "close acquaintance" with Shakespeare.¹⁶ On March 3, 1849, he again reported to Duyckinck about his reading of Shakespeare. Having had a week for study and reflection since his first letter, Melville's comments were specific and

critical. The first part of the letter is devoted to a discussion of Emerson. Then Melville expresses his definition of the quality he must have believed Shakespeare possessed:

I love all men who dive. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five miles or more; and if he don't [sic] attain the bottom, why, all the lead in Galena can't fashion the plummet that will. I'm not talking of Mr Emerson now—but of the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving & coming up again with blood-shot eyes since the world began.¹⁷

Melville next reveals his new reaction to Shakespeare in language somewhat more temperate than that of his first letter. He even feels his own age has an advantage over Shakespeare's:

And do not think, my boy, that because I, impulsively broke forth in jubillations over Shakespeare, that, therefore, I am of the number of the snobs who burn their tuns of rancid fat at his shrine.... —I would to God Shakespeare had lived later, & promenaded in Broadwaythat the muzzle which all men wore on their souls in the Elizabethan day, might not have intercepted Shakespeare from articulation. Now I hold it a verity, that even Shakespeare, was not a frank man to the uttermost. And, indeed, who in this tolerant universe is, or can be? But the Declaration of Independence makes a difference.¹⁸

In this way, Melville, reaching a more mature level in his attitude toward Shakespeare, qualified and limited the "jubillations" of the first letter. His feeling that "the muzzle which all men wore on their souls in the Elizabethan day...intercepted Shakespeare from articulation" shows a critical attitude not present in the first letter when he had exclaimed that "the divine William" was "full of sermons-on-the-mount." Melville no longer was "of the number of the snobs who burn their tuns of rancid fat at his shrine." He realized that Shakespeare, too, was subject to the frailty of his times, that he was only human. Like Melville, Shakespeare, bound by his times, often refrained from writing what he wanted to; but fortunately not altogether, Melville later intimated in his essay on Hawthorne, for the English dramatist, by perceiving truth, "though it be covertly and by snatches," had transcended his times. Thus though Melville admired

Shakespeare's truth-diving, he regretted that it came only sporadically. And why not? That is what troubled him most about his own writing. Melville had made the first important step in his struggle against his "bad angel"—the financial and public pressures which held him from writing the kind of book he desired to write. Melville had found a basis for kinship with the great Elizabethan. He had begun to relate his own needs and preoccupations to his study of Shakespeare.

In reading the plays, Melville not only discovered an affinity between his problem and Shakespeare's, but also found an optimism in his belief that Shakespeare would have been less handicapped in Melville's day in expressing truth. This optimism, derived from his reflections on his readings, Mumford says,

...prepared the way for Hawthorne in Melville's mind. If what one could not quite get from Shakespeare on the printed page one might get directly from the shy man himself, what great good fortune to find a similar person, alive and abroad in one's own century!¹⁹

There are two other records of Melville's reactions to Shakespeare before the publication of his review of Hawthorne's Mosses. The first is a record in his "Journal" of attending a presentation of Othello in London on November 19, 1849:

...[Langford & I] went to the Haymarket. Full house. Went into the critics' boxes. "Times" & "Herald" men there. McCready painted hideously. Did'nt like him very much upon the whole—bad voice, it seemed. James Wallack, Iago. very good. Miss Re[y]nolds Desdemona—very pretty. Horrible Roderigo.²⁰

Second, while reading The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton in January, 1850, Melville checks and crosses on page cl of the "Introduction": "...and though Shakspeare must ever remain unapproachable..." and comments: "Cant. No man 'must ever remain unapproachable.'"²¹ This is further proof that Melville had prepared his mind for the admirable impression he was to have of Hawthorne when he reviewed his Mosses.

II

One year after he began reading Shakespeare seriously, Melville started Moby-Dick. In spite of the optimism he had expressed in his second letter to Duyckinck in March of the previous year, he began his whaling story in the same manner as Redburn and White-Jacket. Financial needs and public taste for adventurous romances, the motivating forces behind Redburn and White-Jacket, retained their grasp upon Melville at the inception of Moby-Dick. An event soon after the March 3 letter explains how he lost the glow of optimism he had exhibited in it. On March 15, 1849, Richard Bentley published Mardi,²² the first of Melville's books containing a theme of a spiritual quest for truth and the key to the mystery of life. Melville had taken his first "dive," ^{and} but he too came up with "blood-shot eyes," for Mardi was attacked from almost every quarter. The Athenaeum in London on March 24 said:

On opening this strange book, the reader will be at once struck by the affectation of its style, in which are mingled many madnesses....If this book be meant as a pleasantry, the mirth has been oddly left out—if as an allegory, the key of the casket is "buried in the ocean deep"—if as a romance, it fails from tediousness—if as a prose-poem, it is chargeable with puerility.²³

The Examiner in London on March 31 exclaimed: "From first to last it is an outrageous fiction; a transcendental Gulliver, or Robinson Crusoe run mad."²⁴ Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine remarked in August:

This young gentleman has most completely disappointed us....we...were glad to hope that Typee and Omoo were but an earnest of even better things. And, therefore, sadly were we disgusted on perusal of a rubbishy rhapsody, entitled Mardi, and a Voyage Thither.... Why, what trash is all this!—mingled, too, with attempts at a Rabelaisian vein, and with strainings at smartness—the style of the whole being affected, pedantic, and wearisome exceedingly.²⁵

Such adverse criticisms must have discouraged Melville considerably, and the memory of them must have lingered in his mind as he began Moby-Dick.

By May 1, 1850, Melville, at the half way mark in his whaling book, was having difficulty with his material: "blubber is blubber." But he was

determined "to give the truth of the thing." The struggle of writing Moby-Dick had begun, for the kind of book he was writing blocked his search for truth. It was like the other books, which, he told Dana, were written "almost entirely for 'lucre'—by the job, as a woodsawyer saws wood."²⁶ Still we can assume that Melville continued with his original conception of the novel, for his June 27 letter to Bentley, in its account of Moby-Dick, gives no indication that he had altered his plans. The letter also shows Melville under financial pressure and, therefore, anxious to complete negotiations for publishing the novel in late autumn, further indications that Melville had not changed his plans.²⁷

In mid-July, 1850, Melville arrived at Pittsfield to spend the summer at Robert Melvill's "Broadhall," a farm-inn.²⁸ Since Melville spent much of his time visiting friends and touring the county in late July and early August, he probably suspended most of his work on the whaling book. It is possible, however, that he had brought his manuscript to near completion before he arrived at Pittsfield.²⁹

On July 18, the day Melville, accompanied by Robert Melvill, set out on a tour of Southern Berkshire County, he received from his aunt, Mary Ann Melvill, a copy of Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse. Since he did not return from his viewing excursion until Saturday night, July 20, he probably did not begin reading it until after this date. After reading the Mosses, Melville, profoundly stirred by the realization that Hawthorne, like Shakespeare, had penetrated into the truth of existence, began writing "Hawthorne and His Mosses" on August 11.³⁰ Evert Duyckinck, after nearly a two-week stay with Melville at "Broadhall," returned to New York on August 12, presumably with Melville's review,³¹ whose authorship Melville attributed to "a Virginian Spending July in Vermont." Duyckinck published it in the Literary World, in two installments, August 17 and August 24.

Melville had written Shaw on October 6, 1849, that it was his "earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail.'" In his essay on Hawthorne's Mosses Melville declares his belief in the right to fail and perhaps his decision to rewrite Moby-Dick: "He who has never failed somewhere, that man cannot be great. Failure is the true test of greatness."³² Since Melville finished the essay so that Duyckinck could take it with him when he left for New York, August 12, he undoubtedly began the revision of his whaling novel soon after that date. Olson, however, conjectures that Melville began his revision a few days after July 18;³³ but a later date is more probable, for Duyckinck would certainly have mentioned this when he wrote to his brother about Melville's novel on August 7. If Melville had begun his revision before his friend arrived on August 2, Duyckinck, it seems likely, would have learned of it in five days. In fact, because Duyckinck makes no mention of it at anytime during his stay at "Broadhall," we have another indication that Melville undertook his revision after August 12, the date Duyckinck left for New York.

III

Melville's discovery in early 1849 that Shakespeare had intuitively penetrated into the meaning of the universe led to the self-realization of his own desire to probe into the nature of things—to write the kind of book that "fails." His letters to Shaw and Dana—and his review of Hawthorne—testify to this desire. When he read the Mosses, Melville found an incentive for his desire in the perception that Hawthorne, his contemporary, had sought intuitive truth as had Shakespeare. Shakespeare confirmed and brought into clearer focus Melville's own vision and gave him the key to its expression; and Hawthorne, by showing him that it could be done in his own time in prose fiction, crystallized his determination to employ in Moby-Dick what he

had learned from Shakespeare. Hawthorne's Mosses and the edition of Shakespeare were perhaps the most important books he ever acquired, for they provided the material for the solution of Melville's creative problem.

Melville's essay on the Mosses is a testimony to his profound response to Hawthorne, but it is much more than this: it is a document of what Melville believed to be the greatness of Shakespeare, it is a declaration of his kinship with Shakespeare and Hawthorne as "thought-divers," and, perhaps most of all, it is a revelation of the critic himself. After concluding that "it is that blackness in Hawthorne...that so fixes and fascinates me," Melville reveals in the essay what attracts and repels him in Shakespeare:

...this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his background,—that background, against which Shakspeare plays his grandest conceits, the things that have made for Shakspeare his loftiest but most circumscribed renown, as the profoundest of thinkers. For by philosophers Shakspeare is not adored as the great man of tragedy and comedy. —"Off with his head; so much for Buckingham!" This sort of rant, interlined by another hand, brings down the house,—those mistaken souls, who dream of Shakspeare as a mere man of Richard-the-Third humps and Macbeth daggers. But it is those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakspeare, Shakspeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask, and speaks the same madness of vital truth. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakspeare, has been lavished upon the least part of him. And few of his endless commentators and critics seem to have remembered, or even perceived, that the immediate products of a great mind are not so great as that undeveloped and sometimes undevelopable yet dimly-discernible greatness, to which those immediate products are but infallible indices. In Shakspeare's tomb lies infinitely more than Shakspeare ever wrote. And if I magnify Shakspeare, it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing. For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakspeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly and by snatches.³⁴

Thus, Melville concludes, it was through "blackness," the dark mood of Hawthorne and Shakespeare, that "vital truth" could be reached.

This ability to perceive truth and reality, like flashes in the darkness, was to Melville the key to Shakespeare's greatness. Evidence that this is what impressed him deeply can be found in his markings and comments in his edition of Shakespeare. He was attracted to the "madness of vital truth," the "cunning glimpses" of reality, in act I, scene iv, of King Lear where the Fool reverses what Lear did to his daughters to emphasize the truth: "Why, this fellow has banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will...." He underlined the "dimly-discernible" insight of the Fool's remark that "Truth 's a dog must to kennel...." He triple-checked Enobarbus's comment to Antony in act II, scene ii: "That truth should be silent I had almost forgot."

These "dark" flashes of intuitive truth, which came "covertly and by snatches," were often overlooked, Melville believed, in reading Shakespeare; instead, it was the "popular" aspects of Shakespeare that attracted so many worshippers. Pandering to the popular Melville knew from his own experience; Shakespeare knew it too. Hawthorne, fortunately, had avoided it, as Melville made clear in another passage in "Hawthorne and His Mosses":

But if this view [Shakespeare as a great truth-teller] of the all-popular Shakspeare be seldom taken by his readers, and if very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making his mere mob renown)—if few men have time, or patience, or palate, for the spiritual truth as it is in that great genius;—it is then no matter of surprise, that in a contemporaneous age, Nathaniel Hawthorne is as yet almost utterly mistaken among men....But unlike Shakspeare, who was forced to the contrary course by circumstances, Hawthorne...refrains from all the popularizing noise and show of broad farce and blood-besmeared tragedy; content with the still, rich utterance of a great intellect in repose....³⁵

Melville, noting the Shakespearean qualities in Hawthorne, declares that America, too, can produce great writers—Shakespeare's standard can be approached, if not excelled:

Some may start to read of Shakspeare and Hawthorne on the same page.... But Shakspeare has been approached. There are minds that have gone as far as Shakspeare into the universe. And hardly a mortal man, who, at

some time or other, has not felt as great thoughts in him as any you will find in Hamlet....Believe me, my friends, that men, not very much inferior to Shakspeare, are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio....The great mistake seems to be, that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day; be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio. Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a correspondent coloring....Nor must we forget that, in his own lifetime, Shakspeare was not Shakspeare, but only Master William Shakspeare of the shrewd thriving business firm of Condell, Shakspeare & Co., proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London....Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William.³⁶

Thus Melville's perception that "great geniuses are parts of the times" elevated him above the infirmities of those writers who become mere worshipers and imitators of the great artists of the past. He knew that his whaling novel must "possess a correspondent coloring."

Whether Melville's critical judgments of Shakespeare are right or wrong is of little consequence here. The important thing is that this critique reveals the workings of Melville's mind at a critical point in his artistic career. Melville discovered that Shakespeare was concerned, as he was, with the "dark," irrational, and ambiguous truths of existence.

Having found in the English playwright a justification of his own creed, he made another crucial discovery in his recognition that if Hawthorne had approached the heights of excellence achieved by Shakespeare, then perhaps he, too, could attain those heights in the nearly-completed Moby-Dick. Determined to get at the truth in his novel, Melville declared in his review, "You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the truth in...."³⁷ He felt he had an advantage, for Shakespeare—he had expressed in his March 3 letter to Duyckinck—had been restricted in his articulation, whereas the Declaration of Independence had given him—Herman Melville—freedom of expression. Shakespeare, living in a monarchical society, had been forced to muzzle his soul. Melville criticized the dramatist, therefore, for not being "a frank

man to the uttermost," a criticism he applied to himself in a letter to Duyckinck, December 14, 1849: "What a madness & anguish it is, that an author can never—under no conceivable circumstances—be at all frank with his readers."³⁸ Yet Melville felt a democratic society, open and flexible, made a difference.

IV

The essay on the Mosses shows that Melville did not find in Shakespeare the bases for his tragic vision of life; he had the foundations for it within himself. Instead Melville found an affirmation in Shakespeare of his own broodings—broodings that led him in Moby-Dick to declare, Lear-like, "Though in many of its aspects the visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright."³⁹ Melville saw mirrored in the plays a reflection of his own concern with darkness and truth. Shakespeare gave direction and focus to that reflection. Olson emphasizes this when he says:

Shakespeare's plays became a great metaphor by which Melville objectified his own original vision. What was solvent within Melville, Shakespeare, in the manner of a catalytic agent, precipitated.⁴⁰

Melville reached the turning point in mid-August. Those motives which lead to "mere mob renown" were cast aside, and Moby-Dick—the second Moby-Dick—took shape. Melville retained his account of the whaling industry for ballast, but "probing at the very axis of reality," he made not merely a whaling adventure but a quest for ultimate truth, with Ahab, the hunter, and Moby Dick, the hunted. The powers of Melville's genius had been released, as he made clear in his essay on the Mosses:

...I somehow cling to the strange fancy, that, in all men hiddenly reside certain wondrous, occult properties—as in some plants and minerals—which by some happy but very rare accident (as bronze was discovered by the melting of iron and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth.⁴¹

That "happy but very rare accident" was Melville's consort with Shakespeare. The chance but timely meeting between them ignited a Corinth and out of the fusion came Moby-Dick.⁴²

Notes for Chapter II

1. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), p. 32.
2. Herman Melville: Representative Selections, ed. Willard Thorp (New York, 1938), p. 344—hereafter cited as Thorp.
3. Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York, 1951), I, 316. The brackets are Leyda's.
4. Thorp, p. 370. The brackets are Thorpe's. Metcalf, p. 58, has "moment" instead of "mount," which appears to fit the context better. The circumstances leading to Melville's purchase of this "glorious edition" are not known. Perhaps his attendance of Fanny Kemble Butler's readings of Macbeth, February 12, 1849, and Othello, February 19, motivated him to purchase a set of Shakespeare's plays. Melville in his letter of February 24 told Duyckinck: "Mrs Butler too I have heard at her Readings. She makes a glorious Lady Macbeth, but her Desdemona seems like a boarding school miss" (Thorp, p. 371).
5. See Melville's letter to Duyckinck, March 3, 1849, in Thorp, p. 372.
6. The markings and comments also give insight into what aspects of the dramatist's thought and art most appealed to Melville. For example, Melville sidelines Hamlet's famous words—"Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so; to me it is a prison"—and comments: "Here is forcibly shown the great Montaignism of Hamlet." Information for the discussions in this thesis of the markings and comments Melville made in his seven-volume edition of Shakespeare has been gathered from the following sources: Jay Leyda's The Melville Log, Lawrence Thompson's Melville's Quarrel With God, Leon Howard's Herman Melville, Vincent and Mansfield's edition of Moby-Dick, F.O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance, and Charles Olson's Call Me Ishmael. The sources for this material will not be cited hereafter. Melville's edition, entitled The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare, With a Life of the Poet, and Notes, Original and Selected..., was published, 1837, in Boston by Hilliard and Gray. Included in the edition are "The Life of William Shakespeare," by Dr. Symmons, and numerous notes by Dr. Samuel Johnson. In the various sources of Melville's annotations of this edition, I have found many discrepancies in the capitalization and punctuation of Shakespeare's text. Therefore, for consistency when quoting from Shakespeare's plays, I have used The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (New York, 1951), which follows the text of the Globe edition. Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville's Reading: A Check-List of Books Owned and Borrowed, offprinted from Harvard Library Bulletin, II, III, IV (1948-1950), No. 460, notes that Melville's edition of Shakespeare is in the Harvard College Library.
7. Raymond G. Hughes, "Melville and Shakespeare," SAB, VII (1932), 104.
8. Leyda, I, 269. Merrel R. Davis, in Melville's Mardi: A Chartless Voyage (New Haven, 1952), p. 62, n. 6, conjectures that the Shakespeare volume may be the edition of Shakespeare's poems among his set of Cooke editions, The Poetical Works of Shakespeare, with the Life of the Author, which is inscribed "Fanny Melville from her brother Herman Pittsfield May 19, 1862." It is full of marginal underlinings, Davis notes, that seem to be Melville's and not Fanny's. Davis suggests Melville owned the book long before 1862 and that after giving it away during the move from Pittsfield, he later replaced it with another copy, Shakespeare's Sonnets, which he acquired on January 20, 1871 (Leyda, II, 718, says January 15, 1871). Davis cites as evidence for this contention the allusion in Mardi, which refers to Shakespeare as poet rather than as playwright: "...and high over my ocean, sweet Shakespeare soars, like all the larks of the spring."

