MOBY-DICK AS A MEDIEVAL EPIC: THE PILGRIMAGE OF ISHMAEL'S SOUL

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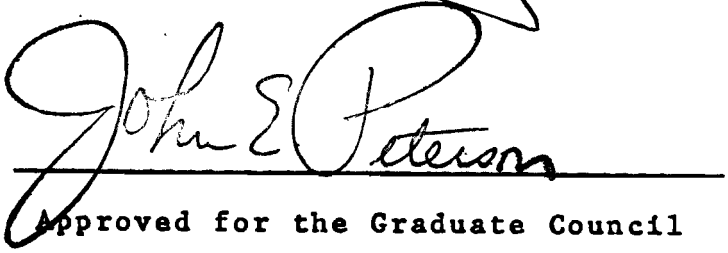

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Table of Contents

MOBY-DICK AS A MEDIEVAL EPIC:

THE PILGRIMAGE OF ISHMAEL'S SOUL

PART 1: ADVOCATES

I. THE PALE USHER AND ETYMOLOGY

As if to illustrate that the spirit of life is not *in* a definition and to show that language can never *exactly* communicate any reality strictly on a literal level, while at the same time placing special emphasis upon the various uses of language and the necessity of re-telling and shaping a story with creative vibrancy rather than dusty complacency, the "Pale Usher" introduces the reader to the literal subject of *The Whale* by quoting dictionary definitions which set forth the argument that mortal man will never know the meaning of *The Whale* according to etymology alone. These extractions are based upon perception of the larger life outside the dictionary to which definitions can only allude, not explain. In that way, the "Pale Usher" has indicated that form and content, whether of a whale or a book, cannot be separated. In that sense, "Etymology" in *Moby-Dick* functions as a Preface to demonstrate the impossibility of splitting any form of life from its content. A human being has to see the example as well as the definition before he understands any reality, whether abstract or concrete, whether a book or a whale. *The Whale*, it seems, is not the only word which is ambiguous and varied according to definition.

The following are some explanations of epic offered by various dictionaries and journals, all of which are, no doubt, completely valid:

> EPIC--a long poem that tells of the adventures of one or more great heroes. An epic is written in a dignified, majestic style, and often gives expression to the ideals of a nation or race.
>
> Thorndike-Barnhart

> EPIC--a long, formal, narrative poem in elevated style, typically having as its subject heroic exploits and achievements or grandiose events. A novel, drama, etc., that in scale or subject resembles such a poem.
>
> Funk and Wagnall

> EPIC--speech, tale, song. Designating, pertaining to or characteristic of, a kind of narrative poetry dealing with heroic action and written in elevated style. Heroic in scale and/or mold.
>
> Merriam-Webster

> EPIC--a long, exalted narrative poem on a serious subject, centered about a heroic figure. Epics are often classed as those by various unknown poets using legends of the founding or expanding of a nation (Beowulf and Roland) and those conceived and composed by one mind (Vergil's Aeneid, Milton's Paradise Lost). The Greek Iliad and Odyssey embrace both groups. Some epics embody the ideals of a nation, e. g., the Finnish Kalevala and the Lusiads of Camoes.
>
> Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia

> EPIC--A very long narrative poem presenting adventures on a grand, heroic scale organically united through a central figure of heroic proportions.
>
> Reader's Encylopedia

EPIC--a poem that celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition.

. . . The Oxford Companion to English Literature

II. EXTRACTS AND THE EPIC

Functioning as a Prologue to the narrative of Moby-Dick, "Extracts" offer the reader a "bird's eye view" of all that has been "said, thought, fancied and sung" of the "Leviathan." Appearing in brackets, the first two paragraphs are to be seen as if they were in the background or the subconscious mind of the reader as well as the persona as he indirectly alludes to the subterranean virtue about to be presented within the narrative of Moby-Dick. While he satirically cautions the reader to "Give it up, Sub-Subs," he realizes that human nature cannot be satisfied with surface authenticity. The samples of the various uses of the word, "Whale," show the several levels upon which he has been, is, and will be interpretted, all of which are not nor cannot be absolutely accurate. All levels, he is saying, will be considered within the narrative, not just the "surface" view. Even so, the meaning depends upon an individual's point of view. Although appearing to be fragmented, Moby-Dick is an organic whole, the subject of which is Ishmael's soul.

Before considering the beginnings of the epic tradition, here are some endings to those literary works which are

epic in scope as well as substance:

> All Troy then moves to Priam's court again,
> A solem, silent, melancholy train:
> Assembled there, from pious toil they rest,
> And sadly shared the last sepulcharal feast.
> Such honors Ilion to her hero paid,
> And peaceful slept the mighty Hector's shade.
> The Iliad[1]

> Odysseus obeyed her, with a happy heart and presently Pallas Athene, Daughter of aegis-wearing Zeus, still using Mentor's form and voice for her disguise, established peace between the two contending forces.
> The Odyssey[2]

> Then, rous'd anew to wrath, he loudly cries
> (Flames, while he spoke, came flashing from his eyes):
> "Traitor, dost thou, dost thou to grace pretend, Clad, as thou art, in trophies of my friend? To his sad soul a grateful off'ring go! Tis Pallas, Pallas gives this deadly blow."
> He rais'd his arm aloft, and, at the word,
> Deep in his bosom drove the shining sword.
> The Streaming blood distain'd his arms around,
> And the disdainful soul came rushing thro' the wound.
> The Aeneid[3]

> When the Emperor has meted out his justice and satisfied his great wrath and has had Bramimunde baptized a Christian, the day is over and the night has darkened.
>
> The King has gone to bed in his valued bedroom. God sends Saint Gabriel to him, to say to him:
>
> "Charles, summon all the hosts of your Empire and enter the land of Bire by force

[1] H. A. Guerber, The Book of the Epic, p. 40.

[2] Homer, The Odyssey, translated by E. V. Rieu, p. 365.

[3] Virgil, The Aeneid. John Dryden, trans., p. 397.

of arms, and rescue King Vivien, for the pagans have laid siege to him in the city of Imphe, and the Christians there are pleading and crying out for you."

The Emperor does not wish to go.

"Oh God," says the King, "my life is a burden!" And the tears run from his eyes and he rends his white beard.

The story which Toruldus set down ends here.

The Song of Roland[4]

Now all whom Fate had doomed were dead, the queen had been slashed to pieces. Dietrich and Etzel began to weep; sorely they mourned both kin and vassals. Their great glory had perished, and all the people lamented. The king's festival had come to a close in grief for so it always is--joy turns to sorrow in the end.

I cannot tell you what happened afterward, save that knights and ladies, and noble squires, too, were seen to weep for the death of their dear friends. Here my tale is ended. This is the fall of the Nibelungs.

The Nibelungenlied[5]

My Cid, the lord of Valencia, passed from this world on the Day of Pentecost, may Christ give him pardon! These were the deeds of my Cid, the Campeador, and in this place the song is ended.[6]

The Poem of the Cid

As the geometer who all sets himself to measure the circle and who findeth not, think as he may, the principle he lacketh; such was I at this new-seen spectacle; I would perceive how the image consorteth with the circle, and how it settleth there; but not for this were my proper wings, save

[4]W. S. Merwin, trans., Medieval Epics, p. 203.

[5]Ibid., p. 433.

[6]Ibid., p. 590.

that my mind was smitten by a flash
wherein its will came to it. To the
high fantasy here power failed; but
already my desire and will were rolled--
even as a wheel that moveth equally--
by hte love that moves the sun and the
other stars.
The Divine Comedy[7]

Thus conquer'd Godfrey; and as yet there
glow'd
A flush of glory in the fulgent West,
To the freed City, the once loved abode
Of Christ, the pious chief and armies press'd:
Arm'd as he was, and in his sanguine vest,
With all his knights in solemn cavalcade,
He reach'd the Temple; there, supremely bless'd,
Hung up his arms, his banner'd spoils display'd,
And at the sacred Tomb his vow'd devotions paid.
Gerusalemne Liberata[8]

So Lamented mourning the men of the Geats,
Fond-loving vassals the fall of their lord,
Said he was kindest of kings under heaven,
Gentlest of men, most winning of manner,
Friendliest to folk-troops and fondest of
honor. Beowulf[9]

They looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late thir happy seat,
Wav'd over by that flaming Brand, the Gate
With dreadful Faces throng'd and fiery Arms:
Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them
soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide;
They hand in hand with wnd'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitary way.
Paradise Lost[10]

[7]C. H. Grandgent, Ed., The Works of Dante Alighieri, p. 606.

[8]H. A. Guerber, The Book of the Epic, p. 213.

[9]Ibid., p. 222.

[10]John Milton, Paradise Lost, p. 307.

Thus the ancient Wainamoinen,
In his copper-banded vessel,
Left his tribe in Kalevala,
Sailing o'er the rolling billows,
Sailing through the azure vapors,
Sailing through the dusk of evening,
Sailing to the fiery sunset,
To the higher-landed regions,
To the lower verge of heaven;
Quickly gained the far horizon,
Gained the purpose-colored harbor,
There his bark he firmly anchored,
Rested in his boat of copper;
But he left his harp of magic,
Left his songs and wisdom-sayings,
To the lasting joy of Suomi.

The Kalevala[11]

Recite ye this heroic song
In tranquil shades where sages throng;
Recite it where the good resort,
In lowly home and royal court.

As long as mountain ranges stand
And rivers flow upon the earth,
So long will this Ramayana
Survive upon the lips of men.

The Ramayana[12]

And lo, he woke with sudden start!
His breath came low at first, then deep,
With an unquiet look he gazed,
As one awakening from a leep,
Wholly bewildered and amazed.

The Mahabharata[13]

I spared her life;
And she, in turn, seeing my sorry plight,
Credit to me from the rocks, and showed the way
To flee from certain death.

White Aster[14]

[11]Guerber, op. cit., p. 3.

[12]Ibid., p. 416.

[13]Ibid., p. 431.

[14]Ibid., p. 463.

> Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.
>
> Moby-Dick [15]

> Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. The unharming sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks. On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan.
>
> Moby-Dick [16]

[15] Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, p. 469. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[16] Ibid., p. 470.

III. LOOMINGS: THREADS OF THE EPIC TRADITION

What is an epic? Perhaps not only the best but the only way to develop a clear insight is to look at some historic origins and attempt to trace some of the connecting threads with which the so-called epic tradition has been spun through the centuries. Although such a tracing can only be superficial, there may well be a need for a simplified approach, for there seems to be a great deal of confusion as to what critics and poets have meant by the "high seriousness" and "elevated language" of the epic. For a literary genre that originated in form with poetic chants and pagan rituals, as well as Homer's poetry of classical Greece, there can be no doubt that the purpose and meaning of epic has suffered inflation. In that sense, what may seem like a step backward is often a step forward. Perhaps Ishmael came more to the point with his impression that: "whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern."(354)

E. M. W. Tillyard entered The English Epic and Its Background through the Neo-Classic door of theories. C. S. Lewis began his Preface to Paradise Lost by considering what kind of poem Milton intended to write. Stanley

Greenfield analyzed Anglo-Saxon Poetry according to subject matter. C. M. Bowra's From Virgil to Milton begins with a definition of the epic. This study was begun with allusion to various epics previous in time to Moby-Dick.

Since the origin of the epic has undergone much scholarly dispute, some critics contend that the first epics were the collections of works of various unknown poets.[17] Gradually, according to that theory, the episodes were molded into a unified whole with an ordered sequence. The other view is that the epic poem, even though collected, is the product of a single genius who gave it structure and expression. Epics have, thus, been divided into two kinds: folk epics which do not have certain authorship and art epics which are the work of one author.[18] Still, others have made the distinctions with different words: oral and literary, authentic and literary, pure and contrived, primitive and artificial, le vers calculé et le vers donné, and primary and secondary.[19] To add to the confusion and, it would seem, to confound the obvious, some have maintained that certain epics are the combination of the two, whatever one wishes to call them. The risk of over-simplification has to be taken, for the ancient is no longer primitive. The basic difference

[17]C. M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, p. 1.

[18]William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, p. 175.

[19]Bowra, op. cit., p. 2.

has been over-complicated: one type of epic was meant to be heard, the other to be read.[20] How they were composed must remain a matter of conjecture. The simple fact is: both species are extant.

For clarification as to the meaning of primary and secondary epic and the way in which they can function, C. S. Lewis is explicit. However, for the over-all characteristics and the epic spirit in general as well as particular, E. M. W. Tillyard is most helpful. The general characteristics which all epics have in common, whether in verse or prose, must be outlined at the outset.

According to Tillyard, there are but four qualities required of the epic. There must be a large-scale narrative and it should be serious enough to merit the epithet universal dealing with many sides of life and gaining amplitude, breadth and inclusiveness. The epic approach is narrow requiring intensity, selection, arrangement, and organization. All of which much be governed by a powerful predetermination which is not completely resolved until the final word has been written; yet, the strategy has been settled before the first word was written.[21]

[20]Bowra, op. cit., p. 2.

[21]E. M. W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, p. 6-9.

Length should offer variety, not repetition, in which the author exercises exuberant control of what's included. The predetermined force of will brings the sustained subject into harmony with the spontaneously composed. In that sense, the poet's sustained will power resembles the human will which created what we call civilization.[22] For that reason, an epic is said to make an heroic impression. Moreover, the writer must express the convictions of a large group of people communicating the feeling of what it was like to be alive at the time.[23]

The epic differs from tragedy in that the latter is timeless resulting in continual repetition; whereas, the epic spreads and collects in time and place; moreover, when the intensity of the tragic elements co-exist with the collective consciousness of an age, Tillyard maintains that the epic has then attained its full growth.[24] However, Tillyard points out that Homer was not conscious of the fact that he was portraying a whole culture or that the changes which take place in Achilles' mind were rendering a regeneration pattern that may be the very core of epic tragedy. He believes Homer was conscious of rendering the deeds of a hero.[25]

[22] Ibid., p. 10.

[23] Ibid., p. 12.

[24] Loc. cit.

[25] Ibid., p. 13.

The Beowulf poet could have had no idea that he was embodying a culture, for such was not his purpose. The narrative material of the Teutonic Heroic Age (4th to 6th Centuries) survived in songs of Germanic tribes settling in Britain. But the Beowulf poet(s) gave them epic proportion in much the same manner that Homer and Virgil treated their heroes in an earlier age.[26] Greenfield maintains that the poet

> . . . has been given, along with other epic accoutrements, an historical setting involving him with the fates of two dynasties, the Danish Scyldings and the Geatish Hrethlings. As an additional layer in Beowulf, there is the Christian ethos, undoubtedly the contribution of the monastery which probably produced the written poem, though certain Christian elements may already have 'lain in solution,' as it were, in oral songs about Beowulf utlized by the religious poet. The fusion of these three levels by the more-than-capable anonymous author leads to the richness and complexity of this sole complete surviving German epic.[27]

There can be no doubt that Beowulf's author(s) had no didactic intention just as Homer probably did not. Not until Plutarch did the idea of a pattern hero take hold in literature. The hero was destined to be one of the chief means of connecting late Latin and early Renaissance epic practice through the Middle Ages.[28]

[26]Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature, p. 37.

[27]Ibid., p. 82.

[28]E. M. W. Tillyard, The English Epic Tradition, p. 4.

A device for interpretting Homer and Virgil came into existence by Fabius Fulgentius' Expositio Virgiliance Continentiae in the sixth century A. D.: allegory. He saw The Aeneid as the progress of a human soul from birth (symbolized by the shipwreck in Book One) to its triumph over the vices.[29] However, that kind of epic did not receive full embodiment until Dante's Divine Comedy, an epitome of a human pilgrimage from a mental hell to a mental Beatific Vision. Although Dante had minded most about the human soul and its salvation as well as politics and culture, Petrarch and Boccaccio emphasized more of the heroic strain in the Italian Renaissance.[30] Similarly, Spenser's The Faerie Queene discontinued the allegorical tradition, giving pleasure but not organic pleasure. Theology and philosophy began to be less important than morality but it was a morality steeped in political significance.[31] The shift in both the Italian and English Renaissances made heroic literature concern itself with the fortunes of great men which had been of secondary importance in the Middle Ages.[32] Didacticism which had been

[29] Ibid., p. 4.

[30] Ibid., p. 5.

[31] Ibid., p. 7.

[32] Ibid., p. 8.

mostly illustrative in Homer and Beowulf poetry as well as the Middle Ages had become of prime importance. Heroic poetry merged into history commemorating a country's own royal or heroic personages and establishing a kind of historical truth which was also designed to delight the reader and the citizen.[33]

Tillyard considers Piers Plowman as the medieval English poem which has the best epic qualifications. The poem's subject is the progress and salvation of the soul of man which was the subject of all medieval epics. The tradition lingered primarily among the humble and achieved its second embodiment in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.[34] However, in the English Renaissance, much learning was demanded of the epic. Tillyard contends that this may have been due to the medieval notion of the learned clerk, a sage who "knew everything," all of which may have been caused by the way men regarded the newly discovered Homer. In any case, people followed the sage as a storehouse of learning and sententious morality.[35] But, with the rising feeling of nationalism, the epic acquired a second property: e. g., patriotism. One's country had to be glorified in its own language.

[33] Ibid., p. 7.

[34] Ibid., p. 6.

[35] Ibid., p. 10.

So, the Renaissance epic became, like the classical, mostly cultural and political. The set of rules, devised in Italy, ultimately stereotyped the English Neo-Classical creed.[36] According to those rules, the epic was considered as the noblest of all literary forms in spite of Aristotle's exaltation of tragedy but because of the prestige of Homer and Virgil.[37] Sidney's Arcadia and Spener's The Faerie Queene are the two English works next in time after Piers Plowman which Tillyard includes in the epic category.

With particular relevancy to Moby-Dick, Sidney's Defense of Poesey is one of the first affirmations that

> . . . it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown makes an advocate; who though he pleaded in armour should be an advocate and no soldier. But it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.38

Spenser's aim was a typical educational aim--that of "fashioning a gentleman," which was due to the ever-growing belief in the pre-eminence of Homer and Virgil. Consequently, the epic was the "supreme" form and excellence could only be achieved by imitating the classical models.[39]

In the Preface to Samson Agonistes, a new movement was beginning to emerge. Tillyard maintains that in that

[36] Loc. cit.

[37] Ibid., p. 11.

[38] Ibid., p. 12.

[39] Ibid., p. 18.

Preface Milton wished to placate Puritan opinion on stage plays and prove to scholarly readers that he was following the rules of Aristotle. Either by acceptance or rejection, Milton concerned himself with the whole of the previous epic tradition in England.[40] While the Renaissance epic was predominantly cultural and political, the medieval had been religious concerning itself with personal salvation. In Paradise Lost, politics is less important than the fate of the individual soul. Milton turned against the whole heroic tradition of the Renaissance which had a definite stronghold on his allegiance.[41] In so doing, Paradise Lost takes a medieval theme combining it with Renaissance culture and exuberance as well as neo-classic compression of form.[42] Paradise Lost reverts to the mental pilgrimage wherein the loss of one paradise results in finding one on this Earth but it is "a Paradise within thee, happier farr."[43]

After Milton, the combining of the medieval, Renaissance, and modern dissolves, according to Tillyard, for the emphasis had again fallen on culture. Although Pope's translation of Homer's Iliad and Dryden's translation of

[40] Ibid., p. 19.

[41] Loc. cit.

[42] Loc. cit.

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[40] Ibid., p. 19.

[41] Loc. cit.

[42] Loc. cit.

[43] Ibid., p. 20.

of The Aeneid were rendered in the 18th century, neither created an epic. That same century, however, saw the birth of a new animal, the novel. Henry Fielding's Preface to Joseph Andrews offers an explanation of the epic as it broke into a seemingly defiant, but comical lion running from the classical cage of pure form. Not enough criticism has looked that literary lion in the face, not to see what makes him tick, but to understand why he runs. Melville resumed the epic tradition but in a different manner and with a different historical background, but in essence, Moby-Dick is a medieval epic which did the same thing in the American Renaissance that Milton's Paradise Lost did in the English.

In Moby-Dick Ishmael turned against the heroic tradition and the pseudo-glorification of self which ultimately beset the eighteenth century, as well as the nineteenth, concept of a hero as an exemplification of pure virtue. Like Milton, Melville's allegiance was with a sentiment more deeply rooted in the heart of the common man than reform.[44] In essence, their poetry is religious, though one be in blank verse, the other in prose. Prior to Melville, American writers had failed to find new forms of expression suitable to what was seen as the American

[44]Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 406.

[45]Ibid., p. 407.

spirit and this may well have been because American nationalism itself was hardly in the making.[45] An intense and rapidly expanding America in the 1800's seems an inevitable time and place for all myths and literary traditions to do battle in the conscience of a genius who would ultimately give them form. American in one sense could not have been a great deal different from the Rome founded by Virgil's Aeneas when he wed Lavinia. The greatest difference, however, was the fact that immigrants were pouring in from many nations of the world, not just one from Troy. Moreover, as Bowra specifies, the literary epic flourishes not in a heyday of a nation or a cause but in its last days or in its aftermath, making way for something new.[46] At such a time, man surveys the recent past with its record of dazzling successes and asks if they can last.[47] Melville's survey foreshadowed the Civil War in America which came ten years after Moby-Dick was published in 1851. Melville's allegiance goes deeper than nationalism and brings into light the pilgrimage of a human soul. In that sense, Moby-Dick surveys not just a recent past, but the entire history of the human race.

[45]Bowra, op. cit., p. 28.

[46]Loc. cit.

I. HEADS OR TAILS? OR MEDIEVAL ALLEGORY?

By now, one obvious fact appears. The epic cannot be approached on any one level. Since the history of the human spirit is what literature is all about, we might do well, if not better, or even best (as Piers Plowman would have it) to re-consider some literary conventions used in the Middle Ages before the heroic strain took precedence over the spiritual. Chief among them was allegory. Too much distrust has developed about medieval allegory. Simply stated, medieval allegory was an effective way of seeing total experience.[47] Dante subscribed to the belief that a poet's chief function was allegorical--to interpret or present the unknown in terms of the known.[48] Modern criticism seems to favor making comparisons with archetypal patterns in terms of the known. However, the line seems to be a fine one between archetypes and allegory. The former emphasizes the repetition of images which are basic in the human mind, while the latter places more importance upon the perception of one image in terms of another. Both are literary devices used for a more effective approach to understand the significance of the written word.

[47]William Langland, Visions from Piers Plowman, Nevill Coghill trans., p. 137.

[48]Loc. cit.

As Tillyard points out, the split which came during the Italian Renaissance was the result of an attempt to emphasize the cultural and political more than the philosophical and the religious. Medieval poets and writers, however, focused upon the whole spectrum. Practicality as well as idealism gave such a view of human experience the kind of new perspective needed to make sound judgment and distinctions amid the multitudes of possibility with which their stage had been drenched.

By the Middle Ages, the soul's pilgrimage had arisen as the central subject of medieval epic. That pilgrimage involved the moral struggle which is central to life.[49] While the idea that order exists behind the earthly façade of chaos and disorder had been the vision of poets like Virgil and Dante, the picture of world order had begun to take shape in more human minds during the Middle Ages:

> . . .However earnestly the most serious thought of the Middle Ages looked to God in heaven, it insisted on seeing God's imprint in earthly creation, too. In fact, one great way of seeing God was to study his visible works. So studied, creation presented a wonderful and complicated picture of order. Every item in it had to be given a significant place; and, so placed, not only did it form an indispensable part of the kind of creation to which it belonged, but it corresponded to another item in a different kind.[50]

In its origin this medieval habit of searching similitudes

[49]Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, p. 138.

[50]Ibid., p. 143.

within the pervading atmosphere of spirituality was a system of multiple meanings which had nothing to do with creating a work of literature. The system was devised to interpret what was already there.[51] By the twelfth century, however, in his Preface to Anticaludianus, Alain de Lille stated that the work should be read in three senses: literal, moral, and allegorical.[52] Dante claimed a fourth sense, adding the anagogical, for The Divine Comedy.

