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The Nature of the whale : intertextual links between Melville's Moby-Dick and Emerson's Nature

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**The nature of the whale: Intertextual links between Melville's
"Moby-Dick" and Emerson's "Nature"**

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San Jose State University, 1992

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THE NATURE OF THE WHALE: INTERTEXTUAL LINKS
BETWEEN MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK AND EMERSON'S NATURE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

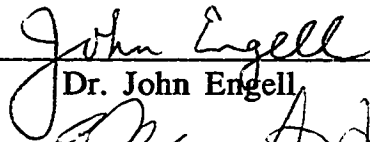
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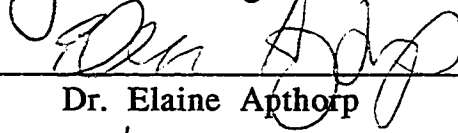
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December, 1992

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ABSTRACT

THE NATURE OF THE WHALE: INTERTEXTUAL LINKS
BETWEEN MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK AND EMERSON'S NATURE

by Gregory Paul Grewell

Herman Melville's Moby-Dick (1851) is a complicated pursuit of the transcendental ideas expounded in Ralph Waldo Emerson's Nature (1831). The two texts have endless, organic correspondences, never frivolous, always rooted in Transcendentalism. Whether Melville gained his transcendental ideology from Emerson's Nature is irrelevant, for it remains that Melville arrived at a configuration of ideas and understanding similar to those of Emerson.

The shape of my thesis corresponds to the seven chapters of Emerson's Nature--"Commodity," "Beauty," "Language," "Discipline," "Idealism," "Spirit," and "Prospects." Through these Transcendental steps Ishmael gains the necessary experience, understanding, and reason to transcend the material world toward Spirit. Thus in "The Pacific" meditative Ishmael achieves Spirit, loses all mean egoism, exists only in the present, and converts his voice to third-person omniscient. In the "Epilogue," the final word on events, Ishmael's Idealism manifests--he alone lives to parent a Transcendental creed, an affirmation of Spirit.

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Explanation of Abbreviations

For purposes of economy, the same text was used as source for all of the Emerson quotations (Emerson, Ralph Waldo. The Portable Emerson. Ed. Carl Bode. New York: Penguin, 1981). The following is a list of abbreviations employed to shorten and consolidate paranthetical documentation:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
<u>Nature</u>	<u>N</u>
"The American Scholar"	"AS"
"Circles"	"O"
"Compensation"	"C"
"Experience"	"E"
"History"	"H"
"Fate"	"F"
"Illusions"	"I"
"The Over-Soul"	"OS"
"The Poet"	"P"
"Self-Reliance"	"SR"
"The Transcendentalist"	"T"

Chapter I

Nature

The frivolous make themselves merry with the Ideal theory, as if consequences were burlesque; as if it affected the stability of nature. It surely does not. God never jests with us, and will not compromise the end of nature by permitting any inconsequence in its procession. (N 33)

In chapter 49 of Moby-Dick, "The Hyena," Ishmael claims life is a "joke" and God an "unseen and unaccountable old joker" (MD 226). But this is only a temporal and whimsical flash of wit; for in chapter 51, "The Spirit-Spout," Ishmael acknowledges the struggle of "two antagonistic influences" on Ahab's face and in the Pequod-- "one to mount directly to heaven, the other to drive yawningly to some horizontal goal" (233). Whether climbing a mast-head or taking a subterranean dive, Ishmael finally shucks this dualistic view of the universe and foregoes horizontal goals to transcend the material and move toward Spirit. As readers, we should identify with and read the story of Moby-Dick as Ishmael's. From young bumpkin to wise magian, Ishmael grows and learns to understand Spirit.¹

¹ Some important Melvilleians see Ahab as the tragic protagonist: to name a few, Lewis Mumford, Leon Howard, Newton Arvin, Alfred Kazin, Richard Chase, and Charles Olson. Other studies are instrumental in bringing Ishmael to the fore-deck: Walter Bezanson's "Moby-Dick: Work of Art" and James Baird's Ishmael; more recently are Edgar Dryden's Melville's Thematics of Form, Martin Pop's The Melville Archetype, and John Seelye's Melville: the Ironic Diagram. Seelye takes Emerson's influence on Melville into consideration, and only then to argue Melville's anti-Transcendentalism. Most recent is Peter Quigley's "Rethinking Resistance: Nature Opposed to Power in Emerson and Melville"; Quigley's argument--often fascinating, always engaging--evokes the Political Correctness movement, demonstrating that Ishmael and Emerson affirm, not refute, the decrees of joint-stock companies: "Positing unseen and transcendent principles of nature or consciousness serves to enlarge the domain of human privilege over the nonhuman and a few humans over the many" (51). Quigley proves himself to be a materialist, and therefore can not bode to value Emersonian Transcendentalism.

Herman Melville's Moby-Dick (1851) is a complicated pursuit of the transcendental ideas expounded in Ralph Waldo Emerson's Nature (1831). The two texts have endless, organic correspondences, never frivolous, always rooted in Transcendentalism. It is not known whether Melville read Emerson's Nature. In a letter to Evert Duyckinck (March 3, 1849), Melville reported that while in Boston he had seen Emerson lecture, and ". . . had only glanced at a book of his once in Putnam's store—that was all I knew of him, till I heard him lecture" (287 in Leyda). We know from Sophia Hawthorne that during the late summer of 1850, when he was at work on Moby-Dick, Melville spent a morning at the Hawthornes' cottage in Lenox reading Emerson—but which essays from what volume she did not mention. Merton M. Sealts, Jr., who has written the definitive essay linking Melville and Emerson, cannot find evidence—based on Melville's known purchases and book borrowing from Duyckinck and the New York Society Library—of Melville having read Nature, but concludes, "Melville . . . not only read Emerson with understanding over a period of more than twenty years, but knew very well exactly where he agreed and disagreed with Emerson's provocative thinking" (72). Whether Melville gained his transcendental ideology from Emerson's Nature, or the works of Emerson which he owned—Poems, Essays: First Series, Essays: Second Series, and The Conduct of Life, all given to him or purchased after Moby-Dick was written—is irrelevant. The fact remains that Melville arrived at a configuration of ideas and understanding similar to those of Emerson. As Perry Miller concludes in his 1953 essay, "Melville and Transcendentalism," Moby-Dick is "to the end, implacably, defiantly, unrepentantly, Transcendental" (575). In this essay I intend to show how Moby-Dick discusses, expands, and transforms the Transcendentalism of Emerson's Nature.

The most obvious Emersonian line in Moby-Dick has received very little attention. In his introduction to Nature, Emerson writes,

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. (N 8)

Prior to listening to Father Mapple's sermon from upon a dismembered ship's prow, Ishmael waxes,

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. (MD 37)

Of this passage, Edward Stone writes, "Emerson, whose wording this echoes, would not have been capable of greater faith" (218).² However, Melville's punning anaphora--his Me thinks--and accent on the twice-used "take" indicate his playfulness. At this early stage in the novel, Ishmael has neither the experience nor the understanding and reason to earnestly voice Spirit. He is merely trying-out another role. The remainder of the novel, then, describes how Ishmael gains the necessary experience, understanding, and reason to transcend the material. In "Illusions" Emerson writes, "Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood" ("I" 378); for not until chapter 111, "The Pacific," does "meditative"

² In his fascinating and provocative commentary to the Penguin edition of Moby-Dick, Harold Beaver connects this passage to Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. The Editorial Appendix of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition doesn't note it.

Ishmael achieve Spirit (MD 482), his voice converting to third-person omniscient.

At the apogee of chapter 1, "Nature," Emerson says,

There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (N 11)

Thus, transparent Ishmael's ego and id vanish, and he exists only in the present. He is objectivism personified. In the Epilogue, the final word on events, Ishmael's Idealism manifests—he alone lives to parent a Transcendental creed, an affirmation of Spirit.

Chapter II

Commodity

When engaged in the "cutting and hoisting" process of reducing a "dearly purchased" whale to oil (MD 415), Ishmael demonstrates a transcendent use of Leviathan. Beginning with chapter 94, "A Squeeze of the Hand," he describes the process of squeezing oil from hardened sperm, cutting the whale into useable chunks, melting the chunks in the try-pots, stowing the oil, and cleaning the deck. The four following chapters—"The Cassock," "The Try-Works," "The Lamp," and "Stowing Down and Clearing Up"—delineate the economic commodity making process. They also introduce additional supernal commodities—the purification of language, for example, which suggests universality—that correspond to and are outlined in the second chapter of Emerson's Nature, "Commodity."

"Under the general name of Commodity," Emerson begins, "I rank all those advantages which our senses owe to nature" (N 12).

In its most primal sense, commodity relates to the physical senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. In "A Squeeze of the Hand," Ishmael demonstrates his profound awareness of these senses when squeezing sperm, "strangely concreted into lumps, here and there rolling about in the liquid part" (MD 415). Having accurately described what he sees, Ishmael describes his other aroused senses:

It was our business to squeeze these lumps back into fluid. A sweet and unctuous duty! No wonder that in old times this sperm was a favorite cosmetic! Such a clearer! such a sweetner! such a softner!

such a delicious mollifier! After having my hands in it for only a few minutes, my fingers felt like eels. . . . (415)

Through his physical faculties of perception, Ishmael expresses his awareness of nature's advantages, and in them finds delight. Corresponding to this, Emerson writes, "the simple perception of natural forms is a delight" (N 14). Ishmael's delight arises from his "simple perception" of the physical, from his senses mechanically augmenting his awareness of natural facts.

His delight intensified, Ishmael realizes that natural facts correlate to spiritual facts; thus Ishmael expresses the emotion he feels from the perception of natural facts in a corresponding image, or symbol, which in turn represents the spiritual fact. "Every natural fact is a symbol," writes Emerson, "of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture" (20). As "all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols," Ishmael delineates the spiritual facts and their correlating natural symbols by identifying and describing the "natural appearance" of "its picture":

As I sat there at my ease, cross-legged on the deck . . . under a blue tranquil sky; the ship under indolent sail, and gliding so serenely along; as I bathed my hands among these soft, gentle globules of infiltrated tissues, woven within the hour; as they richly broke to my fingers, and discharged all their opulence, like *fully ripe grapes their wine*; as I snuffed that uncontaminated aroma,--literally and truly, like *the smell of spring violets*; I declare to you, that for the time I lived in a *musky meadow*. . . . (emphases mine; MD 415-16)

More important, Ishmael's perception of spiritual facts influences his mood:

I forgot all about our horrible oath; in that inexpressible sperm, I washed my hands and my heart of it. . . . While bathing in that bath, I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatever. (416)

This change in mood is a result of Ishmael's delight in the perception of natural facts and corresponding spiritual facts. Emerson expresses exactly this:

The influence of the forms and actions in nature, is so needful to man, that, in its lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of commodity and beauty. To the body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company, nature is medicinal and restores their tone. (N 14)

Hence, Ishmael transcends his labors and discerns supernal commodities; through the toil of oil making, he is restored by and reestablished with Nature.

His attitude effervescent and senses cognizant, his work fulfilling both his material and intellectual needs, Ishmael's "intellect," as Emerson writes, "searches out the absolute order of things" (18). In one of the more unctuous passages in Moby-Dick, Ishmael desires to break down the stratagems of society and symbolically merge with his shipmates:

Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my colaborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this 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 squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (MD 416)

With the ethereal thrill gained by a pure use of commodity, Ishmael strives to be without ego, natural with his fellow men. Emerson calls this an "exercise of the Will" (N 28); for Ishmael attempts to "reduce under his will, not only particular events, but great classes, nay the whole series of events, and conform all facts to his character" (28). Embraced by the delight of perceiving nature, Ishmael wishes all men to be so intoxicated, so natural.

Social caste, however, is too chronic, too obstinate for Ishmael alone to defeat. And since impediments to Spirit coexist, the transcendental process is temporal. Hence, Ishmael discerns that "those advantages which our senses owe to nature [are] a benefit which is temporary and mediate, not ultimate, like its service to the soul" (12). His transcending experience is not permanent, but temporary:

Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since my many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally. (MD 416)

Ishmael believes that "attainable felicity" can be found in the very life about him, and need not be sought in intellect or erudition, fancy or ornament. Yet seven asterisks on the page rudely end Ishmael's temporal felicity and introduce the "business of preparing the sperm whale for the try-works" (416).

Ishmael then "descend[s] into the blubber-room" to have "a long talk with its inmates" (417). Compared to the bliss of the seamen squeezing semen, this is a figurative hell within the Pequod's hull. "Lit by a dull lantern" (417), the men transform the blubber into useable chunks. Ishmael learns, as Emerson writes, "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it" (N 11); for it is a perilous and loathed duty the men perform in the belly of the Pequod:

The whaling-pike is similar to a frigate's boarding-weapon of the same name. The gaff is something like a boathook. With his gaff, the gaff-man hooks on to a sheet of blubber, and strives to hold it from slipping, as the ship pitches and lurches about. Meanwhile, the spade-man stands on the sheet itself, perpendicularly chopping it into portable horse-pieces. The spade is sharp as hone can make it; the spade-man's feet are shoeless; the thing he stands on will sometimes irresistibly slide away from him, like a sledge. If he cuts off one of his own toes, or one of his assistant's, would you be very much astonished? Toes are scarce among veteran blubber-room men. (MD 417-18)

The ominous danger of the blubber-room results from the crew's general mood; the "scene of terror" (417) appears dark from the hue of their spirits.

As Emerson writes in his essay "Circles," "Cause and effect are two sides of one fact" ("O" 236). This (or any) process needn't be so perilous, but in the production of commodity men tend to perform tasks they'd prefer not to, and to exchange safety for economic gain.

Thus, in chapter 95, "The Cassock," risk is lessened by an ingenious, ulterior use of a commodity. The whale's "grandissimus, as the mariners call it" (MD 419), is worn while they further reduce the chunks previously diminished in the blubber-room. This example corresponds to another of Emerson's axioms: "Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other's hands for the profit of man" (N 12). The mincer, so the sailor is called, prepares the whale's penis and wears it as protective clothing, allowing him to work more rapidly with less danger. Productivity increased, quality ensured, safety gained, supernal commodity actualized with greater ease, the whale's material improves the process and the once sizeable chunks of blubber are more manageable, more smoothly reduced. Thus, the profit is manifold. "Nature," writes Emerson, "is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve" (28).

In chapter 96, "The Try-Works," Ishmael fervently speaks about the penultimate phase in reducing whale blubber to oil. This process corresponds to Emerson's idea that nature "offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful" (28). On the first level, the whale is the raw material that man transforms into oil, used chiefly to provide light. But a second, more important purpose awaits the whale in "the great try-pots" (MD 421). Physically, the fat melts from the slices of blubber, appropriately called "Bible-leaves," in the try-pots to produce pure

oil, the desired economic commodity. Yet, this process is metaphoric, is analogous to the reduction of unctuous language--particularly the old Biblical language so often heard in Ahab--to its very essence: the purest fact. R. W. B. Lewis writes,

It can scarcely be a coincidence that, after the slices of blubber (the source of oil) have been pointedly referred to as 'Bible leaves,' the insight gained from the spectacle is conveyed by Ishmael in a cluster of biblical references. The 'Bible leaves' are passed through the furnaces, and oil is the result. . . . (140)

Amassing the old language of Old World men into a melting pot, the seamen, new men with new language, endeavor to salvage the wreck of the language and arrive at the useful. Corresponding to this Emerson writes that "wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things" (N 22). Thus on deck the seamen work to feed the blubber into "the two iron mouths" of the try-pots (MD 422), where, as Lewis writes, "the formed and incrustated language of the past must be 'tried-out' in the transforming heat of the imagination" (140). To obtain oil, the blubber, the unctuous language of the "Bible-leaves," is put in the try-pots--with knees, flanks, lips, mouths--and melted by the fire--communication, the trying-out of the word--to obtain oil, the essence, the purest fact.

With huge pronged poles they pitched hissing masses of blubber into the scalding pots, or stirred up the fires beneath, till the snaky flames darted, curling, out of the doors to catch them by the feet. The smoke rolled away in sullen heaps. To every pitch of the ship there was a pitch of the boiling oil, which seemed all eagerness to leap into their faces. (MD 423)

While the men try to obtain oil, the "Bible-leaves" rebel, resist melting; "snaky flames," which alludes to the prelapsarian serpent, tempt "to catch them by the feet"; and the old language rolls (as do whales in water) from the mouths of the try-pots in "sullen heaps," gloomily and sluggishly. The oil, the pure language of men who work hard and honestly, is eager "to leap into their faces," to be mouthed and formed into venerable truths. And Ishmael, not only one but representative of these men, knows, as Lewis contends, "The transforming process was crucial, for Melville never simply echoed the words of the great books of the past; he subjected them to tremendous pressure and forced them to yield remarkable new revelations" (140).¹ On the visible hand, the desired yield of the whale is many barrels of oil; on the unseen hand this process yields a supernal good, a language that transcends fat for fact.