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9. Leyda, I, 278. Incidentally, Melville's continued appreciation of Shakespeare can be seen in his use of Shakespeare books for gifts. In addition to the copy he presented his sister Fanny, on December 25, 1873, he gave his daughter Francis Pearls of Shakespeare...; and on May 22, 1877, he gave his daughter Bessie A Book of Reference to Remarkable Passages in Shakespeare, by Susanna Beever (Leyda, II, 735, 762).
10. Leon Howard, Herman Melville (Berkeley, 1951), p. 15.
11. Moby-Dick or, The Whale, eds. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York, 1952), p. 783—hereafter cited as Moby-Dick.
12. Moby-Dick, p. 748.
13. Moby-Dick, p. 676.
14. Moby-Dick, p. 676.
15. Davis, pp. 213-214.
16. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 57.
17. Thorp, p. 372. Concerning this passage, Stanley Geist, in Herman Melville: The Tragic Vision and The Heroic Ideal (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 22-23, comments: "To dive, to plunge to the blackest depths of existence, he believed to be the noblest way of life....and Shakespeare, who was the deepest diver of them all, sat enthroned among Melville's demigods."
18. Thorp, p. 372.
19. Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville (New York, 1929), p. 130.
20. Leyda, I, 334. Melville recorded in his "Journal" on December 17, 1849: "Then thro' Farrington Street (where I bought pocket Shakspeare &c)...". (Leyda, I, 349). His list in the "Journal" of books purchased on his trip includes the entry, "2 plays of Shakespeare," which probably refers to his purchase of December 17 (Sealts, No. 463). Perhaps Melville read Shakespeare again at this time.
21. Leyda, I, 363-364.
22. Leyda, I, 292.
23. Leyda, I, 293.
24. Leyda, I, 295.
25. Leyda, I, 311.
26. Leyda, I, 374.
27. Metcalf, p. 77.
28. The biographical data for this and the following paragraphs in this section, unless otherwise noted, has been taken from Leyda, I, 378-390.
29. See chapter I, page 9, note 15.
30. Geoffrey Stone, in Melville (New York, 1949), pp. 139-140, notes: Hawthorne's characterization of the essay as a banquet too lavish in its hospitality for him to accept everything offered in it is a sounder judgment of what Melville had done than Melville's judgment of what Hawthorne had done....The very fact that Melville chose Mosses from an Old Manse, which had appeared in 1846, instead of the just-published Scarlet Letter for his encomium is puzzling...though the lesser work may have been chosen because a lesser work is often more attractive to the critic with a 'message'—which in this case concerned, though unconsciously, the critic himself." Stone's comment is suggestive, but although I agree with him that the essay is a "message," I do not believe that Melville's choice of the Mosses for his review is puzzling. Melville probably chose it because he had just received it as a gift on July 18. Whether Melville read The Scarlet Letter before his review is not known. We do know that Melville purchased a copy of it some-time later, in July, 1870 (Sealts, No. 253). Thorp, p. 422, comments that "Melville evidently took great pains with the article, rewriting a number of

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passages entirely, adding new material and altering many words and phrases to better the writing or modify the tone of what he had originally put down." In view of Thorp's description of the manuscript and in view of its length (over 7,000 words), it may be doubtful that Melville began on August 11, which would have given him less than two days to write and revise it. (Duyckinck probably left early in the afternoon, August 12; he had written his wife that he would arrive "between 3 & 4 o'clock P.M.") Since Duyckinck did not mention that Melville was writing the review in any of his letters, including the last on August 9, written evidently in the morning, it seems plausible that Melville began the review either later that same day or August 10.

31. Metcalf, p. 87. Metcalf's observation appears to be correct. Melville, in a letter of August 16, wrote to Duyckinck that he had received in Duyckinck's August 13 letter an advance copy of the Literary World, containing the first installment of his review of Hawthorne's Mosses. (Leyda, I, 388-389). Therefore, Duyckinck must have taken the manuscript with him when he left Pittsfield on August 12.

32. Thorp, p. 338.

33. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), p. 38.

34. Thorp, pp. 333-334.

35. Thorp, pp. 334-335. Melville was primarily attracted to Shakespeare as a literary artist and philosopher, not as the master of "the tricky stage," although the tremendous force generated by Shakespeare at this time caused Melville to employ in Moby-Dick many of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques.

36. Thorp, pp. 335-336. Geist, pp. 63-64, notes: "How haunting, how insatiable was his wish to speak to another human being across the eternity of space which encompassed his derelict planet, one comprehends perhaps most of all in the essay on 'Hawthorne and His Mosses,' where Melville created his own image, named it Nathaniel Hawthorne, and stretched out his arms to embrace it in a fraternal compact with himself and Shakespeare. Eventually, of course, the illusion of Hawthorne crumbled before the reality, and Melville was left to consort with the ghosts of men who had died hundreds of years before—they alone (with Shakespeare at the head) affording him that sense of spiritual affinity which he sought vainly in the universe of the living."

37. Thorp, p. 336.

38. Metcalf, p. 71.

39. All quotations from Moby-Dick in this thesis have been taken from Moby-Dick or, The Whale, eds. Mansfield and Vincent (New York, 1952).

40. Olson, "Lear and Moby-Dick," Twice a Year, I (1938), 165.

41. Thorp, p. 345.

42. Olson, Call Me Ishmael, p. 40.

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE AND THE "SECOND" MOBY-DICK

It was Melville's good fortune, at a time when all his circumstances combined to make him a sensitive and thoughtful reader, to have his attention directed to the one author who could justify his sensitivity yet allow him to pursue his thoughts in terms of people rather than abstract ideas. Shakespeare gave him the most important direction he received during his journey in the world of the mind.¹

The last chapter traced the growth of Shakespeare's influence in Melville and postulated that it was instrumental in leading him to recast his original version of Moby-Dick into a vast and more comprehensive kind of novel. If we proceed under the assumption that Melville made extensive revisions under the spell of a new creative energy released by his reading of the English dramatist, then it follows that an examination of the final version of Moby-Dick should prove that the impact of Shakespeare was significant on the novel.

Moby-Dick confirms, I believe, what the notes in Melville's Shakespeare edition and what his comments in the letters to Duyckinck and in the review of Hawthorne's Mosses suggest—that Shakespearean material appears abundantly in the novel, not only in allusions, but also in language, style, structure, idea, and characterization. The present chapter will consider internal evidence from Moby-Dick to support my previous contention, based on external evidence, that Moby-Dick after August 7 underwent extensive revision. Following Stewart's study of the remnants of the old Moby-Dick onto which the new Moby-Dick was spliced,² I shall try to demonstrate that much of the substance in the revised novel is Shakespearean in origin and inspiration. Chapter 4 will treat specifically the impact of Shakespeare's creative energy upon Melville's art, and the last chapter will analyze Melville's debt to Shakespeare the tragedian.

I

Stewart, noting sharp differences between the opening of Moby-Dick and the rest of the novel, has recently made a study of the implications suggested by this contrast. He concludes that Moby-Dick is essentially in three parts: (1) chapters 1-15, which represent an original story, slightly revised; (2) chapters 16-22, which represent the original story with some highly important revision; (3) chapters 23-"Epilogue," which represent Moby-Dick as Melville reconceived it, but with certain remnants of the original story, somewhat revised. Stewart labels the original story UMD, the third section as MD, and chapters 16-22 as Transition or UMD. He first presents several details in UMD (including the Transition) which are inconsistent with MD.

1. Cape Horn is mentioned four times (once in chapter 10 and three times in chapter 16). Although a good reason for going by the Cape of Good Hope is given in chapter 44, this does not justify the original deception of the reader.
2. Chapter 19 implies that Ahab's nickname is "Old Thunder." But in MD he is called this only once when the occurrence of thunder seems to suggest the name (chapter 119). In MD, on the other hand, he is called "the old Mogul" in chapters 39, 40, 43, and 99.
3. In chapter 19 Elijah's description of Ahab—"But you must jump when he gives an order. Step and growl; growl and go—that's the word with Captain Ahab."—indicates an ordinary, harsh sea captain, but is not suggestive of Ahab's most characteristic traits in MD.
4. After being kicked by Peleg, Ishmael says, "That was my first kick" (chapter 22). This suggests the original story was to be marked by brutality, but Ishmael receives no more kicks in the novel as we know it. The only tyranny in the final novel is Ahab's mental tyranny.
5. The fact that Queequeg dies when the ship sinks only vaguely harmonizes with Ishmael's statement in chapter 13 that Queequeg was to take "his last long dive." Since Ahab's death seems to resemble such a dive, perhaps the manner of Ahab's death is taken from an original plan for Queequeg's death.
6. In chapter 3 the men of the Grampus, of whom Bulkington is one, are said to have returned from "a three years' voyage," but Bulkington is said to have "just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage" in chapter 23. "The building-up from a three- to a four-year voyage is characteristic," Stewart asserts, "of the heightened effects of MD."³
7. Although the jaw-bone tiller of the Pegoud is described in chapter 16, the spokes of a wheel are mentioned in chapters 41 and 118.⁴

Stewart then considers what he feels are more important inconsistencies between UMD and MD, as, for example, the shifts in the conception and function of various characters. Ishmael is the central character and narrator in the first fifteen chapters of Moby-Dick. "He is altogether of flesh-and-blood," remarks Stewart, "seeing things that an ordinary person may be expected to know."⁵ In MD Ishmael ceases to be a character at all, becoming merely the device by which Melville presents the story. At times in MD Ishmael is undistinguishable from Melville himself; he even records what Ahab and others think. Except for a few passages, Ishmael loses his identity as a realistic figure in MD.⁶ Queequeg in chapters 1-15 is central to the action and is being established for the hero's part when he saves the man who has fallen overboard. Queequeg in UMD appears to be a key man in the action, but in MD he practically disappears, except for the heroic saving of Tashtego and the incident of his coffin. Thus this build-up appears to be waste. Stewart feels that "Ahab is the obvious counterpart of Queequeg."⁷ Referring to the passage in chapter 16 in which Ahab is compared to the Biblical Ahab, who because of his wickedness was slain and had his blood licked by dogs, Stewart notes that the Ahab in MD is not as bloody or as wicked as Ahab in the Bible. Stewart suggests "that Ahab was given that name in UMD in order that something about his character in the later part of the story should be suggested. When the ending of the book was changed, the name was preserved but the character no longer conformed to it."⁸

Bulkington is described in some detail in chapter 3, but he is introduced curiously: "...since the sea-gods had ordained that he should soon become my shipmate (though but a sleeping-partner one, so far as this narrative is concerned), I will thereby venture upon a little description of him." Stewart notes the oddity of an author in one sentence introducing a character, and telling at the same time there is no purpose in introducing him. The

explanation that Stewart suggests is that Bulkington was destined for a real part in UMD, but became unnecessary in MD. Having already written the description, and reluctant to throw it away, Melville, in revising, merely inserted the words in parentheses and let the description stand. Although Bulkington appears in chapter 23, he there serves as an allegorical figure.

Stubb and Flask seem to undergo shifts of character between UMD and MD. Stubb suggests a stub, that is, a short, stocky person; but there is no suggestion in MD that he is of this sort. Flask suggests a man who drinks too much, but this kind of character is not revealed in MD. Stubb is described as "learned" and "old" and is said to be the brother-in-law of Charity, but nothing is made of these facts. In chapter 72, "The Monkey-Rope," he is referred to as "no less a man than Stubb." These facts, Stewart thinks, suggest that perhaps Stubb played a more important part in UMD and may have been patterned after a real mate on the Acushnet, the ship Melville was on when he went whaling. Moreover, Stewart notes, Flask seems to have taken over the stublike quality of Stubb, being described as short and nicknamed King-Pin.⁹

Stewart points out other changes between UMD and MD besides shifts in characterization, particularly the differences in style and atmosphere. "UMD is plain, even prosy and colloquial," observes Stewart.¹⁰ Such dialectal expressions as says I, says he, and thinks I occur not only in conversation, but also in the narrative itself. These colloquialisms are not characteristic of MD, being wholly lacking, Stewart observes. Moreover, UMD lacks almost entirely the poetic elements of style which MD has, such as apostrophe, personification, and figurative language in general, including the Homeric simile.¹¹

The general atmosphere in UMD differs considerably from MD. The first fifteen chapters reveal a realistic, homey, even folksy atmosphere. In addition, Stewart observes that Ishmael remarks in chapter 1 that he cannot

tell "why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others were set down for magnificent parts in high tragedies, and short and easy parts in genteel comedies, and jolly parts in farces." This description, Stewart believes, while applying well enough to UMD, certainly does not fit MD, which is notable for its lack of shabbiness and for its approach to both epic and tragic grandeur.¹² The creation of a more magnificent atmosphere occurs in MD only. It is in MD that the information on cetology has been included, for example, in order to elevate the whaling voyage into something more magnificent. Though a few philosophical passages occur in UMD and Father Mapple's sermon contains allegory, it is not until MD that allegory, symbolism, and philosophical observations begin to play a dominant part.

Stewart next considers the transitional chapters, presenting at the same time some conjectures as to the actual procedure of the writing of Moby-Dick. Stewart, accepting Duyckinck's statement that the novel was "mostly done" by August, 1850, believes that Melville wrote a large part of UMD subsequent to chapter 15. When he decided to revise the novel, he went back over the manuscript trying to salvage as much as he could of what he had already composed. Having decided to use the first fifteen chapters as they stood, Stewart believes, Melville then undertook to splice to them his new material, as chapters 16-22 illustrate. Melville retained his original manuscript in these chapters, but revised it extensively. Stewart remarks: "We can hardly think that he closed his description of his original Pequod with the philosophical commentary so unlike UMD: 'A noble craft, but somehow a most melancholy! All noble things are touched with that.'"¹³ After chapter 22 Melville wrote essentially a new Moby-Dick, only here and there incorporating what he had already written.

Of these seven transitional chapters, only three seem to show important

revisions, in Stewart's opinion. The first of these is chapter 16, which in spite of revision still suggests UMD in several details. Cape Horn, for example, is mentioned three times concerning the route of the ship. Captain Peleg, speaking of the loss of Ahab's leg, says that it was torn off by "the monstrousest parmacetty," which does not necessarily suggest the white whale or its allegorical and symbolical qualities.¹⁴ If the "whiteness of the whale," Stewart feels, had been established in Melville's mind when he originally wrote the passage, he would have had Peleg make at least some reference, however obscure, to it. Also, Ishmael still functions as a character in this chapter, not as the mouthpiece of the author. On the otherhand, Stewart finds several new qualities in the chapter, not typical of UMD. The style, for instance, changes; the more formal said I is employed instead of the colloquial says I of the UMD chapters.

The most significant evidence of revision in chapter 16, Stewart stresses, is the paragraph he labels the "insight passage." He quotes it in full:

So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names—a singularly common fashion on the island—and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary and confiding breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language—that man makes one in a whole nation's census—a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies. Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. For all men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidness.

Stewart believes that this passage introduces most of the ideas which appear in Ahab's character later in the novel. It also suggests the special qualities which the final Moby-Dick contains. Stewart notes that there is no connection

between this passage and what comes before and after it. The "insight passage," beginning with a grammatically incomplete sentence, is introduced with the words so that, but it seems in no way the result of what has been said before. Stewart, admitting it to be a flight of fancy, conjectures that the passage, remarkably isolated and unconnected, may be interpreted as a kind of memorandum which a writer copies down when he suddenly discerns the fundamental objectives of his novel. Stewart extends this supposition to its logical conclusion by saying that this passage "may represent the immediate result of that moment of insight which made him finally decide to abandon UMD, and sent him back to splice MD to UMD and go ahead and finish Moby-Dick."¹⁵

Chapter 19 also suggests MD in the shadowy figure of Elijah, but in general the chapter seems UMD. Ahab is portrayed in the chapter, Stewart notes, in the manner of the customary brutal, even murderous sea captain. Details of Ahab's previous life are twice briefly mentioned in this chapter, presented, furthermore, in such a manner as to lead the reader to expect to hear of them later—but they are never afterwards explained. They suggest once more, Stewart says, that the novel at first pointed in another direction. Chapter 21 again contains elements of old and new. The foreshadowings of Ahab's unusual boat crew and the reintroduction of Elijah suggest the atmosphere of MD. However, Elijah's hint that he may see Ishmael again before the grand jury never finds fulfillment in the book. Stewart also feels the low comedy of Queequeg's sitting on the sleeping sailor is in the atmosphere of UMD.

Stewart identifies several instances in MD where Melville apparently incorporated old material in the revised version, as in chapter 48 which suggests UMD in its atmosphere. Ishmael is very real, getting wet and complaining about it; he also loses the ability to read other people's minds.

No touch of allegory is present; the whales are very real. Moreover, the language is colloquial, not poetic. Among other things suggesting UMD in this chapter, Stubb, Stewart notes, is referred to as "the third mate," whereas in Melville's final form of the novel Stubb is the second mate.

II

Stewart, in conclusion, questions whether any scholar, without more specific external evidence, can work out the exact procedure of Melville's writing of Moby-Dick.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Stewart has provided evidence, though somewhat hypothetical at times, from Moby-Dick itself which helps to substantiate the contention that the novel underwent considerable remodeling after August 7, 1850. We can only hint at the actual process of Melville's revision. Possibly, as Stewart suggests, Melville made more than one false start. After he had set out upon his new conception of Moby-Dick in August, 1850, it is possible that he ran into difficulty and revised in turn some parts of the novel he had written after August. In fact, as late as June, 1851, Melville in his letters to Hawthorne hinted that he was still having trouble completing the novel.

Stewart's evidence is valuable in another way, for much of the material he cites as being MD (that is, added to the novel during revision) appears to be Shakespearean in nature. The paragraph which Stewart calls the "insight passage" seems to be especially motivated by Melville's consort with Shakespeare. The passage contains a logical rationale, clothed in terms of tragedy, for his decision to give his grim Nantucket captain a tragic dignity and to employ a poetic, heightened style in his whaling novel. Both of these decisions are Shakespearean in inspiration. I do not imply that Shakespeare was the only influence on Melville's change in direction in August, 1850; but I do believe that Shakespeare's influence was one of the most important, and that in this particular passage Melville's decisions appear to be the kind a

writer would make under the direct stimulus of Shakespeare's creative energy.¹⁷

First, let us consider Melville's determination, as indicated in the "insight passage," to create Ahab as a tragic hero. Noting that many Nantucket whalers are named after Biblical characters and imbibed by their Quaker heritage with "the stately thee and thou," Melville observes that these "unoutgrown peculiarities" blend with the courage and "audacity" gained from whaling experiences to produce "a thousand bold dashes of character." Now when these qualities, Melville reasons, meet in a man of superior force, intellect, and soul, who by close contact with nature becomes untraditional, introspective, and independent, the resulting synthesis produces a hero of tragic proportions. Melville, then, visualizes Ahab, not as a bloody sea captain, but as "a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies," an indication that he is thinking in terms of the Shakespearean hero. Although Melville nowhere in the passage mentions Shakespeare by name, he does say that the whalers have "bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman," a comparison which suggests Melville had Hamlet and Brutus in mind as he wrote. Furthermore, when he describes Ahab as a tragic figure who would have "a half wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature," he is describing Ahab as a hero with a Shakespearean tragic flaw.

In addition to perceiving Ahab as a Shakespearean tragic hero, Melville realizes in the "insight passage" that since many men in the whaling industry acquire the Quaker speech idioms, such as "the stately dramatic thee and thou," and live in close contact with "nature's sweet or savage impressions," he could justify the use of "a bold and nervous lofty language"—the language of Shakespeare's plays—in his style. Thus Melville records his perception of the necessity of a poetic prose in Moby-Dick, the importance of an elevated style comparable to that of tragedy.