Two kinds of allegory were in use: secular and religious. The secular allegorical principles were based on the belief that there were three levels of meaning in poetry: (1) Sensus Literalis--the simple meaning of the story or the narrative. (2) Sensus Allegoricus--the transferred meaning, its parable-sense, from which the reader could infer his own situation, or, as in the case of some of Chaucer's allegories and Langland's, too, a contemporary social and political event. (3) Sensus Moralis--the moral meaning, extracted by the poet and peppered through the poem, or put as a conclusion in aphoristic form. Religious allegory presented a fourth deminsion: (4) Sensus Anagogicus--a transference of the meaning seen on the human plane which adumbrated the spiritual world of being. Intensely used, it was a

[51] Ibid., p. 145.

[52] Loc. cit.

transference of the meaning seen on the human plane to "the life in eternal glory."[53]

Christian writers were easily able to use these well-tried methods in the study of the Bible and the reading of pagan as well as contemporary authors.[54] To reiterate, secular and religious allegory were not then separated according to the heroic or philosophical strains, for they were merely a two-sided approach used to interpret works of literature according to different levels of meaning. Even so, these levels did not provide definite answers so much as they illuminated the questions, making a reader aware of the significance of the subject.[55] Melville was a medievalist in the sense that

> . . . It is hard to be finite upon an infinite subject, and all subjects are infinite... .[56]

The above quotation supports and is the very essence of the medieval concept of life, for a medievalist believed himself to be an infinitesimal part of the universe. Being was not something to be proved but accepted. One was himself and another was that which was not himself. Thus,

[53]Coghill, op. cit., p. 137-8.

[54]W. T. H..Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, p. 19.

[55]John Lawlor, Piers Plowman, An Essay in Criticism, p. 243

[56]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses." Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, p. 345.

the four-sided approach to literature helped a reader to become aware of the fact that truth has many sides. Consequently, point of view was of primary importance. Allegory was not a literary form but it could serve some of the highest literature of the Middle Ages.[56]

Secular and religious allegory closely parallel primary and secondary epic. The basic difference between a primary and a secondary epic, according to C. S. Lewis, is fundamentally one of chronological order. The secondary grows out of the primary.[57] The basic difference between secular and religious allegory is also one of chronological order; the religious grows out of the secular.

Perceiving the presence of degrees of value in the universe is what C. S. Lewis calls "hierarchial conception."[58] Tillyard has written an entire book on The Elizabethan Chain of Being, The Elizabethan World Picture. Melville may not have realized it when he wrote a letter to Hawthorne in 1851, but he supported the conception and the necessity for perceiving degrees, for

> . . . perhaps, after all, there is no secret. We incline to think that the Problem of the Universe is like the free-mason's mighty secret, so terrible to all children. It turns out, at last, to consist in a triangel, a mallet, and an apron --nothing more! We incline to think that God cannot explain His own secrets, and that He would like a little information upon certain points Himself. We mortals

[56]Tillyard, op cit., p. 145.

[57]C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 13.

[58]Ibid., 73.

> astonish Him as much as He us. But it is this Being of the matter; there lies the knot with which we choke ourselves. As soon as you say Me, a God, a Nature, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam. Yes, that word is the hangman. Take God out of the dictionary, and you would have Him in the street.[59]

Although Melville may have taken a negative position to reach a positive conclusion, there can be no doubt that Moby-Dick exemplifies the acceptance of cosmic order, for Ishmael survives the wreck in much the same way that Adam and Eve go their solitary ways at the end of Paradise Lost as a part of the universal creation. Again, Milton and Melville reject the whole of the purely heroic tradition which had gone before. Just as the violence of Elizabethan drama had nothing to do with dissolution of moral standards but shows them forth instead, so Paradise Lost communicates the same negative capability in a different way--based upon Hebrew and Christian mythology.[60] If, by the Fall, man was alienated from his true self, the true self-knowledge can only be regained by contemplating the works of nature of which he is a part, seeing that the Fall has been his own doing and that the resurrection will come as a result of his own perception. The double vision of world order and all the

[59]Herman Melville, a letter to Hawthorne, April 16, 1851. Herman Melville, Moby-Dick. Hayford and Parker eds., p. 5

[60]E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 18.

effects of sin was the great medieval achievement but was not lucidated or compressed so intensely or so clearly until Milton created Paradise Lost.[61]

Although dual vision must be considered further, a brief appraisal of the Elizabethan conception needs to be set forth, now. Order in the present world corresponded to the divine order which Milton's Adam was eventually to accept. In a world that seems full of chaos and violence, any kind of order is difficult to perceive, but that does not mean that it is not there. The disruption which appeared to Adam and Eve was definitely there, but the loss of Paradise had been the result of denying the presence of the divine order. In that same anagogical sense, Langland was a forerunner of Milton's view when Piers Plowman acknowledged that

> . . . Adam while he said nothing had
> Paradise at pleasure; But when he
> prated about apples and interrupted to
> discover The wisdom and the wit of God,
> he was barred from happiness.[62]

Milton was the forerunner of Melville's view when God told the Son:

[61] Ibid., p. 19.

[62] William Langland, The Vision of Piers Plowman, Nevill Coghill trans., p. 149.

> . . . My Umpire Conscience,whom if they will hear, Light after Light well us'd they shall attain, And to the end persisting, safe arrive. . . [63]

Melville's Ahab has no conscience of either good or evil and directly admits, although he does not understand the significance, that

> . . . I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise. . . (444)

Ishmael, however, pays particular attention to his conscience and progresses in his journey to realize that God indeed IS present and upholding His universe. The universal problem with which Ishmael was wrestling was the result of living in a world which denied the existence of a divine order. The denial caused his malcontent as well as Ahab's rage. Even though Ahab had been wounded and a reader might easily believe him justified in seeking revenge against the White Whale, he reveals in his "Symphony" that for forty years he had "fed upon dry salted fare."(443) After his wound, he had become a monomaniac in whom revenge was not aimed at the whale which caused his grief but at the sum total of all grief. In his blindness caused by excessive light, he had set himself against himself, God, man, and beast.

[63]John Milton, Paradise Lost, p. 66, Bk. III, Ln. 195.

In Paradise Lost one is alluded to the internal pilgrimage of Adam and Eve's souls by the presence of God, Christ, and Satan as characters within the narrative. These direct appearances aid in revealing that the Fall was an internal one within the minds of Adam and Eve rather than an external one. Once they realize the necessity for observing degree, they are free to go their solitary way. Direct intervention in Paradise Lost closely parallels that of the various gods in The Iliad and The Aeneid. The essential differences are that the intervention in Paradise Lost was based upon Hebrew and Christian mythology stressing the point that the realization had occurred within the minds of the principal human characters. Prior to Milton, that point had been obscurred. Melville's Ishmael stresses that same point time and again, but in still a different way: direct intervention in Moby-Dick is completely a matter of individual consciousness so that when Ishmael proclaims that the Rachel had found "another orphan," he re-affirms the importance of making distinctions according to degree. Moreover, he has learned that his conscience has been re-born in accordance with the grace of God and his own will. His perception is the key to his salvation. God, Christ, and Satan are not characters within the narrative, nor are the Greek, Roman, Latin, Germanic, Egyptian, and other gods. However, all are there in the sense that Ishmael calls them forth within

the mind of the reader by making continual allusion to them. There can be little doubt, though, that the substance of Moby-Dick is firmly based upon the conception of one universal God and Hebrew and Christian mythology. Ishmael differs from Adam and Eve in that he started his pilgrimage with the realization that Adam came to at the end of Paradise Lost: man's salvation from the Fall depends upon his individual awareness of his own dual nature and the action he takes as a part of God's universal creation. Ishmael's journey establishes his point of view in a permanent reality not previously conceived in literature. Consequently, his pilgrimage merits a close scrutiny, for he is the basic core of structure in Moby-Dick.

II. THE ANCIENT CRY: ISHMAEL AND THE PRIMARY EPIC

Before looking at the Primary epic in Moby-Dick, one must make some observations about primary epic in general. In Homer's day, all poetry was oral and musical.[64] Moreover, two kinds are described in The Iliad: popular and court poetry. The dancing and celebrating are described in the popular. However, when in court, the poet takes a central position and begins his lay "when the Muse prompts him."[65] The content of that lay comprises serious court poetry which has three characteristics: (1) It is about men; (2) It is historically true; (3) It is tragic.[66] The court poet had an ample supply of wine so that he could drink as much as he wanted. Of the three characteristics, Lewis maintains that only the tragic is epic; further, the tragic is just one of the various types of poetry heard in court, for

> . . . its sharp distinction from lighter kinds makes less impression on us than it should because we merely read about it. If we had seen the poet, first ordered to get up and take his place in a comic and indecent ballet, and then, seated and honoured with wine and spontaneously beginning his tragic lay at the inner prompting of a goddess, we should never again forget the distinction.[67]

[64] Lewis, op. cit., p. 14.

[65] Loc. cit.

[66] Loc. cit.

[67] Loc. cit.

The tragic was the loftiest and gravest kind of poetry in the oral tradition, and it was about nobles, made for nobles, and performed on occasion by nobles.[68] The Middle English word, solempne,comes closer to describing the primary epic quality than the Modern English solemn. The former implies the opposite of what is familiar, free and easy, or ordinary, but it does not suggest gloom or oppression.[69] From the solemn tale in the Primary epic, the poet shapes and manipulates our emotions and sensibilities, bringing in the historical and philosophical perspectives in the secondary epic, all of which work toward establishing the subject and the central figure of the epic.

"The Town-Ho's Story" is the center of the overall construction and is the primary epic out of which grew the whole of Moby-Dick. Heinz Kosok found that

> . . ."The Town-Ho's Story" can be considered as an epitome of Moby-Dick, or at least as an abbreviated and simplified version similar enough to the novel to evoke analogous emotions in the reader.[70]

Kosok maintained that Ishmael learned of the Town-Ho's story from Tashtego. More attention should be paid to who told Tashtego. The story, as Ishmael narrates it

[68] Ibid., p. 16.

[69] Ibid., p. 17.

[70] Heinz Kosok, "Ishmael's Audience in 'The Town-Ho's Story'," Moby-Dick as Doubloon, Parker and Harrison eds., p. 360

in Moby-Dick, involved:

> . . . A certain wonderous, inverted visitation of one of those so-called judgements of God which at times are said to overtake some men. This latter circumstance, with its own particular accompaniments, forming what may be called the secret part of the tragedy about to be narrated, never reached the ears of Captain Ahab or his mates. For that secret part of the story was unknown to the captain of the Town-Ho himself. It was the private property of three confederate white seamen of that ship, one of whom, it seems, communicated it to Tashtego with Romish injunctions of secresy, but the following night Tashtego rambled in his sleep, and revealed so much of it in that way, that when he was wakened, he could not well withhold the rest. . . . . Interweaving in its proper place this darker thread with the story as publicly narrated on the ship, the whole of this strange affair I now proceed to put on lasting record.(208)

Attention should be paid to those "three confederate white seamen," one of whom communicated the story to Tashtego. The "darker thread" reveals several things. First, aside from the obvious fact that Ishmael survived the wreck, since he is the narrator and the poet of Moby-Dick, "The Town-Ho's Story" is the only place in the text where the reader has been told that Ishmael escaped, epilogue excluded. This revelation is established in the paragraph beginning:

> Some two years prior to my first learning the events which I am about rehearsing to you, gentlemen, the Town-Ho, Sperm Whaler of Nantucket, was cruising in your Pacific here. . . (209)

"Some two years prior" to his "first learning" is a subtle ambiguity which leads his listeners (Ishmael is telling them the story, not writing) to believe that he has heard

the story second handedly; whereas, he is actually saying that he was aboard the Town-Ho.

Secondly, prior to putting "the whole of the affair" on "lasting record," Ishmael has directly told the reader of Moby-Dick that the chapter is the primary epic:

> For my humor's sake, I shall preserve the style in which I once narrated it at Lima, to a lounging circle of my Spanish friends, one saint's eve, smoking upon the thick-gilt tiled piazza of the Golden Inn. Of those fine cavaliers, the young Dons, Pedro and Sebastian, were on the closer terms with me; and hence the interluding questions they occasionally put, and which are duly answered at the time. (208)

Ishmael has told the tale before and now brings it into the narrative of the secondary epic which serves two purposes: (1) It preserves the oral rendering; (2) It acquaints the reader with the hero's past encounters. As Lewis has said of Beowulf and Homer:

> We shall go endlessly astray if we do not get well fixed in our minds at the outset the pictures of a venerable figure, a king, a great warrior, or a poet inspired by the Muse, seated and chanting to the harp a poem on high matters before an assembly of nobles in a court, at a time when the court was the common centre of many interests which have since separated, But also, it was the place of festivity, the place of brightest hearths and strongest drink, of courtesy, merriment, news, and friendship.71

[71]Lewis, op. cit., p. 16.

The Golden Inn was certainly a place of festivity, and Ishmael has revealed that he was among friends who were,in a definite sense, members of a Spanish court. One needs to see Ishmael in two roles at this point. First, he is the persona who is telling a reader a long, serious tale about an heroic voyage set in a time past. The secondary epic, Moby-Dick, was not meant for a courtly assembly or a selected group to hear, but for a literate person to read as it is told by the persona, Ishmael. Secondly, in "The Town-Ho's Story," Ishmael is recording the spontaneous account of a still previous voyage exactly as he had rendered it in the oral tradition at the Golden Inn.

The principal characters in "The Town-Ho's Story" are the captain, Radney (chief mate) and Steelkilt (second mate). In character sketches, Steelkilt emerges as a Gothic figure from the forest and lakeland of America. Radney is a Nantucketer who is portrayed as vein, proud, jealous-hearted, ugly and somehow "made mad." The central contention in the story is between these two men, not the captain and Moby-Dick as in the secondary epic. Consequently, the tragic aspects do not spread out in space and time as they do in Moby-Dick. Although Radney was techniquely "superior," basically he was not, for Steelkilt was

> . . . a tall and noble animal with a head like a Roman, and a flowing golden beard like the tasseled housings of your last viceroys snorting charger; and a brain, and a heart, and a soul in him, gentlemen, which had made Steelkilt Charlemagne, had he been born son to Charlemagne's father. (211)

Moreover, Radney had a "malignant eye" and Steelkilt felt a "nameless phantom feeling" each time he was in Radney's presence. After a series of encounters in which the tension gradually builds, Steelkilt is made prisoner for hitting Radney with a hammer although he had threatened to do the same to Steelkilt. Still refusing to be shackled, and after "long entombment in a place as black as the bowels of despair," Steelkilt decided to break out of the "hole" with two "Canallers" who were in his command. However, these two felt it necessary to prevent him from being the first on deck, so they "gagged" and "bound" Steelkilt in his sleep and called for the captain who apprehended all three and placed them in the riggings after separating them from those who had not "rebelled." Turning to the three, he said:

> "But as for you, ye carrion rogues, for you. I mean to mince ye up for the try-pots; and seizing a rope, he applied it with all his might to the backs of the two traitors, till they yelled no more, but lifelessly hung their heads sideways, as the two crucified thieves are drawn. (219)

As the captain started to do the same to Steelkilt, he "hissed something" which was "inaudible to all but the captain" and the "three men were cut down."

Still determined to kill Radney, Steelkilt had planned to do it in a way which would seem like an accident, but

> . . . a fool saved the would-be murderer from the bloody deed he had planned. Yet complete revenge he had, and without the avenger. For by a mysterious fatality, Heaven itself seemed to step in to take out of his hands into its own the damning thing he would have done. (221)

Almost at the same instant when Steelkilt would have killed Radney, Moby-Dick appears. Radney was spilled from the boat and tossed upon the back of Moby-Dick who "seized the swimmer between his jaws; and rearing high up with him, plunged headlong again, and went down." In the meantime, the lakeman who had "slackened the line," so as "to drop astern from the whirlpool, thought his own thoughts. During this process there was a "downward jerking" of the boat and Steelkilt cut the "line" to "free" the "whale." Simultaneously, Moby-Dick rose again with "Radney's wollen red shirt" in the "teeth that had destroyed him." Later, the Town-Ho reached a port whereupon Steelkilt and six "foremast-men" seized a large "double-war canoe" from the "savages" and headed for another harbor. (222)

On a later encounter, the "savage craft" bore down upon the Town-Ho, demanding to know where and for what the ship was bound. Steelkilt made the captain promise to delay the Tahiti destination so he (Steelkilt) could beat the Town-Ho there where he and his mates sailed away on a French vessel. The significance of Tahiti isn't brought to light

until, in the secondary epic, a chapter called "Brit" considers the "eternal war" in terms of the "subtleness of the sea" and its "awfulness which aboriginally belongs to it" as well as its "loveliest tints of azure." Then, a parable is drawn between the "sea and the land" which in turn is analogous of "something in" each individual self, for

> As this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there is one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompssed by all the horrors of the half-known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return! (236)

In the anagogical sense, Tahiti is the center of "peace and joy" in man's soul. Consequently, the tragic aspects of the Town-Ho's story become two-fold. First, the captain is "bound" there to gather more men in his pursuit of whales, not realizing that he is waging "eternal war" against peace and joy. Secondly, Steelkilt, although intuiting the ruthlessness of the captain's madness and rising superior to it, does not realize the spiritual import of his own quest, sailing away for still another "harbor" with no apparent motive other than to escape that which he does not understand and cannot accept. Ishmael, in the moral sense, steps in to teach another lesson by crying out that "self" should not "push off from that isle" of peace and joy. He is saying that there are limits beyond which man cannot go. The "eternal war" thus takes on highly individualistic implications, for ultimately, each individual either accepts

peace or wages war, depending upon whether or not he denies or rejoices in God's divine order revealed within the universe.

After hearing the story of the Town-Ho, the Dons would not believe the tale until Ishmael consented to swear it was true. They were far less interested or concerned about the spiritual significance than its surface authenticity. With his hand upon the Bible, Ishmael swears at them:

> So help me Heaven, and on my honor, the story I have told ye, gentlemen, is in substance true. I know it to be true; it happened on this ball; I trod the ship; I knew the crew; I have seen and talked with Steelkilt since the death of Radney. (224)

There is ample evidence to establish Ishmael as the third member of the crew. In "Loomings" the reader is invited to call the persona Ishmael but he could just as well be called Steelkilt, for the persona, by whatever name, is actually a spokesman for the Soul of Man, not with a multitude of "identities" but one common truth to reveal. With the allusion to the "two crucified thieves," Steelkilt can be seen as a Christ-like figure who shows that the Son of Man may not have been crucified at one time for all time by his fellowmen but as a Son of God, though intuiting rather than perceiving the malicious intent around him, Steelkilt was not flogged and he escaped from the ship whose

captain he could not tolerate. Earlier, his two mates had thought they would "gag" and "tie" him to prevent his being first on deck, when they actually prevented him from committing mutiny. His straightforward stand against the captain stopped the flogging and the intervention of Moby-Dick prevented him from committing murder. Radney's malicious intent was chewed up in "the jaws" of the White Shale. In short, Steelkilt exemplifies the natural heroism and God-likeness inherit in the Soul of Man. Steelkilt's trinity was "brain," "heart," and "soul." However, he was purely heroic and unconscious of either darkness or light. The direct intervention eluded him. He would have murdered Radney and he would have committed mutiny in order to be free. He had only a forceful intuition which refused any sort of nonsense.

Lewis maintains that primary epic does not nor cannot have a great subject because

> Parallels from other literatures suggest that primary epic simply wants a heroic story and cares nothing about a great national subject.[72]

He believes that the Trojan War was not the subject of The Iliad. Rather, the war was the background to the personal story of Achilles' wrath and his killing of Hector.[73] As

[72]Lewis, op. cit., p. 29.

[73]Ibid., p. 28.

such, the interpretation has been made with *sensus allegoricus*, for in the literal sense, the subject is definitely the Trojan War. Accordingly, the whaling industry, or the killing of whales, was not the subject of the *Town-Ho*'s story but merely a background for Steelkilt's wrath and his attempt to kill Radney. However, in the anagogical sense, Moby-Dick's mysterious intervention has freed Steelkilt to continue the purely heroic.

The most important quality of a primary epic is that it be tragic. The tragic aspects of the *Town-Ho*'s story are the *attempts* to flog innocence; man's *attempt* to be inhumane to man; and the overall unawareness of the spiritual significance of the appearance of Moby-Dick. However, the mere repetition of these tragic elements in individual character or situation is not the proper background for the overall epic, for tragedy in and of itself has no direction and no destiny. Rather, the universal capacity is merely re-enacted without reverence for time and place. Goethe once commented: "The lesson of *The Iliad* is that on this earth we must re-enact Hell."[74] However, "The Town-Ho's Story" is almost an entirely different situation, for Steelkilt is prevented from re-enacting hell. It is as though his genuine superiority and human goodness cannot be overcome. Just as Radney and the captain were not aware of "malicious intent"

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

in their thinking, Steelkilt was not aware of the meaning of the facts that his two mates had prevented him from committing mutiny by their acts of jealousy and pride and that Moby-Dick had prevented him from murdering Radney. Steelkilt was determined not to be involved with any attempts to kill the White Whale. He fled the ship.

Not until Virgil's Aeneid did the epic really spread out in time and place. Of The Iliad, Lewis has said:

> Only the style--the unwearying, unmoved, angelic speech of Homer--makes it endurable. Without that The Iliad would be a poem beside which the grimmest modern realism is child's play.[75]

In Beowulf what Lewis calls "essential darkness" is brought into the foreground and embodied in monsters which the hero must fight against. There is no fight against darkness in The Iliad, but as in Homer also in Beowulf, the defeat of the monsters is not long lasting.[76] The primary epic leaves the scene pretty much as it was found while the Heroic Age continues.[77] The latter is partially true of "The Town-Ho's Story" in that the heroic age continues. But, in it the fight has been against light supposedly embodied in or reflected by Steelkilt and the White Whale. There is no defeating that man or that monster.

[75] Loc. cit.

[76] Ibid., p. 32.

[77] Loc. cit.

There can be no doubt that Steelkilt as a Gothic figure from the lakeland and forest region alludes to the Germanic tribesman thus linking the primary epic with the noble and primitive, not unlike Beowulf. With the allusion to the "two crucified thieves," Steelkilt as a Christ-like man of action ties the core of the primary epic with the New Testament just as the genesis of the secondary epic is tied to the Genesis of the Old Testament in which Ishmael, the son of Abraham, was cast out of Egypt. The fusion of the Old and the New results in an exemplification of Jesus' teaching: "Before Abraham was, I am."

III. THE MASTHEAD, THE MORAL SONG AND THE SECONDARY EPIC

Virgil's Aeneid was, according to C. S. Lewis, an entirely different kind of epic than The Iliad, for Virgil invented the "epic subject" and completely altered the epic.[78] While the Greeks primarily saw tragedy as timeless, Virgil took one single legend and treated it

> . . . in such a way that we feel the vaster theme to be somehow implicit in it. He has to tell a comparatively short story and give us the illusion of having lived through a great space of time. He has to deal with a limited number of personages and makes us feel as if national, or almost cosmic, issues are involved. He must locate his action in a legednary past and yet make us feel the present, and the intervening centuries, already foreshadowed. After Virgil, this procedure seems obvious enough. But it is obvious only because a great poet, faced with an all but insoluble problem, discovered this answer and with it discovered new possibilities for poetry itself.[79]

Accordingly, a comparatively simple fable can carry the weight of so much destiny. Aeneas had been driven by storm to the shores of Libya and welcomed by the people of Carthage. He later described the fall of Troy and how the Greeks had defeated the Trojans. In his series of flash-backs and highly elevated oetry, Virgil's Aeneas established the primary epic in Book II of The Aeneid. All that came before was then illuminated; all that comes after was an

[78] Ibid., p. 32.

