A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO

MOBY-DICK

by

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ABSTRACT

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On the surface, Herman Melville seems less complicated than the other dark Romantics. He was neither as isolated as Edgar Allen Poe, nor as haunted by guilt as Nathaniel Hawthorne. He, when compared to them, seems the extrovert, the man who went to sea, the man who decided to educate himself at twenty-five years of age and who actually did. He was the pioneer, discovering and cultivating a physical world. But if one explores past the surface, past the sailor, past the man who lived among the cannibals, one finds parts of him as wild as anything in Poe, as haunted as anything in Hawthorne. Parts of Melville cry out into the night; parts feel enveloped in whale-line.

The Melville I have discovered is a man who believed in disintegration and who was aware of this belief even in the midst of this desperate personal need for lasting absolutes. He allowed his reader, one might even say that Melville's style demanded that his reader, enter

his struggle, personalize it, making the struggle his own. He was a man who created linearly and yet believed the world was too complex for organization; a man preoccupied with the truth and yet one who knew in his blood that all earthly truths were at best partial, paltry. The best he hoped for was to end where he began . . .and to perhaps know the place for the first time.

In this dissertation I have attempted to go beyond the Melville who protected himself with aloofness and false bravado and to find, briefly, the man who believed in diving and who therefore dived and like the Catskill eagle miraculously soared again. This dissertation is a study of the major personal relationships in Herman Melville's life and an exploration of how they translated themselves into the metaphors and characters of Moby-Dick. It contains three major sections.

In the first, I explore the major relationships in Melville's life, up until and including those he was involved in when creating Moby-Dick. I demonstrate the existence of Melville's fear of emotional vulnerability and how, when Melville's desire to have a fully-reciprocal relationship finally surpassed his fear of it, his inability to trust doomed the relationship: Melville's absolute need to be accepted by the person he chose for this role, Nathaniel Hawthorne, blinded him to the part of Hawthorne that was a frightened, detached man.

In the second section I demonstrate how Melville avoided this strain of absolutism when creating the imagery of Moby-Dick. I focus my attention on Melville's complex use of the line and circle. In developing both of these patterns, Melville allows them healing and destructive qualities. He also allows them to melt into one another: the line becomes the circle, the snake turning on its own tail, and the circle divides to once again become the line, always maintaining its ability to reconnect.

In the third section of my study I demonstrate that Melville also avoided this tendency toward reductionism in creating the characters of Moby-Dick. Ahab, Starbuck, and Ishmael all share a strong need for control, but Melville allows none of their solutions to function successfully. Ahab's life ends in self-destruction, as does Starbuck's; neither activity nor passivity consistently maintains life. Ishmael is saved, not by the wisdom of rejecting Ahab's vision of the world, but by serendipity. He has no more direct control than do the other members of the Pequod.

My dissertation demonstrates that while Melville failed to control his need for absolute solutions in his personal life, he avoided this need in his creation of Moby-Dick, successfully writing a novel that explored rather than reduced his need for order.

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SECTION I

HERMAN MELVILLE'S RELATIONSHIPS: 1819-1851

Edwin Haviland Miller, Herman Melville's latest and most psychologically astute biographer, sees Melville's difficulty with relationships as a central problem in his life. He theorizes that the relationship Melville developed in 1850 with Nathaniel Hawthorne served as a culminating link in a series of relationships which he traces back to Melville's early life. Miller focuses on Melville's continual search for the ideal father:

> Without any awareness on his part, he was the culminating link in a series of events and relationships which can be traced almost to the beginning of Melville's life. That Hawthorne was in Melville's eyes an ideal father was the most significant link. . . .[1]

Although the general direction of Miller's statement is correct, that Hawthorne was a culminating link in a series of relationships which can be traced to Melville's early life, Melville, in his relationship with Hawthorne, was attempting to break the pattern of inequality in his relationships: he did not need Hawthorne to parent him, but to confirm him as only an equal can. Melville was already receiving the parenting he missed in childhood

from his wife, Elizabeth Knapp, and his friend, the editor of New York's Literary World, Evert Duyckinck. Nathaniel Hawthorne was a culminating link because it was with him that Melville attempted to form a relationship of equals, one where he and Hawthorne would be two of those few men who formed "A chain of God's posts around the world."[2] Neither his wife nor Duyckinck were included in this category. They were not perceived by Melville as his spiritual equals.

It was in the midst of this relationship with Hawthorne that Moby-Dick was created. This novel was started before Melville met Hawthorne, but according to Howard Vincent's scholarly research, this version lacked the intricate characterization and philosophical detail of the later version.[3] Melville's great risk, an attempt to form a reciprocal, open relationship between equals, personally failed, but Melville successfully projected his new found bravery into the philosophy and humanity of Moby-Dick.

By the time Melville met Hawthorne, he was too emotionally bruised to develop an open, reciprocal relationship. Martin Buber, twentieth century religious philosopher, discusses the importance of those relationships we form in early life: "The loves of childhood and of adolescence cannot be subtracted from us; they have become part of us. Not a discrete part that could be

severed. It is as if they had entered our blood stream."[4] The early relationships which entered Melville's blood were slightly poisoned. His parents undermined his intelligence, attractiveness, and general sense of self-worth. Ronald Laing, British psychologist, discusses the various ways individuals can reject segments of each other:

> There are different levels of confirmation or disconfirmation. An action may be confirmed at one level and disconfirmed at another. Some forms of 'rejection' imply limited recognition --the perception of and responsiveness to what is rejected. . . . Direct 'rejection' is not tangential; it is not mocking or in other ways invalidating. It need neither depreciate nor exaggerate the original action. It is not synonomous with indifference or imperviousness.
>
> Some areas of a person's being may cry out for confirmation more than others. Some forms of disconfirmation may be more destructive of self-development than others.[5]

Herman Melville, born in New York City, August 1, 1819, the second son and third child of Allan Melvill and Maria Gansevoort, was not confirmed by either parent: they fostered feelings in Melville of mediocrity and unattractiveness, negatively affecting Melville's attitude toward himself and setting up a relationship based on competition between him and their favored eldest son, Gansevoort.

Allan, himself an insecure importer of fabrics, gloves, stockings, and perfumes who was to die an exhausted and bankrupt death in 1832 when Melville was just twelve, gave Melville either negative criticism or back-handed

compliments. Generally his message was that Melville was neither energetic nor intelligent. When Melville was seven, Allan wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Peter Gansevoort, revealing his belief that Melville was innately dull: Melville was very "backward in speech & somewhat slow in comprehension."[6] Three years later Allan wrote another letter, this time to his father, revealing his belief that Melville was making progress, and although amiable was neither quick nor energetic:

> Herman I think is making more progress than formerly, & without being a bright Scholar, he maintains a respectable standing, & would proceed farther, if he could be induced to study more -- being a most amiable & innocent child, I cannot find it in my heart to coerce him, especially as he seems to have chosen Commerce as a favourite pursuit. . . .[7]

Allan found his eldest son, Gansevoort, much superior to Melville and Melville, accepting his inferior position, became "docile." If he could not get the confirmation he needed, he would repress needing it. Docility was less straining than protest. Edwin Miller sees Melville's passivity as evidence that he felt unable to successfully compete with his brother: "No son aspires to such a passive state or to such epithets unless there is no other avenue open to him."[8] Most likely, Melville did not overtly analyze the motivation behind his passivity, but his later attitude toward himself reveals feelings of inadequacy. His desire for knowledge, for understanding,

and for a respectable position in New York intellectual circles, may have been kindled by an unconscious need to prove that his dead father's judgment was incorrect.

Because Allan confused his message of Melville's intellectual dullness with positive responses about his amiable nature, it was even more difficult for Melville to protest his treatment. His relationship with Allan was further complicated when Allan's business began failing. In the late twenties, Melville's father had invested several thousand dollars, the bulk of his capital, in a business venture, a transaction which ruined him financially. Lawsuits were filed against him, causing him to leave Broadway and escape to his wife's family in Albany, New York; Allan was emotionally desperate. He wrote an anxious letter to his father attempting to borrow five hundred dollars. In January, 1832, he broke under the strain of this crisis. His brother, Thomas Melvill, Jr., went to see him in Albany, negatively assessing his condition in a letter he wrote to Allan's friend, Lemuel Shaw: "I found him very sick. . .under great mental excitement -- at times fierce, even maniacal."[9] Thomas Melvill, Jr.'s perception, that Allan was in a dangerous condition, proved true; January 28, 1832, Allan died without ever recovering his composure.

Allan's hysterical death added still another negative element to Melville's sense of his own worthiness.

Not only was Melville a slow person who could be at best friendly, but also one who could become mentally deranged. If his father could die mad, then he, being weaker and less intelligent, could certainly lose control of his mind. In 1849, this fear of madness was still a strong element in Melville's personality when one of his acquaintances, Charles Fenno Hoffman, a member of the New York literati, became mad. Melville wrote a letter to his friend, Evert Duyckinck, admitting feelings of empathy and fear:

> This going mad of a friend or acquaintance comes straight home to every man who feels his soul in him, -- which but few men do. For in all of us lodges the same fuel to light the same fire. And he who has never felt, momentarily, what madness is has but a mouthful of brains. What sort of sensation permanent madness is may be very well imagined. . . .[10]

In Moby-Dick, Melville also conveys his sensitivity toward madness, this time through Ishmael, the novel's narrator. Ishmael recounts a childhood dream of uncontrol:

> . . .nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bedside. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken.[11]

Melville's identification with his father's madness made his relationship to him even more complicated. He, at least unconsciously, must have resented his father's low

opinion of his intellect, and now Allan had proven that even his own intellect was precarious.

Melville's problematic relationship with Allan may very well have been a major cause in his fear of emotional vulnerability. While the destructive quality of this relationship is well documented in Edwin Miller's biography, an earlier biographer, Newton Arvin, ignores its complexity. Arvin sees their relationship as generally positive. When Arvin writes, "when Melville has Redburn say, 'I always thought him a marvelous being, infinitely purer and greater than I was,' he may be speaking not only for Wellingborough Redburn and his father but for himself and Allan Melvill."[12] Arvin is overlooking the feeling of worthlessness and fear that identification with Allan must have elicited in Melville, especially after his father's financial failure and mental breakdown.

If Melville idealized his father, he also feared and resented him. These confused feelings displaced themselves into his other relationships. From 1844-1850, when he was living with his wife and attempting to make contact with New York literary circles, Melville was torn by his attitude toward his associates. He did not know whether to feel inferior or superior to them. While Perry Miller blames Melville's intellectual isolation on the fact that his peers were conservative and basically non-

intellectual, the fact that Melville wanted to be accepted by individuals who felt less passionately about ideas than he, reveals Melville's confused attitude toward relationships and his own worth.[13]

Melville's mother, Maria, increased Melville's feelings of worthlessness. She also preferred Gansevoort to Melville. In 1870, Melville wrote a poorly disguised portrait of his mother which reflected long harbored bitterness toward her and anger at his secondary role in the family's structure:

> When boys they were I helped the bent;
> I made the junior feel his place,
> Subserve the senior, love him, too;
> . . .But me the meek one never can serve,
> Not he, he lacks the quality keen
> To make the mother through the son
> An envied dame of power, a social queen.[14]

Melville's anger at his mother is again verified by the fact that in his old age, he remarked to his niece, Anne Morewood, that his mother hated him,[15] strengthening the connection between the narrator of this poem and his mother.

Melville's mother fostered feelings of unattractiveness in her son, an attitude that in adulthood made him believe himself unworthy of love. In his relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, after Melville had completed Moby-Dick, he wrote Hawthorne a letter revealing his self-hatred: "You were archangel enough to despise the imperfect body, and embrace the soul. Once you hugged the

ugly Socrates because you saw the flame in the mouth. . . ."[16] Yet even in the midst of self-disgust there is pride; in his ugliness he identifies himself with Socrates.

Melville's relationship to his parents, understandably, made him sensitive and self-protective. At fifteen, he published a short-short story in the New York Sun revealing his acceptance of an ironic universe, and exploring his detached, accepting façade. The story's setting is filled with images of death and emptiness: frost-nipt fruit and naked hazel bushes. Autumn is portrayed indifferent toward the death which surrounds it:

> . . .Had it been Winter he would have raved, had it been Spring she would have wept, had it been Summer she would have fainted. Autumn never cares, he turns up the lane with his hands still beneath his empty pockets, humming a tune and looking pleasant as ever.[17]

Melville's self-protection is also revealed in his relationship with his eldest brother, Gansevoort. If Melville was "dear" and "beloved," his parents never hesitated to compare him unfavorably with their eldest son: Allan found Gansevoort "buoyant and gifted," and Maria found him "beautiful."[18]

Although the relationship between Melville and Gansevoort was overtly peaceful, there were undercurrents of coldness. Gansevoort was fifteen years old when his father died and he accepted the role of family provider. During the years when Gansevoort was attempting to run

his father's hat and fur business, Melville was clerking in the New York State Bank directed by his Uncle Peter. In 1834 he helped Gansevoort with the business for a short time. He left the business to farm with his Uncle Thomas at Pittsfield and later that year, 1837, taught school near the farm.

On April 15, 1837, Gansevoort's business went bankrupt, and he returned home depressed and ill. Melville also returned home to his mother and studied surveying for a short while. In 1839 he decided to become a sailor on a merchant ship. We have no information concerning Gansevoort's response to Melville's decision, but we do know that when Melville returned his brother, whose outward strength was recovered, helped him to reestablish his land-life in New York City. Gansevoort wrote a sarcastic letter to his younger brother, Allan, revealing a hesitant unwillingness to be used by Herman and his companion, Eli Murdoch, as provider:

> Herman is still here -- He has been & is a source of great anxiety to me -- He has not obt^{d} a situation -- Fly is still on the lookout . . . . They are both in good health & tolerable spirits. . . . They dine with me every day at Sweeney's & are blessed with good appetites -- as my exchequer can vouch -- Herman has had his hair sheared. . .and looks more like a Christian than usual--[19]

At the time Gansevoort wrote this letter, 1840, he was a lawyer and spokesman for the Democratic party, once again in Maria's eyes, the successful son. His reputation as

orator was strong. Gansevoort was frequently praised by the press as having elicited a powerful emotional response from his audience.

In 1840, he may have appeared powerful to the world of politics and journalism, but in his private, psychological world, he was travelling on mutable ground. After the failure of the hat and fur business, he had never fully recovered his confidence. His health had collapsed in 1837 and constant worry and overwork were diminishing this endurance again.

In 1844 Gansevoort's career was at its height. An article published in the Niagara Democrat praised him for his magnetism:

> . . .he held the attention of his audience for two hours and a half, while he discussed the Texas Question. . .embellishing his discourse with all the graces of oratory, the keenest wit, and passing alternately 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe.'

He was hoping that James K. Polk would find him a public position. When Polk failed to do so, Gansevoort wrote him a note that carefully withheld anger, anger that Gansevoort would displace toward himself:

> Although the entire failure of my application (for public employment) has injured me more seriously than you can imagine both in the present and the future and has fallen upon me with stunning force,. . .I acquiesce in the result without a murmur.[20]

Gansevoort's need to verbalize acquiescence is linked to a need to maintain control. He was not meeting his dead

father's or doting mother's concept of him. If he was not the ideal son his parents thought him, for he had no sense of himself to grasp: he had never built an identity for himself separate from his parents' attitude toward him. Allen Wheelis, twentieth century psychologist, discusses the portrayal of composure at a time when a person is justifiably disappointed:

> What appears to be strength and autonomy of superego may in fact be the superego's last-ditch effort to preserve itself against change. A superego is never more authoritarian than when its authority is about to be lost.[21]

Gansevoort attempted to be the brave, successful son. His active roles stemmed from a need to avoid failure rather than a need for success. He was driven by his parents' concept of him to be independent, vital, and successful, but his façade was growing increasingly brittle. On May 12, 1846, when only thirty years old, after a brief service as secretary of legation in the Court of St. James, Gansevoort died. His last letter to Melville portrays deep exhaustion and overpowering depression.

The letter begins in a formal fashion, revealing his need to patronize and to be useful:

> Herewith you have a copy of the arrangement with Wiley & Putnam for the publication in the U.S. of your work on the Marquesas. . .By the steamer of tomorrow I sent to yr address several newspapers containing critiques on your work. . . .[22]

It soon, however, reverted to more personal feelings:

> My thoughts are so much at home that much of my time is spent in disquieting apprehensions as to matters & things there. . .I sometimes fear I am gradually breaking up. . . .Selfishly speaking I never valued life much -- it is impossible to value it less than I do now. . . .[23]

In this letter Gansevoort revealed his compulsion to apologize for feelings of depression. He continued his letter by admitting that he wanted passionately to avoid failure (debt), and had no interest in the rewards of success. He was much distressed because he feared that he could no longer be the provider: his feelings of inadequacy would not let him rest.

We know very little about Melville's response to his brother. We do know, however, that indirectly there must have been a great deal of competition, on Melville's side, at least. Undercurrents of Melville's competitiveness with Gansevoort exist, for instance, in Melville's attitude toward oratory.

Gansevoort was the chosen family orator. As early as 1826 Allan commented on Melville's poor speaking ability. It was not until 1837, when Melville was eighteen years old, that he became involved in a debating club, the Philo Logos, thus rivalling Gansevoort on Gansevoort's territory. Up until then, Melville had consistently avoided any infringement in the area of public speaking. It is important to note that in 1837 Gansevoort declared bankruptcy, fell ill and generally proved himself vulnerable. Biographers have neglected to

note this revealing coincidence: only after Gansevoort's failure could Melville even begin competing with his brother. Even in 1837, Melville's involvement in the club was more political than speech-oriented. He was still protecting himself from overtly competing with Gansevoort.[24]

This participation in Philo Logos was Melville's major experience with public speaking until after Gansevoort's death. In 1857-58, and 1859-60, Melville took part in two lecture series. Neither, as documented by Merton M. Sealts, Jr., were successful. David Mead in his well-wrought study of the nineteenth century Ohio lyceum, also notes Melville's poor ability as public speaker. Mead concludes that Melville's Ohio lectures were failures because they were too low-keyed for his Ohio audience.[25] Melville never became an excellent orator; he never successfully competed with his brother on his brother's ground.

Melville replied to Gansevoort's last letter, but it arrived after his brother's death. While Melville's response was supportive, it was perhaps too calm. A subsequent letter, written to his uncle, Peter Gansevoort, was mechanical and dealt with funeral finances rather than the emotional pain that might come at losing one's brother.

Feelings of competition and jealousy may help to explain why Melville's response to Gansevoort's death was

not warmer. While Gansevoort was useful in helping Melville financially and in being his literary agent in London, their relationship was never emotionally close. The death of Gansevoort brought no major change to Melville's life because he had not lost someone emotionally close to him; he had only lost a sometimes useful, but more often psychologically inhibiting competitor who had been praised by his parents as the more brilliant and verbally adept.

In 1844 Melville's own career as writer was just beginning. But for many years Melville was to write in emotional isolation. From 1844-1850 none of Melville's relationships were to be intimate.

Newton Arvin saw Melville as a man with a great capacity for friendship. When he interpreted Melville's American navy experience, he saw it as one involving the formation of intimate relationships:

> . . .his capacity for friendship, along with his need of it, was very great, and among his comrades of the maintop he struck up several intimacies; with a lean saturnine, bookish man whom he calls Nord; with a nautical poet he calls Lemsford; with Griffith Williams, a good-humored Yankee from Maine; and above all with 'matchless and unmatchable Jack Chase,' his idolized captain of the maintop.[26]

What Arvin saw as intimacy on board the United States was idealization. We have no evidence in any of these

relationships that Melville attempted to share his real self and learn about a fully complicated, and therefore, imperfect, other. If Melville's need for friendship in 1842 was strong, his capacity for anything other than partial, idealized relationships was very small. His early relationships with Allan, Maria, Gansevoort, and, as far as we know, with any of his other six siblings, had allowed him no experience for open, reciprocal relationships. On the contrary, they had taught him not to trust and perhaps even more importantly, not to feel too deeply about any one person. Melville had made himself as emotionally invulnerable as possible. He preferred to treat people as if they were somehow unable to comprehend his full complexity. Regardless, he was unwilling to show it.

Unlike Arvin, Perry Miller senses Melville's isolation. Miller notes that the type of questions Melville asked separated him even from the intellectual circles of his era:

> . . .on his own he acquired a passion for ideas, and then tried to enter a world where taste was respected, wit admired, erudition praised, but ideas themselves -- well, those might turn out to be 'german' and 'transcendental.' If so, they were to be ridiculed and, wherever possible, stamped out.[27]

In 1844, when Melville was launching his writing career in New York, its two main editors, Evert Duyckinck and Lewis Gaylord Clark, were embroiled in power struggles.[28]

Generally, New York was growing increasingly unwilling to risk change. Lewis Mumford attempts to explain New York's growing conservativism during this era:

> The pioneer phase was strenuous, hazardous, heroic; but once the settlement was effected, once the town was founded and the building-lots divided and the outlaws rounded up, it was unbearably tame. . . .In provincial society we are nearer to Europe, that is, nearer to a settled life, to order, authority, tradition.[29]

Melville preferred isolation to risk; it felt safer. He needed to legitimize his own ability, an ability his parents had undermined, by gaining acceptance into New York intellectual life. Melville wanted to belong, or to at least try to belong, to Evert Duyckinck's New York intellectual circle, the most scholarly in New York, one containing the old Dutch Episcopalian element of the town.[30] Abraham Maslow, humanistic psychologist, discusses the human tendency to get safety needs met before spiritual ones:

> Assured safety permits higher needs and impulses to emerge and to grow towards mastery. To endanger safety, means regression backward to the more basic foundation. What this means is that in the choice between giving up safety and giving up growth, safety will ordinarily win out. Safety needs are prepotent over growth needs.[31]

Although Melville remained on the periphery of the Duyckinck circle, Duyckinck himself became a long-term friend. He was kind to Melville and an important intellectual figure in New York: in 1847 Evert Duyckinck was editor and owner of Osgood's Literary World, one of the most important

literary weeklies of its time.[32] Previously he had been literary advisor to the Wiley and Putnam publishing house. He was also the owner of one of the best libraries in New York.[33]

Regardless of Duyckinck's important positions, he was not Melville's intellectual equal; certainly, he was not a believer in suffering over spiritual and intellectual truths. But he knew most of the famous literary figures of his era, readily introduced Melville to whomever he could, willingly lent him books, helped arrange for the American publication of Typee and placed favorable reviews of the work in Literary World. Not sharing or understanding Melville's need for intellectual comraderie, he patronized what he considered Melville's odd intellectual eccentricities. Duyckinck wrote in a letter to his brother George, a statement about Melville's reading which revealed this patronizing stance:

> By the way Melville reads old Books. He has borrowed Sir Thomas Browne of me and says finely of the speculations of the Religio Medici that Browne is a kind of 'crack'd Archangel.' Was ever any thing of this sort said before by a sailor?[34]

Although Duyckinck was himself an avid reader, his sincere interest in Browne's simultaneously alogical and argumentative treatise is questionable. But Duyckinck did write Melville reviews which reveal warmth towards the man, if not philosophical understanding of his work.

Melville did not find a fully reciprocal relationship with an equal in Duyckinck, but he did find a nurturing and loyal friend, one who provided him with the main-stream intellectual support he so needed. Melville was also useful to Duyckinck who was afraid of losing his connection with young, expansive intellectuals. In 1847, Evert, fearful that he would have little part in helping New York find its own great writers, wrote to his brother stating that he felt useless and unwanted.[35] Melville provided him with the focus he needed.

Their relationship lasted Duyckinck's lifetime. Brief blotter memoranda kept during the last two years of Duyckinck's life record regular visits from Melville.[36] It was Duyckinck and not Hawthorne who was to fulfill Melville's need for a father, one who could nurture and praise him, though not one that could understand his deep spiritual need for order, and the strength to find that order.

Melville freely used his relationship with Duyckinck as a protective yet, emotional buffer zone. He felt comfortable venting his feelings of isolation to Duyckinck. On April, 1849, after his philosophical novel, Mardi, received a negative reception, it was to Duyckinck that he turned for comfort. He wrote to Duyckinck, knowing that even if he did not fully understand, or agree, he would offer solace. With Duyckinck he could risk sounding

bitter: "Who in the name of the trunkmakers would think of reading Old Burton were his book published for the first to day?"[37] It was Duyckinck who he could trust not to reject him.

During this same period, in 1847, Melville married, again working toward his need for security rather than emotional fulfillment that can only come from a relationship between equals. Melville, then twenty-eight, married the daughter of Judge Shaw, a friend of his father's. Elizabeth, a close friend of his sister, Helen Maria, had most likely also been a friend of his since childhood. Newton Arvin correctly calls the marriage "cousinly."[38]

In his marriage Melville opted for nothing new; he chose a spouse who would offer him physical nurturing without spiritual communication. Regardless of the deep emotional tension in his family, they had always supplied his physical needs. Elizabeth would offer similar caring.

Marriage brought little change to Melville's life. It was highly patterned, and most likely spiritually unfulfilling. Elizabeth did not understand what her husband wrote. She revealed this in a letter to her step-mother:

> I suppose by this time you are deep in the 'fogs' of Mardi -- if the mist ever does clear away, I should like to know what it reveals to you -- there seems to be much diversity of opinion about Mardi as might be supposed. . . .When you hear any individual express an opinion with regard to it, I wish you would tell me -- whenever it is -- good or bad -- without fear of offence -- merely by way of curiosity.[39]

Domestically, their existence was extremely ordered. It allowed Melville the time he needed to create, but it did not offer him understanding. Again Elizabeth reveals in a letter to her step-mother information about her routine with Melville:

> Perhaps you will wonder what on earth I have to occupy me. Well in fact, I hardly know exactly myself. . . .We breakfast at 8 o'clock, then Herman goes to walk and I fly up to put his room to rights, so that he can sit down to his desk immediately on his return. Then I bid him good-bye with many charges to be an industrious boy and not upset the inkstand, and then flourish the duster. . . .[40]

Even during their honeymoon, Elizabeth's conservative needs seemed to color her responses. She found the house at which they stayed uncomfortably complicated and communicated her feeling of discomfort to her step-mother via letter:

> The House at which we are staying, the best one in the place, is a great rambling, scrambling old castle of a thing, all stairs and entries and full of tawdry decorations. A forbidding strangeness pervades the place and makes me want to get out of it as soon as possible. . . .[41]

Again on her return from Lansingburgh, familiarity became an issue:

> . . .I had never been in a canal boat in my life, Herman thought we had better try it for novelty. . . .while I was suffocating with the heat and bad atmosphere, he was on deck, chilled and half-frozen with the fog and penetrating dampness. . . .[42]

A year after their marriage Elizabeth's letters began to reveal increased dissatisfaction, but she did

not let these feelings of unfulfillment translate themselves into emotional separation from Melville: she felt obligated to meet his need for physical comfort and psychological dependence. On June 6, 1848, almost a year after their marriage, when Melville was near completion of Mardi, Elizabeth expressed these attitudes in another letter to her step-mother:

> And now for something which I hardly know whether to write you or not I feel so undecided about it. My cold is very bad indeed, perhaps worse than it has ever been so early, and I attribute it entirely to the warm dry atmosphere. . .and Herman thinks I had better go back to Boston with Sam . . . .But I don't know as I can make up my mind to go and leave him here -- and besides I'm afraid to trust him to finish up the book without me! That is -- taking all things into consideration I'm afraid I should not feel at ease enough to enjoy my visit without him with me.[43]

Elizabeth met Herman's dependence with patronization, and her own dependence.