Therefore, I feel Melville's "insight passage" is not only a memorandum for much of what the new Moby-Dick contained, but also a record of Melville's two-fold communion with Shakespeare. One of the primary agents in the release of Melville's creative powers at this time was Shakespeare's artistic energy and tragic powers—forces which were instrumental in leading Melville to write the "insight passage."

III

Taking my lead from Stewart's article, I shall examine the first few chapters of MD, beginning with chapter 23, in order to illustrate the profound impact of Shakespearean art and tragedy working in Melville as a result of his perceptions in the "insight passage." Chapter 23, "The Lee Shore," presents Bulkington for the last time. Here he takes on allegorical and symbolical significance as Melville's ideal man, something akin to "the Handsome Sailor" who was to appear later in Melville's writing, especially in Billy Budd. He no longer functions as a narrative character. The chapter, lacking the homey, realistic, and humorous qualities of UMD, is written in the atmosphere of serious tragedy. The language has become poetical, exalted, heightened, pervaded with a rhythmical undertone. Poetic devices appear, such as the apostrophe, simile,¹⁸ pathetic fallacy.¹⁹ The extended image of the land, symbolizing safety, and the sea, representing the dangerous and infinite search for truth, is carried throughout the chapter. The very language of poetry appears: wonderfullest, 'gainst, direst, fain, lashed, howling infinite, ingloriously dashed, ocean-perishing, landlessness, forlornly, succor. Alliteration also appears abundantly: should I see standing, tempestuous term, seemed scorching, storm-tossed ship, leeward land, port is pitiful, lashed sea's landlessness, wildest winds, slavish shore. The repetitious quality of the chapter may also be of Shakespearean derivation. Shakespearean influence, both in art and in tragic atmosphere, thus appears in the first of

the MD chapters.

Chapters 24 and 25 present the first cetology, which appears at this time apparently to counteract Ishmael's remark in chapter 1 that whaling was "shabby business." Melville has employed this cetology section in order to raise the level of whaling to a state of dignity, to something magnificent and royal, believing such a setting necessary for the introduction of a great tragic hero.

Chapters 26 and 27, both entitled "Knights and Squires," also show the influence of Shakespeare. The very title of these chapters indicates an attempt to preserve the mood established in the previous two chapters, a mood of dignity and magnificence. These chapters are actually a sort of dramatis personae. Although some of the characters here presented have been already introduced into the narrative, they are reintroduced at this point as heroic personages in keeping with the new atmosphere of tragedy. Melville emphasizes the cosmic nature of the crew for the first time; the three mates come from three different parts of the country, and the three harpooners come from three different races. By making his crew representative of the people of the world, Melville has given himself more freedom in characterization and added universality to his novel.²⁰

In chapter 28 Melville presents Ahab as he is suggested in the "insight passage." No longer is his character suggestive of the cruel, brutal sea captain foreshadowed by Peleg and Elijah in the Transition. The new conception of Ahab as a tragic figure can be seen in Ishmael's description of him:

Captain Ahab stood erect, looking straight out beyond the ship's ever-pitching prow. There was an infinity of firmest fortitude, a determinate, unsunderable wilfulness, in the fixed and fearless, forward dedication of that glance....And not only that, but moody stricken Ahab stood before them with a crucifixion in his face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe.

The juxtaposition in Ahab of a willfulness and pride over against a morbidity

and regal, mighty woe is a composite picture of a Shakespearean tragic hero whose internal struggle leaves him proud, yet despairing. This is the Ahab who dominates the revised Moby-Dick, and the paradox of these two traits reappear again and again throughout the rest of the novel. The last paragraph contains a sustained simile, suggestive of Shakespeare's imagery and the Homeric simile:

Nevertheless, ere long, the warm, warbling persuasiveness of the pleasant holiday weather we came to, seemed gradually to charm him from his mood. For, as when the red-cheeked, dancing girls, April and May, trip home to the wintry, misanthropic woods; even the barest, ruggedest, most thunder-cloven old oak will at least send forth some few green spouts, to welcome such glad-hearted visitants; so Ahab did, in the end, a little respond to the playful allurings of that girlish air. More than once did he put forth the faint blossom of a look, which, in any other man, would have soon flowered out in a smile.

This is also suggestive, in its fanciful yet faintly incongruous comparison, of the Elizabethan conceit.

In chapter 29 Melville employs the dramatic method almost completely. The very title of the chapter is a stage direction: "Enter Ahab, to him Stubb," and hereafter many of the chapters are headed by similar stage directions. More than a third of the chapter consists of a long soliloquy by Stubb, the first of many soliloquies to be employed subsequently in the novel. Furthermore, Stubb's soliloquy is presented in dramatic terms, in language reminiscent of Shakespeare: "A hot old man! I guess he's got what some folks ashore call a conscience; it's a kind of Tic-Dolly-row they say--worse than a toothache....He's full of riddles." Stubb, after commenting on the mysteriousness of Ahab, concludes dramatically:

What the devil's the matter with me? I don't stand right on my legs. Coming afoul of that old man has a sort of turned me wrong side out. By the Lord, I must have been dreaming though--How? how? how?--but the only way's to stash it; so here goes to hammock again; and in the morning, I'll see how this plaguey juggling thinks over by daylight.

This dramatic soliloquy has an archaic flavor both in the use of such words and phrases as coming afoul, stash, plaguey juggling, Tic-Dolly-row, and in

its syntax. It contains repetition, a favorite device used by Shakespeare for emphasis, such as "How? how? how?" Note also that the monologue suggests the movements of Stubb: "so here goes to hammock again."

These first few chapters of MD seem to reveal that the impact of Shakespeare is quite considerable. It is the motivating force behind Melville's attempt to create tragic grandeur in both general atmosphere and characterization, especially in Ahab. The Shakespearean influence is also apparent in Melville's poetical and figurative style in the revised novel.

IV

This chapter has presented Stewart's data concerning the old and new Moby-Dick for two reasons: first to show that Moby-Dick itself supports the hypothesis, previously based on limited external information, of a radical reworking of the novel, and second to illustrate that the new Moby-Dick, among other things, was reconstructed along Shakespearean dramatic lines. If we accept Stewart's conjecture, the "insight passage" represents that moment when Melville saw how his novel was ultimately to be presented. But more significantly, as far as it concerns this study, the "insight passage" indicates by its content that, above all, Shakespeare's genius was stimulating Melville's when he jotted it down. Melville's Shakespearean inspired decision in the memorandum to portray Ahab as "a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies" and to articulate his tragedy in "bold and nervous lofty language" became one of the main factors producing the Moby-Dick upon which his fame largely rests today.

Notes for Chapter III

1. Leon Howard, Herman Melville (Berkeley, 1951), p. 131.
2. George R. Stewart, "The Two Moby-Dicks," AL, XXV (1953-54), pp. 417-448.
In this chapter I have made extensive use of Stewart's illuminating article. It presents valuable evidence from Moby-Dick for the theory that there was an original version of the novel quite different from the final form which reached the presses. I have examined the data which Stewart believes was written during the revision of Moby-Dick for the presence of Shakespearean influence. In the first section of the chapter, I have paraphrased some of the highlights of Stewart's investigation. I have noted only exact quotations from Stewart's article, but to avoid confusion, whenever I have made a personal comment in "Section I," I have placed it in the notes. It may be well to mention at this time that the influences leading to Melville's revision of his whaling novel were not solely Shakespearean. Howard, pp. 149-179, in his discussion of the genesis and growth of Moby-Dick, gives an adequate summary of the various sources and influences in the formation of Moby-Dick. He also discusses (pp. 165-173) the differences between the early and the revised Moby-Dick.
3. Stewart, p. 422.
4. Stewart, p. 423, admits concerning these details that "Taken individually, these minor details may be considered doubtful, or may be written off as mere author's lapses. Taken in the aggregate, they are not easily dismissed."
5. Stewart, p. 423.
6. Howard P. Vincent, in The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), p. 56, notes that Ishmael functions dramatically as a chorus character in Moby-Dick. Narrator, prologue, and epilogue, Ishmael's commentary elucidates and his person enfolds the entire novel. "No less than Horatio in Hamlet," says Vincent, "Ishmael is the author's surrogate among the Pequod crew."
7. Stewart, p. 423.
8. Stewart, p. 429.
9. Stewart, p. 431, concludes: "It looks then on the whole very much as if in UMD Stubb and Flask were conceived as different characters from the characters which they became in MD. Stubb for instance may have been the third mate (as he is said to be in Chapter XLVIII), and may have been more developed in that story than he is in the present one. On revision the two may have had their names exchanged for some reason and have had their characters somewhat mixed up. The bibulous characteristic of Flask would have been out of place in MD, and so it was dropped completely."
10. Stewart, p. 424.
11. Though difficult to prove, I should suggest that Melville's use of a poetical style came as a response to the creative energy of Shakespeare. The "insight passage" in Moby-Dick, which Stewart discusses (pp. 435-437), lends evidence to this suggestion. It will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.
12. The attempt to elevate the novel to tragic proportions, I believe, is a direct Shakespearean influence.
13. Stewart, p. 434. The passage from Moby-Dick is in chapter 16.
14. At the end of chapter 1 a reference is made to Moby-Dick which suggests his symbolic whiteness: "...mid most of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air." If Melville alluded to the allegorical function of the white whale in the first chapter, why did he refer to Moby only as "the monstrousest parmacetty" in chapter 16? A possible answer is that this reference to the white whale in chapter 1 was added during revision. Stewart, pp. 433, 444, suggests this possibility, pointing out

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also that the reference has no organic connection with the rest of the chapter.

15. If I, too, may be permitted a flight of fancy, I suggest that Melville may have written this passage soon after writing in August, 1850, his review of Hawthorne's Mosses.

16. The paraphrase of Stewart's article ends here.

17. Besides the two decisions in the "insight passage," which stem from Melville's response to Shakespeare, the frequency in which terms of tragedy appear in the passage also indicates the Shakespearean influence. Such words and phrases as stately dramatic, mighty pageant creature, noble tragedies, dramatically regarded, tragically, poetical, and lofty language suggest how profoundly Melville was thinking in terms of drama and tragedy when he wrote this passage.

18. The last paragraph in chapter 23 contains two striking similes: "indefinite as God" and "worm-like" (which is continued in "craven crawl to land!").

19. Allardyce Nicoll, in The Theory of Drama (New York, n.d.), pp. 112-113, defines pathetic fallacy as a kind of species of natural symbolism. "This natural symbolism," Nicoll notes, "has been used by other dramatic poets... but not to the extent in which it appears in Shakespeare's dramas." "It is evident in the darkness and the gloom of the castle in which Duncan is murdered and in the storm scenes of Lear, where the lashing hail and the driving wind seem to sympathize with the aged king, the tempest outside symbolizing in a way the tempest of madness in his own brain." Melville, who read Lear carefully, may have received his idea of employing it in this chapter, in his symbols of land and sea, and in "The Candles" where the storm symbolizes the madness of Ahab, from Shakespeare.

20. Universality is a trait found readily in Shakespeare. It is the ability to portray exceptional human beings beset with problems and conflicts of a cosmic or universal nature, those difficulties which engulf all with whom the hero comes into contact and which produce an impression that the hero who has faced them has lived life to the fullest. See chapter 5, section 2, for a more detailed discussion on universality.

CHAPTER IV

"THE ART ITSELF IS NATURE"

The effect on him [Melville] of such books as Shakespeare and the Bible was remarkable for the reason that he not only echoed them verbally but re-created what he found there in terms of his own time and language, of his own vision. Their words sank to the deepest level of his consciousness, there to be constantly transforming and transformed by his thought and imagination.¹

The above statement by Wright suggests the theme of this chapter. In the previous chapter, I attempted to show that a considerable part of the new material added to Moby-Dick during its revision was the result of the double action of Shakespeare upon Melville. This action was two-fold in that his reading of Shakespeare influenced both Melville's poetic style, and his attempt to create a tragic atmosphere and hero. The analysis of the first few chapters of MD,² at the end of chapter 3, illustrated that these two Shakespearean influences were playing a significant part in the formation of the new Moby-Dick. The present chapter is concerned with a closer examination of the impact of Shakespeare's creative energy upon Melville's style and language. In examining Moby-Dick for evidences of the influence of Shakespeare's art, we must constantly keep in mind that Melville was no mere copyist of Shakespeare's style and language. Melville adapted, assimilated, and integrated Shakespeare's language, phraseology, and poetic style into his own idiom; he shaped this artistic influence to meet his own needs and preoccupations, and stamped his own genius upon it so that much of it became essentially his own.

I

The starting point in this discussion of the influence of Shakespeare's art upon Melville is with a consideration of the many verbal echoes of the great dramatist to be found in Moby-Dick.³ The actual identifiable references in Moby-Dick to Shakespeare and his plays are relatively few and brief, a fact

which helps to back up my contention that Melville did not employ these echoes for their own sake but adapted them in terms of his own vision. In fact, the only literal quotation is "Et tu Brute!" in chapter 65. It is, however, worth noting that Melville has used this famous expression of Julius Caesar ironically, cleverly adapting it to the context of a satirical and ironical passage. About midway in the narrative he mentions Mark Antony and his adventures on the Nile, and in chapter 84 Melville compares the flight of the whales to the flight of "Cleopatra's barges from Actium." Besides these references to Antony and Cleopatra, he alludes to two other plays. He speaks of "Richard III. whales" in chapter 55; and in "The Deck" Ahab refers to Hamlet when he asks the carpenter, "Hark ye, dost thou not ever sing working about a coffin?...the grave-digger in the play sings, spade in hand." In chapter 79 Melville refers directly to Shakespeare: "Few are the foreheads which like Shakespeare's...rise so high, and descend so low, that the eyes themselves seem clear, eternal, tideless mountain lakes...."⁴

The list of paraphrases and modifications of Shakespearean quotations is much larger. I shall not attempt to list all the allusions to Shakespeare in Moby-Dick, for a mere listing would be neither particularly meaningful nor interesting. A few examples will serve to illustrate Melville's adaptation of Shakespearean quotations for his own purposes.

The oath-taking episode in chapter 36 is suggestive of a similar event in Hamlet. Matthiessen gives an excellent analysis of the similarity of these scenes when he says:

A more effective since less labored derivation adds intensity to the moment when Ahab pledges the crew to his purpose in the harpoon-cups. For he also makes the three mates cross their lances before him, and seizes them at their axis, "meanwhile glancing intently from Starbuck to Stubb, from Stubb to Flask." The cellarage scene where Hamlet compelled Horatio and Marcellus to swear on his sword was operating on the same construction here.⁵

In chapter 70, "The Sphynx," Melville makes use of a famous scene from Hamlet, again accommodating it to his own needs. Ahab, "with eyes attentively fixed," speaks to the "black and hooded head" of the whale, which "hanging there in the midst of so intense a calm...seemed the Sphynx's in the desert":

Speak, thou vast and venerable head...which, though ungarnished with a beard, yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses; speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest.⁶

Ahab, after probing into the vast secrets and mysteries of the whale, concludes by exclaiming: "O head! thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine!" This brings to mind Hamlet's famous soliloquy to the skulls in the churchyard. But although Melville has derived the general framework for his short chapter on the whale's head from Shakespeare, he has, in its details, stamped his own individuality upon it. The subject matter of the soliloquy is Melville's, not Shakespeare's. The purpose of the scene, which is to emphasize once again the vast mystery and ambiguity of whales in general and of the white whale in particular, is in tune with the rest of the novel.

In addition to similarities between scenes, many parallels to Shakespeare in sentences and phrases can be found in Moby-Dick. In chapter 134, when Ahab learns of the Parsee's death, he cries out in despair, "My line! my line? Gone?—gone? What means that little word?—What death-knell rings in it, that old Ahab shakes as if he were the belfry." These lines clearly echo Macbeth, act II, scene i:

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

In its general tone, Ahab's cry also suggests Macbeth's lines of despair when he receives news of his wife's death:⁷

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow....⁸

Pip's lamented repetition of the word "coward" and especially the phrase "shame upon all cowards" in chapters 110 and 129 was possibly suggested by Falstaff's "a plague of all cowards," repeated twice in 1 Henry IV, act II, scene iv.⁹ In chapter 32, "Cetology," "mere sounds, full of Leviathanism, but signifying nothing" is a close paraphrase of Macbeth, act V, scene v: "...full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."¹⁰ Ahab's speech in "The Symphony," which partially reveals his humanity, is somewhat equivalent to Macbeth's final reflections about the futility of his quest for power and to Hamlet's cry, "Thou wouldst think / How ill all's here about my heart."¹¹ Ishmael's plea—"let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness"—is a somewhat labored derivation of Macbeth, act I, scene v: "It is too full o' the milk of human kindness."¹²

These examples illustrate how Melville adapted phrases, sentences, and scenes from Shakespeare's plays. Obviously the degree of mastery with which Melville assimilated Shakespearean allusions into the context of his thought varies. But, on the whole, Melville succeeded well in transplanting Shakespearean quotations into the fabric of Moby-Dick—so well that many of the parallels come to light only upon a close scrutiny of the text.

II

Melville's "insight passage," as I suggested in chapter 3, reveals the author at that point when he decided to delineate Ahab as a "mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies." Parallel with this decision is Melville's realization that a language which was bold, nervous, and lofty would be most suitable for a character with "a half wilful over-ruling

morbidness." Chapter 23, the first of the MD chapters, shows Melville dressing his prose in the language and device of poetry, in an elevated, metaphoric language. On the surface it is prose, but beneath--in its spirited and energetic forcefulness, in its musical rhythm, in its lofty and exalted tone--it is poetry. The spirit, imagery, pulsation, and sound of the chapter lift it beyond the confines of clear, cold prose into the realm of heroic and tragic grandeur; and the language of tragedy, as Shakespeare has so forcibly shown, is the language of emotion and intense feeling--the language of poetry.

Melville's impression of Shakespeare's artistic powers, I believe, was directly influential in his decision to re-create Moby-Dick in a bold, nervous, heightened style. This decision to employ a poetical language led to a maturation of his artistry. F. O. Matthiessen, to whose study of Shakespeare's influence on Melville's art I am greatly indebted, believes Melville found a clue to the expression of the hidden meaning of life through the "unexampled vitality of Shakespeare's language."¹³ Matthiessen probably would agree with Wright's premise that when Melville turned to Shakespeare, he "re-created what he found there in terms of his own time and language;" for Matthiessen realizes that the possession of Shakespeare could have been disastrous for Melville. "A man of less vigor," Matthiessen asserts, would have reduced himself "to the rank of dozens of stagey nineteenth-century imitators of the dramatist's stylistic mannerisms."¹⁴ The importance of this point cannot be overemphasized. Had Melville merely copied Shakespeare, perhaps there would have been no realization of his own genius in Moby-Dick. The realization could very well have come later, but it would have been seriously delayed by imitativeness at this point in his career.

A further examination of Moby-Dick for evidence of the "unexampled vitality of Shakespeare's language" working upon Melville is necessary to substantiate the belief that it, because Melville was no mere imitator,

resulted in the culmination of his artistic powers. I have already presented as evidence the verbal echoes of Shakespeare, which Melville shaped for use in Moby-Dick with varying success, and the poetical quality of chapter 23.