[79] Ibid., p. 34.

account, through a series of confrontations and conflicts, of how Aeneas was able to win his freedom to marry Lavinia and thereby establish Rome and the long-promised new nation. In the background, the gods watched the conflicts; whereas, before they had directly intervened.

The primary epic in Moby-Dick carries a similar kind of weight as that of The Aeneid in that all the action in the secondary epic develops from the tragic aspects of the primary. However, involving as it does so much accrued history, conflict and spiritual indifference, Moby-Dick brings into the narrative much more than the simple fable upon which it is based. Ishmael, as the poet, narrator and Everyman figure, is not speaking to the people of any one nation, as Aeneas was to Carthage. He is speaking to the people of all nations, and he is driven by an inward kind of storm, as he reaffirms his human characteristics and his insistence upon observing divine order in the first paragraph of "Loomings:"

> All men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me. (12)

"In their degree" establishes at the outset a concept of hierarchy which alludes to a divine order corresponding to the order in the universe as he begins to spread the significance of his learning in time and space. From Ishmael's

point of view, people do not differ in kind, only degree. It is important to note that Ishmael speaks for himself; whereas, Virgil describes Aeneas' problem and his heroic quest for him as the secondary epic opens:

> Arms, and the man I sing who, forc'd by fate,
> And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
> Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore,
> Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
> And in the doubtful war, before he won
> The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town;
> His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
> And settled sure succession in his line,
> From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
> And the long glories of majestic Rome.[80]

Aeneas was driven by a need to establish a homeland, a nation, and restore his banished gods. Ishmael as an American, already had a homeland which was threatened by moral laxity and rapid expansion. Moreover, he was not forced by fate; his quest was not heroic, but one for salvation. As the secondary epic unfolds, he alludes to personages in all walks of life in time present and time past. These include religious and non-religious, literary and non-literary, heroic and non-heroic, as well as contemporary and ancient historical figures. Not once in the text, with all the allusions and references, does Ishmael mention the name of Jesus Christ. The effect of the omission is monumental, for it clearly shows that the spiritual reality of Christ's teaching

[80]Virgil, The Aeneid, p. 4.

had not entered the thinking of those whom Ishmael encountered on his journey, whether on land or sea. Ishmael's quest was to restore that teaching by way of example in the hearts and minds of his readers, even though that may not have been his intention.

Ishmael was no stranger to situations in which he felt whelmed between a world of indifference and apathy and one of exploitation and inhumanity. At "The Mast-Head," (Ch. 35, p. 135), he is portrayed "with the problem of the universe revolving" in him. Although he refuses to sing out when he sees a whale, he sings out in moral song to his audience with a warning that Panthiests are to heed:

> There is no life in thee, now, except that rocking life imparted by a gently rolling ship; by her, borrowed from the sea; by the sea, from the inscrutible tides of God. (140)

"No life in thee" stresses the point that his situation is one from which the reader can infer his own. He alludes to what for him is an inscrutable fact: inspite of the madness behind the motive for the Pequod's journey, Ishmael knew there was a God in whom he lived, moved, and had his being. He did not understand Him but feared Him. Although he has reached a high and inexplicable view at the mast-head, he climbed down to the deck because he had also seen the correspondence of degree in the world around him.

Ishmael's determination for soundness of substance reiterates his dissatisfaction with either seeing or feeling hell re-enacted on Earth. In a chapter called "The Fossil Whale," Melville re-constructs the basic problem of epic style and structure when Ishmael cries out against the hazards of pure form:

> Friends, hold my arms! For in the mere act of penning my thoughts of this Leviathan, they weary me, and make me faint with their out-reaching comprehensiveness of sweep, as if to include the whole circle of sciences, and all the generations of whales, and men, and mastodons, past, present and to come, with all the revolving panoramas of empire on earth, and throughout the whole universe, not excluding its suburbs. Such, and so magnifying, is the virtue of a large and liberal theme! We expand to its bulk. To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme. No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be who have tried it. (379)

While alluding to antiquity and the whale as well as reiterating that "Ahab's harpoon had shed older blood than the Pharaohs," the chapter is also

> . . . a significant illustration of the fact, again and again repeated in this book, that the skeleton of the whale furnishes but little clue to the shape of his fully invested body. (380)

Although "Ahab's harpoon" had shed the "older" blood, Ishmael is drawing a direct parallel to that blind quest wherein he places equal emphasis upon the past and future by insisting that the present is the only place that is actually alive. With "friends, hold my arms," Ishmael has inserted

the comical along with the weight of the tragical aspects, for he protests the ridiculous attempts to place too much stress upon form and surface structure. The biting satire of such lines as "no great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea" re-affirms his disapproval of any subject which does not have human attributes and re-states his disgust not with details, but with trite details. The overall plan of Melville's epic, then, is not to be seen in surface structure but according to aesthetic sequences and moral construction. Ishmael, there can be no doubt, is a religious persona as well as a secular one. In the primary epic, the hatred between Radney and Steelkilt can only be seen in terms of two men at war with each other. However, in the secondary epic, Ishmael shapes the tale with a higher as well as a deeper spiritual significance. The quality is one which meets the stipulation that a

> . . . secondary epic aims at an even higher solemnity than the primary; but it has lost all those external aids to solemnity which the primary epic enjoyed.[81]

Lewis also maintains that the secondary epic must have a "grandeur" or "elevation" of style which is produced mainly by three things: (1) The use of slightly unfamiliar words and constructions; (2) The use of proper names of the splendid, remote or terrible which establish in the reader's mind a richness and variety of the world; (3) Continued

[81]Lewis, op. cit., p. 40.

allusion to sources of heightened interest in our sense experience, i.e. light, darkness, storm, etc. With these, the poet unremittingly manipulates his readers sweeping us along as though we were present at an actual recitation without allowing us to settle down on any one line or paragraph.[82]

In "Loomings" where the secondary epic begins, the reader has been invited to "Call me Ishmael." He directly appeals to the universal in man as the medieval "Everyman" had done. A reader feels himself in the midst of something great, though he knows not what, for it as though

> . . . the flood gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and midmost of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow ball in the air.' (16)

The grandeur is "imaged" forth by the allusions and the elevated use of language. Archaisms seem to rest with the proper names, not the least of which is Ishmael and Ahab. One sentence should be enough to establish the use of archaic language which exists throughout the book but yet fascinates and communicates as well as elevates and enriches the tale. For example, when Ishmael directs us to:

> Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. (12)

[82] Ibid., p. 41.

What could be more archaic than "circumambulate" or "thence?" Ishmael continually uses slightly unfamiliar words and sentence structure and the names allude us to the timelessness before Egypt to the latest issue of a daily newspaper or a presidential election. Ishmael's purpose is to awaken with every possible means, not lull to sleep at the Masthead. Although similes abound there is method in Ishmael's lurking "fits and snatches," as the pairing of opposites proceeds, not the least of which is the past and the present. Each chapter is short, seemingly connected with the one that went before, all of which heighten the intensity of the drama as we are lead from the low-keyed loomings to the final crescendo during the third day's chase.

The use of verbs in their present tense while referring to antiquity ("with a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship") gives a sense of immediacy. This quality of sentence structure added to the brisk, short chapters, sweep the reader into a consideration of the past as if it were the present, while at the same time not allowing any rest for such consideration. The reader is eager to get to the next chapter, the shortness of which gives the impression that he is progressing rapidly through the text. While each chapter

appears to be "paired" with the next, a close scrutiny would show that there is often no logical connection. Ishmael is manipulating us. The similes and allusions swirl on the page almost as fast as waves roll in with tides. In keeping with that epic convention, details are splashed on the page as if everything had a perfectly reasonable and logical sequence, as though everything were being fully explicated. The abundance of such devices tries the reader's patience to the point where he feels weighted down by concrete facts. Moral preachments pry sensibilities in ways which seem utterly ridiculous. Certainly! Ishmael is not imitating or representing life. He is alluding us to it, seeing that we get the feel of it. The subject of the White Whale, a sustained metaphor, is indirectly ever-present but easily lost sight of because that is one subject which transcends all those facts, illusions, and allusions. The reader can easily get lost in the grandeur of the infinite possibilities or weighted down in a profusion of realities.

While the connections between chapters are not necessarily logical, they are emotional, quite aesthetic and in that sense, quite literal. Ideas from all sorts of origins, places and times have been thrown together because of the relationships which can be said to exist in the conscience and sub-conscience of Everyman. We accept the pairings of

opposites without questionning them, because the logical has been lulled to sleep. For example, there is quite a distance between the allusion to "one grand hooded phantom, like a snow ball in the air" in "Loomings" and the earthy ending of the next chapter, "The Carpet Bag," in which we are asked to "scrape the ice from our frosted feet, and see what sort of a place this 'Spouter' may be." (20) This typical "up and down" process is logically but not emotionally overlooked as the reader is lead along Ishmael's journey.

According to C. S. Lewis such "continuity" is an essential of the epic style.[83] We are not to be allowed to "settle down" but must be borne on with tireless flights and comparisons as the reader is plunged back into the past with a sense of immediacy or carried forward with a sense of connection and relevancy. A sense of dignity must, however, always be preserved. Ishmael never loses sight of the overall, sustaining metaphor: the White Whale. Since the pilgrimage of Ishmael's soul is the subject and central basis of structure in the secondary epic, his perception of the apparent opposites is constantly brought to bear upon the narrative.

Since the subject and structure of Moby-Dick are now under direct consideration, it will be helpful to use the four medieval senses of allegory in order to see the development that takes place within the narrative. On the

[83] Ibid., p. 45.

literal level, Moby-Dick may be interpretted as a story about the whaling industry, Ahab's heroic quest directed against the white monster as well as Ishmael's inexplicable "malcontent" and his journey in which resolution was made. On the allegorical level, the whale, not the White Whale, is comparable to man whereby Ishmael effectively demonstrates his own personal situation and in the transferred meaning, or its parable-sense, allows the reader to infer his own situation. The allegorical level is also one in which Ishmael illustrates man's inhumanity to man. On the moral level, Ishmael continually sprinkles the meanings of the comparisons throughout the narrative. Somewhat like a "learned sage," he sings out where injustice is being done, has been done, or is about to be done. His "teaching" is by way of illustration and, somewhat like Chaucer in Canterbury Tales, some of the outcries are in solemn earnestness and some are highly satirical. On the anagogical level, the transference of meaning reaches its highest plane wherein the various meanings of the colorless "white" are considered. Ultimately and specifically, however, and somewhat like Piers Plowman and the Good Samaritan who find identity with Christ, Ishmael discovers the love of God. On that level, the whiteness of the whale alludes to the inscrutable but very evident revelation of the Love of God for man, beast and all forms of life according to degree.

The four senses of allegory do not offer explanations but provide keys for unlocking doors to understanding. The senses are constantly at play in the text of Moby-Dick, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes just one or more at a time. In the chase of a whale, the four senses are represented by the four boats which lower in the pursuit. The result is highly effective, for it shows that the spirit of life cannot be killed, completely or directly explained, dissected or disrupted. All of which supports Ishmael's original contention in "Extracts" and "Etymology" that the Sub-subs whose only motive is to give chase should give it up.

PART III: THE GRAND ARMADA

I. WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL: THE FOUR PARTS OF MOBY-DICK

Having seen "The Town-Ho's Story" as the primary epic, and knowing that the swearing upon the Bible had probably not convinced the Dons, a reader may well understand why Ishmael has assumed an approach other than a straightforward one as well as one which allows certain degrees of satire to balance, not overshadow, the high seriousness. Mere repetition of tragedy is assured not to be the result, for Moby-Dick's structure establishes a wider amplitude which confronts more sides of life, including the comical as well as the tragical aspects. Even so, whether one reads more comedy than tragedy in the narrative, a subterranean order dominates and controls the overall plan of the epic scope. The predetermination does not parallel but closely follows a natural order in the universe. More specifically, the four seasons are a key to the structure.

In shaping the secondary epic, the subject of which is the pilgrimage of a human soul, Ishmael directly states a universal truth when, in talking about Ahab behind the mask, in a chapter called "The Specksynder," he said:

> For be a man's intellectual superiority what it will, it can never assume the practical, available supremacy over other men, without the aid of some sort of external arts and entrenchments, always, in themselves, more or

> less paltry and base. This it is, that for ever keeps God's true princes of the Empire from the world's hustings; and leaves the highest honors that this air can give, to those men who become famous more through their infinite inferiority to the choice hidden handful of the Divine Inert, than through their undoubted superiority over the dead level of the mass. Such large virtue lurks in these small things when extreme political superstititions invest them, that in some royal instances even to idiot imbecility they have imparted potency. But when, as in the case of Nicholas the Czar, the ringed crown of geographical empire encircles an imperial brain; then, the plebeian herds crouch abased before the tremendous centralization. Nor, will the tragic dramatist who would depict mortal indomitableness in its fullest sweep and direst swing, ever forget a hint, incidentally so important in his art, as the one now alluded to.(129)

Among other things, Ishmael, in the above passage, has alluded to those "external aids" which Lewis maintains are missing from any secondary epic. Ishmael in the Golden Inn had such "external aids" as the festive atmosphere among friends, an abundance of wine, and quite literally, a Bible upon which to place his hands. However,in the secondary epic, he is telling and shaping the story for a private person reading a book. Quite simply, that person is not hearing the story told, but reading it and must be made, through allusions and images, "to feel that he's assisting at an august ritual, for if he does not, he will not be receptive of the true epic exhilaration."[84] Ishmael carries his intention to that

[84] Ibid., p. 40.

> Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shaggiiness; and in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whalehunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestical trappings and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air! (130)

Ishmael, as has been noted, effectively resorts to the epic device of grand and elevated swayings in which he continually uses parables and all sorts of comparisons to manipulate the reader and give a believable technique to the story, hoping that he is not wasting his time in re-telling, re-shaping, and featuring it in the "unbodied air," with an intensity not unlike Coleridge's Ancient Mariner who must tell the tale. Thus, the secondary epic is by all means more solemn than the primary. It is comical only in the sense that often the best means of telling any truth is by making people laugh at themselves. The substance, nonetheless, is solid, sincere and highly serious.

Moby-Dick as an organic whole is governed by a powerful predetermination which Tillyard clearly sets forth as a basic requirement for an epic.[85] Lewis refers to the technical accomplishment of that quality as an "essential continuity." The reader wants something more than obstacle.

[85]Tillyard, EEB, p. 9.

He wants resolution, and in epic poetry, "the poet's battles are mainly won in advance."[86] The reader has an idea of increasing expectancy. It is doubtful that anyone can read Moby-Dick without several levels of expectancy operating within his mind at the same time, even though he may not be conscious of the process. On the literal level, one paragraph and one chapter lead him to expect interesting contrasts and episodes in the next. On the allegorical level, he expects and feels a relevancy to his own situation, and it is in that sense that Ishmael speaks to a vast multitude of people, sharing their deepest or most prevalent convictions. On the moral level, he expects Ishmael to sing out in dissention as well as ascendency. On the anagogical level, the reader expects resolution amid the flood of mythology and allusion with which he has been drenched. Ishmael shows and describes, leads and illustrates throughout the narrative so that a reader is not really surprised at the outcome. However, in the last section of the book, the whole of Ahab's quest has been reversed; whereas, Ishmael discovers his identity.

In the background, behind all the action, resolution, and moral singing, natural order has dominated and shaped the journey. In that respect, Moby-Dick exemplifies the

[86]Lewis, op. cit., p. 49.

Elizabethan concept of a Chain of Being wherein nature was a tool of God.[87] Nature for Ahab had worked itself out; he could only feel and defy. He was chained, as it were, to nature, but, with his blind sense of predestination, he had set himself against himself by trying to erradicate all that was natural. Ishmael, however, could observe and think as well as feel. Nonetheless, nature was functioning throughout the narrative and was utilized to give shape, purpose and scope to the secondary epic.

The four seasons comprise the natural progression in Moby-Dick and in turn, constitute four distinct sections of the book. It is interesting to note that in medieval number symbolism the number four signified the spiritual world; nature; man by nature; or system and order.[88] Before explicating the four parts of the text, it should help coherency to set them forth:

Part I - Winter
"Loomings" (Ch. 1, p. 12) - "The Lee Shore" (Ch. 23, p. 97).

Part II - Spring
"The Advocate" (Ch. 24, p. 98) - "The Gam" (Ch. 53, p. 204).

Part III - Summer
"Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" (Ch. 55, p. 224) - "Ambergris" (Ch. 92, p. 342).

Part IV - Fall
"The Castaway" (Ch. 93, p. 344) - "The Chase--The Third Day" (Ch. 135, p. 460).

[87] Tillyard, EWP, p. 54.

[88] G. A. Gaskell, ed., Dictionary of All Scriptures and Myths, p. 541.

The first part of the journey, from "Loomings" to "The Lee Shore," takes place during the winter season. Ishmael directly states that he arrived in New Bedford on a "Saturday night in December."(17) The first section also sets forth the motives for Ishmael's decision, explains his discontent, and presents the coldness and the indifference of land dwellers in terms of their attitude toward whales and the whaling industry. Spring is ushered in between "The Advocate" and "The Gam" after Queequeg and Ishmael are fully embarked "in this business of whaling."(98) The section also introduces all the other characters and members of the crew, establishing important facts about the nature of the quest. The joy of spring is portrayed by the merriment of the crew as they dance, sing and celebrate the idea of catching Moby-Dick. Again, Ishmael directly sets the time as "the Pequodnow went rolling through the bright Quito spring, which, at sea, almost perpetually reigns on the threshold of the eternal August of the Tropic."(111) After circling the Cape of Good Hope and sailing by the Crozets, the Pequod has entered the third leg of the trip in a climate that becomes very hot. From "Of Monstrous Pictures of Whales" to "Ambergris," all sorts of varied pictures and interpretations of whales and the various uses of their parts and products are

sketched into the narrative in ways which reflect the feverish attempts, both past and present, to dissect or directly and accurately picture the content and structure of a whale. Around the Equator, the Pequod had entered the hot climate of summer. The effect of the heat as drawn by the narrator directly parallels the fevered blindness of Ahab's quest as well as the other attempts to conquer the inscrutable which had been made before him. Having crossed the Equator through the Java Sea by Sumatra, the Pequod entered the South China Sea enroute to the Pacific. The climate had cooled as the ship came closer to a fall season. However, the fourth part of the book, from "The Castaway" to "The Chase--The Third Day," depicts Ahab's determination, which he believes to be predestination, to not enter that cycle since Moby-Dick was in the South Seas. The remainder is an account of the attempt to reverse the natural course of a whaling ship sailing through that area. Rather than continuing north, the Pequod turned south again. According to Melville's map, "Track of the Pequod," the shipwreck took place exactly upon the Equator.(xviv Consequently, "fall" functions on two levels. For Ahab who was chained to nature, the wreck exemplifies the fact that the natural cannot be foregone. For Ishmael who had observed degree with a dual-like vision, the wreck was a means of salvation. The subject of Moby-Dick is the pilgrimage of a human soul and the Fall of man.

II. WINTER: FROM "LOOMINGS" TO "THE LEE SHORE"

Part I, from "Loomings" to "The Lee Shore," contains the sketches which lay the groundwork, for these chapters reveal Ishmael's motives for making the voyage, set forth the contentions of various mythologies, describe how the whale and the ship are interpretted on land and exploited in the pulpit, develop the friendship between a Christian and a cannibal, describe the ship and its owners, and foreshadow the character of Ahab.

Beginning with the low-keyed ebbings of "Loomings," Ishmael, in his "insular city of Manhattoes," suffers from what John Steinbeck or Shakespeare's Richard the Third calls "the winter of our discontent."[89] He compares himself with Cato, the Roman Statesman who constantly struggled against enemies of the state abroad and moral laxity at home. Realizing what Lewis calls "the doctrine of the unchanging human heart," Ishmael does not imitate Cato's Stoic act of defiance nor Richard's determination to re-enact Hell.[90] Ishmael simply observes the various modes of feeling and thinking through which Everyman passes. Ishmael does yearn for the heroic ideals which no longer seem present in his world in much the same way that Cato and Richard may have missed them. However, Ishmael's inner struggle was

[89]Wm. Shakespeare, Richard the Third. Hardin Craig, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare, p. 302.

[90]Lewis, op. cit., p. 62.

compassionate and spiritual. He simply heads for the ocean and makes allusions to the "mystic sea," wondering why the Persians held the sea to be holy and the Greeks gave it a deity in the person of Poseidon. (14) Even Narcissus could not grasp the tormenting but "mild image he saw in the fountain and plunged into it and was drowned."(13) Everyone, Ishmael realizes, sees that same image in all rivers and oceans: "It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all."(13) Indeed, it is the key to it all, for Ishmael is embarking upon a twofold journey. He makes comparisons of the immediate surroundings and personages with those of the past. In that way, his journey is a mental pilgrimage as well as physical one. Everything he sees, including himself, has a counterpart or several counterparts in his mind. Even Nantucket was "the Tyre of this Carthage." (17) The very name Ishmael (God hears) functions within two time spans: the one in which a reader is to believe Ishmael is telling the story and the historical one in which another Ishmael was an outcast, not a grand heroic figure. In that way, the genesis of Moby-Dick is tied to the Genesis of the Bible. The foreshadowing of Ahab in "The Ship" draws a similar parallel, for Ahab was an evil king in I Kings 16-22 and the reader expects, at this early stage, that Ahab's quest will meet defeat. Seeing similtudes in time present and

time past, Ishmael states:

> I think I can see a little into 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 freewill and discriminating judgement. (16)

Ishmael's survival of the wreck is foreshadowed by his apparent "delusion" concerning freewill, but chief among his motives for going was "the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself" which not so obviously refers to Moby-Dick, not just any whale. Consequently, a reader knows that Ishmael has heard of or possibly seen Moby-Dick before although he informs the owners of the Pequod and other "landsmen" to the contrary.

The whole business of killing and being killed in the whaling industry is effectively portrayed in "The Spouter Inn," "The Chapel," and "The Pulpit." Various portraits on the walls of the Spouter-Inn are painted with a "black mass of something hovering in the centre of the picture" which causes all sorts of "fancies" to arise in Ishmael's mind.(20) But these fancies yield to "that one portentous something in the picture's midst" which he likens to "the great leviathan himself." Even the bar was "a rude attempt at a right whale's head" and the bar tender was "another cursed Jonah" within its jaws. The "little withered old

man who, for their money, dearly seels the sailors deliriums and death," creates another aspect of irony, for the very business in which the sailors are involved is one of delirium and death.[21] These outward manifestations of darkness are comforting to Ishmael who turned in that night and never slept better in his life.