Although their relationship was not close, it fulfilled both of their needs for firm, conservative limits and for domestic regimentation. Newton Arvin saw the distance in Melville's relationship to Elizabeth as the product of latent homosexual tendencies. He ignored the intellectual separation between Elizabeth and Herman, and apologized for Melville's marital choice for social rather than psychological reasons:

> He could not, for one thing, given all his connections, abandon himself genially to the declassed and rather raffish Bohemianism that Whitman found so congenial. Marriage was doubtless inescapable for him. . . .[44]

It is essential to note that Melville was not perfectly conventional. Typee, Omoo, and Mardi were critically considered blasphemous. White-Jacket appeared to overtly criticise the navy and was censored by doing so.[45] Melville's marriage to Elizabeth was more than a compromise with conventionality. It was a choice: protection at the cost of spiritual isolation. Melville had made a decision to repress his need for what Martin Buber terms an I-Thou relationship, a relationship where two individuals meet on equal ground to learn and share experiences without any attempt to control or limit one another's response.[46] Melville had too many unmet needs to try for this highest form of relationship between two people.

But even while Melville was protecting himself, part of him knew that he was avoiding some aspects of life. He shows this awareness indirectly, by empathizing with Emerson's inability to interact more openly with the world. In March,1849, he wrote to Duyckinck, exonerating Ralph Waldo Emerson's conservativism and fear:

> You complain that Emerson tho' a denizen of the land of gingerbread, is above munching a plain cake in company of jolly fellows, & swiging off his ale like you & me. Ah, my dear sir, that's his misfortune, not his fault. His belly, sir, is in his chest, & his brains descend down into his neck, & offer an obstacle to a draught of ale or a mouthful of cake.[47]

Melville was not afraid of his ale, but he was afraid of emotional vulnerability. Elements in his nature were leading him toward risk. His relationship to Duyckinck

and Elizabeth were meeting his need for being nurtured. He was ripe to try another, higher form of interaction. His fear of intimacy was giving way to his painful dissatisfaction with remaining on the surface of life. In Moby-Dick he was to write: ". . .better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!"[48]

After Melville returned from sea, he fulfilled much of his need for risk-taking through his interaction with literature. He was interested in The Book of Solomon, Hamlet, King Lear, Religio Medici, and Anatomy of Melancholy,[49] books whose conclusions were self-consuming, books which were explorations of process rather than product.[50] Sir Thomas Browne, for instance, in Religio Medici, concluded that we are all in the same boat and must survive through faith rather than proof, even though the structure of his work is logical. Robert Burton, in Anatomy of Melancholy, concluded his treatise in similar fashion, stating that he could and would wish impossibilities. Melville was finding fellow searchers in literature rather than in life.

Morse Peckham discussed man's need to break existing patterns, calling this tendency "man's rage for chaos":

> . . .we praise order because it is an adaptational necessity for us that we experience order. And our praise merely reinforces the greatest of all human mottos: Millions for the orientation but

> not one cent for reality. . . .We value order for precisely the same reason we value a good movement of the bowels. Both are human necessities. The reasons for praising order are comprehensible, but they are not impressive. . . .They are not even exclusively human.[51]

When feeling strong, Melville wanted to honestly search more than he wanted to have comfort, protection, and recognition. And Melville was becoming stronger. For instance in 1845, he allowed his publishers to bowdlerize Typee, deleting sexual and philosophical sections which they thought might offend its audience,[52] but by 1849 Melville decided that if his writing were to be less than honest, it was not because he allowed his publishers to change sections against his will. He defended Mardi against both publisher and critic. He wrote in a letter to Duyckinck, "Nay, I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow, but prefer rather to hang myself in mine own halter than swing in any other man's swing."[53]

His belief in himself, his ability to be expansive, was increasing, tentatively but regularly. He was starved for people with whom to share and discover new ideas. After writing Mardi, his most abstractly philosophical and worst reviewed book, he took a ship, the Southampton, to London and Paris. During this trip he met two learned men, Frank Taylor, a professor of modern languages at New York University, and Dr. George J. Adler, a German-American scholar. With these men, he talked of fixed fate, free will, knowledge, absolute truths, topics of conversation

infrequently available to him in the Duyckinck circle.[54] In Mardi he had stated: "We have had vast developments of parts of men, not of any whole. Before a fully-developed man, Mardi would fall down and worship."[55] This echo of Ralph Waldo Emerson's language suggests Melville's need for human confirmation and for increased bravery within himself. Knowledge of his acceptance and the ability to accept others was essential for Melville's own self-respect as it is for all sensitive persons. Martin Buber describes these needs as the basis of relationships:

> The basis of man's life with man is twofold, and it is one -- the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow-men in this way.[56]

In his early life, Melville had learned not to trust his family with his emotional parts and he remembered his lesson never attempting to reveal those parts completely until he decided that Nathaniel Hawthorne was the one person with whom he could have an absorbtively reciprocal relationship.

Whether this decision to attempt an open, reciprocal relationship was made before or after meeting Nathaniel Hawthorne is questionable: In July, 1850 Melville's Aunt gave him a copy of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse to read. Melville met Hawthorne August 5, 1850. We do not know whether Melville had read Mosses by this time, but we do know that on August 17 and

24 Melville wrote a review for publication in Duyckinck's Literary World which sang the book's and author's praises, marvelling at the originality that so affected him:

> A man of deep and noble nature has taken hold of me in this seclusion; his wild, witch-voice rings through me; in softer cadences, I seem to hear it in the song of the hillside birds that sing in the larch trees at my window.[58]

Melville's narrative stance in this review, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," is relaxed, inspired, one might even say willfully seducible and seduced:

> Stretched on that new mown clover, the hillside breeze blowing over me through the wide barn door, and soothed by the hum of the bees in the meadows around, how magically stole over me this Mossy Man! and how amply, how bountifully, did he redeem that delicious promise to his quests in the Old Manse, of whom it is written: 'Others could give them pleasure, or amusement, or instruction -- these could be picked up anywhere; but it was for me to give them rest -- rest in a life of trouble! What better could be done for those weary and world-worn spirits?. . .'[59]

If Melville could find rest, then he could also find safety, this time in a relationship with a great original man. Melville, by seeing Hawthorne as a bringer of peace, was making him as non-threatening and non-destructive as possible. For the fifteen months that their relationship lasted Melville tried to keep himself believing that he had actually found the one person with whom he could share his innermost thoughts and feelings without fear of rejection. He could not perfectly convince himself that this was so because he could not completely hide from

Hawthorne's non-reciprocity, but he obsessively clung to his initial hope.

The germ of this hope can be explored in "Hawthorne and His Mosses." Melville defines Hawthorne in terms that he needs, even to the point of searching Hawthorne's prose for a self-portrait which seems closer to a portrait of Melville than one of Hawthorne:

> "A man now entered, in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker, but somewhat too rough-hewn and brawny for a scholar. His face was full of sturdy vigor, with some finer and keener attribute beneath; though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through. He advanced to the Intelligencer, and looked at him with a glance of such stern sincerity, that perhaps few secrets were beyond its scope.
> 'I seek for Truth,' said he."[60]

He wants to see Hawthorne as a man with uncommon heart, uncommon tenderness, and uncommon love. His heart judges and finds Hawthorne's gold:

> He is immeasurably deeper than the plummet of the mere critic. For it is not the brain that can test such a man; it is only the heart. You cannot come to know greatness by inspecting it; there is no glimpse to be caught of it, except by intuition; you need not ring it, you but touch it, and you find it is gold.

He searches Hawthorne's work for his own personality and his own questions and finding them, responds with joy and with relief:

> Now, the page having reference to this Master Genius, so happily expresses much of what I yesterday wrote, touching the coming of the

> literary Shiloh of America, that I cannot but be charmed by the coincidence; especially, when it shows such a parity of ideas, at least in this one point, between a man like Hawthorne and a man like me.[62]

Melville longs for bravery and originality and feels he shares these desires with Hawthorne. He condemns imitations, and finds Hawthorne original; he feels he can share in Hawthorne's honor:

> . . .and however great may be the praise I have bestowed upon him, I feel that in so doing I have served and honored myself, than him. For, at bottom, great excellence is praise enough to itself; but the feeling of a sincere and appreciative love and admiration towards it, this is relieved by utterance, and warm, honest praise ever leaves a pleasant flavor in the mouth. . . .[63]

Melville has waited a long time for such a man, and reveals that in reading his book that he felt misty reminiscences, as if he had been dreaming of him.[64] And indeed Melville had dreamed of him; not Hawthorne, the man of flesh, but Hawthorne the ideal who in his greatness and warmth would heal Melville's loneliness. Finding the possibility of unity with Hawthorne, Melville increases his sensitivity toward fertility and sexuality.

Edwin Miller discusses the sexual phrases preponderant in Melville's review. Miller perceives that his obsession with fertility and sexuality last past his review. He notes that imagery of insemination continues into Melville's subsequent letters:

> . . .in a letter to Duyckinck, Melville was still preoccuppied with the subject. He labelled the

> twelve bottles of Champaigne 'beautiful babies' in a 'wicker cradle;' and referred to the desk in 'the garretway' as 'covered with the marks of fowls -- quite white with them -- eggs had been laid in it -- think of that -- Is it not typical of these other eggs that authors may be said to lay in their desks, -- especially those with pigeon-holes?'[65]

Melville wanted to be born. Years of carefully protected isolation were giving way to hunger, and in his starvation he idealized Hawthorne to mythic proportion, the same proportion to which he would have liked to feel himself equal. Sophia Peabody Hawthorne noted Melville's over-powering response to her husband in a letter addressed to her mother:

> He said Mr. Hawthorne was the first person whose physical being appeared to him wholly in harmony with the intellectual & spiritual. He said the sunny hair & the pensiveness, the symmetry of his face, the depth of eyes. . .' & the peace supreme' all were in exact response to the high calm intellect, the glowing, deep heart -- the purity of actual & spiritual life.[66]

Perhaps Melville, in his infatuation with Hawthorne, was also working through feelings of repressed love for Gansevoort, love he had never shown Gansevoort because of his jealousy. As Miller perceptively notes in his biography, both Hawthorne and Gansevoort have blond hair, both are lithe and well formed and both have attractive faces.[67] But Melville, in his attraction to Hawthorne, is also reaching past his dead brother toward a heart and soul with whom he could share his own search for

truth. Melville wanted a worthy colleague, an original, not a copy:

> And now, my countrymen, as an excellent author of your own flesh and blood, -- an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an inimitable man -- whom better can I comment to you, in the first place, than Nathaniel Hawthorne. He is one of the new, and far better generation of your writers. The smell of young beeches and hemlocks is upon him; your own broad prairies are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara.[68]

Hawthorne may have been twelve years Melville's senior, but Melville concentrated his attention on the fact that they were both striving for great achievement. Together they would discover even deeper parts of their nature. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses" he hints at this desire to find his own essence:

> . . .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 the iron and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth; not entirely waiting for their better discovery in the more congenial, blessed atmosphere of heaven.[69]

Perhaps these wondrous properties might be better discovered in heaven, but Melville, through his self-searching and his relationship with Hawthorne, would achieve what he could here on earth.

Melville was correct in assuming that many of the conflicts that existed in him also existed in Hawthorne,

but he was incorrect in his belief that Hawthorne, when given the chance for an intimate relationship, would embrace it. While Melville was ready to break out of his pattern of isolation by the time he met Hawthorne, Hawthorne was unwilling to make any new changes in his own life that would disorder it. He had moved to the Berkshires to escape the ghost of his recently deceased mother and he wanted to remain as clearly separate from emotional situations as he could. He had left his position at the Custom House, hoping to quit New York forever.[70] His response to his mother's death had been overpowering: Sophia had feared that his emotional pain would lead to brain fever.[71] Hawthorne had come to the Berkshires to surround himself with nature, but he found that he was more attached to the city than he had guessed. The strain of his mother's death had put him in an unnatural mental state, one that lasted a shorter period of time than he, in the midst of mental turmoil, had suspected.

When Melville met Hawthorne he was less trusting than Melville would have liked. He was afraid to speak directly and intimately to any person. He communicated this fear in a letter:

> . . .my theory is, that there (is) less indelicacy in speaking out your highest, deepest, tenderest emotions to the world at large than to almost any individual; but you cannot be

> mistaken in thinking that, somewhere among your fellow creatures, there is a heart that will receive yours in itself.[72]

Melville sensed that Hawthorne was a naturally hesitant person. What Melville could not know was that Hawthorne was probably more hesitant to make new commitments now than ever before because of his mother's death. His relationship with his mother had been painfully silent. She never ate a meal with him until he had children of his own.[73] Hawthorne was unaccustomed to being embraced by what he loved and hesitated to be demonstrative even when emotionally involved. When his wife, for instance, painted a tiny scene for him, he encased the picture in a ring but found that he had difficulty wearing it. He remarked to her that he could wear the ring better, if he only liked it less.[74]

Hawthorne did meet Melville's desire for a relationship with initial reciprocity; his response was not equal to Melville's but it was positive. Within a few days of their first meeting, Hawthorne wrote to his friend Horatio Bridge: "I met Melville, the other day, and I like him so much that I have asked him to spend a few days with me before leaving these parts."[75] But Melville was unsatisfied with a positive response. He wanted unity. Later that year when Hawthorne was obviously not meeting his intensity with equal fervor,

Melville ignored the reality of their relationship and wrote to Hawthorne:

> That side-blow thro' Mrs. Hawthorne will not do. I am not to be charmed out of my promised pleasure by any of that lady's syrenisms. You, Sir, I hold accountable, & the visit (in all its original integrity) must be made. -- What! spend the day, only with us? -- A Greenlander might as well talk of spending the day with a friend, when the day is only half an inch long.
>
> As I said before, my best travelling chariot on runners, will be at your door, & provision made not only for the accommodation of all your family, but also for any quantity of baggage.
>
> Fear not that you will cause the slightest trouble to us. Your bed is already made, & the wood marked for your fire. But a moment ago, I looked into the eyes of two fowls, whose tail feathers have been notched, as destined victims for the table. I keep the world "Welcome" all the time in my mouth, so as to be ready on the instant when you cross the threshold.
>
> (By the way the old Romans you know had a Salve carved in their thresholds)
>
> Another thing, Mr Hawthorne -- Do not think you are coming to any prim nonsensical house -- that is nonsensical in the ordinary way. You must be much bored with punctilios. You may do what you please -- say or say not what you please. And if you feel any inclination for that sort of thing -- you may spend the period of your visit in bed, if you like -- every hour of your visit.
>
> Mark -- There is some excellent Montado Sherry awaiting you & some most potent Port. We will have mulled wine with wisdom, & buttered toast with story-telling & crack jokes & bottles from morning till night.
>
> Come -- no nonsence. If you dont -- I will send Constables after you.
>
> On Wednesday then -- weather & sleighing permitting I will be down for you about eleven o'clock A.M.
>
> By the way -- should Mrs. Hawthorne for any reason conclude that she, for one, can not stay overnight with us -- then you must -- & the children, if you please.[76]

This is the first of the letters in the correspondence of Melville with Hawthorne that are available or that have survived.[77] It reveals Melville's insistence that Hawthorne meet his needs, and his desire to displace the blame of Hawthorne's lack of reciprocity, on Sophia. Approximately a week before this letter had been sent, Melville visited the Hawthornes at Lenox and they seem to have agreed upon the visit that Melville speaks of, then. Sophia seems to have sent a note changing the Hawthornes' plans, and Melville reacted to this change with a great deal of hostility towards Sophia. In this letter Melville was attempting to convince Hawthorne that he could have as much privacy as he wanted when the visit did come about, but one still senses Melville's overpowering desire to control, an insistence on closeness, and a deep fear that Hawthorne may again refuse his offer.

In the midst of his belief that he had found his soul-mate, the tension in Melville did not diminish. In December 1850, almost seven weeks before the letter I have just quoted was sent to Hawthorne, Melville revealed in a letter to Duyckinck, that he was experiencing overwhelming feelings of uncontrol:

> I have a sort of sea-feeling here in the country, now that the ground is all covered with snow. I look out of my window in the morning when I rise as I would out of a porthole of a ship in the Atlantic. My room seems a ship's cabin; & at night when I wake up & hear the world shrieking, I almost fancy there is too much sail on the

> house, & I had better go on the roof & rig in the chimney.[78]

Early in their relationship, Melville seemed to sense that the new world he had put together between himself and Hawthorne would not hold. Melville feared that his relationship with Hawthorne might not give him the "I-Thou" relationship for which he wanted to be prepared, but the joy of possibilities, although intermingled with the tension of its precariousness, was to be held as firmly as possible. Melville was an adept rationalizer. He could translate Hawthorne's silence into intelligence. He allowed Ishmael a similar power in Moby-Dick:

> . . .the whale has no voice; unless you insult him by saying, that when he so strangely rumbles, he talks through his nose. But then again, what has the whale to say? Seldom have I known any profound being that had anything to say to this world, unless forced to stammer out something by way of getting a living. Oh! happy that the world is such an excellent listener![79]

Throughout his relationship with Hawthorne he insisted on distorting the man in such a way to avoid Hawthorne's imperfection and withdrawal from him. He sensed Hawthorne's artistic isolation, an isolation Hawthorne explored in his short story, "The Artist of the Beautiful," when he had his narrator verbalize the importance of an author's belief in himself, regardless of the fact that he might be alone in this belief. Melville, reading the story, triple scored the text:

> It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself, while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius, and the objects to which it is directed.[80]

He was sure that Hawthorne could trust him and that knowing this, Hawthorne would desire an "I-Thou" relationship as much as he. He mentally transformed the shrinking Hawthorne into a magnetic personality. Melville hid Hawthorne's hesitancy from himself as much as he was able; he needed Hawthorne's involvement with him too desperately to be able to acknowledge emotional distance between them. Thus, though Melville knew that "in the world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a sacred white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpes will she reveal herself,"[81] he compulsively chased the doe until she would reveal herself no longer.

Melville was in the midst of Moby-Dick and he did not want to acknowledge his disappointment in the relationship he had been brave enough to attempt. Unconsciously, he must have felt that if he acknowledged the precariousness of his relationship with Hawthorne that this lack of personal safety would negatively affect his honest search in Moby-Dick. Morse Peckham, a student of the creative process, theorizes that without safety, creativity is intolerable: "The life of the members of

that highest cultural level requires psychic insulation, for only that makes problem exposure tolerable."[82] Peckham notes that creative people often ally themselves with social status, political power, and wealth so that they can use their energy to break patterns and create new order. Melville did not have the creative energy to deal honestly with Hawthorne's emotional reticence and complete Moby-Dick.

Melville had begun the first version of Moby-Dick before he met Hawthorne. This version, according to Howard Vincent, was begun February 2, 1850 after Melville had sold White-Jacket in London, and was almost completed by the time he met Hawthorne in August. The previous May, Melville had written a letter to Richard Henry Dana, telling him that he was half done with his work. June 27, he assured his editor, Richard Bentley, that the book would be finished by August and in August, Evert Duyckinck verified the fact that the novel was almost complete in a letter he wrote to his brother George: "Melville has a new book mostly done -- a romantic, fanciful and literal and most enjoyable presentment of the whale fishery." Vincent convincingly argues that only an important revision can account for a fourteen month delay in finding Moby-Dick a publisher: "It was not Melville's practice to let his manuscripts gather dust. Upon looking over what he had done he either sent it to the publishers or set to work

at revisions radical in character."[83] The major revision which was begun after he met Hawthorne took him fourteen months to complete. It was finished September 1851, during the second half of the Melville/Hawthorne relationship.

It was a belief in life that Hawthorne elicited in Melville that led to the recreation of Moby-Dick as we know it. He was grappling with questions about selfhood and the world's order: Moby-Dick was no longer a book about whaling, but rather a book about people. The idealized Hawthorne allowed Melville to feel expansive: he was finally brave enough to have a fully-reciprocal relationship with a great man, with a spiritual equal. Melville was afraid to look at the real relationship he was developing with Hawthorne too closely for fear that the lack of richness, the lack of reciprocity, would cause him to stop feeling his own richness, and possibly to lose that gigantic spirit in him which was creating the fluid masterpiece, Moby-Dick.

Melville was never to work out his need for a confirming relationship: no one ever fully confirmed him as what he was, nor did he ever fully confirm another human being. But with Hawthorne he had opened himself up more than to any other person, and though he was not brave enough to look directly at the person to whom he

was opening, this new flow of blood and spirit, this newly awakened passion in him was creating a great work of art.

Martin Buber comments on the infrequency of successfully creating such relationships as the one Melville wanted to attempt with Hawthorne:

> That this capacity [to confirm and be confirmed by another human being as what one is] lies so immeasurably fallow constitutes the real weakness and questionableness of the human race: actually humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds. On the other hand, of course, an empty claim for confirmation without devotion for being and becoming, again and again mars the truth of the life between man and man.[84]

By the end of their relationship the contact between Hawthorne and Melville was becoming less and less realistic. Melville refused Hawthorne's offer to be the reviewer of Moby-Dick. He insisted that his dream of Hawthorne's response to the book be as untouched by reality as possible. The letter that he wrote to Hawthorne thanking him for his response to Moby-Dick and for his friendship feels more like the letter written at the end of a friendship. Melville knew that he and Hawthorne would never be the open friends of which he had dreamed. He was still holding on to the fragments of its possibility as best he could:

> People think that if a man has undergone any hardship, he should have a reward; but for my part, if I have done the hardest possible day's work, and then come to sit down in a corner and eat my

supper confortably -- why, then I don't think I deserve any reward for my hard day's work -- for am I not now at peace? Is not my supper good? My peace and my supper are my reward, my dear Hawthorne. So your joy-giving and exultation-breeding letter is not my reward for my ditcher's work with that book, but is the good goddess's bonus over and above what was stipulated for -- for not one man in five cycles, who is wise, will expect appreciative recognition from his fellows, or any one of them. Appreciation! Recognition! Is love appreciated? Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of this great allegory -- the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill comprehended. I say your appreciation is my glorious gratuity. In my proud, humble way, -- a shepherd-king, -- I was lord of a little vale in the solitary Crimea; but you have now given me the crown of India. But on trying it on my head, I found it fell down on my ears, notwithstanding their asinine length -- for it's only such ears that sustain such crowns.

Your letter was handed me last night on the road going to Mr. Morewood's, and I read it there. Had I been home, I would have sat down at once and answered it. In me divine maganimities are spontaneous and instantaneous -- catch them while you can. The world goes round, and the other side comes up. So now I can't write what I felt. But I felt pantheistic then -- your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God's. A sense of unspeakable security is in me this moment, on account of your having understood the book. . . .

Whence come you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips -- lo, they are yours and not mine. I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling. Now, sympathizing with the paper, my angel turns over another page. You did not care a penny for the book. But, now and then as you read, you understood the pervading thought that impelled the book -- and that you praised. Was it not so? You were archangel enough to despise the imperfect body, and embrace the soul. Once you hugged the ugly Socrates because you saw the flame in the mouth, and heard the rushing of the demon, -- the familiar, -- and recognized the sound; for you have heard it in your own solitudes.

> My dear Hawthorne, the atmospheric skepticisms steal into me now, and make me doubtful of my sanity in writing you thus. But, believe me, I am not mad, most noble Festus! But truth is ever incoherent, and when the big hearts strike together, the concussion is a little stunning. Farewell. Don't write a word about the book. That would be robbing me of my miserly delight. . . .[85]

The letter continues, frequently changing tone, moving from humor to pathos, from praise of Hawthorne to criticism of his coldness, from deep need to ironic indifference. When Melville mentioned that he was confused over where Hawthorne begins and he ends, Melville was revealing the unconscious truth behind the relationship: Melville, not having himself, was searching for his own identity. He had wanted Hawthorne to give him himself. What was most attractive to Melville in Hawthorne was precisely that part of Hawthorne that Melville felt within himself and yet could not own. He had hinted of this as far back as "Hawthorne and His Mosses:"

> Now, it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken that so fixes and fascinates me . . . .this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his background, that background against which Shakespeare plays his grandest concerts. . . .[86]

It is his own blackness that Melville was trying to understand. . .and his own light. If Melville was feeling purified during the letter in which he had asked Hawthorne not to write a review of Moby-Dick, it was not because of the richness he had received from his relationship with Hawthorne, but because in creating Moby-Dick, he had

reached a higher unity, a more powerful whole than he had ever yet experienced. Momentary peace, momentary greatness is the best man can achieve. Melville had achieved it by creating Moby-Dick. In 1849 he had emphatically underscored a passage in Goethe's Autobiography, and it had come to pass:

> . . .in the end man is always driven back upon himself, and it seems as if the Divinity has taken a position towards men so as not always to respond to their reverence, trust, and love, at least not in the precise moment of need.[87]

Melville sensed that Hawthorne was deserting him and he was correct. In the same letter where he asked Hawthorne not to review Moby-Dick because he did not wish to be robbed of his "miserly delight," he apologized for the passion of his response: "What a pity, that, for your plain, bluff letter, you should get such gibberish!"[88] Yet he was not ready to let go of Hawthorne. Even against his rational judgment he continued reaching out:

> P.S. I can't stop yet. If the world was entirely made up of Magians, I'll tell you what I should do. I should have a paper-mill established at one end of the house, and so have an endless riband of foolscrap rolling in upon my desk; and up that endless riband I should write a thousand -- a million -- billion thoughts, all under the form of a letter to you. The divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds. Which is the biggest? A foolish question -- they are One.
> P.P.S. Don't think that by writing me a letter, you shall always be bored with an immediate reply to it -- and so keep both of us delving over a writing-desk eternally. No such thing! I sh'n't always answer your letters, and you may do just as you please.[89]

By the following year Hawthorne had left Pittsfield. Hawthorne neither saved nor destroyed him, but gave him a focus through which to explore the richness and horror of his own soul. The relationship ended without Melville ever understanding the one person with whom he had attempted to completely share himself. He was not ready for such sharing, then or at any other point of his life. Melville never again tried to establish such a relationship. He was never settled or secure enough to trust that he would win.

NOTES -- SECTION I

[1]Edwin Miller, Melville (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1975), p. 179. Edwin Miller has explored Melville's relationships between 1819-1851 in the greatest detail and with the best psychological understanding to date. I am indebted to him for his exploration, although our understanding of the psychological implications of these relationships is sometimes different.