Melville's choice of words provides additional evidence of the dramatist's influence. Shakespearean words, such as ergo, hark, wight, anon, halloa, for the pit, out upon it, ere, underling, faith sir, for the nonce, fain, naught, methinks, are used quite frequently in the novel. Although they cannot be proved as directly Shakespearean in origin, especially when considered individually, it cannot be denied that they give the narrative and dialogue an Elizabethan flavoring.

Another aspect of Melville's style, the use of words, shows possible Shakespearean influence. For instance, Melville may have gained his practice of having characters repeat words for dramatic effect from his reading of the English playwright. Ahab, in his first soliloquy, says, "Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourself." Later he says, "so, so, so, then;—softly, softly!" Or take Stubb's words: "Well, Stubb, wise Stubb—that's my title—well, Stubb, what of it, Stubb?" The "nervousness"—that "short, rent" quality as Olson calls it—of Ahab's language is in a large measure due to this use of repetition. Melville's use of puns may have its origin in Shakespeare's word-play. The old Manx sailor in chapter 40 says, "Well, well; belike the whole world's a ball, as you scholars have it; and so 'tis right to make one ball-room of it. Dance on, lads, you're young; I was once." In chapter 125 Ahab makes a sarcastic pun out of the Manxman's home: "In the Isle of Man, hey? Well, the other way, it's good. Here's a man from Man; a man born in once independent Man, and now unarmed of Man." In "Surmises" Ahab plays upon the word "cash": "They may scorn cash now; but let some months go by, and no perspective promise of it to them, and then this same quiescent cash all at

once mutinying in them, this same cash would soon cashier Ahab." Unfortunately, Melville's punning led to an ignominious word-play at the end of "The Cassock."

The elevated passages, especially the soliloquies, reveal Melville at his poetical best. Here Shakespeare exerted a strong influence. In fact, many of these passages are easily arranged into blank verse which is both Shakespearean in tone, technique, and language and at times almost perfect in its rhythm. For example, much of Ahab's soliloquy in "Sunset" can be arranged into dramatic blank verse:

I leave a white and turbid wake;
Pale waters, paler cheeks, where'er I sail.
The envious billows sidelong swell to whelm
My track; let them; but first I pass. Yonder
By the ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm
Waves blush like wine. The gold brow plumbs the blue.
The diver sun—slow dived from noon,—goes down;
My soul mounts up!

Dry heat upon my brow? Oh! time was, when
As the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed.
No more. This lovely light, it lights not me;
All loveliness is anguish to me, since I
Can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception,
I lack the low, enjoying power; damned,
Most subtly and most malignantly! damned
In the midst of Paradise! Good night—good night!

Some of the sequences are irregular, but the iambic beat predominates throughout the pentameter lines; and it must be remembered that the metrical variations, such as initial trochee, inverted word order, spondee, pyrrhic, anapaestic, and varied caesura, present in the above examples, were used by Shakespeare, too, in order to relieve the monotony often caused by perfect regularity. In addition to illustrating the metrical qualities of Melville's "poetical prose," the above examples reveal other characteristics of poetry. Repetition and alliteration add to the musical effect of the passage. Vivid imagery adds to the beauty of the prose; metaphors, similes, and pathetic fallacy raise up vivid pictures within the reader's mind. Sound, rhythm,

figure, and language combine to create a poetical, serene description of the sunset: "Yonder by the ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm waves blush like wine. The gold brow plumbs the blue." Actually the first half of the soliloquy is a sustained image of the sunset and its effect upon Ahab, the author ringing every possible change out of the comparison, in a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare.

Closely related to the poetical quality of Ahab's soliloquy in "Sunset" are the characteristics of Ahab's speech, another area where Shakespeare has touched Melville's art. In fact, Melville's poetical style forms an integral part of Ahab's speech, distinguished as it is by an extreme energy and loftiness. In Ahab's soliloquies, which usually reveal him under emotional tension, alternating between despair and rage, his speech comes by bursts as if violently wrested from his soul. The words do not come smoothly or easily; Ahab has to fight for them. Part of this quality, as indicated before, comes from the repetition of key words or phrases. Melville may have received the idea of representing Ahab's speech as hesitant and nervous from Shakespeare. Olson suggests this when he says:

Of the soliloquies Ahab's show the presence of Elizabethan speech most.... Melville characterized Ahab's language as "nervous, lofty." In the soliloquies it is jagged like that of a Shakespeare hero whose speech like his heart often cracks in the agony of fourth and fifth act.¹⁵

The soliloquy in "Sunset" illustrates Ahab's jagged, hesitant speech.

The chapter shows Ahab in a mood of depression. The weight of carrying the "Iron Crown of Lombardy" is heavy upon him:

Yet is it bright with many a gem; I, the wearer, see not its far flashings; but darkly feel that I wear that, that dazlingly confounds. 'Tis iron—that I know—not gold. 'Tis split, too—that I feel; the jagged edge galls me so, my brain seems to beat against the solid metal; aye, steel skull, mine; the sort that needs no helmet in the most brain-battering fight.

This passage illustrates Ahab's hesitant speech, even the use of "spitting" initial consonants in words like split, galls, steel, skull, brain-battering

adding to the effect.

Although the influence of Shakespeare is pervasive in "Sunset," Melville has stamped his own individuality upon it. In the second half of the soliloquy Ahab begins with an Elizabethan geometrical image: "I thought to find one stubborn...but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they revolve." But Melville adds another image which is modern and colloquial: "Or, if you will, like so many ant-hills of powder, they all stand before me; and I their match." A few lines later, Ahab speaks informally and colloquially again: "I laugh and hoot at ye, ye cricket-players, ye pugilists, ye deaf Burkes, and blinded Bendigoes! I will not say as school-boys do to bullies,—Take some one of your own size..." Here we have a peculiar change of pace. Occasionally, interspersed within the elevated, dignified, poetic passages, are colloquial, less poetic conceits and comparisons. At the end of the monologue, the cadences increase and tension mounts once again. The chapter ends in a tone that is Shakespearean, but its imagery expressing fatality is Melville's own:

The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way!

Many aspects, then, of Melville's style show the influence of Shakespeare. Melville's language often has an archaic, Elizabethan flavor; stylistically, Melville has employed repetitions, puns, blank verse characteristics, vivid and elaborate imagery and figurative speech, and bold, jagged, elevated language, particularly in dialogue, soliloquies, and philosophical passages. All these qualities of the new Moby-Dick owe much to the response Melville made to the abundance of Shakespeare's creative linguistic energy.

III

However, not all the responses to Shakespeare's art were positive. The

Shakespearean influence at times reacted negatively upon Melville's style. Occasionally, Melville's employment of poetical devices, particularly alliteration and assonance, results in a highly artificial style which shows the author at his worst. These instances suggest what could have happened had Melville simply imitated his original, without absorbing it into his individuality. In "The Spirit-Spout" Melville over-uses the initial "s" consonant sound, mingling with it a repetition of the vowels "e," "i," "o":

It was while gliding through these latter waters that one serene and moonlight night, when all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver; and, by their soft, suffusing seethings, made what seemed a silvery silence, not a solitude: on such a silent night a silvery jet was seen far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow.

The passage begins well enough, but soon breaks down into a sequence of fourteen alliterations. The author, in this instance, has not been discriminating in selecting echoes from Shakespeare's plays. The mere novelty of imitating the atmosphere of the last act of The Merchant of Venice where the phrase "In such a night" is repeated eight times and the word "moon" is referred to several times appears to be the only reason for borrowing this scene. Again, in "The Grand Armada" Melville over-uses alliteration: "...and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland...." The strong influence Shakespeare exerts upon Ahab's speech is not altogether beneficial either. Matthiessen points out the danger of such almost unconsciously compelled verse:

As it wavers and breaks down again into ejaculatory prose, it seems never to have belonged to the speaker, to have been at best a ventriloquist's trick. The weakness is similar in those speeches of Ahab's that show obvious allusion to a series of Shakespearean characters. The sum of the parts does not make a greater whole; each one distracts attention to itself and interferes with the singleness of Ahab's development.¹⁶

IV

For the most part, however, Shakespeare's artistic influence was positive. Matthiessen, summarizing the impact of Shakespeare's language and style upon

Melville, tells about an important lesson Melville learned from the dramatist:

In Melville's case the accident of reading Shakespeare had been a catalytic agent, indispensable in releasing his work from limited reporting to the expression of profound natural forces. Lear's Fool had taught him what Starbuck was to remark about poor Pip, that even the exalted words of a lunatic could penetrate to the heavenly mysteries. But Melville came into full possession of his own idiom, not when he was half following Shakespeare, but when he had grasped the truth of the passage in The Winter's Tale that "The art itself is nature."¹⁷

Melville saw the significance of Shakespeare's profound statement concerning the relation of art to nature; when he read this passage, he double-scored and added the remark, "A world here," to its opening two lines:

Yet nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race: this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.

Matthiessen in American Renaissance develops at length Emerson's organic principle of art,¹⁸ a principle which has as its premise that art must be based organically on nature. The passage from The Winter's Tale which Melville marked is an expression of that principle. Matthiessen quotes Coleridge's key-passage on the organic principle, which arose significantly from his analysis of Shakespeare:

No work of true genius dares want its appropriate form, neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not, so genius can not, be lawless; for it is even this that constitutes it genius—the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination...The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material;—as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops, itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms....¹⁹

"Ask the fact for the form," Emerson said, for "it is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem." Emerson believed the intrinsic

thought which gives rise to a poem must be "so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing."²⁰ Melville, in grasping from Shakespeare that "the art itself is nature," realized an organic principle akin to Emerson's and Coleridge's.

Melville learned from Shakespeare's discussion of art that to borrow modes from Shakespeare in their entirety would be a grave error, for the appropriate form must come organically from the matter itself. In "The Specksynder," for example, Melville concludes his description of Ahab in "a bold and nervous lofty language" which though suggestive of Shakespeare is in Melville's own medium:

But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shagginess; and in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whale-hunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestical trappings and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air!

Matthiessen, discussing this passage, notes how the final phrase is especially "Shakespearean in its imaginative richness." However, its two key words occur only once each in the dramas, "featured" in Much Ado About Nothing ("How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured"), and "unbodied" in Troilus and Cressida ("And that unbodied figure of the thought / That gave't surmised shape"). From neither of these passages from Shakespeare did Melville receive the idea for his new combination. Rather Melville has adapted these verbs of action so completely to his own usage that they have become his as well as Shakespeare's.²¹

V

Nevertheless, though Melville was not echoing Shakespeare when in "full possession of his own idiom," it must be remembered that he retained the characteristics of a poetic prose, a style essential to the imaginative

freedom and the intellectual speculation which went into the new Moby-Dick, through the agency of the great dramatist, that is, through his perception of the significance of Shakespeare's statement that "art itself is nature." Responding to the vitality of the English playwright's verse, Melville chose to articulate Moby-Dick, in its tragic, philosophic, and symbolic depths, with an organic style that Olson characterizes as "a deeply imagined systolic and diastolic pulsation, as though of the universe itself."²² This pulsation, a regular variation of tempo and cadence, can be observed in the difference between Ishmael's narrative and descriptive prose and Ahab's speech. Ishmael, the passive, choric narrator, relates his story easily and freely; but Ahab, the active and energetic force of the novel, speaks angrily and nervously.²³ Thus Melville has applied the organic principle, the pulsating withdrawal and return of life itself—in its death and birth, disintegration and integration, flux and order—to Moby-Dick. This variation of rhythm and cadence can be noticed within Ahab and Ishmael as well as between them. For the most part Ishmael quietly and calmly unfolds his story, but often he moves from the strait narration of facts to speculate upon them. During these philosophical passages, language and style become lofty, emotional, and figurative. A similar rise and fall of tempo occurs in Ahab's cyclic variation between quiet despair and stormy rage.

The revised novel provides many examples of Melville's vivid and masterly variety and flow of language, of its pulsating rhythms and lyrical beauty. A few examples will suffice to show Melville's mastery of the art "that nature makes." In "The Cabin-Table" Melville describes Ahab's isolation in vivid imagery, making an unique and detailed comparison between the hibernation of the grizzly bear and Ahab's latent soul:

He lived in the world, as the last of the Grisly Bears lived in settled Missouri. And as when Spring and Summer had departed, that wild Logan of the woods, burying himself in the hollow of a tree, lived out the

winter there, sucking his own paws; so, in his inclement, howling old age, Ahab's soul, shut up in the caved trunk of his body, there fed upon the sullen paws of its gloom!

Frequently Melville draws upon nature for such images as the one in this passage. Sometimes Melville succeeds in packing into one sentence rhythms of nature which set the mood for a whole scene, as in "The Sphynx": "An intense copper calm, like a universal yellow lotus, was more and more unfolding its noiseless measureless leaves upon the sea." In chapter 81 Melville uses succinct figurative language and alliteration to advantage in describing a group of whales traveling abreast: "They left a great, wide wake, as though continually unrolling a great wide parchment upon the sea." Ingenious imagery is employed in "The Grand Armada" to describe Ahab's brow: "...Ahab's brow was left gaunt and ribbed, like the black sand beach after some stormy tide has been gnawing it, without being able to drag the firm thing from its place." Here Melville has successfully drawn upon natural forces to convey Ahab's internal conflict; Ahab's suffering has gnawed upon his indomitable will, but has not dragged it from its fixed purpose.

In the dramatic chapter, "The Candles," Ahab's bold defiance of God and the elements, though suggestive of Shakespeare, shows Melville's mastery over his medium. Melville may have received the germ for the scene from Cassius's defiance of lightning in Julius Caesar, but beyond this he has created a tense, dramatic episode pervaded by a Melvillian sense of speech rhythms, not dependent upon someone else's poetry. "The verbal resources demonstrate," Matthiessen asserts,

that Melville [in "The Candles"] has now mastered Shakespeare's mature secret of how to make language itself dramatic. He has learned to depend more and more upon verbs of action, which lend their dynamic pressure to both movement and meaning. A highly effective tension is set up by the contrast between "thou launchest navies of full-freighted worlds" and "there's that in here that still remains indifferent." The compulsion to strike the breast exerted by that last clause suggests how thoroughly the drama has come to inhere in the words.²⁴

VI

This chapter has attempted to illustrate how Melville used the abundance of Shakespeare's art to advantage. His decision to use a highly elevated and dramatic poetic diction resulted in a style which is one of the outstanding features of Moby-Dick. Melville wisely chose not merely to imitate the English dramatist. Although it must be admitted that at times he succumbed to the temptation of using Shakespearean material which failed to harmonize with the scheme of his novel, for the most part he employed Shakespearean allusions and artistic devices with a freshness and originality which made them uniquely his own. Shakespeare's influence on Melville's art was most positive, however, when Melville received direction from the creative energy of the dramatist's art and from the lesson Shakespeare taught him that "the art itself is nature." When Melville had grasped these two gifts, he could write of Pip's accident with a magnificent expression of the sacredness of madness:

The sea had jerringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman, Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, 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 ship-mates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God.

Notes for Chapter IV

1. Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (Durham, 1949), p. 19.
2. MD includes chapters 23 to "Epilogue," which contain mostly revised and new material.
3. Part of the list of actual references to Shakespeare's plays is taken from Raymond G. Hughes, "Melville and Shakespeare," SAB, VII (1932), 105-106. Hughes errs in stating that the quotation "Et tu Brute!" appears in chapter 85. It is in chapter 65.
4. Melville also makes direct references to Shakespeare in the "Extracts" which preface the novel. Melville lists a quotation from "King Henry": "The sovereignest thing on earth is parmacetti for an inward bruise." This is from 1 Henry IV, act I, scene iii, lines 57-58. Immediately following this quotation is the following from Hamlet, act III, scene ii, line 399: "Very like a whale." In addition to these direct quotations, Melville, in a note to the word "gallied" in chapter 87, says in part: "To gally, or gallow, is to frighten excessively—to confound with fright. It is an old Saxon word. It occurs once in Shakespeare:—'The wrathful skies / Gallow the very wanderers of the dark / And make them keep their caves.'" This quotation is from King Lear, act III, scene ii, lines 43-45.
5. F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London, 1941), p. 432.
6. This recalls Melville's letter to Duyckinck, March 3, 1849: "I love all men who dive."
7. Hughes, p. 108.
8. Both Ahab's speech and Macbeth's famous words of despair contain repetition which heightens the effect in both instances.
9. Moby-Dick or, The Whale, eds. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York, 1952), p. 814—hereafter cited as Moby-Dick.
10. Moby-Dick, p. 676.
11. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), pp. 385-386.
12. Pierre and The Confidence Man also contain numerous direct references and allusions to Shakespeare and his plays. See the explanatory notes in Pierre or, The Ambiguities, ed. Henry A. Murray (New York, 1949), and in The Confidence Man: His Masquerade, ed. Elizabeth S. Foster (New York, 1954).
13. Matthiessen, p. 423.
14. Matthiessen, p. 424.
15. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), p. 38.
16. Matthiessen, p. 426.
17. Matthiessen, p. 428.
18. Matthiessen, pp. 133-140.
19. Matthiessen, pp. 133-134.
20. Matthiessen, p. 134.
21. Matthiessen, pp. 428-429.
22. Olson, "Lear and Moby-Dick," Twice a Year, I (1938), 185.
23. Olson, Call Me Ishmael, p. 68.
24. Matthiessen, pp. 430-431.

CHAPTER V

"A MIGHTY PAGEANT CREATURE, FORMED FOR NOBLE TRAGEDIES"

And so, in the days of King Lear, it was chiefly the power of "monstrous" and apparently cureless evil in the "great world" that filled Shakespeare's soul with horror, and perhaps forced him sometimes to yield to the infirmity of misanthropy and despair, to cry "No, no, no life," and to take refuge in the thought that this fitful fever is a dream that must soon fade into a dreamless sleep; until to free himself from the perilous stuff that weighed upon his heart, he summoned to his aid his "so potent art," and wrought this stuff into the stormy music of his greatest poem, which seems to cry, "You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need," and, like the Tempest, seems to preach to us from end to end, "Thou must be patient," "Bear free and patient thoughts."¹

Bradley's statement not only suggests the state of Shakespeare's mind during the time he was writing King Lear, but also suggests, especially in the first part, Melville's reaction to the tragic implications of life when composing Moby-Dick. Yet this quotation also reveals the fundamental cleavage between the two writers. Both Shakespeare and Melville perceived the double nature of life, the ambiguous, two-faced image of good and evil. Both yielded to the horror and despair of life. But Shakespeare managed to present his view of tragedy with an artistic detachment which kept his art under control and which achieved an equilibrium between the contending forces of good and evil—a harmony which he expressed through Edgar in King Lear:

Men must endure
Their going hence even as their coming hither;
Ripeness is all.