For the "new men" and "new thoughts," of which Emerson writes, to prevail and "enjoy an original relation to the universe (N 7), the old language (and the men of that language and its antiquated ways, like Ahab) must be defeated, if not destroyed. Lewis adds, "Father Mapple's sermon, established in traditional comprehensive acceptance, is truncated also in "Try-Works" (146). Thus "the intense heat of the fire" which is necessary to melt the "Bible-leaves" and consume the unctuousness of the language "is

¹ In chapter 32, "Cetology," Melville writes, Many are the men, small and great, old and new, landsmen and seamen, who have at large or in little, written of the whale. Run over a few:—The Authors of the Bible; Aristotle; Pliny; Aldrovandi; Sir Thomas Brown; . . . and the Rev. T. Cheever. But to what ultimate generalizing purpose all these have written, the above cited extracts will show. (MD 1)

Lewis is correct, for Melville writes not to take his "Extracts" from previous whale authors "for veritable gospel cetology" (xvii); "Nevertheless, though of real knowledge there be little, of books there be plenty" (135).

prevented from communicating itself to the deck" where the crew, the "new men" of "new thoughts," work (MD 422); for the "fire," like the Zoroastrian Fedallah, is considered evil--"Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man!" (424)--and may influence the crew as it temporarily inverts Ishmael. Ahab, consumer of men, user of old world language, is consumed by his perverse pursuit of commodity, and by his own brand of fire:

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. (423)

Both Ahab's passion and the try-pots' fires would consume the Pequod and its crew.² But, of course, this is a causal, dualistic relationship. For the crew, workmen at industry, unknowingly deter Ahab's corrupted pursuit;

² It is with a perverse passion that Ahab burns to corrupt and coerce the crew, to have them do his will. To convert the crew into accomplices, Ahab must pervert his words--in this instance, the meaning of "cash"--to sway them:

I will not strip these men, thought Ahab, of all hopes of cash--aye, cash. They may scorn cash now; but let some months go by, and no perspective promise of it to them, and then this same quiescent cash all at once mutinying in them, this same cash would soon cashier Ahab. (MD 212-13)

Ahab's purpose--to annihilate Moby Dick--is the cause of his corruption, which consequently is necessary to accomplish his purpose. Yet, Ahab's corruption is the cause of his purpose also; as Ahab proves to be corrupt, either he must change or continue and commit further atrocities. So far corrupted, Ahab weds himself to his perverted purpose; thus his continued perversion of language--and particularly of Shakespeare--is corruption incarnate, for Ahab corresponds to what Emerson means when he writes:

Hundreds . . . may be found in every civilized nation, who for a short time believe, and make others believe, that they see utter truths, who do not themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously upon the language. . . . (N 22)

Ahab cares for neither commodity nor beauty, but uses language, that which he has most power over, to affect his crew. I discuss his corruption more fully in the "Language" chapter of this work.

and they feed the blubber into the growing fires; thus the crew nourish that which they may be consumed by.

Chapter 97, "The Lamp," reveals the consummate purpose for the once mighty whale. Reduced to oil, the whale becomes a convenience.

Ishmael says,

. . . you would have almost thought you were standing in some illuminated shrine of canonized kings and counsellors. There they lay in their triangular oaken vaults, each mariner a chiselled muteness; a score of lamps flashing upon his hooded eyes. (MD 426)

As a necessity, light assists man in his study of worthwhile contemplations (such as Emerson's Nature), or aids sight. To these ends light is good, corresponding to what Emerson means: "Nothing divine dies. All good is eternally reproductive. The beauty of nature reforms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation" (N 18). The whale, a divine creature, is "eternally reproductive": its oil provides light for mankind. As long as the oil-burning light is used for a worthwhile end--"new creation"--it merits the sacrifice of a divine creature. But too often light is used to keep men within walls when the sun provides: "the glorious, golden, glad sun, the only true lamp--all others but liars!" (MD 424). To this end, light is an unnecessary evil, a perversion of commodity. The whale should be sacrificed, if at all, only to provide what is useful.

Chapter 98, "Stowing Down and Clearing Up," presents the final stage in the process of oil production:

Now it remains to conclude the last chapter of this part of the description by rehearsing--singing, if I may--the romantic proceeding of decanting off his oil into the casks and striking them down into the

hold, where once again leviathan returns to his native profundities, sliding along beneath the surface as before; but, alas! never more to rise and blow. (427)

The bulk of the whale gone, his oil is stored in casks. The process of producing an economic commodity is finished. Non-corporeal commodities, however, remain. Emerson notes that the advantages of commodity are not exclusively material:

Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service. In God, every end is converted into a new means. Thus the use of Commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid. But it is to the mind an education in the great doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good only so far as it serves; that a conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end, is essential to any being. (N 29)

Like the whale's "grandissimus" discussed above, "nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use." The whale, as any provision of nature or God, exists for man's use. Converting whale to oil for monetary gain alone "is mean and squalid." The worthwhile use of light is the sole reason for producing oil. The available good, the advantage gained, should be equal for all men. Otherwise, "mean and squalid" reasons will deny some men their fair share of Nature's commodity. With an allusion to Emerson's "Self-Reliance," in chapter 26, "Knights and Squires," Ishmael proclaims the equality of men with Nature and the ubiquity of Spirit; and these are evident from the first two verbs which man Ishmael prefers—the transcendent man cognizant of Spirit:

Men may seem detestable as joint stock-companies and nations . . . ;
 but man, in the ideal, is so noble and so sparkling, such a grand and
 glowing creature. . . . 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 end from God; . . . The centre and circumference of
 all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality! (emphases
 mine; MD 117)³

³ Melville's use of "God" here equates better with Emerson's Spirit or Over Soul than the with Judeo-Christian God; although Ishmael calls himself after a character from this latter deity's biography, The Holy Bible, certain aspects of Moby-Dick, such as the function of the try-pots, tend to negate this deity's designs for a more fair and just, less patriarchal and omnipotent God. And in his footnotes to the Penguin edition of Moby-Dick Harold Beaver points out the correspondence of this passage to Emerson's "History" and "The Over Soul":

There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. . . . ("H" 115)

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole . . . to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal ONE. . . . ("OS" 210-11)

More so, in "The Over Soul" Emerson writes,

Everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency to enthusiasm. The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist; the opening of the eternal sense of the Word, in the language of the New Jerusalem Church; the revival of the Calvinistic churches; the *experiences* of the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul. (218)

Compare this to Ishmael's comments about Queequeg to himself in chapter 17, "The Ramadan," and to Bildad's statement in chapter 18, "His Mark":

[Queequeg] no doubt thought he knew a good deal more about *the true religion* than I did. He looked at me with a sort of condescending concern and compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety. (emphasis mine; MD 86)

I mean, sir, the same ancient Catholic Church to which you and I, and Captain Peleg there, and Queequeg here, and all of us, and every mother's son and soul of us belong; the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world; we all belong to that; only some of us cherish some queer crotchets noways touching the grand belief; in *that* we all join hands. (88)

Clearly, Ishmael's "queer crotchets" correspond to Emerson's "varying forms . . . with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul," "the First Congregational Church" (88).

Immaterial commodities are gained--those which radiate from Spirit--beyond the production and use of oil. The act of producing oil, the work itself, is a commodity. Praising the physical labors of work, Emerson writes, "A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work" (N 13).

Ishmael is enlightened by wonderful thoughts when squeezing sperm and during the clean up after the oil production is completed, "for the real price of labor," Emerson writes in his essay "Compensation," "is knowledge and virtue. . . ." ("C" 178). The labor refreshes and renews the entire crew. "Give me health and a day," Emerson says, "and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous" (N 14); likewise, no joy is found for the laborers when erecting pyramids, but in simply cleaning, or "clearing up" the Pequod there is delight:

Hands go diligently along the bulwarks, and with buckets of water and rags restore them to their full tidiness. All the numerous implements which have been in use are likewise faithfully cleansed and put away. The great hatch is scrubbed and placed upon the try-works, completely hiding the pots . . . and when by the combined and simultaneous industry of almost the entire ship's company, the whole of the conscientious duty is at last concluded, then the crew themselves proceed to their own ablutions . . . and finally issue to the immaculate deck, fresh and all aglow, as bridegrooms. . . . (MD 428)

Usually, more work, especially after the long, laborious process of producing oil, would not be so gladly accomplished. But the delight gained from the production of commodity reverberates in the cleaning of the Pequod. "An action is the perfection and publication of thought," writes Emerson (N 31); the crew prove content by the verve of their actions.

The cleaning finished, the men forget the oil production process altogether--"they pace the planks in twos and threes, and humorously discourse. . ." (MD 428). The crew recognize the spiritual element of the beauty--the clean boat, the corporeal and supernal commodities--that they have created. As "nature always wears the color of the spirit" (N 11), the nature of the Pequod now--unlike the blubber-room--is bright. The crew's delight is a result of the truth that they have encountered while producing commodity; for the material commodity itself does not bring delight, but they find delight in the act of producing a worthwhile commodity to be used for worthwhile ends, and in the spiritual revelry encompassed thereby. "The foundations of men are not in matter," writes Emerson, "but in spirit" (46). Thus it is not material commodity but the intangible, spiritual commodity that makes the production of oil, or any work (including the production of a Master's thesis), worthwhile.

Unfortunately, spiritual enlightenment is not the sole aim of work, not even for the Pequod's crew; most sail (excluding Ishmael, as he posits in the first chapter, "Loomings") to produce material commodity. They that discover Spirit do not deny. So while most of the crew revel, the rest man the mast-heads searching for more whales:

Oh! my friends, but this is man-killing! 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 young routine again. (MD 429)

Here Ishmael reveals disdainfully that industry focuses on the production of material commodity. Having just discerned more valuable spiritual commodities, Ishmael treats his return to the primal stages of commodity-making as the death of his recent renewing: "The ghost is spouted up" suggests Ahab's final giving up of the spear and Christ's giving up the ghost; the use of "fight" admits to the struggle one who has known Spirit portends to with such base entertainments; the "other world" represents a return to the world of material Ishmael once shucked through spiritual revelry; and "life's young routine again" refers to the cyclical structure of material production and of life, which further suggests universality, the All.

Chapter III

Beauty

"Beauty," the third chapter of Emerson's Nature, explains the function of the material world to the Spirit. While man may busy himself with Commodity making, Beauty exists so that man may transcend the world of matter within which he works and approach a greater understanding of that world. The first purpose of Beauty is its corporeal benefit: "the simple perception of natural forms is a delight" (N 14). Having delighted in viewing Beauty, man finds himself moving toward the second stage, "the spiritual element" (16). Essentially, man becomes that which he perceives, realizes with the perception of Beauty his own natural Beauty, and suggests and recreates it in virtuous and noble deeds, in good-will and humanity. Man then can attain the highest degree of Beauty, which is to understand "Beside the relation of things to virtue . . . the absolute order of things. . ." (17-18). The fact of Beauty is not ultimate, but the herald of man's inward journey toward Spirit.

Melville tests and demonstrates the benefits of Beauty on each of the levels posited by Emerson. While questioning the dualisms of his civilization--white and black, good and evil, male and female--Melville has his narrator Ishmael perceive and recognize Beauty "without the colors of affection" (18). Whereas Ahab, in contrast, sees in his limited view of the universe only dichotomies, does not perceive Beauty but terror. For Ahab has limited himself to a narrow view of life, a view that only admits to, for example, good and evil. This view, while capable of admitting to the dualisms inherent in man's construed civilizations, does not allow Ahab to

know the third function of Beauty, to transcend matter toward Spirit. In Chapter 70, "The Sphynx," Ahab pontificates on a slain whale's severed head:

Speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest. . . . Thou saw'st the locked lovers when leaping from their flaming ship; heart to heart they sank beneath the exulting wave; true to each other, when heaven seemed false to them. Thou saw'st the murdered mate when tossed by pirates from the midnight deck; for hours he fell into the deeper midnight of the insatiate maw; and his murderers still sailed on unharmed--while swift lightnings shivered the neighboring ship that would have borne a righteous husband to outstretched, longing arms. (MD 312)

Asking a dead head to explain the "secret" of the universe, Ahab reduces each plot--focusing on the theme of justice and injustice--to a simple dichotomy, which illuminates universal evil. With each issue bifurcated, Ahab is capable only of seeing good and bad--"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" (312). That physical nature masks "secret things," that there are "linked analogies" or correspondences between the material and Spirit spheres, is the extent of Ahab's view of the universe; and since he neither realizes nor knows greater, universal truth, Ahab assumes the immaterial world, that which he cannot understand (like *Moby Dick*), is simply evil and therefore without Beauty. And with his character so simply focused, Ahab is as Emerson writes in his essay, "Fate," merely a man of strong will, for ". . . when a strong will

appears, it usually results from a certain unity of organization, as if the whole energy of body and mind flowed in one direction" ("F" 361).

At the beginning of Moby-Dick Ishmael has yet to realize the value of Beauty. While his "hypos" (MD 3) have the better of him, Ishmael, like Ahab, sees mostly darkness in the Universe; fortunately, however, Ishmael understands that "meditation and water are wedded for ever" (4) and thus gets himself off to sea to create and become Commodity, the first step in Nature toward transcendence. While in Nantucket, Ishmael encounters Queequeg and reveals subjective prejudice, a lack of an understanding of Spirit. Though he philosophizes that "a man can be honest in any sort of skin" (21), Ishmael is struck by the "dark, purplish, yellow color" (21) of Queequeg's skin and fears him--"Landlord, for God's sake . . . Angels! save me!" (23). Not until the next morning when Ishmael recognizes a sublime Beauty and sees "the traces of a simple honest heart" (49-50) in Queequeg do they become "bosom friends" (51):

Here was a man . . . thrown in among people as strange to him as though he were in the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself. Surely this was a touch of fine philosophy; though no doubt he had never heard there was such a thing as that. (50)

As Emerson writes, "The high and divine beauty which can be loved without effeminacy, is that which is found in combination with the human will" (N16). Having witnessed the beauty behind Queequeg's good nature, Ishmael transcends his previous subjectivity and accepts him--they "open

the very bottom of their souls to each other," become "a cosy, loving pair" (MD 52).

The mystery of "The Whiteness of the Whale" is analogous to Ishmael's initial difficulty with Queequeg. Where at first Ishmael perceives delight in the idea of seeing a white whale--"whiteness refiningly enhances beauty, as if imparting some special virtue of its own" (188)--he allows himself to be coerced from his initial monistic perception toward a dualistic view consistent with Ahab's--"It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me" (188). Masked with the beauty of white but considered terrible in deed, Moby Dick denies definition and therefore is misunderstood and feared. Ishmael says: "Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright" (194). That is, the "invisible spheres" Ishmael cannot understand, he fears. In contrast Emerson writes: "The reason why the world lacks unity . . . is because man is disunited with himself" (N 48). While "disunited" and viewing the universe with an agenda founded in fear, man will inevitably with his dualist view place on the side of evil all things which he cannot understand.

Ahab, who Ishmael fears (for Ahab too eschews definition), is most victimized by this dualistic view of nature. When in chapter 37, "Sunset," Ahab sees "the ever-brimming goblet's rim, [and] the warm waves blush like wine" (MD 167) he exclaims, "This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy" (167). Ahab, incapable of earthly pleasure, cannot delight in the perception of nature. Ishmael, however, is finally able to transcend material, and realize Emerson's view of Nature as it concerns Beauty. For example, in chapter 98, "Stowing Down and Clearing

Up," after the processing of a whale Ishmael and the rest of the crew fervently clean the ship and themselves and playfully pace "the immaculate deck, fresh and all aglow, as bridegrooms new-leaped from out the daintiest Holland" (428). Having produced Commodity and perceived Beauty, the crew begin to transcend toward Spirit and feel temporal delight.

More important is the incident in chapter 35, "The Mast-Head," where Ishmael proves a corporeal use of Nature. Emerson writes, "From the earth, as a shore, I look out into that silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations; the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind" (N 14). Thus Emerson experiences and becomes part of the Beauty he perceives. Ishmael, while atop a mast looking into the sea, admits that

he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly-discovered, uprising fin of some undiscernable form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space; . . . forming at last a part of every shore the round globe over. (MD 159)

Ishmael's state is akin to what Emerson describes in the untitled first chapter of Nature:

. . . my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I

am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (N 11)

Having through the perception of Beauty transcended from the material world toward Spirit, Ishmael learns that, like Emerson, he is part of the universal All. As Emerson writes, "The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common" (49). Admiring Beauty, Ishmael comes to know truth, realize the elusiveness of thought, and understand his relation to the universe. But Melville reminds us of the danger of Ishmael's location and warns, ". . . slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror" (MD 159). With the physical fact of gravity in the material world, Ishmael's transcendent voyage is rudely cut short.¹ Corresponding to this, in his essay "Experience," Emerson writes, "Nature, as we know her, is no saint" ("E" 277). Regardless of what wonderful thoughts Ishmael may be having, he must remain cognizant of the material world, of Nature, for ". . . she does not distinguish by any favor" (277), and will stove him in without question: "We must see that the world is rough and surly, and will not mind drowning a man or a woman, but swallows your ship like a grain of dust" ("F" 349).