[2]Hawthorne, Julian, Hawthorne and His Wife, I (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896), p. 398, as cited in Raymond Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner, and Mystic (New York, 1921), p. 328.

[3]Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of "Moby-Dick" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), pp. 22-25.

[4]Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 30.

[5]Ronald D. Laing, Self and Others (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), p. 99.

[6]Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 6.

[7]Victor Hugo Paltsits, Family Correspondence of Herman Melville: 1830-1904 (New York: The New York Public Library, 1929), p. 4.

[8]Edwin Haviland Miller, p. 68.

[9]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891, I (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), pp. 46; 51.

[10]Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman, eds. The Letters of Herman Melville (New Haven: University Press, 1960), p. 83.

[11]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Fiedelson, Jr. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), p. 53.

[12]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1950), p. 17.

[13]Perry Miller, The Raven and the Whale: The War of Words and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 210. New York intellectual life during the 1840's will be discussed later in my study.

[14]"Timoleon" in Collected Poems of Herman Melville, ed. Howard P. Vincent (Chicago, 1947), p. 211.

[15]Metcalf, pp. 124-5.

[16]Leyda, p. 435.

[17]Jeanne C. Howes, "Melville's Sensitive Years," in A Symposium Melville Annual 1966, ed. Henry A. Murray (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1968), p. 39.

[18]Paltsits, pp. 4-5; Metcalf, pp. 1-12.

[19]Leyda, p. 110.

[20]Leyda, pp. 185; 195.

[21]Allen Wheelis, The Quest For Identity (New York: Norton, 1958), pp. 162-3.

[22]Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Vision (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), p. 50.

[23]Mumford, p. 50.

[24]Leyda, p. 70. Melville's main function in Philo Logos seemed to be participation in a letter-writing battle. These letters were published in The Microscope. The battle centered around the last election of the Philo Logos club. The legality of this election was in question.

[25]Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville as Lecturer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 3-114; David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum 1850-1870 (East Lansing, Michigan State College Press, 1951), pp. 74-77.

[26]Newton Arvin, p. 75.

[27]Perry Miller, p. 31.

[28]Perry Miller, p. 210.

[29]Mumford, p. 4.

[30]Van Wyck Brooks, The Times of Melville and Whitman (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1947), p. 21.

[31]Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968), p. 49.

[32]Metcalf, p. 38.

[33]Mumford, p. 50. Mumford quotes Richard Lathers on this observation.

[34]Metcalf, p. 56.

[35]Perry Miller, p. 210.

[36]Luther Stearns Mansfield, "Herman Melville: Author and New Yorker, 1844-1851," Diss. University of Chicago 1936, p. 39. Duyckinck's diaries show that Melville wrote him about once a month from 1876-1878.

[37]Davis and Gilman, p. 82.

[38]Arvin, p. 126.

[39]Leyda, p. 302.

[40]Metcalf, pp. 48-49.

[41]Metcalf, p. 46.

[42]Metcalf, pp. 46-47.

[43]Leyda, p. 277.

[44]Arvin, p. 131.

[45]Arvin, p. 128.

[46]Buber, pp. 1-19.

[47]Davis and Gilman, p. 80.

[48]Melville, Moby-Dick, p. 149.

[49]Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville's Reading: A Check-List of Books Owned and Borrowed (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), pp. 15-21.

[50]Stanley E. Fish, Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), Preface. Fish argues that Sir Thomas Browne and Robert Burton do not follow arguments along well lighted paths, but rather force their readers to search out paths of their own.

[51]Morse Peckham, Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior and the Arts (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1965), p. 39.

[52]Leyda, p. 200.

[53]Davis and Gilman, p. 78.

[54]Metcalf, pp. 72-73.

[55]Herman Melville, Mardi and a Voyage Thither, IV (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1922), p. 323.

[56]Martin Buber, "Distance & Relation," 1957[a], Psychiatry 20. As quoted in R.D. Laing, p. 98.

[57]Vincent, p. 38. Vincent is using: Harrison M. Hayford, "Melville and Hawthorne: A Biographical and Critical Study," unpublished Yale dissertation, 1945.

[58]Herman Melville, The Apple-Tree Table and other Sketches, ed., Henry Chapin, "Hawthorne and His Mosses: (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922), p. 53.

[59]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," pp. 56-7.

[60]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 78.

[61]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," pp. 63-64.

[62]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 83.

[63]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," pp. 76-77.

[64]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 57.

[65]Edwin Haviland Miller, p. 32.

[66]Metcalf, p. 91.

[67]Edwin Miller, p. 94.

[68]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 75.

[69]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 86.

[70]Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1948); Hawthorne's Letter as cited on page 432.

[71]Cantwell, pp. 380; 431.

[72]Cantwell, p. 427.

[73]Cantwell, pp. 380-4.

[74]Cantwell, p. 261.

[75]Cantwell, p. 426.

[76]Davis and Gilman, pp. 118-119.

[77]Davis and Gilman, p. 118.

[78]Davis and Gilman, p. 117.

[79]Melville, Moby-Dick, pp. 477-8.

[80]Leyda, p. 381.

[81]Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 66.

[82]Morse Peckham, "Hawthorne and Melville as European Authors," in Melville & Hawthorne in the Berkshires: A Symposium Melville Annual 1966, ed. Henry A. Murray (North Carolina: Kent State University Press, 1968), p. 43.

[83]Vincent, pp. 25-6.

[84]Buber, "Distance and Relation," Laing, p. 98.

[85]Davis and Gilman, pp. 141-3.

[86]Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 64.

[87]Leyda, p. 354.

[88]Davis and Gilman, p. 143.

[89]Davis and Gilman, pp. 143-144.

SECTION II

THE LINE AND CIRCLE IN MOBY-DICK: A STUDY OF FLUID IMAGERY

Herman Melville transformed the defenses, fears and confusion of his personal relationships into the greatness of Moby-Dick. The book is great, not because it is consistent, not because it gives us clean answers concerning the world's order, but because Melville succeeded in keeping his artistic balance while breaking his metaphorical patterns. The world of Moby-Dick is not finally reductionist: Melville carefully avoided the concretization that would render his ideas false. At its best, Moby-Dick resists logical analysis; it leaves its reader with a persistent sense of mystery.

While Herman Melville was unsuccessful in unfastening the manacles of inhibition in his relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, he was successful in attaining fluidity in Moby-Dick. One way he did this was by creating exploratory rather than fixed images: through the use of the line and circle, Melville created a network of images which he used to explore the danger and peace within his world.

Let us begin with an example: the Grand Armada. In this kaleidoscopic scene of sperm whales, Melville

begins, not by telling us about the whales directly, but rather by telling us about our own location in space. The reader, as well as the Pequod is about to enter the Pacific Ocean, the most central ocean of the world. We are influenced to feel as if we were entering a central gateway opening into a vast walled empire, a world richer and purer than our own; but this world is without any physical gates. Ishmael develops this image:

> The shores of the Straits of Sunda are unsupplied with those domineering fortresses which guard the entrances to the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and the Propontis. Unlike the Danes, these Orientals do not demand the obsequious homage of lowered top-sails from the endless procession of ships before the wind, which for centuries past, by night and by day, have passed between the islands of Sumatra and Java, freighted with the costliest cargoes of the east.[1]

Yet, regardless of the fact that the Orientals waive western-like ceremonials, piratical representatives frequently sally through shadow, entering upon these vessels from the west. They demand tribute, boarding and pillaging, repaying the Europeans for their similarly cruel chastisements.

But the Pequod enters the straits without meeting pirates, without touching land. It is insulated, self-sufficient:

> While other hulls are loaded down with alien stuff, to be transferred to foreign wharves; the world-wandering whale-ship carries no cargo but herself and crew, their weapons and their wants. She has a whole lake's contents bottled in her ample hold (p. 489).

Ahab parallels this insulation. Ishmael compares him to the sun who for a long time "has raced within his fiery ring, and needs no sustenance but what's in himself" (p. 489). The circumnavigating Pequod, as well as her captain, is equal to the supra-rich world where west silently meets east. As the Pequod closes more and more upon Java Head, floating between green palmy cliffs, breathing cinnamon air, searching for the whales frequently found in this central location, a cheering cry from the masthead adds its contrapuntal ring to this magnificent scene and the Pequod sees in the distance a caravan of thousands: an extensive herd of sperm whales.

Ishmael, the perceptual artist, offers us a still-point. The kaleidoscope is momentarily stopped and Ishmael draws us a physical description of the scene:

> Broad on both bows, at the distance of some two or three miles, and forming a great semicircle, embracing one half of the level horizon, a continuous chain of whale-jets were up-playing and sparkling in the noon-day air. Unlike the straight perpendicular twin-jets of the Right Whale, which, dividing at top, fall over in two branches, like the cleft drooping boughs of a willow, the single forward-slanting spout of the Sperm Whale presents a thick curled bush of mist, continually rising and falling away to leeward (p. 490).

But he is unsatisfied with this technical vision. Ishmael attempts to share the magic of haze and light:

> Seen from the Pequod's deck, then, as she would rise on a high hill of the sea, this host of vapory spouts, individually curling up into the air, and beheld through a blending atmosphere of

> bluish haze, showed like the thousand cheerful chimneys of some dense metropolis, descried of a balmy autumnal morning, by some horseman on a height (p. 490).

The kaleidoscopic scene changes. The fleet hurries forward through the straits, as if to escape the Pequod. They gradually contract the wings of their semicircle and swim in one solid, but still crescentic center. The caravan is before them, and Ishmael thinks of capturing some of their number. Other members of the Pequod respond similarly as the sails are raised and the harpooneers begin handling their weapons. Weapon is held against whale: linear object against curve. The scene is too simply portrayed for the reader to easily ignore the contrast between the line-like harpoon and the round moving mass of whales. Melville well understands the power of tension and he is employing it in his kaleidscopic scene. In La Poétique de la Rêverie, Gaston Bachelard, twentieth century philosopher, explains the power of opposition:

> Indeed what credit would snow deserve for being white if its matter were not black, if it did not come from the depths of its hidden being to crystallize into its whiteness.[2]

The weapons of the harpooneers draw us back to the whale, and we are also brought back to "Etymology," Melville's introduction to the word, "whale," where he informs the reader that the word ". . .comes from the Swedish and Danish hval, meaning arched or vaulted. The whale is named so because of its rolling and round nature" (p. 5).

The line and circle have not touched, but the potential of meeting creates additional tension.

Ishmael, imaginatively, sees even more potential tension. In the midst of these round, rolling things, he searches for Moby Dick, the spiritually present center of every whale scene in the novel.

> And who could tell whether, in that congregated caravan, Moby Dick himself might not temporarily be swimming, like the worshipped white-elephant in the coronation procession of the Siamese! (p. 491).

And again the kaleidoscope turns as Tashtego's voice directs attention to the rear. Ishmael has seen but half of the picture: corresponding to the crescent before them is another in the Pequod's rear. The crescent is unclear: the spouts appear fragmented, shattering the curve, replacing it with broken lines:

> It seemed formed of detached white vapors, rising and falling something like the spouts of the whales; only they did not so completely come and go; for they constantly hovered, without finally disappearing (p. 491).

But these were not the spouts of whales, rather they were the Asiatic pirates pursuing the Pequod. Fate, metaphysics, irony, directly enter the scene. Ahab, in Ishmael's estimation, consciously responds to the ironic implications:

> And when he glanced upon the green walls of the watery defile in which the ship was then sailing, and bethought him that through that gate lay the route to his vengeance, and beheld, how that through that same gate he was now both chasing and being chased to his deadly end; and not only that, but a herd of remorseless wild pirates and

> inhuman atheistical devils were infernally cheering him on with their curses; -- when all these conceits had passed through his brain, Ahab's brow was left gaunt and ribbed, like the black sand beach after some stormy tide had been gnawing it, without being able to drag the firm thing from its place (pp. 491-2).

Other lines, those on Ahab's forehead are brought into the foreground of the kaleidoscope. Momentarily, they conflict for power, and then Melville changes the focus of his narrative. We leave tormented Ahab to again focus on the other sailors on the Pequod who have left the Malays behind only to grieve that the whales had been gaining. Gradually the Pequod nears them, lowering its boats. More lines appear: the whale spouts look like flashing lines of stacked bayonets. Again the kaleidoscope turns and the whales seem mad in their consternation:

> In all directions expanding in vast irregular circles, and aimlessly swimming hither and thither, by their short thick spoutings, they plainly betrayed their distraction of panic (p. 493).

From violence, irregular circles, short broken lines, we move to Ishmael's vision of stasis. Ishmael observes that though many of the whales are violently moving, that the herd neither advances nor retreats. Queequeg flings his harpoon, strikes a whale, and it steers for the heart of the herd. Ishmael is no longer simply observing the kaleidoscopic vision from the outside; he is quickly moving toward its center, becoming a central part of its movement. With short darts, Starbuck pricks whales out of

the boat's wake. A number of other whales are winged with druggs and finally, Starbuck's boat finds itself in the innermost heart of the shoal:

> Here the storms in the roaring glens between the outermost whales, were heard but not felt. In this central expanse the sea presented that smooth satin-like surface, called a sleek, produced by the subtle moisture thrown off by the whale in his more quiet moods. Yes, we were now in that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion (p. 496).

Hemmed in by a living wall, Ishmael watches the tumults of the outer concentric circles. He notes successive pods of whales travelling shoulder to shoulder in a ring; he imagines them to be horses in a circus: "A Titanic circus-rider might easily have overarched the middle ones, and so have gone round on their backs" (p. 497). This time the kaleidoscope turns slowly as the members of Starbuck's boat are visited by cows and calves. Their confidence is met with equal innocence on the part of the whalemen:

> Like household dogs they came snuffling round us, right up to our gunwales, and touching them; till it almost seemed that some spell had suddenly domesticated them. Queequeg patted their foreheads; Starbuck scratched their backs with his lance; but fearful of the consequences, for the time refrained from darting it (p. 497).

The whales are no longer passive objects; they, by their behavior, are demanding certain responses. The cows and calves in their innocence have gained control and have demanded that the scene of horror be momentarily

transformed into a scene of peace. Gaston Bachelard calls this power, "trans-subjectivity."[3] Melville uses it to give texture to his already textured scene.

In the center of this enchanted calm, the reader remains suspended, watching mothers nurse their calves. Ishmael again turns the kaleidoscope, projecting the infants' world:

> . . .as human infants while suckling will calmly and fixedly gaze away from the breast, as if leading two different lives at the time; and while yet drawing mortal nourishment, be still spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence; -- even so did the young of these whales seem looking up towards us, but not at us, as if we were but a bit of Gulf-weed in their new-born sight (p. 497).

But the scene is not to remain peaceful. The mother of an infant who is still attached to her by the umbilical cord is stricken. Queequeg cries out in empathy and Starbuck sees the rope and cord entangled, entrapping the infant.

Peace is to be only momentary. Line coldly cuts through circle shattering curves:

> Meanwhile, as we thus lay entranced, the occasional sudden frantic spectacles in the distance evinced the activity of the other boats, still engaged in drugging the whales on the frontier of the host; or possibly carrying on the war within the first circle, where abundance of room and some convenient retreats were afforded them. But the sight of the enraged drugged whales now and then blindly darting to and fro across the circles, was nothing to what at last met our eyes (p. 499).

A terrific object recalls the whole herd from its stationary fright. This object is a struck whale who has run away with a loose cutting-spade in him. Tormented to madness, he swims through the water, wounding and murdering his own comrades as he churns in a broken, irregular fashion.

Again the kaleidoscope rotates. The entire host of whales tumbles upon the inner center. Starbuck and Queequeg change places and Starbuck attempts to steer the boat out of the crescendic mountain. The boat escapes, losing only Queequeg's hat. The fleet again becomes peaceful:

> Riotous and disordered as the universal commotion now was, it soon resolved itself into what seemed a systematic movement; for having clumped together at last in one dense body, they then renewed their onward flight with augmented fleetness (p. 501).

There is no further pursuit. Only one drugged whale is captured. The scene disperses.

Katharine Kuh, modern art critic, in her discussion of the modern world, could be referring to the kaleidoscopic scenes which Melville presents to us in this whale scene. In discussing the technique of modern artists, Kuh could be explaining Melville's use of physical detail:

> Unexpectedly the world shrinks as it expands; there is a great deal more to see, and yet we see it faster. In trying to condense modern multiplicity into tangible form, artists have

> turned to certain shortcuts, to transparent, fragmented, reconstructed images where two compelling illusions -- speed and space -- act as basic source material.[4]

In this chapter, Melville is attempting to show the reader the myriad sides and implications of a world, where each gestalt gives way to another, different, not always directly connected, vision. Melville concentrates on one motion, only to allow its dispersion. Each foreground submerges back into the spectrum of experience; some scenes linger longer, others passively melt away. Melville's end product becomes a montage of his fragmented visions; he has used both concrete detail and psychological suggestion to reconstruct as honest a world as possible.

The archetypal symbols of line and circle adapt easily to the syncopated rhythm of Melville's vision. He is fascinated by them because they have both the qualities of mystical transcendence and cold, unrelenting destruction. He is also enthralled by their fluidity: the line endlessly turns on itself, narrowing to a still point, widening to infinity. These images seem to have the power of their own volition, enlarging only to break apart, closing only to reopen. They allow Melville to explore his world as a scattered totality, existing in incomprehensible pieces, inviting people's dreams and fears.

Georges Poulet, in The Metamorphosis of the Circle, discusses the power of the circle which has the double

generating force of the point: it prolongs itself into a line and begets concentric circles:

> There is no more 'accomplished' form than the circle. No form more lasting, either. The circle that Euclid describes and the one which modern mathematics traces, not only resemble one another but merge with one another. The dial of the clock, the wheel of fortune, traverse time intact, without being modified by the variations which they register or determine. Each time the mind wants to picture space, it sets in motion a selfsame curve around a selfsame center. No matter what the degree of angle may be, men of all epochs have used only one compass.[5]

The tension and fluidity that the different aspects of the circle and line allow are one of the main reasons that Melville is so attracted to this specific network of images.

In Moby-Dick, Melville has Ishmael verbalize his awareness of the power fluidity gains through tension. Ishmael narrates his experience of being snugly in bed, connecting his comfort to his awareness that the room is slightly chilled:

> Nothing exists in itself. If you flatter yourself that you are all over comfortable, and have been so a long time, then you cannot be said to be comfortable any more. But if, like Queequeg and me in the bed, the tip of your nose or the crown of your head be slightly chilled, why then, indeed, in the general consciousness you feel more delightfully and unmistakably warm (p. 86).

Melville relies on the power of tension to create the atmosphere of Moby-Dick. He has Ishmael describe the Pequod encountering vast meadows of brit and shows the

Pequod sailing through these boundless fields of ripe and golden wheat only to have right whales break the symmetry by mercilessly feeding on them:

> As morning mowers, who side by side slowly and seethingly advance their scythes through the long wet grass of marshy meads; even so these monsters swam, making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea (p. 361).

Other critics have noted the vast amount of tension in this work. Robert Zoellner's reading of Moby-Dick is accurately based on the power of tension in the novel:

> From beginning to end, Moby-Dick is dominated by the shark's saw-pit mouth and charnel of maw. Into that gaping, apparently bottomless rictal void everything must go. All things are, finally, consumed. It is this sense of both cosmic activity and life process as hideously predacious, devouring kind of business, that makes Moby-Dick the supremely horrible book it is.[6]

He correctly relates this power to the cannibalism/rebirth motif recurrently present in Moby-Dick. Melville begins his book by depicting a presently dead, consumptive usher who prepared the "Etymology" section on the meaning of the word, "whale." Melville tells us of his life:

> The pale Usher -- threadbare in coat, heart, body, and brain; I see him now. He was ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars, with a queer handkerchief, mockingly embellished with all the gay flags of all the known nations of the world. He loved to dust his old grammars; it somehow mildly reminded him of his own mortality (p. 3).

The usher seems self-consuming in his controlled movement toward order, and in his will to die. He mocks his consumption, his mortality, caring nothing for the limited

world he will never directly experience. Most enchained, it is ironically the usher who is most free.

Even the image of the Pequod is one of mocking cannibalism, indifferent to its own mortality and to the mortality surrounding it:

> She was apparelled like any barbaric Ethiopian emperor, his neck heavy with pendants of polished ivory. She was a thing of trophies. A cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies. All round, her unpanelled, opened bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to (p. 105).

And of course the sea is the most powerful cannibal of all. Ishmael, fearing his mortality, points out its deceptive power:

> Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began (pp. 363-4).

At points of the novel Ishmael may jest about cannibalism, but this complicates rather than decreases the tension, simply adding another level to the intricate montage already created. Ishmael tells us there is evil in the fact that man feeds upon the creature that feeds his lamp and like Stubb, eats him by his own light. By

playing with human cruelty he attempts, unsuccessfully, to dissuade himself from fearing it:

> . . .and everyone knows that some young bucks among the epicures, by continually dining upon calves' brains, by and by get to have a little brains of their own, so as to be able to tell a calf's head from their own heads; which, indeed requires uncommon discrimination. And that is the reason why a young buck with an intelligent looking calf's head before him, is somehow one of the saddest sights you can see. The head looks a sort of reproachfully at him, with an 'Et tu Brute!' expression (p. 393).

Ishmael's seriousness became part of the foreground again, when he asks the reader to confess his own cannibalism. People, he insists, are not much different from sharks who viciously snap at each other's disembowelments and "like flexible bows, bent round," bite their own, until those entrails seem "swallowed over and over again by the same mouth" (p. 395).

The power of this cannibalistic imagery, as Zoellner points out, lies not only in its dialectical tension but also in the circularity of the life process. Yvor Winters, in his analysis of Moby-Dick, implies that the novel's power comes not from this circular, cannibalistic synthesis, but from the duality of the imagery. Specifically, Winters sees the basis of Moby-Dick's power as coming from the antithetical qualities of land and sea, the land representing the known, the master and the sea, the half known, obscure region of uncritical instinct, danger and terror.[7]

Winters is focusing on the power of opposition in Melville's creation of the imagery in Moby-Dick, rather than the fact that he uses the power of opposition, but is also aware that there are complexities in nature which go beyond dualism. Tension, in Moby-Dick, does not only come from conflicting opposites, but also from the complex nature of each element. For instance, when Melville has Ishmael explore the meaning of land, he has Ishmael verbalize his awareness that land does not always imply safety:

> The port would fain give succor; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearth-stone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through (p. 148).

Melville has Starbuck share Ishmael's sensitivity to a complexity that transcends dualism. Starbuck, deciding he should act, finds forces working within him which are stronger than logic, forces which cause him to passively acquiesce to Ahab's power:

> 'I come to report a fair wind to him. But how fair? Fair for death and doom. -- that's fair for Moby Dick. It's a fair wind that's only fair for that accursed fish. . . .shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him? . . . .he's sleeping. Sleeping? aye, but still alive, and soon awake again. I can't withstand thee, then, old man' (pp. 650-1).

Melville freely plays with dualism, but is not limited to it: the innocent Pip may adore the diabolical Ahab; ambergris, the sweetest of all matter, may be found only in the bowels of sick whales, but Melville uses this information to explore rather than reduce his world.

Correspondences also play an important part in Melville's world, but these correspondences also explore rather than define nature. Ishmael notes patterns frequently and shares them with his reader. When Ahab moves on board the Pequod, Ishmael comments, pointing out the patterns being formed:

> Soon his steady, ivory stride was heard, as to and fro he paced his old rounds, upon planks so familiar to his tread, that they were all over dented, like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of his walk. Did you fixedly gaze, too, upon that ribbed and dented brow; there also, you would see still stranger foot-prints -- the foot-prints of his one unsleeping, ever-pacing thought (p. 216).

When Ahab draws the chart which defines Moby Dick's watery journey, Ishmael notes that a rocking lamp is sending off rays which are marking his forehead:

> While thus employed, the heavy pewter lamp suspended in chains over his head, continually rocked with the motion of the ship, and for ever threw shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead (p. 267).

These hieroglyphical signs which hint of higher, if parallel, truths, are not limited to Ahab. They are also

associated with Queequeg, whose tattoos invite reading but firmly remain incomprehensible. Ishmael comments that no person, not even Queequeg, can comprehend their import:

> And this tattooing, had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise of the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them. . . (p. 612).

Mysterious markings also distinguish Moby Dick from other whales. Messages also appear on his body in the form of a snow-white wrinkled forehead, but they too remain undefined (p. 245).

Patterns emerge everywhere in Moby-Dick, but the more they are understood, the more one realizes that their outward portents are most likely giving a false impression. The whale skeleton, for instance, gives little indication of the whale's true shape (p. 351). Even if understood perfectly, they gain humans little control. When a fiery message burns on the masthead, Ishmael admits that even if this message were understood, the fate of the individuals on board the Pequod would most likely not be affected. The sailors are in no better position than Belshazzar. When Belshazzar noted the writing on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," he requested that the message be interpreted. The prophet, Daniel, offered his services,

analyzing the anagram: "God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end; thou art weighed in the balances and are found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Knowing this, Belshazzar could prevent nothing: there would be painful destruction. That night Belshazzar died in his sleep.[8]

The complex patterning of the world brings pain, for it reminds humans of the passage of time, and of their lack of control. In the bower in the Arsacides, Ishmael responds to the beauty and horror of his vision:

> It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen; the trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap; the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver's loom, with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof. . . .Through the lacings of the leaves, the great sun seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure. Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver! -- pause! -- one word! -- whither flows the fabric? what palace may it deck? wherefore all this ceaseless toilings? (p. 573).

Even minor characters are aware of the intricate correspondences within the universe and fear their own lack of power. At midnight, fantasies thread through the forecastle, passing from the Maltese to the Sicilian and finally to the Tahitian sailor. He reclines on his mat, perceiving the vague female shape which fades from his mat:

> 'Hail, holy nakedness of our dancing girls! -- the Heeva-Heeva! Ah! low veiled, high palmed Tahiti! I still rest me on thy mat, but the

> soft soil has slid! I saw thee woven in the wood, my mat! green the first day I brought ye thence; now worn and wilted quite. Ah me! -- not thou nor I can bear the change!' (p. 235).

Melville's novel seems motivated by his desire to present a world that may be limited in terms of individual character's views, but when these views are taken simultaneously, form a gestalt which is more than the sum of their individual parts. For instance, fascinated with roundness, he has Ishmael respond to it in many forms. It is the ocean which is cannibalistic, but it is also the ocean, specifically the Pacific, which zones the world's whole bulk, making all coasts its bay; it is the ocean which is the "tide beating heart of earth" (pp. 613-14). It is also the ocean whose water can curl and hiss around him like the circled crest of enraged serpents (p. 300). The Pacific, the most central ocean, is the most alluring to him:

> There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea, whose gently awful stirrings seem to to speak of some hidden soul beneath; like those fabled undulations of the Ephesian sod over the buried Evangelist St. John. And meet it is, that over these sea-pastures, wide-rolling watery prairies and Potters' Fields of all four continents, the waves should rise and fall, and ebb and flow unceasingly; for here, millions of mixed shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnambulisms, reveries; all that we call lives and souls, lie dreaming, dreaming, still; tossing like slumberers in their beds; the ever-rolling waves but made so by their restlessness (p. 613).