Shakespeare recognized and accepted this tragic vision of life. Melville, too, recognized it, but could not accept its limitations. Whereas Shakespeare viewed the good and evil in life both with an equal eye; Melville only vainly professed that he did. It was the illusive, inseparable quality of good and evil—the ambiguity of life—that grasped Melville's attention so intensely that the piercing of the "dark" mystery of this mask became the theme of Moby-Dick. In fact, his attempt became so intensely personal, that Melville

in his next novel, Pierre, lost even the partial balance he had achieved in Moby-Dick. He injected himself so personally into Pierre that his art disintegrated. Realizing that his quest to resolve the ambiguities of existence had led only to more mysteries, Melville found himself mentally exhausted at the finish of Pierre. He was to come to a state of acceptance later in Billy Budd, when he both accepted and comprehended the meaning of "Ripeness is all."

The first two chapters of this study traced the growing awareness of Shakespeare's greatness in Melville's mind, and postulated that, through the agency of Shakespeare, Melville found crystallized within himself those occult, hidden properties which led to a new and enriched Moby-Dick. Having presented in chapter 1 the external evidence for a revision of Moby-Dick shortly after Melville read Shakespeare, I considered in chapter 3 internal evidence for this revision, pointing out that much of the new material in Moby-Dick is quite possibly of Shakespearean origin. This is especially true of the "insight passage" which, appearing to present Melville's decision to rewrite Moby-Dick in dramatic terms by using a poetic language and by creating Ahab as a tragic hero, significantly reveals how deeply Shakespeare was imbedded upon Melville's mind at this time. Chapter 4 examined closely the role Shakespeare played in Melville's art during the revision--how Melville learned from the playwright that art must be based organically upon nature.

In this concluding chapter, I shall present evidence from Moby-Dick of Melville's carrying out his plan, implied in the "insight passage," of raising the level of the novel to tragic proportions. In that passage, Melville presents a memorandum for the "new" tragic Ahab. The description of Ahab in the passage is suggestive of the Shakespearean hero in many ways. Even the words "dramatically regarded" reveal the author thinking in terms of tragedy. If in revising his novel Melville thought of Ahab as a tragic

hero, particularly Shakespearean, it follows that we should find in Moby-Dick many of Shakespeare's tragic ideas and techniques. This chapter will consider, then, the influence of Shakespeare, the writer of tragedies, upon Herman Melville, in both the substance and the structure of his tragedy. The first topic of discussion will be the influence of Shakespeare upon the structure of Moby-Dick. The second topic will consider the subject of the substance of tragedy—the relationship between Shakespeare's and Melville's tragic characteristics. The third subject will deal specifically with the tragedy of Ahab. The final section will contrast the two men's tragic views of life.

But before examining Moby-Dick as a tragedy, I wish to advance what I feel to be the proper approach to this study. First of all, critics are by no means in agreement as to what constitutes a true tragedy, Shakespearean or otherwise. We have, as a result, many contradictory theories of the essence of tragedy. Second, the meaning and tragic implications of Moby-Dick are not easily established, for here critics differ also. Mumford, Arvin, Sedgwick, Chase, Howard, Stone, and Weaver, for example, disagree on many points in their interpretations of Moby-Dick. For that matter, Matthiessen and Olson fail to see eye to eye on the key question of whether Moby-Dick is a Shakespearean tragedy. And here the problem of properly defining tragedy merges with the problem of properly interpreting Melville's novel, for both critics, in judging Moby-Dick as a Shakespearean tragedy, use a criterion which, in itself, does not agree with the theories of many critics of tragedy.² In light of the facts that the critics of Melville disagree concerning the tragic implications of his novel, and that^t an even larger number of critics cannot agree on the nature of tragedy itself, the comparison of Melvillian tragedy with Shakespearean tragedy is not a simple matter.

Furthermore, the task is complicated by a third consideration, which

also concerns the relationship between Moby-Dick as a tragedy and Shakespearean tragedy. Melville recognized that his tragedy must be written in terms of his own time and environment, writing in his review of Hawthorne's Mosses that "great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a correspondent coloring." Nor was he blind to the fact that Shakespeare was not only a great artist, but also "Master William Shakspeare of the shrewd, thriving business firm of Condell, Shakspeare & Co., proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London." He realized when he wrote his essay that Shakespeare also had to face the problem of imitation, that Shakespeare "by a courtly author, of the name of Chettle, was looked at as an 'upstart crow,' beautified 'with other birds' feathers."³ Here, then, is Melville's perception of another valuable lesson from Shakespeare, a lesson which he took to heart much sooner than the lesson of the proper balance between good and evil. His tragedy of Ahab could contain much that was Shakespearean, but in the end it must "possess a correspondent coloring."

What are the implications of Melville's statements, and how do they concern the proper approach to the study of Shakespeare's influence upon Melvillian tragedy? The first implication is that, in view of Melville's own avowal in the Hawthorne review of the necessity of creating literature that possesses a coloring of his own times, any attempt to prove that Moby-Dick is a Shakespearean tragedy (as Olson appears to have done) is an attempt to prove that the novel is something which its author may never have intended it to be. It is further implied from Melville's statements in the review that an attempt to judge whether Moby-Dick is a true tragedy according to the degree with which it approximates Shakespearean tragedy is unjust to Melville on two counts. In the first place, must a tragedy be Shakespearean to be a true tragedy? Secondly, was Melville trying to pattern his tragedy to the letter after Shakespearean tragedy? The answer to both is No.

Melville rather made use of many of the elements of Shakespearean tragedy, modifying them and integrating them into his own pattern of thought and conception of tragedy, the end result being a tragedy that is similar to Shakespeare's in many ways, but not identical, nor need it be.

It is the aim of this study to show that Melville made use of Shakespearean tragedy—that the influence was significant and instrumental in aiding him to form his own concept of tragedy and tragic view of life. It is not my aim to show that Melville succeeded in writing Shakespearean tragedy. Thus though Moby-Dick and Shakespearean tragedy will be frequently compared and contrasted in this study, the express purpose for such comparison will be to evaluate Shakespeare's influence on Melville and nothing more.

I

Various structural devices appearing in Moby-Dick display perhaps most obviously the influence of Shakespearean tragedy upon Melville. Although Melville deplored the Shakespeare of "the tricky stage," the Shakespeare with "the popularizing noise and show of broad farce and blood-besmeared tragedy," he could not, his response to the playwright was so intense, refrain from employing the devices of tragedy. Whether or not one agrees with Arvin that Melville "would have written badly for the stage," it is erroneous to conclude, as Arvin has, that Melville's "imagination was profoundly nondramatic."⁴ The numerous devices are indeed helpful in elevating the tone of the novel to that of tragedy. Many of the most dramatic passages display Melville's imaginative fire at its best. One only has to read "The Quarter Deck," "Sunset," or the climactic "The Candles" to see Melville's imaginative powers at work within a dramatic framework.

Once presented in "Knights and Squires," those chapters which function structurally as a dramatis personae, the main characters are frequently fixed in their dramatic situations through the use of stage directions, such as

(Foresail rises and discovers the watch standing, lounging, leaning, and lying in various attitudes, all singing in chorus) in "Midnight, Forecastle" (in itself a stage direction), and (Sudden, repeated flashes of lightning; the nine flames leap lengthwise to thrice their previous height; Ahab, with the rest, closes his eyes, his right hand pressed hard upon them.) in "The Candles." Many of the chapters are but one degree removed from the theatre; and in "Midnight, Forecastle," the form is completely theatrical. Ahab, Stubb, and Starbuck frequently speak in soliloquies, Lear-like or Macbeth-like; and through these soliloquies, Melville effectively expresses, as Matthiessen notes, Ahab's development, "since, isolated in his pride and madness, he tended to voice his thoughts to himself alone."⁵ Furthermore, Melville's soliloquies, like Shakespeare's, reveal the inner conflicts and tensions of the chief characters. After the quarterdeck scene, for example, when Ahab displays his monomaniac defiance, Melville provides Ahab with a soliloquy to reveal his inner despair, a monologue that also functions as a relief scene, its quiet tone contrasting with the tension created by Ahab's diabolic, Satanic communion ceremony in the previous chapter. Finally, Melville's soliloquies, especially those of Ahab, contain the most frequent evidences of Shakespearean language and speech.

Relief scenes, quiet or comic in tone, often sordid, are used to relieve tension and to provide variety at various points in the novel. In fact, alternation between calm and tempest is characteristic of the novel. "Without exception," Olson observes, "action rises out of calm, whether it is the first chase of a whale, the appearance of the Spirit Spout, the storm, or the final chase of Moby-Dick precipitously following upon 'The Symphony.'"⁶

Omens, premonitions, and prophecies abound in Moby-Dick. Ahab with the same name as the Biblical king who met a disastrous end, dogs licking his blood; Ishmael's innkeeper I.A. Coffin; the Pequod, named after an extinct

Indi ~~an~~ tribe; the strange prophecy of Fedallah; the spirit spout; the appa ~~l~~ling white squid; and the lifebuoy-coffin—all hint at onrushing tragedy. The ~~e~~lement of the supernatural enters into the novel frequently. The whole Ahab—Fedallah relation is tinged with it. Stubb considers Fedallah the devil in ~~dis~~guise:

Do you believe that cock and bull story about his having been stowed away on board ship? He's the devil, I say....Why, do ye see, the old man is hard bent after that White Whale, and the devil there is trying to come round him, and get him to swap away his silver watch, or his soul...and then he'll surrender Moby Dick.

Fedallah is perhaps a continuation of the Faust theme—the compact with the devil—but Melville was careful, as Shakespeare was, to leave room for several possible interpretations. He presented Fedallah on three levels: as a supernatural being in compact with Ahab, as symbol of Ahab's madness and diabolism, and as a mysterious, Oriental sailor. Yet, to use Melville's own words, "that hair-turbaned Fedallah remained a muffled mystery to the last," for Fedallah, too, was an ambiguity. On two occasions Melville blends Shakespearean supernaturalism into the context of the Ahab-Fedallah relation. The "low laugh from the hold" in "The Quarter Deck," a supernatural effect connected with Fedallah and his mysterious crew, echoes Shakespeare's Ghost below ground in Hamlet. Another one, more integral to the movement of the novel, is Fedallah's prophecy, a portent which received its inspiration from Macbeth. Fedallah's strange prophecy that he will perish before Ahab and will appear to Ahab again after death, and that "hemp only" can kill Ahab, has as its source the witches' prophecy that

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

Because of the seemingly impossible things that must occur before he can die, Ahab, like Macbeth, feels confident that he will succeed in his quest. Just as the prophecy comes true in Shakespeare's most supernatural tragedy, so

Fedallah's prediction comes to pass in Moby-Dick. Much of Melville's final chapters concerns the working-out of this prophecy.

Melville is also indebted to Shakespeare for the device of identifying inward conflict and violence by external signs. Ahab's violence is symbolized by the typhoon, much as the storm scene in Julius Caesar illustrates the turmoil within the Roman state and within Brutus's mind.⁷ When Ahab pledges his crew to his purpose of chasing Moby-Dick, external embodiments—"the pre-saging vibrations of the winds in the cordage," "the hollow flap of the sails against the masts," and "the subterranean laugh" from the hold—second Starbuck's murmur, "God keep me!--keep us all!" Yet by making these symbols quickly die away, Melville also suggested by them the fleeting rebellion in Starbuck, concluding, with Ahab in mind, that "with little external to constrain us, the innermost necessities in our being, these still drive us on."

Melville uses properties for theatrical effect in Moby-Dick. We have already seen how Melville makes use of the whale's head for a soliloquy reminiscent of Hamlet's soliloquy to the skull. Aware of the theatrical effect of the scene in Richard II (which he marked in his edition of Shakespeare) in which the King dashes the looking-glass to the ground, Melville produced a similar effect by having Ahab throw his quadrant to the deck and trample it. One of the most subtle and pervasive uses of the stage property is Melville's use of the doubloon, an idea he may have received from the same source from which he derived Fedallah's prophecy. Vincent notes that the place of the doubloon

is roughly equivalent to the place of the images issuing from the witches' cauldron in Macbeth, images of the terrible truth to be but interpreted whimsically by Macbeth as portents of what he wishes to happen. He is led to his doom by his heedless wilfulness.⁸

As each character gazes upon the image on the coin, he confidently interprets it to suit himself. The Spanish gold-coin becomes, to use Olson's term, "the focus"⁹ through which the true aspects of the various characters are

crystallized, a character revelation. Ahab sees in the image his strength and power, but also his own suffering. Starbuck views it religiously, seeing the Trinity and a beacon of hope "over all our gloom"; but he cannot face the double image of life and quits it, "lest Truth shake me falsely." Stubb sees both good and evil in the coin, but, true to his character, he whimsically laughs it off. Flask cannot pierce into its symbolical meaning; he can only estimate its monetary value. Pip, in his mad wisdom, sees the doubloon as "the ship's navel," and ironically is the only one to sense the true significance of the coin.

The element of chance, which will be discussed later, enters into the structure of Moby-Dick; and although not peculiar to Shakespearean drama alone, some of its characteristics as used by Melville are clearly Shakespearean. To cite an example, it is simply accidental that Ishmael chooses to sail with the Pequod when Queequeg leaves the choice of ship to him. More especially Shakespearean in origin is the frequent chances for a reversal in the plot. Shakespeare, in Julius Caesar for example, wove in several situations whereby Caesar could have avoided his fate. If Caesar had heeded the Soothsayer's "Beware the ides of March," or Calpurnia's plea, or Artemidorus' schedule, among others, he might have foiled the conspirators' plot; Iago's intrigue with Othello is fraught with just such dangers. Melville, too, has called upon this device in Moby-Dick. The possibility that Ahab, restored to a proper balance, may relinquish his demoniac obsession is suggested in the scenes between Ahab and Pip, Ahab and Starbuck, and in the meeting between the Pequod and the Samuel Enderby.

Olson and Matthiessen have argued that the novel, considered broadly, has a rise and fall like that of Elizabethan tragedy.¹⁰ Matthiessen, in particular, has analyzed the novel in detail from this viewpoint. The first twenty-three chapters, with Ishmael as chorus narrating the action antecedent

to ~~the~~ voyage, serve as a sort of prelude to the drama. With chapter 24 the drama begins, the first act reaching its peak in the quarterdeck scene where Ahab forces his will upon the crew, receiving their pledge of consent to his mad quest. There follow several chapters--soliloquies--where each of the important figures is presented in a less intense key. Melville displays his dramatic sense in this first sequence by delaying Ahab's entrance until considerable uncertainty and apprehension has been created. In the following interlude Melville develops the main themes and symbols of the novel in "Moby-Dick" and "The Whiteness of the Whale." The next sequence, including several encounters with other ships which serve as warnings to Ahab as to the futility of his quest and his itemized survey of the whaling industry, reaches a second peak of intensity in the encounter with the Jeroboam, its mad, shrieking Gabriel admonishing Ahab to beware a blasphemer's end. The novel enters into the third act with the meeting of the Samuel Enderby, whose captain has lost an arm to Moby-Dick. The contrast between Captain Boomer's acquiescence and Ahab's determination emphasizes the extremes to which Ahab's mania has carried him and the folly of his revengeful purpose. As Thompson and Olson note,¹¹ the climax in Moby-Dick comes in the Lear-like storm scene in the "The Candles". In this scene Melville pulls out all the dramatic stops. As the "stage" blazes with the fiery corposants, Ahab blasphemously declares that the "right worship" of the fiery God "is defiance." Thereafter, the end is certain, and the falling action, moving inevitably towards a whirling vortex, reminiscent of Poe, reaches the catastrophe, symbolically embodying the annihilation of all existence save Ishmael. Although Melville may have criticized the more visible aspects of Shakespearean tragedy, he nevertheless lowered the curtain of his drama in the destructive, "blood-besmeared" fashion of Hamlet and King Lear.

However, such an analysis of the structure of Moby-Dick should not be

misleading, for the novel is too diverse and varied to be forced into such a clear-cut pattern. Moby-Dick defies such conclusive classification. It is dangerous to conclude from these "tendencies" that the novel closely parallels an Elizabethan tragedy in structure, for it contains much that is impossible for the stage. The cetology is a good example. Any stage presentation of Moby-Dick would necessitate the condensation and elimination of much of the whaling matter, yet much of the success in its presentation lies in its being clothed in narrative. Arvin concludes that

the structure of the book has only a superficial analogy with that of tragedy or of drama in general. The vital character of dramatic structure...is concentration; the vital character of this book's structure is expansiveness. A tragedy, in form, is ideally close, swift, and undivertible; Moby-Dick, on the contrary, though in its own sense firm and unwasteful, is structurally open, loose, slow-paced, and ample.¹²

Some of Shakespeare's tragedies point in the direction of expansiveness, as Arvin recognizes,¹³ especially King Lear and Antony and Cleopatra, which, judged by the markings and comments in Melville's edition and the frequency of the allusions to the plays in Moby-Dick, impressed Melville considerably. Yet as Bradley declares,

King Lear, as a whole, is imperfectly dramatic, and there is something in its very essence which is at war with the senses, and demands a purely imaginative realisation. It is therefore Shakespeare's greatest work, but it is not...the best of his plays....¹⁴

From the standpoint of form, then, though Lear is not a great tragedy in the sense that Macbeth is, no one can deny that Shakespeare comes to grips in it with the tragic implications of life. Moby-Dick, too, is imperfect structurally as a tragedy, though at the same time, broadly speaking, there is a rise and fall movement within the structure of the novel which very conceivably indicates a Shakespearean influence. But we must be careful not to judge the novel on this basis alone. The subject matter of the book is as tragic in purport as that of Lear, whatever the stage possibilities of either.

II

To examine the relationship of dramatic structure between Shakespeare and Melville is to consider only part of Melville's debt to Shakespearean tragedy. The influence of Shakespeare also pervades the substance of Melville's tragedy. Earlier in this chapter I mentioned that it is considerably difficult to determine what Shakespearean tragedy is, yet for purposes of comparison between Melville and Shakespeare, some norm or basis is necessary. Therefore, I have selected Bradley's analysis of the substance of Shakespearean tragedy as a guide in my discussion.¹⁵

(1) The first fact of Shakespearean tragedy is that a tragic story is concerned primarily with one person, as Moby-Dick is concerned primarily with Ahab. The influence of Shakespeare perhaps explains why Melville reduced in his revision the importance of Ishmael and Queequeg. During the first fifteen chapters of Moby-Dick, Ishmael, the narrator, is the central character; and Queequeg's role in the story seems destined to be significant. Yet, as pointed out in chapter 3, Ishmael soon almost ceases to be a character at all, and Queequeg's importance becomes negligible. When in the "insight passage" Melville recorded his decision to recast Ahab as "a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies," he broke with his usual procedure of having the narrator, as in Redburn and White-Jacket for example, serve as the chief character. Furthermore, the necessity of emphasizing one person as the chief character required Melville to eliminate another potential hero, already introduced as a character of some importance. Hence Bulkington after chapter 23 disappears from the narrative altogether.

(2) Another characteristic of Shakespearean tragedy is that the story leads up to and includes the death of the hero, as Moby-Dick leads inevitably to the death of Ahab.