As Moby-Dick progresses Ishmael begins to transcend the material world more often; in comparison, Queequeg and Bulkington are from the

¹ Richard Chase says that this chapter ends with a "sense of violence and the precariousness of life" and awareness of "ranges of reality unsuspected by . . . the Emersonian transcendentalists Melville may have in mind when in describing the 'mystic ocean' into which Ishmael gazes [for] he makes it resemble the Oversoul" (56). First, all things resemble the Oversoul; that is, an Emersonian transcendentalist is capable of recognizing Spirit in all things. But Chase is clearly wrong when he says there are "ranges of reality" that the Emersonian seer is not aware of; indeed, a transcendentalist is aware of "ranges of reality" that most, including Chase, may never know. Before transcending toward Spirit, one will be aware of, like Ishmael, the limitations of reality, and will want to bend and stress the common "ranges."

beginning further along the spiritual path. Bulkington is first encountered in chapter 3, "The Spouter Inn." Of the sailors in the Inn Ishmael notes: "I observed . . . one of them held somewhat aloof, and . . . upon the whole he refrained from making as much noise as the rest. This man interested me at once. . . ." (MD 15-16). This character in self imposed alienation is Bulkington. S. A. Cowan observes, "This strong, popular, gently asocial sailor would seem to be a conscious parallel of Emerson's 'great man . . . who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude'" (552). This early view of Bulkington (which will apply to Ishmael later) verifies Emerson's description of a man familiar with the spiritual elements of Beauty:

And in common life whosoever has seen a person of powerful character and happy genius, will have remarked how easily he took all things with him,--the persons, the opinions, and the day, and nature became ancillary to a man. (N 17)

Though Bulkington may be representative of Emerson's "Self-Reliance" (which is requisite to, but not synonymous with Transcendentalism), he has not completely attained Spirit. Unless, that is, having in the past achieved Spirit, Bulkington retains the appearance that his Discipline lent him. As Emerson says, "And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, himself divine" (38). This explains why "in the deep shadows of his eyes floated some reminiscences that did not seem to give him much joy" (MD 16), for Bulkington has known Spirit, and fears now an inability to know Spirit again. While Emerson claims, "A man is a god in ruins" (N 47), Melville counters--in the "six-inch

chapter [that] is the stoneless grave of Bulkington" (MD 106), chapter 23, "The Lee Shore"—"Bear thee grimly, demigod!" (107). Had Bulkington fully transcended the material world he would not have "from a four years' dangerous voyage . . . so unrestingly push[ed] off again for still another tempestuous term" (106). Even if "the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets" and other material conveniences, Bulkington is not much better in eschewing the shore than Ahab in tossing his pipe overboard because such pleasures are "meant for sereneness . . . among mild white hairs, not among torn iron-grey locks" (129). Though while on the "treacherous, slavish shore" (107) the soul may be "dashed upon the lee" (107) and stove in (for "in landlessness alone resides the highest truth" [107]), it is better to live than, like *Bartleby the Scrivener*, senselessly to die. While in Emersonian terms Ishmael says Bulkington glimpses, "that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea" (107), Bulkington's apparent suicide, however heroic or romantic, is on one level an act of cowardice; the impact of his sudden death, however, may have been his last opportunity to serve the All. Emerson writes, "What is useful will last, what is hurtful will sink" ("F" 357). Overused, no longer serving the All, Bulkington resigns from life before his uselessness perversely affects those such as impressionable Ishmael—"so, better it is to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee. . . ." (MD 107). Thus, while living Bulkington has served the All by fulfilling history, and by creating Beauty, a symbol of self-reliance, a testimony of Spirit.

Like Bulkington, Queequeg is self-reliant. But where Bulkington's independence may seem in the end self-destructive and solipsistic,

Queequeg's understanding of Nature clearly benefits man-kind, serves the All. Queequeg, in part representative of the romantic tradition of noble savages, knows the import of life can be achieved only when living. As Emerson writes of a soul who has realized Spirit, "No man fears age or misfortune or death . . . for he is transported out of the district of change" (N 38). Though not married absolutely to the Over-soul (his love of pipe and harpooning attest to this), Queequeg's two rescues testify to an awareness of the spiritual elements of Beauty superior to that of his fellow seamen. In chapter 78, "Cistern and Buckets," Daggoo, saving himself by "clinging to the pendulous tackles" (MD 343), fails to rescue Tashtego from within a whale head of oil when the head rips free and plummets into the sea; Queequeg "dived to the rescue" (343) while the rest of the hands watched on without hope. Of such deeds Emerson writes,

Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful. Every heroic act is also decent, and causes the place and the bystanders to shine. We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it. (N 16)

While Queequeg's rescue attempt seems reckless, if not impossible, it is sensical, for Tashtego is both friend and fellow harpooner. In contrast, Queequeg's previous rescue was purely an act of magnanimous good-will to an anonymous man who had insulted him. For when in chapter 13, "The Wheelbarrow," a loose boom thrashed about the deck, sending one sailor into the sea and the others aft to safety, Queequeg calmly secured the boom and then "darted from the side with a long living arc of a leap" (MD 61). Ishmael describes Queequeg's virtuous deed thus:

I looked at the grand and glorious fellow [Queequeg], but saw no one to be saved. The greenhorn had gone down. Shooting himself perpendicularly from the water, Queequeg . . . dived down and disappeared. A few minutes more, and he rose again, one arm still striking out, and with the other dragging a lifeless form. . . . All hands voted Queequeg a noble trump. . . (61)

Corresponding to such a deed Emerson writes, "When a noble act is done . . . [is] a scene of great natural beauty" (N 16). And when afterwards the calm Queequeg lights his pipe and leans against the bulwarks, Ishmael says that Queequeg "seemed to be saying to himself--'It's a mutual, joint-stock world. . .'" (MD 62), paraphrasing Emerson's Self-Reliance: "Society is a joint-stock company. . ." ("SR" 141). Thus the import of Queequeg's rescue is not so much the beauty of his form--that of a "living arc of a leap"--but the ubiquitous Beauty that the "arc" represents--a portion of a circle, of unity, the All.

Queequeg's suggestion of the All is for Emerson the most important function of Beauty, as a symbol for Spirit: "Truth and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All" (N 19). Beauty, then, to an open-mind and supple heart suggests oneness. Specifically (or locally) this is the oneness of individuality; generally (or globally) it is the oneness of unity, of the All. Melville's recurring metaphor for this idea (as we saw with Bulkington) initially signifies independence: in "The Chapel," chapter 7, we see "silent islands of men and women" (MD 34); in "Brit," chapter 58, we learn "in the soul of men there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy. . ." (274). And in one of the my favorite chapters in the novel, chapter 87, "Grand Armada," a school of whales encircles Ishmael:

. . . we glided between two whales into the innermost heart of the shoal, as if from some mountain torrent we had slid into a serene valley lake. Here the storms in the roaring glens between the outermost whales, we heard but not felt. In this central expanse the sea presented that smooth satin-like surface, called a sleek, produced by the subtle moisture thrown off by the whale in his more quiet moods. Yes, we were now in that enchanted calm which . . . lurks at the heart of every commotion. (386-87)

While islanded in the eye of the maelstrom, Ishmael finds himself an "insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy," not frightened by the terrible danger a harpoon's length away. The awesome Beauty of the scene delights Ishmael and heralds him toward Spirit:

. . . though surrounded by circle upon circle of consternations and affrights, did these inscrutable creatures at the centre freely and fearlessly indulge in all peaceful concernments; yea, serenely revelled in dalliance and delight. But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy. (388-89)

The image of calmness within the circle of tempestuous whales is symbolic of oneness, of the All, man's ultimate transcendent relation to Nature. In an almost hypnotic revelry not unlike the "Mast-head"--where Ishmael claimed he had "the problem of the universe revolving in me" (158)--here amid the armada, Ishmael transcends his material existence--Emerson's "Not-me" (N 8), attaining Spirit, "me in eternal mildness and joy." In her fine,

unpublished dissertation, "The Romantic Concept of the Self," Gloria Dussinger writes, "The vision of the organic wholeness that is beauty, seen by Ishmael in the stillness at the heart of a violent sea, becomes an image to him of the quiet center of his self. . . ." (259). Ishmael's "vision" of "wholeness" influences him, and he becomes like that which he sees--whole, calm, quiet. As an object of the intellect, then, Beauty symbolizes the All: "Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole" (N 18).

As it depicts through Beauty a "universal grace" and is positioned near the tale-end of *Moby-Dick*, chapter 132, "The Symphony," signifies the last titanic metaphor of the novel. During the opening paragraphs, Ishmael identifies a male-female dichotomy ordering the air and sea which soon coalesces; corresponding to this, Emerson writes, "In fact, the eye,--the mind,--is always accompanied by these forms, male and female; and these are incomparably the richest informations of the power and order that lie at the heart of things" (31). Thus Ishmael absorbs these "richest [of] informations," and his corresponding vision results in an acknowledgement of coherence and unity:

Hither, and thither, on high, glided the snow-white wings of small, unspckled birds; these were the gentle thoughts of the feminine air; but to and fro in the deeps, far down in the bottomless blue, rushed mighty leviathans, sword-fish and sharks; and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea.

But though thus contrasting within, the contrast was only in shades and shadows without; those two seemed one; it was only the sex, as it were, that distinguished them.

Aloft, like a royal czar or king, the sun seemed giving the gentle air to this bold and rolling sea; even as bride to groom. And at the girdling line of the horizon, a soft and tremulous motion--most seen here at the equator--denoted the fond, throbbing thrust, the loving alarms, with which the poor bride gave her bosom away.

(MD 542)

Of a similar shade, Emerson writes, "The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it. . ." (N 30). Thus there is a semblance in all things. In contrast, "This polarity of surface beauty and submerged terror, a juxtaposition of gentle creatures with savage ones," writes Frank G. Novak, Jr., "is an inherent quality of nature . . . [and] the sexual differentiation merely hints at the profound differences hidden within" (122). In regards to a "surface" and "submerged" vision, Novak is correct, for Ahab agrees that "All visible objects . . . are but as pasteboard masks" (MD 164). Yet, things are not always what they seem, as Ahab continues, "But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask" (164). The "submerged," according to Ahab's vision, appears on the "surface." Corresponding to this, Emerson writes that material "things . . . have a relation to thought" (N 17-18). Man's interpretation of the "submerged," then, reflects his "submerged" thoughts. If Ahab sees behind the "surface" an evil "submerged," then something in Ahab's thought must be miscreant. In contrast, Emerson writes, "The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind . . . and without the colors of affection" (18). Undoubtedly, Ahab's thought is affected: "If man will strike, strike through the mask!" (MD 164).

Though Novak's point is viable, he, along with Ahab, sees but half-truth.² For Ishmael not only marries and conjoins the air to the sea ("those two seemed one"), but has them "at the equator" with a "fond, throbbing thrust" creating Beauty. The result of this procreative act is the grand metaphor of universal Beauty that affects and temporarily softens Ahab's obdurate intellect and will--"Ahab dropped a tear into the sea" (543); Ahab

² And this half-aware world vision--advanced by E. A. Poe, revised by modern populist Stephen King--that focuses on darkness and pretends to be unaware of light, of hope, of the morning star that concludes Thoreau's Walden Pond, lead to the initial condemnation that pushed Melville into obscurity. The Hollywood version of Moby-Dick, for example, starring Gregory Peck as Captain Ahab, has in common with the novel only a broad plot outline, but focuses almost completely on the theme of Ahab's hijacking hubris. Indeed, an inchoate view of Nature has caused many critics, of whom F. O. Matthiessen is exemplary, to read Moby-Dick as Ahab's story. Michael J. Hoffman, in his "The Anti-Transcendentalism of Moby-Dick," writes, "Obviously much of Melville's response to Emerson is in Ahab" (5). That is, Hoffman, like many readers before and after him, thinks Moby-Dick is Melville's rebuttal of Emersonian Transcendentalism. I let Emerson speak for me: "Also we use defects and deformities to a sacred purpose, so expressing our sense that the evils of the world are such only to the evil eye" ("P" 250); and Melville:

I do not know where I can find a better place than just 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. (MD 276)

Neither "a monstrous fable" nor "a hideous and intolerable allegory," Moby-Dick demonstrates, as this study proves, Emersonian Transcendentalism. For if read as an allegory, Moby-Dick is allegorical of many, many things--indeed, all things--and thus is both "monstrous" and "intolerable." For as an allegory, Moby-Dick can only be read as a rejection of all "of the plainest and most palpable wonders of the world," of all "plain facts," and therefore of all of Nature. This leaves only Spirit, which is not a book at all. Thus Moby-Dick is first and foremost the narration of a transcendental voyage; let it be what you will thereafter.

reflects upon his wife and child, on "all natural lovings and longings" (543), and with the suasion of Starbuck, also affected by the scene's miraculous Beauty, transcends by means of it toward Spirit, nearly giving up the chase. Emerson writes that

The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception. (N 48)

Ahab's glimmering of greater truth is temporary because he is too far bent to change and therefore proves incapable of love, of satisfying all of "the demands of spirit." After Ahab's failure to transcend the world of matter, the narrative gives way to the chase of the white whale, and Beauty gives way to Ahab's dark will. From "The Symphony" forward, Beauty ceases to be recognized by Ahab and the crew.

While Ahab lacks the capacity to know Spirit, Ishmael learns transcendence, in one instance among many, from the cetological chapters, which function to show "the totality of nature" (18). In these discursive chapters, Melville dissects and deconstructs the whale—Emerson: "Even the corpse has its own beauty" (14)—to demonstrate three main points. First, physical Nature is incomplete: "I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete, must for that very reason infallibly be faulty" (MD 136). Hence, the material part is incomplete without its corresponding spiritual part. Second, Ishmael says of the "systemization of cetology. I am the architect, not the builder" (136). Because Emerson says, ". . . to an architect, a knowledge of anatomy is essential" (N 30), it is clear why Ishmael constructed the cetological chapter—to learn, if not develop the

science of, whale anatomy—and why he chose the former profession over the latter. Since the "builder" referred to is Spirit ("absolute order," the Creator), Ishmael equates himself with the architect, the planner (of whale and whaling science, and of novels), because he is both literally and metaphorically designing and (re)producing art, the art of the novel, and the art of whaling. Emerson writes,

A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect, seek each to concentrate this radiance of the world on one point, and each in his several work to satisfy the love of beauty which stimulate him to produce. Thus is Art a nature passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art does Nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works. (18)

The whale is, after all, both a part and element of natural Beauty. The whale needs not Ishmael to label it Art. The natural fact of the whale is Art incarnate. While explaining that no single part of the whale is the whole whale, Ishmael says, "the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature. . . . his is an unwritten life" (MD 135). Ishmael, then, is literally establishing the reality of the whale and metaphorically re-creating it.

Finally, after enumerating the classes of whales in chapter 32, "Cetology," Melville lists in the next chapter, "The Specksynder," the hierarchical structure of a ship's crew. This comparison—dissected whale to society deconstructed—reveals "the absolute order of things" (N 18). A single component of any structure (a jawbone or a captain's boy, for example) is in itself a thing of Beauty. But ultimately Beauty is found in

unity. A single object, then, is beautiful not only as it suggests "universal grace," but as it serves the All.

To further demonstrate the "universal grace" found in a single object, Ishmael analyzes the individual components of his deconstructed whale. The most pertinent to Beauty is chapter 86, "The Tail," in which Ishmael further disassembles a single object (the tail) to inspect the particulars--the "three distinct strata [that] compose it: --upper, middle, lower" (MD 375)--which are in turn identified to be "a dense webbed bed of welded sinews" (375), muscle and tissue fiber, atom upon atom. This trisected structure, or by implication any structure, can be reduced to reveal a pattern repeated throughout nature, reduced infinitesimally to as many particulars as the universe is vast; the tail, then, represents and is a symbol of the universe, of infinity. For as a tail it serves the whale, and as a structure the tail serves the universe. As Emerson writes,

Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all,--that perfectness and harmony, that is beauty. (N 18)

As Beauty is representative of the universe, so too is the tale (of the tail as well) an object of Beauty. The tale has in common with all forms a structure, a pattern that is Nature. Ishmael points out this parallel, connecting the tale/tail with and as an object concocted by man, yet still an object of structure, however rigid and forced:

This triune structure, as much as anything else, imparts power to the tail. To the student of old Roman walls, the middle layer will furnish a curious parallel to the thin course of tiles always alternating with

stone in those wonderful relics of the antique, and which undoubtedly contribute so much to the great strength of the masonry. (MD 375)

Hence, the tale/tail's "strata" represent the tripartite function of Beauty; a beginning, a middle, and an end--"a dense webbed bed" interwoven throughout the universe, an image of Wholeness.

The Beauty of the tale is, of course, immediately found in perceiving the tale. But the tale's true Beauty, Ishmael at once signals us, is neither manifold nor obvious: "Other poets have warbled the praises of the soft eye of the antelope, and the lovely plumage of the bird that never alights; less celestial, I celebrate a tail" (375). His tone bordering on sarcasm, Ishmael admits he is pursuing a less grand object, but nonetheless a form of Beauty. The Beauty Ishmael pursues, however, has function, or purpose, and is not just beautiful for Beauty's sake, which satisfies only its most puerile function. We should not expect Ishmael to pursue the "lovely plumage" of anything whose form (Beauty) is functionless (it "never alights").³ And while the eye of the whale is indeed celebrated, Ishmael does not lavish the eye for its softness but expounds on the function of the eye. Explaining that the two eyes of the whale are on opposite sides of its head, thus giving the whale two distinct views (duality) of the world, Ishmael shows that a monistic view corresponding to Emerson's can be achieved in the intellect, where man

³ "But what is this on the chest? I took it up, and held it close to the light, and felt it, and smelt it, and tried every way possible to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion concerning it" (MD 20). Ishmael (and Melville, for that matter) have an insatiable curiosity which discovers, as Emerson says, "Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use" (N 29). Exercising his senses with the dexterity of an acrobat, Ishmael pursues all things with fervor; that is, all but useless and trivial things. Neither as passenger nor "as a Commodore, or a Captain, or a Cook," ". . . I always go to sea as a sailor, because of the wholesome exercise and pure air. . ." (MD 5-6).

may mold the opposing forces of the material world into a coherent and unified vision. While it occurs in and by the intellect, this uncontrived vision is inherent to the nature of the mind; it is a natural fact that the vision of two eyes is conjoined into a unified view. In comparison, the "distinct strata" that compromise the tail, despite their individual functions, serve to demonstrate "universal grace," to proffer an example of transcendency toward Spirit. The first function of the eye and the mind alike is to focus on the visible, paste-board masks; thereafter, correspondent layers of meaning will unfold as naturally as a tail, to propel the whale, or a tale, to propel the whole. As Emerson writes in his essay "Circles," "There is no end in nature, but every end is the beginning" ("O" 228).