Man's refusal to give up his dead, a different degree of darkness, is explicated in "The Chapel," where Ishmael observes:

> . . . so many are the unrecorded accidents in the fishery, and so plainly did several women present wear the countenance if not the trappings of some unceasing grief, that I feel sure that here before me were assembled those, in whose unhealing hearts the sight of those bleak tablets sympathetically caused the old wounds to bleed afresh. (40)

The women's unceasing grief directly parallels Ahab's determination to remove it. Ishmael shares the concern and early establishes his willingness to see if Ahab could eliminate wide-spread grief. The chapter also contains a poetic elegy to the dead which is a forerunner of "The Pulpit" and the preacher's black "Sermon." Ishmael sites the paradox that

> Life Insurance Companies pay death-forfeitures upon immortals; in what eternal, unstirring paralysis, and deadly, hopeless trance, yet lies antique Adam who died sixty round centuries ago; how it is that we still refuse to be comforted for those who we nevertheless

> maintain are dwelling in unspeakable bliss; why all the living so strive to hush all the dead; wherefore but the rumor of a knocking in a tomb will terrify a whole city. All these things are not without their meanings. But Faith, like jackal, feeds among the tombs, and even from these dead doubts she gathers her most vital hope. (41)

Having already faced death, Ishmael was ready to live; he becomes merry again:

> 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 of air. 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. (41)

With that degree of spiritual insight, Ishmael goes forth into the darkness of "The Pulpit" which is reached by a ladder and "like most old fashioned pulpits, it was a very lofty one." (42) "Its pannelled front was in the likeness of a ship's bluff bows." (43) "The Holy Bible rested on a projecting piece of scroll work, fashioned after a ship's fiddle-headed beak." (43) Those kind of sketchings in the chapter depict the bleakness of worship without the spirit. Ishmael, however, agrees with Father Mapple that "the world's a ship on its passage out, not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is its prow." The agreement foreshadows Ishmael at the Masthead on the Pequod. The device of continual foreshadowing used throughout the narrative gives the powerful

feeling of predetermination to the entire work. The contrasts of the degrees of darkness are also highly effective, such as those between the interpretations of the whale in the Spouter-Inn and the Chapel as well as the Pulpit. The absence of New Testament allusion is emphasized by Father Mapple whose entire sermon is based upon Jonah and the whale and the whaling industry. After exhausting himself with the preaching of woe, Father Mapple "covered his face with his hands, and so remained, kneeling, till all the people had departed" and he was "left alone in the place."(51) The aloneness contrasts Ishmael's insistence that "nothing exists in itself" as well as his ultimate discovery that man's relationship with God is also personal and individualistic.

The friendship theme is also developed in Part I. Ishmael's account of his "Bosom Friend" is very detailed but, in essence, concerns the humanism at the root of most religions, for "you cannot hide the soul." (52) The pairing of opposites, a Christian and a cannibal, is an effective dramatic device to bring together those personae who, although opposite according to class distinction, are similar in basic characteristic. In the "Biographical" sketch, Ishmael reveals that Queequeg is a "native of Kokovoko" where his father was a "High Chief, a King; his uncle a High Priest" so Queequeg has

"excellent blood in his veins--royal stuff." However, his "cannibal propensity" had been nourished in his "untutored youth." (56) The pairing provides a background against which Ishmael can contrast various degrees of cannibalism, both inside and outside Christendom. The pairing also establishes the basis upon which Ishmael can demonstrate his genuine but practical interpretation of Christianity, for he cherishes "the greatest respect towards everybody's religious obligations," no matter how "comical," and could never find it in his heart to "undervalue even a congregation of ants worshipping a toad-stool." (78) The comparison is also another vital instance wherein Ishmael shows an awareness of the peaceful and domestic. The attitude is one he maintains all through the secondary epic. This characteristic is one that Tillyard attributes to a hero or the main character of an epic. Ishmael seems to be on both sides. [91] The effect illustrates that the new is always fashioned from the old. Ishmael establishes an emotional continuum which follows the thoughts and emotions of an individual character but the overall quality which Brooks Otis calls ethos establishes the universal rather than the emotional and personal. [92] Ishmael's situation is individual; yet, universal as well as specific. The idea

[91] Tillyard, EEB, p. 63.

[92] Brooks Otis, Ovid as an Epic Poet, p. 71.

of change is the organic principle of an epic; however, in Moby-Dick, Ishmael is the only character whose understanding and determination seem capable of accepting change.[93]

Ishmael's concept of pathos is light as well as heavy, for he emphatically penetrates all the characters and his personal comments on the action often do not seem serious or intense but relaxed, even comic, which makes the development of change human. Ishmael's sympathetic style is empathetic as he communicates the feelings of the other characters. The continual and deliberate exaggeration enhance the epic décor, picturing precision, but all the while turn the epic diction into paradoxes and stages of intense or comic irony.[94] Again, the essential epic continuity and dignity of purpose are maintained by dramatic comparisons in situation and condition.

Ishmael sets forth the contention that "all good Presbyterian Christians," of which he is one, "should be charitable"

> . . . and not fancy ourselves so vastly superior to other mortals, pagans and what not . . .

because

> . . . we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending. (78)

[93] Ibid., p. 74.

[94] Ibid., p. 58.

The full irony of the above realization will be intensified as well as exemplified when he moves further out to sea where he compares the complete madness of Ahab with the "half-crazy" conceits. As foreshadowed in "Nightgown," Ishmael will illustrate that

> There is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself. (55)

Ahab later utters the same thought but with quite a different motive than Ishmael's when in "The Spynx" he cried out:

> O Nature, and O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind. (264)

Ahab's mad purpose was to destroy that which he sought while Ishmael sought only understanding. Ishmael appreciates religious paganism, for he knows it is a counterpart of the Christianity which has been paraded in his world as unquestionably superior. The relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael, or, on the anagogical level, between paganism and Christianity, establishes the lifebuoy in its earliest and most significant stages before Queequeg faced death or a coffin was built. Ishmael's friendship with Queequeg also provides a sharp contrast, with the seemingly darker aspects, to the satanic aspects of Ahab who exemplifies the Miltonic conviction that the greatest darkness comes from too much

light wherein man may think it possible to completely dominate nature.

"The Ship" had "an old-fashioned claw-footed" look about her. Images of durability and insistence dominate Ishmael's verbal portrait, for she was long seasoned and weather-stained

> . . . in the typhoons and calms of all four oceans. Her old hull's complexion was darkened like a French grenadier's, who has alike fought in Egypt and Siberia. Her venerable bows looked bearded. Her masts, cut somewhere on the coast of Japan, where her original ones were lost overboard in a gale--stood stiffly up like the spines of three old kings of Cologne. Her ancient decks were worn and wrinkled, like the pilgrim-worshipped flagstone in Canterbury Cathedral where Becket bled. But to all these her old antiquities, were added new and marvellous features, pertaining to the wild business that for more than half a century she had followed. (67)

With that kind of personification, the ship carried all the dark forebodings of the past, and with allusions like the "Canterbury Cathedral where Becket bled," the reader is urged to remember that the Son of man has not been crucified at one time for all time. Moreover, the parts which make up the ship and the countries from which they apparently originated bring into play, or at least into the reader's mind, the various civilizations which have taken part in the recurring quest. The "new and marvellous features" which had been added for the "wild business" of the last

fifty years place particular stress upon man's continual improvement of ways and means to make pursuits and put emphasis upon man's persistent demand for the marvellous at the expense of the ordinary.

Captains Peleg and Bildad, owners of the Pequod, appear as personifications of two abstract but influential qualities carried to their extreme. The love of money in and for itself is exemplified by Captain Peleg who insisted upon paying Ishmael a bare minimum since Ishmael had told him he was not experienced in the business of whaling. Captain Bildad's religious hypocrisy soon becomes evident, for he had

> . . . long since come to the sage and sensible conclusion that a man's religion is one thing, and this practical world quite another. (72)

Ishmael has drawn a parody of the "sage and sensible," for he has already learned and observed that there is much which surpasses understanding. However, his business is to present what he does understand: exploited gree, religious hypocrisy and false charity. Both Captains had decided that the business of killing whales was perfectly acceptable. Captain Bildad quoted scripture on Christmas day when the Pequod left and Miss Charity, Bildad's sister, came aboard with many gifts for the crew. Ishmael notes that it was "a short, cold Christmas." All the material attributes were present

but the spirit of Christmas was missing. Ishmael felt a little warmer when Captain Bildad recited:

> Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Stand dressed in living green.
> So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
> While Jordan rolled between. (95)

However, the first section closes with Ishmael's own hymn to Bulkington with whom he was impressed at "The Spouter Inn" when he recognized Bulkington as a "silent partner" who would take no visible part in the business of whaling.(97) Reaching "The Lee Shore," Ishmael proclaims that

> . . . this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington. Let me only say that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land: for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe! (97)

The above passage re-affirms the fate of the Pequod and tells the reader that the ship will be wrecked. With the tribute, Ishmael reaches the essence of the compassionate force which drives him onward, for even the deepest thinking is but "an effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea." (97) Changing in the movement toward the sea, Ishmael begins to think that God is indefinite, cannot be harpooned, but simply is. With definite empathy for Bulkington, Ishmael decides

> . . . better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! who

> would craven crawl on land! Terrors of the terrible! is all this agony so vain? Take heart, take heart, O Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demi-god! Up from the spray of the ocean-perishing--straight up, leaps thy apotheosis! (98)

Bulkington, who was obsessed by the ocean, had just returned from one adventurous voyage before embarking upon the Pequod. He remained aloof. With his moral preachment, Ishmael rides out the first crescendo of an epic wave in which he praises complete self-reliance but also implies that Bulkington avoided reality. The effect receives more impact when the reader realizes that Bulkington does not appear nor is he mentioned again the narrative. Bulkington's plight is in sharp contrast to Ishmael's. Bulkington, Ishmael hints, was not aware of dualities. However, Ishmael acknowledges Bulkington's human and divine characteristics by referring to him as "demigod." Ishmael's vision strikes the medieval view of this "middle-earth" but the vantage point is purely a matter of consciousness. The sub-conscious has been revealed in accordance with the winter season that governs and decides the first section of Moby-Dick. Winter and Part I point beyond themselves, as does Ishmael, for an answer--the effect of which reaffirms the contention that God controls nature.

During the Winter section, Ishmael has established the starting point of a quest. He confronted and observed man

in this world, including himself. He looked at things as they were, as Piers Plowman does from the Prologue through Passus VII.[95] However, the chief difference is simply that Ishmael's vision is not a dream. His conscience is not a character in the narrative but a part of him which directly speaks to the reader. The allusions do not break entirely free of time and place. Like Piers, Ishmael had watched the crowd--in Manhattoes; he is questionning and bothered by prejudices but remains straightforward illustrating courtesy which was one of the most significant values in the Middle Ages.[96] Although Ishmael has evaluated the trades, including the commercial, the religious, the political and the charitable with a satiric bite in his tone, he remains sympathetic. He has demonstrated a power to fuse doctrine with poetic imagination as exemplified by his own sermon in "The Chapel" and the final hymn to Bulkington.

Culminating like a high wind in March before the first breath of spring, Part I (Winter) directly coincides with that natural background as Ishmael, in his praise of Bulkington, echoes Piers Plowman with the concept that there are things in the world which are open to Nature alone; limits beyond which learning cannot pass.[97] With that degree of respect

[95]William Langland, Piers the Plowman, Trans. Margaret Williams, p. 23.

[96]Ibid., p. 26.

[97]Ibid., Bk. xii, ln. 232-35, p. 207.

for nature, Ishmael has also emphasized the inscrutable love of God which surpasses human understanding. However, he has also specified various degrees of understanding with the subterranean insistance upon re-telling and re-shaping the story according to those aspects of life which he does understand. Indirectly, he advocates respect and appreciation for the ordinary instead of the marvellous.

As the winter season developed, Ishmael can be seen as the central character. Moreover, most of the epic requirements have been established with surprising clarity: Ishmael speaks for a vast majority of people in time present and time past with a style of convincing fortitude that attests to the high quality and high seriousness for the human condition which he confronted. Secondly, the amplitude and the scope have called into mind the history of the human race since man first learned to symbol and to write placing particular emphasis upon the Old Testament and Genesis. Thirdly, the reader feels the power of the predetermination which governs the entire work, for he has been told that the ship will be wrecked so there is no suspense in the narrative in terms of plot. The strategy has been settled beforehand. This ideal of epic structure is referred to by Tillyard who stipulates

> . . . that the whole, however long, should remain fluid and unset till the last word has been written, that the writer should have

> everything simultaneously in mind and keep it open to modification throughout the process of composition. This must remain an ideal, for no man has possessed the powers of memory and control necessary to fulfill it. Even Dante was inconsistent. And one should not exclude from all possibilities of epic success a work that settles its parts as it goes along, provided it makes one part truly evolve out of the others, provided it retains a general recollection of what has gone before.[98]

Although "no man has possessed the powers" to completely meet the epic ideal, there can be little doubt that many aspects of Part I, Winter, have been left open to modification, not the least of which was Ishmael's praise of self-reliance that rides out the foreshadowing of the wreck as the first section reaches a crescendo. The "whole" of Moby-Dick remains "fluid and unset" until the "last word" has been written. That word is orphan. In the aesthetic sense, reference has already been made to the use of language and the way in which it connects one chapter with another in a process not necessarily logical but believable. Many minor parts, such as the Bulkington episode, are resolved enroute to the major theme's finalé. With nature as a governing force for the structural parts, one part "evolves out of the others" and "retains a general recollection of what has gone before." Any apparent "inconsistency" in terms of literal plot or episode

[98]Tillyard, op. cit., p. 9.

seems minor when remembering that an approach to "the whole truth" involves three other senses: the moral, the allegorical and the anagogical. Epic must select, arrange, and organize.[99]

Although the wide variety has been pictured in the allusions to human society which surrounded Ishmael ashore as well as the various civilizations to which he refers in the past, the main theme can be evidenced only when those societies are seen in terms of another setting which Ishmael takes to sea. The hierarchical but organic conceptions are thus subordinated to larger religious motives which are more natural than marvellous. The religious theme is personal salvation and the Fall of man. The complexities of unquestionned Christianty, self-sacrifice, self-reliance and love are all awaiting modification and re-discovery as the mobility of the human race comes under more particularized scrutiny as exemplified by Ishmael in the three remaining parts of Moby-Dick. In the first part, however, Ishmael has established the low-keyed resolution to seek an answer by looking for God in the mirror of nature as did Piers Plowman. Although Moby-Dick is based in the Genesis of the Old Testament, Ishmael's imitation of Christ accounts for most, bringing the New Testament into the narrative only by way of illustration. As in Piers Plowman, the law of Charity is

[99] Ibid., p. 8.

greater than any formulated rule.[100] Ishmael's concept of charity involves also the righteous heathen as exemplified by Queequeg. That genuine charity is directly paralleled by Miss Charity, Captain Bildad's sister, who exemplifies false charity.

With Ishmael established as the central character, Moby-Dick emerges as a non-heroic epic. The word epic and heroic should not be equated although

> It is very difficult not to fall into the habit of equating them, partly because we tend to derive our ideas of epic from the poems of Homer, which happen to be heroic as well as epic, and not from the Divine Comedy, which is epic without being heroic; and partly because there lingers in our mind the idea that only the primitive is truly epic, and in primitive times it is mainly the heroic string that has sufficient seriousness to have an initial chance of qualifying as epic.[101]

The heroic strain in Moby-Dick appears by way of Ahab who exemplifies antiquity's idea of a hero who could eradicate grief by killing a monster. Ishmael's spiritual quest, as has been explicated in Part I, will directly parallel that of Ahab.

[101] Ibid., p. 120.

III. SPRING: FROM "THE ADVOCATE" TO "THE GAM"

As the Pequod goes further out to sea and enters the spring season, Ishmael does some cutting back to re-assure "landsmen" that the journey is valid and relevant to poetic treatment, not all divorced from their land life. He re-iterates:

> As Queequeg and I are now fairly embarked in this beusiness of whaling; and as this business of whaling has somehow come to be regarded among landsmen as a rather un-poetical and disreputable pursuit; there-fore, I am all anxiety to convince ye land-smen of the injustice hereby done to us hunters of whales. (98)

Such a beginning is in direct opposition to the conclusion of "The Lee Shore," in which aloofness and non-involvement have been praised. With this seeming change, Ishmael shifts to a pose of direct involvement in which he includes himself as a hunter of whales. The passage has a sobering effect for any who may have felt themselves completely free of animalistic propensities. Ishmael has taken the core of tragic heroism lifting it from antiquity as well as the society contemporary to him and placing it in the wide open sea range where a closer look may reveal much about the nature of human heritage in terms of the whale. By supporting the validity of the whaling industry, Part II brings the narrative up a scale, as it were, to the allegorical level wherein man is often compared to a whale. With shades of

the medieval bestiary epics, Ishmael draws a direct parallel between the butchering of whales and butchering done by "martial commanders whom the world invariably delights to honor."(98) Consequently, when Ishmael sings out, either in protest or praise, he reaches the moral sensibility of his reader and forces him to see the essence of one of Ishmael's chief concerns: man's inhumanity to man. Much can be learned, he implies, by the comparison. Thereby, much of the narrative takes on a biting kind of satirical irony, as, for example, when he asserts:

> No dignity in whaling? The dignity of our calling the very heavens attest. Cetus is a constellation in the South! No more! Drive down your hat in the presence of the Czar, and take it off to Queequeg! No more! I know a man that, in his lifetime, has taken three hundred and fifty whales. I account that man more honorable than the great captain of antiquity who boasted of taking as many walled towns. (101)

If the whale is thus compared with man, Ishmael may seem to be against all degrees of dignity. However, he does not put down dignity per se but develops his protest that dignity in and of itself, without consideration for various forms of life, is pure folly, not a value to be praised. Dignity deprived of individual worth is meaningless. The "great captain of antiquity" draws a backdrop against which Ahab can be paralleled. The degree of dignity about which Ishmael is concerned

> is not the dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without and from God Himself! The great God absolute! The centre and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality! (104)

Ishmael is afraid of uncontrolled nature and harbors a genuine respect of effective leadership and, in "The Advocate," points to various past encounters and pursuits made by whalers in terms of authorship, blood lines, respectability, and grand imposition as well as dignity. Whether whale or man, Ishmael insists upon the importance of observing degree.

Observing the effects of spring, and bringing in the various characters on board the Pequod, Ishmael, in "Knights and Squires," draws brief character sketches and parodies amid the forthcoming merriment in which degrees of dignity are variously represented. The crew, aside from the chief mates, are described as Islanders:

> ... . they were Isolatoes, too, each living in a separate continent of his own, accompanying Old Ahab in the Pequod to lay the world's grievances before that bar from which not very many of them ever came back. (108)

The impossibility of divorcing oneself from the world is there set forth. Each member of the crew, while thinking or assuming himself to be a separate entity, was actually assisting Ahab in an effort which would ultimately kill them all.

As the transition in season is taking place for everyone aboardship, Ishmael observes:

> Now it being Christmas when the ship shot from out her harbor, for a space we had biting Polar weather, though all the time running away from it to the southward; and by every degree and minute of latitude which we sailed, gradually leaving that merciless winter, and all its intolerable weather behind us. IT was one of those less lowering, but still grey and gloomy enough mornings of the transition, when with a fair wind the ship was rushing through the water with a vindicative sort of leaping and melancholy rapidity, that as I mounted to the deck at the call of the forenoon watch, so soon as I levelled my glance towards the taffrail, foreboding shirvers ran over me. Reality outran apprehension; Captain Ahab stood upon his quarter-deck. (109)

Ishmael's account establishes the change in season, confirms a transition for the crew, clues the reader to his fear of Ahab who appeared as though he had been "shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus," and presents the beginning of the heroic strain. Ahab comes forth in spring in response to the natural transition as if it were inevitable inspite of himself:

> For, as when the red-cheeked, dancing girls, April and May, trip home to the wintry, misanthropic woods; even the brest, ruggedest, most thunder-cloven old oak will at least send forth some few green sprouts, to welcome such glad-hearted visitants; so Ahab did, in the end, a little respond to the playful allurings of that girlish air. (110)

With the direct establishment of seasonal structure, Ishmael reaffirms the winter departure and cuts back in the narrative to show the reader Ahab's complete indifference. The ship

has entered spring with "The Advocate;" will go into summer at the Cape of Good Hope after "The Town-Ho's Story" which has already been seen as the primary epic of Moby-Dick. Refusing to enter the fall season, Ahab will later take the ship off course to return to the Equator where Ahab's "mould" was shattered in defeat. In spring, Ahab's quest is beginning to be seen in a perspective which would deny the natural seasons of man and nature, if Ahab had his own way. The insignificance of Ahab's attempt as compared with the natural power of the ocean when, in "The Pipe," Ahab

> . . . tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. The fire hissed in the waves; the same instant the ship shot by the bubble the sinking pipe made. With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks. (114)

Bringing the narrative back to a more apparent literal level, after having set forth the allegorical, Ishmael mixes in various descriptions of the different kinds of known whales but, as if to place both more and less importance upon details, he sums up the varied definitions by simply asserting that "a whale is a spouting fish with a horizontal tail." (127-8) "Cetology" expounds upon the technical terms of the whaling industry,but at that chapter's conclusion, Ishmael presents an hypothesis in favor of allusion, for

> . . . the cetological system standing thus unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity. God keep me from

> completing anything. This whole book is but a draught--nay, but the draught of a draught. Oh, Time, Strength, Cash, and Patience! (127-8).

With all the "facts" concerning the whales previously presented, Ishmael still insists that no one can conquer the unconquerable or explain the inexplicable.

Ahab's determination is brought more clearly into focus on "The Quarter-Deck" which he paces in hopeful anticipation, waiting for Moby-Dick to be sighted. In the previous chapter, Ishmael at "The Masthead" refused to sing out when seeing a whale, for if a whale isn't sighted, it can't be killed. Ahab encouraged all hands on deck to sing out as the excitement is spread throughout the crew. In a coaxing mockery, he asks "What do you do when you see a whale?" "Sing out for him!" was "the impulsive rejoinder from a score of clubbed voices."(141) As the shouts prevail, Ahab's countenance gains momentum. Starbuck attempts to stop Ahab from coaxing the crew to follow his quest insisting"it's madness to be enraged with a dumb thing."(141) Ahab countermands with absolute objectivity revealing his ill-conceived motive:

> All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. I see in him (Moby-Dick) outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will break that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. . . .Who's over me? Truth hath no confines. . . The crew, man, the crew! Are they not one all with Ahab, in this matter of the

> whale? . . . the silence, then, that voices thee. (Aside) Something shot from my dilated nostrils, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine; cannot oppose me now, without rebellion. (144)

Ahab has, thus, revealed his determination to manipulate all "visible objects" to his purpose, and his monomania begins to emerge as he expresses his hatred for the "inscrutable" whiteness of Moby-Dick. His question, "Who's over me?," directly contrasts with Ishmael's insistence that everyone has someone "over them." In fact, he does not mind the "indignity" of sea-captains ordering him about and asks "Who ain't a slave? Tell me that." (15) Ishmael had set forth the contention that

> Everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way--either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder--blades, and be content. (15)

Ishmael, however, was not "content" in that drizzly NOvember of his soul. His insistance upon contentment is paradoxical and comes only after his survival of the wreck.

Ahab's madness shows through his belief that "something had shot" from his nostrils. Starbuck had perceived that there was no stopping his captain from the pursuit of the white whale and any visible objects which might get in his way and could only shout: "God keep me! -- keep us all!" (144)

Ishmael in observing the situation notes how

> Starbuck's downcast eyes lighted up with the stubborness of life; the subterranean laugh died away; the winds blew on; the sail filled out; the ship heaved and rolled as before. Ah, ye admonitions and warnings! Why stay ye not when ye come? But rather are ye predictions than warnings, ye shadows! Yet not so much predictions from without, as verifications of the foregoing things within. (145)

The entire plan of the narrative is but a continual arrangement and organization in which selected situations are presented as if all "predictions from without" were but "verifications of the foregoing things within," All of which remain fluid and unset but within the scope of the predetermined result. Ahab's unswerving and unthinking will runs counter to that plan. The "Quarter-Deck" chapter closes with Ahab's ironic cry:

> "Death to Moby-Dick! God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby-Dick to his death!" (146)

On the anagogical level, Ahab had brought the death wish down upon himself and the entire crew. The cry caused Starbuck to shiver although he knew not why.

In keeping with the mixture of contrasts and the plan that things "without" are verifications of "foregoing" things "within," the narrative brings the reader with closer intensity to the actual confrontation. Moby-Dick will soon appear. Beginning with "Sunset," the next few chapters function somewhat like a Greek chorus wherein the community

brings collected grief to the king or god to rid themselves of "the furies." However, on the Pequod the situation has been reversed--the king is instigating the fury with his determination to rid the world of grief. Captain Ahab, the three chief mates and most all crew members each directly address the reader as each makes an individual confrontation with his innermost soul. Some of the crew, if not all after being coaxed by Ahab, sing out in jubilation at the very thought of killing the white whale. With spring in the background, the scene takes on an additional paradox: joy is inevitable but so is death. Ironically, the crew is celebrating a death which they are bringing upon themselves in a season of joy which originates outside themselves.