Ishmael, from the beginning of his tale, clearly convinces us that it is the fluidity of water which lures all people to it:

> Say, you are in the country; in some high land of lakes. Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries -- stand that man on his legs, set his feet a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water, if water there be in all that region. Should you ever be athirst in the great American desert, try this experiment, if your caravan happen to be supplied with a metaphysical professor. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever (pp. 24-25).

Different characters on the Pequod are drawn to various forms of this roundness. The Manxman, for instance, fixates his attention on the ring which he sees as the central metaphor for the world's action. When Daggoo and a Spanish sailor spring at one another on the ship's forecastle at midnight the Manxman insists that the men form a ring in which to fight. He shouts at the angry sailors: "'There! the ringed horizon. In that ring Cain struck Abel. Sweet work, right work! No? Why then, God, mad'st thou the ring?'" (p. 238). The Manxman, himself a circle within a circle, a man from Man, is obeyed.

The question concerning the ultimate good or evil of the ring remains unanswered, but it is further, if indirectly, explored. Ahab uses the circle in a blasphemous ritual where he has the Pequod's sailors swear their loyalty to his vindictive and blasphemous quest after Moby Dick

(p. 223). He has the harpooneers form a central circle while the rest of the sailors form a larger circle around them. The grog is then passed around the circles, spiralizing like a serpent, once again connecting line to circle. Later, reviewing the ceremony, Ahab describes himself as a cogged wheel that fits into the crew's various wheels. Melville leaves the reader with a kaleidoscopic set of fragments. Circles and lines interpenetrate; the ultimate meaning remains undefined.

Indestructable rings attach themselves to death and madness. When Queequeg is sick, Ishmael, fearing his death, sees indestructable rings in the place of his eyes, rings which would lead Queequeg away from him: "'And like circles on the water, which, as they grow fainter, expand; so his eyes seemed rounding and rounding, like the rings of Eternity'" (p. 607). Expanding, rolling rings may lead to transcendence, but they also may lead to death. When Pip becomes mad, Ishmael states that his ringed horizon had expanded around him miserably, creating a sense of vastness which denied his integrity (p. 53).

The dangerous implications of roundness recede into the background of Moby-Dick, as Melville explores the healing aspects of the ring. When Samuel Enderby's sons, the great whalers of the eighteenth century, gained power, they did so, according to Ishmael, in the form of ever-expanding rings: they opened up sea after sea for sailing,

as pebbles thrown in water create ever-widening rings, expansive mirrors of themselves (p. 566).

Sailors are enchanted by rings, but are also afraid of them. Melville will not let us forget that Ishmael, when on the mast-head, transcended in reverie, but at the cost of hovering unconsciously above Descartian vortices (pp. 214-15). Ishmael risks drowning when most at peace with himself.

In Moby-Dick, the doubloon serves as a compelling symbol of roundness to which a number of main characters respond. Ishmael tells us that this sixteen dollar piece comes from a land of central location, the Republic of Ecuador, named after the great equator, the imaginary line that cuts through the earth's roundness. The fact that this round coin was cast midway up the Andes in an unwaning clime that knew no autumn, reinforces its power of centrality, its power of roundness. Ishmael, in describing it, captures its sanctity:

> Now this doubloon was of purest, virgin gold, raked somewhere out of the heart of gorgeous hills, whence, east and west, over golden sands, the headwaters of many a Pactolus flows. And though now nailed amidst all the rustiness of iron bolts and the verdigris of copper spikes, yet, untouchable and immaculate to any foulness, it still preserved its Quito glow (p. 549).

Ahab in studying its pictorial face, sees himself mirrored in its tower, volcano and fowl. He stops studying its marks only to turn to its shape:

> '. . .and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self. Great pains, small gains for those who ask the world to solve them; it cannot solve itself. Methinks now this coined sun wears a ruddy face; but see! aye, he enters the sign of storms, the equinox! and but six months before he wheeled out of a former equinox at Aries! From storm to storm!' (p. 551).

In the midst of studying its shape, he has turned once again to markings, this time to notice that in the very stasis of the patterns is the material which allows flux: the sun is entering autumn, a fact which elicits in Ahab a sense of the spring it left behind only half a year ago. He ends his soliloquy feeling fated, caught in a circular pattern he did not create:

> 'From storm to storm! So be it, then. Born in throes, 't is fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs! So be it, then! Here's stout stuff for woe to work on. So be it, then' (p. 551).

Starbuck, noting Ahab's depression as he reads the coin's meaning, decides to also inspect the coin. He attempts to read human choice into its roundness, but his optimism gives way to his fear of a fluid world:

> A dark valley between three mighty, heaven-abiding peaks, that almost seem the Trinity, in some faint earthly symbol. So in this vale of Death, God girds us round; and over all our gloom, the sun of Righteousness still shines a beacon and a hope. If we bend down our eyes, the dark vale shows her mouldy soil; but if we lift them, the bright sun meets our glance half way, to cheer. Yet, oh, the great sun is no fixture. . . (p. 551).

Thus Starbuck's comforting gestalt gives way to a gloomy one. He, too, is saddened by the fact that he cannot see the

the sun at will. The sun has its own rhythms, its own balance; it is no object to Starbuck's needs. He quits the coin, fearing the lack of control he has himself depicted.

Stubb, viewing the doubloon, also focuses his attention on the sun, the sun which is consistently present, which cannot be escaped. Yet, he too sees movement beyond his control. Although he may cry, "'Book! you lie there; the fact is, you books must know your places '"(p. 553), continues to study this pictorial depiction of the almanac, and he sees within it the life of man in one round chapter. He refuses to be depressed by this lack of control, for as long as life continues, he is satisfied. At the end of his soliloquy, he verbalizes this contentment: "'There's a sermon now, writ in high heaven, and the sun goes through it every year, and yet comes out of it all alive and hearty'" (p. 554).

His version stays in the foreground momentarily, only to recede as Flask steps up to the doubloon and adds his understanding to the montage. For him the doubloon is but sixteen dollars. The Manxman also stops before the doubloon, studies the zodiacal work for a moment and then decides to look at the back end of the mast. Noticing a horse-shoe nail, he concludes that the whale will be raised in the horse-shoe sign, Leo. Stubb notes that each new rendering adds to the same text. When Queequeg appears,

he fancies that Queequeg first compares notes and then signs to the signs on the doubloon. Pip appears and Stubb, fearful of his madness, withdraws.

Pip is the last member of the crew to study the doubloon and add his rendering to the other interpretations. He becomes the crow and his caw is one of doom:

> 'Here's the ship's navel, this doubloon here, and they are all on fire to unscrew it. But unscrew your navel, and what's the consequence? Then again, if it stays here, that is ugly, too, for when aught's nailed to the mast it's a sign that things grow desperate. . . . Oh, the gold! the precious, precious gold! -- the green miser 'll hoard ye soon! Hish! hish! God goes 'mong the worlds blackberrying' (pp. 556-7).

Using the physical image of the doubloon, Melville explores the metaphysical implications of roundness. Melville has invited us to concentrate on each of the above character's versions of reality, only to allow each one to disperse as it came. Melville has us leave the doubloon with no definitive theory, only to enter another chapter, "Leg and Arm," to discover Captain Boomer, who like Ahab has lost a limb in trying to capture Moby Dick. The accepting Captain Boomer becomes a contrasting figure to the angry Ahab. Boomer has discovered that the White Whale is best let alone, an opposite conclusion to Ahab's. Again and again Melville introduces problems to explore rather than define them.

The doubloom is the physical center through which Melville explores roundness; Ishmael is the psychological

center through which this exploration takes place. When we meet him he is at a still-point, attempting to act in a non-destructive manner:

> Call me Ishmael. Some years ago -- never mind how long precisely -- having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. . . .whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off -- then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can (p. 23).

Being a water-gazer is one way of moving from the still-point into something possibly less dangerous. Yet one must be careful not to move too directly. In the introductory chapter, Melville has Ishmael recall the story of Narcissus, who moved outward by gazing into water, only to drown in his newly acquired longing. If we move outward we must be careful not to move too quickly toward the ungraspable phantom of life, for we are no more likely to capture it than was Narcissus. Ishmael discusses this need for the unattainable, this need for the center of things, for our own essence:

> And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all (p. 26).

Ishmael, himself at a still-point, is preparing us for our own journey which will be through concentric circles and through the radii which both divide and form the circumference. In his own movement outward, Ishmael will travel through both the line, dark narrow streets, and through the circle of his own concentric visions. He is unsure how best to progress. He is attracted to the more circular exploration of metaphysics, but he feels compelled, as much as possible, to make his journey linear. He ends his chapter "The Spouter-Inn," using both methods of progression: he discusses paradox but then promises us logical detail:

> Now, that Lazarus should lie stranded there on the curbstone before the door of Dives, this is more wonderful than that an iceberg should be moored to one of the Moluccas. Yet Dives himself, he too lives like a Czar in an ice palace made of frozen sighs, and being a president of a temperance society, he only drinks the tepid tears of orphans.
>
> But no more of this blubbering now, we are going a-whaling, and there is plenty of that yet to come. Let us scrape the ice from our frosted feet, and see what sort of a place this 'Spouter' may be (p. 35).

Even, as during the last paragraph, when Ishmael verbalizes his desire to proceed directly, he cannot help but shatter his direct approach by offering us puns such as 'blubbering,' and he surreptitiously returns to his previous iceberg image by referring to our frosted feet. Ishmael speaks of going directly but his very language curves around itself.

Through the personality of Ishmael, direct and indirect methodologies, the line and circle fight for supremacy. But in Moby-Dick both methodologies emanate from the same source: the still-point.

Ishmael is searching for the meaning of the center, and he is aware that he does not even understand his own interior space:

> Yes, these eyes are windows, and this body of mine is the house. What a pity they didn't stop up the chinks and the crannies though, and thrust in a little lint here and there. But it's too late to make any improvements now. The universe is finished; the copestone is on, and the chips were carted off a million years ago (p. 34).

His surroundings remind him of his lack of control. He tries to be fluid, accepting, but he puzzles after stable meaning. When he spends his first evening at Nantucket, he is allured by an oil painting. What puzzles him most about the picture is something round and indestructible hovering at its center, something beyond crossed and recrossed lines. He attempts several theories concerning the picture's meaning, finally formulating the following theory:

> The picture represents a Cape-Horner in a great hurricane; the half-foundered ship weltering there with its three dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads (pp. 36-7).

In this picture the whale, representing roundness, is crossed by three lines which implant themselves in it.

But perhaps, even more important, the reader should observe that it is a central roundness which so fascinates Ishmael. Again and again, it will be a central image which comes into Ishmael's foreground. From the outset of his journey, round, insulated things have seized his attention. He depicts Manhattan as an insular city. At Father Mapple's church, he notices the insularly constructed platform. There he finds yet another painting to analyze. In this picture, high above the flying scud and dark-rolling clouds, floats a little isle of sunlight. For Ishmael, this isle, another round, rolling object, this time with an angel's face, is the center of the picture. It beckons the ship past the storm; it brings hope beyond itself.

Ishmael is aware that the center is likely to create reverberating horrors if tampered with indelicately: Pip is the living embodiment of his fear. But regardless of the danger, Ishmael remains fascinated with the center. He even notices that the power of the whale leads down to a concentrated point:

> But as if this vast local power in the tendinous tail were not enough, the whole bulk of the leviathan is knit over with a warp and woof of muscular fibres and filaments, which passing on either side the loins and running down into the flukes, insensibly blend with them, and largely contribute to their might; so that in the tail the confluent measureless force of the whole whale seemed concentrated to a point (pp. 481-2).

Outwardly, this point may appear to be little more than a child's bauble. Ishmael notices that the children of the Arsacides play with the end bones of whales as if they were no more impressive than marbles (p. 579), but objects, as he explores them, seem to have the power of trans-subjectivity. For Ishmael, the point remains surreptitiously potent.

Ishmael explores other methods of moving from the center: circles fascinate him and so do lines. The rope, the physical embodiment of the line, at times seems as unimpressive as the end bone of a whale's tail, but as he studies it, it, too, seems to have unexplicable power.

Herman Melville's genius lies in his ability to fuse inner and outer realities. His images of the circle and line reach down past the material, delicately touching the elemental. F. O. Matthiessen praises Melville's reliance on the physical world -- a world he carefully uses to prevent his drama from gliding off into a space where the reader can feel no normal ties.[9] And Melville earns this praise because he has the rare ability to be simultaneously earthly and ethereal. He is the surrealist born of physical ardor; he is the alchemist tied to, but not controlled by the engineer.

As Mathew Arnold states, every great composer makes his own vehicle,[10] and for Melville this vehicle is the whaling industry. Within this industry there are

sufficient images of roundess and linearity so that he can intricately study various methods of progression, various methods of achieving order.

One of the central tools of this industry is rope. It infiltrates almost every area of whaling. Rope is part of the boat and part of the chase -- it attaches sails and it is tied to harpoons. Rope gives the seaman his place, his security and at times his death. It connects to the round images of whale and ship, and it curves, itself becoming a round object that Melville can explore through the consciousness of Ishmael and other members of the Pequod's crew.

Melville exaggerates the rope's nature in order to increase dramatic effect and perhaps, less consciously, because he is afraid to trust so chameleon an instrument. For instance, most whaleboats have rope running down their centers, but Melville, in designing the Pequod, creates a line that runs all around the boat. He chooses to deal with the rope in all its complexity, uniting qualities of good and evil, of treachery and control. Melville also uses the strengthening power of opposition by connecting all four elements to rope: fire is represented by the blue light the rope emits when moving quickly; air is represented by the presence of smoke; water is represented by the element through which the line moves during the whale hunt; and earth is the

physical rope itself, always present on the whale ship and always potentially volatile.

Just as Ishmael is fascinated by the center of things and their circular reverberations, he is also fascinated by the center's radii. The line is a method of moving outward, a method of making contact. But just as the circle can destroy, so can the line: it is the umbilical cord that can bring life, yet wrapped tightly around the infant's neck it will impair breathing and therefore kill. Ishmael verbalizes his distrust of it:

> . . .the calm is but the wrapper and envelope of the storm; and contains it in itself, as the seemingly harmless rifle holds the fatal powder, and the ball. . .so the graceful repose of the line, as it silently serpentines about the oarsman before being brought into actual play -- this is a thing which carries more of true terror than any other aspect of this dangerous affair (p. 372).

Ishmael is aware that if the whale line has even the slightest kink, it, while moving, will easily remove an arm or leg (p. 376). The fact that the layers of concentric spiralizations may look like cheese simply adds to his fear of rope.

The rope, in Moby-Dick, is so powerful that it is used to differentiate characters. Starbuck's relationship to the rope is inactive: he passively stands attached to a shroud watching a storm. Stubb and Flask choose to ignore the shroud: instead they make sure the masts are bound firmly to the railings, attempting to be as practical

as possible. Ahab challenges the ropes, as he challenges everything else:

> . . .with a mighty volition of ungraduated, instantaneous swiftness, the White Whale darted through the weltering sea. But when Ahab cried out to the steersman to take new turns with the line, and hold it so; and commanded the crew to turn round on their seats, and tow the boat up to the mark; the moment the treacherous line felt that double strain and tug, it snapped in the empty air (p. 718).

Ahab wants more from the rope that it can give him.

Ropes are intricately connected to dreaming, and thus to the transcendent nature of human beings. Ishmael notices that when people try to comprehend the ocean they climb "high aloft in the rigging, as if striving to get a still better seaward peep" (p. 24). When we hear Father Mapple's sermon, we find that Jonah has a similar tendency to attach himself to shrouds. Startled to wakefulness by his Master, Jonah staggers to his feet and stumbles to the ship's deck. The first action he takes is to grasp a shroud: only then does he look at the sea (p. 76). Even Ahab holds the mizen shroud when looking outwards at sea. However, for him, the connection brings the look of crucifixion to his face (p. 170). Even Ahab, in his terrible isolation, wants at least the semblance of connection with something outside of himself.

Melville creates an undefined relationship between the mystical and physical world of rope. He has the sooty flames from the diabolical try-works light up the rigging

with its unnatural light (p. 639): he has unearthly messages appear in the rigging. Melville is alluding to the message that appeared on the wall of Belshazzar's palace, a message that foreshadowed the destruction of the Babylonian kingdom. By having rigging replace wall, Melville is being consistent with his desire to reconstruct as fluid a world as possible.

Melville is also toying with psychological pairing when he connects rope to the elusive albatross: Ishmael, frightened by the quality of whiteness and the uncontrollable center of nature, shares his dream-like state with us:

> Bethink thee of the albatross, whence come those clouds of spiritual wonderment and pale dread, in which that white phantom sails in all imaginations? Not Coleridge first threw that spell; but God's great, unflattering laureate, Nature (pp. 255-6).

Melville, or Ishmael (in this section author and narrator merge in their omniscience) break the flow of the tale to give the reader a footnote concerning the albatross' relationship to rope. Telling the reader of the first time he saw an albatross, he ends his narrative by questioning how such a mystic, central, uncontrollable thing can be caught. He answers his own question: "Whisper it not, and I will tell; with a treacherous hook and line, as the fowl floated on the sea" (p. 256f). Melville reinforces the power of rope by having even as

mystical a bird as the albatross vulnerable to it. And he creates in all its horrible whiteness, the living embodiment of the rope, the all grasping squid.

Melville also has rope influence dreams. Ishmael notices that the sailors are protective of one another's sleep: "If a rope was to be hauled upon the forecastle, the sailors flung it not rudely down, as by day, but with some cautiousness dropt it to its place for fear of disburbing their slumbering shipmates" (p. 172). Ropes bring nightmares and must be silenced.

Melville sometimes isolates rope to give it power. In the Parsee's prophesy, hemp alone can kill Ahab (p. 631). When precious spermacetti is tapped, only a light tackle called a whip is needed (p. 440). Ahab gives Starbuck control over his life by handing him a single rope which he may or may not properly attach to the rigging. If this single rope is misused, Ahab will fall to his death (p. 677). Melville also reminds his reader that only one rope is needed to find one's way out of a labyrinth (p. 574).

At times one feels that rope, like the circle, has a will of its own. It can respond independently of people's contact with it. When Queequeg and Ishmael are on a schooner, the Moss, on their journey to Nantucket, an unexpected strain on the main-sail parts the weathersheet. The tremendous boom flies from side to side, dangerously sweeping the after part of the deck. The wind and rope

seem to be conspiring to punish the Captain and a rambunctious young man for abusing Queequeg. The young man falls overboard and Queequeg shows his heroism. He whips hold the rope, secures one end to the bulwarks and flings the other around the boom, thus stopping all dangerous motion (p. 95). The rope that might have killed the bumpkin saves him. Sometimes the rope's potential power is dressed with the calm façade of ineffectuality. During Ishmael's classification of whales he speaks of the sulphur bottom whale, mentioning that it is never chased because it would run away with rope walks of line (p. 159). Rope, like the circle, has the power of trans-subjectivity: it shows power independent of that which it is given. When the rope appears ineffectual, the times it seems to have acted at will remain in the background. Melville may overtly concentrate on the rope's innocence, but its moments of power will not disappear from the montage he has created.

Different lines have differential power. In the mat-maker scene, Queequeg and Ishmael are passing and repassing a two-stranded, tarred rope between the long yard of a warp. When a sailor shouts that a whale is in view, their peaceful reverie ends and the lines of weaving are dropped in order that they may pick up thicker, more essential rope. The line is also breaking into the

peaceful, yet less sturdy circle of transcendence: the round, fluid, quality of reverie gives way to the more linear physical reality.

Ropes gain power because of their ability to connect. In the "Town Ho's Story" when Steelkilt warns Radney not to threaten him with a hammer and is ignored, he knocks Radney down and shakes the backstays, gaining attention from his friends, and thus their aid. After Steelkilt strikes Radney, three junior mates come to arrest him, but his friends, because they have received the message from the ropes, slide down them and arrive before the mates, allowing Radney to gain the forecastle (p. 353). Ropes, during a storm, can also connect the sailors to the rail. Each sailor makes a bowline, and stays in this loop until the storm subsides. Recall signals are also tied to the rigging (p. 666). Connection is also used as punishment: in the Steelkilt/Radney episode, Steelkilt and his desperados are punished by being dragged along the deck, like dead cattle and tied into the mizen rigging (p. 387).

Ropes also gain power because of their sensitivity. They vibrate in the water and thus become conductors of life and death when attached to whales. Even the dullest oarsman feels the power conducted in the line (p. 459). They are quick to respond to pressure: the instant the

stricken whale starts on a fierce run, the line swiftly straightens (p. 528). Rope can even determine location (p. 656).

Neither the circle nor the rope will consistently allow other people control: Ishmael, aware of this, still attempts to gain as much control as possible. He attempts to control by defining, spending a good deal of energy telling his reader how hemp and Manilla differ from each other. Ishmael's tone, when he tries to discuss rope realistically and physically, is journalistic rather than poetic:

> Of late years the Manilla rope has in the American fishery almost entirely superseded hemp as a material for whale-lines; for, though not so durable as hemp, it is stronger, and far more soft and elastic (p. 368).

Other sailors attempt to control rope by showing it respect. For instance, when we are first introduced to the Pequod and told its history, we learn that the masts on the ship are new, but that the old hempen thews and tendens have been preserved. The reason for the new masts is because the ropes were unsuccessful in holding them, yet they have been saved. A subconscious covenant between the sailors and the rope may exist: if the sailors have faith in the experienced rope, perhaps it will aid them toward a safe journey and return. If such a covenant does exist, Ahab either consciously or unconsciously breaks it when he forges his new harpoon and

demands that the old, although still adequate, towline be replaced by new rope (p. 621).

Sailors are always trying to work around the rope's surreptitious power. One way they attempt to do this is by leaving both ends of the line exposed in each tub. The lower ends hangs over the edge of the tub completely disengaged from everything while the higher end remains open in case the whale begins to move uncontrollably, or in case more line is needed (p. 369). But rope proves too chameleon.

Melville allows all the control-oriented fragments of reality to be subsumed momentarily by the line's power when he has Ishmael describe what happens when even a single harpoon is darted:

> The harpoon was hurled. 'Stern all!' The oarsman backed water; the same moment something went hot and hissing along every one of their wrists. It was the magical line (p. 376).

When a single harpoon is darted the motion initiates the flow of line all around the boat; both the speed and power of the line deny the probability of easy control. Its power becomes all-consuming, almost taking over the other fragmented visions of the rope. Ishmael offers the reader an intricate description of smoke jetting up from the swift turns of the rope around the loggerhead. And he describes what holding this rope is like: "It was

like holding an enemy's sharp two-edged sword by the blade, and that enemy all the time striving to wrest it out of your clutch" (p. 376).

Melville continues to develop the mobile image of the rope, exploring even more of its facets: it may be feared for being overly-powerful, but it is also to be scorned for its weakness. Rope is blamed for not being able to withstand the strain of people pulling it in opposite directions. When the sailors refuse to go further and Ahab insists on going forward, the line breaks, and is called "treacherous" for doing so (p. 715). The implication of this name-calling is that the rope, given its trans-subjective power, could be strong if it somehow chose. Devil imagery becomes only a fragment of Melville's development of the rope for he also uses angel imagery in connection with it: when the line grows tighter, Ishmael uses the simile of a harpstring to describe it; when Ahab presses his foot on the rope, he notices that it hums like a harpstring (p. 621).

By developing the precariousness of the rope's position in the whale-boat, Melville further adds to the complexity of our response to it. Melville mentions that the rigging of the Pequod is attached to whales' teeth set in rail, thus building on his theme of cannibalism, and the circularity of existence. The information that the rope and teeth are juxtaposed is repeated when the

Pequod begins its journey. Melville even has the moon's light shine on these teeth, reinforcing the evil and danger of the relationship (p. 145). This image reaches its most powerful height when the captain of the Samuel Enderly tells his story:

> 'How it was exactly,' continued the one-armed commander, 'I do not know; but in biting the line, it got foul of his teeth, caught there somehow; but we didn't know it then; so that when we afterwards pulled on the line, bounce we came plump on to his hump!. . .And thinking the hap-hazard line would get loose, or the tooth it was tangled to might draw (for I have a devil of a boat's crew for a pull on a whale-line). . .' (p. 560).

Tooth and line fight for supremacy. Captain Boomer sacrifices an arm in his withdrawal from the conflict.

Rope, connection, may bring safety or death. The sailors, understandably, have difficulty deciding when to cut the line and when to hold firm. Melville explores the danger and joy of connection in a number of scenes. During the Steelkilt/Radney episode, Steelkilt must make the decision whether or not to remain attached to Radney: he cuts the rope, severing his attachment to him. Radney leaves his rope attached to Moby Dick. This rope will get caught in Moby Dick's teeth and will drown him (p. 343). In the monkey-rope scene, Queequeg and Ishmael are attached to one another, but never seriously consider separation. Ishmael, humorously compares his situation with that of a dancing ape attached to an Italian organ grinder, yet

Ishmael is quite aware that the situation is mortally dangerous:

> So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two. . .and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. . .Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I would, I only had the management of one and of it (p. 416).

The decision to remain attached has a more negative affect during an early chase scene when Queequeg and his boat succeed in thrusting their harpoon into a whale and remain attached even when a violent storm begins. By remaining attached they risk death. After the squall, the only sound is that of ropes: "We all heard a faint creaking, as of ropes and yards hitherto muffled by the storm" (p. 301). This eerie sound causes the ropes to gain the foreground of the montage, and metaphorically come back to life after the storm. They remind the reader not only of the power of rope and the rebirth of life after a storm, but also of the sailors' mortality.

Frequently individuals disagree over when rope should be cut. During one violent storm, when Ahab's diabolical harpoon is hit by lightning, its glow frightens the crew into wanting to reverse direction and return home. Ahab responds by snatching the harpoon and waving the burning torch among them, swearing to transfix any sailor

that casts loose a rope's end (p. 646). Ahab then demands more rope, and the men obey. As irrational forces increase, the rope becomes more vulnerable. Lines can, and do, rot. In the log and line episode, rain and spray weaken the rope, making the instrument ultimately ineffectual. When overstrained, the line will snap. During a terrible typhoon, Starbuck and Stubb cut the jib and main-sail adrift as soon as they can. The image that follows the cutting of the lines is of an albatross losing feathers. Melville, in creating his intricate montage of the rope's power, is clearly attempting to keep his image as large, as complex as possible. Regardless of how the kaleidoscope turns, however, regardless of how Melville undermines the image of physical rope, he will not let the reader forget that the central action of Moby-Dick is taking place on the equator, the non-physical counterpart of the rope.