The first end of the tail, then, is to delight in the perception of its physical Beauty. Melville writes, "In no living thing are the lines of beauty more exquisitely defined than in the crescentic border of these flukes" (MD 375). While in Moby-Dick Melville employs "17, 560 different word forms" (Cohen vii), "beauty," and the adjectivals "beautiful" and "beautifully," occurs only 16 times, and four of these are in "The Tail" chapter. (I also think it is important to note that neither "beauty" nor its variants occur after "The Symphony" chapter.) This signals us of the first importance of Beauty in relation to the tail. More so, it signifies a lack of Beauty in the final chapters--the chase scenes--of the tale.

Thus the Beauty of the tail is only good so long as it serves, like Queequeg, the All. Melville lists the tail's functions: "First, when used as a fin for progression; Second, when used as a mace in battle; Third, in sweeping; Fourth, in lobtailing; Fifth, in peaking flukes" (375). The underlying meaning of these functions is the power (as seen above with the

wall metaphor) attributed to the tail. The tail is, after all, the whale's "sole means of propulsion" (376). Unable to out swim a whaler, the whale is reliant on its tail for self-defence. Though admitting Beauty--"in maidenly gentleness the whale with a certain soft slowness moves his immense flukes from side to side upon the surface of the sea. . . . What tender is in that preliminary touch!" (377)--sweeping denotes the whale's sensitivity to touch. But the whale's sensitivity is hardly that of man, for if the whale sweeps "a sailor's whisker, woe to that sailor, whiskers and all" (377). Similarly, lobtailing, the act of a whale's splayed tail smacking the sea's surface, connotes power (as emphasized by the forceful iambic rhythm of the second line): "Kitten-like, he plays on the ocean as if it were a hearth. But still you see his power in his play" (377).⁴ And, finally, the peaking of the whale's flukes, heaving the massive rear portion of his body, with his tail, erect into the air prior to plunging, is

⁴ It is interesting (and most likely coincidental) that Melville and Emerson both use "kitten" in the transcendent sense. Here, Melville's "kitten" is playful and apparently unaware of its location, "on a hearth," but still able to amuse itself. As "words are signs of natural facts" (N 19), both Emerson and Melville use the same word to "sign" and arrive at the same "natural fact" or signification. From Emerson's essay "Experience":

Do you see that kitten chasing so prettily her own tail? If you could look with her eyes you might see her surrounded with hundreds of figures performing complex dramas, with tragic and comic issues, long conversations, many characters, many ups and downs of fate,--and meantime it is only puss and her tail. How long before our masquerade will end its noise of tambourines, laughter and shouting, and we shall find it was a solitary performance? A subject and an object,--it takes so much to make the galvanic circuit complete, but magnitude adds nothing. What imports it whether it is Kepler and the sphere, Columbus and America, a reader and his book, or puss with her tail?" ("E" 287)

Hence, "kitten" stands for playfulness, self-indulgence, and serves to suggest the All--clearly with Emerson, presumptively with Melville.

the grandest sight to be seen in all animated nature. Out of the bottomless profundities the gigantic tail seems spasmodically snatching at the highest heaven. So in dreams, have I seen majestic Satan thrusting forth his tormented colossal claw from the flame Baltic of Hell. But in gazing at such scenes, it is all in all what mood you are in; if in the Dantean, the devils will occur to you; if in that of Isaiah, the archangels. (378)

To Ishmael, who oscillates about the mood of Isaiah, the power of the whale's tail is embodied with Beauty. And that Beauty is its strength, its use or function: "Real strength never impairs beauty or harmony, but it often bestows it; and in everything imposingly beautiful, strength has much to do with magic" (376). It is important to note that Ishmael is tacit about the "magic," the mysterious, ineffable reason why strength can exude Beauty, for corresponding to this Emerson writes, "No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty" (N 19).

Ahab, however, is mad with reason, detesting precisely the Beauty and strength of the tail that Ishmael admires and delights in. In chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," an appropriate title for the chapter in which Ahab, missing nearly 1/4 of his body, his means of propulsion, says, "I see in him outrageous strength, with an incredible malice sinewing in it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and . . . I will wreak that hate upon him" (MD 164). Ahab, perennially in a "Dantean mood," sees in the strength Ishmael calls "beauty or harmony," "malice"; in the strength Ishmael names "magic," Ahab detects an "inscrutable thing" to hate. Where in the "dense webbed bed of welded sinews" Ishmael recognizes immense and ubiquitous Beauty, Ahab's vision is limited to seeing only "an

incredible malice sinewing" in everything. Ahab's vision is "broken and in heaps" because he is, as Emerson writes, "disunited with himself" (N 48).

Ishmael, far more united with himself than Ahab, understands the true import of the tail. The tail serves the whale, is Beauty incarnate, and therefore serves the All. But at this point in the novel, "The Tail" chapter, Ishmael, though having begun his transcendence of Nature, is far from achieving Spirit. He says, "Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will" (MD 379). Ishmael forgets that he does not dissect the whale to "know him," to "know" the minute truths of details, but to understand how these particulars function in and represent the All. Emerson writes, "The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. All things with which we deal, preach to us" (N 29). Ishmael, trying to intellectualize the veritable truths nature relates to him, interrupts the process of his transcendence, stops hearing the harmony of the truth being imparted, and attempts to deconstruct the whale's tale, to analyze its parts, to understand universal structure. Endeavoring to form the entire fact of the tail in his mouth at once, Ishmael in frustration says, "The more I consider this mighty tail, the more do I deplore my inability to express it. At times there are gestures in it, which, though they would well grace the hand of man, remain wholly inexplicable" (MD 378). As the material world is but a shadow of Spirit, Ishmael can never fully breach this difference and expect to "express it" ably. He can at best "know" Spirit. But Spirit is "inexplicable"; Ishmael--indeed, everyman--lacks the vocabulary to wholly mouth spiritual truths, to fully become--as Emerson writes in his essay "The Poet," ". . . the sayer, the namer, and

represent beauty" ["P" 244])—"the namer" of Spirit. Ishmael disremembers, as Emerson writes, "How calmly and genially the mind apprehends one after another the laws of physics! What noble emotions dilate the mortal as he enters into the councils of the creation, and feels by knowledge the privilege (sic) to Be!" (N 27). Ishmael forgets just "to Be," to admire and delight in natural and spiritual Beauty, and tries too soon (perhaps similar to Bulkington) to understand Spirit without having resigned naturally to the next step in the process of Transcendentalism, Language.

Chapter IV

Language

"Language," in the Emersonian sense as discussed in chapter 4 of Nature, furthers the meaning of Moby-Dick before the white whale's tale even begins. Following his dedication to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Melville signals the reader of the universality of his subject in the sub-chapters, "Etymology" and "Extracts." A mocking self-portrait of the former school teacher, the "late consumptive usher to a grammar school" (MD xv) supplies "Etymology," which traces the English "whale" through 12 languages; the Fegeean "Pekee-Nuee-Nuee" and Erromangoan "Pehee-Nuee-Nuee" (xvi) introduce the jocular, self-deprecating tone that begins the novel's first chapter, "Loomings." Undoubtedly Melville, like "the pale Usher" (xv), "was ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars" (xv), for these two sub-chapters provide the evidence of his labors.

In "Extracts" Melville tells us "you must not . . . take the higgledy-piggledy whale statements, however authentic, in these extracts, for veritable gospel cetology" (xvii). These "Extracts" are Melville's collection of whaling myth, legend, and literature; they are ". . . solely valuable or entertaining, as affording a glancing bird's eye view of what has been promiscuously said, thought, fancied, and sung of Leviathan. . ." (xvii). Furthermore, they are requisite to the fact that, as Ishmael later claims, "The whale has no famous author, and whaling no famous chronicler. . ." (111). Melville alone, or at least his narrator, Ishmael, has "swam through libraries and sailed through oceans" (136). Ishmael is both erudite and empirical, both learned and weathered, alone capable of wedding all previous whaling

literature with the whale a priori, making Moby-Dick a culmination of all that has come before it, of all that shall occur within its pages, a book as big as a whale is huge. Only Ishmael has seen the whale from the top of the mast-head, from within its bowels, has harpooned it, has reduced it to oil, and has pursued it throughout the "lexicons and grammars" of the world. Only Ishmael has both read of and spoken to the whale--whether through the guise of Stubb the whale-blubber eater, or Ahab who considers the whale's head "the Sphynx's in the desert" and who begs, "Speak, thou vast and venerable head. . . ." (311). Likewise, in "The Poet," Emerson writes, "The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold. He is the true and only doctor; he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes" ("P" 244-45). Ishmael alone has the sole ability to become the "famous author, and . . . chronicler" of the whale and whaling; Ishmael knows, as in "The American Scholar," Emerson writes, "Each age . . . must write its own books. . . . The books of an older generation will not fit his" ("AS" 55). Hence Ishmael's discourse in chapter 32, "Cetology," and the cetological chapters that follow, begin to re-define the whale; but only the whole novel--the "Etymology" and the "Extracts," the portrait of a living, breathing whale, and of a whale dismembered, dissected, and displayed--gives us "veritable gospel cetology."

"So fare thee well," says Melville's yet unnamed narrator, "poor devil of a Sub-Sub, whose commentator I am" (MD xvii). Commentator of the Sub-Sub and of the events of the novel, the narrator says in the first line of chapter I, "Loomings," to "Call me Ishmael" (3). Signifying that many things throughout the novel will be named, or "called" after some representative

fashion, the narrator chooses the name of the illegitimate son of the first of the Hebrew patriarchs, Abraham. Indeed, Ishmael the biblical character is orphaned from birth and Ishmael, Melville's narrator, is without familial ties from the outset and again at the end of the novel. Ishmael, then, names himself after his circumstance, emphasizes his alienation. Similarly, in his essay "The Poet" Emerson says,

. . . the poet is the Namer or Language-maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence, and giving to every one its own name and not another's, thereby rejoicing the intellect, which delights in detachment or boundary. ("P" 252)

Self-proclaimed Ishmael, a truly self-made man, is representative of Emerson's poet, his "Language-maker." In contrast, "Captain Ahab did not name himself" (MD 79), as Peleg says in chapter 16, "The Ship." Ahab does, however, acquire the occasion to name himself after Ishmael's manner; in chapter 115, "The Pequod meets the Bachelor," Ahab shouts aloud to the passing whaler, ". . . call me an empty ship, and outward-bound" (495). Ahab here unconsciously admits to his lack of humanity, to the fact that he is moving away from unity toward an isolated extremity, and thus names himself after his "essence." As Ishmael expounds in "The Ship," Ahab, a definitive anomaly, is an example of those men who are

named with Scripture names . . . and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic *thee* and *thou* of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character. . . And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous

heart; who has . . . been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary breast . . . to learn a bold and nervous language--that makes one man in a whole nation's census. . . . (73)

This, then, is our first portrait of Ahab, whose "bold and nervous language" resounds throughout the novel with such dramatic force and impact that Moby-Dick has been read by some as Ahab's story. This description, though, is emblematic of Ishmael as well. Through his own "audacious, daring, and boundless adventure," of which the novel is illustration, Ishmael grows, learns to "think untraditionally and independently" and to receive "all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary breast"; Ishmael's language, while not imbued with Quaker idioms, is rarely "nervous"--and then only when his "hypos get such an upper hand" (3) of him prior to the commencement of the sea voyage--and is usually experimental, independent.¹

¹ In chapter 16, "The Ship," Ishmael, intimidated yet putting forward his best "paste-board mask," lets Bildad's postured Quaker-language influence him, reiterates a single germ of and is influenced by that "nervous and lofty language":

"He says he's our man, Bildad," said Peleg, "he wants to ship."
 "Dost thee?" said Bildad, in a hollow tone, and turning round to me.
 "I *dost*," said I unconsciously, he was so intense a Quaker. (MD 75)

Emerson explains the ramifications of precisely this kind of exchange:

The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language.
 When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires,--the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise,--and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not. . . (N 22)

For "the desire of riches," the corrupt Peleg and Bildad convince Ishmael to ship for a little lower lay than his worth. His first time on a whaling ship, Ishmael sways too easily, relaxes his primary hold of nature, mimics the "old

Following the publication of Moby-Dick in late October, 1851, reviews were mixed--part praise, mostly contempt. But even the most condemning criticisms mentioned the power and originality of Melville's language, maintaining that Ishmael is, as Emerson says, a "Namer or Language-maker." In October 25, 1851, the reviewer for The Athenaeum, the first to publish a critique of Melville's new book, The Whale, wrote, "Mr. Melville possesses . . . more vivacity, fancy, colour and energy than ninety-nine percent out of the hundred who undertake to poetize or prate about 'sea monsters and land monsters'" (152 in Howard). The reviewer for The Examiner wrote, "Mr. Melville is a man of too real an imagination, and a writer with too singular a mastery over language and its resources. . . ." (433 in Leyda). In his day, Melville's prose (like Emerson's) was considered too diffused and weird. But in 1941, nearly a century later, James Purcell, in an article entitled "Melville's Contribution to English," provides the first in depth study of Melville's language, concluding that "The reader who turns to Herman Melville's works for the first time is likely to be struck by his many strange words and strange usages" (797). Following Purcell's lead, eleven years later C. Merton Babcock furnishes the following banal but useful outline:

1. Melville's use of the language was not limited to conventional English.
2. Moby-Dick, because of the author's lexicographical interests, constitutes an invaluable glossary of terms originating in or unique to the New England sperm whale fishery.

words" of Old World men. This parallels a line from Emerson's "American Scholar": "In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, [man] tends to become . . . the parrot of other men's thinking" ("AS" 53).

3. Melville took many liberties with the language as he knew it, for the purposes of his art.
 4. Melville's sensitivity to the elemental aspects of language formation is attested by the flexibility of word functions he employs, by his unique combination of familiar elements in words, by his use of reduplicated forms, and by his displayed interest in compounding words.
 5. Melville's contributions to the English and American languages are, generally speaking, evidenced in his ability to adapt language to his selective purposes rather than in his ability to coin new words.
- (101)

While noting Melville's originality and inventiveness, neither Purcell nor Babcock begins to discern why Melville "took many liberties with the language," adapting it "to his selective purposes." In part explaining Melville's originality, Clark Griffith writes, ". . . Melville literally wrings the neck of rhetoric, always hopeful that the more daringly and inventively he uses language, the closer language will carry him to what he really yearns to say" (128). Thus a conventional writer adheres to traditional "lexicons and grammars," neither attempts nor needs to push language in new directions, to "wring" its "neck" to obtain new regions of thought. "But how great a language," writes Emerson in "Language," the fourth chapter of *Nature*, "to convey such pepper-corn informations! Did it need such noble races of creatures, this profusion of forms, this host of orbs in heaven, to furnish man with the dictionary and grammar of his municipal speech?" (N 23). When in the first chapter of *Moby-Dick* Ishmael says, "I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote" (MD 7), it is clear that Melville will

need to use language, to bend and shape it in a way that will allow Ishmael to touch his "itch." As Newton Arvin says, "One feels, as in all such cases, that the limits of even the English vocabulary have suddenly begun to seem too strict, too penurious, and that the difficult things Melville has to say can be adequately said only by reaching beyond those limits" (84). Ishmael, then, will not be content with "pepper-corn informations," with mundane trivia, but must breach the limits of common speech in order to obtain those "things remote." And thus Melville goes to sea, takes a metaphysical voyage; as R. W. B. Lewis writes, "Experience fulfilled and explained itself for Melville only and finally in language" (130).

In the "Language" chapter of Nature, Emerson offers the following outline:

1. Words are signs of natural facts.
2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts.
3. Nature is the symbol of spirit. (N 19)

The first, most obvious axiom aggregates Purcell and Babcock's generalizations concerning Melville's prose. Evident throughout the novel, this first, most apparent function of "Language" permits Ishmael to name himself. Again, it is the first function of the poet, to be the "Namer or Language-maker," of which Ishmael has proven himself capable. Thus Ishmael seems to have an instinctual sense of language. For while F. O. Matthiessen writes, "Unlike Emerson [Melville] discussed at no point the origins and nature of language" (423), Melville's narrator Ishmael perhaps never directly addresses "the origins and nature of language" but he

demonstrates an adept knowledge of these. Hence, the quotation from Emerson's "The Poet" continues thus:

The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history, and, if we must say it, a sort of tomb of the muses. For though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. ("P" 252)

Both Melville's "pale Usher" and "Sub-Sub," literal keepers of the "tomb of the muses," understand "the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture";² without some sort of stimulation, some understanding of a

² And Ishmael, keeper of the keepers, is the legitimate narrator of these two, his brethren. Indeed, I argue both the "pale Usher" and the "Sub-Sub" are Ishmael in former stages of his life. In "Loomings" Ishmael describes the difficulties of going to sea "as a simple sailor, right before the mast, . . . aloft there to the royal mast-head. . . . if just previous . . . you have been lording it as a country schoolmaster, making the tallest boys stand in awe of you. The transition is a keen one, I assure you, from a schoolmaster to a sailor. . . ." (MD 5-6). Demonstrating his bookishness with an allusion to Richard Henry Dana, and alluding to a very transcendent episode (in the "mast-head," as I discussed in the previous chapter), the supposedly "unlettered Ishmael" (347) exposes his (and Melville's) former stint in the school-house, pursuing and perusing "lexicons and grammars." Concluding his introduction to "Extracts"—"Here ye strike but splintered hearts together—there, ye strike but unsplinterable glasses!" (xviii)—Ishmael reveals the difference between the material—the "heart" which can be severed, fragmented, "splintered"—and Spirit, transparent as "glass" and "unsplinterable," whole. While his "hypos" have had him agitated and excited, upon meeting the noble Queequeg Ishmael says he ". . . felt a melting in me. No more my *splintered heart* and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it" (emphasis mine; MD 51). Transcending toward an "unsplinterable" wholeness, Ishmael departs from the "Pale Usher" and "Sub-Sub" self only capable of relishing collections of written words and becomes all things. Perhaps in the labyrinth of some library the "Pale Usher"/"Sub-Sub" discovered a copy of *Nature* and went to sea, became the Ishmael who now writes about that physical and metaphysical voyage.

greater truth, the "Sub-Sub" would not have bothered to pursue the whale (unless of course he was hired, but then that is Commodity making) through his literary labyrinth, which appropriately begins with Genesis. The "Pale Usher" recognizes the brilliancy of language, for the two definitions he cites show that the noun "whale" originates from an action, a verb:

'WHALE. * * * Sw. and Dan. *hval*. This animal is named from roundness or rolling; for in Dan. *hvalt* is arched or vaulted.'