(3) Thirdly, according to Bradley's analysis Shakespearean tragedy

depicts the troubled period precedent to his death, the story being, then, for the most part a tale of exceptional suffering and calamity, usually unexpected and contrasted to previous happiness. Moby-Dick depicts Ahab during the troubled part of his life. From the first of Ahab's appearances, Melville presents him as suffering and despairing. Constantly throughout the novel the stricken Ahab is contrasted with the strong-willed, proud Ahab. When Ahab ascends the quarterdeck for the first time, Ishmael observes that "moody stricken Ahab stood before them with a crucifixion in his face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe." Ahab's first soliloquy, in "Sunset," reveals Ahab's intense feeling of woe and despair. Furthermore, until he lost his leg to the white whale, Ahab seems to have been happy. Peleg describes him to Ishmael as "a good man—not a pious good man, like Bildad, but a swearing good man." Peleg had no doubt that Ahab's temporary moodiness resulting from his encounter with the whale would not pass off. "Besides, my boy," Peleg exclaimed, "he has a wife...a sweet, resigned girl. Think of that; by that sweet girl that old man has a child; hold ye then there can be any utter, hopeless harm in Ahab? No, no, my lad; stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his humanities!"

(4) Another element of Shakespearean tragedy, writes Bradley, is that the hero's suffering and calamity generally extends beyond the chief character, affecting many others, often striking down innocent victims, so as to make the final scene a scene of woe. Thus in Moby-Dick the suffering of Ahab touches the whole crew of the Pequod; all share in Ahab's calamity in the end, except Ishmael.

(5) Tragedy with Shakespeare always concerns persons of high degree, or station, in life. Bradley feels this characteristic of Shakespeare's tragedies is important, for the greater the man, the more not only will his fall affect those around him, but also the greater will the sense of contrast become

between the helplessness of man and the omnipotence of fate and fortune. In the ~~c~~razed figure of Lear we see

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king....

That Melville was deeply concerned with this aspect of Shakespearean tragedy is evident from his constant attempt to raise the poor old Nantucket captain to heroic stature. Melville has Peleg remark to Ishmael: "He's a grand, ungodly, god-like man, Captain Ahab....Ahab's above the common....he's Ahab, boy, and Ahab of old, thou knowest, was a crowned king!" In "The Advocate" and "Postscript" Melville attempts to raise the level of whaling to a state of dignity to provide a proper setting for a great tragic hero. Still endeavoring to justify Ahab as a heroic figure and having argued that greatness can be found in all men, Melville closes his presentation of his dramatis personae in chapter 26 by apologizing:

If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribed high qualities, though dark; weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them all, shall at times lift himself to exalted mounts; if I shall touch that workman's arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God!...Thou who, in all Thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God!

Melville, realizing that his story was in reality a tale of whaling, knew his novel must have a "correspondent coloring." He knew that "this august dignity" could not be that "dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God"—that "just Spirit of Equality." Melville again attacked the problem in chapter 33, "The Specksynder," this time concentrating on Ahab specifically:

But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shagginess; and in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whale-hunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestic trappings and housings are

denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air!

Thus at this point it may be said, therefore, that Melvillian tragedy follows Shakespearean tragedy in its postulation of a story of exceptional suffering and calamity, ultimately leading to the death of a man of high station, with but one important difference. Melville's subject matter prevented him from giving Ahab the "majestical trappings and housings" of the typical Shakespearean king. As Melville told Duyckinck on March 3, 1849, "The Declaration of Independence makes a difference."¹⁶ With this in mind, he fell back upon the democratic spirit and transcendental optimism, which declared a belief in the individual's potentialities for greatness despite its awareness of the potential evil in man, for justification of Ahab's dignity as a tragic hero.

(6) However, Bradley reminds us that Shakespearean tragedy is much more inclusive than this narrow medieval concept, for it places man in a calamity for which he has no responsibility. The fact is that in Shakespeare's tragedies the bad fortunes of the hero do not just simply happen; they are results of the actions of men. Shakespeare's hero is never placed innocently in a vortex of circumstances; he always contributes in some measure to his own downfall. Though Ahab declares, "I am the Fates' lieutenant," nevertheless, he contributes, through his own actions, to his own disaster. Thus Starbuck exclaims before the third and final day of the chase: "Oh! Ahab not too late is it, even now, the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!" Tragedy from this point of view postulates that men, not the gods, are the agents of their woe. Shakespearean and Melvillian tragedy take into account both approaches, for their heroes are both agents of their tragedy and victims of chance.

(7) Furthermore, the deeds of the hero, which bring the calamity, are

characteristic of the doer. Thus not only does the catastrophe follow inevitably from the actions of men, but also the chief source of these actions is character. Ahab is willful and proud and moody. These are dominating traits in Ahab, his tragic flaws; these very characteristics are the cause of his mad, heedless chase.

Bradley believes Shakespeare's main interest lay in the characteristic deeds of the hero. This is true of Melville's Moby-Dick also, although I do not discount Melville's interest in accident and fate. The tragedy of Ahab perhaps may never have occurred if Ahab had not lost his leg to Moby-Dick. From this viewpoint, the "accident" of the encounter with the whale is the precipitant of the tragedy. On the other hand, it is equally true, perhaps more so, that if Ahab's character were like that of the captain of the Samuel Enderby, no tragedy would have resulted. Moreover, the natural hazards of the whaling industry made Ahab's injury not unusual. The only thing "unusual" about the incident was that it happened to Ahab, for whereas Moby-Dick only struck off Captain Boomer's arm, the white whale not only cut off Ahab's leg, but inflicted a mortal wound to Ahab's pride and individualistic will. Therefore, Ahab's character—not his lost leg—provides the primum mobile of his tragedy. Shakespeare's dictum that "character is destiny," containing its share of truth, is, then, misleading, since it is for neither Shakespeare nor Melville the whole truth.

(8) The sum of Shakespearean tragedy is more than the total of such factors as suffering and calamity in the hero, the characteristic actions of the hero, and fate, as Bradley notes. The playwright, for example, occasionally presents abnormal conditions of the mind, such as somnambulism, hallucinations, and insanity, though Bradley is careful to point out that these are not presented by Shakespeare as the motivating force of important deeds of dramatic moment. Lear's madness is not the cause of calamity; it is the

result of conflict.

In Moby-Dick, likewise, it is a mistake to say that Ahab decided to chase Moby-Dick because Fedallah's interpretation of his dream led Ahab to believe that he would succeed. His dream was instead the result of conflict; Ahab would have continued his quest whether he had dreamed or not. His dream serves only to emphasize the intensity of his desire to continue, for he heedlessly rationalizes it into another justification for his acts—but his acts thereafter do not originate from it. In fact, the real implications of the dream would have turned him from the quest had he chosen to follow them. Likewise Pip's madness has no real influence upon Ahab's catastrophe. Pip brings Ahab's humanity temporarily to the forefront, but he ultimately fails to derail Ahab from his iron purpose.

Some critics have observed that Ahab is mad, and because he is mad he acts as he does. On the surface of things this appears to be true, yet upon closer examination of Ahab's madness, the conclusion is highly questionable. Melville in chapter 41 makes it clear that Ahab did not become mad because of his dismemberment. Only after the "long months of days and weeks" during the voyage home when

Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one hammock...then it was, that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad...it was only then, on the homeward voyage, after the encounter, that the final monomania seized him....

"It is not probable," Melville remarks, "that this monomania in him took its instant rise at the precise time of his bodily dismemberment." Thus Melville explains that Ahab's madness, like Lear's, is the result of the conflict and anguish of a "gashed soul," not the origin. At first Ahab was "a raving lunatic." The more visible manifestations of madness soon left, yet "Ahab, in his hidden self, raved on." "Human madness," continues Melville, "is oftentimes a cunning and most feline thing. When you think it fled, it may have

but become transfigured into some still subtler form." Ahab's insanity differed from ordinary kinds in that he retained control of his intelligent faculties. Here Ahab reflects the King's judgment of Hamlet's supposed insanity: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't." During Ahab's previous "broad madness, not a jot of his great intellect had perished," and Melville summarizes the unique effect of this "subtler form" of insanity by saying that

his special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it, and turned all its concentrated cannon upon its own mad mark; so that far from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that one end, did now possess a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any one reasonable object.

Ahab, then, is the author of his own tragedy just as Macbeth, who also can be said to have a "madness" in his obsession for power, brings about his own downfall. Ahab is not mad in the sense that he is unaware of his actions, or their consequences. His madness lies in his inability to deter from his purpose in spite of his awareness of them.

(9) Bradley demonstrates that another factor, the supernatural, often contributes to the action of Shakespeare's tragedies, yet it is always placed in close relation with character, confirming the inward movements already present in the character and never removing the hero from his responsibility or capacity for dealing with his problem. In Moby-Dick Fedallah's relationship to Ahab often partakes of the supernatural. Fedallah frequently appears as a confirmation of Ahab's monomaniac willfulness—thus when Ahab smashes the quadrant upon the deck, "a sneering triumph that seemed meant for Ahab... passed over the mute, motionless Parsee's face." The true significance of the Ahab-Fedallah relation is difficult to ascertain. Various interpretations were presented earlier in the discussion of the structure of Moby-Dick. Perhaps Melville, having already established Ahab's course of action, meant Fedallah to connote a bond with the devil, to serve as a reminder to Ahab of his

pledged purpose.

(10) Action in Shakespeare can generally be defined as conflict, which is of two kinds: external and internal. Both are always present in Shakespearean tragedy. Tragedy in which the hero with an undivided soul opposes hostile forces is not the Shakespearean type. The external conflict in Moby-Dick, if we can call it such, is hard to evaluate; it certainly is not Shakespearean. The main conflict is between Ahab and Moby-Dick, yet the whale never appears until the final catastrophe. In addition, the role of Moby-Dick is somewhat passive; that is, he never openly seeks Ahab and, regardless of his ferocity, strikes only when attacked. While Shakespearean tragedy poses an external conflict between human groups, Ahab opposes a mammal. It is true that when pursued it had fought with a seemingly "unexampled, intelligent malignity," but this is symbolic rather than literal. The true significance of the whale as an opposing force rests in its symbolical representation of Ahab's inner conflicts. Therefore, Ahab's conflict with the whale is external only in a loose sense. It would be more correct to say that conflict in the novel exists primarily within Ahab, not without. There seems to be no external conflict of any significance between Ahab and his crew, except perhaps Starbuck, whose resistance poses more of a potential rather than an actual danger to Ahab. But to consider Starbuck an enemy or opposing force in the sense that Iago is to Othello, or Antony to Brutus, is impractical.

(11) In Shakespearean tragedy, the hero usually is torn by an inward struggle. In this respect, Melville's novel is Shakespearean. Actually, as suggested above, the conflict with Moby-Dick remains within Ahab until the last three chapters, only then externalized. This conflict arises out of Moby's injury to Ahab, but it originates primarily not in his physical injury, but in the more significant and permanent injury to his soul, leading first to complete lunacy and later to a more special, qualified "madness," wherein Ahab retained

his intellectual faculties. Melville in chapter 41 describes how Ahab's conflict with the white whale came to involve within his mind much more than mere revenge for a physical dismemberment:

Small reason was there to doubt, then, that ever since that almost fatal encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him [Moby-Dick], not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them...he pitted himself, all mutilated against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down....

Ahab, therefore, transferred to the whale all his mental morbidity, all his inner frustrations derived from the inscrutability of the very nature of things—thereby making the evil and irrationality of life "practically assailable" in the whale. The whale, a personification of Ahab's "intellectual and spiritual exasperations," becomes a manifestation of Ahab's inward struggle with the ambiguities of life. Throughout this conflict in Ahab, two predominating characteristics struggle for ascendancy. Time and time again, Melville, in a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare, places Ahab's willfulness and pride in juxtaposition with his despair and morbidity. When Ahab makes his first appearance on the quarterdeck, Ishmael contrasts Ahab's "determinate, unsurrenderable wilfulness" with the crucifixion of woe upon his face. In "Sunset" Ahab's soliloquy reveals this fundamental cleavage in his nature; likewise, when he views the doubloon, he sees himself in this two-fold aspect. These two qualities also come into play in "Ahab and the Carpenter" and "The Symphony."¹⁷

(12) The concentration of conflict on inward struggle emphasizes in Moby-Dick, as it does in Shakespeare's plays, the fact that the action issuing from this conflict is essentially the expression of character. It is true of

both Shakespeare's heroes and Melville's Ahab that there is in them, to use Bradley's words,

a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind.¹⁸

This is usually identified as the tragic trait or character flaw. But though this tragic flaw is fatal to the hero, it is also a touch of greatness.

Ahab has several traits which, when combined, account for his decision to pit himself, "all mutilated," against the whale. First of all, there is Ahab's predisposition to morbidity. Peleg says that Ahab "was never very jolly," and that Melville intended this to be one of Ahab's fundamental traits is evident from the "insight passage":

Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half wilful over-ruling morbidity at the bottom of his nature. For all men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidity. Be sure of this, O young ambition, all mortal greatness is but disease.¹⁹

However morbidity alone does not account for Ahab's tragedy; this quality by itself is neither admirable nor tragic. Ahab has another quality which, added to morbidity, tended to channel his whole being into one-sidedness, a single habit of mind, a willful and determined drive to self-assertion. In Ahab we have an extreme example of the Emersonian individualist. Self-reliant, individualistic, striving for certainty in life, he courageously attempts, like Thoreau, to drive life into a corner. This implicit faith in the possibilities of the individual is admirable, yet at the same time fraught with danger, for Ahab's egotistical individualism, though admirable in that it gave him a desire to make life purposive, also led him away from the common stream of humanity into isolation and blindness. Ahab's extreme pride, or self-love, deepened the gulf between himself and his fellow man. A combination of morbidity, self-dependence, willfulness, and pride, Ahab's

character inevitably leads to his destruction because such traits result in complete independence from God and human brotherhood and thorough-going denial of human imperfection. He has an uncontrollable drive to self-assertion, an ambitious, irresistible desire to tear the veil of life from its profound mysteries. He cannot accept the moral of Father Mapple's sermon that to obey yourself is to disobey God, that for a finite being to attempt to know infinity or eternity is blasphemous, "for what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God?" Ahab's character prevents him from accepting, with humility, the limitations of life; he would not have accepted Raphael's dictum in Paradise Lost:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
 Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
 Heaven is for thee to high
 To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
 Think onely what concerns thee and thy being;
 Dream not of other Worlds....

Ahab could not "be lowly wise"; his pride, his willful and ambitious desire to know the unknowable, and his egotistical self-reliance must always prevent him. Ahab's tragic hybris is expressed best in his speech to Starbuck in the quarterdeck scene. "All visible objects, man," says Ahab in defending his avowed search for the white whale,

are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me....Who's over me? Truth hath no confines.

Ahab, steeped in pride, outraged by the "inscrutable malice" in the Moby-Dick-universe, declares his unconditional self-reliance; his isolation is complete. Accordingly, though external conflict in the true Shakespearean

sense is absent in Moby-Dick, the novel does have a kinship with the English dramatist's tragedies in its emphasis upon internal conflict arising out of fundamental tragic traits. Ahab's tragedy originates in his very character.

(13) One more aspect of Shakespearean tragedy remains to be considered, universality.²⁰ Shakespeare's tragedies reveal much more than merely ordinary people placed in ordinary but unfortunate circumstances. Instead, we have in Shakespeare exceptional people—heroes of lofty and heroic grandeur—fixed in a sequence of events that not only affect them, but both those with whom they come into contact and the ultimate power behind the universe itself; from them we gain an impression that life in all its vastness, depth, and meaning has been presented on the stage. Many elements contribute to this impression of universality. As the tragic dignity of the hero is important to the feeling in Shakespeare, so Melville's attempt to elevate Ahab to lofty heights helps to create a feeling of universality in his novel. Shakespeare's use of the supernatural and of fate adds to the sense of the infinite, indefinable, and intangible forces of the universe, much as the subplot in Shakespeare (as in King Lear) gives the impression that the actions and events in which the chief characters are caught are not isolated. Gloucester's ill-treatment at the hands of his son Edmund tends to give more universality to Lear's suffering at the hands of Goneril and Regan. In Moby-Dick supernaturalism and fate also give the impression of forces at work beyond the control of human beings; the Town-Ho story functions somewhat like a subplot to the action on the Pequod. External symbolism, as well as symbolism concerning what the whale represents, devices for creating universality, aid in elevating the significance of the novel from that of a simple revengeful pursuit to a quest after the mystery of the universe.

In conclusion, this discussion has attempted to show the similarities between the substance of Shakespearean tragedy and Melvillian tragedy.

It demonstrates that Melville conceived much of Ahab's tragedy in Shakespearean terms; yet all things considered, to Melville alone must go the credit for his unique and special handling of conflict, and for creating within Ahab tragic traits which were implicit in the ideal character traits of his age.

III

Having considered independently the kinship Melville's novel has with the various elements found in Shakespearean tragedy, I should now like to consider specifically the tragedy of Ahab as a whole, examining at the same time its affinities with King Lear and Macbeth. This section will also involve a discussion of Olson's and Matthiessen's judgments of Moby-Dick as a Shakespearean tragedy.

A passage checked by Melville in Antony and Cleopatra suggests Ahab's problem in Moby-Dick:

Now he'll outstare the lightning. To be furious,
Is to be frightened out of fear; and in that mood
The dove will peck the estridge; and I see still,
A diminution in our captain's brain
Restores his heart: when valour preys on reason,
It eats the sword it fights with.

"In exactly what way Ahab, furious and without fear," Olson says, "retained the instrument of his reason as a lance to fight the White Whale is a central concern of Melville's in Moby-Dick. In his Captain there was a diminution in his heart."²¹ The tragedy of Ahab lies in what Melville perceived later in Ethan Brand that "the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart."²² Ahab's sensitive pride, natural brooding nature, and extreme individualism lead him to undertake his fatal quest. He becomes alienated from his fellow man and from all the human qualities that stem from the heart. As the search for Moby-Dick continues, Ahab gradually loses all contact with humanity. Individualism, an ideal of Melville's age, causes Ahab to become so estranged

from those below him and the heavens above him that he shouts, "Who's over me?" Melville realized that exaltation of intellect, reason, and individualism in a democracy could also result in anarchy and tyranny; Ahab becomes virtually a dictator. But the ascendancy of his brain over his heart does not leave him without remorse and suffering. In chapter 37 Ahab remarks that the sunset no longer soothes him:

This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise!

Ahab's dilemma is that his brain is destroying his heart; his soul has lost its consort with humanity. His tragedy results, as Matthiessen notes, from the separation of perception and feeling.²³ Melville recognized this danger when he underlined Gloucester's comment in King Lear on the kind of man

that will not see
Because he doth not feel.

When Ahab is attracted to Pip, his "humanities" are partially retrieved; but not for long, for he soon withdraws again into spiritual isolation. The Ahab-Pip relation is reminiscent of Lear's relationship to the Fool. Like Lear's Fool, Pip spoke "the same madness of vital truth" that Melville had admired in Shakespeare's "dark" characters. As the Fool serves as the foil to Lear, so Pip touches Ahab's "inmost centre." "Thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart strings," says Ahab. In King Lear, during the storm scene, Lear's speech to his Fool reveals his awakening sense of values and his emerging humanity:

My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy; how dost, my boy? art cold?
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

In a like manner, Pip brings Ahab's stifled humanity to the surface. Ahab

says:

Oh, boy, nor will I thee, unless I should thereby drag thee to worse horrors than are here. Come, then, to my cabin. Lo! ye believers in gods all goodness and in man all ill, lo you! see the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man; and man, though idiotic, and knowing not what he does, yet full of the sweet things of love and gratitude. Come! I feel prouder leading thee by thy black hand, than though I grasped an Emperor's!