Most decisions concerning the physical rope, even when having generally positive affects, involve pain and loss (p. 649). One of the central reasons for loss is the desire for conflicting objects, as well as subjects, to maintain their power whenever possible. Frequently enemy and object are irrevocably attached to one another. For instance, the rope's own flexibility rushes it toward its potential destroyer, the harpoon.

At times the physical line is helpless to human will; at other times human will is helpless in battling the physical line. When Starbuck considers tying up Ahab in order to save the ship, he realizes that Ahab's will is so much stronger than his own that no amount of physical rope can aid him:

> What! hope to wrest this old man's living power from his own living hands? Only a fool would try it. Say he were pinioned even; knotted all over with ropes and hawsers; chained down to ring-bolts on the cabin floor; he would be more hideous than a caged tiger, then. I could not endure the sight; could not possibly fly his howling. . . (p. 651).

Ropes may respond to human will. They cannot keep Ahab fixed; nor can they give Starbuck the strength to try using them. Yet Melville, on the second day of the chase, allows rope so much power that its being missing implies Ahab's death. Ahab tries to maintain control, but Moby Dick is so ferocious that even he believes that continuing the battle then is futile: "having no alternative, he twice sundered the rope near the chocks" (p. 706). His gesture proves impotent for Moby Dick dashes Stubb's and Flask's boats together. In the chaos which follows the Parsee becomes entangled in Ahab's line and disappears. Ahab's response when he finds that the Parsee and his rope are gone focuses on the missing rope: "'My line! my line? Gone?-gone?'" (p. 706). He knows that his missing rope foreshadows his death: Ahab has chosen to fight

Moby Dick; the whale-line has chosen to separate itself from him.

Cutting the physical rope corresponds with metaphysical problems of connection, and problems of connection correspond with problems of imbalance. These, in turn, relate to difficulties in Melville's own life, specifically to the problem of how to best go about human relationships. In Moby-Dick Melville explores this network of issues more bravely and more honestly than in his personal life.

Through the objective correlative of the whale industry Melville studies the issue of balance. When the members of the Pequod capture a sperm whale and tie it to one side of the ship, they also catch a right whale and attach it to the other side of the ship in order to keep it physically steady, and, even more importantly, because diabolical Fedellah has suggested that having a right whale on the opposite side of a sperm whale keeps ships from capsizing in the future (p. 422). Ishmael questions this magical cure. Keeping balance, or trying to do so, is seductive, but this particular method has its dangers. When both whale heads are tied to the ship, they obscure the spars and rigging, thus hiding important ropes. This hiddenness reinforces Stubb's statement that Fedallah's charm will ultimately "'charm the boat to no good at last'" (p. 422). Melville, through his character

Ishmael, explores the possibility that natural movement, rather than imposed balance, might be more practical. He partially makes his suggestion of cutting off both heads in jest, but there is also seriousness in it:

> As before, the Pequod steeply leaned over towards the sperm whale's head, now, by counterpoise of both heads, she regained her even keel; though sorely strained, you may well believe. So, when on one side you hoist in Locke's head, you go over that way; but now, on the other side, hoist in Kant's and you come back again; but in very poor plight. Thus, some minds for ever keep trimming boat (pp. 425-6).

As in the "Grand Armada" chapter, where Melville, through his use of break-up, studies the implications of a peaceful center that cannot hold, so, in his study of rope, he explores the myriad implications of connectedness. Melville's physical gestalt of two whales attached to opposite ends of the Pequod gives way to Ishmael's psychologically correspondent question concerning the usefulness of studying philosophers. Again Melville has created a scene only to allow it to disperse; he has concentrated on one image only to show its limitations.

Again the kaleidoscope shifts, and Melville shows the life-giving qualities of connectedness. When we meet the Bachelor, we see a ship carrying two barrels of sperm wedged in her cask. Easing the load is the suggestion Ishmael makes; but Melville offers us another vision: perhaps we should be attaching ourselves to more life-giving objects. But one follows one's nature. Yet, even

being as natural as possible has its dangers: during the "Grand Armada" chapter, an infant whale is caught in both its umbilical cord and the whale line (p. 489).

Melville, in his study of how best to progress, becomes confused between his image of the line and the circle. The line offers one set of difficulties, the circle another. By being attached, Ahab drowns, but by being separate Pip goes mad. Neither the line nor circle are consistently life-giving. Melville is exploring these images, but in his exploration he himself becomes confused over which to choose. This confusion is best depicted in his inconsistent choice of a steering mechanism for the Pequod: its steering apparatus is described both as a stick and a wheel. Early in the novel Ishmael explains to the reader that the steering mechanism of the Pequod is a curiously carved tiller made from the lower jaw of a whale. During a critical moment the helmsman who steered by that lever feels like a Tartar when holding back his fiery steed by clutching its jaw (p. 106). Yet, in the midst of a larger crisis, when Ahab is in a fury, when an even more critical storm is up, and Ahab pushes the helmsman aside and attempts to steer the boat himself, he dashes the helm down before the helmsman can handle the spokes (p. 374), thus implying that the steering apparatus is a wheel.

This disparity between tiller and wheel, between line and circle, seems to be more than a simple technical problem: it is a problem of vision.

As the chase leads the sailors closer to their destiny, balance and order are more and more frequently destroyed. Neither circle nor line proves safe. Counter-balancing attempts are made, such as attaching rope to more powerful substances like iron and pole rather than sail and wood, and ropes are braided for increased strength, but the boats continually capsize and the ropes break.

The sailors become victims of their own inability to differentiate. Simultaneously, their need for some semblance of connection becomes stronger. Under the psychological strain of the second day's chase, Ishmael needs order desperately, and therefore perceives that the world is indeed ordered. He sees all things running into the hull:

> . . .as the one ship that held them all; though it was put together of all contrasting things -- oak, and maple. . .iron, and pitch, and hemp -- yet all these ran into each other in the one concrete hull (pp. 700-1).

In this scene, rope gains the foreground, dangerously becoming part of the unified vision. By being ignored, it gains power. The sailors are entering a metaphysical sphere and Ahab is increasing his own power by allowing them to become his objects:

> Unmindful of the tedious rope-ladders of the shrouds, the men, like shooting stars, slid to the deck, by the isolated backstays and halyards; while Ahab, less dartingly, but still rapidly was dropped from his perch (p. 702).

As in a dream, all things begin to move effortlessly. Unification evokes its opposite. The kaleidoscope turns and elements begin to terribly, irrevocably, break apart.

Ahab, unsuccessfully, tries to control the tragedy. He plays out more line and then rapidly hauls and jerks it in again. The ropes, however, rather than alleviating the problem, become intricately knotted. The whale has, by its untraceable evolutions, crossed and recrossed the three lines attached to him. The boats have become their own enemies, weaving in such a way as to make the rope even more convoluted. Line and circle join once again.

No action is direct: Ahab's desperate attempt to control his fate brings the reader back to Bulkington, the sailor who was the first to drown, the sailor who stepped on land only to return immediately to another watery voyage. Ishmael, carried away by his own need for order, had reinforced Bulkington's obsessive circling, his direct return to water: "Terrors of the terrible; is all this agony so vain? Take heart, take heart, O Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing -- straight up, leaps thy

apotheosis!" (p. 148). Bulkington had drowned by going too directly back to water, and Ahab too, in his monomaniacal need to revenge himself on Moby Dick, is courting death. Ahab is so directly identified with the line, with direct action, that when a rope snaps during the second to the last day of the chase, he cries out in pain, "'What breaks in me?'" As he has himself stated earlier, before he broke the sailors would hear him crack. The cracking rope represents his own cracking. The kaleidoscope turns and arrogance becomes pain.

Subject and object merge and Ahab becomes the rope the sailors have unsuccessfully controlled. The rope turns on itself and becomes the noose that hangs Ahab. The ship's shroud is Ahab's death cloth. Rope, which can save, has chosen to kill.

Continual circular motion may create a suction to drown all things, as does the Pequod's spinning at the end of Moby-Dick. The chase itself has been little more than a mad circle (p. 251), as was the movement in the "Town Ho's Story," the endless motion of two men, Radney and Steelkilt, around a windlass (pp. 329-30). Motion waits for its end, and the end is often entropy.

Once again the kaleidoscope turns. The same circle that drowns, that carries the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight (p. 722), saves one man, Ishmael, and one piece of wood, the life-buoy coffin. Ishmael connects

himself to this coffin and a passing ship, the Rachel, rescues him. Line and circle again are intricately connected, and again, momentarily, the kaleidoscope rests at yet another still-point.

NOTES -- SECTION II

[1]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Fiedelson, Jr. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), pp. 487-8. All subsequent references to this edition will be internally documented.

[2]Gaston Bachelard, On Poetic Imagination and Reverie, trans. Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1971), pp. 8-9.

[3]Bachelard, p. xix.

[4]Katharine Kuh, Break-up: The Core of Modern Art (New York: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1965), pp. 7-8.

[5]Georges Poulet, The Metamorphoses of the Circle, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman in collaboration with the author (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. vii. It was Georges Poulet who first allowed me to see how intricately connected the line and circle were.

[6]Robert Zoellner, The Salt-Sea Mastodon: A Reading of Moby-Dick (California: University of California Press, 1973), p. 191.

[7]Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason (Denver: Allan Swallow, 1943), p. 200.

[8]The Book of Daniel, ed. Rev. Dr. A. Cohen (London: The Soncino Press, 1973), pp. 45-6.

[9]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 417.

[10]Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, referred to in American Renaissance, p. 409.

SECTION III

AHAB, STARBUCK, AND ISHMAEL: THE INDIVIDUAL'S SEARCH FOR ORDER

In 1856, five years after the possibility of the fully-reciprocal relationship Herman Melville had wanted to achieve with Nathaniel Hawthorne ceased to exist, Melville was still revealing his hungers to Hawthorne and Hawthorne was still protectively detached, yet listening to his anguished cries. Melville visited him in Liverpool on his way to Constantinople: Hawthorne wrote a journal entry, revealing Melville's tortured frame of mind:

> . . .we took a pretty long walk together, and sat down in a hollow among the sand hills. . . . Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated;' but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists -- and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before -- in wandering to and fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us.[1]

This journal entry gives us some insights into Melville. Although his relationship with Hawthorne had not developed as he had wished, it had not been replaced.

Melville could not let go of his relationship with Hawthorne, even though it was not successful, nor could he let go of his questions concerning Providence and futurity.

Melville, in 1851, had not been successful in forming a fully-reciprocal relationship. He hid this fact from himself as long as he could. But during the same period of time, he did successfully explore his own need for relationships and control of life through the characters in Moby-Dick. Melville, by studying his characters, explores, rather than reduces, their need for order; he studies their personalities without sanctioning their psychological solutions: Ahab's life ends in self-destruction, as does Starbuck's: neither active nor passive bargains with fate, neither relationships nor isolation, consistently maintain life. Ishmael is not saved by the wisdom of rejecting Ahab's vision, nor by his close, even if not fully-reciprocal relationship to Queequeg, but by serendipity: Ishmael has no more direct control than any other member of the Pequod's crew. He is simply lucky enough, or fated, to be at the center of the vortex with Queequeg's life-buoy; he is simply lucky enough, or fated, to be spotted by the Rachel as it searches for its lost son.

Robert Zoellner, in his stimulating study of Moby-Dick, suggests that we connect Ishmael's movement away from solipsism with his survival:

> This seamless unity of perceiver and perceived, of the outer world and the inner, sets Ishmael apart from Ahab. This is what will save Ishmael while Ahab goes down to destruction: his sense of oneness, increasing radically as Moby-Dick progresses, with the external world.[2]

Zoellner stresses, in his study of Ishmael, that Ishmael's depression lifts as the novel progresses. He relates this change to Ishmael's movement from the cold of New England to the warmth of the Pacific, and from the dark philosophy with which Ahab enmeshes him to his disentanglement from this dark vision and its replacement by the peace of brotherhood. This is understandable. But when Zoellner connects Ishmael's positive feelings about himself and his world to his survival,[3] one must question Zoellner's theory: Ishmael, landing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, can clearly have no power over his survival: no amount of optimism can save a person from drowning.

What Zoellner is trying to do makes emotional sense: he is trying to pair survival with a positive, mature, sense of the world, but this reflects Zoellner's desire, more than Melville's presentation. Melville, by ending Moby-Dick as he does, seems to be consciously attempting to study all types of human solutions without sanctioning any. If he wanted to raise Ishmael's philosophy above

the other philosophies presented, he would have Ishmael survive, not by chance, but by his own actions. Melville clearly does not do this: in Moby-Dick, Melville is avoiding his tendency to judge. His characters may do so, but they are not Melville.

Although Melville does not sanction any solution, one can learn much about him by the type of characters he is creating, and the type of problems on which he focuses. In this study, I would like to concentrate on three of his main characters: Ahab, Starbuck, and Ishmael. All three of these characters are, like Queequeg, creatures in a transition state -- neither caterpillar, nor butterfly. Melville studies them, as he studies the line and circle, attempting to show us their various parts, their points of activity and passivity, and their relationships to one another.

Through his character Ahab, Melville studied his own tendency toward an absolute solution, toward a solution which used people as objects in order to gain fuller control over the desired aspects in oneself: simplified intensity and directed action.

Much of Ahab's strength comes from a fear of being nothing more than a ploy in someone else's game. Sometimes his need for invulnerability becomes so strong that he acts irrationally, refusing to be even afraid of human diseases. He will not allow himself to feel his fear of

mortality, and thus the Jeraboam's epidemic cannot threaten him.[4] And even when the ship's log and line are clearly rotten and cannot possibly function properly and give directional information, he insists that the instrument will hold upon his demand (p. 657). He refuses to be frightened of the corposants when they light up the rigging and practically sing of physical as well as metaphysical danger, insisting that they are useful and have appeared for positive reasons: to light the crew's way toward Moby Dick (p. 641). And he shows anger when nature will not act according to his rigid value structure: a structure which allows no weakness, no withdrawal. He condemns the wind for not fighting back: "'Ha! a coward wind that strikes stark naked men, but will not stand to receive a single blow'" (p. 710). The wind partially redeems itself by following Ahab's rules and blowing "straight on," but Ahab maintains some condemnatory feelings concerning it.

Through Ahab, Melville also explores the individual's need to get past the world's mask, to find the center of the universe, and thus to understand the meaning of the world. Melville allows him the compulsive courage to act out his need for control, even at the cost of his life. Ahab is more afraid of being nothing than of being dead. This need of strength transforms itself into a deep fear of weakness. If Ahab gives way to any of his inner

softness, if Ahab shows any movement away from the direct path of his quest, he is convinced that he will lose his battle with the elements, and never find the answer for which he searches. Ishmael describes his supra-human strength, even in the fact of human misery, when the captain of the Rachel begs Ahab to change his course for a short time and help him search for his missing son: "Ahab still stood like an anvil, receiving every shock, but without the least quivering of his own" (p. 670).

If Ahab is to be victor, he will only identify with victors. His rejection of the sun points toward this fear of failure. If the sun is not omnipotent, then Ahab will have as little to do with it as possible. Ahab, viewing the dead whale's tendency to float away from the sun, generalizes the meaning of this act; he sees the sun as limited and therefore unworthy of his respect: "'life dies sunward full of faith; but see! no sooner dead, than death whirls round the corpse, and it heads some other way'" (p. 629). Ahab will not even allow death half the power; his turning from the sun implies that death may, as far as he is concerned, have all the power since it has the last power. He hails death, personified as the watery world, as victor: "'Then hail, for ever hail, O sea, in whose eternal tossings the wild fowl finds his only rest. Born of earth, yet suckled by the sea; though hill and

valley mothered me, ye billows are my foster-brothers!'" (p. 630).

By fighting the White Whale, Ahab attempts to simplify his goal, a goal which he realizes is symbolic rather than actual. By wreaking hate on the White Whale, he is symbolically fighting for the control of his own life:

> 'All visible objects, man, 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. . . . and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him' (p. 220-1).

Ahab's goal is simple: he will fight the White Whale's outrageous strength, meeting what he perceives as the whale's inscrutable malice with every muscle and nerve of his being. His fight for revenge is the only part of him that remains unviolated. Nevertheless, this core self satisfies him. He tells his crew: "'Ahab is enough to die'" (p. 716), and he tells them that regardless of what takes place, his center is invulnerable: "'Nor white whale, nor man, nor fiend, can so much as graze old Ahab in his own proper and unaccessible being'" (p. 705). He believes that his outward being, his mask, may be flawed, limited, lacking the low perception,

emotional, physically razed, but he never believes himself unworthy of returning to his spiritual source.

Ahab's indomitable will fascinates Ishmael as well as other members of the crew. His passionate isolation invites theorizing. Left an orphan at one year, Ahab refrains from marrying until later in life. The woman he weds is much younger than he. Shortly after she becomes pregnant, he leaves her (p. 120), continuing his own isolation, and making his child almost as orphaned as he.

A scar extending across his crown, face,and neck (p. 169), also separates him from general humanity. The scar becomes a generating center for rumors: some think it extends across his entire body. The Manxman suggests that it may have been acquired during a battle with the elements; the carpenter is so caught up in the scar that, in an attempt to understand Ahab's behavior, he unconsciously evokes the memory of the scar:

> 'He goes aft. That was sudden, now; but squalls come sudden in hot latitudes. I've heard that the Isle of Albermarle, one of the Gallipagos, is cut by the Equator right in the middle. Seems to me some sort of Equator cuts yon old man, too, right in his middle. He's always under the Line -- fiery hot, I tell ye!' (p. 666).

When Ahab is crippled by Moby Dick, he further secludes himself. Rumors concerning him become increasingly metaphysical. Frequently, they associate him with

the dead. Ishmael summarizes the rumors: ". . .for a certain period, both before and after the sailing of the Pequod, he had hidden himself away with Grand-Lama-like exclusiveness; and, for that one interval, sought speechless refuge, as it were, among the marble senate of the dead" (p. 591). The different echoes of his legs increase this sense of mysterious otherworldliness: "While his one live leg made lively echoes along the deck, every stroke of his dead limb sounded like a coffin-tap. On life and death this old man walked" (p. 310).

What most intrigues Ishmael about Ahab is the depth of his intensity. Ishmael associates the center of this intensity with the same omnipotent blankness as Moby Dick (p. 272). At times this blankness connects Ahab to God; at times to the devil. On one hand Ishmael verbalizes that he looked like a man cut away from the stake (p. 168), and that his trances and torments left him with Christomachia (p. 271), and that his cabin was a sacred retreat (p. 167); but on the other hand he sees God as Ahab's enemy. Ishmael hears a hiss when Ahab tosses his pipe into the water (p. 176), a sound which connects Ahab to the devil. When a sea-gull steals the hat which hides half of Ahab's face from him, Ishmael associates the bird's gesture with God's wrath.

Ahab is aware that his fellow sailors have mythicized him and he uses their response to augment his power over them. He refers to himself as "Old Thunder" (p. 638) in an attempt to reinforce in others their existing sense of his elemental power. He also uses his silence to gain control, assuming the role of a "mute, maned sea-lion" (p. 202) during mealtimes.

Knowing his crew is superstitious, he uses ritual to deepen their commitment to the hunt. He gathers the crew, ordering the mates to cross lances. He grasps the center of each harpoon, forming the mystical, six pointed, Star of David, the star of victorious warfare. Ahab then orders the harpooneers to detach and draw their harpoons, completing the ceremony by filling each harpoon socket with the same fiery liquid that the crew is to consume, unifying their commitment to Ahab's quest through both weapon and person (p. 224). He attempts to convince the crew that they will the chase.

Later in the voyage he again uses superstition to gain power. When a heavy gale lights the rigging with fire, he ends the crew's half-mutinous stirrings by demonstrating his mystical acumen: he uses the power of correspondence to convince the members of the Pequod that he, by blowing out the harpoon's flames, has successfully blown out their last fear (p. 664). When the compasses go awry, he responds in a similar fashion, making his

scientific knowledge appear otherworldly, making his reorientation of the loadstone seem magical. He calls himself lord of the loadstone, and relies on the crew's ignorance to gain awesome respect when he cries: "'I crush the quadrant, the thunder turns the needles, and now the mad sea parts the log-line. But Ahab can mend all'" (p. 658), each sailor silently acquiesces.

Ahab's actions are deliberate and methodical. He spends hours discovering and charting hypothetical patterns of Moby Dick's movement through the world. Ahab carefully chooses which of the crew's expectations to violate. His purpose is to tie them, in any way he can, to his hunt. Although he would like to believe, and sometimes almost completely convinces himself, that he is a cogged wheel that fits into all his crew's various wheels, that he is a match and they so many ant-hills of explosives (p. 226), that his own soul is a centipede that cannot be cut down (p. 707), Ahab still attempts not to jeopardize his position by overtesting it. He uses his rhetoric as much to convince himself, as to convince his crew, that his power is undefeatable: "'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!'" (p. 227).

Ahab needs to repeatedly convince himself that his actions have led him so far that he can never return. His tendency is to make his world as stable as possible and thus gain the added strength of consistency. He does this in terms of the hunt; he also does it in terms of his deplorable scar. Hating it, he simplifies the matter in his own mind, by convincing himself that it is unremovable. On one level he will ask the blacksmith to smooth out his scar, but he will not wait for an answer, feeling more comfortable in asserting that the task he himself requests is an impossible one: "'. . .can ye smooth out a seam like this, blacksmith. . .if thou could'st, blacksmith, glad enough would I lay my head upon thy anvil, and feel thy heaviest hammer between my eyes'" (p. 619). Ahab responds before the blacksmith, asserting that the scar is permanent having worked its way to bone.

Through Ahab, Melville was recreating his own need for answers, and his unwillingness to listen completely to responses because somehow they might not work to make his world what he desires. During the letter he wrote to Hawthorne which thanked him for his response to Moby-Dick and asked him not to review the book, Melville was showing

the same tendency as Ahab to leave his version of reality as untouched by other's views as possible.[5] Through Ahab, Melville indirectly explored the dangers of fearing reality.

Melville intricately tied Ahab's bravery to his insecurity. The major outlet he allowed Ahab for venting this insecurity was in his limited relationships with other members of the Pequod. If he is to move unswervingly toward his battle with Moby Dick, he will have to control his feelings of self-hate, of human morality, and of human love. His three major relationships, ones with Fedallah, Starbuck, and Pip, serve Ahab as a means through which he can maintain the necessary control to continue his quest.

Ahab uses Fedallah to vent his feelings of evil and self-hate. He allows Fedallah to mercilessly accuse him of weakness and to torment him with prophesies of destruction so that he can justify this hatred. Fedallah is most essential to Ahab when he feels his own control diminishing. When Ahab becomes increasingly clearer that he will not be dissuaded from the hunt, Fedellah is reduced to a tremulous shadow (p. 675).

The crew is useful in helping Ahab maintain his evil as a separate entity from himself. They are more comfortable believing that Fedallah, rather than their captain, is linked with deviltry. Ahab is allowed his humanities by the crew (p. 120), but Fedallah is not. The

members of the crew see Fedallah as physically devilish: they see his complexion as tiger-yellow (p. 290) and hear his voice as a snake-like hiss. Stubb develops a myth around him: "'Why, they say as how he went a sauntering into the old flag-ship once, switching his tail about devilish easy and gentlemanlike, and inquiring if the old governor was at home'" (p. 423). Earlier, Flask notices that his tusk was carved into a snake's head (p. 422). He believes that Fedallah, like the devil, needs oakum to stuff into the toes of his boots, and that he tucks his tail surreptitiously out of sight.

Ishmael also sees Ahab and Fedallah as unaccountably connected. When Fedallah leans over the same rail as Ahab, Ahab seems to allow him to occupy his shadow. Ishmael is alluding to the fact that Fedallah, like the devil, casts no shadow, but he is also suggesting that an intricate tie exists between the two men. At times Ishmael actually questions Fedallah's physical existence: " . . .if the Parsee's shadow was there at all it seemed only to blend with and lengthen Ahab's" (p. 426). On the second day of the chase Ishmael reports another correspondence between Ahab's and Fedallah's existences: "As with Fedallah the day before, so Ahab was now found grimly clinging to his boat's broken half, which afforded a comparatively easy float. . ." (pp. 704-5).

Fedallah accepts his two-dimensional position on board the Pequod. He demands no more than the symbolic position allotted to him by the members of the Pequod. When Ahab and Perth forge Ahab's harpoon, the harpoon that is to kill Moby Dick, Fedallah passes the fire silently, invoking some curse or blessing on the toil (p. 620); when Ahab breaks the quadrant, Ishmael interprets the Parsee's response as triumphant, fatalistic, self-consuming despair (p. 634). Fedallah, willingly, reinforces Ahab's self-destructive movements and willingly parallels them. For a reason which is never developed in Moby-Dick, he patiently and consistently awaits Ahab's death, and his own. On the first day of the hunt, Fedallah "incuriously and mildly" eyes Ahab when he is tossed from his boat, and his head, like a fragile bubble, rides the ocean. Even when the whale shakes the boat, Fedallah's eyes remain unastonished.

As Fedallah prophesies, he dies before Ahab, serving as his pilot. And Ahab wants and needs this pilot: a pilot that he can hate, a pilot that represents that which will lead him to death. Ahab could hide the pale death glimmer in his own eyes by viewing it in Fedallah's; and he could protect himself from the hideous motion of his own gnawing anguish by watching it reflected in the motion of Fedallah's mouth (p. 689). To see these things too directly in himself might discourage him from continuing the hunt.

In as much as Fedallah can personify pure evil, pure vindictiveness, and in as much as he heads Ahab's boat, then he must also rule Ahab's revenge and lead him to the enactment of his revenge. Ahab needs them to act as one man. If Fedallah and he are identical, then he will assuredly revenge himself upon Moby Dick: if Fedallah and he are identical, then Ahab can indeed be self-sufficient. Ahab fluctuates betewen dividing himself from Fedallah in order to vent his scorn of so cruel a being, and uniting himself with Fedallah to assure his vindictive victory. Through the Ahab/Fedallah relationship Melville is exploring how a relationship can be used to intensify purpose and yet to diminish life and decrease honest self-exploration.

Perhaps even more strongly, Ahab needs his relationship with Starbuck in order to project his moral nature, a nature which would make his monomaniacal hunt for the white whale an inhuman one to carry out. If he cannot exorcise his moral component, he cannot subordinate all the live's on board the Pequod to his need to strike through a mask, which when explored may reveal nothing to him. By projecting his own need to be good into Starbuck, Ahab can simultaneously rule and pity his own moral nature. He controls the part of him that wants to stop himself from completing his hunt by giving it over to Starbuck. He will let Starbuck prevent the quest he refuses to stop

himself. Again and again, he actively gives Starbuck opportunities to destroy him: when entering the basket which will allow him to get to a high point in the main-mast, he gives Starbuck the essential rope, which, if tied improperly, will cause him to fall to his death. He is aware of the implications of this gesture: "'Take the rope, sir -- I give it into thy hands, Starbuck'" (p. 677). Starbuck, his projected moral force, will be the perfect agent to his death. But Starbuck, for reasons I will discuss later, cannot find the strength to be less than perfect, or to kill what he himself idealizes, even though he is convinced that Ahab will bring death to the entire crew.