In "Sunset," Ahab's final "Symphony" is foreshadowed. He ponders the path which he has taken personifying antiquity's concept of an absolute hero and thinks that "envious billows sidelong swell to whelm my track; let them; first I pass." He laments:

> Oh! Time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly damned in the midst of Paradise! (147)

Like Milton's Satan, Ahab's absurdity has been subordinated

to the misery which he suffers and inflicts. He knows no joy. The "sunset" in external nature corresponds and contrasts with a lifeless sunset in his soul. Although physically wounded by loss of leg, Ahab, like Satan, suffers most from his own "sense of injur'd merit."[102] Milton's Satan thought himself impaired because the Messiah had been proclaimed Head of the Angels. Ahab feels himself impaired because he cannot comprehend the "inscrutable" aspect of Moby-Dick; however, his powers to feel are dimming, and he can find nothing more interesting than his own reputation and determination to kill the monster. Milton's Satan in pursuing pseudo-liberty can only believe that "orders and Degrees Jarr not with liberty."[103] Like Milton's Satan, Ahab both wants and does not want hierarchy. As Lewis maintains about Satan, so with Melville's Ahab:

> Throughout the poem he is engaged in sawing off the branch he is sitting on, not only in the quasi-political sense, but in a deeper sense still, since a creature revolting against a creator is revolting against the source of his own powers--including even his power to revolt.[104]

The fact that Ahab is revolting against a creator is perhaps not as obvious as Satan's revolt, for God is not a character within the narrative of Moby-Dick. However, on the

[102] John Milton, Paradise Lost, Bk. I, ln. 98, p. 8.

[103] Ibid., Bk. V, ln. 789, p. 134.

[104] Lewis, op. cit., p. 96.

anagogical level, the ambiguity of the "whiteness" and the specific "inscrutability" are definite allusions to God's presence as well as the varied interpretations. Ahab's conscience is immune to any degree of superiority other than his own. Just as there had never been a war between Satan and God, only between Satan and Michael, so there had never been a war between Ahab and God, only between Ahab and the white whale.[105] Ahab had assigned his hatred to the "whiteness" and "inscrutable malignancy" of the whale. At "Sunset" Ahab realizes that he is "madness maddened" and begins to believe that the white whale was the sum total of all grief.

At "Midnight, Forecastle," all harpooners and sailors intensify the chorus effect. A sailor from practically every nation on Earth joins in the celebration. However, Pip declines to take part in the festivities. Somewhat in keeping with the scapegoat role that Americans had for so long assigned to the Negro, Pip protests:

> Oh, thou big white God aloft there
> somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy
> on this small black boy down here;
> preserve him from all men that have
> no bowels to feel fear! (155)

Ishmael affirms in "Moby-Dick" that he had joined with the rest in their shouts but more from "the dread" in his soul than from any objective. His perception closely aligns his

[105] Ibid., p. 97.

thinking with that of Pip who, later, will be the first castaway. Ishmael feels compassion for Ahab whose

> . . . 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. (155)

Ishmael's pose now seems to support Ahab's quest by reiterating that the whalemen are most directly brought into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing in the sea and

> . . . face to face they not only eye its greatest marvels, but, hand to jaw, give battle to them. (156)

The entire chapter of "Moby-Dick" concerns mostly "supernatural surmisings" which have come about not by the appearance of Moby-Dick, but by the appearance of Ahab.

With the ambiguous allusion to "every dismembering or death" which had been attributed to Moby-Dick, the narrative has begun to take on higher degrees of seriousness with satirical counterparts as well as a more universal amplitude, for the terror is not "unexampled" but very well exemplified aboard the Pequod by Ahab who, as an archetype of the satanic aspects of man's nature, will carry the absurd to ultimate extremes which prevent the Satanic predicament from being comic. Ahab implies that all beings are self-existent, yet he had determined to rid them all of grief indicating that there was nothing personal about

grief. Lewis explains that Milton's Satan

> . . . attempts to maintain the heresy which is at the root of his whole predicament--the doctrine that he is a self-existent being, not a derived being, a creature, Now, of course, the property of a self-existent being is that it can understand its own existence; it is causa sui. The quality of a created being is that it just finds itself existing, it knows not how nor why. Yet at the same time, if a creature is silly enough to try to prove that it was not created, what is more natural than for it to say, "Well, I wasn't there to see it being done?" Yet what more futile, since in thus admitting ignorance of its own beginnings it proves that those beginnings lay outside itself? Satan falls instantly into this trap--as indeed he cannot help doing--and produces as proof of his his self-existence what is really its disproof.[106]

Ahab has fallen into a similar trap in that he does not see that the absolute terror which he had assigned to Moby-Dick is his own predestinated idea, not the whale's malignancy. Like Milton's Satan, Ahab does not notice that every approach toward victory will take away the basis upon which he hopes for victory.[107] In subtle actuality, Ahab has become malign. He perceived that grief lay "outside" himself but grief was the only aspect of life that he had claimed; he was determined to rid not himself but the entire human race of that. Exemplifying the Satanic

[106] Ibid., p. 97.

[107] Ibid., p. 98.

predicament in a different degree, Ishmael had taken the "oath of violence and revenge" in fear of Ahab as well as Moby-Dick, for Ishmael reveals that he could see but not understand that the "malignity" was not "unexampled" aboard the Pequod. His compassion for Ahab's predicament affirms Ishmael's humanity and concern for a human being in a similar situation. Ishmael's quest is less selfish but more personal. As captain, Ahab has invested the whole crew with his idea that the white whale was the monomaniac

> . . . incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning, to whose dominion, even the modern Christians ascribe one-half of the world; which the ancient Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil; Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brains; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it. (160)

Ahab's personification of the white whale seems but a projection of himself upon the monster. Unacquainted with his beginnings, Ahab persists in hating the idea of having a creator or anyone in charge other than himself. Unlike

previous heroes who conquered a monster or a beast or an enemy to save his people, Ahab's revenge is different, for God Himself seems to be, in Ahab's mind, incorporated in the whiteness of the whale against whom Ahab revolts. That manner of intervention is something new for the epic genre. The physical wound had been inflicted by the whale, not its whiteness. Yet, Ahab could not make that distinction.

In efforts to provide lucidity for the complexity of "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael mentions various interpretations of the color white and the feelings it has evoked in the mind of man "from the beginning." He sets forth the paradox:

> . . . not yet have we solved the incantation of this whiteness, and learned why it appeals with such power to the soul; and more strange and far more portentous--why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, and, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind. (169).

Striking the above pose, Ishmael, <u>not</u> Ahab, is the quester who speaks impersonally, therefore more personally, as the voice of the community of man pondering the various meanings and observing the details. He is subjective as well as objective.

In "The Chart," Ishmael observed that an "eternal living

principle of soul" was working on Ahab's mind but Ahab could see it only in terms of the white whale on which he unleashes absolute objectivity with hatred and revenge. Ahab, with the "Season-on-the-line" actually charted himself against himself. (See pages 171-5). Ahab fluctuates between everything and nothing. At one time he feels as though he were a "self-assumed, independent being of its own;" at another time, he feels there are all sorts of "powers" and "beings" around him. Like Prometheus, Ahab remained proud and defiant refusing help or advice on the grounds that the white whale should be punished for inflicting injury upon him and the human race.

After observing Ahab's "supernatural surmissings," Ishmael re-establishes the validity of his own journey. In "The Affidavit," Ishmael is concerned about "enlarging upon" the "leading matter" and states:

> I do not know where I can find a better place than here to make mention of one or two other things, which to me seem important, as in printed form establishing in all respects the reasonableness of the whole story of the White Whale, more especially the catastrophe. For this is one of those disheartening instances where truth requires full as much bolstering as error. So ignorant are most landsmen of some of the plainest and most palpable wonders of the world, that without some hints touching the plain facts, historical and otherwise, of the fishery, they might scout at Moby Dick as a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory. (177).

Here Ishmael establishes the need for an effective use of language and important details which affirm plain facts. With "The Affadavit," he contrasts the natural cycles with Ahab's "Season-on-the-line" wherein he contrives to manipulate according to his own malignant purpose. The chapter also affirms the "catastrophe." Ishmael makes a parody of pre-destination according to the way Ahad had taken it so seriously and charted the whole affair; that Stubb had laughed everything away since "all has been predestinated;" or that Starbuck had left his fate to God. Ishmael shows that allegory, while not a literary genre, can be an effective means of alluding to a truth. Ishmael sees the whiteness of the whale and the whale as two separate things. Ahab could not make such distinctions.

After Ahab's "phantom" crew appears during "The First Lowering" and are dismissed as "stowaways" by the regular crew, the first whale is missed in a miniature wreck in whcih all could have been drowned. Although the event somewhat foreshadows the final wreck, Ishmael seems aghast that the high-minded Ahab who had determined to kill the monstrous whale should not even be able to catch a much smaller one:

> There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. (195)

Although he had seen absurdities as a joke, Ishmael does not think that the Satanic predicament is comic. In direct parody of "free will" which he advocated earlier, Ishmael decides to draw up a will letting the reader know the "secret" of his survival:

> I survived myself; my death and burial were locked up in my chest. I looked around me tranquilly and contentedly, like a quiet ghost with a clean conscience sitting inside the bars of a snug family vault. (197)

The snug family vault indicates Ishmael's belief in the interdependency of mankind which directly parallels the "one-mindedness" of Ahab and the crew. For example, in "The Spirit-Spout," Ahab is portrayed as walking on "life and death" keeping his eye on the compass--"the needle of the tell-tale that swung from a beam in the ceiling."(202)

After the Pequod misses an opportunity to have a gam with "The Albatross," Ishmael offers an explanation of "The Gam," which is "a social meeting of two (or more) Whale ships."(206) Ahab had no time for a gam with a ship that had no news of Moby-Dick. Moreover, Ahab had not the slightest interest in being sociable.[1]

Just as Part I, Winter, introduced Ishmael and Queequeg, Part II, Spring, introduces Ahab and the crew. Ishmael's quest was established in the former, Ahab's in the latter. A direct parallel between the two has thus emerged. The

Satanic predicament which Everyman faces at one time or another has been exemplified in two distinctly different ways. Ishmael has quietly refused the concept of a predestinated "fate", believing that man does have control over his destiny even though that destiny may be intermingled with "unaltered threads." Ahab has clearly emerged as a monomaniac pitted against himself and nature.

Like Milton's Adam, Ishmael talks about God, the necessity of maintaining one's own degree, and the difference between beast and man (as well as the similarities), how he survived himself and tended, at times, to take himself too seriously. He also observes and talks about the sun, wind, birds, and all other civilizations in time past and time present. Ahab, like Milton's Satan, can only state his own position which he does not understand, makes plain his refusal to change, and continually gives his impressions of hell.[108]

[108]Lewis, op. cit., p. 101.

IV. SUMMER:

"OF MONSTROUS PICTURES OF WHALES" TO "AMBERGRIS"

As the Pequod moves into summer northeastward from the Crozets and the Brazil Banks, a feverish intensity begins to emerge within the narrative as the "monstrous" pictures and the various uses of whales and whale products are considered by Ishmael who has determined to

> . . . paint as well as one can without canvas, something like the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the eye of the whaleman when in his own absolute body the whale is moored alongside the whale-ship so that he can be fairly stepped upon there. It may be worth while, therefore, previously to advert to those curious imaginary portraits of him which even down to the present day confidently challenge the faith of the landsman. It is time to set the world right in this matter, by proving such pictures of the whale all wrong. (225)

By striving to prove "such pictures all wrong," Ishmael directly implies that "dissect it" as one might, an absolutely accurate picture of the whale is impossible; however, such pictures have challenged the faith of the "landsman," who believes them to be precise. Although Ishmael appears to contradict himself by asserting that "it is time to set the world right," the contradiction makes way for the actuality that no one picture can accurately convey. Ishmael's degree of contradiction differs sharply from Ahab's kind of contradiction with which his monomania eradicates his "self" and nature as well. Ishmael "shadows forth" various

pictures as they have appeared

> . . . for sale by beggars on the streets of London, or those primal delusions by the Hindoo, Egyptian, and Grecian sculptures. (225).

He then makes allegorical comparisons by referring to the many portrayals in books, stories, and plays including Shakespeare's Richard III as a "humpaback" whale. With the array of allusions, he also claims that most all pictures, in whatever form, have been taken of stranded fish and not of one in its native habitat. The only way in which one can derive even a "tolerable" idea of the whale's "living contour," according to Ishmael, is by going "a whaling yourself." Then, in direct contrast to the humanism involved with his friendship with Queequeg, a cannibal, Ishmael asks the reader to "consider the universal cannibalism of the sea" whose creatures prey upon each other, "carrying on eternal war since the world began."(236) The references to cannibalism and war evoke pictures of death and destruction in contrast to Ahab's determination not to face the possibility of either. Ahab, like Milton's Satan, wants to go on being Ahab, but his monomaniac concern with the supposed predestined wrongs attributed to Moby-Dick have given him no choice. The grief, like the hell Satan carries with him, is mostly infinite boredom and a joyless life.[102] The complexity and richness of the narrative seem largely to

depend upon contrasts and parallels which give unity to the organic whole of Moby-Dick. They operate within the larger structural elements, character presentations, theme, and provide the unifying technique which allows many digressions, whether they be legendary or historical, letting pagan and Christian aspects co-exist within the framework. The four major structural divisions, developed as they are by adherence to the seasons, provide an overall contrast between the Messianic and Satanic positions, all of which support the concept that life is transitory filled with perpetual change amid unaltered threads, which is, itself, a contradiction or as Dante would have it: a divine comedy.

In further explication of the allegorical comparisons, Ishmael contends in "The Line" that

> All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters around their necks, but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life. And if you be a philosopher, though seated in the whale-boat, you would not at heart feel one whit more of terror, than though seated before your evening fire with a poker, and not a harpoon, by your side. (241)

Ishmael has begun to feel "caught in the swift, sudden turn" and in making the contrast, he seems to contradict himself by saying that a "philosopher," wherever he might be, would not "at heart feel one whit more of terror." However, Ishmael who "survived himself" in the "First Lowering," has

also begun to think as a "philosopher" maintaining a calmness in the hot, fiery pursuit in which he is involved.

Ishmael continues to draw pictures of the absurdities of the various interpretations reflected in "other pictures" and begins to consider the various uses of the whale. After Stubb killed a whale, Ishmael went into another digression about "The Whale as a Dish" which parallels the cannabilism of the sea and creates a different degree of human cannabilism. Next, Ishmael draws a sketch of "Cutting In" as the recently-killed whale is literally cut apart. Observing the skin of the whale as "The Blanket," he sites a fact that the whale has lungs and warm blood like a man, and satirically strengthening the allegorical level, he notes,

> . . . as has been proved by experiment, the blood of a Polar whale is warmer than that of a Borneo negro in summer.
>
> It does seem to me that herein we see the rare virtue of a strong individual vitality, and the rare virtue of thick walls, and the rare virtue of interior spaciousness. Oh, man! admire and model thyself after the whale! Do thou, too, remain warm among ice. Do thou, too, live in this world without being of it. Be cool at the equator; keep thy blood fluid at the Pole. Like the great dome of St. Peter's and like the great whale, retain, o man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own. (261)

With continual insistence that man keep a "temperature" of his own, Ishmael degrades individualism while, at the same time, praising it. The epic convention of seeming to be on both sides of an argument is thus maintained. Ishmael

has reinstated his contention that the creation reflects a divine and virtuous order, for man, too, "lives in this world without being of it." The repeated contrast between whale and man in the various detailed digressions is mainly homiletic and what Tillyard calls "the stuff of the medieval sermon."[109] However, the many comparisons only serve as vehicles to illustrate the validity of the pilgrimage providing a vast variety of substance in terms of the contrasts. In direct opposition to Ishmael's observation, Ahab personified the head of the dead whale in "The Sphynx" and demanded:

> Speak, thou vast and venerable head, which though ungarnished with a beard, yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses; speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. (264)

While Ishmael made a comparison, Ahab talked to the head as if life were <u>in</u> it just as he thought evil was <u>in</u> the inscrutable aspects of Moby-Dick.

After encountering the Jeroboam aboard which a personage named Gabriel warned Ahab that he was headed for death, Ishmael returns to the "cutting-in" of the whale:

> There is no staying in any one place; for at one and the same time everything has to be done everywhere. It is much the same with him who endeavors the description of the scene. (270)

[109]Tillyard, EEB, p. 168.

The passage clearly shows Ishmael, the poet, keeping in stride with the above mentioned epic convention.

In "Monkey Rope," which parallels "The Line," Ishmael as the "savage's" bowsman realizes that his

> free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. Therefore, I saw that here was a sort of interregnum in Providence; for its even-handed equity never could have sanctioned so gross an injustice. And yet still further pondering--while I jerked him now and then from between the whale and the ship, which would threaten to jam him--still further pondering, I say, I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals. If your banker breaks, you snap; if your apothecary by mistake sends you poison in your pills, you die. (271)

Ishmael has reaffirmed by way of example his earlier "teaching" that "nothing exists in itself" and makes the connection of friendship tighter between Queequeg and himself as the ship sails toward a blind and hopeless destination over which he apprently has no control. Although, like Piers Plowman, Ishmael as an agent is certainly not the whole truth, it is yet for him to work out his own salvation. He proceeds from an awareness of truth as many-sided and the visionary intensity continues to rise simultaneously with the rising action which resolves complexity into unity.

In the next two chapters, Ishmael draws a comparison between a Sperm Whale's "prodigious head" and a Right Whale's. Since these two are the only ones hunted by man, they represent "the two extremes of all known varieties of the whale."(278) The Right Whale's head represents Platonism while the Sperm Whale's refers to the Stoic in Ishmael's thinking as he notes that

> Few are the foreheads which like Shakespeare's or Melanethon's rise to high, and descend so low, that the eyes themselves seem clear, eternal, tideless mountain lakes; and all above them in the forehead's wrinkles, you seem to track the antlered thoughts descending there to drink, as the Highland hunters track the snow prints of the deer. (292)

About the Sperm Whale, he raises the question:

> Genius in the Sperm Whale? Has the Sperm Whale ever written a book, spoken a speech? No, his great genius is declared in his doing nothing particular to prove it. It is moreover declared his pyramidical silence.(292)

With the duality thus expressed, Ishmael considers himself in the middle of two extremes. The Sperm Whale's "pyramidical silence" directly alludes the reader to ancient Egypt before man had discovered his ability"to symbol" -- man's gift to use language to keep afloat in the unconscious sea which would otherwise roll him into nothingness as coldly and impartially as it eventually does Ahab and the crew. The other extreme, that of Stoicism, is presented as being closely allied to the Calvinism of Melville's time--the idea that endurance and the acceptance of predestination

in all things which limits man's ability to symbol within certain staid and steadfast rules. Ishmael decides that

> . . . though I am but ill qualified for a pioneer, in the application of these two-semi-sciences to the whale, I will do my endeavor. I try all things; I achieve what I can. (291)

Ishmael has experienced the effects of the exploitation of the two extremes and cannot fully support or deny the validity of them but neither can he accept either as an absolute. Like Piers Plowman, he emerges as an anit-hero shown up against his environment. If, however, he maintains,

> any highly cultured, poetical nation shall lure back to their birthright, the merry May-day gods of old; and livingly enthrone them against the new egotistical sky; on the now unhaunted hill; then be sure, exalted to Jove's high seat, the great Sperm Whale shall lord it. (293)

He implies that there is no "going back," for the past is included in the present. The contrast between the Classical and the Christian mythologies is brought more sharply into consideration "against the new egotistical sky." If man chooses the "gods of old," and "enthrones them," then the exaltation on "the now unhaunted hill" will result in the personification of one kind of absolute which, he infers, would "lord it" over the other. With the "now unhaunted hill," Ishmael aligns his thought with those who no longer believe in the existance of a Devil or a Satan, but he still believes in the Christian God. The whole debate is drawn by the narrative rather than by dialogue as in Piers Plowman or Paradise Lost.

Ahab was not interested in the usual kind of gam in which ships of other nations confer. The cataloging of ships, like the killing of Sperm and Right Whales is, for Ahab, a tiresome or even boring routine which must be followed to keep his mask before the crew and please the owners with a profit at home. His only objective in conducting a gam was to ascertain "news" of Moby-Dick. In the Pequod's encounter with "The Virgin," Ishmael exemplifies how the Sperm Whale will "lord it" over the Virgin who had not only not seen Moby-Dick but had yet to kill their first whale. Following that episode, Ishmael sings out again about "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" in which he alludes to the Whale as the "Royal Fish in the Bible" and makes an allusion to Perseus as the first whaleman. Continuing the contrasts and similarities, Ishmael alludes to Ezekiel, St. George, Jonah and Vishnoo claiming that their "deeds" were all done before "the true form of the whale" was known to artists. Bringing in more recent history, he alludes to Hercules who was "that antique Crockett and Kit Carson--that brawny doer of rejoicing good deeds--who was swallowed down and thrown up by a whale."(306) The effect of the allusions affirms his contention that "true form" cannot, was not, and will not be "precise" and completely accurate. Moreover, the satire directly supports another major contention: a completely literal interpretation of scripture or myth is impossible.

In "Jonah Historically Regarded," Ishmael ponders the many ways in which the episode of Jonah and The Whale have been "regarded," and sets forth "one old Sag-Harbor whaleman's" main reason for want of faith in the prophet:

> Jonah was swallowed by the whale in the Mediterranean Sea, and after three days he was vomited up somewhere within three days' journey of Nineveh, a city on the Tigris, very much more than three days' journey across from the nearest point of the Mediterranean coast. (307)

In addition, Ishmael points out that "even the highly enlightened Turks" devoutly believe in the history of Jonah and sites other "historical" acceptance of the account inspite of the obvious discrepancy. Ishmael himself will later be "coughed up," as it were, by the giant Moby-Dick. Just as Ishmael "tries all things" and "achieves" what he can, so he suggests that anything is possible. While the historical facts may be jumbled in disagreement, the substance of their seemingly vague and distorted truth can indeed become a cold fact.

In "The Fountain" a comparison is drawn between the inability of the whale and man to "speak" accurately or directly, if at all, about "plain" facts which are often overlooked in favor of the marvellous. Comically considering whether what comes out of the whale's spout is water or air, Ishmael asks the reader to

> Speak out! You have seen him spout; then declare what the spout is; can you not tell water from air? In this world it is not so easy to settle these plain things. I have ever found your plain things the knottiest of all. And as for this whale spout, you might almost stand in it, and yet be undecided as to what it is precisely. (313)

Ishmael here places equal emphasis upon the ordinary as well as the extraordinary and sets forth a hypothesis that

> . . . 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 a man who regards them both with equal eye. (314)

Here he directly emphasizes the importance of his dual vision, including the simple as well as the complex aspects which he sees as well as those which he intuits. Ishmael's conception of dual order resembles that which Shakespeare presented in Troilus and Cressida (Act I; sc. III) where Ulysses, in alluding to the Elizabethan chain of being, notes that when "degree" is not observed,

> Then every thing includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,
> This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
> Follows the choking.[110]

[110] Wm. Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, Craig, ed. op. cit., p. 870.

Ahab has combined "power, will, and appetite" to become a "universal wolf" in pursuit of himself. Ahab has overlooked all the parts and counterparts of the physical world with an eye which has become completely apathetic to the gracious beauty and strength of the creation. He has no motive for killing whales. Men as well as whales have become mere "objects" in his mind which can be forced to do his bidding as he progresses toward his predetermined objective to kill the White Whale.