Webster's Dictionary.

'WHALE. * * * It is more immediately from the Dut. and Ger. *wallen*; A.S. *Walw-ian*, to roll, to wallow.'

Richardson's Dictionary. (MD xv)

Both of these definitions prove Ishmael's instinctual and innate understanding of "the origins and nature of language," and correspond to the first function of Language; Emerson writes, "Words are signs of natural facts. . . . Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance" (N 19). The "intellectual fact," the whale, is named (or called) for its "appearance," its tendency "to roll" or "to wallow" upon the water. And both definitions of the whale are related by the infinitive or gerundive forms of the verb, "to roll." Likewise, Emerson says, "The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages" (21). A whale rolling in water, his "appearance," is a symbol kindred to at least the above four Germanic languages and a "natural fact" in the language of any peoples cognizant of the physical fact of the whale. It is no accident, then, that the first time Ishmael mentions the whale he describes his "appearance" with this common verb: ". . . the wild and distant seas where he *rolled* his island bulk"

(emphasis mine; MD 7). Nor is it a coincidence that the final verb of the novel (save the Epilogue) is the same: ". . . and the great shroud of the sea *rolled* on as it *rolled* five thousand years ago" (emphasis mine; 572). The repetition of this verb (and its variants, which appear 103 times in all) serves to connect the whale with the water, relate his "island bulk" to the land (and Ishmael's second description of the whale is "like a snow hill in the air" [7]), and complete the novel in toto. Serving to transcend all material elements, to arrive at universality, the refrain of this picturesque verb lends to Moby-Dick some of its immediate vibrancy, color, and organicism. Hence, Melville proves, as Emerson posits, that language corresponds to "natural facts."

The second function of Language is to "convey a spiritual import" (N 20). Emerson writes, "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture" (20). I have shown how this corresponds to what Melville calls Dantean or Isaiahan moods. "It depends on the mood of the man," writes Emerson in his essay, "Experience," "whether he shall see the sunset or the fine poem" ("E" 269). Consider Ahab's reply in chapter 37, "The Sunset": "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" (MD 167). Ahab's mood (or mode) delights in neither the sunset nor any phase of loveliness (save the "fond, throbbing" in "The Symphony" chapter, which only temporarily soothes his soul); Ahab is too much in the Dantean mood, too far bent to be trued.

In comparison, Ishmael, never as perverse as Ahab, begins the novel with "a damp, drizzly November in [his] soul" (3). At the conclusion of chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael says,

And when we consider that other theory of natural philosophers, that all other earthly hues--every stately or lovely emblazoning--the sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; yea, and the gilded velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of young girls; all these are but subtle deceits, not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without; so that all defied Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within. . . . (195)

Ishmael, experiencing mental dyspepsia, the cause of Ahab's spell, weaves a loose, self-deconstructing argument: for if meaning is "not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without," then whiteness cannot "call up a peculiar apparition to the soul" (192). Ishmael's "state of the mind" causes his pejorative interpretation of a "natural fact," a whale that merely happens to be white. Indeed, earlier in the chapter Ishmael says to himself, "thou surrenderest to a hypo, Ishmael" (194). This "hypo," harking back to the novel's first paragraph, is soon soothed, however, for Ishmael becomes a less subjective, more disinterested narrator. As his "state of the mind" lightens, Ishmael begins to speak for everyman, take up the voice of the entire crew, a microcosm of greater humanity, and his language comes closer to the spiritual fact, to universal truth.

Thus in chapter 99, "The Doubloon," a myriad of interpretations of the meaning of the "riveted gold coin" show (430), as Emerson says, that "particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts." Ishmael

by this point in the novel is closer to becoming Emerson's "transparent eyeball"; he narrates with Keatsian disinterestedness, without subjectivity. He is objective, he is fair, he is just. His idiosyncratic quirks and oddities appear less in the narration. Nina Baym writes,

Collecting all statements and all modes (or giving the appearance of doing so), Ishmael creates the illusion that he is free of the rules of statement and mode and hence that he has gone through the constraints of medium directly to the truth. His voice, taking up all other voices in turn but resting in none of them . . . is the sum of all voices . . . [and] leads to fullness. . . . (918)

The other characters in this chapter, Ahab, Starbuck, Flask, Pip, and Stubb, on the other hand, see neither collectiveness nor wholeness, simplicity nor truth but something corresponding to the various hues of their spirits, their "state[s] of the mind." Proving, as Emerson writes in his essay "Circles," that "Conversation is a game of circles" ("C" 233), this collective group talks around and about the doubloon, but Ishmael speaks for them and for it, for Nature.

Prior to the first of many soliloquies in "The Doubloon" chapter, Ishmael describes the initial speaker, Ahab: ". . . he seemed to be newly attracted by the strange figures and inscriptions stamped on [the doubloon], as though now for the first time beginning to interpret for himself in some monomaniac way whatever significance might lurk in them" (*MD* 430). Having identified the bend of Ahab's peculiar brand of interpretation (a singular obsession with and exaggerated enthusiasm for an idea), Ishmael continues, explaining the transcendent nature of the material prior to letting the puerile sense of the "riveted gold coin" be skewed by any one dominant

impression: "And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth. . . " (430). Corresponding to this on one level, Emerson writes,

It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. (N 20)

"All things," then, are interpretable, "emblematic" of "some certain significance," "some spiritual fact"; Ishmael's expression of a truly Emersonian idea proves on an accessory level the transcendent nature of language. Whether coin or cloud, white whale or action, any descriptive word beyond the name of the material thing itself is an attempt to arrive at the corresponding "spiritual" meaning. As Griffith writes, "Generally speaking, the style of Emersonianism is either discursive or descriptive. It deals with symbolism speculatively (as in Emerson's prose) or portrays the activities of symbols (exactly the situation in much of Whitman's poetry)" (125). Melville's language is both discursive and descriptive, and in Griffith's general terms Melville seems Emersonian. In the more specific terms of this study, however, Melville is Emersonian, for Ishmael the narrator uses language in a way that makes him Emersonian.

Ishmael's soul harmonizes with Nature, for his is the single voice in Moby-Dick capable of speaking for an extended length of Spirit, of expressing the universal soul within or behind things. This interpretability of matter demonstrates a scrutable truth, matter's highest "worth." One whose soul harmonizes not with Nature, who is aligned with a malefactor, will

dictate the meaning of a material object, will interpret a symbol to his or her own advantage. For example, Ahab interprets or names the doubloon thus,

There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look here,—three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab; and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self. (MD 431)

Ahab sees but himself in the doubloon. Egotistical Ahab, who thinks it is his duty and Fate to rid the world of Moby Dick and therefore all evil, believes he is the "certain significance [which] lurks in all things."

Methinks now this coined sun wears a ruddy face; but see! aye, he enters the sign of storms, the equinox! . . . From storm to storm! So be it, then. Born in throes, 't is fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs! So be it, then. Here's stout stuff for woe to work on. So be it, then. (431-32)

Ahab of the Dantean mood can only see storm and darkness and pain and death within and behind all things. Ahab proves that "the evils of the world are such only to the evil eye" ("P" 250). As Emerson writes,

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth and his desire to communicate it without loss. (N 22)

The only truth Ahab loves is the falsehood he names "truth" ("So be it, then"), the morbidity and limitations of humanity, the darker aspects of human nature. While these are indeed real, these half-truths are not by any

means the final issue of Spirit; Ahab is incapable of communicating greater, "spiritual" truths.

In contrast, Starbuck's vision is wider than Ahab's. For Starbuck recognizes both Ahab's agenda and a universal principal: "I plainly see my miserable office—to obey, rebelling; and worse yet, to hate with a touch of pity! For in [Ahab's] eyes I read some lurid woe would shrivel me up, had I it." (MD 169). While attracted to the strength and focus of Ahab's mind, Starbuck, in many ways his Captain's opposite, realizes the danger in single-mindedness, and is aware of the dualistic quality of nature: "If we bend down our eyes, the dark vale [on the doubloon] shows her mouldy soil; but if we lift them, the bright sun meets our glance half way, to cheer" (432). Prudent Starbuck sees both good and bad in the twin-sided doubloon; but as a God-fearing Quaker, Starbuck opts not to have his faith shaken: "This coin speaks wisely, mildly, truly, but still sadly to me. I will quit it, lest Truth shake me falsely" (432). Corresponding to this, Emerson writes, "All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren, like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life" (N 21). Because Starbuck thinks that Ahab "seems to read Belshazzar's awful writing" in the doubloon, and because of the omnipresence of evil in "human history," Starbuck reads in the doubloon facets of life he would rather not have to admit, let alone see, and thus retreats with a face "nine fathoms long" (MD 432). Refusing to marry "fact" to "history," to realize universal good, Starbuck, while more open to experience than Ahab, remains nearsighted, focused on the representative bad.

Both Flask and Pip's readings of the doubloon, in contrast, are closer to Ahab's, are more limited in focus. An agent of Bildad and Peleg, Flask

represents, as Emerson says, "the corruption of man" (N 22). Flask is a materialist, whose primary concern is with "secondary desires,--the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise. . . ." (22). Flask says, "I see nothing here, but a round thing made of gold worth sixteen dollars, that's true; and at two cents the cigar, that's nine hundred and sixty cigars" (MD 433). Simple-minded and unable to see any but the corporeal value of material, Flask reasons erroneously, jumbling his arithmetic, adding the correct sum (eight hundred) to the principle plus an extra digit (one hundred and sixty, versus sixteen), and arrives at an optimistic figure.

Pip, who once "loved life, and all life's peaceable securities" (412), has been reduced to an "idiot" since he fell overboard and felt "the awful lonesomeness," "the intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity" (414). Similar to Bulkington, Pip has transcended the material world and viewed Spirit, his true place in the universe; he was "carried down to wondrous depths, where . . . Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and . . . the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities. . ." (414); "He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad" (414). As Emerson writes in "Experience," "We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them" ("E" 275). But Pip skates poorly on the surface, sees only a nothingness that is everything on the other side--his mortality. Pip realizes his place in "human history" merits, for example, barely more than Bulkington's "six-inch chapter" (MD 106), and is certainly less memorable. As Emerson says, "It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made that we exist" ("E" 284). Pip the ship's cabin boy, a small, youthful Negro, whose name is even an "abbreviation" (MD 411), is thought by the crew incapable

of communicating universal knowledge and is therefore rejected, considered "mad" when he "spoke" his learned wisdom; like Bulkington, but without the common-sense not to speak, Pip learns, "Wonderfullest things are ever the unmention-able. . ." (106). Thus Pip accepts his abjection, does not bother to read meaning into a piece of cut metal which the "Language-maker" names doubloon (for who will believe him?), and parrots both his masters' grammar and actions by repeating, "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look" (MD 434). Pip contracts into a simple grammarian, without "history" or "loved life"; having developed the "peaceable securit[y]" of speaking correctly only, Pip lives without meaning.

Of all the crew excepting Ishmael, Stubb reads the doubloon most ambitiously and picturesquely. Stubb begins,

I'll get the almanack; . . . I'll try my hand at raising a meaning out of these queer curvicies here with the Massachusetts calendar. Here's the book. Let's see now. Signs and wonders. . . . Book! you lie there; the fact is, you books must know your places. You'll do to give us the bare words and facts, but we come in to supply the thoughts. . . . Signs and wonders, eh? Pity if there is nothing wonderful in signs, and significant in wonders! (432-33)

Stubb's interpretation plays with the rhetoric of language: leaning casually against "the try-works" (432), Stubb's "I'll try my hand at raising a meaning" puns with that three-legged reducer of the unctuousness of language; the use of "book," "words," "facts," "thoughts," and "signs" all signal Melville's gambol. Stubb's interpretation reads meaning into material, shows the "immediate dependence of language upon nature" by analogy (N 22); as Emerson writes, "man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He

is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him" (21). Reading the relations, Stubb says, "Look you, Doubloon, your zodiac here is the life of man in one round chapter; and now I'll read it off, straight out of the book. Come, Almanack!" (MD 433). In rare form, Stubb arrives at a transcendent view of nature akin to that which is outlined in Emerson's "Language" chapter; Emerson writes, "The motion of the earth round its axis and round the sun, makes the day and the year. These are certain amounts of brute light and heat. But is there no intent of an analogy between man's life and the seasons?" (N 21). Stubb discovers this "analogy between man's life and the seasons":

To begin: there's Aries, or the Ram--lecherous dog, he begets us; . . . then Gemini, or the Twins--that is, Virtue and Vice; we try to reach Virtue, when lo! comes Cancer the Crab, and drags us back; . . . and while we are very sad about that, . . . Scorpio, or the Scorpion, stings us in the rear; we are curing the wound, when whang come the arrows all round; Sagittarius, or the Archer, is amusing himself. As we pluck out the shafts, stand aside! here's the battering-ram, Capricornus, or the Goat, full tilt, he comes rushing, and head-long we are tossed; when Aquarius, or the Water-bearer, pours out his whole deluge and drowns us; and to wind up with Pisces, or the Fishes, we sleep.

There's a sermon now, writ in high heaven. . . . (MD 433)

On the one hand, Stubb's proves that, as Emerson says, "man is an analogist" (N 21); on the other Stubb demonstrates universal principle, that all things are meditative, and serve the All, for Stubb's soliloquy summarizes the transcendental process and foreshadows the conclusion of Moby-Dick. Revealing the duality of nature--"Virtue and Vice"--Stubb shows that

naturally "we try to reach Virtue"; however, the "Crab," in zodiacal language literally the crustacean and in the Emersonian sense metaphorically the temper, "drags us back."³ And while "very sad about" not having achieved Spirit, and probably less crabby than when in a Dantean mood with the severity of Ahab's, we are liable to continue to suffer, to get stung "in the rear" by the slings and arrows of Scorpio and Sagittarius. While so unnecessarily repressed (or suppressed in Ishmael's case), a "battering-ram"--of a whale as well--"comes rushing, and head-long we are tossed," such as when Moby Dick smites the Pequod. All are drowned excepting Ishmael, who is saved, for "the Fates ordained [him] to take the place of Ahab's bowsman" (573); indeed, this "sermon" is "writ in high heaven" where the order of the invisible spheres determine the visible. Likewise, there is a correspondence between the pre-ordained fates of Pip's sanity and Ishmael, who concludes chapter 93, "The Castaway," "in the sequel of the narrative, it will then be seen what like abandonment befell myself" (MD 414). For whether or not "we" or Pip or Ishmael "wind up" in water, we all wind up like a top.

Stubb's reading of the doubloon, however fanatical, is the most truthful interpretation of the seamen (sans Ishmael, of course), for it in no way favors him as speaker but simply relates the cyclical quality of universal mortality. The "significance" of the matter relates closest to a reasonable

³ The dual function of "Crab" serves as a prime example of Emerson's first function of Language, that "words are signs of natural facts" (N 19):

Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance. *Right* means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*. (19)

Thus "Crab" is both an animal, by its "essence," and a mood, by its "appearance."

truth. Hence, the jocular conclusion of chapter 90, "Heads or Tails"--"And thus there seems a reason in all things, even in law" (401)--compares significantly with the transcendent axiom from "The Doubloon"--"And some certain significance lurks in all things. . . ." (430). As the "reason" or "significance" in "all things" tends to depend upon the interpreter, it is a matter of "heads" versus "tails," a coin toss, a Dantean or Isaiahan mood, what the interpretation may be. But as Emerson says, "This universal soul [man] calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its" (N 20). The laws of nature, Spiritual Reason, are both navigator and counsel to man. Nature's laws determine man's will, when he is aligned with nature, and his goal, if he wants to re-align himself with Spirit. Only one harmonizing with Nature is capable of speaking of Spirit, of expressing the universal soul within or behind things. Only one who opens his body and heart and mind to the All, to the "universal soul" (and becomes "its") is capable of speaking truth, is competent to speak for everyman. Objectively reporting the actions and words of his fellow men, and not deducing the doubloon's significance himself, Ishmael is the only speaker of truth.⁴ Therefore, Ishmael understands with Emerson:

For as it is dislocation and detachment from . . . life . . . that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole,--re-attaching even artificial things and violations of nature, to

⁴ And since Ishmael, our All-seeing eyeball in residence, stresses only the doubloon's beauty--"so Spanishly poetic" (MD 431)--and not a corresponding moral, it is clear, then, that the only true significance of the gold coin, besides its physical fact, is not its face-value but its unassigned ability to help some men reveal themselves as Materialists--without mores and ethics. As the "doubloon" is double-sided, so too is man without Nature. Man aligned with Nature is a monist, demonstrates only goodness, spends a coin responsibly, if he spends at all.

nature, by a deeper insight—disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. ("P" 251)

Ishmael's narration "alone encompasses the vision of the others" (33), writes Harold Beaver in his introduction to the Penguin edition of Moby-Dick. In relation, Stubb summarizes, "There's another rendering now; but still one text. All sorts of men in one kind of world, you see" (MD 434). And for each man an interpretation; but for the Emersonian, for Ishmael, there is only one reading, which encompasses at once all readings, and which arrives at a final universal reading of the world.