Ahab makes Starbuck the enemy, the moral force that will stop him, if it can, from fighting the inscrutable White Whale. In order to separate himself from Starbuck, in order to destroy his desire to emphathize, he gloats over the power his successfully vindictive self has over Starbuck. He compulsively needs to prove this power again and again. It is Starbuck he needs to command; it is Starbuck whom he orders to send the men on deck so that they can swear their loyalty to his chase; and it is Starbuck whom he publicly challenges to refuse the chase. He tells Starbuck, partially in order to convince himself: "'Stand up amid the general hurricane, thy one tost sapling

cannot, Starbuck!'" (p. 222). Ahab needs to prove to Starbuck, and thus to himself, that rightmindedness, that humanistic virtue, is incompetent to stop his quest. Starbuck is the only member of the crew on whom he draws his musket (p. 605).

At times Ahab will use omens to gain power, but he is afraid of Starbuck's mystical fears and works, and tries as much as he can to deny these tendencies in himself. When Starbuck responds to the first day's chase as a heavenly gesture telling the members of the Pequod that they might still turn around and be saved, Ahab denies the omens and denies the fact that Starbuck's fears are his own repressed fears:

> 'Omen? omen? -- the dictionary! If the gods think to speak outright to man, they will honorably speak outright; not shake their heads, and give an old wive's darkling hint. -- Begone! Ye two are the opposite poles of one thing; Starbuck is Stubb reversed, and Stubb is Starbuck; and ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men his neighbors!' (p. 697).

In order to distance Starbuck's moralizing and mythicizing from himself, he tries to relate him as much as possible to Stubb, a man with whom he does not identify. Ahab also attempts to remove himself from the shadowy sphere of human behavior. People become frightened; people give up their purpose. Ahab is separate and he alone will be successful. He hates Starbuck's judgments and fears because they

remind him too much of his own repressed morality, a morality that he cannot perfectly delete from his nature.

Starbuck also represents the part of Ahab which is capable of pity. Ahab fights this kind of pity in himself because he knows it will impede his ability to act. Starbuck is that repressed part of him that can blasphemously obey rebelling in order not to kill the vindictive Ahab, even though the vindictive Ahab can surely kill him.

Yet there are times when Ahab so hungers for this repressed morality that he turns to Starbuck, revealing his pain, needing Starbuck's empathy, yet thankful that Starbuck cannot find the strength to stop him:

> 'Forty years of continual whaling! forty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time! forty years on the pitiless sea!. . .and then, the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood and the smoking brow, with which, for a thousand lowerings old Ahab has furiously, foamingly chased his prey -- more a demon than a man! -- aye, aye! what a forty years' fool -- fool -- old fool, has old Ahab been! Why this strife of the chase?' (pp. 683-4).

Ahab cannot stand Starbuck's stare, for it is Ahab's morality staring at his vindictive, compulsive self. Ahab demands that Starbuck redirect his focus: "'Take off thine eye! more intolerable than fiends' glarings is a doltish stare! So, so; thou reddenest and palest; my heat has melted thee to anger-glow'" (p. 221). Triumphant, the vindictive Ahab feels compelled to punish his receptive self. Ahab is fighting Ahab.

As he approaches his destiny and his vindictive part gains strength, he is able to comfortably look into Starbuck's eyes without feeling threatened. He fantasizes his wife and child in their magic glass (p. 684). The vision is bittersweet because Ahab realizes his inability to nurture these people. The most he can allow Starbuck is the opportunity to stay aboard the Pequod during the chase.

Ahab does not nurture Starbuck, his wife or child, because he is afraid nurturing these people will interfere with his vindictive quest. But as he approaches Moby Dick his strong need for vindictive power invokes its opposite: a need to be loved and loving. Pip becomes the outlet for these emotions. The relationship is limited but genuine. When the Manxman repremands Pip, Ahab comes to his rescue: "'The greater idiot ever scolds the lesser. . . .Hands off from that holiness! Where sayest thou Pip was, boy?'" (p. 659). As heartless as he can be toward himself, he can still allow himself to act compassionately toward Pip.

It is interesting that Ahab cannot see his own reflection in Pip's eye (p. 659). This is directly connected to his ability to care for him. When Ahab consciously identifies things and people with himself, he feels compulsively bound to hate them. He punishes

others as he punishes himself. This hardness toward self and toward that with which he identifies, appears most clearly when Starbuck requests that the leaking casks be mended. Ahab screams:

> 'Begone! Let it leak! I'm all aleak myself. Aye! leaks in leaks! not only full of leaky casks, but those leaky casks are in a leaky ship; and that's a far worse plight than the Pequod's, man. Yet I don't stop to plug my leak. . .' (pp. 603-4).

Because Ahab identifies the casks with himself he refuses to repair them. He can only be kind to Pip by keeping him as separate from himself as possible. But unconsciously, Ahab is identifying with Pip. Pip is that part of him that is miserable, that part which has been defeated by his desire to break through the pasteboard mask. As heartless as he can be to himself, he can act compassionately toward Pip. He is unaware of the irony in his cry for compassion: "'There can be no hearts above the snow-line. Oh, ye frozen heavens! look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines'" (p. 659). Ahab is indirectly nurturing his own deserted child-like self. When he opens up his cabin to give Pip a home, he is doing for Pip what he cannot do for himself or for those who threaten the hunt of Moby Dick.

Pip is grateful for Ahab's love, and will go through any pain to keep it. He responds masochistically

to Ahab's preoccupation with his hunt: "'I am indeed down-hearted when you walk over me. But here I'll stay, though this stern strikes rocks, and they bulge through; and oysters come to join me'" (p. 673). Ahab can continue to walk on deck; Pip passively accepts whatever abuse or love he is given.

Ahab remains equally obsessed with the chase. Only in as much as he is clear that Pip cannot interfere with his need for vengeance, can the relationship continue. As long as Pip does not threaten the chase, Ahab can maintain his relationship: "'Now, then, Pip, we'll talk this over; I do suck most wondrous philosophies from thee!'" (p. 667). When the chase begins, Pip is forgotten. Ahab uses him as a distraction, as an outlet for troublesome positive emotions which cannot successfully be cut out; he discards him when there is no time left for love.

Ahab has gained much of his strength by using other people as a means by which to limit and strengthen his own active personality. At times he remembers that he has cut out much of what is good in him. When shoals of small fish - a good luck omen - swim away from him, he responds: "'Swim away from me, do ye?'" (p. 315). Ishmael notices his deep sadness: "There seemed but little in the words, but the tone conveyed more of deep helpless sadness than the insane man had ever before evinced" (p. 315).

Yet he is willing to accept his losses in order to wreak his hate upon the White Whale.

Ahab would have preferred being without fear, yet as deeply as he desires to repress it, he cannot. When he realizes that Fedallah's prophesy is being enacted, he responds by denying his own place in that prophesy. Ahab states emphatically that the Parsee prophesied correctly for himself, but incorrectly for Ahab (p. 712). When he is not able to distance himself from these fears or deny them, he can feel them so deeply that he gets past them quickly:

> Dragged into Stubb's boat with blood shot, blinded eyes, the white brine caking in his wrinkles; the long tension of Ahab's bodily strength did crack, and helplessly he yielded to his body's doom; for a time, lying all crushed in the bottom of Stubb's boat, like one trodden under foot of herds of elephants. Far inland, nameless wails came from him, as desolate sounds from out ravines.
>
> But this intensity of this physical prostration did but so much the more abbreviate it (pp. 694-5).

Ahab attempts to maintain his firmness. When he breaks he breaks completely, only to heal the faster and once again prove his need to be strong.

As he nears his own death, he grows afraid. Although he himself crushes the quadrant, when he sees it lying on the deck he identifies himself with it: "'Thou poor, proud, heaven-gazer and sun's pilot! yesterday I wrecked thee, and to-day the compasses would feign

have wrecked me'"(p. 655). Although he prefers to think of himself as a man who already experienced death, and who is therefore invulnerable to it, part of him realizes that he too will be broken.

Ahab's core self, the part of him that knows he is neither all good nor all evil, all vulnerable or all invulnerable, is a sensitive, astute, philosophical man, yet one who is determined to separate himself from the majority of men simply born to die. He sees the world as a circle, but the circle offends him and he insists on at least trying to break through it. He convinces himself that if he responds to the world as if it were simple, as if he were simple, then his chance of breaking through the world's wall will be much better. Part of Ahab is aware of his own ironic position, but he refuses to act on this knowledge. Ishmael perceives this awareness in Ahab during the "Grand Armada" chapter:

> And when he glanced upon the green walls of the watery defile in which the ship was then sailing, and bethought him that through that gate lay the route to his vengeance, and beheld, how that through that same gate he was now both chasing and being chased to his deadly end; and not only that, but a herd of remorseless wild pirates and inhuman atheistical devils were infernally cheering him on with their curses; -- when all these conceits had passed through his brain, Ahab's brow was left gaunt and ribbed, like the black sand beach after some storm tide had been gnawing it, without being able to drag the firm thing from its place (pp. 491-2).

Realizing that he is also a victim, Ahab still insists on acting out his role as victimizer and revenging himself on Moby Dick.

While Ahab can intellectually agree that some things are better off discarded than pursued, he will not act on this knowledge. As he says to the captain of the Samuel Enderby: "'What is best let alone, that accursed thing is not always what least allures'" (p. 564). Ahab attempts to stay with his decision to fight Moby Dick, regardless of the fact that he knows he is naming an inscrutable thing and then fighting it for the very name he has himself given it (p. 221), just as he continues to complete the forging of his own harpoon, even after he questions whether he is simply forging his own branding iron (p. 621). Intellectually, Ahab knows he is part of a larger scheme, and that he, as part, cannot always comprehend the whole. But Ahab wants to stay with his decision to break through the wall: if the Iron Crown of Lombardy is too heavy, if the jagged edges gall him, if his brain seems to beat against the solid metal, still, he will wear it until death (pp. 225-6). Vulnerable as he is, Ahab insists upon meeting Moby Dick head on until he has either thrust through his inscrutableness, or died in the process of trying.

Ahab can accept that the dead, blind wall butts all inquiring heads, but he will only intellectualize this information. He verbalizes his need to act in spite of the fact that his reason condemns such action: "'I leave a white and turbid wake; pale water, paler cheeks where'er I sail. The envious billows sidelong swell to whelm my track; let them; but first I pass'" (p. 225). He accepts the fact that he is tied up and twisted, gnarled and knotted with wrinkles (p. 682), and that there is pain in fighting nature, but he will not give up his quest: "'Born in throes, 't is fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs! So be it, then!'" (p. 551).

Ahab knows that his world is an extension of himself, that what he is indirectly fighting is his own inscrutableness, but this knowledge does not lessen his need to break through it. He verbalizes this when he analyzes the doubloon on the mainmast:

> 'There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look here -- three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab, and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self' (pp. 550-1).

Ahab also knows that he is acting out of passion and that his philosophical stance is circular. If he is every part, then he is the heaven by which he feels turned, and he is

Fate acting upon him (p. 685). He is the destroyer and the destroyed, responding to himself by defying himself. When Ahab looks at the quadrant he has just destroyed, one sees his identification with it:

> 'Foolish toy! babies' plaything of haughty Admirals, and Commodores, and Captains; the world brags of thee, of thy cunning and might; but what after all canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee: no! not one jot more! Thou canst not tell where one drop of water or one grain of sand will be tomorrow noon; and yet with thy impotence thou insultest the sun!' (pp. 633-4).

Through the mutilated image of the quadrant, power and powerlessness meet. Ahab, like Melville, is aware of the still-point at the center of both line and circle. At the end, he too will be at this identical point as vanquished and vanquisher and as the creator of both. The knowledge that he, like the most poisonous reptile of the marsh, and like the sweetest songster of the grove, will do nothing more or less than inevitably beget his like, gives him both pain and power: "'I own thy speechless, placeless power; said I not so? Nor was it wrung from me; nor do I now drop these links'" (p. 642).

If Ahab will do anything, he, being Fate, will fulfil his destiny. Whatever he does, his philosophy acknowledges that he will be himself. If his worship is defiance then it is the correct form of worship for him.

His patterning, his cotillion, is the correct dance: "'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!'" (p. 225).

Ahab also knows that the more he chases the shadow of himself, the more it will elude him, but his need to chase is part of his destiny. Ahab, like Narcissus, will only be able to rest when he touches the still-point, even if that touching will mean that he must drown at the bottom of a pool: ". . .Ahab leaned over the side, and watched how his shadow in the water sank and sank to his gaze, the more and more that he strove to pierce the profundity" (p. 682).

Knowing his destiny is self-destructive, Ahab sometimes wishes he could be someone else. When he asks the blacksmith to make a complete man after a desirable pattern, he models this man after what he finds lacking in himself:

> '. . .I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel;. . . three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains -- and let me see -- shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards' (p. 599).

What Ahab is not able to separate from himself in life, he can delete in fantasy. The complete man he depicts

will know no confusion, he will only reason, and will never have to contend with conflicting emotions. He will never feel compelled, as Ahab does, to take a small vial of sand out of his pocket and long for the soundings of home (p. 628). Unlike Ahab, he will need no box in which to keep his sins tightly bound.

But Ahab is not this emotionless ideal. He chooses to act only out of his need for control, for revenge, but repress his other needs as he tries, he cannot perfectly annihilate them. He can pack his sins and his needs in separate compartments, he can use various relationships to help him maintain control, but he cannot force his emotional needs to eternally dissipate. Part of Ahab always questions his ruthless need for vengeance:

> What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozzening, hidden lord and master and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? (p. 685).

Ahab may stubbornly fight against the wind (p. 627), and even though his actions are simple, his spirit is not. Melville, through Ahab, has successfully explored a monomaniacal personality without reducing it. Ahab may stop supping, praying, going beneath the planks, but he will neither stop acting nor feeling. He fights and thinks until he is caught around the neck by the flying turns of

his own harpoon, actively fighting his way toward the passivity of death.

Ahab's destruction becomes part of his own self-fulfilling prophesy of doom. He has wanted to be prophet and fulfiller (p. 227), and is his belief in entropy and his obsessive movement toward it, he successfully fulfils both roles. He has cried: "'Hand me those main-masts links there; I would fain feel this pulse, and let mine beat against it; blood against fire!'" (p. 641). The full prive had been demanded. . .and it had been paid.

Through Starbuck, Melville explores the dangers of passivity and the dangers of ignoring the cannibalism of the world. While Ahab tries to streamline his personality to be only active and revengeful, Starbuck, his psychological opposite, attempts to be only receptive and understanding, except in fulfilling specific obligations as chief-mate. When placed in a position where action is essential, unless the activity relates directly to the whaling industry, Starbuck finds himself unable or unwilling to act. Starbuck's need to relinquish power comes from the same psychological space as Ahab's need to maintain it: both men wanted idealized worlds. While Ahab's personal philosophy centers around the belief that "I must provide," Starbuck's centers around the belief that "God must provide." As Ahab uses Fedallah, Starbuck,

and Pip to narrowly control the elements in his own personality, so Starbuck is able to deny the assertiveness in his own personality by centering this trait in Ahab and protecting him for owning the very characteristic he will have nothing to do with in himself.

Ishamel chances upon the very appropriate image of a mummy in his attempt to define Starbuck's nature. The image is especially apt because it elicits in the reader an impression of Starbuck's passivity. On the surface, Starbuck seems a young, aggressive whaleman, yet there in an aura of stasis surrounding him. Ishmael describes him: ". . .Starbuck seemed prepared to endure for long ages to come, and to endure always as now; for be it Polar snow or torrid sun, like a patent chronometer, his interior vitality was warranted to do well in all climates" (p. 158). This mechanical case combines with an element of dryness in his character, suggesting to Ishmael the quality of "twice baked" hardness. Without being fully conscious of it, Ishmael's imagery implies his sense that Starbuck's strength is precarious and that given the wrong circumstances, Starbuck will crumble to dust. Although Starbuck's thinness "seemed no more the token of wasting anxieties and cares, than it seemed the indication of any bodily blight" (p. 157), Ishmael's language suggests that the "condensation" of the man who,

on one hand, seems made to endure, on the other hand, is likely to evaporate. The fact that he seems born in some drought or famine adds to this sense of contradiction, this sense of death preserved in life.

Further testimony of Starbuck's imbalance and the sense that something in his personality is being rigidly held back is the fact that Ishmael, rather than finding him good looking finds him "by no means ill-looking." Ishmael also tells the reader that Starbuck is "embalmed with inner health," subtly connecting this vital attribute of health with the contradictory image of death.

Thus, from our earliest introduction to Starbuck, the reader gets a Yeatsian sense that the "center will not hold." There is something in Starbuck which is too technically perfect to be alive. Even the rigger's definition of him as a "lively" mate, both "good" and "pious" (p. 142), suggests the awkward, opposing combination of health and rigidity: there is a dense quality to the word pious that renders false either itself or the word lively.

Ishmael is consciously aware of some elements of contradiction in Starbuck's personality. He sees him as a man bent in discordant directions:

> Outward portents and inward presentiments were his. And if at times these things bent the welded iron of his soul, much more did his far-away domestic memories of his young Cape wife

> and child, tend to bend him still more from the original ruggedness of his nature, and open him still further to those latent influences which, in some honest-hearted men, restrain the gush of dare-devil daring, so often evinced by others in the more perilous vicissitudes of the fishery" (p. 158).

Although aware of the contradiction, Ishmael fails to understand how Starbuck can be brave in the hunt yet easily discouraged by abstractions. Ishmael is fascinated by this limited, yet powerful bravery:

> And brave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man (p. 159).

Ishmael, failing to understand,can still successfully diagnose Starbuck's nature. Although Ishmael never verbalizes that Starbuck is acting out of an incomplete, idealized center, he does conclude that Starbuck's behavior reflects incompetence, the incompetence of "mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness" (p. 251). Ishmael perceives that it is not enough to be passively good, for passivity will ultimately become complicity with evil. If right-mindedness cannot defend itself, then it is self-destructive.

Starbuck's desire to be simply pure in a world that does not allow for such clear virtue renders him

impotent in the face of destructive power. Karen Horney, humanistic psychologist, defines the perfectionist personality as having the following characteristics:

> This type feels superior because of his high standards, moral and intellectual, and on this basis looks down on others. His arrogant contempt for others, though, is hidden -- from himself as well. . .because his very standards prohibit such 'irregular' feelings.[6]

Starbuck is not in touch with the fact that he feels superior to the other sailors. Yet he forms no close relationships, never considering his isolation inappropriate. Ahab is the one person toward whom he shows any personal interest. Starbuck feels compelled to be virtuous at all costs, and it is this relationship with Ahab which forms the center of conflict: Starbuck cannot be pure if he kills rather than understands Ahab, nor can be be pure if he fails to kill Ahab and thus allows him to destroy the entire crew.

Starbuck portrays his need to be perfect in several ways. One way is by feeling compelled to see all of life's horrors as outside himself. Hearing the revelry in the forecastle he responds: "'Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward! mark the unfaltering silence aft! Methinks it pictures life'" (pp. 228-9). He separates himself from these horrors at the cost of community:

> 'Peace! ye revellers, and set the watch! Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like this, with soul beat down and held to knowledge, -- as wild, untutored things are forced to feed -- Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent horror in thee! but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me! and with the soft feeling of the human in me, yet will I try to fight ye, ye grim, phantom futures!' (p. 229).

Another way he portrays his need to be perfect is to deny the reality of these horrors. If he fears his own inner cannibalism, denying cannibalism in nature will help him feel his own innocence. Starbuck's desire for a pure world is stronger than his desire for reality. As he penetrates further and further into the heart of the Japanese cruising ground, he verbalizes that his desire to believe in a benevolent universe is the strongest force within him: "'Loveliness unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride's eye! -- Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal ways. Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and do believe'" (p. 624).

Another way Starbuck portrays his need to be perfect is in his desire for rules. Whaling is an acceptable industry only in as much as its rules are well-delineated and carefully obeyed. He is extremely order conscious, and respects the socially stratified power structure on the whaler as perfectly as possible. He, unlike Ahab, would do nothing to offend the owners. He

is comfortable being brave as long as it is in the name of doing his duty well:

> 'I am game for his crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death too, Captain Ahab, if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow; but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance' (p. 220).

He again portrays his need for limits in his attitude toward his fellow boatsman: "'I will have no man in my boat. . .who is not afraid of a whale'" (p. 158).

When Ishmael defines him as a "staid, steadfast man, whose life for the most part was a telling pantomime of action, and not a tame chapter of sounds" (p. 158), Ishmael chose the exact image to best describe Starbuck's particular type of action: pantomime. Starbuck's action is tense rather than rhythmical. He is comfortable only with controlled assertion, thus his activity pantomimes life, lacking the quality of spontaneity that would render it vitally fluid.

Starbuck protects himself from vice by controlling his emotional response as much as he is able. He does not allow himself to enjoy his activities. Whaling, for him, is a duty, a necessity, something that his father and brother died doing. If Starbuck is a good sailor, it is because he is supposed to be a good sailor. He neither laughs nor revels in his prosperity. Successful whaling proves he is a good whaler; it does not make him joyful.

Unconsciously, he looks down upon his fellow whalers because their response is not equally serious to his own. He demands that they exert themselves as much as he does:

> 'Oars! Oars!' he intensely whispered, seizing the helm -- 'gripe your oars and clutch your souls, now! My God, men, stand by! Shove him off, you Queequeg -- the whale there! -- prick him! -- hit him! Stand up -- stand up, and stay so! Spring, out men -- pull, men; never mind their backs -- scrape them! -- scrape away!'" (pp. 500-1).

When rules are delineated he expects them to be adhered to as closely as possible.

Given a specific context, Starbuck's perfectionism allows him to be assertive. He functions very well. For instance, when surrounded by countless sperm whale during the "Grand Armada" chapter, he stands up in the bow of his boat, lance in hand, aggressively pricking out of the way whatever whale he can reach. He demonstrates no fear, no loss of control, no need of God (p. 494). Within a context, Starbuck's freezing passivity can be suspended. During one of the hunt scenes, Ishmael notes the serenity of his eyes: "looking into his eyes you seemed to see there the yet lingering images of those thousand-fold perils he had calmly confronted through life" (p. 158). His eyes, regardless of the physical peril surrounding him, contain neither joy nor pain. Starbuck is simply satisfied when he can do what it is that he is supposed to do. By being a good whaler, Starbuck could appropriately

vent his aggression and expansive nature and still feel virtuous. He could prove his skill without feeling arrogant. The system of whaling frees him to act:

> 'Pull, pull, my good boys,' said Starbuck, in the lowest possible but intensest concentrated whisper to his men; while the sharp fixed glance from his eyes darted straight ahead of the bow, almost seemed as two visible needles in two unerring binnacle compasses. He did not say much to his crew, though, nor did his crew say anything to him. Only the silence of the boat was at intervals startlingly pierced by one of his peculiar whispers, now harsh with command, now soft with entreaty (pp. 297-8).

Without the safety of a system, the same behavior he could comfortably portray within bounds made him shudder:

> Never could Starbuck forget the old man's aspect, when one night going down into the cabin to mark how the barometer stood, he saw him with closed eyes sitting straight in his floor-screwed chair; the rain and half-melted sleet of the storm. . .still slowly dripping from the unremoved hat and coat. . . .Though the body was erect, the head was thrown back so that the closed eyes were pointed towards the needle of the tell-tale that swung from a beam in the ceiling.
>
> Terrible old man! thought Starbuck with a shudder, sleeping in this gale, still thou steadfastly eyest thou purpose (p. 313).

Starbuck can be perfect only in a simple world: a world where the opposite of truth is falseness, rather than another, no less valid, truth. He wants this world to exist, yet he himself senses something deeper, more complicated in nature. Rather than confront what he cannot understand, he prefers avoiding it. For instance, when faced with the complicated patterning of the doubloon

Ahab has nailed to the masthead, and faced with his own intricate response to it, he verbalizes his need to withdraw from it and from his own thought: "'This coin speaks wisely, mildly, but still sadly to me. I will quit it, lest Truth shake me falsely'" (p. 552). Starbuck has perceived a world where change is inevitable, one which he cannot control regardless of emotional need and this world makes him fear that he will reject his moral structure. He is afraid to look too closely, for if he rejects the world he sees, if he rejects his system, then virtue, in the regimented way he perceives it, will become an impossibility. He prefers a truth less profound, less dangerous, one that does not require, as Ahab's does, sinking into darkness and rising into air.

Starbuck's world is no less complicated than Ahab's. The major difference between them lay in their solutions. Ahab attempts to break through the world's inscrutable wall; Starbuck attempts to evade complications when he can, and trust in God when he cannot. Unlike Ahab, in studying the gold coin, Starbuck sees God's, rather than his own, shadow, but like Ahab he too feels evil portents:

> A dark valley between three mighty, heaven-abiding peaks, that almost seem the Trinity, in some faint earthly symbol. So in this vale of Death, God girds us round; and over all our gloom, the sun of Righteousness still shines a beacon and a hope. If we bend down our eyes, the dark vale shows his mouldy soil; but if we lift them, the bright sun

> meets our glance halfway, to cheer. Yet, oh,
> the great sun is no future. . . (p. 551).

Starbuck finds life's complexities offensive. Early in the journey, when the white squid appears in the Atlantic, it evokes more fear in him than the possibility of a direct fight even with Moby Dick (p. 306). The squid, with all its white, grasping tentacles, somehow seems less controllable. Starbuck also has the tendency to avoid information when he can. When Captain Derick De Deer, the Captain of the Virgin, waves a lamp-feeder at the Pequod, Starbuck responds by not believing that this action indicates an oil-free ship (p. 453). When this same whale ship, after having been given oil by the Pequod, chases after the same whale as it does, Starbuck is unable to ignore the unfairness of the situation. He responds with impotent anger. His own value system would never have allowed him to chase the same whale as someone who has just aided him. He is outraged that the captain of the Virgin has different, and therefore inferior, values. Starbuck cries in frustration: "'The ungracious and ungrateful dog!. . .he mocks and dares me with the very poor-box I filled for him not five minutes ago!'" (p. 455).

He is frustrated because the people he must interact with do not share his values, and he is frustrated because nature itself ignores his sense of values: if he chases and catches a whale, then the whale must not sink.

When Starbuck captures a whale and it is obviously sinking, he will not let go of it, though it seems to be tilting the ship. Other whaleman seize control and cut the whale from the ship (p. 463). While Starbuck can sail in a foggy squall or go "plump on a flying whale" (p. 303), he is not equal to the unfairness he sees surrounding him. When he wins a battle he expects to gain the whale oil.