In celebrating "The Tail," which on the Sperm Whale expands in full growth to exceed "twenty feet across," Ishmael notes the amazing strength which does not cripple "the graceful flexion of its motions," for

> . . . real strength never impairs beauty or harmony, but it often bestows it; and in everything imposingly beautiful, strength has much to do with the magic. (315)

In alluding to Hercules and a painting of Goethe, or Angelo's painting of God the Father in human form, Ishmael notes the "robustness" that is there. However, in all paintings of "the divine lovein the Son" the power is not there; instead there is but

> . . . the mere negative, feminine one of submission and endurance, which on all hands it is conceded, form the peculiar practical virtues of his teachings. (315)

While the portraits of the Son seem to be those with which Ishmael can agree since every artist has painted him that way,

other "monstrous pictures" of the whale have not nor cannot yield "true likenesses." Ishmael seems to agree to disagree, for he is no stranger to negative capability. Indirectly, Ishmael has raised the question: Is the whole whale greater than any of its parts? In any case, life is not to be found in either the whole or any of its parts. Ishmael comes to the conclusion:

> Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will. But if I know not even the tail of this whale, how understand his head? Much more, how comprehend his face, when face he has none? (318)

Ishmael implies that the whale and man can best be understood by accepting the realities of the creation according to degree and proceeds in "The Grand Armada" to illustrate how an entire body of whales were swimming in schools with amazing grace until the Pequod's crew descended trying to kill as many as possible.

Making another contrast in terms of the law by which the whale fishery was governed, Ishmael discusses the "vexing" and "violent disputes" that have arisen between fishermen as he satirically sets forth the "formal whaling code authorized by legislative enactment" which, "in essence," has only two specifications:

> I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the part fast to it.
>
> II. A Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it. (331)

Implying that the above two categories are the essence of various levels and forms of "law," he then draws a contrast between the whole and the parts of law making particular note how so much room for interpretation exists. For example, "possession is half of the law," but is the law valid

> . . . regardless of how the thing came into possession? Often possession is the whole of the law. What are the sinews and souls of Russian serfs and Republican slaves but Fast-Fish, whereof possession is the whole of the law? What to the rapacious landlord is the widow's last mite but a Fast-Fish? What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish in which Columbus struck the Spanish standard by way of waifing it for his royal master and mistress? What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? All Loose-Fish. (331)

Carrying the question of law to another level of comparison and making it specifically individual as to interpretation, he asks:

> What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish? What are all men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is the principle of religious belief in them but a Loose-Fish? What to the ostentatious smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish? (334).

With such degrees of questioning, Ishmael brings both support and a sword to the law implying that there are, indeed, laws outside as well as within the ones man has made.

More than that, however, he has presented various interpretations, some of which have been enforced or applied as absolutes.

As the hot summer season draws to a close, "The Pequod Meets the Rose Bud," a French vessel whose crew has never heard of Moby-Dick, and Ishmael brings the irony into the narrative by contrasting another use of a part of a whale with death. Cutting into a dead whale, the Frenchmen are easily relieved of their task by the absolutely-flexible Stubb who knows that the valuable "Ambergris" is inside its head. The episode is an illustration on the literal level of the fact that mankind often perfumes itself with the smell and effects of death.

During Part III, Summer, Ishmael has effectively sketched in narrative form, on the literal and allegorical levels, the monstrous pictures of whales and men as they have been drawn by artists and various landsmen. He has demonstrated the impossibility of knowing the whole whale by dissecting any of its parts and has shown the perfect harmony that exists in a school of whales until attacked.

V. FALL:

FROM "THE CASTAWAY" TO "THE CHASE--THIRD DAY"

As the Pequod draws nearer an actual confrontation with Moby-Dick, the drama becomes more intensified and the "monstrous" pictures fade away. Part IV, Fall, of Moby-Dick brings to light the major theme: The Fall of Man. Intermingled as it is, however, with the fall season functioning in the background, the major theme will be set forth in a separate chapter immediately following this section as well as in the conclusion where Moby-Dick can be seen as a medieval epic.

Part IV, Fall, begins with "The Castaway," where, somewhat like a leaf falling away from a tree during a natural cycle of the fall season, Pip jumps from the "predestinated craft" which was in pursuit of another whale. When picked up, he instinctively refuses to stay aboard and jumps again

> . . . out from the centre of the sea, poor Pip turned his crisp, curling, black head to the sun, another lonely castaway, though the loftiest and the brightest. (347)

Directly drawing a contrast between Pip's plight and his own which occurs at the end of the third-day's chase of Moby-Dick, Ishmael describes Pip's dilemma:

> The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where

> strange shapes of the unwarped primal merman, Wisdom, revealed his boarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God. (347)

Here, in essence, Ishmael presents the difference between Pip's "heavenly" sanity and Ahab's "heavenly" madness. Pip, whom Ishmael implies feels fear intuitively, has now seen the depths; whereas, Ahab had seen only the heighth of his own objective. The contrast is to be brought into focus when, as the ship draws near its "predestination," Ahab seeks comfort from Pip. Observing the balance, Ishmael will later be resurrected from the fall and the wreck, even though he is subjected to a "fate" similar to Pip's.

The possibility of eternal life is directly paralleled with the means by which life is instigated on Earth when, with "A Squeeze of the Hand," Ishmael begins to describe the "labors" aboard ship after the whale, the pursuit of which had nearly drowned Pip, had been killed:

> Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly loving feeling did that avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,-- Oh, my dear fellow beings why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all around; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (349)

"The strange sort of insanity" which comes over Ishmael directly parallels a "consciousness" of life while a "being" is still in the sperm, before birth brings him into this world. John Barth's "Night Sea Journey" does much to explicate that kind of consciousness when in the opening sequence the "conscious being" in the spermadic state raises the question:

> Is the journey my invention? Do the night, the sea, exist at all, I ask myself, apart from my experience of them? Do I myself exist, or is this a dream? Sometimes I wonder. And if I am, who am I? The Heritage I supposedly transport? But how can I be both vessel and contents? Such are the questions that beset my intervals of rest.[111]

With that degree of questionning, Ishmael has

> . . . perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fireside, the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally. In visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermacetic. (349)

After the sperm was removed, the whale was prepared for the try-works of the rushing Pequod, which,

> . . . freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul. (354)

[111]John Barth, "Night Sea Journey." W. Elkins, ed. Literary Reflections, p. 633.

But Ishmael, wrapped in "darkness" at the "helm," could also see

> . . . the redness, the madness, the ghastliness of others. The continual sight of the fiend shapes before me, capering half in smoke and half in fire, these at last begat kindred visions in my soul, so soon as I began to yield to that unaccountable drowsiness which ever would come over me at a midnight helm. (354)

At that "midnight helm," he perceives that something is wrong, for there was "no compass" before him to steer by, and the vessel was "rushing from all havens astern." His vision foretells the breaking of the ship's compass in "The Needle," but more than that, on the allegorical level, the Pequod sails against reason and the past experience of a multitude of civilizations and personages. Ishmael moralizes:

> Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man! Never dream with thy hand on the helm! Turn not thy back to the compass; accept the first hint of the hitching tiller; believe not the artificial fire, when its redness makes all things look ghastly. Tomorrow, in the natural sun, the skies will be bright; those who glared like devils in the forking flames, the morn will show in far other, at least gentler, relief; the glorious, golden, glad sun, the only true lamp--all others but liars! (354)

Again, Ishmael insists that "whatever is grand" should be and will be featured in the "unembodied air." He emphasizes that the natural cannot be foregone, and he now has

reached a decision which runs counter to Ahab's objective and contradicts his own previous sympathy for Ahab's position:

> That mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man cannot be true--not true, or undeveloped. With books the same. The truest of all men was the Man of Sorrows, and the truest of all books is Solomon's and Eccesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe. 'All is Vanity.' All.

Even Solomon says:

> 'the man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain' (even while living) 'in the congregation of the dead.' Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee, as for the time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness. And there is a Catskill cage in some souls that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces. (355)

Ishmael reiterates his earlier contention that there are few who can "rise so high" or "descend so low" as Shakespeare. He also directly confirms, free of negative capability, that the "Man of Sorrows" <u>was</u> the truest of all men.

"Stowing Down and Clearing Up" gives a description of the hard work involved in cleaning the ship after the slaughter of a whale. No sooner is one mess cleaned than another whale is sighted and the whole routine has to be repated:

> Yet this is life. For hardly have we mortals by long toilings extracted from this world's vast bulk its small but valuable sperm; and then, with weary patience, cleansed ourselves from its defilements, and learned to live here in clean tabernacles of the soul; hardly is this done, when There she blows! the ghost is spouted up, and away we sail to fight some other world, and go through life's old routine again. (358)

The moral may seem to be one of apathy, but the truth which it exemplifies is one that Ishmael knows must be faced in order to avoid the madness which drives Ahab. Once man has realized and accepted the repetition of endless cycles, whether they be in nature according to seasons or in the mind of man according to reason, he will not "rush from all havens astern" in a blind rage. At this point in the narrative, Ishmael has been weighed down by the boredom of the sheer mechanics of being a member of the crew. He now realizes that life at sea is not different in that respect from life ashore. Wherever he is, man must be saved from himself, or else he will lose balance and perish, the concept of which brings into full sight within the "dark background" the necessity of confronting the "white ghost" when it is "spouted up." Ishmael realizes that the majority of people are not "rushing from all havens astern," but evolving from them, for time present and time past cannot be separated in the soul of man. Although "all" may be "vanity," all is present. Distinctions need to be made in man's "conscious time." In that sense, he exemplifies

a teaching of Christ: "Before Abraham was, I am." He draws a Classical comparison as well:

> 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 a rope! (358)

Although uttered in downcast mood, the allusion and the teaching "to splice a rope" illustrates that there was indeed a connection to be made.

Drawing nearer to the chase, Ahab paces the deck in "The Doubloon." He feels it necessary in order to satisfy the "human need" for money to parade the incentive before the weary crew so they will be inspired toward his purpose in the forthcoming battle. Ishamel, paying particular attention to the signs of the Zodiac which are on the face of the coin, makes another comparison:

> The coin is round gold and 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. (359)

In addition to placing emphasis upon the "mirroring" forth of nature and man's confrontation with himself, Ishmael notes another aspect of the coin:

> It is an "equatorial coin" which 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! (359)

After referring to the inconsistency and instability of astrology which appears "from storm to storm" to offer a false answer to man, the ship nears the equator, again, which functions on the anagogical level as the "equalizer." Ahab is taking the ship off course. Each member of the crew looks closely at the coin in much the same way that each reacted to Ahab's first "calling" for "jubilation" over the prospect of killing Moby-Dick. Each member acts as "interpreter" of the coin, reflecting his idea of the signs written there. Pip's intuitive wisdom shows that "fate" will be literally enforced, for the coin is to Pip:

> . . . 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? . . . The White Whale; he'll nail ye (Ahab)! ---they'll say in the resurrection, when they come to fish up this old mast, and find a doubloon lodged in it, with bedded oysters for the shaggy bark, Oh, the gold! the precious, precious gold! -- the green miser'll hoard ye soon! Hish! Hish! God goes 'mong the worlds blackberrying. (363)

Pip realizes the ship is "doomed," not because an "indifferent" God has predestinated the wreck but because Ahab has insisted upon it. Moreover, Pip, himself a Negro, knows that the White Whale has nothing to do with race, creed or color and that the precious "gold" which Ahab now uses as an incentive to spur the crew will be the only thing appreciated or understood about the "wreck" when and if the ship were "resurrected."

As the Pequod meets the Samuel Enderby of London, Ahab has a good gam with Captain Boomer, and, for the first time shows signs that he can be responsive to human compassion. Captain Boomer, who lost an arm in the pursuit of Moby-Dick, has resolved not to chase the whale again because "ain't one wound enough?" Ahab "turns his back to the stranger ship" and refuses the wisdom of a fellow captain. Ishmael counters with a tribute to the Anglo-Saxons by referring to their genuine hospitality and draws a parody upon their insistence for detail by quoting from an "ancient Dutch volume" which he "stumpled upon." He ends "The Decanter " by commenting that

> . . . enough has been said to show that the old Dutch whalers of two or three centuries ago were high livers; and that the English whalers have not neglected so excellent an example. For, say they, when cruising in an empty ship, if you can get nothing better out of the world, get a good dinner out of it, at least. And this empties the decanter. (373)

Ishmael has thus drawn a comparison between the heroic days of Beowulf and the whalers of "two or three centuries ago." He, also, compliments the "present day" whalers who refuse to "neglect so excellent an example." Ishmael, however, is not content to accept the English resolution for the past nor Ahab's "doom" for the future. He maintains a powerful predetermination as he continues his personal quest amidst relative manifestations by representing a delicate and continually shifting relationship between a truth and its allusion.[112]

[112]Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible, p. 77.

Ishmael begins a digression on the "bones" in "A Bower in the Arsacides" and the "Measurements of a Whale's Skeleton" which he had seen in a museum, both chapters supporting his resolution that absolute reverence for the past is ludicrous and senseless. Drawing a contrast between Ahab's mortality and that of a whale, Ishmael indirectly considers the "senseless doom" to which Ahab has subjected himself. Ishmael believes that the whales of "the present day are superior in magnitude to those whose fossil remains are found in the Tertiary system."(381) He makes a case for the continuing and recurring cycles and the literal immortality of the whale:

> Wherefore, for all these things, we account the whale immortal in his species, however perishable in his individuality. . . . . the eternal whale will still survive, and rearing upon the topmost crest of equatorial flood, spout his frothed defiance to the skies. (385)

The problem of the relationship between the whole and its parts has, again, been set forward--raised another notch on the anagogical level in that the "whale as a species" does have continual life,but Ishmael also knows that the individual whale is indeed perishable. No amount of "reasoning" or probling or dissecting can answer the ultimate question: Is the soul perishable? Ishmael has implied that the soul is not perishable, for the reality is exemplifed by the form and the idea. On the allegorical level, Ishmael insists that grief and agony result in recurring quests when man has saught to make either the form

or the idea exclusive of each other. The two halves are actually a whole, the origin of which must remain "inscrutable" for man.

Returning to the literal level and to Ahab who exploits and exemplifies a predestinated "idea," Ishmael, in describing "Ahab's Leg," notes

> that as the most poisonous reptile of the marsh perpetuates his kind as inevitably as the sweetest songster of the grove; so, equally with every felicity, all miserable events do naturally beget their like. Year, more than equally, thought Ahab; since both the ancestry and posterity of Grief go further than the ancestry and posterity of Joy. (385)

Ishmael, again insisting upon a balance between "grief" and "joy," has dhown that Ahab was chained to grief just as he also has shown how certain members of the crew were chained to "joy." But,

> . . . to trail the geneaologies of these high mortal miseries, carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods; so that, in the face of all the glad, hay-making suns, and soft-cymballing, round harvest-moons, we must needs give into this; that the gods themselves are not forever glad. (385)

Ahab had sought refuge among the "marble senate of the dead." Ishmael personifies the image by describing how Ahab wanted to strengthen the leg upon which he stood so he had "the Carpenter" make him a new leg of "jaw-ivory" from the Sperm Whale.

As Ahab had taken steps to reinforce his stand, Starbuck springs the news that the Pequod has sprung a leak in "Ahab and Starbuck in the Cabin." Just as Ahab was not interested in conducting gams or in chasing any whale except Moby-Dick, another abandonment of purpose comes to light when Starbuck reminds him of his responsibility to the owners of the ship. Ahab sounds off:

> Let the owners stand on Nantucket beach and outyell the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners, as if the owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander; and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel. on deck! (393)

Here Ahab reveals that the abandonment of the ship's commerical purpose is the cause of the wreck. Yet, all the claims of trade were long ago foregone after the Pequod left New Bedford. The irony becomes more evident, for Ahab does not "own" his conscience nor that of the human race whom he fancies to free from grief. He utters the ironic duality:

> There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one captain that is lord over the Pequod--on deck! (394)

To which Starbuck replies:

> Thou hast 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. (394)

The reply has a sobering effect on Ahab who then gives the order to have the ship mended.

As the "omens" and images of death begin to appear directly in the narrative rather than being foreshadowed,

> Queequeg was seized with a fever which brought him nigh to his endless end. (396)

Duality is again brought directly into consideration as Ishmael observes how Queequeg faced death and immortality at the same time. He then acknowledges that

> . . . whatever is truly wondrous and fearful in man, never yet was put into books. And the drawing near of Death, which alike levels all, alike impresses all with a last revelation, which only an author from the dead could adequately tell. (396)

No "Chladee" or "Greek" could have had higher and holier thoughts than those Ishmael saw on Queequeg's face as he faced death. Ishmael, it will be remembered, had faced the possibility of death in "The First Lowering" and had "survived himself." After Queequeg's coffin was built, during which time he had "closed eyes, as if in a dream," he rallied. Every preparation had been made for death, so Queequeg was ready to live, for

> . . . it was Queequeg's conceit, that if a man made up his mind to live, mere sickness could not kill him; nothing but a whale, or a gale, or some violent, ungovernable, unintelligent destroyer of that sort. (398)

In contrast to the intensity aboard ship, Ishmael, in "The Pacific," refers the reader to the interval of quietude of the sea before the forthcoming storm:

> . . . when beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember, that this vlvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang. (405)

He reaches a point where the sea seems comparable to the prairie as "fact and fancy" seem to meet "half-way," forming one "seamless whole." These "soothing scenes" do have an effect on Ahab, but if these "secret golden keys" did seem to "open in him his own secret golden treasuries," his "breath upon them prove but tarnishing." Ishmael is particularly moved and soliliquizes:

> Oh, grassy glades! Oh, ever vernal endless landscapes in the soul; in ye--though long parched by the dead drought of the earthy life--in ye, men yet may roll, like young horses in new morning clover; and for some few 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;---through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence's doubt (the common doom), then scepticism, then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose of If. 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? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers
>
> ~~died in bearing them~~

> die in bearing them; the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it. (406)

Just as Ishmael's "Satanic predicament" precedes Ahab's in the narrative, so does his final soliloquy. Ishmael, in this "dreamy" state paid homage to "the blessed calms" as well as the beauty and peace which surrounded him. In pondering the cycles or seasons of man, he also raised the question about the "final harbor" because, at this point, Ishmael is preparing for death while Ahab is preparing for battle. Ishmael has answered his own question and set forth the contention which the wreck will prove: "Our souls are like those orphans." He re-states his conviction which he established in "Loomings" that there are limits beyond which man cannot go.

The comparisons between various degrees of "grief" and "joy" as well as "calm" and "storm" are amplified as "The Pequod Meets the Bachelor" on which "olive-hued girls" had eloped and

> . . . as the two ships crossed each other's wakes--one all jubilations for things passed, the other all forebodings as to things to come--their two captains in themselves impersonated the whole stricking contrast of the scene. (408)

In answer to Ahab's question if the White Whale had been seen, the gay Bachelor's commander replied:

> No; only heard of him; but don't
> believe in him at all. (408)

Thus, on the anagogical level, the irony is ultimately contrasted according to similitude: one captain has only heard of the White Whale and the other seeks to kill him.

The irony becomes fully tight in "The Quadrant" when the "season on the line" draws near,and Ahab emerges from his cabin and "the eager mariners quickly" run "to the braces" where they will stand with "their eyes centrally fixed on the nailed doubloon" waiting for "the order to point the ship's prow for the equator." (411)
with
Ahab awaits/his "astrological-looking instrument placed to his eye" for "the precise instant when the sun should gain its precise meridian." He looks toward the sun and murmurs:

> Thou sea-mark! though high and mighty
> Pilot! thou tellest me truly where I
> am--but canst thou cast the least hint
> where I shall be? Or canst thou tell
> where some other thing besides me is
> this moment living? Where is Moby-Dick?(411)

The situation is similar to that of Satan's in Paradise Lost when he addresses the sun:

> To tell thee How I hate thy beams
> That bring to my remembrance from
> what state I fell, how glorious once
> above thy Sphere. (Bk. Iv, ln. 37-9)[113]

Ahab expresses a similar kind of hatred by denouncing the Quadrant and as for man's

[113]Milton, op. cit., p. p. 85.

> Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him, as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light, O sun! (412-3)

In his blindness, Ahab then curses the Quadrant and swears that he will not be guided by it. The forebodings of renunciation later come to pass as the continuous counterpoint between past and future are merged with the larger contrast between the major forces in the final conflict.

Toward evening of that day, the Pequod's canvass was ripped off in a typhoon which left the ship bare-poled. As Ahab's quest draws nearer to complete reversal, and the rising and falling action gives way to the pursuit, the "curse" which he had wished upon the owners has come upon the ship. Starbuck again tries to get Ahab to change course:

> The gale that now hammers at us to stave us, we can turn it into a fair wind that will drive us towards home. Yonder, to windward, all is blackness of doom; but to leeward, homeward--I see it lightens up there; but not with the lightning. (414)

Ahab still insists upon the lightning rather than light. Speaking to the lightning as the "clear spirit of clear fire," he feels atonement with it and says:

> In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here. Though but a point at best; whencesoe'er I came; wheresoe'er I go. . . . .Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like atrue child of fire, I breathe it back to thee. (417)

Clearly, Ahab now fancies that he is a part of each of the external elements; first, the sun, and now the lightning. He changes, again, from defiance to reverence:

> Oh, thou foundling fire, thou hermit immemorial, thou too hast thy incommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief. Here again with haughty agony, I read my sire. . . . I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee! (417)

Ishmael's original observation that Ahab fluctuated between "everything" and "nothing" has thus been directly personified. The next morning, Ahab still felt the personified power of the sun and cries out:

> . . . all ye nations before my prow, I bring the sun to ye! Yoke on the further billows, hallo! a tandem, I drive the sea! (423)

While Ahab has gone mad with a false sense of power, "The Needle" is broken on the compass, and the direction of the Pequod can no longer be ascertained. Ahab is in all his fatal pride as the contrast between "scorn" and "triumph" met their "leveling absolute" to which he had assigned them.

As the ship held on its path toward the Equator, "The Life-Buoy" and a sailor sink:

> . . . and thus the first man of The Pequod that mounted the mast to look out for the White Whale, on the White Whale's own peculiar ground; that man was swallowed up in the deep. (429)

In contrast to that loss, Queequeg's coffin becomes the new-life-buoy placed upon "The Deck" between "the vice-bench" and "the open hatchway." (431)

As "The Pequod Meets the Rachel," one captain is concerned only about his son while the other is "throttled" only by the fact that the Rachel has news of the White Whale. As a personification of everything he has professed to hate, Ahab absolutely refuses to help Captain Gardiner look for the son who was lost at sea. While sailing away from the Rachel, Ishmael noted how

> By her still halting course and winding, woeful way, you plainly saw that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because they were not. (436)

With direct reference to Rachel, Ishmael has effectively made allusion to the Hebrew mythology central to the core of Moby-Dick. After Ahab returned to "The Cabin," Ishmael reiterates that Ahab's

> . . . successive meetings with various ships contrastingly concurred to show the demoniac indifference with which the white whale tore his hunters, whether sinning or sinned aginst. . . . Ahab's purpose now fixedly gleamed down upon the constant midnight of the gloomy crew. (437) In this foreshadowing interval too, all humor, forced of natural vanished. . . . Alike, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, seemed ground to finest dust, and powered, for the time, in the clamped mortar of Ahab's iron soul. (437)

Ahab's "whole life had now become one watch on deck" and he mistrusts everyone aboard and doubts the "crew's fidelity."

> "I will have the first sight of the whale myself," he said. "Aye! Ahab must have the doubloon!" (439)

Now he has avowed to betray every member of the crew as he unknowingly had done from the beginning.