This, then, is the final function of Language: "Nature is the symbol of spirit" (N 19), writes Emerson. Nature is, as Stubb says, the "one text," and Nature can be read only one way, if it is to be read truthfully. Emerson writes,

A life in harmony with Nature, the love of truth and of virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause. (25)

This, then, is how Emerson would have Nature read, and how Moby-Dick may be read. Indeed, Melville would have one "purge the eyes to read [his] text." In chapter 101, "The Decanter," Ishmael begins to formulate a method for reading his text: "During my researches in the Leviathanic histories, I stumbled upon an ancient Dutch volume, which, by the musty whaling smell of it, I knew must be about whalers" (MD 445); demonstrating that all senses function, including the aural, in a communicative manner, Ishmael continues, "Most statistical tables are parchingly dry in the reading; not so

in the present case, however. . . . during which many profound thoughts were incidentally suggested to me, capable of a transcendental and Platonic application" (446). The cetological chapters—which I found "parochially dry in the reading" my first time through the bowels of this book—ought to be read in the same way Ishmael reads statistical tables, with a "transcendental . . . application." The cetological chapters, which begin to re-define and name the whale, deserve and demand metaphorical translation, for that is how Ishmael reads, how Melville writes. Besides, language itself—which makes up the whole of Moby-Dick, sans Queequeg's "mark" (89)—is metaphorical; Emerson writes that "Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it" (N 31). Thus if not read transcendently, the whole novel—the "Etymology" and the "Extracts," the portrait of a living, breathing whale, and of a whale dismembered, dissected, and displayed—will not be comprehensible or unified, will not evolve into what Ishmael wants—"veritable gospel cetology." Discussing Melville's achievement, Griffith writes,

[The Emersonian] hopes that language will prove adequate for his deepest meanings; but in the final analysis he trusts the meanings far more than his ability to render them articulate. At best, this double conception of language can act as a powerful creative spur, resulting as it does in the search for novel expressions, which will produce or at least approximate novel intuitions. (126)

Since "finite" language can only at best "approximate" or signify an "infinite," spiritual truth, Melville hopes that his symbols are sensical to his

reader, that his reader will interpret his language, his arrangement of words, that his reader will read as he writes--with metaphysics in mind.

Corresponding to this, in his essay "Experience," Emerson writes, "As I am, so I see; use what language we will, we can never say anything but what we are" ("E" 287). Of "a small cub Sperm Whale . . . bodily hoisted to the deck," says Ishmael, "Think you I let that chance go, without using my boat-hatchet and jack-knife, and breaking the seal and reading all the contents of that young cub?" (MD 449) As Ishmael reads into things all that he can, we too must read Moby-Dick with an objective, all-encompassing, open-mind, allowing the meaning behind the "paste-board masks" to surface.

"There are some enterprises," Ishmael says, "in which a careful disorderliness is the true method" (361). Hence, to better communicate through a limited language the illimitable truths he had realized, Melville arranged his book with all the peculiarity of a whale's migration, chartable, but not wholly predictable.

I care not to perform this part of my task methodically; but shall be content to produce the desired impression by separate citations of items, practically or reliably known to me as a whaleman; and from these citations, I take it--the conclusion aimed at will naturally follow of itself. (203)

Corresponding to this, Emerson writes in "Experience,"

Nature hates calculators; her methods are saltatory and impulsive. Man lives by pulses; our organic movements are such; and the chemical and ethereal agents are undulatory and alternate; and the mind goes antagonizing on, and never prospers but by fits. (280)

Because of the above, I both concur and differ with Richard P. Blackmur's claims,

[Melville's] work discovered for itself, if we may say so, and in the very process of writing, that it was not meant to be fiction. . . . Melville either refused or was unable to resort to the available conventions of his time as if they were real; he either preferred or was compelled to resort to most of the conventions he used for dramatic purposes not only as if they were unreal but also as if they were artificial. (78)

Melville's "careful disorderliness" "discovered for itself" an "organic" arrangement, and yet it is (in part, but not limited to) fiction; more so, I argue that Melville's work is of the highest kind of fiction, for it offers a literal reading, yet denies literal readers its simple and evident truths; its intended "conclusion" does "naturally follow of itself," for it completes the cycle, creates a unified vision as imaged through Ishmael's mind; it transcends the material and resembles what it is, a discursive, descriptive novel, often epic in scope, that defines a whale as best as a whale can be defined--"The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable water" (MD 263). As Baym writes, ". . . the final work is something other than a fiction" (917); and "[Melville] perceived authorship as combining the roles of prophet and philosopher, as charged with both discovering and articulating significant truths about man's place in the universe" (909). Hence, Melville the author, like his narrator Ishmael, opens himself wide to embrace many styles, forms, and truths; as Emerson says about the ideal writer in his essay "The Poet," "He uses forms according to the life, and not according to the form" ("P" 252).

A fiction, and more, Moby-Dick attempts to bring to life a universal view, that which is unpaintable and therefore unprintable:

For all these reasons, then, any way you may look at it, you must needs conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any considerable degree of exactness. So there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. (MD 264)

The whole fact of the whale may only exist in the mind, and only in an all encompassing mind, a mind that embraces both the literal and the metaphysical. Try as we may, we can never grasp the pure fact of the living whale whole:

But it may be fancied, that from the naked skeleton of the stranded whale, accurate hints may be derived touching his true form. Not at all. For it is one of the more curious things about this Leviathan, that his skeleton gives very little idea of his general shape. (263).

And again,

In considering these ribs, I could not but be struck anew with the circumstance, so variously repeated in this book, that the skeleton of the whale is by no means the mold of his invested form. (453)

And again, as if to strike the reader as Ishmael is "struck anew":

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. (457)

Whether "careful" or disorderly, this is deliberate. As is the whale's migration deliberate, and yet you cannot know precisely where or when Leviathan will surface next.

Therefore it is impossible, says Ishmael in chapter 104, "The Fossil Whale," to descry completely the spiritual truth of the whale, for "only think of the gigantic involutions of his intestines, where they lie in him like great cables" (455) and it will be understood that "you could not compress him" into words (455). No part of the whale is the whole; parts only suggest and are emblematic of the whole, just as no one chapter is the whole veritable fact of a novel. The whole of the whale only, in form and in water, in action and living, and not just the whale and whaling language (but, yes, the language too), can begin to approach the Spirit of the whale.

Thus, no man, not even Jonah (whose view of the whale was limited to an organ), can rightfully claim to know the whole whale. "I confess, that since Jonah, few whalers have penetrated very far beneath the skin of the adult whale; nevertheless, I have been blessed with an opportunity to dissect him in miniature" (448-49). But remove the parts from the whole, or the whale from water, and gravity—not to mention natural process—changes his appearance. The only way to see and know the physical whale is to join him in his element, the water—which in Melville's day was virtually impossible, not to mention deadly. In chapter 103, "Measurement of the Whale's Skeleton," Ishmael says,

How vain and foolish, then, thought I, for timid untravelled man to try to comprehend aright this wondrous whale, by merely poring over his dead attenuated skeleton, stretched in this peaceful wood. No. Only in the heart of quickest perils; only when within eddyings of his angry

flukes; only on the profound unbounded sea, can the fully invested whale be truly and livingly found out. (453-54)

It is only by experiencing the whale that man can truly know him, and only by experiencing him metaphysically, with a "transcendental . . . approach."

A whale can be known only by going whaling, but whalers risk "being stoved in," and as the purpose of whaling is to destroy the whale, the knowing of the whale, like the achieving of Spirit, is temporal. The whole fact of the whale exists, then, only in the imagination, and only by metaphoric understanding, by analogy, by comparing Leviathan to a trout or tuna, to a more knowable fish, by having an understanding of ichthyology and applying it to the known physical facts of the whale. And this is exemplary of the final function of Language: its use in acquiring the unknown, in obtaining an understanding of the All. As Griffith says, ". . . Melville's Emersonian belief in the magic of words, [is part] of his search for that particular combination of words which would project him across the 'pasteboard masks' of experience" (128). Even the media, the "pictures of the whale," as Ishmael knew them, were "all wrong" (MD 260). Thus the whale wholly exists only in the mind (through reason and imagination) because of "that particular combination of words" that when spoken signify "whale."

Ishmael has to experience the whale to know him, to communicate his meaning. Emerson writes that it is best not ". . . to write poems from the fancy, at a safe distance from their own experience. But the highest minds of the world have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or shall I say the quadruple or the centuple or much more manifold meaning" ("P" 242). Experiencing the whale from an unsafe, watery distance to that of a safe,

inland table, Ishmael explores with language the furthest realms of the whale and its meaning, for Ishmael alone has "penetrated very far beneath the skin of the adult whale." As Emerson writes, "The world being thus put under the mind for verb and noun, the poet is he who can articulate it" (251); Ishmael mouths the literal yet intangible fact of the whale with "verb and noun," "lexicons and grammars."

"To produce a mighty book," says Ishmael, "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" (MD 456). Thus Ishmael has his "mighty theme"—the Whole of Nature as demonstrated by his study of the Whole Whale. And, yet, this is the same Ishmael who writes, "I try all things; I achieve what I can" (345). For Ishmael does write an "enduring volume" on "the flea"; that is, he writes on the most minute particulars of the whale too, as he shows in his conclusion to chapter 102, "A Bower in the Arsacides":

The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed; as in my wild wanderings at that period, there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics. But as I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing—at least, what untattooed parts might remain—I did not trouble myself with odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale.

(451)

Ishmael, like Queequeg, is tattooed (and many times over, for only some "untattooed parts . . . remain"), and is a cannibal like "the ivory Pequod" (309), a collection of facts, apparati, data, "valuable statistics" collected from

previous voyages and experiences.⁵ And only the material body, the "blank page," is secure, for knowledge (spirit-sense) is subject to perversion by Language--perverters such as Ahab. But of course even the material body, like the doubloon, has yet to be interpreted to be viable. The text of Moby-Dick, the prose poem Ishmael composes out of his experience, is "the other parts of [his] body"; it represents, like Thoreau's pond, the width and depth of his experience, the mass that is emblematic of his soul. Conversely, Ishmael's soul is, as all spiritual elements are, metaphoric, and it is his physical body, his Not Me, that symbolizes his spirit, is counterpart to his soul.

That Ishmael says "I did not trouble myself with odd inches" is ironic, for the bulk of the cetalogical chapters, when not metaphorically representing the All, are concerned with "odd inches," minute particulars ("fleas") that work toward a unified vision of the whole of the universe. And

⁵ Ishmael and Queequeg, "a cosy, loving pair," "open the very bottom of their souls to each other" (MD 52) and come to resemble each other both in form and action. Ironically, Ahab and Moby Dick, both of whom have a "twisted brow" and other similar wounds, foil the first pair. Ahab, himself a cannibal, is part whale, propelled by whale ivory; and Moby Dick and he are symbolically wedded in the final chapter, chapter 135, "The Chase--Third Day":

Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; . . .
for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all
hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me
then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee,
though damned whale! *Thus*, I give up the spear! (571-72)

Having given up his last bit of "feminine air" (542), Ahab "roll[s]" toward Moby Dick, which equates Ahab with a whale by common verb use, and by describing his similar "appearance." Ahab then opts to be "tied" to Moby Dick, bonded as if in marriage, and intends to merge in death with Moby Dick in "one common pool" or death-bed. Ahab "give[s] up his spear," making a final phallic thrust at his foe before submitting. And androgynous Ishmael, collective speaker for humanity, of the All, is the offspring of an Old World man and a known-by-name-and-appearance-only whale, is reborn as a result of this last and ever-lasting marriage.

though "inches" should not "enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale," invariably they must; for without an understanding of first the particulars and, second, how the particulars serve the All, a unified vision of the whale, the whole cannot be achieved. Only a limited view of Nature, and of the whale (and of the human body, says Whitman), is possible without having related it to the All.

Mere "inches," a skeletal understanding of a thing, are useless without an understanding of the whole. The first sentence of the next paragraph is "But the spine" (454); as "the spine" is but a fragment of the whole, Melville's first sentence of the paragraph elucidating on that most valuable of bone structures is a fragmented sentence. Likewise, Emerson writes of his "Language-maker": "He uses forms according to the life, and not according to the form" ("P" 252). The "spine," the thesis or backbone of an object, is the quickest way to arrive at a facile understanding of an object. More so, by digesting (reading) the material supported by a book's spine, a few odd inches on a page, one may arrive at a fair, or at least better, understanding of an object--accepting of course that the point of view and the information transferable are limited, and that there is inevitably some spiritual truth lost with communication, through the inadequateness of physical language to express Spirit.

Ishmael concludes this spinal chapter: "Thus we see how that the spine of even the hugest of living things tapers off into simple child's play" (MD 454). That a book is a "living thing" is obvious to the imagination, where it is re-created when it is read, and to the Modern Language Association, who dictates that we refer to a book's text in the present tense; the understanding of the material posited by any spine, however, tends by

the reader to be reduced to "simple child's play," to an infantile understanding more cognizant of the infinitesimal than the All: our understanding of the whale or the universe, and our ability to express it with Language, is childish in relation to Spirit.

Chapter V

Discipline

"In view of the significance of nature," Emerson begins "Discipline," the fifth chapter of Nature, "we arrive at once at a new fact, that nature is a discipline. This use of the world includes the preceding uses, as parts of itself" (N 26). "Discipline," the learning and comprehension of "central Unity" (31), is omnipresent in the foregoing chapters of this study-- "Commodity," "Beauty," and "Language." "Discipline" is the cultivation of these three consecutive disciplines that function to ". . . educate both the Understanding and the Reason" (26). Thus I have to a degree already demonstrated "Discipline" as it functions in Moby-Dick. The "Try-Works," metaphorically reducing unctuous language ("Bible-leaves") to the pure fact and literally converting blubber into oil, an aid in man's pursuit of Spirit, provides my example from "Commodity." As "Beauty" teaches the absolute order of things, it is a "Discipline": on the mast-head Ishmael's compliant and duteous perusal of Nature teaches him that he is part and parcel of the universal All; Queequeg's noble and virtuous deeds, obedient to the will of Nature, suggest unity; "The Grand Armada" and "The Symphony" chapters are in accord with and thus reveal universal grace; and the whale's tail, which is Beauty incarnate, serves the whale and therefore the All. Ishmael, whose all-encompassing narration interconnects the centrifugal layers of meaning of the doubloon, and whales and whaling as outlined in the cetological chapters, shows the physical fact of "Language" as obedient signifier of Spirit.

"Discipline" functions to "educate both the Understanding and the Reason" (26), "form the common sense" (26), and marry "Matter and Mind" (26). All things, all components of Nature, facts of this world and universe, serve to instruct "Discipline." "Every property of matter is a school for the understanding" (26): fable, myth, allegory, symbol, religion; Languages, Arts, Sciences; the natural elements--air, water, fire, and earth; and society. Other than these general categories, Emerson specifies five primary tenets of "Discipline": "Nature is a discipline of the understanding in intellectual truths" (26); "The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event" (28); "Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience" (28); "[E]very natural process is a version of a moral sentence" (29); "An action is the perfection and publication of thought" (31). A teacher, a disciplinarian, Nature is the material counterpart, the visible reflection of Spirit; therefore, Nature illustrates right living. One who lives in accord with Nature, whose soul corresponds with Spirit, demonstrates these five tenets daily. Thus, these, and all things, suggest and are herald to the All; this motion, the process and act of Nature's suggestion, and of man's irrefutable obedience to the will of Nature, is "Discipline." A convergence of the twain transpires; Nature and man become united, as one. For "Discipline" is not a demarcated but an organic fact--a fact to which man in the All unconsciously conforms his will. Fragmented man, however, is unaligned with Nature, and instead endeavors to conform Nature to his will. Not whole, he has gone wayward somewhere along the transcendent path--thus frustrated, if fragmented man has perseverance and optimism he may try the transcendent path again; if he instead shifts his attention on something outside of himself--a big fish, for

example—he will probably continue to degenerate spiritually, slide further off the rule of Understanding and Reason. A man percipient of Discipline can come to know the All of Nature; a man without Discipline, if he is malleable, is subject to any number of unnatural and therefore immoral influences, and if he is obstinate, will know only himself, his own egoistic and solipsistic tendencies and desires. Live by Nature, and we live whole, in the All. The whole of Nature, instructs Emerson, ". . . give[s] us sincerest lessons, day by day, whose meaning is unlimited" (26).

The most fundamental exercise of Discipline in Moby-Dick is in the cetological chapters. Etymology and extracts, dictionary and lexicon, the cetological chapters explain, define, cite, name, and categorize the science of whales and whaling. Beginning with a basic definition—"a whale is a *spouting fish with a horizontal tail*" (MD 137)—Ishmael proceeds to expound and expand upon the differences and similarities of all fish that fit within the net of his definition: "Now, then," writes Ishmael, "come the grand divisions of the entire whale host" (137). Thus the cetological expositions seem organized like a chapter of Emerson's Nature. Ishmael, representative of Melville's erudition, breaks the bulk of the whale down into an ordered outline, a structured form alien to the living whale, familiar to rational man; corresponding to this, Emerson writes,

Nature is a discipline of the understanding in intellectual truths. Our dealing with sensible objects is a constant exercise in the necessary lessons of difference, of likeness, of order, of being and seeming, of progressive arrangement; of ascent from particular to general; of combination to one end of manifold forces. (26)

Because he demonstrates Discipline, has conformed his character in accord with the lessons of Nature, Ishmael is capable of fair division, of understanding greater, "intellectual truths." To a woodsman, a whale is a whale; just as to a sailor, a tree is a tree. That is, one must have not only experience with but an Understanding of whichever fact of Nature one deals. One must have "common sense" (26). Yet, while "common sense" is a quality of Discipline, it is perhaps the most limited of the "senses" or teachings of Discipline. For with "common sense" one can see the difference between a whale and a tree, but it takes a more developed, uncommon sense to know the difference between whales, or between trees.