Although Starbuck prefers to ignore reality, when he cannot he deals with uncomfortable aspects of it as perfunctorily as possible. Starbuck accepts the fact that Queequeg's coffin is to be made into a lifebuoy. The action is practical: the original life-buoy has been lost at sea. But he is angry at being forced to order the action, since it is more ironic than his value system can easily encompass. He is angry that he must appear strange in other's eyes: "'Bring it up; there's nothing else for it,' said Starbuck, after a melancholy pause.' Rig it, carpenter; do not look at me so -- the coffin, I mean. Dost thou hear me? Rig it'" (p. 662). The carpenter notes his unwillingness to see the task through: "The whole he can endure, at the part he balks" (p. 663).

The carpenter, by perceiving that Starbuck, although comfortable with parts, dislikes the whole for it is too uncontrollable, is making an important observation concerning his personality. While he, when placed in a situation that goes against his value system would sometimes act, he

does so with hesitancy, if at all. Starbuck, when he can, tries to escape from those parts of life that confuse him and make him question his values. This tendency toward self-deception and escapism is a usual one in individuals attempting to be perfect.[7] By walking away in a huff from the life-buoy incident, he can avoid seeing the ironic act ennacted. He can partially blame others for the action and thus protect himself. Starbuck prefers not to see people callously rigging a coffin in the place of a life-buoy. The less callousness he perceives in human nature, the more he will be able to remain a believer in human sensitivity. He prefers as little direct information about people as possible.

Starbuck shows sensitivity to human suffering, sensitivity unusual on the Pequod. He defends Dough Boy against Stubb's abuse. When Queequeg goes through the harrowing experience of cutting into a whale and Stubb orders him to bring Queequeg some refreshment, Dough Boy brings Queequeg ginger jub rather than an alcoholic beverage. He is innocently following Miss Charity's orders but Stubb angrily strikes him for bringing the tea. Starbuck interrupts the scene and silences Stubb's abortive defense: "'Enough. . .only don't hit him again, but. . . .Only this: go down with him, and get what thou wantest thyself'" (p. 419). Starbuck identifies with

Dough Boy, a defenseless victim to a system he cannot comprehend. Starbuck's hatred for unfair abuse surfaces again when Flask offers an old sick whale a whale-line sling to hold his damaged starboard fin: Starbuck responds, showing identification for the victim: "'Mind he don't sling thee with it'" (p. 455). When Flask chooses to unnecessarily castrate the whale (p. 461), Starbuck abortively attempts to stop him (p. 461). But when he fails to do so, he chooses to ignore Flask's act of unnecessary cruelty. Rather than castigating Flask, he simply orders his men to secure the whale to the ship (p. 462). The less he deals with the situation, the easier it is for him to consider himself free of complicity in the act, and the easier it is for him to avoid dealing with Flask's cruelty. Karen Horney sees the tendency toward self-deception as a characteristic related to perfectionism:

> What really matters is not those petty details but the flawless excellence of the whole conduct of life. But, since all he can achieve is behavioristic perfection, another device is necessary. This is to equate in his mind standards and actualities -- knowing about moral values and 'being' a good person.[8]

Starbuck's passivity, his fear of non-contextual responsibility, and his ability to deceive himself into believing that he always acts appropriately are all related to his unwillingness to confront his idealistic value system. His lack of activity does not come from either a

lack of sensitivity or a lack of intellect. On the contrary, Starbuck demonstrates both these qualities. He is the first man to realize that Ahab wants to use the voyage to gain revenge on Moby Dick (p. 219). He is not simply paranoid about the whale hunt, but rightfully fears its outcome. He feels his vision superior to his fellow whalers' and his vision proves correct. Unable to act himself, he tries to verbalize his insights to Stubb, perhaps indirectly attempting to convince Stubb to act when he himself cannot:

> 'Here!' cried Starbuck, seizing Stubb by the shoulder, and pointing his hand towards the weather bow, 'markest thou not that the gale come from eastward, the very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick? the very course he swung to this day noon? Now mark his boat there; where is that stove? In the stern-sheets, man; where he is wont to stand -- his stand-point is stove man!. . .The gale that now hammers at us to stave us, we can turn it into a fair wind that will drive us towards home' (pp. 637-8).

Starbuck is unwilling to take action which will make him a victimizer, thus imperfect, but he is aware that the ship's course is suicidal.

Starbuck protects himself from feelings of self-hate by using God as a buffer. As long as he believes he is obeying God, Starbuck can accept his fate and die, in his estimation, a martyr to his purity. He insists that there is hope outside of his own actions: "'His heaven

insulting purpose, God may wedge aside'" (p. 228). Even when he feels wetness seeping into his bones, he rationalizes that God wants him to remain passive to Ahab's quest:

> 'Against the wind he now steers for the open jaw,' murmured Starbuck to himself, as he coiled the new-hauled mainbrace upon the rail. 'God keep us, but already my bones feel damp within me, and from the inside wet my flesh. I misdoubt me that I disobey my God in obeying him!' (p. 711).

Starbuck shows his insecurity by using a triple negative in his speech, yet he stays with his need to be passive, an attitude he believes that his God approves. His fate, as horrid as it is, will be in obedience to God's desires.

Starbuck continues to use God to keep himself from questioning his values. If all things turn to dust, then he might as well remain pure and let fate take its course:

> 'I have sat before the dense coal fire and watched it all aglow, full of its tormented flaming life; and I have seen it wane at last, down, down, to the dumbest dust. Old man of oceans! of all this fiery life of thine, what will at length remain but one little heap of ashes!' (p. 635).

Starbuck attempts to convince Ahab to remain passive, but he will take no action to insure it. Instead he continues to believe that somehow, regardless of what direction his life takes, that all will be for the best. He will continue to do his duty and leave the rest to fate (p. 294).

Starbuck's relationship with Ahab is an essential element in his perfectionistic solution. He uses Ahab as a person on whom he can project his aggression and his desire to break through the system and understand life's meaning. It is easier for Starbuck to define himself as incapable of fighting without divine intervention when he has an individual on whom to project strength. He uses Ahab to simplify himself, by making him the personification of his own assertiveness.

Starbuck is unwilling to understand Ahab's dream of revenge, but on an unconscious level the dream is his own. He does not know that while he himself is satisfied choosing impotence over action that he will not deprive Ahab of his ability to act.

Although Starbuck does not himself care to be expansive, except within the context of his actions as a whaler, he very much wants the respect of an expansive person. As long as he can, Starbuck pretends that Ahab respects him. When Ahab refuses to give him the respect he wants, he pretends that Ahab has been accidentally rude:

> 'Captain Ahab mistakes; it is I. The oil in the holding is leaking, sir. We must up Burtons and break out. . . .Either do that sir, or waste in one day more oil than we may make good in a year' (p. 603).

When Ahab behaves offensively, Starbuck simply lowers his eyes and turns away pale and shivering (pp. 221-5). Rather than accepting the power of his own personality, he turns from Ahab, mumbling his responses, asking God to keep both him and the crew (p. 222). Even when he acts bravely, when he refuses to simply have Ahab order him on deck, he hesitates to act.

During his most volatile account with Ahab, when the oil in the hold is leaking, Starbuck works very hard to remain as peaceful as he can. Attempting to ignore the potential violence of the scene, he meets Ahab's verbal demand that he return to deck with reluctant assertiveness. Ishmael, at this point an omniscient narrator, notices that Starbuck, even as he moves forward in the cabin, seems torn between action and passivity. Starbuck approaches Ahab "with a daring so strangely respectful and cautious that it almost seemed not only every way seeking to avoid the slightest outward manifestation of itself, but within also seemed more than half distrustful of itself" (p. 604). When he does make a demand of Ahab, it is for him to be understanding: "'And I do dare, sir -- to be forebearing! Shall we not understand each other better than hitherto, Captain Ahab?'" (p. 604). His demand is pleading. Starbuck does not forget to respectfully call Ahab, "Captain."

When Ahab responds to Starbuck by threatening him with a musket, Starbuck maintains control and focuses on the lack of respect he has been shown. He attempts to maintain his own sense of integrity, verbalizing that the responsibility of action is not on him, but on Ahab:

> For an instant in the flashing eyes of the mate, and his fiery cheeks, you would have almost thought that he had really received the blaze of the levelled tube. But, mastering his emotion, he half calmly rose, and as he quitted the cabin, paused for an instand and said: 'Thou has outraged, not insulted me, sir; but for that I ask thee not to beware of Starbuck; thou wouldst but laugh, but let Ahab beware of Ahab: beware of thyself, old man' (pp. 604-5).

Starbuck is caught between his desire to be passive and his desire to be honored and honorable. He will not take control of the situation and actively end Ahab's quest. He alternately cries to God and to Ahab to take control. "'Great God! but for one single instant show thyself' cried Starbuck, 'never, never wilt thou capture him, old man -- In Jesus' name no more of this, that's worse than devil's madness'" (p. 706).

He believes even the smallest sign of Ahab's uncertainty demonstrates the passive victory for which he hopes. His optimism is self-willed blindness, yet he persists in it: "'Oh, my Captain! my Captain! noble soul! grand old heart, after all!'" (p. 684).

It is important to note that Starbuck, in the name of perfectionism, protects Ahab more than he protects

himself. Starbuck verbalizes his willingness to stay tied to Ahab:

> 'My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman! Insufferable sting, that sanity should ground arms on such a field!. . . .Will, I nill I, the uneffable thing has tied me to him; tows me with a cable I have no knife to cut. . .Oh! I plainly see my miserable office -- to obey, rebelling; and worse yet, to hate with touch of pity! (p. 228).

In the name of inability, he remains a tool to Ahab's vengeance. Even though he finds himself incapable of separation from Ahab, incapable of untying the ropes which connect them, he feels that he can never allow Ahab to remain tied:

> '. . . .Say he were pinioned even; knotted all over with ropes and hawsers; chained down to ring-bolts on this cabin floor; he would be more hideous than a caged tiger, then. I could not endure the sight; could not possibly fly his howlings; all comfort, sleep itself, inestimable reason would leave me on the long intolerable voyage. . .' (p. 651).

While Starbuck refuses to be assertive himself, he protects Ahab's assertiveness at the cost of the entire crew's lives. Not only is Starbuck protecting himself from the evil of activity, from the corruption of being the victimizer, but he also is protecting Ahab's assertiveness. Vicariously, he seems to be experiencing a great deal of passion through Ahab which he will not allow himself to feel directly, and he is willing to protect this passion at any cost. Starbuck does not feel that he is protecting Ahab because he unconsciously wants to be Ahab, but rather feels that he is protecting him because at bottom, Ahab too, has a human heart as pure as his own. But one must keep in mind

that Starbuck does not protect Ahab's equally to his own but more than his own. Thus, through Ahab, Starbuck can simultaneously protect himself from sordid activity and can vicariously protect himself from the knowledge of chains.

Starbuck, even in the face of death, will stay as pure as possible. Even on the third day of the chase when Starbuck is fully convinced that Ahab will persist in his blasphemous revenge, he will do nothing. He only hopes to maintain his own non-action oriented integrity:

> 'The whale, the whale! Up helm, up helm! Oh, all ye sweet powers of air, now hug me close! Let not Starbuck die, if die he must, in a woman's fainting fit. Up helm, I say -- ye fools, the jaw! the jaw! Is this the end of all my bursting prayers? all my life-long fidelities? Oh, Ahab, Ahab, Ahab, lo, thy work. Steady! helmsman, steady. Nay nay! Up helm again! He turns to meet us! Oh, his unappeasable brow drives on towards one, whose duty tells him he cannot depart. My God, stand by me now!' (p. 719).

Starbuck is afraid that he will lose courage to die, and he is bitter that all his rules and fidelities have led him to this death. But he is not so bitter that he will not do his duty, not so angry that he will discard a value system that has led him to this point. Rather, he will trust to God to allow him at least the virtue of a firm, unyielding death.

Melville, in his creation of other characters in Moby-Dick, continues his exploration of personality. Ishmael is the most complex character in Moby-Dick. He serves as its narrator, fluctuating between omniscience and unreliability. He is both its main character, the only survivor of the

whaling voyage, and yet one so minor that his recurrent disappearance from the novel seems natural. Psychologically, he is the most difficult to analyze. His solution to life's complexities varies from healthy interest in objective reality to a protective detachment which distorts his experiences. While Ahab's solution to life's complexities is to strike through the pasteboard mask and Starbuck's is to virtuously obey, Ishmael flits between honest observation and protective rationalization.

In order to understand Ishmael's search, it is essential to comprehend not so much for what he is looking, because he himself is uncertain about this, but from what he is protecting himself. Although Ishmael does not know the origin of his needs and defenses, he is aware that he is protective. One of his greatest needs is to be free from demands. In "Loomings," the first chapter of Moby-Dick, Ishmael confesses this fear of coercion, admitting that he goes to sea, not so much for the sake of being mystical, although he associates water with mysticism, but rather to escape from the desperate feelings that recurringly encompass him on land:

> Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately step-stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off -- then I account it high time to

> get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball (p. 23).

In this self-analysis Ishmael reveals that he is less interested in being free for other activities than in being free from undesirable demands: he is less interested in experiencing life at sea then in escaping the tensions of life on land.

Ishmael's need to escape becomes understandable if one looks at his youth. He does not give the reader much information about his early years, but what information he reveals depicts a childhood filled with pain. Ishmael is an orphan, raised by a stern step-mother who frequently beats him and sends him to bed supperless. He recounts an incident where he is punished for climbing up a chimney:

> -- my mother dragged me by the legs out of the chimney and packed me off to bed, though it was only two o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st June, the longest day in the year in our hemisphere. I felt dreadfully. But there was no help for it, so up stairs I went to my little room in the third floor, undressed myself as slowly as possible so as to kill time, and with a bitter sigh got between the sheets (p. 53).

Ishmael begs for pity: he returns down stairs asking to be beaten rather than condemned to bed. His step-mother refuses to change the punishment. When Ishmael returns up stairs and finally falls asleep his dream reveals a deep sense of fear, and a frightening powerlessness:

> . . .half-steeped in dreams -- I opened my eyes, and the before sun-lit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock running

> through all my frame: nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bedside. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken (p. 53).

In his dream, Ishmael is clear that if he can stir his hand, he can regain control, but he cannot stir his hand.

Much of Ishmael's adulthood is oriented toward avoiding such feelings of powerlessness. He strongly believes that an individual must be free, if he is to be vital: thick walls are necessary to maintain essential interior spaciousness (p. 401). Ishmael works hard to protect this interior spaciousness. He is more comfortable willingly giving up all power over life, than somehow having it taken from him. At his first capsizing he feels so vulnerable that he decides to write out a will. He confesses that he has written wills before and that he is most happy when he expects least from life:

> This was the fourth time in my nautical life that I had done the same thing. After the ceremony was concluded upon the present occasion I felt all the easier; a stone was rolled away from my heart. Besides, all the days I lived would be as good as the days that Lazarus lived after his resurrection. . . .Now then, thought I, unconsciously rolling up the sleeves of my frock, here goes for a cool, collected dive at death and destruction, and the devil fetch the hindmost (p. 304).

Ishmael is demonstrating an important aspect of his personality: he is most comfortable when he is resigned to his fate. Squalls, capsizings, bivouacs on the deep, are common occurrences in the whaling industry. Frequently his life is entrusted into the hands of a man who steers the boat, or one who holds the other end of a rope. The less control he demands and expects, the smaller, he hopes, will be his pain.

Ishmael's self-protection is also revealed in his assumption that the world is basically destructive. By being both pessimistic and accepting, he cannot be hurt:

> -- what matters it, after all? Are you not the precious image of each and all of us men in this whaling world? That unsounded ocean you gasp in, is life; those sharks, your foes; those spades, your friends; and what between sharks and spades you are in a sad pickle and peril, poor lad (p. 418).

Even Ishmael's narrative technique is protective. His statements about his narration are designed to make critical comments ineffectual: "I care not to perform this part of my task methodically; but shall be content to produce the desired impression by separate citations of items. . .I take it -- the conclusion aimed at will naturally follow of itself" (p. 273). He displaces blame for miscomprehension from himself to his reader. He feigns chaotic listing, detaching himself from his need for a pattern that will hold. If he expects

little, if his reader expects less, then suffering will be minimal.

Wherever Ishmael looks, he sees patterns. . .and there is an honest, searching, brave part of him that is attempting to allow the book to generate its own methods, symbols and patterns: "Out of the trunk, the branches grow; out of them, the twigs. So, in productive subjects grow the chapters" (p. 379). He looks at the physical images on his journey, extrapolating what metaphysical meaning from them that he can. A romantic by nature, he has problems keeping his images earthly: their relationship to one another hints of dark, spiritual meanings. At the very outset of his journey one finds him analyzing and exploring:

> At last the anchor was up, the sails were set, and off we glided. It was a short, cold Christmas; and as the short northern day merged into night, we found ourselves almost broad upon the wintry ocean, whose freezing spray cased us in ice, as in polished armor. The long rows of teeth on the bulwarks glistened in the moonlight; and like the white ivory tusks of some huge elephant, vast curving icicles depended from the bows (p. 145).

In this scene, Christmas and cannibalism merge. In other scenes Ishmael focuses on hieroglyphical patterns. He notices mystical patterns in the water, on the whale deck and in the cordage. There are prints on Queequeg, Ishmael and even Bildad. Yet, aware that patterns exist, Ishmael does not understand them. He knows that there are large

gaps in his knowledge, gaps that he cannot fill. The universe, like the Old Testament God, will not reveal itself.

Ishmael has an artist's sensibility, always forming new gestalts. During the storm when the corpusants light the mast, Ishmael observes:

> Relieved against the ghostly light, the gigantic jet negro, Daggoo, loomed up to thrice his real stature, and seemed the black cloud from which the thunder had come. The parted mouth of Tashtego revealed his shark-white teeth, which strangely gleamed as if they too had been tipped by corpusants; while lit up by the preternatural light, Queequeg's tatooing burned like Satanic blue flames on his body (p. 640).

Ishmael is also drawn to religion and science. He uses sacred imagery to explain how the oil casks are hermetically closed and walled (p. 546). There is blood in the oil, and its combination is therefore sacrificial. Ashes, fire, cleansing, the sacred quarter deck, are all associated with the process. He portrays his interest in science when discussing the roundness of the pots used in the try-works:

> While employed in polishing them -- one man in each pot, side by side -- many confidential communications are carried on, over the iron lips. It is a place also for profound mathematical meditation. It was in the left hand try-pot of the Pequod, with the soapstone diligently circling round me, that I was first indirectly struck by the remarkable fact, that in geometry all bodies gliding along the cycloid, my soapstone for example, will descend from any point in precisely the same time (p. 538).

Ishmael both observes the workings of gravity and the mysteries of parallelism. He is not, as Milton Stern would have the reader believe, mainly a rationalist: Ishmael is too clear that physical data have their spiritual counterparts.[9]

Ishmael is intermittently afraid of searching. The information he gathers leads him to believe that the invisible spheres are dangerous:

> Though neither knows where lie the nameless things of which the mystic sign gives forth such hints; yet with me. . . somewhere those things must exist. Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright (p. 263).

He even suggests, in an attempt to protect himself, as well as his reader, from searching past the surface, that the amount of curiosity one feels is best carefully checked:

> Nor is it at all prudent for the hunter to be over curious touching the precise nature of the whale spout. . . .For even when coming into slight contact with the outer, vapory shreds of the jet, which will often happen, your skin will feverishly smart, from the acridness of the thing so touching it. . . .The wisest thing the investigator can do then, it seems to me, is to let this deadly spout alone (p. 479).

Ishmael is unconscious of exactly how strongly his own fears control his actions. When he is afraid, he is most likely to use logic rather than intuition, and he is most likely to be rigid rather than fluid. At times he didactically commands fluidity, without realizing the irony of demanding nuance:

> But if his eyes were broad as the lens of Herschel's great telescope; and his ears capacious as the porches of cathedrals; would that make him any longer of sight, or sharper of hearing? Not at all. -- Why then do you try to 'enlarge' your mind? Subtilize it (p. 430).

His perceptions of the whale's sense organs becomes an unconscious opportunity for him to verbalize his fear of expansion.

While Ishmael feels that expansion is dangerous, he is even more afraid of the other end of the dialectic, emptiness:

> And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston, to fill up some morass in the Milky Way (p. 549).

He finds comfort in watching and analyzing. He prefers neither to be at the center of action nor asleep. At the Spouter Inn, Ishmael demonstrates this tendency to passively observe: "Supper over, the company went back to the bar-room, when, knowing not what else to do with myself, I resolved to spend the rest of the evening as a looker on" (p. 40).

Analysis is often more comfortable than experience. Even in reverie, his tendency is to analyze, thus control his experience. In reverie Ishmael can repress the horrible oath and thus find momentary peace, but he is still at least as interested in understanding the experience,

as in the experience itself. He studies his reverie on the mast-head:

> Ere forgetfullness altogether came over me, I had noticed that the seamen at the main and mizen mast-heads were already drowsy. So that at last all three of us lifelessly swung from the spars, and for every swing that we made there was a nod from below from the slumbering helmsmen. The waves, too, nodded their indolent crests; and across the wide trance of the sea, east nodded to west, and the sun over all (p. 373).

Ishmael attempts to be reasonable and observant. When frustrated and confused, it is easier for him to turn his anger outward and castigate the human race for its stupidity. He relates the fact that ships shun the burial place of whales and responds bitterly to their lack of logic:

> And for years afterwards, perhaps, ships shun the place; leaping over it as silly sheep leap over a vacuum, because their leader originally leaped there when a stick was held. There's your law of precedents; there's your utility of traditions; there's the story of your obstinate survival of old beliefs never bottomed on the earth, and now not even hovering in the air! There's orthodoxy (p. 403).

Yet even when Ishmael is being less than objective, he, in the name of objectivity, will demand that the reader either accept his theory, or consider himself a fool:

> . . .though the Sperm Whale stove a passage through the Isthmus of Darren, and mixed the Atlantic with the Pacific, you would not elevate one hair of your eye-brow. For unless you own the whale, you are but a provincial and sentimentalist in Truth (pp. 437-8).

At times, Ishmael so fervently needs a workable order that he deletes information that cannot comfortably fit into his system of classification. For instance, if the pig fish is not, in his estimation, good enough to be a whale, Ishmael will simply remove him from the whale family (p. 183). His demand for simplification sometimes verges on being reactionary. When Ishmael suggests that rather than tie a right and sperm whale to each side of a ship to prevent capsizals, to simply leave the whaler alone (pp. 425-6), his response is sensible: magical preventions are time-consuming and dangerously complicated. But he suggests that John Locke and Immanuel Kant also be thrown overboard. To extend his reasoning so that Locke and Kant are rejected as writers of worthless jargon seems counter-productive to his own search for understanding.

At other times Ishmael distances himself from his need for analysis and order by laughing at himself. He recalls a journey where his ship encounters a small whale:

> In a ship I belonged to, a small cub Sperm Whale was once bodily hoisted to the deck for his poke or bag, to make sheaths for the barbs of the harpoons, and for the heads of the lances. Think you I let that chance go, without using my boat-hatchet and jack-knife, and breaking the seal and reading all the contents of that young cub? (p. 572).

The same man who has earlier suggested that Locke and Kant be discarded also uses hermeneutical imagery to describe his physiological studies: he will "break the seal" of

the whale and "read" its contents. Ishmael can no more discard philosophy than remain objective.

Humor serves to insulate Ishmael from the depth of his fear. Temporarily, a laugh distances him emotionally from what he cannot understand. It allows him to accept the mystery without seriously trying to explain it. Ishmael verbalizes that the possibility that life is no more than a joke comforts him even if the joke is at his expense (p. 302). He uses his humor to protect him from taking his own experiences and his own writing too seriously. At the beginning of Moby-Dick, after Ishmael spends some time philosophizing about his journey toward the Pacific, and after he spends a good deal of energy trying to decide which New Bedford inn to enter, and after discussing the necessity of passion at any cost, he reduces his perceptions to the derogatory term, "blubbering": "But no more of this blubbering now, we are going a-whaling, and there is plenty of that yet to come" (p. 35). In order to protect himself from the depth and seriousness of his perceptions, Ishmael is willing to insult the worth of his ideas. By punning upon the word, blubber, Ishmael is also able to transfer the reader's focus from the metaphysical concepts which frighten him, to the physical, and thus more controllable world of whaling.

Ishmael is equally willing to turn his humor against innocents. He heartily laughs at the priests of Tranque, a fantasy island of his own creation, who are morally offended at his blasphemous desire to measure their god, a whale skeleton:

> 'How now!' they shouted; 'Dar'st thou measure this our god! That's for us!' 'Aye, priest -- well, how long do ye make him, then!' But hereupon a fierce contest rose among them, concerning feet and inches; they cracked each other's sconces with their yard-sticks -- the great skull echoes -- and seizing that luck chance, I quickly concluded my own admeasurements (p. 575).

Ishmael pleasantly creates a slap-stick comedy routine, playing the straight man to characters who act delightfully immature. He continues his tale of absurdity without faltering, telling his reader that after taking the measurements, he tatooed them on his body, rounding off his figures in order to save space for a poem he is possibly going to compose at a later time. When relaxed, he can transcend facts joyfully.

Ishmael enjoys laughing at the human situation. Even Pythagoras is not so important that he cannot be the object of jest. He fantasizes having met with Pythagoras, when Pythagoras was an inexperienced sailor:

> Oh! the metempsychosis! Oh! Pythagoras, that in bright Greece, two thousand years ago, did die, so good, so wise, so mild; I sailed with thee along the Peruvian coast last voyage -- and, foolish as I am, taught thee, a green simple boy, how to splice rope (p. 548).

Ishmael cannot resist extending a metaphor. He ends his chapter on whaling houses and the hedonism of British and Dutch whalers with "and this empties the decanter." After discussing food and drink, he enjoys making his chapter a vessel. He demonstrates this joyful wit in discussing the size of whales and his own relationship to his subject:

> One often hears of writers that rise and swell with their subject, though it may seem but an ordinary one. How, then, with me, writing of this Leviathan? Unconsciously my chirography expands into placard capitals. Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand! Friends, hold my arms! (p. 580).

There is underlying bitterness in some of his jests which demonstrates that he feels abused by fate. He uses the metaphor of a "grand program" to describe his whaling voyage and he questions why his part is so shabby:

> Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part. . .yet, now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased free will and discriminating judgment (p. 29).

But Ishmael does not always deal with his confusion by relying on humor. There are times when Ishmael feels insulated enough to directly admit his confusion without relying on either humor or bitterness:

> And meet it is, that over these sea-pastures, wide-rolling watery prairies and Potters' Fields of all four continents, the waves should rise and fall, and ebb and flow unceasingly; for here, millions of mixed shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnambulisms, reveries; all that we call lives and souls, lie dreaming, dreaming, still; tossing like slumberers in their beds; the ever-rolling waves but made so by their restlessness (p. 613).