As "The Pequod Meets the Delight," another dramatic reversal is revealed about that ship which was "most miserably misnamed." The Delight, having lost four men in pursuit of the White Whale, was about to bury the fifth as Ahab commanded the Pequod to move on. But the "Pequod was not quick enough to escape the sound of the splash that the corpse soon made as it struck the sea."(442) As the Pequod turned from the Delight, a "foreboding voice" was heard from the latter's wake:

> In vain, oh, ye strangers, ye fly our sad burial; ye but turn us your taffrail to show us your coffin. (442)

Ahab's domination has now gone as far as it can in demonstrating his indifference to God and human values and relationships.

Standing on deck in "The Symphony" in the "clear steel-blue day," Ahab comes forth in that "lovely enchanted air" which seemed to "dispell" the "cankerous thing" in his soul.

Ishmael describes the scene:

> That glad, happy air, that windsome sky, did at last stroke and caress him; the step-mother world, so long cruel--forbidding--now threw affectionate arms around his stubborn neck, and did seem to joyously sob over him, as if over one, that however wilful and erring, she could yet find it in her heart to save and to bless. From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop. (443)

Although Ahab is not aware of the significance of his "tear," the "drop" illustrates that human grief, like human joy, is ultimately and particularly individual and that the confrontation of selfhood with the "inscrutable malignancy of God" is inescapable. In a "divine paradox," Ahab, who had denied all alegiance with human relationships and human values, now laments the loss and finds himself merely human. He cannot, however, sufficiently lament his Fall. His final "Symphony" is not a soliloquay but an effort to communicate his own grief to Starbuck:

> Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God. (444)

After the long lamenting, he affirms his loss of identity:

> Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? (444)

Then asking still another question, he ponders:

> See yon Albicore! Who put it into him to chase and fang that flying-fish? Where do murders go, man! Who's to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar? (445)

Knowing that Ahab, not the "judge," was dragging himself to the "bar," Starbuck had "stolen away," as if to turn his back upon Ahab's blindness. Ahab, who had resolved himself to fate as if God had not given man the means by which to survive or to control his own destiny, personifies a living death in that at this point he no longer believes in grief or himself; and, he has never believed in God.

After Moby-Dick surfaces in "The Chase--First Day," Ishmael, in direct contrast to Ahab's indifference, describes the White Whale's "gentle joyousness" and "mighty mildness of repose in swiftness" which

> Not the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns; his lovely, leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid; with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nupital bower in Crete; not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme! did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam. (447).

With the description of the White Whale's "mighty mildness" and"swiftness," Ishmael has implied that what seems to be a contradiction is, ultimately, not a contradiction at all, but merely two aspects of a complete being. Even the

classical "Jupiter" swimming with his "ravished Europa" and thinking himself "majestically Supreme" cannot, according to Ishmael, surpass "the glorified White Whale," as he "so divinely swam." In contrast to Ahab's conception of antiquity's absolute "fate," wherein two different aspects seem absolute contradictions, Ishmael sketches the reality of the scene as if there were no such thing as "fate," for the White Whale was

> But calm, wnticing calm, oh, whale! thous glidest on, to all who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same way thou may'st have bejuggled and destroyed before. (448)

Ishmael has established in the above passage that the White Whale harbors no malignancy and does not intentionally inflict grief. But, after Ahab had sighted Moby Dick and the chase has begun, the whale rushes close almost grabbing Ahab in the giant jaws. From the boat, Ahab falls flat-faced upon the sea as Moby-Dick "swam swiftly round and round the wrecked crew," who

> . . . with straining eyes, then, they remained on the outder edge of the direful zone, whose centre had now become the old man's head. (450)

The unconquerable and inscrutable White Whale remains unconquerable and inscrutable while Ahab's madness now has been directly personified. After the Pequod drove Moby-Dick from the stranded captain and crew, Starbuck, again, tries to get Ahab to stop the chase mentioning that the

day's encounter was a bad "omen" to which Ahab retorts:

> 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 wives' 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 heighbors! Cold, cold--I shiver! How now? Aloft there! D'ye see him? Sing out for every spout, though he spout ten times a second! (452)

Ahab now directly feels himself impaired and blindly and broadly re-instates a profession in "the gods" while, at the same time, denying "mankind" for whom he has previously professed to be making the quest. Ahab has accused the two mates of being the "opposite poles" in much the same way that Ishmael had described the two extremes in terms of the Right Whale and the Sperm Whale's head. Although Ahab has looked for an answer in the heads, he now proclaims that "the gods will speak directly" to him. Although Ishmael has observed that "everyone" can easily feel "whelmed" between two extremes, Ahab feels that he "stands alone among the millions." His outburst reveals his own point of view from which he cannot swerve, for he is "bound" to a belief in fate. The passage establishes Ahab's denial of the Hebrew and Christian God. In "The Symphony" he was wondering if it were "God, I, or who"

that lifted his arm, and now he speaks as though he believes in many "gods."

Driven by the sheer force of his own misguided will, Ahab returns to the "doubloon" and announces: "men, this gold is mine, for I earned it," but "whosoever first raises him (Moby Dick) shall have it." Earlier, after the weary crew had needed an incentive for the chase, Ahab had paraded the doubloon before the men to manipulate them toward his purpose, but he had no intention of letting anyone else have a chance. Now, however, he knows that he will need every crew member.

As if "the hand of Fate had snatched all their souls," the crew in "The Chase--Second Day" was "one man, not thirty." All "individualities" were welded into "oneness" and directed to a fatal goal which Ahab, their "one lord" did "point to." Now, under the direction of a false god, "Ah, how they still strove" in the "infinite blueness" to search "out the thing" which "might destroy them!" Moreover, after the White Whale appears and cuts through the water, he turns on the three crews which were able to keep their distance for awhile,

> But at last in his untraceable evolutions, the White Whale so crossed and recrossed, and in a thousand ways entangled the slack of the three lines now fast to him, that they foreshortened, and, of themselves, warped the devoted boats towards the planted irons in him. (456)

All the lines were "twisted" and "corkscrewed" with "harpoons" and "lances"--all of which had to be dropped into the sea. After finally getting back to the ship, Starbuck pleads with Ahab: "In Jesus' name, no more of this." But Ahab persists showing his refusal to change:

> Ahab is forever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant! I act under order. . . . But ere I break, y'll hear me crack; and till ye hear <u>that</u>, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet. Believe ye, men, in the things called omens? Then laugh aloud, and cry encore! For ere they drown, drowning things will twice rise to the surface; then rise again, to sink forevermore. So with Moby Dick--two days he's floated--rise once more,--but only to spout his last! D'ye feel brave, men, brave? (459)

Ahab has now directly stated that he will not accept any degree of reality which would attest that God and a divine order do exist. In making the allusion to Jesus as a "drowning thing," he also makes a direct comparison between Christ and Moby-Dick. He has, thus, now mocked the gods, God, Jesus Christ, <u>and</u> the beast. The "life" within Ahab is a "blankness" which he feels is a "malignant fate," a force which has overcome the race "a billion years before the ocean rolled." Like Pilate who thought he was doing the will of his people by bringing Jesus to face death,

Ahab has previously felt that he would remove grief. Now he only wants to be Ahab. Like Pilate, he keeps within the noble tradition of committing suicide, if in a different way. Ahab, now at the height of his "fatal pride," will take an entire crew with him into the literal depths. Little does he know that he is also taking another human soul to a literal resurrection.

On the morning of "The Chase--Third Day," Ahab intuits:

> What a lovely day again! were it a new-made world, and made for a summer-house to the angels, and this mornig the first of its throwing open to them, a fairer day could not dawn upon the world. Here's food for thought, had Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels; that's tingling enough for mortal man! to think's audacity. (460)

In this, his last major soliloquay, Ahab, in the freshness of the morning air, talks as though God had directly intervened with his conscience. However, his conscience weaves back and forth with the breeze, thinking first that the wind is "a noble and heroic thing" but that he himself is braver and can conquer it. Unable to make distinctions, he thinks first one way, then another, wanting to be more heroic than the wind in which he now feels "something all glorious and gracious." Realizing that most all things which "enrage man" are bodiless except

as agents, he does not see that Moby-Dick is just a whale as he is just a man who is a part of the universe. He exemplifies the purely heroic feeling that he is his own god. Throughout the text, from his foreshadowing in "The Ship" until his actual appearance upon "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab has been facing what Lewis calls "the satanic predicament," just as Ishmael has faced the same kind of situation in a winter of discontent. Ahab, however, is a creature revolting against a creator, the source of his own powers. Like Milton's Satan, Ahab has become a personified self-contradiction. As he approaches the White Whale for the last time, Ahab sees more clearly but refuses to accept the weight or the depth of his unrealized convictions in favor of the "predestinated" one he has chosen for himself while, at the same time, maintaining that he has had no choice. Ahab is not aware of his own beginnings; whereas, Ishmael has laid in front of the reader the Genesis of the Bible and the genesis of Moby-Dick with allusions to all various civilizations since the Egyptian calendar as well as before time began. All those beginnings were outside himself. Ishmael observed the degrees within the universe around him in his isle of Manhattoes, Nantucket, and New Bedford as well as aboard the Pequod. Like Milton's Satan, however, Ahab exemplifies the co-existence of a subtle intellectual activity which

cannot understand anything. Just as Milton's God never had a battle to wager against Satan, Melville's God had never had a battle with Ahab. Ishmael has clearly demonstrated that God seems indifferent only because He does not recognize the existence of evil. Ultimately, he will prove that evil is powerless because non-existent. Ahab only thought the giant whale was the embodiment of all evil. Ishmael, however, notes differences and similarities between beast and man, as well as darkness and light, and brings them into the uninbodied air of the narrative.

Starbuck has a "clearing" vision when he cries out:

> Oh! My God! What is this that shoots through me so deadly calm, yet expectant--fixed at the top of a shudder! Future things swim before me, as in empty outlines and skeletons; all the past is somehow grown dim. . . . . Strangest problems of life seem clearing; but clouds sweep between--Is my journey's end coming? (463)

The "problems" of the ship, however, roll into full force as the Parsee loses his life in fulfillment of the first part of the "prophecy." Still willful, Ahab insists that he hold "to the last letter of thy word," believing that the Parsee's prophecy means victory rather than defeat. Starbuck still persists:

> "Oh! Ahab," cried Starbuck, "not too late is it, even now, the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thous, that madly seekest him!" (467)

But Ahab's determination continues as he grows close enough to drive his "fierce iron, and his far fiercer curse into the hated whale." Suddenly, he staggers as his "hand smote his forehead" and yells:

> "I grow blind; hands! stretch out before me that I may yet grope my way. Is't night?" (467)

The inevitable blackness has come upon him and as the crew gatheres their forces in the final encounter, all was to no avail, for

> Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timber reeled. Some fell flat upon their faces. (468)

In the midst of the shackled wreckage, Ahab realizes that the "letter of the law" had been carried out:

> "The ship! The hearse! the second hearse!" cried Ahab from the boat; "it's wood could only be American!" (468)

In the fury of the battle and his "fatal pride," Ahab knows that he is to be denied the "pride a sea captain" should have. As his quest is about to be completely reversed, he asks:

> "Am I to be cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. Ho, ho! from all your

> furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hells heart I stab at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear! (468)

At that moment the line to which "the spear" was connected flew around Ahab's neck as Moby-Dick whirled through the water, jerking Ahab from the boat in an instant. Moby-Dick then headed toward the Pequod and as

> concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance-pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight. (469)

In the process of the "predestined" sinking,

> A sky-hawk that tautingly had followed the maintruck downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag, and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that etherial thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-grasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it. (469)

The dramatic irony implies that the "living part of heaven" should have been Ahab; however, since he had denied himself that privilege in his pursuit, a substitute was made. The immortality of a "hawk" draws a rich contrast and demands respect for all forms of life. The hawk in following a "natural" course has been dragged down just as the ship has been. Thus, the intricacy of hierarchy is effectively contrasted in the conclusion as it was throughout the narrative. Ishmael has carefully described the degrees. Like Milton's Adam who was "not aw'd" but "bowing low" to the "superior Nature" when he went to meet an archangel, Ishmael has paid reverence to a strict observation of degree and wholeheartedly embraces a hierarchical principle.[114] He has directly illustrated that he had no quarrel between the ethical and the poetical; rather, his whole being met salvation because of his vision of the shape of virtue. He quite literally demonstrates that a saved soul will still be finite.

Ahab's "satanic predicament" had been just the opposite of Ishmael's. The journey for Ahab was one of continual retrogression although he felt sure he would succeed; whereas, for Ishmael, it was one of continual progression even though he had fears, doubts and made preparations for death.

[114] Ibid., p. 123. Bk. V, ln. 358-360.

Although Ahab, in his final bout, had come to feel that his "topmost greatness" lay in his "topmost grief," he could never reconcile the two, for they would forever be two entirely different absolutes for him. Although Ahab had initially deceived himself by feeling that he would nobly relieve the human race of grief, he came to realize that it was individual; but, for him, it was accutely and absolutely individual. All the "topmost greatness" to which Ahab aspired was ultimately destroyed by his "topmost grief." Now only

> . . . small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago. (469)

The narrative ends by alluding to time before the beginning of recorded history when Nature had no written language. Ishmael has shown the reader the various uses of language as it was employed either to express or interpret the "eternal living principle of Soul" among all nations and peoples. The "small fowls" force a consideration of the importance of "little" forms of life within creation and reinforces Ishmael's original contention that the greatest significance is also revealed by the smallest creatures which ultimately cannot be separated from their creator.

Ahab sank in moral judgment feeling himself superior to all other human beings and forms of Nature. Ishmael swam with moral perception as the "sullen white surf" continued its course "then collapsed" as the "great shroud of the sea rolled on" with no conscious evil intent. The larger life lay outside that "shroud" and Ishmael was alive, though drenched with undoubtable re-birth. Even so, Ishmael, like Virgil's Aeneas, is less concerned with origins than a permanent reality as it had been displayed, was being displayed and would be displayed. The Everyman in Ishmael has risen from the enveloping gulf of pure madness demonstrating that the substance of the teachings of Christ, not their varied interpretations, is indeed the key to salvation.

PART IV: MAT-MAKERS

I. "THE TRY-WORKS" AND THE FALL

While the major subject of Moby-Dick is the pilgrimage of Ishmael's soul, the major theme is the Fall of Man. With the unchanging background of seasonal cycles in which change is a matter of course and with Ishmael's allusion to a multitude of personages who have made journeys through the world, there are two conclusions, epilogue excluded. Two experiences have been presented, one in terms of the other. One is the inevitable fall of the satanic Ahab who chose to have no choice but who ultimately was forced to see that his greatness and his grief were individual although he could never reconcile the two aspects. The other is the literal resurrection of Ishmael who faced a satanic predicament by aspiring to the messianic position wherein he accepted change but respected the past from which he had spiritually evolved. Ahab's physical defeat is swallowed up in moral victory for Ishmael, who has shown that man should not do battle with the source of his powers if he expects to establish or protect himself or his identity. He has shown that no matter how daring a human being may be in pursuing heroically the dictates of a decided purpose, a man is still a man, subjected to darkness as well as light, according

to degree. To realize that, Ishmael implies, strengthens the individual, for he knew that he was standing up against savage odds as well as definite promise. Yet, in Ahab's defeat, the concept of an ideal has not been deprecated but strengthened, for Ishmael has demonstrated a truth of his experience: no ideal is sufficient to satisfy the hunger for conclusions to a purely heroic personage by whom the tragic is re-inacted rather than resolved. Ahab's ideal was neither secular nor religious, for he had renounced everything including himself; whereas, Ishmael's was both with particular emphasis upon the religious. In the anagogical sense, he realized there was no conclusion, only another chapter unfolding in which he urges and teaches by way of example that man re-consider, not overlook, his religious as well as secular heritage in terms of his immediate situation. In direct contrast, Ahab felt that he could literally conclude grief once and for all but only instigated it instead.

As Ishmael weaves a loom of time, each chapter seems to melt into the next, giving a sense of immediacy in which the present has grown out of the past, not in contradiction to it, as Ahab would have "doomed." Ahab tried to burn all bridges behind him in his blind quest for an absolute. The "burning" process is both literally and figuratively portrayed in "The Try-Works" which presents the core of the Fall section. Functioning on two levels, one in accord

with the fall season and the other in correspondence to a metaphysical Fall within the mind of man, the chapter also directly contrasts the literal situation with Ishmael's point of view. In describing how the Try-Works burns down the whale's blubber, Ishmael notes how the "mincer" was "intent on Bible leaves" which aligns the Fall with other portrayals of a felix culpa (happy fault) in which the satanic predicament is not absolute but succumbs to the messianic.[115] In Piers Plowman, Repentance speaks after the Seven Deadly Sins have confessed:

> God, you made the world in your goodness, making something of nothing, man most like yourself; you allowed sin to be, a sickness for all of us, and all for the best, I believe. The Book says: O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam! (Rev. xxi.2, Rev. xvii. 4) Through that sin your Son was sent to this earth, becoming man of a maiden to save mankind; with your Son, you yourself became man like us sinners.
> Let us make man to our image and likeness. (Is. XIV:12-16, cf. Paradise Lost, V, 755-7)[116]

In the twelfth book of Paradise Lost, Michael speaks to Adam about the "Second Coming" and the "Final Judgment" wherewith the Christ shall reward:

> His faithful and receive them into bliss,
> Whether in Heav'n or Earth, for then the Earth
> Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
> Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

[115]Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," Innocence and Experience, Klein and Pack, eds., p. 71.

[116]Williams, op. cit., p. 127. Passus V, ln. 488.

> So spake the Archangel Michael; and then paused,
> As at the world's great period, and our Sire
> Replete with joy and wonder thus replied:
> "O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense,
> That all this good of evil shall produce,
> And evil turn to good--more wonderful
> Than that which by creation first brought forth
> Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
> Whether I should repent me now of sin
> By me done or occasioned, or rejoice
> Much more that much more good therof shall spring--
> To God more glory, more good will to men
> From God--and over wrath grace shall abound.[117]

In "The Try-Works" Ishmael describes the try-pots in a manner which parallels the "pouring out" of the Seven Deadly Sins in Piers Plowman, Paradise Lost, and the Book of Revelation. Like most situations aboard ship, this one also brings together and compares the various segments of human philosophy and experience: He refers to the process of burning down the blubber:

> Like a plethoric burning martyr, or a
> self-consuming misanthrope, once ignited,
> the whale supplies his own fuel and burns
> by his own body. (353)

And adds that:

> It smells like the left wing of the day
> of judgment; it is an argument for the
> pit. (353)

Comparing the situation aboard ship with the classical as well as the Christian analogies, he alludes to "the bold Hydriote, Canaris, who, issuing" from "their midnight harbors," bore "down upon the Turkish frigates." An additional layer provides

[117]Milton, op. cit., p. 303. Bk. XII, ln. 460.

a fourth dimension to the richness of the contrasted comparisons when the "pagan harpooneers" "pitched hissing masses of blubber into the scalding pots." Ishmael, then, tells how the pagans

> . . . narrated to each other their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth; as their uncivilized laughter forked upwards out of them, like the flames from the furnace. (353)

Here paganism is not remote but aboard ship. In a way similar to Adam's standing in doubt as well as the "light out of darkness" in the above quoted passage from Paradise Lost, Ishmael then tells how the

> . . . rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul. (354)

Wrapped in "darkness," Ishmael thought he could but "better" see "the redness, the madness, and the ghastliness of others." He was also more aware of his own situation at the "midnight helm" where he got the "uppermost"

> . . . impression that whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern. (354)

Almost falling asleep with a "bewildered feeling, as of death," he turned his back on the ship's "prow" and "the compass," but "faced back" just in time to prevent the ship from being capsized. He concludes the chapter believing "All is vanity." He speaks to the reader:

> Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee, as for the time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness. And there is a catskill eagle in some souls that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces. (355)

Like Adam, Ishmael may have previously "stood in doubt," but he has resolved, after realizing that "all is vanity" aboard ship, to "repent" and his moral sprinklings also show a certain degree of "rejoicing," for Ishmael did not fall into that "fire." He has also realized that he is immortal and compares his soul with a "Catskill eage" who had "dived down in the blackest gorge" and became "invisible in the sunny spaces." Although there is no Michael or Repentance in the narrative to talk with God or council the main character, Ishmael has already metaphysically survived the forthcoming fall toward which Ahab is commanding the crew. In drawing a conclusion to this episode, Ishmael has placed the weight of his realization upon Christ and the Hebrew prophets. He, now, believes that

> The truest of all men was the Man of Sorrows, and the truest of all books is Solomon's, and Ecclesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe. (355)

The allusion to Ecclesiastes places direct emphasis upon the seasons of man as well as upon the season of all forms of life.

Unlike Piers Plowman who sets forth his text as a result of a dream vision, or Paradise Lost in which Satan, Christ and God appear as characters in the narrative, Ishmael's salvation from the wreck was a matter of individual conscience, not a dream vision nor a result of direct intervention by God, Christ or Angel as a person speaking directly to him within the narrative.

"The Try-Works" is a key chapter, not just within the Fall section of the book, but all of Moby-Dick, for it directly illustrates the satanic predicament carried to an ultimate extreme as well as the messianic victory as does Book XII of Paradise Lost, Passus V of Piers Plowman, and the Book of Revelation. Thus, the subject of Moby-Dick, the pilgrimage of Ishmael's soul, and the central theme, the Fall of Man, has been drawn by Ishmael's recounting of how he fared in his passage through the world. That retelling is based upon the story of the Fall. As a result, Moby-Dick is a culmination of the redemptive process in human history alluding the reader to a time before time as well. C. S. Lewis comments on "The Fall" in Paradise Lost:

> When we remember that we also have our places in this (cosmic) plot, that we also, at any given moment, are moving either towards the Messianic or towards the Satanic position, then we are entering the world of religion. But when we do that our epic holiday is over: we rightly shut up our Milton. In the religious life man faces God and God faces man. But in the epic it is feigned, for the moment, that we, as readers, can step aside and see the faces of God and man in profile. We are not invited to (as Alexander

> would have said) to *enjoy* the spiritual life, but to *contemplate* the whole pattern within which the spiritual life arises. Making use of a distinction of Johnson's we might say that the subject of the poem "is not piety, but the motives to piety." [118]

In *Moby-Dick*, a reader cannot "step aside and see the faces of God and man in profile" in the same way as in *Paradise Lost*, but Ishmael has constructed a profile with language. He "invites" the reader to "contemplate" the whole pattern out of which spiritual life evolves. Certainly, Ishmael has given the details as well as the substance of his "motives to piety" and with his moral preachments has asked that the individual reader give some thought to his own. All of which places a great deal of emphasis upon the use of the word, "orphan," in the Epilogue. Although Ishmael has lost his sense of self-importance in a manner which the Christian associates with Jesus' words, "Whosoever loses his life for my sake will gain it," there can be little doubt that the third day's chase concludes with Ishmael's re-birth of self in terms of infinity within the finite world. His new consciousness of immortality was for him as real as the ocean in which he was rescued. Now, the reader knows that the entire text of *Moby-Dick* has been a re-telling and re-shaping of that discovery utilizing the guise of pairs of opposites *en route*.

[118]Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

II. THE "EPILOGUE" AND THE BIBLE

Although Moby-Dick may have ended with "The Chase--Third Day" as "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago," the "Epilogue" re-iterates Ishmael's survival, ties the several layers of mythology into the organic whole from which Ishmael had emerged, and places direct emphasis upon the re-telling and re-shaping of the story as the present had grown out of the past. The impact of the brief recounting also establishes Ishmael as an original character in literature and affirms the messianic position in accordance with the Bible.