Yet lurking beneath Ahab's sympathetic response to Pip is defiance.

Ahab, who cannot wholly and permanently respond to the suffering of others, remains to the end selfishly concerned with his own suffering. "I do suck most wondrous philosophies from thee!" says Ahab of Pip, but he refuses to admit his dependence: "There is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. Like cures like; and for this hunt, my malady becomes my most desired health." How incomplete is his response to his heart is illustrated in his warning to Pip: "Weep so, and I will murder thee!" Ahab's tragedy, then, is not that he does not recognize the consequences of his quest, for he does. It stems rather from his inability to give play to his natural "lovings and longings" and thereby desist from the pursuit. In this respect Ahab differs from Lear. Lear's response to the Fool's suffering opens the way to his transformation; from it he gains meaning, values, and wisdom. But Ahab is not changed by the comprehension of his wrongs. During the final catastrophe, Ahab is defiant to the end:

Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!

During the final chase Ahab suffers increasingly, but it is a selfish suffering. His fatal pride and selfishness reach the apex when, at the sight of the sinking ship, Ahab cannot feel the tremendous suffering and waste of others' lives. He can only speak of his own grief and loneliness: "Oh,

lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief."

Olson, in comparing Moby-Dick as a tragedy to King Lear, contends that through the agency of Pip, Ahab finds repose and quietness.²⁴ He further suggests that Ahab becomes less angry, strident, and defiant, although he does not go so far as to identify Ahab with humanity during the final disaster.²⁵ Ahab may thus have been humbled to the extent that he could ask God to bless the captain of the Rachel, but when Olson suggests that Ahab was humbled like Lear,²⁶ he has pressed the comparison between Lear and Moby-Dick too far. With the same breath that Ahab asks God to bless Captain Gardiner, he utters: "and may I forgive myself, but I must go." Ahab had neither the humility to ask God's forgiveness for himself, nor to help a fellow captain in the search of his son. Olson concludes by implying that the ending of Moby-Dick evokes a catharsis in the reader:

What Pip wrought in Ahab throws over the end of Moby-Dick a veil of grief, relaxes the tensions of its hate, and permits a sympathy for the stricken man that Ahab's insistent diabolism up to the storm would not have evoked. The end of this fire-forked tragedy is enriched by a pity in the very jaws of terror.²⁷

Matthiessen, on the other hand, feels it is the lack of poignancy that distinguishes Ahab from Lear. In Moby-Dick, he says,

there is a crucial divergence...from Lear, where the central movement is the purgation of the headstrong and arrogant King. In that scene on the heath where he finally becomes aware of the blindness in his former pomp, where he both sees and feels the plight of other human beings, and prays for all "poor naked wretches" whereso'er they are, he is no longer a vain monarch but a fellow man.

No such purgation transforms Ahab. He perceives in Pip's attachment the quality that might cure his own malady, but he refuses to be deflected from his pursuit by the stirring of any sympathy for others....²⁸

Not only does Ahab lack purgation, but the audience fails to experience catharsis, Matthiessen feels. He concludes that Ahab's tragedy

admits no adequate moral recognition. The catharsis is, therefore, partially frustrated, since we cannot respond, as we can in Lear, to

Ahab's deliverance from the evil forces in which he has been immersed.... When talking with Pip and Starbuck, he perceives the human consequences of his action. He is momentarily touched, but he is not moved from his insistence that his course is necessary. In his death therefore... colossal pride meets its rightful end, and there can be no unmixed pity for him as a human being.²⁹

Is Matthiessen, or Olson, right? Perhaps the final answer will depend on one's own reaction to the novel. The problem of judging Moby-Dick as a tragedy is difficult; although both Matthiessen and Olson judge the novel by the same criteria (that is, according to the degree to which it conforms to the theory of catharsis and to King Lear), they still arrive at different conclusions. Furthermore, even their basis, that is, their starting point, is open to question. Nicoll and Lucas, for example, both question the necessity of catharsis or purgation in tragedy, Nicoll also listing pity as of minor importance.³⁰ I should agree with Matthiessen's judgment that Melville "had composed a tragedy incomplete by Shakespearean standards,"³¹ but with this important qualification. Melville's tragedy is incomplete according to Shakespearean standards as exemplified in King Lear, but not necessarily as indicated in Macbeth. In fact, Ahab's tragedy appears to have much in common with Macbeth's. Both tragedies result from the inability of their heroes to deliver themselves from the forces of evil in which they are immersed.³² Both suffer from the pangs of conscience, but both remain defiant and proud to the end. But the comparison, as in Lear, must not be pressed too far. The aim of each man's ambition differs, and we might conclude that Ahab's attempt to penetrate the irrational nature of life is more heroic than Macbeth's quest for a kingdom.

In summary, the important thing to be gained from a discussion of the tragedy of Ahab is not that it is complete or incomplete by Shakespearean standards, but rather that Melville in writing Ahab's tragedy in Moby-Dick incorporated many ideas from Lear and Macbeth and the other plays. Moreover,

we must not forget that Melville gave his tragedy of Ahab "a correspondent coloring." After Melville had examined his age, given over as it was to a profound faith in the individual, reason, and progress, he found danger lurking within its beliefs. Exaltation of individualism, reason, and progress, Melville proclaimed, could lead to hatred, independence at the expense of brotherhood, isolation, fatal pride, separation of heart and intellect, loss of humanity, impossible goals, and ultimate annihilation.

IV

The final portion of this chapter will contrast and compare Melville's tragic vision with Shakespeare's. I believe that in Shakespeare's tragic world Melville found his own preoccupations objectified. Shakespeare confirmed his vision, and gave him the key he needed for the expression of it; with it Melville wrote what perhaps is the greatest tragedy of his times.

As a norm for comparing Shakespeare's tragic view with Melville's, I shall use Bradley's analysis.³³ Bradley explains that the central impression in Shakespeare, one closely related to the greatness of the tragic hero, is the "impression of waste." The most important aspect of this waste is that it involves the tragic destruction of good. If Shakespeare's concept of the tragic world merely postulated an order which destroys evil, we should have no tragedy; the tragedy is, Bradley explains, that this involves the waste of good.³⁴

Observing that the Shakespearean hero, however great he may be, still through a combination of circumstance and characteristic action ultimately destroys himself, Bradley concludes, then, that the tragic hero must not be the ultimate power in Shakespeare's tragic world. What, then, is this power? In answering this question, Bradley attempts to find a theory which will also explain why good is wasted. The views that the ultimate power is fate and that it is a moral order, which justly punishes evil and rewards

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good, Bradley rejects, believing the former view allows no room for the fact that the hero, through actions issuing from character, brings about much of his own downfall, and believing the latter, though accounting for the destruction of evil, does not account for the tragic waste of good.³⁵

Next, Bradley presents his own theory of Shakespeare's tragic concept of existence. He suggests that Shakespeare portrays an universe governed by a kind of "moral" order, not of justice and merit, but simply of good and evil. This order or power, as pictured by Shakespeare, is "akin to good and alien from evil"; it, in its demand for perfection and good, relentlessly and violently destroys imperfection and evil.³⁶ However, this evil against which the moral order struggles is not outside the order but within it; thus, Bradley asserts, this power, in spite of its violent reaction toward evil, must paradoxically produce that evil.³⁷ Bradley concludes:

Thus we are left at last with an idea showing two sides or aspects which we can neither separate nor reconcile. The whole or order against which the individual part shows itself powerless seems to be animated by a passion for perfection: we cannot otherwise explain its behavior towards evil. Yet it appears to engender this evil within itself, and in its effort to overcome and expel it it is agonised with pain, and driven to mutilate its own substance and to lose not only evil but priceless good....We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact...of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact or appearance is tragedy.³⁸

Whether we agree or not with Bradley's theory of Shakespeare's concept of tragedy, we must admit that he has hit upon what was probably one of Shakespeare's major concerns during his tragic period--his concern with the nature of good and evil, its sources and ambiguity. That Shakespeare consciously envisaged such a moral order as Bradley describes is perhaps impossible to determine, but we can be reasonably sure that Shakespeare conceived the major tragic fact of life as he saw it as the inexplicable mystery of good and evil. Yet Shakespeare envisaged life as meaningful and worthwhile also. Tragedy which postulates a purely evil order is not

tragedy in the Shakespearean sense, for Shakespearean tragedy also maintains that good is a positive force in the universe. Because Shakespeare recognized this fundamental dualism, the presence of good and evil principles in the universe, though irrationally and ambiguously interrelated, he maintained a kind of equilibrium. When he wrote in Lear that "Ripeness is all," he recognized the necessity of such a balance. To become completely absorbed in the illusive and ambiguous nature of evil, that is, to abandon a balanced view of life, Shakespeare perceived at this time, might result both in a loss of artistic control and in mental frustration.³⁹ Therefore, although Shakespeare, to use Melville's words, probed "at the very axis of reality," he stopped short of any solution to the mysteries involved in his tragedies. He accepted as the cardinal fact of life its incongruity and illusion but chose not to solve what lay beyond human ken.

In examining Melville's tragic view of the world, we discover he, too, was concerned with the ambiguity and sources of good and evil. But we must not make the error of concluding that Melville acquired his philosophy solely or wholly from Shakespeare. The great dramatist did not give Melville the bases of his tragic vision of life; instead Melville found in Shakespeare an aid to the crystallization of his own inner promptings.⁴⁰ Melville's letters to Duyckinck and his review of Hawthorne's *Mosses* show that it was the "blackness" and the truth-telling of Shakespeare that attracted him, those "snatches" of "things...so terrifically true" that Melville felt "in this world of lies" Shakespeare had sought truth at the very foundations of existence.

In addition to the comments about Shakespeare in the letters and review, Melville's annotations and markings in his edition of Shakespeare provide hints of those ideas that appealed to Melville most.⁴¹ Melville was struck by the disillusion in the world, as expressed by Shakespeare in the Tempest,

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when Miranda exclaims in act V, scene i:

O! wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!

Melville scored this passage and boxed Prospero's reply, "'Tis new to thee," adding in the margin: "Consider the character of the persons concerning whom Miranda says this—then Prospero's quiet words in comment—how terrible! In 'Timon' itself there is nothing like it." The inseparableness of good and evil and the discrepancy between appearance and reality Melville found in Shakespeare at every turn. He found it in Hamlet, marking the passage in which Hamlet tells Rosencrantz that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," and commenting: "Here is forcibly shown the great Montaignism of Hamlet." Melville noted it in Othello's disillusion:

By the world,
I think my wife be honest and think she is not,
I think that thou art just and think thou art not,
I'll have some proof.

Melville found the strange mixture of good and evil in Shakespeare's characters both a shocking and truthful revelation. He marked the Duke's observation in Measure for Measure:

O, what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side!

He knew that evil often put on the appearance of good; thus he underlined Cordelia's statement in King Lear, "Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides." He became deeply absorbed with the nature of evil and its twisted, ironical ambiguity in King Lear, scoring Edmund's courageous reply to Albany's challenge:

...what in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:
Call by thy trumpets: he that dares approach,
On him, on you, who not? I will maintain
My truth and honour firmly.

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Melville no doubt saw the irony of the depraved Edmund maintaining his truth and honor so firmly, but what impressed him most was that such a man should have the valor lacking so often in the weak goodness of an Albany or a Starbuck. "The infernal nature," commented Melville, "has a valor often denied to innocence." He perceived the irony of beloved evil when he heavily checked Edmund's dying words: "Yet Edmund was belov'd!" That the selfish Edmund could find consolation in the love of two such evil women as Goneril and Regan was to Melville a strange mixture of good and evil. A similar reaction to the curious combination of good and evil caused Melville to place a question mark beside Edmund's promise:

...some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature.

When Melville read the horror-filled scene of Gloucester's blinding, he perceived the double meaning of Shakespeare's words. On the one hand, he saw the ruthlessness of evil exhibited, but he also discerned the deeper significance that by losing his eyesight, Gloucester gained insight into the realities about him. His perception of Shakespeare's insight led him to exclaim "Terrific!" When Regan calls Gloucester, "Ingrateful fox!" Melville once again was perplexed at Shakespeare's tragic irony and commented: "Here's a touch Shakespearean--Regan talks of ingratitude!"

Melville found further "contraries" in the disillusionment of friendship. In King Henry VIII Melville doubled-scored Buckingham's speech:

...This from a dying man receive as certain:
Where you are liberal of your loves and counsels
Be sure you be not loose; for those you make friends
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
Like water from ye, never found again
But where they mean to sink ye.

The theme of insincere friendship confronted Melville everywhere in Shakespeare. He could find it in King Lear in the "madness of vital truth"

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of the Fool's song:

Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind;
But fathers that bear bags
Shall see their children kind.
Fortune, that arrant whore,
Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

Or he could find it in Hamlet in the lines of the Player King:

For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.

Melville found it to be the penetrating theme of Timon. He summarized his feeling for the play by underlining in it the Stranger's intuitive perception of the hypocrisy of Timon's friends: "Why, this is the world's soul."

Melville found in Coriolanus an expression of his ideal friendship. In that play he heavily marked the long passage in which Coriolanus and Aufidius meet. Aufidius speaks passionately:

...that I see thee here
Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
Bestride my threshold.

Melville in Moby-Dick portrayed a friendship as sincere as this between Ishmael and Queequeg.

These prolific marginal notes substantiate Melville's comments in his letters and the Hawthorne review. Melville was most struck by the intuitive truths Shakespeare uttered through the mouths of his "dark" characters, and through those of his good characters at their moments of suffering. What fascinated Melville most were the revelations concerning the inexplicable union and disunion of good and evil; it was the darkness of Shakespeare that appealed to Melville. In King Lear Melville was more concerned with the depravity of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund than with the reawakening of values in Lear, or the principles of Kent, Edgar, or Cordelia.

Perhaps part of the reason for Melville's preoccupation with evil and

the ambiguities lies in his reaction against transcendentalism. Melville had attended a lecture by Emerson in early February, 1849, a few days before he began reading Shakespeare in earnest.⁴² On March 3 he wrote Duyckinck: "I was very disappointed in Mr Emerson. I had heard of him as full of transcendentalism, myths & oracular gibberish." Melville was not impressed with the idealism of "this Plato who talks thro' his nose."⁴³ His annotated copy of Emerson's Essays shows that Melville reacted negatively to the bland transcendental optimism that postulated evil as merely the absence of good. Emerson declared in The Conduct of Life: "The first lesson of history is the good of evil." Melville could only retort: "He still bethinks himself of his optimism—he must make that good somehow against the eternal hell itself."⁴⁴ Although Melville's reaction to Emerson and transcendentalism was not entirely negative, his distrust in Emerson's optimism led him to criticize transcendentalism in Moby-Dick, especially in "The Mast-head," for its lack of contact with reality.

Are we to conclude that Melville's preoccupation with evil left no room for a consideration of good? Melville, like Hawthorne, believed that the source of evil came often from the cultivation of the ego and intellect at the expense of the heart. Herein, felt Melville, lay the great danger of transcendentalism, which, in emphasizing man's reason and self-reliance, often stifled the heart. Melville's reaction to Shakespeare, moody and grim as it was, nevertheless was not wholly so; had it been he could not have responded as he did to the friendship of Aufidius and Coriolanus, or to the humanity and insight Gloucester and Lear found in the midst of their suffering. His reading of Shakespeare likewise opened the way for Melville's response to Hawthorne's Mosses. Though, once again, he found imaged in Hawthorne his own predisposition to blackness, he also saw Hawthorne's brighter side. He saw the importance of the heart to the intellect when

he described Hawthorne in the essay on the Mosses as a man who had shed (using Hawthorne's own words) "such a light, as never illuminates the earth save when a great heart burns as the household fire of a grand intellect."⁴⁵

Later Melville, in a letter to Hawthorne in late spring, 1851, wrote:

By the way, in the last "Dollar Magazine" I read "The Unpardonable Sin." He was a sad fellow, that Ethan Brand....It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart....I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with the head!⁴⁶

Melville, then, perceived the necessity of the heart and intellect working together, of brotherhood and friendship, of humanity in people. Exaltation of intellect leads to pride and vanity, which in turn lead to alienation from and the loss of feeling for mankind. These beliefs Melville found restated in Shakespeare and Hawthorne, as he found objectified in them the positive existence of evil. Thus far Melville could respond to Shakespeare's balanced view of good and evil. The fundamental dualism of evil and good in life Melville accepted; because he accepted both this dualism and the necessity of humane brotherhood, he achieved in Moby-Dick what I should call, for want of a better term, a "balance." Here he pitched his tragedy of Ahab, a tragedy resulting from the separation of intellect from heart, perception from feeling, soul from humanity.

Yet as Melville responded so intensely to the incongruity of good and evil in Shakespeare, he paradoxically seems to have also identified himself with Ahab's attempt to unmask the deep, vast mystery of this incongruity. He found this mystery expressed in Shakespeare in such "dark" characters as Iago and Timon; he found it in the passages he marked concerning the faithlessness of friends; he found it in the paradoxical good of such depraved people as Edmund; he found it in the startling fact that Edgar could gain insight only through losing his eyesight. As Melville explored the many manifestations of this mystery, he was absorbed not only with the impossibility

of separating good and evil, but also with the vastness and illusiveness of man's soul and of God. He had remarked in Mardi that "God is past finding out, and mysteries ever open into mysteries beyond." He had learned also in his youth that though life among the Typees appeared ideal and Fayaway seemed a symbol of beauty and goodness, beneath the surface of Polynesian life there lurked the terrible reality of cannibalism and vulturism—and in Moby-Dick he declared universal vulturism to be one of the fundamental principles of life. In his determination to probe systematically into these unanswered problems, in spite of the inner promptings that told him they were "past finding out," Melville parted company with Shakespeare. In Moby-Dick he attempted to unmask his times—to unveil an age that proclaimed the importance of the individual, his unlimited potential, and the mission of America. He sought that which lay beyond the world of appearances.

We have, consequently, a paradox in Melville's thought which perhaps will remain forever unresolved. On the one hand is the Melville who, like Shakespeare, recognized the dualism of life; on the other hand is the Melville who, like Shakespeare, was appalled at the "contraries" implicit in this dualism. But Melville's response to this last aspect of the tragic world was much more pervasive than Shakespeare's; in fact, Melville criticized Shakespeare in the Hawthorne essay for having probed the incongruity of existence only "covertly and by snatches." Melville was not satisfied with random probings. He could not accept illusion itself as a fact of reality. As a result, Melville had to strike through illusion in an attempt to find what lay beyond.

This contradiction in Melville's view of the tragic world found its way into Moby-Dick. But it must not be thought that Melville can be placed so easily into even this somewhat inconsistent pattern, for Melville's statement that "Ahab's larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted" is

not untrue of its author either. But, at the danger of over-simplification, there are two passages among the many in Moby-Dick, expressing land as a symbol of security and the sea as its opposite, which illustrate the paradox suggested above. The first is in "The Lee Shore":

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land!