Ishmael could intermittently see that it was foolish to have too much pride in anything, including reason (p. 471). And he could forgive error, forgive foolishness, since all men learn by descending (p. 540), and since no position is permanent or true except in contrast (p. 86). Power, although it may momentarily relieve pressure, is not to be trusted for it is equally indifferent to itself and to others (pp. 450-1). Life is precarious: whales can be chased, irons recovered, but ships still sink (p. 278). Ishmael fluctuates as to whether searching for truth is a useful endeavor, but he realizes, much of the time, that his search is desperately serious. He admits that part of him wants to leave from the original port, and that he longs to find his paternity, and thus his own identity. At times he is convinced that he can know it only after death; at other times he thinks it possible to find on earth. Intelligently or destructively, the whale rouses all his curiosity as does the wild seas and nameless perils (pp. 29-30). As protective as parts

of Ishmael are, other parts insist on asserting their power too, and these are expansive. As much as he can, given his deep fear of powerlessness, he allows these expansive, searching parts to grow.

One can learn much about Ishmael by the type of images he studies and the way he studies them. His perceptions during the "Grand Armada" chapter and his exploration of the doubloon, the equator, and the whale line reflect a spirit grappling with reality.[10] One can also gain insights into his personality by looking at his attitude toward and his relationship with people.

Generally an introvert, Ishmael knows that he is easily influenced by those people with whom he does come into contact. When he decides to ship on the Pequod, he is so overwhelmed by Captain Bildad's intensity that he begins to talk like him, answering his question with "I dost," the Quaker version of "I do." Unconsciously he discards his own speech patterns when faced with a more forceful personality than his own.

He does not want to be weak, thus when he focuses on Starbuck, Starbuck's fall from valor becomes an overpowering element in the way Ishmael perceives him: it is Starbuck's incompetent display of rightmindedness that morally enfeebles the ship (p. 251) in Ishmael's judgment. Ishmael's response to Pip also seems to stem from Ishmael's

fear of vulnerability. In the midst of stating that few people return from oceanic court, Ishmael remembers Pip's leap into the ocean. He abruptly interrupts the idea and tone of his narrative to discuss Pip's horrifying experience. Pain flows through his language:

> Black Little Pip -- he never did -- oh, no! he went before. Poor Alabama boy! On the grim Pequod's forecastle, ye shall ere long see him beating his tambourine; prelusive of the eternal time, when sent for, to the great quarter-deck on high, he was bid strike in with angels, and beat his tambourine in glory; called a coward here, hailed a hero there! (pp. 166-7).

Ishmael is afraid of losing his identity. He questions the usefulness of receptivity if it makes one vulnerable. It is receptivity to spiritual vibrations which has caused, in his mind, Starbuck's fall of valor in the soul (p. 160), and Pip's madness. He associates fluidity with death, yet it is in death that he feels wisdom can be best attained.

Ishmael would prefer to be strong and invulnerable. When discussing the whale's spine, he chooses to identify himself with its power: "A thin joist of a spine never yet upheld a full and novel soul. I rejoice in my spine, as in the firm audacious staff of the flag which I fling half out to the world" (p. 451). His frustration at complexity leads him to make statements about the classification of people. He feels that generally they are as categorical as carpenter's nails (p. 594).

Generally, Ishmael is unclear how much he wants to identify with the human race. This confusion is demonstrated in his variable attitude toward the Pequod's crew. At times he feels fully identified: "I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs" (p. 239). But when the Pequod crosses the equator and the first man who mounts the masthead falls to his death, Ishmael separates himself from the other men on the Pequod: while the crew is generally relieved that the presaged evil has been finally fulfilled, Ishmael feels that the death forshadows a darker evil to come. When he recalls the crew's response to the second day of the chase, he speaks of them in such as way as to imply his complete separation:

> The hand of Fate had snatched all their souls; and by the stirring perils of the previous day; the rack of the past night's suspense; the fixed, unfearing, blind, reckless way in which their wild craft went plunging towards its flying mark; by all these things, their hearts were bowled along (p. 700).

Since identification with other characters is often frightening for him, he attempts to control these feelings by keeping his own personality as mutable as possible. As long as he is controlling change, he feels more secure. Ishmael moves from drama to cetology, from character to stage director, and from scholar to sailor. While mobile, he can touch the forces at work within him

and still maintain a sense of freedom. He longs for an innocence that will simply allow him to be:

> Oh, immortal infancy, and innocence of the azure! Invisible winged creatures that frolic all round us! Sweet childhood of air and sky! how oblivious were ye of old Ahab's close-coiled woe! But so have I seen little Mirian and Martha, laughing-eyed elves, heedlessly gambol around their old sire; sporting with the circle of singed locks which grew on the marge of the burnt-out crater of his brain (p. 682).

Although part of Ishmael may have been happier had he been perfectly insulated, perfectly oblivious, perfectly innocent, he was not. As afraid of relationships as he was, the most positive relationship portrayed in Moby-Dick was his relationship with Queequeg. Like him, Queequeg was a creature in a transition state, neither caterpillar, nor butterfly (p. 140). Ishmael decides to trust him: "I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy" (p. 84). He may associate marriage and relationships with death (p. 167), but he also associates death with knowledge. Domesticity, generally, gives him pleasure. He sees the ship's deck as a parlor (p. 374), and though he tells the reader that parlors are ultimately as dangerous as ships, he seems to enjoy the domesticity of the image. He also takes pleasure in the officer's dining ritual (p. 374), even as he perceives the problems it brought Flask, the third mate who ritualistically is the last to be seated and the first to rise. With Queequeg, Ishmael forms an

almost domestic relationship, one where neither party is consumed nor consuming, one where Ishmael, the orphan who has known little domestic comfort can temporarily rest. If all people, those on water and those on land, are born with a halter around their neck, Ishmael prefers, at least temporarily in his relationship with Queequeg, not to focus upon it.

One of the reasons Ishmael was able to form a close relationship with Queequeg when so strong a part of him cries out for protection is because he feels that Queequeg's background is so different from his own that fear of merging can be suspended. During the mat-maker scene, Ishmael takes pleasure in feeling the security of separation mingled with a comfortable degree of identification: ". . .each silent sailor resolved into his own invisible self" (p. 287). Ishmael tries hard to believe in their separation:

> After all, I do not think that my remarks about religion made much impression upon Queequeg. Because, in the first place, he somehow seemed dull of hearing on that important subject, unless considered from his own point of view; and, in the second place, he did not more than one third understand me, couch my ideas simply as I would. . .(pp. 126-7).

He projects differences between them which help him believe in their separation and allows Queequeg the unconsciousness, the insulation, he feels he lacks:

> Here was a man some twenty thousand miles from home,. . .thrown among people as strange to him as though he were in the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself (p. 83).

The peacefulness that Ishmael has not achieved is projected upon Queequeg: Ramai, it will do, it is easy (p. 610). Ishmael allows Queequeg to feel concern without feeling overpowered by this caring. He fantasizes that Queequeg patronizingly, but kindly, believes: "It's a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We cannibals must help these Christians" (p. 96). Ishmael allows Queequeg to make him feel so secure that Ishmael can allow himself to be forced to choose the ship without feeling frightened by Queequeg's coercion (p. 103).

Through Queequeg, Ishmael is able to get some of his dependency needs met. At times he is angry at his vulnerability to Queequeg but never angry enough to seriously consider terminating their relationship. The idea of losing control makes him uncomfortable. He portrays his discomfort during the monkey-rope scene:

> But handle Queequeg's monkey-rope heedfully as I would, sometimes he jerked it so, that I came very near sliding overboard. Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I would, I only had the management of one end of it (p. 416).

Ishmael could not comfortably idealize himself, but he could idealize Queequeg. During the "Grand Armada" chapter, he watches Queequeg gain control even while

rowing between hundreds of whales: "But not a bit daunted, Queequeg steered us manfully; now steering off from this monster directly across our route in advance. . ." (p. 404). Ishmael finds in Queequeg the power, purity, and simplicity that he lacks. When first presented with his innate generosity, Ishmael is so overwhelmed by it that he, in his own estimation, henceforth cleaves to him like a barnacle (p. 95). Queequeg has generously, naturally, saved the life of a country bumpkin who had just moments before been irritating him without provocation and refuses to be played the hero for what he considers a human gesture. Through Queequeg, Ishmael can associate himself with human kindness without directly committing himself to this ideal.

As Ishmael uses the chill of a cool room to help him feel the pleasure of warmth, so he uses Queequeg as a contrasting force. Ishmael needs Queequeg to be what he cannot: a man of firm religious beliefs, one with a strict sense of limits, one who has so strong a will that he can even heal himself. Through Queequeg, Ishmael can enjoy the pleasure of being simply powerful:

> Now, there is that noteworthy difference between savage and civilized; that while a sick, civilized man may be six months convalescing, generally speaking, a sick savage is almost half-well again in a day. . . .after sitting on the windlass for a few indolent days (but eating with a vigorous appetite) he suddenly leaped to his feet, threw out arms and legs, gave himself a

> good stretching, yawned a little bit, and then springing into the head of his hoisted boat, and poising a harpoon, pronounced himself fit for a fight (p. 612).

If one looks closely at the relationship, one sees the symbiotic pattern of a mother/child relationship. Queequeg serves as the nurturer, the bringer of peace, the morally perfect and physically powerful. Ishmael even associates Queequeg with the power of childbirth. When Tashtego sinks in spermacetti, Queequeg helps him emerge from the whale head, an incident described as a metaphorical birth. Although Ishmael, the adult, loves Queequeg because he feels free in the relationship, Ishmael, the child, loves him not because he is separate, not because Queequeg is integrated, content with his own companionship and equal to himself, but because Queequeg warms and protects him. This possessiveness is best illustrated in Ishmael's own verbalization: he refers to Queequeg as "my brave Queequeg" (p. 443).

Ishmael never understands his attraction to Queequeg. He verbalizes his confusion:

> Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; Yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that drew me (p. 84).

It is likely that part of his attraction is because Queequeg is the ideal mother, offering love without cost. The existence of this mother/child relationship also helps

explain why Ishmael cannot fact Queequeg's mortality. When Queequeg catches a chill and grows increasingly ill, Ishmael refuses to admit that his nurturer might be dying. He focuses away from the emaciated body toward the vital eyes:

> . . .his eyes, nevertheless, seemed growing fuller and fuller; they became of a strange softness of lustre; and mildly but deeply looked at you there from his sickness, a wondrous testimony of that immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened (p. 607).

Ishmael is unprepared for separation. As it happens, Queequeg lives, so Ishmael is not forced to deal with it. By the end of the novel, Ishmael has lost everything and is too numb to focus on his loss of Queequeg. Interestingly, it is his nurturer's coffin that saves him, marked by Queequeg with designs that parallel the tattoos on his body.

But during the center of the novel, Queequeg is Ishmael's support, his main nurturer, the central structure of his precarious world, the man who gives him strength to move outward and to look at more threatening issues and more frightening characters: issues such as darkness; characters such as Ahab.

Because the Ishmael/Queequeg relationship is the closest one formed in Moby-Dick, it is interesting to compare it to the Melville/Hawthorne relationship. As Ishmael projects qualities into Queequeg, so Melville

projects qualities into Hawthorne: Melville is quite comfortable with Hawthorne's silences for he can define them as he will. He verbalizes that these silences make it easier for him to open himself up to Hawthorne.[11]

In spite of communication barriers and misunderstandings, Melville has Ishmael and Queequeg become "busom friends." While Melville himself feels that he is looking toward Hawthorne for an equal, he allows Ishmael to find a nurturer. This possibly portrays Melville's unreadiness for a relationship of equals.

Melville, afraid of losing Hawthorne, may be testing this event when he has Queequeg become so ill that he almost dies. He portrays Ishmael's inability to cope with the event and he does not have him die. Yet, conveniently, before the novel ends, he has Queequeg drown with the rest of the crew. By causing his death Melville keeps Ishmael from having to develop a relationship with Queequeg outside of the insulated Pequod. Ishmael can return to land without the complication of his "bosom friend." He need not worry about maintaining the relationship in a less accepting setting. Through Ishmael and Queequeg, Melville is very likely testing out some of his own confused feelings toward, and fears of, his relationship with Hawthorne and his confusion over how to make it the lifelong relationship for which he longed, and whether such a relationship were even possible.

Ishmael, with Queequeg's support, is more able to develop his fascination for Ahab. While Queequeg represents unconscious nobility, Ahab represents supra-conscious nobility: power at its most self-aware. Queequeg believes that he fan earn rebaptism; Ahab believes that he can only be saved by going directly through hell. Ishmael is unable to maintain a comfortable psychological distance from Ahab. He moves beyond empathy to identification, trying to comprehend Ahab's mind, entering places he cannot physically go, listening to conversations he cannot physically hear. He responds to Ahab with a wild passion:

> A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me: Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster against whom I and all the others had taken our oaths of violence and revenge (p. 239).

Ishmael's relationship with Ahab was clearly one-sided. Ahab never individually acknowledged his existence, yet Ishmael watches him with a subtle energy he himself finds surprising (p. 167). Ishmael, psychologically protected by his symbiotic relationship with Queequeg, allows himself, at least at the beginning of his encounter with Ahab, to play out Ahab's powerful vindictiveness without actively trying to escape from his power. He is attracted to Ahab because Ahab is vindictive, perfectly self-centered, and god-like in his suffering. When Ahab appears, Ishmael feels "foreboding shivers" (p. 168) run over him. His respect for this man who affected him so

strangely was even greater than his respect for the mystical, religious, and humanistic Queequeg:

> But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shagginess. . . .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! (p. 199).

Ahab is the part of Ishmael that can be blasphemous, that is unafraid, that can arrogantly say that our fate makes us in a way totally independent even of the whims of God. After looking at the tombstones of sailors before going to sea, Ishmael, frightened by death, discusses how easily one can become a disbeliever, yet concludes that faith is irrepressible. Because humans are limited, they are also limitless: "Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me. And therefore three cheers for Nantucket; and come a stove boat and stove body when they will, for stave my soul, Jove himself cannot" (p. 66).

Ahab is also the part of him that will eat away its own heart and liver to gain control, the part that rejects the finite earth for metaphysics and landlessness. Ahab is the part of him that chooses to fight power rather than worship passively, the absurd risk-taker in him, the part that wishes to knock off people's hats, the part that goes to sea, not simply to escape coercion, but to meet the realities of life head on, the part of him that when passionately inspired can say:

> With a frigate's anchor for my bridal-bitts and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight! (p. 360).

While other parts of Ishmael tend to separate emotion from intellect, and choose safety, the part of him that feels united with Ahab is powerfully arational. Ahab, he projects, allows his "torn body and gashed soul to bleed into one another and interfuse" (pp. 247-8). Ishmael fears this blending, this passion, this madness, but through identification with Ahab, he can temporarily feel the passion other parts of him are fighting so desperately to control (pp. 247-8).

If the Ishmael/Queequeg relationship represents a part of the Melville/Hawthorne relationship, then the Ishmael/Ahab relationship might be said to represent the Melville/Moby-Dick relationship. As Ishmael gained strength through his perception of Queequeg and their relationship to explore the passionate, Ahabian, part of himself, so Melville gained strength through his perception of Hawthorne and their relationship to explore the passionate, creative part of himself. Moby-Dick, was the culmination of that passionate exploration.

Ishmael, through exploring the passionate part of himself, feels the strong emotions of a man who finds himself pulling to the charmed, churned circle of the

hunted sperm whale (p. 299); but ultimately he grows frightened and turns toward a safer reality. Although he has the sensitivity to feel Ahab's passion and his pain, he fears madness more than he fears escapism. He rejects Ahab's world as partial, as distorted. But during the second day of the chase there is a part of him that when viewing the White Whale again becomes overpowered so that his need to be rational and safe is suspended. As Ahab's boat is stricken by Moby Dick, Ishmael's and Ahab's perceptions merge. Ishmael allows Moby Dick as much controlled intelligence as Ahab could have, had he been narrating the scene:

> . . .he now lay for a moment slowly feeling with his flukes from side to side; and whenever a stray oar, bit of plank, the least chip or crumb of the boats touched his skin, his tail swiftly drew back, and came sideways smiting the sea. But soon, as if satisfied that his work for that time was done, he pushed his pleated forehead through the ocean, and trailing after him the intertangled lines, continued his leeward way at a traveller's methodic pace (p. 704).

The Ishmael who empathizes with Ahab, who like Lazarus would rather lie down lengthwise along the line of the equator, who would rather go down to the fiery pit than be frozen, is not the part of Ishmael that is strongest, but it is a part that can explore through his relationship with the passionate part of himself. Although Ishmael's and Ahab's methods are different, Ishmael perceives that their desire for understanding is similar.

While Ahab's desire for truth is overpowered by his need to be vindicated, Ishmael's is overpowered by his fear of uncontrol. He rejects the fire of the try-works out of fear, not out of clear insights. He absolutely, and therefore falsely, decides that it is an unnatural and therefore unholy light (p. 540).

While Ishmael wants control, it is not his nature to get it by absolutely believing in one system. He leaves that to Ahab. His is a world of patterns he cannot fully believe in: a world of round, moving things, a world of crooked streets and crooked directions, a world of fasting where all human thoughts are partially starved. He is, during his less frightened moments, aware of his own subjectivity:

> In judging of that tempestuous wind called Euroclydon. . .it maketh a marvellous difference, whether thou lookest out at it from a glass window where the frost is all on the outside, or whether thou observest it from that sashless window, where the frost is on both sides (p. 34).

When he verbalizes combining intuition with reality in a functional way, Ishmael is trying to convince himself that an ideal world on earth is possible:

> . . .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 (p. 480).

Regardless of balanced statements like the one above, Ishmael remains confused. When looking at the doubloon he focuses on the fact that it is nailed amidst all the rustiness of iron bolts and the verdigris of copper spikes, but he still wishes to believe that at its center is unfouled purity: the nail touches only the surface (p. 549). The whaling industry also elicits confusion in him:

> Yes, there is death in this business of whaling -- a speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into Eternity. But what then? Methinks we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death. Methinks that what they call my shadow here on earth is my true substance. Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water, and thinking that thick water the thinnest air. (p. 66).

Regardless of the fact that he would like to view his confusion in positive light, regardless of the fact that he verbalizes that the heart of the doubloon remains mysteriously undefiled, he is afraid of the evil lurking at the heart: he never loses his fear of becoming the weakling youth who lifted the dread goddess' veil at Sais (pp. 437-8). He generally believes that clear Truth is a thing for salamander giants to encounter and he never fully believes he is one.

To trust Ishmael's definition of himself is to misread Moby-Dick. When Ishmael states: "I try all things;

I achieve what I can" (p. 446), Ishmael is speaking of an idealized self. Just as when he chooses to reject the try-work's ghastly fire, he is simplifying his world in a way he himself will later reject:

> . . .when beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocen's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember, that this velvet paw but conceals a remoreseless fang (p. 623).

Ishmael moves toward open spaces whenever he feels enclosed and attempts to close spaces whenever he feels afraid. Like a weaver who chooses disappearing thread, he keeps weaving what he cannot create. He is neither as naturalistic as Milton Stern sees him,[12] nor as integrated as Robert Zoellner implies.[13] As Zoellner perceives, his philosophy is basically cyclical, but to stress the optimistic part of it creates a distortion of his personality. The optimistic part of his cycle is no more true than the pessimistic part: the truth lies somewhere between.

When Ishmael comes up with absolute answers, he is not being his most honest, but is trying to avoid psychological destruction. But Ishmael will recurrently return to a less didactic philosophy, one that encompasses both madness and the artificial fire where blubber is melted to oil and laughter forks through flame:

> Oh, grassy glades! Oh, ever vernal endless landscapes in the soul; in ye -- though long

> parched by the dead drought of the earthly life, -- in ye, men yet may roll, like young horses in new morning clover; and for some fleeting moments, feel the cool dew of the life immortal on them. Would to God these blessed calms would last. But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof; calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause. . . .But once gone through, we trace the round again; and are infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally. Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? (pp. 623-4).

At the end of his narration Ishmael has included more in his circle of experience than before it. Moby-Dick ends with Ishmael neither resolved nor in permanent stasis, but resting so that he may at a later time continue his journey toward reality. Ishmael has not been saved by his visions, his wisdom, his learned ability to love, but by serendipity, by being at the right place at the right time, by being at the still-point of a vortex that happens to contain a life-buoy/coffin that he has neither formed nor carved.

In Moby-Dick, Melville has brilliantly studied different human solutions and has avoided sanctioning any. He has explored rather than judged, and he has honestly studied parts of himself and of the creative process. In Moby-Dick, Melville achieved a grandness unprecedented by him. Melville had successfully surpassed himself.

NOTES -- SECTION III

[1]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891, II (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), p. 529.

[2]Robert Zoellner, The Salt-Sea Mastodon: A Reading of Moby-Dick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 9.

[3]Zoellner, p. 145.

[4]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Fiedelson, Jr. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), p. 410. All subsequent references to this edition will be internally documented.

[5]See page 36 of my dissertation for an analysis of the implications of Melville's response, and how it relates to his fear of reality testing.

[6]Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950), p. 196.

[7]Horney, p. 196.

[8]Horney, p. 196.

[9]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana: University of Illionis, 1957), pp. 1-29.

[10]See my section on "Imagery."

[11]Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 91.

[12]Stern, pp. 242-4.

[13]Zoellner, p. 212; p. 145; p. 9.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSION: MELVILLE'S CREATIVE RESISTANCE OF ABSOLUTES

In this study I have related the major relationships in Herman Melville's life to the imagery and characterization of Moby-Dick. I have demonstrated that while Melville's personal relationships were doomed because of his inability to fully trust another human being, he avoided the strain of absolutism, the need for exact definition, in creating the imagery and characterization of Moby-Dick.

Donald Hall, in his astute study of poetry's connection to poets, discusses the enrichment that emanates from studying a person's life in relation to his work:

> Domesticity precedes ideology, for all men and women. The feelings between parents and children, siblings, men and women as lovers or as spouses -- these relationships penetrate the life of genius as much as they penetrate the lives of the rest of humanity. To insist on the primacy of the family affair is neither to denigrate nor to reduce the poem or the idea. . . .I do not say that when we read his poems we should derive his life from them; I do say that when we read his poems, we must be conscious that they are 'personal' as well as historical or doctrinal, or we do not read them.[1]

What Donald Hall says about T. S. Eliot's poetry is true for Moby-Dick. The major personal relationships of Herman Melville's life colored the type of images and characters

within this work. While forming direct connections between relationships in Melville's life and in Moby-Dick distorts, forming correspondences enriches. In this dissertation I have attempted to intuit rather than project; I have attempted to explore rather than define.

The Melville I discovered was a student of nature, one who was interested not only in what people do, but also in what they are. His characters reflect his involvement with finding an order that portrays life's variable gradations. Melville's relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne encouraged this study of life, but it did not resolve his sense of uncomforting mobility. His characters reflect different aspects of his search. Each character's solution has its own dangers, its own limitations; each character's voyage brings him back upon himself.

Melville critics have attempted to connect the imagery and characterization in Moby-Dick, for Melville was also interested in the nature of objects: his use of the circle and line was as complex, as variable, as his study of human nature. But these critics have attempted to make their connections absolute. In John Seelye's diagrammatic analysis, for instance, he associates the line with Ahab because of the monomaniacal structure of Ahab's quest and the circle with Ishmael because of

Ishmael's relativisitc, reiterative sensibility.[2] Robert Zoellner, on the other hand, has made exactly opposite connections: he associates Ahab with images of roundness, specifically the doubloon, and Ishmael with images of linearity, because he believes that Ishmael is objective:

> . . .Ishmael never, even in the 'Whiteness' chapter, employs the metaphor of the mirror in the absolute sense that Ahab uses it in the 'Doubloon' scene. Ahab sees a hopelessly circular solipsism in the total reflectivity of the doubloon-microcosm, and the varying interpretations of the coin given by the six percipients who follow him appear to reinforce this view. But Ishmael, while he faithfully reports all that is said in this scene, including what Stubb-as-observer reports, does not himself comment upon the doubloon in any but the most objective terms. The 'Doubloon' chapter belongs to Ahab, not Ishmael. The solipsism implicit in it is therefore Ahab's not Ishmael's.[3]

But Ishmael is not simply objective, not simply linear. He speaks of the doubloon as "immaculate" even though it is nailed amidst iron and bolts. He is impressed by its stability: "every sunrise found the doubloon where the sunset left it last." When he mentions that it comes from the Republic of Ecuador, he is quite aware that Ecuador is the central country of the world.[4] The richness of Moby-Dick lies in the fact that no character is strictly tied to either the line or circle. Nor are the line or circle separate: they bifurcate one another and melt into one another.

Moby-Dick seems motivated by Melville's desire to present a world that may be limited in terms of individual character's views, but these views have the richness of variation, and they, when taken simultaneously, form a gestalt which is more than the sum of its individual parts. Each character is a point that can extend into a line, or curve into a circle; no one person can comprehend the whole. Each character is both creator and created.

Moby-Dick is a startling dance, a moveable ever-changing work of art. Radii proceed from the center, and yet when taken collectively form a circumference. The "Grand Armada" chapter's movement demonstrates this in physical terms. Each point, each whale, has its double generating quality: it can circle and it can cut. Through Moby-Dick, Melville apprehends time and space. The voyage progresses and turns on itself: Ishmael begins and ends his journey alone. For Melville, the world is an infinite circle whose center is everywhere and whose extension lies beyond human ken. Melville studies his vision through the actions of both character and object. He explores his own consciousness and the variety of his own needs, and yet creates a world that the reader can enter and explore.

Melville moves from order to anarchy and back to order again. The reader experiences a scattered totality as rich as life itself, a totality which can be broken and reformed but which cannot be successfully defined.

Circles beget circles, ideas, ideas, and the reader is left to ponder, to experience, to analyze, to reject his definitions, and to begin again.

Moby-Dick is a finely textured work protraying Melville at his strongest, at his creatively most honest. He has Ishmael verbalize Melville's own fear that the complexities of his novel will somehow be incomprehensible: "but how can I hope to explain myself here; and yet in some dim, random way, explain myself I must, else all these chapters might be naught" (p. 253). Neither Ishmael nor Melville need worry. Through all the dimness, through all the random complexity, subtlety appeals to subtlety, and the reader imaginatively follows Melville through the magical world of Moby-Dick.

NOTES -- SECTION IV

[1]Donald Hall, Remembering Poets: Reminiscences and Opinions (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), pp. 102-3.

[2]John Seelye, Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 6-7; pp. 60-73.

[3]Robert Zoellner, The Salt-Sea Mastodon: A Reading of Moby-Dick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 25.

[4]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Fiedelson, Jr. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), pp. 549-550. All subsequent references to this edition will be internally documented.

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