The concept of presenting two experiences at once, one in terms of the other, goes back to the Bible. Lewis maintains that The Iliad results in repetition of tragedy while The Aeneid and Paradise Lost in particular end with reconciliation. Erich Auerbach makes distinctions according to epic style in still a different way when comparing Homer's Odyssey with the account of Isaac's sacrifice:

> The two styles, in their opposition, represent basic types: on the one hand fully externalized description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, ew elements of historical development and of psychological perspective; on the other hand, certain parts brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the unexpressed, "background" quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, universal-historical claims, development of the

> concept of the historically becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic.[119]

The first epic "style" refers to Homer, the latter to the Biblical text. Homer's narrative has no "background" but fills "the stage and the reader's mind completely" with the "present."[120] The HOmeric style, Auerbach explains, leaves "nothing which it mentions half in darkness and unexternalized." Consequently, the style knos "only a foreground, only a uniformly illuminated, uniformly objective present."[121] In direct contrast, in the Biblical text's epic style:

> . . . time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and "fraught with background."[122]

Moreover, God is "represented" in that background, for He is not comprehensible in His presence as is Zeus. But

> . . . even the human beings in the Biblical stories have greater depths of time, fate, and consciousness than do the human beings in Homer; although they are nearly always caught up in an event engaging all their faculties, they are not so entirely immersed in its present that they do not remain continually conscious of what has happened to them earlier and elsewhere; their thoughts and feelings have more layers, are more entangled. Abraham's actions are explained

[119] Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," Mimesis, p. 23.

[120] Ibid., p. 5.

[121] Ibid., p. 7.

[122] Ibid., p. 11.

> not only by what is happening to him at the moment, nor yet only by his character (as Achilles' actions by his courage and pride, and Odysseus' by his versatility and foresightedness), but by his previous history; he remembers, he is constantly conscious of what God has promised him and what God has already accomplished for him--his soul is torn between desperate rebellion and hopeful expectation; his silent obedience is multilayered, has background. Such a problematic psychological situation as this is impossible for any of the Homeric heroes, whose destiny is clearly defined and who wake every morning as if it were the first day of their lives; their emotions, though strong, are simple and find expression instantly.[123]

Also, Homer's "real" world

> . . . into which we are lured, exists for itself, contains nothing but itself; the Homeric poems conceal nothing, they contain no teaching and no secret second meaning.[124]

Consequently, Homer can be analyzed but not interpretted; whereas, in direct contrast, Biblical texts require interpretation as

> In the story of Isaac, it is not only God's intervention at the beginning and the end, but even the factual and psychological elements which come between, that are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore require subtle investigation and interpretation. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon.[125]

[123] Ibid., p. 12.

[124] Ibid., p. 13.

[125] Ibid., p. 15.

For example, the reader is not told "who" or "where" Abraham is although he does say "Here I AM," but

> . . . the Hebrew word means only something like "behold me," and in any case is not meant to indicate the actual place where Abraham is, but a moral position in respect to God, who has called to him--Here am I awaiting thy command.[126]

Moreover, when a journey is made, it is because God has designated the necessity. Thus, that kind of "predetermination" is similar but also sharply contrasts to the "Fates" as depicted in Greek. The "suspense" of the mysterious is heightened

> . . . as a personage in the action, here and now, is illuminated, so that it may become apparent how terrible Abraham's temptation is, and that God is fully aware of it.[127]

In that respect, the Biblical development of personality contrasts sharply with the static characters in Homeric poems where they are described with adjectives and direct explanation.

The two styles point to different approaches in portraying "reality" in literature. The Homeric style would seem to lead to a repetition of tragedy while the Hebrew would lead to a repetition of predicament. However, the Homeric and the Old Testament styles were altered by the Latin Virgil's Aeneid and the story of Christ in the New

[126] Ibid., p. 8.

[127] Ibid., p. 10.

Testament. Auerbach contends that

> It was the story of Christ, with its ruthless mixture of everyday reality and the highest and most sublime tragedy, which had conquered the classical rule of styles.[128]

As noted in "Loomings: The Threads of the Epic Tradition," in this study, the break with the "classical rule of styles" which was, for the most part, totally objective, came in the Middle Ages and continued through the Renaissance and appeared again in the nineteenth century when revolution against the classical doctrine once again emerged. During the medieval period it had been possible in literature to represent the most "everyday phenomena of reality in a serious and significant context." Auerbach uses

> . . . the term figural to identify the conception of reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages. In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now. The connection between occurrences not regarded as primarily a chronological or causal development but as a oneness within the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts and reflections. 129

Auerbach's "figura" concept closely resembles Lewis' explanation of "Hierarchy" and Tillyard's Elizabethan Chain of

[128] Ibid., p. 555.

[129] Loc. cit.

Being. All three confirm the "necessity" of having both a "foreground" and a "background" for literary characters and that their actions correspond to a divine plan, whether noted or not, which is not predestinated or known to man but is, nonetheless, quite operative within the universe. Both Lewis and Tillyard have affirmed that Paradise Lost uniquely reconciled the classical and Christian styles of what Auerbach calls "the representation of reality in literature." Milton applied the "rules" to Hebrew mythology and placed particular emphasis upon the Christian viewpoint. (See page 19). In so doing, Milton turned against the purely objective or the purely heroic and created a universal historical pattern. A similar reconciliation was not made in literature until Herman Melville created Moby-Dick in the nineteenth century.

No doubt, the style of Moby-Dick patterns the Biblical texts. The narrative, from start to finish, presents a "background" as well as a "foreground," the balance of which is maintained by a powerful predetermination for resolution and develops a "concept of the historically becoming" as well as the salvation of Ishmael. The style also incorporates qualities from the classical as well. The "uninterrupted connections" and the illusion that "all events are in the foreground" as well as the "externalized description" are feigned to give an "heroic impression." The classical rules

appear, at times, to be mocked rather than followed, for there can be little doubt that the poet, Ishmael, although with alliterative prose rather than verse, was in rebellion against the hallowness of pure form without substance. This is particularly noteable in "The Fossil Whale." Even so, the "appearance of rebellion" is deceptive, for the poet is also insisting upon the need for form and content to function simultaneously. For example, in "The Mat-Maker," Ishmael, while he and Queequeg were weaving a "sword-mat for an additional lashing to the boat," came to think

> . . . as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. There lay the fixed threads of the warp subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and that vibration merely enough to admit of the crosswise interblending of other threads with its own. This warp seemed necessity; and here, thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into these unalterable threads. (185)

At that point, Ishmael realizes that he is weaving his own destiny among "unalterable threads." The meaning of that revelation became more apparent in his progression as, for example, when in "The Try-Works" he knew that the ship was not"bound to any haven ahead" but rushed "from all havens astern."(354) The full impact does not occur until the wreck when he was "dropped astern," as he recounts in the "Epilogue."(470) The fact that the "Fates" had

"ordained" him to take the place of the Parsee coupled with the actuality of his survival proved to Ishmael that God does indeed exist. The event also evidences a "fusing" between the classical and the Hebrew mythologies. "Chance" did not have "the last featuring blow."(185) Ishmael had woven his own destiny by recognizing the presence of divine grace. He "floated on the margin of the ensuing scene, and in full sight of it." His being dropped "astern" provides full impact to his continual insistence that there are limits beyond which man cannot go and places emphasis upon his contention that the present evolves from the past in accordance with divine decree. Ahab's defeat affirms Ishmael's realization that man cannot play God nor deny the source of his powers. God's direct intervention in Ishmael's behalf is evidenced by the fact that

> The unharming sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks. (470)

That kind of direct intervention, although only briefly cited here, is an epic device used consistently throughout the text of Moby-Dick and the Bible. Time and place are undefined and call for interpretation, as Auerbach notes about Biblical style. It is neither allegory nor parable but individual realization.

The whole text of Moby-Dick gives the impression of having been permeated with the most un-relieved suspense

and directed toward a single goal which is"fraught with background. In that way, Ishmael's loom of time becomes inclusive expanding beyond time as well as before time to create a permanent reality in time which is not redeemable by time but through the grace of God, Christ and the messianic position. As a result, a cosmic pattern in which the past and present are distinct but not divorced has been created within the narrative. Ishmael indeed had a story to tell. His originality seems to have been obscured by those who expect an epic to present the deeds of an indestructible hero or at least one who, in fighting until death, brings honor and glory to his people and have, therefore, considered Ahab as a hero. Ishmael, however, presents the honor and glory of re-birth in life. His singularity was perhaps best established by Melville in The Confidence Man:

> If we consider what is popularly held to entitle characters in fiction to being deemed original, is but something personal--confined to itself. The character sheds not its characteristics on its surroundings, whereas, the original character, essentially such, is like a revolving Drummond Light, raying away from itself all round it--everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet), so that, in certain minds, there follows upon the adequate conception of such a character, an effect, in its way, akin to that which in Genesis attends upon the beginning of things.[130]

[130]Herman Melville, The Confidence Man, p. 261.

Can there be two?

> For much the same reason that there is but one planet to one orbit, so can there be but one such original character to one work of invention. Two would conflict to chaos. In this view, to say that there are more than one to a book, is good presumption there is none at all. ----this sort of phenomenon--cannot be born in the author's imagination--it being as true in literature as in zoology, that all life is from the egg. 131

The passages clearly show Melville's insistence upon having but one original character and illuminate the role he believed that character should play. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Melville commented: "Mark it well, imitation is often the first charge brought against real originality." [132] No one seems to have brought the "charge" of "imitation" against Ishmael's "real originality." In fact, as the main character, he seems to have been overlooked.

The style, the characters and the main theme of Moby-Dick have their origin from Biblical texts. However, incorporated within the varied style, as to language use, are a profusion of Anglo-Saxon kennings as in chapter titles as well as paragraphs and the title of the book itself, i.e. "The Mat-Maker," "The Spouter-Inn," and "The Town-Ho's Story," etc. Elizabethan rhythmns and alliterative prose,

[131] Ibid., p. 260.

[132] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses;" ' . . . Willard Thorp, Melville, p. 336.

Rabelaissian exaggerations and the unfamiliar words of voyageurs are all utilized. Moreover, this kind of varied profusion is responsible for the overtones and contributes to the rhythmical smoothness as well as the abundance of imagery. The multilayered language brings a unique universal quality to the ext as does the multi-layered mythology. (For a complete discussion of Melville's Use of the Bible, see Nathalia Wright's book by the same name.)

The direct quotation from Job in the "Epilogue" indicates that Melville may have used The Book of Job as one of his models as Milton did for Paradise Lost.[133] Six direct references to Job are made within the text in "Extracts," "The Advocate," "Cetology," "Moby-Dick," "The Pequod Meets the Virgin," and the "Epilogue."[134] Most references are made to Job 41 which concerns the impossibility of man's conquering the Leviathan. The quotation from Job I, "And only I am escaped alone to tell thee," places direct emphasis upon Ishmael's reconciliation according to Hebrew mythology. The reference to Ixion, the Greek Cain who was the first to murder one of his kind, brings the Greek mythology to surface as Ishmael, in being "drawn towards the closing vortex," reached the scene where

> Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle, like another Ixion I did revolve. (470)

[133]Tillyard, EEB, p. 411.

[134]Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible, p. 191.

The similitude between Ixion whom Zeus purified and Ishmael soon becomes a vicissitude when Ishmael

> . . . gaining that vital centre, the
> black bubble upward burst; and now,
> liberated by reason of its cunning
> spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy,
> rising with great force, the coffin life-
> buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell
> over, and floated by my side. (470)

The allusion to Ixion also brings into the narrative the concept of an original sin in terms of Greek mythology just as that of the Fall has done according to the Hebrew. The "devious-cruising Rachel" refers to the mother of Joseph, who, although a believer in monotheism, yet clung to the forms of polytheism partaking of duplicity. In Jeremiah, Rachel is portrayed as rising from her grave to weep over the children who are being carried to Babylon, never to return.[135] However, Matthew interprets the passage as a vision of the prophetic slaughter of innocents by Herod.[136] Despite the ambiguity, the allusion to Rachel unifies Ishmael's salvation from the wreck with the Hebrew mythology in both the Old and the New Testaments. Although the Ishmael, the first born of Abraham, in the Old Testament had been led by the God of Abraham into the desert to father a new nation, Ishmael in Moby-Dick has been led into a different wilderness: the sea. Although the Rachel had found another "orphan," Ishmael had found himself in accordance with the messianic position.

[135] Jer. 31:15

[136] Matt. 2:18

III. CONCLUSION:

MOBY-DICK IS A MEDIEVAL EPIC

The purpose of this study has been to view Moby-Dick as an epic. In reiterating the major factors by which the work may be judged as an epic in book-length prose, review must be given to those general characteristics which Tillyard specifies as distinguishing features of epic and the narrative's organic unity as well as Moby-Dick's unique achievement in literature.

The first main characteristic is that the work must be one of high quality and high seriousness using language in a distinguished way.[137] Next, as the narrative spreads out into space and time, a certain amplitude must be established dealing with more sides of life than tragic drama, not repeating but offering variety which concerns "the whole truth;" whereas, tragedy sacrifices it. The epic approach is narrow requiring intensity, selection, arrangement, and organization.[138] All of which must be governed by a powerful predetermination which is not completely resolved until the last word has been written; yet, the strategy has been settled before the first word was written.[139] Consequently, the poet's will contracts and shapes the narrative

[137]Tillyard, op. cit., p. 5.

[138]Ibid., p. 6.

[139]Ibid., p. 8-9.

in progress leaving an heroic impression as total experience is being conveyed. One part or episode grows out of the previous one while at the same time retaining recollection of that which went before. In the process which Milton called "deliberate valour," the poet's conscious will has been forced into harmony with spontaneous composition.[140] In controlling "a large material" and exercising the conscious will, the poet creates the heroic impression which often concerns situations in which the main character, or possibly others, too, know exactly what they are doing rising through "deliberate valour" to a great height of resolution.[141] The fourth requirement is one of choric effect in which the feelings of a large group of people must be expressed creating a sense of what it was like to be alive at the time. In that way, the poet is the mouthpiece for the most serious convictions and habits of a multitude of people.

With the contention that a work of literature is a living thing, if properly unified, Moby-Dick provides a classic example in terms of form and content. Whether referring to certain aspects of the form or content, each part supports the whole, and not until the final words were written was a conclusion drawn. Whether one regards the final word(s) as "five thousand years ago" or"orphan" depends upon the

[140] Ibid., p. 10.

[141] Ibid., p. 12.

importance the reader places upon a need for an epilogue. In either case, Moby-Dick carves a pattern of change in a changeless universe and brings Ishmael to the shore of reality with various devices and techniques used in previous epics, among which those of the Bible are frequently utilized as well as those in Beowulf, the classical epics, and Paradise Lost. In a letter to Hawthorne, Melville commented on the progress of writing Moby-Dick:

> What's the use of elaborating what, in its very essence, is so short-lived as a modern book? Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter. (558: Ltr. dated June 1, 1851)

From his comment, one can see that Melville was living in a century where the Gospels were either not being accepted as truth or else they were being interpretted as absolute fact with no room for any sort of humanism. It would probably not be wrong to assume that two schools of thought existed about the Bible as well as the classical works and various other accounts of human experience--one placing all importance upon the surface authenticity of the content, the other disregarding the Bible or the works of antiquity altogether. Obviously, Melville could join neither school. Such a split, often erroneously referred to as duality, is reflected in Moby-Dick, along with other types of duality. Ishmael's resolution ultimately is a means by which all mythologies,

including the classical and the Christian, are unified. The comment also indicates that Melville was deliberately writing Moby-Dick patterned after Biblical texts in prose narrative which was what Milton had done about two hundred years previously in blank verse.

Lewis has set out "the whole scheme" of Milton's plan for a poem in the Preface to the Reason for Church Government in which Milton was, he says, contemplating "whether to" write an epic modelled after:

I. (A) The diffuse Epic (Homer, Virgil, and Tasso)
(B) The brief Epic (The Book of Job)

II. (A) Epic keeping the rules of Aristotle.
(B) Epic following Nature.

III. Choice of subject ("what king or knight before the conquest")[142]

Milton's plan also included a scheme for tragedy and lyric, the two other possible forms Milton was evidently considering for the content of his poem. In each, models were twofold: classical and Christian. The result, of course, was that Milton wrote Paradise Lost, an epic which fuses the classical and the Christian both in terms of form and content. He applied the rules of Aristotle stipulating the necessity for unity and requiring that the epic concern one single action which for Paradise Lost was the Fall of Man as depicted in Genesis 3. Lewis suggests that Milton was pondering the

[142]Lewis, op. cit., p. 4.

question "whether to write" an epic "following Nature" or one following Aristotle's rules. Lewis believes that Milton thought an "epic following Nature" referred to "the romantic and chivalrous epic of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Spenser" which

> . . . differ from the ancient works, firstly by its lavish use of the marvellous, secondly by the place given to love, and thirdly by the multiple action of interwoven stories.[143]

He summarizes:

> I believe, with very little doubt, that Milton's hesitation between 'the rules of Aristotle' and 'following Nature' means, in simpler language, 'shall I write an epic in twelve books with a simple plot, or shall I write something in stanzas and cantos about knights and ladies and enchantments?' [144]

The case in point refers to what might be called a psuedo-split between either the classical and nature or the Christian and nature as though man were alienated from nature on either side, or as if he must obey either a principle or a God without any consideration for human needs and the revelations in nature which surround him. I am not disagreeing with Lewis about what Milton may have thought an "epic following Nature" would be. But, I believe Paradise Lost follows nature (human, external, hellish and heavenly) and the rules of Aristotle--even if that means

[143] Ibid., p. 6.

[144] Loc. cit.

Milton made the fusion inspite of himself. The scenes in the garden and those depicting the natural relationship between Adam and Eve "follow Nature" with expertise and believability. Milton's God does not say or imply that Adam must either obey Him or love Eve. The Fall does not occur when Adam decides that his love for Eve is greater than his love for God. It comes when Adam splits his reason disobeying God's law by eating the Apple; yet, Adam and Eve's fall into consciousness does not constitute the Original Sin. The Original Sin was their disobedience. Once they realize how much they have to enjoy, they show no qualms about having to utilize their creating power to maintain the goodness and virtue toward which they naturally aspired, not as if those qualities were something separate from them to be upheld but as a matter of course in accordance with God's promise of redemption by Christ.

No one knows what kind of epic Melville intended to write. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses," however, the paragraph concerning a Carolina cousin definitely shows that the epic form was on his mind. The cousin had vowed to stand behind "Pop Emmons and his 'Fredoniad'" until "a better epic came along" swearing that "it was not very far behind the Iliad" to which Melville commented: "Take away the words, and in spirit he was sound."(544-5) The terminology may strike some as crude but the sense is clear.

In considering Moby-Dick as an epic (beginning on page 10), it was found that the epic in general is a term which covers a multitude of literary art. More specifically, Moby-Dick is a medieval epic in the same vein as Dante's Divine Comedy in that the subject is the pilgrimage of a human soul: a recounting of how that soul fared in his passage through the universe. Moby-Dick is also a medieval epic in the same vein as Paradise Lost, for it also has the Fall of Man as a central theme giving the story of the universe in a different way by definitely showing change on the part of Ishmael in a basically changeless cosmic situation. The Aristotlian rule of unity and a single subject has been implicitly maintained. Moby-Dick also follows nature. As explicated (beginning on page 56), the four seasons are a basis for an overall structural framework providing four distinct parts to the book: Winter ("Loomings" to "The Lee Shore" Ch. 23); Spring ("The Advocate" to "The Gam" Ch. 53); Summer ("Of Monstrous Pictures of Whales" to "Ambergris" Ch. 92); and Fall ("The Castaway" to "The Chase--The Third Day" Ch. 135). That kind of natural order is in the background while the human action and Ishmael's motives to piety and resolution are maintained in the foreground. The four seasons provide a cycle of natural progression taking place within the universe. Fall, in that

way, functions on two levels. For Ahab who was chained to nature, but who had set himself against himself as well as nature, the wreck exemplifies that the natural cannot be foregone. For Ishmael, the wreck makes clear that redemption and divine grace are not figments of the imagination. In that way, Moby-Dick repudiates the purely heroic as did Milton's Paradise Lost. Ishmael sketches a framework within which an individual being finds God and salvation from the Fall of Man, not the fall season. The consequence of the fundamental irony is such that the weight of the plot does not rest on one episode but on the entire narrative within which the process of temptation, Fall, judgment, despair and salvation have been exemplified. Ultimately, Ishmael's reconciliation has evolved out of all the varied and vast happenings.

Melville's Ishmael is a unique character in literature. He is the narrator and the poet, not a poet describing how someone else fared but telling about his own situation; yet, he created a universal pattern of history at the same time. Today, one is accustomed to, or even may grow weary by, hearing such terms as "narrator" or "persona," but in the 1800's such distinctions had not been made in literary art. No separation existed between the author and the narrator in the mind of the reader of poetry. While it is impossible

for a writer to leave himself out of anything that he writes, and although a large portion of the conflict in Moby-Dick may have been Melville's, the poet and the narrator are Ishmael. Melville had converted poetry into poetical and alliterative prose giving it epic form and creating a new literary device: a persona who is someone other than the author. All of which had not been done before nor has it been done since in one epic.

Lewis maintains that Paradise Lost

> . . . is a poem depicting the objective pattern of things, the attempted destruction of that pattern by rebellious self love, and the triumphant absorption of that rebellion into a yet more complex pattern. The cosmic story--the ultimate plot in which all other stories are episodes--is set before us. We are invited, for the time being, to look at it from outside. And that is not, in itself, a religious exercise.[145]

Moby-Dick creates the subjective pattern wherein "rebellious self love" is confronted as well as the objective pattern. However, Milton's "objective pattern," as Lewis describes it, refers to a universal framework directly established by the narrative in Paradise Lost in which God, Christ and Satan appear as characters. Ishmael alludes the reader to the existence of such an objective pattern with negative capability illustrating that "objectivity," as it was being interpretted by Ahab, was quite a different kind of quest.

[145] Ibid., p. 132.

For example, Ahab felt that his absolute objective, to kill the white whale, was not only possible but just a matter of time and circumstance. Because of Ishmael's subjectivity, Moby-Dick is a more personable account, not necessarily a more religious one. The Fall in Moby-Dick is a matter of individual conscience. Satan's sin, like Ahab's, was self-motivated and self-inflicted; he imagined himself impaired and thought that he could be a more powerful force than the creator. Ishmael, like Adam and Eve, was not responsible for the Fall because he was subjected to Ahab's quest. Adam and Eve's sin was not self-motivated, for they listened to Satan. In both, the Fall was a felix copula (happy fault) without which change and reconciliation would not have been possible. Ahab's defeat was Melville's means of refuting antiquity's idea of a hero who could, in destroying monsters, rid the human race of grief. Ishmael does not invite us to enjoy the spiritual life, but he has set forth a complete pattern in which it arose. He has rendered a personal recounting.

Moby-Dick is unique in that it contains both a primary and a secondary epic. No primary epic exists in Paradise Lost. In a definite sense, the New Testament grew out of the Old. In the Middle Ages, religious allegory grew out of the secular and in Moby-Dick the secondary epic grew out of the primary to be placed within a structural pattern based upon Genesis 16-25. With "The Town-Ho's Story" as

as the primary epic, Moby-Dick preserves an oral tradition in a form comparable to that of Beowulf and the classical epics. In both the primary and second epics, an allegiance to epic form has been maintained: they are highly didactic and exemplary in keeping with the obligation to teach through example.[146] Another Renaissance "commonplace" about the epic has been maintained in that the virtues of the native English language have been utilized reverting to the Old English alliterative style. However, the decorum also resembles Biblical texts in that the narrative is not entirely straightforward; Ishmael also "recollects." The desire to amplify, to swell "the lake of adventure into the sea" was a medieval concept. In that sense, the epic is complicated but simple.[147]

The pilgrimage of Ishmael and the history of the human spirit from the domestic to the cosmic have been established within the narrative epic form from the low-keyed "Loomings," which began in the middle of decision and action, until the final crescendo of "The Chase--The Third Day." The supreme and fundamental irony, the Fall, has been taken to sea. But, at the conclusion of the narrative, Ishmael has reached a new shore of permanent reality.

[146] Tillyard, op, cit., p. 431.

[147] Ibid., p. 312.

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