Understanding and Reason are limited senses also. First, they are limited by the users faculties; second, they are limited by Nature. While learned Ishmael's faculties for Understanding and Reason, his power of mind, are both profound and supple, are able to accumulate and accurately arrange a vast amount of data, he is limited to the material of Nature without attaining Idealism. Though he can surmise Spirit and universal principles, Ishmael no more knows them as veritable truth than he knows whose is the "supernatural hand" (MD 26) he holds in chapter 4, "The Counterpane." His ability to discern Spirit, however, corresponds to his Understanding and Reason. So one who knows the differences between whales, and between tress, also needs to know the different uses to which these material facts may be applied, for "Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve" (N 28). A scientific name is not a distinguishing fact of difference—for a poet or Language-maker will name a thing according to its form or essence. Rather, the difference is in the degradation of scale, the particulars of a things use. Which wood burns best? which makes the straightest post? Which whale

yields the most oil? which is the most efficient method of oil extraction? By this measure, then, a whaler is to a degree naturally Disciplined, as are all who work with Nature.

"The wise man shows his wisdom in separation, in gradation," writes Emerson, "and his scale of creatures and of merits is as wide as nature" (27). Ishmael, then, is like Emerson's "wise man," on the one hand, for he is able to write of whales: "According to magnitude I divide the whale into three primary BOOKS (subdivisible into CHAPTERS), and these shall comprehend them all, both small and large" (MD 137). Ahab, in contrast, understands only the differences between himself and all men; as Emerson writes: "The foolish have no range in their scale, but suppose every man is as every man" (N 27). Ahab's Understanding of the differences of the crew is limited. In Pip Ahab sees a fellow alienated human and a sadness not unlike his own. In Starbuck Ahab recognizes a kindred mind of relative but moderate strength and a dedicated passion to a conviction, however dissimilar it may be to his dedication. Dark Fedallah, who Ahab enlists to serve his will, is emblematic of the material counterpart of evil, and in this manner like Ahab; and yet it is interesting how often Ahab, after an emotive moment, finds the Fedallah's eyes upon him, such as after the incident in "The Symphony." Ahab gives heed to the three harpooners--Queequeg, Dagoo, Tashtego--for he needs to usurp their power and Discipline, but never does Ahab show he can recognize one from the other. While not of the crew, Moby Dick is scarred and deformed like Ahab, and the only whale Ahab ever names. Thus Ahab knows not the degradations in scale of the Pequod's crew and mates, assumes each is as the other, and all will sway under his coercion. Ahab is obedient only to himself, to his perverted and undisciplined will;

Ahab has neither rationale nor reason and cannot differentiate between forms—"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. . ." (MD 184). In contrast, Ishmael, narrator of the novel, enumerator of the differences of each character of the book, reveals an awareness of both archetypes and stereotypes—a separate plot on the "scale" for each member of the crew. For example, immediately following chapter 32, "Cetology," are "The Specksynder" and "The Cabin-Table," which delineate "the harpooner class of officers" (146) and the eating order and habits of the Pequod's officers; and in chapter 40, "Midnight, Forecastle," Ishmael identifies the men by race and dialect and relates their various reactions to Ahab and his will.

While the cetological chapters demonstrate Ishmael's Discipline in the "understanding in intellectual truths," they barely implicate the involvement of the will. Chapter 47, "The Mat-Maker," presents a scene emblematic of Ishmael's greater Discipline. Just as Emerson writes, "The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event" (N 28), Ishmael reveals and discusses his will, and the differing degrees of will in Humanity. Recalling chapter 1, "Loomings," where "meditation and water are wedded forever" (MD 4), we find in chapter 47 that "the seamen were lazily lounging about the decks, or vacantly gazing over into the lead-colored waters" (214), while Ishmael and Queequeg dreamily weave a mat. Indeed, "So still and subdued . . . was all the scene . . . that each silent sailor seemed resolved into his own *invisible* self" (emphasis mine; 214). The natural beauty of the moment, accented by the stillness, leads each man within himself, toward the

"invisible" spheres of Spirit.¹ Ishmael too moves toward the "invisible" spheres of understanding:

As I kept passing and repassing the filling or woof of marline between the long yarns of the warp, using my own hand for the shuttle, and as Queequeg, standing sideways, ever and anon slid his heavy oaken sword between the threads, and idly looking off upon the water, carelessly and unthinkingly drove home every yarn: I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermittent dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. (214)

Emerson writes, "a thing is good only so far as it serves" (N 29); Ishmael, demonstrating first his utility, uses his "hand for the shuttle." Ishmael is both witness and participant, both seer and doer, exercising his will, affecting both himself and the loom, and therefore the All.

In transcending the material world or the visible sphere toward the All, Ishmael recognizes his interconnectedness with all things and unconsciously—"mechanically"—becomes like that which he uses—"I myself were a shuttle." More so, with this action Ishmael realizes his place in Time;

¹ Just a few chapters previous, chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael, while under Ahab's malign spell, said, "Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright" (MD 195). What would seem a contradiction to his present statement and condition is actually a demonstration of the interpretability of Nature, and the varying degrees of meaning consigned to Spirit by a character (Ishmael) at different steps along the Transcendental path. In chapter 42 Ishmael has been recently affected by Ahab's coercion (which I discuss at greater length below) and thus for the moment finds white appalling, finds all things without obvious meaning deserving of fear. But now, in chapter 47, Ishmael is moving closer to Spirit and in the "invisible spheres" sees peace, serenity, wholeness.

as Time is signified by a mat being created, Ishmael is weaving his pattern into the "Loom of Time," integrating his insignificant but vital thread into a larger design. He is both of the moment and beyond it, moving toward universality.

There lay the fixed thread of the warp subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and that vibration nearly 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. (214-15)

While Nature is a "fixed" and "unalterable" fact of Time, it still admits Ishmael and Queequeg to enter into and interblend their threads. The "one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration" signifies the oneness of the All. As Emerson writes, "Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience" (28); the loom, then, and the interweaving of the three parts--Ishmael and Queequeg, representatives of mankind, and Time, that which the loom represents--are reflections of Ishmael's conscience. With Understanding and Reason, Ishmael's conscience, like the material world, reflects Spirit. He becomes a mirror, a reflection of Truth. While the other sailors, Queequeg included, gaze into the sea, Ishmael is reading deeper meaning into, extracting sense from an object at hand; as Emerson writes, "All things with which we deal, preach to us. . . . a mute gospel" (N 29).

Meantime, Queequeg's impulsive, indifferent sword, sometimes hitting the woof slantingly, or crookedly, or strongly, or weakly, as the case might be; and by this difference in the concluding blow

producing a corresponding contrast in the final aspect of the completed fabric; this savage's sword, thought I, which thus finally shapes and fashions both warp and woof; this easy, indifferent sword must be chance--aye, chance, free will, and necessity--no wise incompatible--all interweavingly working together. (MD 215)

In contrast to the above, where Ishmael consciously plies the shuttle, his part in Time, Queequeg enacts his part sporadically and impulsively. Thus Queequeg's material force is symbolic of an action committed unconsciously, without passion or determination, without a will completely corresponding to Nature; as Emerson writes, "An action is the perfection and publication of thought" (N 29). Like all thinking creatures, Queequeg's habit of thought--sometimes conscious, as in his virtuous and noble deeds, sometimes unconscious, in his moments of indifference--is reflected in his actions. Hence, Queequeg's "indifferent sword" affects "both warp and woof," which compromise and correspond to the final fabric; "chance, free will, and necessity"--all elements of Nature, however abstract--are determined by man's actions.

All men, then, have a responsibility toward each other. In chapter 72, "The Monkey-Rope," Ishmael demonstrates this. While holding onto a line of rope wedding himself to Queequeg, suspended precariously over a dead, sinking whale and many ravenous sharks, Ishmael says,

So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two: that my free will had received a mortal wound; and

that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. (320)

With the third and final reiteration of Emerson's term from "Self-Reliance," Ishmael shows that he finally understands something Queequeg knew as early as chapter 13 of *Moby-Dick* (as shown in chapter III of this study, Beauty). Only Ahab never learns the benefits of "a joint stock company," humanity; indeed, Ahab is the type that makes a "company" repulsive, and increases the chance of one such as Ishmael receiving a "mortal wound." Further pondering his bonding with Queequeg, Ishmael realizes "that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breaches; only, in most cases, he . . . has this . . . with a plurality of others mortals" (320). Thus Ishmael's will is still "free," still individually his though subject to "plurality"; but the individual and plural will is subject to chance and necessity, which result from and are a part of the interconnectedness of Nature. As Emerson writes, we ". . . have each an experience precisely parallel, and leading to the same conclusion: because all organizations are radically alike" (N 29); thus while Ishmael's "experience" with the monkey-rope leads him to learn what Queequeg had already learned, it shapes his Understanding and Reason and leads to a spiritual truth parallel to the mat-maker episode. For all men need to be responsible toward each other, toward Time, toward Nature and Spirit. All men need to apply their shuttles and swords consciously, lest they botch their patterns. For Nature's design will not swerve under man's will. "The Mat-maker" chapter continues thus,

The straight warp of necessity, not to be swerved from its ultimate course—its every alternating vibration, indeed, only tending to that; free will still free to ply her shuttle between given threads; and

chance, though restrained in its play within the right lines of necessity, and sideways in its motions modified by free will, though thus prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events. (215)

Nature's will, free will, one single vibration, remains unchanging, and yet admits the interblending, the interconnectedness of other threads: a savage's sword; the conscious weave of Ishmael's hand; or, the skewed and bitter taint of Ahab's malevolent will, a will shaped and honed to destroy Nature, to eradicate free will, and therefore a will antipodal to Nature's. In spite of the opposing elements making up the mat, "in this vision," writes Jeanne C. Howes, "a mood of harmony and classic serenity prevails" (18); that is, "a mood" projected by Ishmael, one in league with Unity. Emerson writes, ". . . every natural process is a version of a moral sentence" (N 29); Ishmael, then, learns his morality (the value of interconnectedness, in this case), his conscience, from his Understanding and Reason, his Discipline, his use of Nature.

Yet Discipline, like all steps upon the Transcendent path, is as transient as footsteps in sand. A wave of enthusiasm effortlessly sweeps the fugitive tracks away. Thus "chance," that random, chaotic element of Nature, offers, in "The Mat-Maker," "the last featuring blow"; the chance sighting of a sperm whale's spout calls forth a "wild and unearthly" cry from aloft--"There she blows!" (MD 215).² On one level, Tashtego's cry is "unearthly" because it is unexpected, seemingly from a realm outside of Ishmael's experience. In

² But the true "last featuring blow at events" is Moby Dick's blow against the prow of the Pequod. All of the crew--save Ishmael, who has his Discipline--answer to Nature's blow.

other words, the "unearthly" sound stalls Ishmael's momentary transcendence, returns him (similar to the episode atop the mast-head) to the material world of necessity; the "unearthly" cry causes "the ball of free will [to be] dropped from [Ishmael's] hand" (215): chance first affects and then supplants free will by forcing one to attend to inescapable and compulsory conditions subordinate to Spirit. Ishmael need not forego his free will, yet his role on a whaler demands that he enact his part, that he fulfill his assignment as bowsman in Starbuck's boat. Thus Ishmael returns to the realm of material with a lesson learned—a lesson taught through Discipline: the interdependent and blended roles of "chance, free will, and necessity" in a symbiotic universe.

Wanting to eradicate "free will," to remove the discipline of equality as demonstrated by Ishmael above, is Ahab. Clearly there is something malign, or, more simply, wrong with Ahab. In the visible sphere he is obviously short a leg. In the sphere of the invisible there is ". . . the subtle insanity of Ahab respecting Moby Dick. . . ." (MD 212)—his character. Both Ahab the physical man (like Nature, representative of the invisible sphere) and some nameless characteristic[s] of his merit discussion with respect to Emersonian Discipline.

But "What exactly *is* Ahab's problem?" Ahab himself says, ". . . I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself!" (MD 168); in this view only he is capable to "comprehend" his madness. But even this view is monocled, reduced to a singular separateness; it is without dimension, without the benefit of humanity, the universe, satellites by which one may find guidance. In "Circles" Emerson writes, "The field cannot be well seen from within the

field. The astronomer must have his diameter of the earth's orbit as a base to find the parallax of any star" ("O" 235). Thus in chapter 118, "The Quadrant," Ahab rejects science--a form of Understanding and Reason achieved through Discipline--by smashing it on the deck--"Foolish toy!" (501). In chapter 124, "The Needle," Ahab concocts his own crude mechanism to find his bearings: destroying a proven method of measuring a universal principle for an untested one of his own devising may win over the crew's faith and loyalty, but it further demonstrates Ahab's distance from humanity and its tools, and shows how he is without Emersonian Discipline.

Like the ancient mythic cryptogram, the enigmatic symbol discussed in chapter 70, "The Sphynx," Ahab is a riddle. Ishmael describes the difficulties of beheading a whale (clearly much more onerous than emasculating a leg), pointing out that boneheaded Stubb boasts he can behead a sperm whale in ten minutes; Ishmael explains,

Bear in mind, too, that under these untoward circumstances he has to cut many feet deep in the flesh; and in that subterraneous manner, without so much as getting one single peep into that ever-contracting gash thus made, he must skilfully steer clear of all adjacent, interdicted parts, and exactly divide the spine at a critical point. . . .

(310)

While like Oedipus Ahab challenges the figurative sphinx of the sea, it is the self-imposed duty of the book-whalers--who wield pens in place of harpoons and say, "Call me scholar"--to "skilfully steer clear of all" remote and ersatz slabs, to "cut many feet deep" into "and exactly divide [Ahab's] spine at a critical point. . . ." in order to begin to know him, to understand his problem. Ishmael says, "The whale, like all things that are mighty, wears a false brow

to the common world. . . . For I believe that much of a man's character will be found betokened in his backbone" (349). A compendium of the criticism "in that subterranean manner" supplies a width of solutions as deep as Ahab's "ever-contracting gash"; and though the hypotheses work within that "gash," they tend, without simple Stubb's dexterity, to gnash the "adjacent, interdicted parts" too often, not getting at what I contend is the "critical point." Though many a pen has written on Ahab, none has touched upon what I contend is the "critical point."

Like the doubloon, Ahab's problem seems interpretable. And many have come to read the riddle of the man who walks on one leg. In 1929, Lewis Mumford, like Columbus finding North America, rediscovers Melville and declares that Ahab's problem is his "titanic pride. . . . There is madness in that pride, the madness of a tormented soul" (165).³

³ There is no question that Ahab has a problematic pride. But I show and discuss the cause, Ahab's misaligned nature, rather than the psychological effect (or defect). In fact, Ahab's pride has probably earned more critical discourse than any other single aspect of *Moby-Dick*. Newton Arvin, for example, posits that Ahab is guilty of *hybris* in the Greek sense, or of excessive pride, in the Christian sense" (56). Gene Bluestein concurs: "He is guilty of hubris, the sin of pride, in the very classical sense. . . ." (101). And while Mary Roth writes that Ahab's madness is ". . . of a nonclinical and undefined sort" (119), she surmises Ahab's problem is that "the vast expanse [of the universe] is suddenly all too small; it becomes the wall of a prison pressing close upon the American will and ego which demands for its sustained endurance the spatial gratification of the infinite" (122). I assume Roth has read Sacvan Bercovitch's *The American Jeremiad*; for Bercovitch writes of

. . . the actual tyranny that Ahab manages to enforce. . . . Ahab [is] an antinomian romantic turned 'mogul,' 'czar,' 'sultan,' 'emperor.' Thus the novel tends to divide our sympathies between two modes of individualism, American and false American. And in Ishmael's ambiguous gestures toward fulfilling the federal covenant it offers us a cultural rite of passage—a revolutionary American Way to exorcise the rebellious Ahab in our souls. Blasphemy may enchant when it takes the form of monomania. As a social alternative it can only argue the need for the containment of individualism. (192)

Concurring with Mumford, Richard B. Sewall states that Ahab, as a result of his humongous pride, ". . . is more than man--and more than tragic man; he is a self-appointed God" (51).⁴ With similar ends but a different linguistical approach, Alfred Kazin proclaims that Ahab ". . . is a hero of thought who is trying, by terrible force, to reassert man's place in nature" (44). While these critics have shown Ahab's problem is an abundance of bile, others in contrast argue that Ahab's problem results from a lack of goodness. For example, Therman B. O'Daniel says Ahab is ". . . almost a demon" (55). Going a little lower, Henry A. Murray insists, "Captain Ahab is an embodiment of that fallen angel or demi-god who in Christendom was variously named Lucifer, Devil, Adversary, Satan. The Church Fathers would have called Ahab 'Antichrist' because he was not Satan himself, but a human creature possessed of all Satan's pride and energy. . . ." (66). A diplomat, F. O. Matthiessen explains Ahab's problem as encompassing both the good and evil visions, for he says the mystery to Melville's "hero" lies in the juxtaposition of "ungodly" and "God-like" (445-46).

Bercovitch would "exorcise" all proud, egotistical, and self-reliant characters, no matter the degree. Of those like Ahab Roth calls "mad."

⁴ Actually, Sewall points out that this is an extreme of Ahab's character, based on one of his more quoted lines: "Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. . . . Who's over me?" Juxtaposing this to, "I am the Fates' lieutenant," Sewall concludes that in this pose Ahab "is less than man, a mere agent of destiny" (51). Because Sewall's theology leans more towards Chance than Fate, his judgement is questionable, purportedly not objective. Ishmael works out a fair theory (as shown in "The Mat-Maker") for the interblending of these abstracts with the third part, necessity. Hence, Sewall contends that man is not man but "less than man" who proscribes to Fate. By Sewall's logic, then neither is Ishmael man: "*It so chanced, that after the Parsee's disappearance, I was he whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman. . . .*" (emphases mine; 573). Indeed, Stubb and Flask are the only real men by Sewall's count.