The second passage, in chapter 58, appears to contradict the first:

Consider...the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began. Consider all this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!

To say which of these ideas represent Melville's true feelings is difficult, perhaps impossible. In Moby-Dick these two viewpoints are essentially exemplified in two worlds: the Ishmael world and the Ahab world. In the Ishmael world Melville seems to express the necessity of humanity, emphasizing, for example, the necessity of brotherhood and interdependence in the friendship between Queequeg and Ishmael. Through this friendship, the isolated and wandering Ishmael gains humanity. In chapter 72, "The Monkey-Rope," the rope between Queequeg and Ishmael becomes a symbol of human brotherhood and the fact of mutual dependence of all mankind. In "A Squeeze of the Hand" Ishmael proclaims the need of brotherhood and of the proper equilibrium between the heart and the head:

Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country, now that I have perceived this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally.

However, Ishmael too felt "the irresistible arm drag" him into Ahab's mad drive after the "gliding demon of the seas of life." Only Ishmael's contact with humanity saved him in the end.

The Ahab world would seem to illustrate the disastrous results of the lack of humanity. Ahab's inability to allow the free play of his feelings accounts largely for his tragedy. The potential good in Ahab is there, but it is never realized. His morbidity, dominant will, and pride isolate him from all human ties and blind him to the fact that his quest may not only destroy himself, but the Pequod-world besides. Even after he finally recognizes these dangers, he relentlessly drives himself and his crew to catastrophe. Intellect triumphs over heart, and like Ethan Brand, Ahab commits the unpardonable sin. "Cultivation of the brain eats out the heart" of Ahab until "his last, cindered apple" of humanity falls to the soil. The novel ends in a wholesale annihilation of all save Ishmael, a waste reminiscent of Shakespeare. Good and bad alike are destroyed. It is from this viewpoint that Melville, in identifying himself with the world of Ishmael, in creating the equilibrium of intellect and heart in Ishmael, established a balance between the contending forces of good and evil in the novel. In the Ahab world Melville revealed evil at work in its many manifestations—the vulturism of Stubb and Flask, the sadism of Flask, the pride, hatred, and defiance of God in Ahab, and the cowardice of Starbuck. In Ishmael Melville revealed the forces of good, love, brotherhood, and humanity. Ishmael summarizes the ideal "middle of the road" attitude when he says,

And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny; but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye.

Such an identification with Ishmael's world of men may have led Melville to remark in a letter to Hawthorne: "I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb."⁴⁷ Matthiessen suggests the significance of this statement when he says:

He thus instinctively transferred the effect of tragedy from the audience to make it apply to the author as well....when the book was done, when he had written his vision of Ahab's madness out of his system, he could feel himself purged....He had experienced the meaning of catharsis, even though his protagonist had not.⁴⁸

Still this does not represent all of Melville's feelings. Although Melville may have felt himself purged upon completing the novel, there are hints that he also identified himself with Bulkington's heroic striving for truth in the vast and terrible sea of life, believing that this was man's courageous goal in life. It is hard to believe that Melville did not identify himself at least partially with Ahab's pursuit of the unknowable mysteries. It is equally true perhaps that Ahab echoed Melville's own protest when he said, "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate." In considering the white whale as a symbol, Melville's absorption with the shifting values of good and evil becomes clear. In "The Whiteness of the Whale," the ambiguous symbolism of Moby-Dick—the duality in the symbolism of whiteness—is treated in detail. Although whiteness suggests the almost God-like attributes of beauty, joy, gladness, innocence, justice, purity, and power, Melville observes that

there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of his hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood. This elusive quality it is, which causes the thought of whiteness, when divorced from more kindly associations, and coupled with any object terrible in itself, to heighten that terror to the furthest bounds.

If we can judge from Pierre,⁴⁹ Melville's purgation of doubt, gained from writing Moby-Dick, was temporary, for in that novel (which is significantly subtitled, "The Ambiguities") Melville, with a despair and intensity

of Hamlet, searched again into the incongruities of life and destroyed Pierre, undone by goodness, in a catastrophe which annihilated everything, good and evil alike. Melville, injecting himself into Pierre's tragedy to a degree beyond which even Shakespeare did not go in Timon, found himself in a state of mental and physical exhaustion at the completion of Pierre. Yet even then Melville did not surrender, and in The Confidence Man⁵⁰ he explored again the masquerade of life wherein man's goodness consistently makes him a dupe.

It was not until late in life, in Billy Budd, that Melville recognized and accepted Shakespeare's dictum that "Ripeness is all," being content to take the mystery of life as the paramount fact. He no longer endeavored to solve Hamlet's problem of the difference between appearance and reality. He could still write of such contradictions as the inability of a Billy Budd, all goodness and innocence, to cope with the primal depravity of a Claggart or with a man-of-war society; but he wrote now with an objectivity and control that was impossible for him in Pierre. Matthiessen makes this point when he says that Captain Vere

in his dying hours was heard to murmur the words, "Billy Budd," but not in "accents of remorse." Melville could now face incongruity; he could accept the existence of both good and evil with a calm impossible to him in Moby-Dick.⁵¹

Melville accepted illusion as fundamental reality, as Shakespeare did in

The Tempest:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

V

"The Drama's Done," Ishmael says in the "Epilogue," and in "The Try-Works" he says, "It is an argument for the pit." These words suggest the impact which "Master William Shakspeare" made upon Melville's tragic vision and art in revising Moby-Dick—a novel containing, among other things, Ahab, "a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies," and a poetic prose style distinguished by "a bold and nervous lofty language." "Without the precipitant of Shakespeare," Matthiessen asserts, "Moby-Dick might have been a superior White-Jacket. With it, Melville entered into another realm, of different properties and proportions."⁵² Melville's verse tribute to Shakespeare, written in 1865, is a testimony to his perception that he had intuitively touched the core of the great English dramatist and had found gold:

No utter surprise can come to him
 Who reaches Shakspeare's core;
 That which we seek and shun is there—
 Man's final lore.⁵³

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1. A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1922), p. 330.
2. For discussions of the many and conflicting theories on the function, purpose, or desired effects of tragedy, see Allardyce Nicoll, The Theory of Drama (New York, n.d.), pp. 119-137, and F. L. Lucas, Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's "Poetics" (New York, 1928), pp. 23-60. Nicoll discusses the theories of Aristotle, F. L. Lucas, Schopenhauer, Schlegel, Fontenelle, Shelley, and A. C. Bradley, in addition to his own views. His book also contains a selective bibliography. Lucas considers the theories of Aristotle in detail, also evaluating the theories of Rousseau, Hume, Abbe Dubos, Fontenelle, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and I. A. Richards.
3. Herman Melville: Representative Selections, ed. Willard Thorp (New York, 1938), p. 336—hereafter cited as Thorp. Thorp notes that it was not Chettle who thus criticized Shakespeare, but Robert Greene.
4. Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (n.p., 1850), p. 161.
5. F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London, 1941), p. 415. N. Bryllion Fagin, in "Herman Melville and the Interior Monologue," AL, VI (1935), 433-434, argues that Melville's soliloquies not only show a Shakespearean influence, but also anticipate the "interior monologue" as used by James Joyce and his disciples.
6. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), pp. 68-69.
7. Incidentally, as mentioned in chapter 4, Cassius's defiance of lightning may have suggested to Melville Ahab's similar defiance in "The Candles."
8. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), p. 338.
9. Olson, p. 68.
10. Olson, p. 67; Matthiessen, pp. 417-421.
11. Olson, p. 67; Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel With God (Princeton, 1952), p. 229.
12. Arvin, p. 161.
13. Arvin, p. 161.
14. Bradley, p. 248.
15. Bradley, pp. 5-23. Hereafter in this section I shall give notations of direct quotations of Bradley only.
16. Thorp, p. 372.
17. In addition to this conflict, there is another internal conflict within Ahab arising from the opposition his sense of humanity presents against his determination to bring vengeance upon the white whale. This conflict will be considered later in connection with the Ahab-Pip relation. Starbuck also has an internal conflict between his belief that Ahab's quest is dangerous and must be stopped and his cowardice.
18. Bradley, p. 20.
19. Leon Howard, in "Melville's Struggle with the Angel," MLQ, I (1940), 202; and in Herman Melville (Berkeley, 1951), p. 165, notes that this passage bears a striking resemblance to Coleridge's dictum, in his lecture on Hamlet, that "one of Shakespeare's modes for creating characters is to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to place himself...thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances" (Howard's italics). Howard suggests that Melville may have received the idea for a "morbid" Ahab from Coleridge's lecture. He says (p. 202), "It may be that when Melville wrote his friend a letter of enthusiastic comment on 'the divine William,' Duyckinck directed his attention to Coleridge's interpretations of Shakespeare's art in his Literary Remains." Howard adds (p. 202, n.), however, that "mention of the Literary Remains does not appear in the incomplete record of his [Melville's] readings, and his acquaintance with the volume can be asserted only on the grounds of probability and on the

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evidence of parallels between the lecture on Hamlet and the language of Moby-Dick."

20. I have received hints for the discussion of universality from Nicoll, pp. 103-119.

21. Olson, p. 72.

22. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 109.

23. Matthiessen, p. 448.

24. Olson, pp. 59-63.

25. Olson, pp. 60, 62.

26. Olson, p. 51.

27. Olson, pp. 62-63. Olson seems to imply that Melville's novel, therefore, is complete according to Shakespearean standards. However, I cannot see a relaxation of Ahab's selfishness or hate in the end. His last speech in the novel shows him selfish and hateful to the finish.

28. Matthiessen, p. 451. William Ellery Sedgwick, in Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (Cambridge, Mass., 1944), pp. 133-134, makes a similar judgment. He says, "A character that in many respects can stand comparison to King Lear, Ahab is not poignant like King Lear....His tragedy inspires terror as does no work in the language outside Shakespeare. But it fails to inspire pity."

29. Matthiessen, p. 456.

30. Nicoll, pp. 119-123; Lucas, pp. 23-28. In American Renaissance, pp. 179-180, 350, Matthiessen presents his theory of Tragedy. The most interesting aspect of his theory is his transference of the effect of Aristotle's catharsis from the audience to the protagonist of the play. Tragedy, says Matthiessen, must contain a moral recognition scene wherein the hero becomes "aware of the inexorable course of action and his implication in it" (p. 350). Moreover, for the recognition scene to be adequate there must be a purgation within the hero which transfigures him and moves him towards regeneration. "What I mean by purgatorial movement," Matthiessen stresses, "can be observed most fully in Lear's purification through suffering" (p. 350). Although he admits that he "would not presume that such a formula would fit all tragedies," he nevertheless uses it to judge Ahab's tragedy. He further implies during his judgment of Moby-Dick as a tragedy that this formula is Shakespearean (p. 458). I feel this requirement—that the hero must experience a catharsis or purification—is unwarranted, not because Ahab's tragedy does not fit it, but because even some of Shakespeare's plays do not have a purification or regeneration of the hero. Brutus is not purified. In fact his nobility, integrity, honesty, and courage are in a sense "pure" qualities to begin with. Nor is Macbeth purified or purged; he does not alter his ways or action even though he recognizes what he has done. Macbeth is in reality a tragedy depicting the degeneration of a hero. Matthiessen seems to interpret catharsis as meaning purification. For the theory that catharsis does not mean purification, see Lucas, pp. 25-27; Nicoll, pp. 122-123.

31. Matthiessen, p. 458.

32. This fact is more important than it may seem. If Ahab had given himself over completely to humanity and altered his course of action, there would have been no catastrophe in Moby-Dick, especially in light of the passive role of Moby-Dick, and therefore no tragedy, even in the barest sense of the word. From this viewpoint, then, it may be unjust to criticize Melville for not making his novel a "comedy."

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33. During the first part of my discussion of Shakespeare's tragic vision, I have made extensive use of Bradley, pp. 23-39.

34. Bradley, p. 23, notes that "the pity and fear which are stirred by the tragic story seem to unite with, and even to merge in, a profound sense of sadness and mystery, which is due to this impression of waste." Still the greatness of the hero, the feeling that here is someone who has found life worthwhile, Bradley explains, "makes us realise so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity." Bradley apparently would not agree with Schopenhauer that the main impression of tragedy is the "vanity of vanities." (Lucas, pp. 45-48, and Nicoll, pp. 133-134, give summaries of Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy.)

35. For Bradley's discussion of fate as the guiding force in the universe, see pp. 26-31. For his discussion of a just and benevolent moral order as the power, see pp. 26, 31-33. Bradley, p. 26, explains: "These accounts isolate and exaggerate single aspects...either the close and unbroken connection of character, will, deed and catastrophe, which, taken alone, shows the individual simply as sinning against, or failing to conform to, the moral order and drawing his just doom on his own head; or else that pressure of outward forces, that sway of accident, and those blind and agonised struggles, which, taken alone, show him as the mere victim of some power which cares neither for his sins nor for his pain. Such views contradict one another, and no third view can unite them; but...they...are both present in the fact, and a view which would be true to the fact and to the whole of our imaginative experience must in some way combine these aspects." Bradley attempts to combine them by suggesting that Shakespeare presents an universe controlled by a power which, though producing both good and evil, is violently opposed to evil. Since the power without exception destroys the evil it has produced, it is in a sense as ruthless as fate. Because the hero with his tragic flaw opposes the principle of good in the "ultimate power," he is therefore justly destroyed. Yet the profound mystery of this order, Bradley observes, is that it produces the evil it must destroy and that in the process of annihilating its evil, it mutilates also much of its good.

36. Bradley, p. 33, explains that what he means by a "moral" order is "that it does not show itself indifferent to good and evil, or equally favourable or unfavourable to both, but shows itself akin to good and alien from evil." The main source of suffering and death in Shakespeare's tragedies, Bradley notes, is never good; it is always evil. This evil originates from characters around the hero—as in Othello, King Lear, and Hamlet—or from within the hero—as in Macbeth. Even in the relatively innocent hero, his imperfection or defect, though not evil in itself, often results in evil or harmful deeds which make important contributions to the conflict and catastrophe. Because this evil, destructive and wasteful, tends to annihilate not only good, but itself as well, the inference is, Bradley suggests, that the "moral" order is alien to evil and tends to relentlessly destroy it.

37. Bradley, pp. 36-37, observes that "the evil against which it [the moral order] asserts itself, and the persons whom this evil inhabits, are not really something outside the order, so that they can attack it or fail to conform to it; they are within it and a part of it. It itself produces them,—produces Iago as well as Desdemona, Iago's cruelty as well as Iago's courage. It is not poisoned, it poisons itself. Doubtless it shows by its violent reaction that the poison is poison, and that its health lies in

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good. But one significant fact cannot remove another, and the spectacle we witness scarcely warrants the assertion that the order is responsible for the good in Desdemona, but Iago for the evil in Iago."

38. Bradley, pp. 37-39. Bradley, p. 38, says: "That this idea, though very different from the idea of a blank fate, is no solution of the riddle of life is obvious; but why should we expect it to be such a solution? Shakespeare was not attempting to justify the ways of God to man, or to show the universe as a Divine Comedy. He was writing tragedy, and tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery."

39. It is difficult to ascertain the degree to which Shakespeare injected his personal beliefs and feelings into his plays, yet the problem has a direct bearing upon his artistic control. At times, he probably pessimistically felt the powers of evil and the helplessness of man overwhelming; but it is unlikely that he reached a conviction of complete pessimism, for there is every indication in his plays that he conceived man to be a noble, heroic creature who could find values in life. If not, we should have no Lear. Undoubtedly during the period of the tragedies, Shakespeare was not a happy man; he probably felt contempt, bitterness, melancholy, and despair. Nevertheless his personal broodings did not, except in Timon, become so intense that he lost the self-control or objectivity of an artist.

40. See chapter 2 for discussion of this point.

41. I am particularly indebted to Matthiessen, Olson, and Leyda for these marked and annotated passages as well as for aids in interpreting the significance of them.

42. Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York, 1951), I, 287.

43. Thorp, pp. 371-372.

44. Matthiessen, p. 185.

45. Thorp, p. 344.

46. Metcalf, p. 109.

47. Metcalf, p. 129. Olson, pp. 52-58, discusses the significance of the following notes which Melville jotted down on the back fly-leaf of the last volume of his Shakespeare edition:

Ego non baptizo te in nomine Patris et
Filii et Spiritus Sancti—sed in nomine
Diaboli.—Madness is undefinable—
It & right reason extremes of one,
—not the (black art) Goetic but Theurgic magic—
seeks converse with the Intelligence, Power, the
Angel.

It is Olson's contention that these notes are rough notes for Moby-Dick. Ideas present in these jottings are discernable in Moby-Dick, but that they represent the key to the theme of Ahab's tragedy seems to be an over-simplification. The tragedy of Ahab is too complex to be reduced to such a concise pattern. However, when Melville spoke of having written a wicked book, and when he wrote Hawthorne, "This is the book's motto (the secret one), Ego non baptizo te in nomine—but make out the rest for yourself" (Metcalf, p. 111), he may have at least temporarily felt that these notes represented an important aspect of his novel. For another discussion of these notes, see Thompson, pp. 137-138, 436. For refutations of Olson's theory see Matthiessen, pp. 457-458, n. 6, and Moby-Dick or, The Whale, eds. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York, 1952), pp. 643-644.

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48. Matthiessen, pp. 457-458.

49. Several critics have noted the influence of Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet upon Pierre: Matthiessen, pp. 467-487 passim (the influence of Hamlet); Pierre or, The Ambiguities, ed. Henry A Murray (New York, 1949), "Introduction," passim (the influence of Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet); E. Yaggy, "Shakespeare and Melville's Pierre," BPLQ, VI (1941), 43-51 (which argues that the influence of Romeo and Juliet is more significant than Hamlet); Sedgwick, pp. 163-172 passim (the influence of Hamlet).

50. The Confidence Man, incidently, provides another piece of evidence that Melville was primarily attracted to the mystery and ambiguity of Shakespeare's tragedies. Frank Goodman observes: "This Shakespeare is a queer man. At times irresponsible, he does not always seem reliable. There appears to be a certain—what shall I call it?—hidden sun, say, about him, at once enlightening and mystifying." In another passage Melville discusses what is meant by an "original" character in literature, holding that only three—Milton's Satan, Don Quixote, and Hamlet—are really true original characters. The original character, Melville observes, is "like a revolving Drummond light, raying away from itself all round it—everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet)." He further remarks that "for much the same reason that there is but one planet to one orbit, so can there be but one such original character to one work of invention." These comments not only suggest Melville's conception of Ahab, but also Shakespeare's influence on that conception. The influence of Shakespeare on The Confidence Man has been noted by Elizabeth S. Foster, in The Confidence Man: His Masquerade (New York, 1954), pp. xv-xvi. Howard, pp. 227, 230-231, 277, discusses Shakespeare's influence upon The Confidence Man. Arthur L. Vogelback, in "Shakespeare and Melville's Benito Cereno," MLN, LXVII (1952), 113-116, compares Babo, the Negro mutineer, with Shakespeare's Iago.

51. Matthiessen, p. 512.

52. Matthiessen, p. 416.

53. Leyda, II, 674.

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