While the one critical approach deals mostly with the theological aspects of Ahab's character, the other leg depends upon which critical agenda is applied.⁵ For example, Marius Bewley grants, "Ahab is guilty of that most democratic of sins--of denying hierarchy between the body and soul, eternal and temporal values" (107).⁶ Charles Olson shows that Ahab is in part designed after Shakespeare's Lear and Fool and "the Faust legend . . . of both Marlowe and Goethe" (55). Henry L. Golemba understates that Ahab is ". . . an example of aspiring but misdirected conduct" (198).⁷ Michael Vannoy Adams' "Whaling and Difference: Moby-Dick Deconstructed," claims

⁵ The contrast in critical opinions seems to result from the critics' world view[s]. Though criticism of this sort is supposed to be objective, it is not. For example, each of the critics in the above paragraph read Moby-Dick with a dualist tendency; that is, they bifurcated the tale, divided it into this side and that. Donald E. Pease's highly political "Moby-Dick and the Cold War" demonstrates this "Us against them" (115) attitude which is omnipresent in especially Matthiessen and to some degree in Bercovitch among others. The second tendency follows a less narrow polemic, does not posit that the text should be read where "Ishmael's freedom is opposed to Ahab's totalitarianism" (117); the focus, then, is on Ahab, and not Ahab's affect on Ishmael and the rest of the crew. My study does not argue that Moby-Dick should be read as Ahab against Ishmael, as man vs. man. True, Ahab does threaten Ishmael's freedom. But it is Ahab who divides the world into dualisms (man v. society). Ishmael, while temporarily affected, is capable of a much more universal view. (I would write "man v. Nature" but the "v." poses as a problem; it admits to an opposition or force which does not exist. I contend Man v. Self is best.) Besides, in no way does Ishmael ever oppose Ahab. A fair, objective reporter, Ishmael lets Ahab speak through him, and thus only Starbuck and we as readers oppose or damn Ahab. If anything, Ahab's suasion is so powerful that we as readers are liable to be coerced, to read Moby-Dick--though Ishmael warns us not to--as "a hideous and intolerable allegory" (MD 205), in which we would have to for the sake of clarity bifurcate the text and reduce it to that which it is not. As Emerson writes, "The wise man shows his wisdom in separation, in gradation, and his scale of creatures and of merits is as wide as nature" (N 27).

⁶ While there is a lot of criticism discussing Melville and Democracy, I find it interesting that, in light of their recent and local popularity, no Marxist critics have subjected Moby-Dick to a thorough analysis.

⁷ On the subject of conduct, I could not find one Feminist reading of Moby-Dick; and since Melville's work abounds with gynecomorphic imagery, it seems a study of this sort would be natural.

to an extent Ahab "tends to be a deconstructor" as long as "he has doubts and expresses them. . . ." (59).⁸

And there are those, of course, whose gam with Ahab compares or contrasts him to some tangent of Emerson. Richard Chase, for example, asserts that there is ". . . reason to think of him as guilty of or victimized by a distorted 'self-reliance'" (56). Theodore L. Gross claims "at the center of Melville's fiction is his criticism of Emersonian self-reliance, his deep skepticism about the nature of confidence and optimism--and authority" (34). While Joel J. Thomas shows that in the novel "a change toward Transcendentalism itself can be discerned" (413), he concludes that Melville's feelings about transcendental quests changed from a bias to a celebration of the hero (Ahab). In his curious, unpublished doctoral thesis, "Melville's Critique of the Transcendental Hero," J. P. Alaimo posits that Ahab's problem is ". . . of his own unbalanced egotism, his own impotent rage for power" (248). Henry Nash Smith argues Ahab's heroic language suggests a higher truth that transcends mere everyday common sense (35). Allen Austin suggests that with Ahab ". . . Melville satirizes transcendentalism and individualism" (344). And, to cite just one more,

⁸ Adams rather confusing essay ultimately compares Transcendentalism to Deconstruction--". . . the difference between the transparent eyeball and the pasteboard mask tends to be the difference between the transcendentalist and the deconstructor" (60). Thus Adams contends that Ahab *seems* to an extent to be both, but is actually neither--"There is no felicity to Ahab, only misery, for he is not a demystifier, or deconstructor. He is a constructor of significance. He is a mystifier--and not the sort that Ishmael is. . . Ahab is in search of the white whale, which is to say, in pursuit of signs" (61). The gist of Adams' conclusion is that Ahab "establishes a relation in which to construe a significance is to commit suicide" (63). If Adams is correct, Ahab is Bartleby.

Michael J. Hoffman writes that the "heroic central figure" of Moby-Dick, Ahab, is

a character on the epic scale, whose strength overwhelms all the men who surround him; but he is blinded by his own vision, mouths the ideas of an author who Melville thought 'a humbug' [Emerson], and is ultimately a parody of the Transcendental "great man." (3)⁹

None of these statements is entirely wrong. They are, in part, all right. But none "exactly divide" Ahab's malign "spine" at the "critical point"; rather, each hypothesis looks at *what* Ahab does (action), as is the fashion with analysis grounded in psychology, than denote *why* he does what he does. We should invert this pattern, and look first at cause and later at effect. Only then can we instruct unity. As Emerson writes in "Circles," "Cause and effect are two sides of one fact" ("O" 236). The "one fact" which the hypotheses share as common ground is that Ahab has a problem or dilemma (though each tends to give it a different name), and it is both causal and effectual--"Ah, God! what trances of torments does that man

⁹ Hoffman's "The Anti-Transcendentalism of Moby-Dick" is rather curious and, like his understanding of Emerson's Nature and his reading of Ahab, suspect. First, Hoffman (after Milton Stern) suggests Moby-Dick is a "parody" of Transcendentalism (3); second, according to Hoffman's reading of Melville "Nature has no value" (3); third, Ahab embodies Emerson's Transcendental hero (6); and, fourth, "Melville sees beyond Emerson, who did not take with sufficient seriousness the possibility that spirit could be anything other than 'good'" (11). I think Hoffman quotes Melville on Emerson--"a humbug"--out of context. Unfortunately Hoffman doesn't cite his source, nor can I locate it. Melville easily could have called Emerson a "humbug," but the connotation wouldn't have been necessarily pejorative. For example, in a letter to Evert Duyckinck (February 5, 1849), Melville admits that he "was very agreeably disappointed in Mr. Emerson," but "Say what they will, he's a great man" (287). In another letter to Duyckinck (March 3, 1849), Melville writes, "...let us call [Emerson] a fool;--then had I rather be a fool than a wise man" (292). Melville's passion for language often results in word usages which whelm the average reader, if he is open-minded, and confuse him, if he is not.

endure who is consumed with one unachieved revengeful desire. He sleeps with clenched hands; and wakes with his own bloody nails in his palms" (MD 201). Though revenge may seem to be Ahab's dilemma, it is his escape from his real problem; for he has shifted the blame from self to an external object. And his inability to enact his revenge further complicates his dilemma.

Thus Ahab's problem, simple and evident, is that he is unaligned with Nature; for his will corresponds not with the will of Nature. Rather than be part and parcel of Nature, part of the All, Ahab would have Nature and all of the ship's crew serve and cater to his will. If we view Ahab from the perspective of the Me and the Not Me, between the Spirit and material, Ahab dwells within the sphere of the Not Me, as he admits after "his ivory leg had been snapped off" in chapter 134, "The Chase--Second Day": "I account no living bone of mine one jot more me, than this dead one that's lost" (560). Ahab considers his Me, in Emersonian terms, to be his Not Me; thus he reduces all facets of the universe to his own terms, as his reading of the doubloon demonstrates. For Ahab's Me is clearly material--"This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy" (167). And since Ahab defines his Me as material, he hates the immaterial, the invisible spheres. Though he would, Ahab cannot simply diminish the universal and subjugate the universe to do his will; thus his inability to grasp and understand the universe wracks him--"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 the mind" (312). Ahab wants to call all that is immaterial, material; all that he cannot grasp, graspable; all that is evil, the white whale.

When Ahab defines what he calls his "soul"—". . . Ahab's soul's a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs" (561)—his use of the term embodies the Pequod's crew. Ahab determines that his "soul"—otherwise a natural conduit, connector of will to Nature—has material, legged representatives. If his will were aligned with Nature, if he had had his Discipline, Ahab would know, as Emerson writes, "Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world" (N 30); to an open mind and heart and soul, Nature offers imagery which corresponds with Spirit. Rather, Ahab manipulates language and Nature, invents a material image which, however accurate it is in light of his suasion, depicts the material and excludes Spirit. By accepting a universal principle, Ahab would not be tortured by that which he cannot grasp, the invisible spheres, and would not in turn torture others with that which tortures him. By accepting a universal principle, a kinder, gentler Ahab, perhaps, could achieve universal understanding. Thus Ahab would allow Nature to determine his will, rather than he determine it.

Denying the existence of Spirit, relying on a faith grounded on what he can control, Ahab limits his power of mind to the material and the mortal; while he shapes and conforms his will to avenge his leg and his pride, he cannot abrogate Spirit and subjugate the universe to do his deed. Thus he abuses his power as Captain. Besides his material self, Ahab's only tool is a vessel full of seamen, and then only if he can petition them to enlist in his unofficial but acknowledged, independent crusade against the established evil of the capital "snow hill in the air" (MD 7). Emerson writes,

The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event. From the child's successive possession of his several senses up

to the hour when he saith, 'Thy will be done!' he is learning the secret that he can reduce under his will not only particular events but great classes, nay, the whole series of events, and so conform all facts to his character. (N 28)

Ahab never learns the "secret." He is without Discipline. Instead of becoming part and parcel of the All, Ahab is the quintessential "*Isolato* living on a separate continent of his own" (MD 121). Not "federated along one keel" (121) with the rest of the crew, Ahab thinks himself superior to mankind and nature. Says Starbuck, "Horrible old man! Who's over him, he cries;—aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!" (169). Hence Ahab wrestles to seize control of his will, struggling to remove it from the realm of Nature. Attempting to maintain control, authoritarian Ahab creates a new world order, conforming all within his power—especially the Pequod, microcosm of the macrocosmic—after the law of his self-determined, aberrant will. He has thus removed himself from the All. Both physically and spiritually, Ahab is a fragmented man who lives a "life of shreds and patches" ("OS" 227), as Emerson writes in "The Over Soul."

Ishmael receives Discipline from events such as those described in "The Mast-Head" and the "The Mat-Maker" chapters. Ahab is without Discipline, does not learn from but rather wants to be master of Nature, of the universe. For Ahab believes all has been ordained by Fate, a destiny which he has helped to shape and determine. "This whole act's immutably decreed," Ahab tells Starbuck. "'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a million years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders" (MD 561). Ahab declares "chance, free will, and necessity" do not (if

he will even admit they exist) affect him. In chapter 37, "Sunset," Ahab defines his will:

The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (168)

Ahab's "purpose"--to annihilate Moby Dick, ridding the world, as he believes, of all evil--is "fixed." More so, "iron" is an apt metaphor for Ahab's will: for human hands forge "iron," natural matter that is pliable when hot and impulsive, into whatever is willed; and while he forgets that iron rusts, Ahab knows that iron, the material of a harpoon, can pierce a man's will if aimed correctly.¹⁰ To ensure his aim "he seemed ready to sacrifice all mortal interests to that one passion" (211); as he rejects the pleasure of his pipe, of his wife and child, and of the opportunity for friendship with Starbuck, Ahab denies all "mortal interests," including the pursuit of Spirit, which is--considering the money amassed in tithes, the energy spent in art, the pages given to bible-language, and the seventh of each week the devout

¹⁰ This idea can be related to a paragraph from Emerson's "Compensation":
A man cannot speak but he judges himself. With his will or against his will he draws his portrait to the eye of his companions by every word. Every opinion reacts on him who utters it. It is a thread-ball thrown at a mark, but the other end remains in the thrower's bag. Or rather it is a harpoon hurled at the whale, unwinding, as it flies, a coil of cord in the boat, and, if the harpoon is not good, or not well thrown, it will go nigh to cut the steersman in twain or to sink the boat. ("C" 176)

Thus Ahab's nervous and lofty language, further emphasized by "his nervous step" (*MD* 160), portrays his character (as he defines both himself and the doubloon on its surface), and attracts, as Ishmael shows, the eyes of the crew toward him. And his language, the publication of his thought, coerces the crew, allowing him to do his will, to throw the harpoon, in an attempt to kill Moby Dick, which holds the hemp that is Ahab's prophesied death--"Hemp alone can kill thee" (499).

donate to their discipline--perhaps the largest of all "mortal interests."¹¹ Ahab's will serves only himself, and neither others nor the All, and therefore is destructive to each man aboard the Pequod.

Though egoistic and solipsistic, self-centered and with a "fixed" will, Ahab cannot exercise his wrath without the assistance of the Pequod's crew, without "a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater" ("SR" 141). While the will of man is naturally aligned with Nature, the whaler is, as are all who work in earnest, susceptible to perversion; for one aligned primarily with Nature is neither cognizant nor leery of a misdoer and would say with Emerson: "I grasp the hands of those next [to] me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work. . . ." ("AS" 59). In the beginning of "The Over Soul" Emerson asks, "We grant that human life is mean, but how did we find out that it was mean?" ("OS" 209). Natural man lives for Spirit, does not recognize the evils and perils of society till a confidence-man on a busy street has picked Faith from his pocket. Like Spirit, evil is a part of the symbiotic universe; but unlike Spirit, evil is not an inherent but a learned entity. One is taught unnatural ways by a culture not obedient to and therefore misaligned with Nature. Aboard the Pequod,

¹¹ In "The Symphony," besides glimmering the Unity of material nature, Ahab sees the oneness between humans--humanity--in Starbuck's eyes, though as usual he denies it: "Starbuck, of late I've felt strangely moved to thee; ever since that hour we both saw--thou know'st what, in one another's eyes" (MD 561). Yet obviously something strong passes between the two men, perhaps the first touch of compassion Ahab has felt in the 40 years since he married, for otherwise Ahab would not bring it up. Despite some strange friendly feeling he has for his first mate, Ahab rejects him, "But in the matter of the whale, be the front of thy face to me as the palm of this hand--a lipless, unfeatured blank. Ahab is for ever Ahab, man" (561). No cozy, loving pair, Ahab tells Starbuck to be like that which he hates--blank, the color of white.

Ahab, who wishes to eradicate evil, actually embodies evil, unnatural ways. Ironically, Alfred Kazin writes, "Ahab is trying to give man, in one awful, final assertion that his will *does* mean something, a feeling of relatedness to the world" (44). On one level, Kazin is correct. Ahab *does* want his will to mean something, as did Hannibal, Napoleon, Hitler, or a mass of other armchair dictators. Unfortunately, the "relatedness" Kazin calls for is in actuality a subjugation of the material (and spiritual) world, which sometimes entails enlisting a deity into servitude, and which always involves an army of men without Discipline to do the will of one, in a dictatorship, or a few, in a democracy. The best way to feel a sense of "relatedness" is to experience life, not control it. One learns "relatedness" with nature by walking in a wood (or living within it as did Thoreau), not by clear-cutting. For example, Ishmael learns his "relatedness" to whales by experiencing them, by reading what others have had to say about them, by getting amongst them ("The Grand Armada"), and by using his senses to know them ("A Squeeze of the Hand") in multifarious ways. Ishmael's Discipline teaches him a "relatedness" that adheres to Universal law and therefore supports life, Nature, and Unity. Ahab is without Discipline; he has a malign passion, an unaligned will, and can only "give man," as Kazin would have it, lessons by which one may learn—as Ishmael says, "Give not thyself up, then, to the fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me" (425).¹²

¹² A reading of Sam Keen's Fire in the Belly would behoove Ishmael; for it would help him to embrace and accept patriarchal Ahab. But then it may deprive us of a greater and better tale—Ishmael's.

Thus Ahab--determined, purposeful and strong-willed--manipulates the crew to do his will by perverting the first tenets of Nature: Commodity, Beauty, Language, and of course Discipline. While one must pass through each phase of Nature, as Ishmael shows, to achieve Spirit, Ahab proves that one may cheat another of his ideal much more easily. Perhaps Ahab whittles away at the core of each of the primary stages of Transcendentalism because, rather than cutting to the critical point, he believes that in order to filch the crew's will once and for all he must undermine their various faiths, wherever the strengths lie. Knowing that "his officers and men must have some nearer things to think of than Moby Dick" (MD 212), Ahab offers "to each shareholder" material compensation--"I will not strip these men, thought Ahab, of all hopes of cash--aye, cash" (212)--for as Emerson writes, "the soul is subject to dollars" ("AS" 52). Though recruited to execute his purpose, the crew are allowed to hunt other whales--perhaps as practice for the final, high "noon" (MD 564)--to shift their attention from the "peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead, and . . . high pyramidical white hump" (183), as Ishmael fairly describes the white whale in chapter 41, "Moby Dick."

Ahab's descriptions of Moby Dick convert the whale's natural beauty to ugliness and in a weird twist of Reason to evil. In chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," the inebriated and impulsive crew, excited from the prospect of earning a doubloon, extol Ahab's "fiercely glad and approving . . . countenance" (161) and concur "to chase that white whale . . . over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out" (163). While Ahab berates and perverts the natural beauty of the whale to signify something nameless and evil, open-minded Ishmael--that is, free of Ahab's suasion and oppressive will--depicts whales as naturally beautiful and harmonious, as

creatures of Nature's will. In chapters 88, "Schools and Schoolmasters," and 89, "Fast Fish and Loose Fish," the whales are shown in a "domestic bliss" (392) comparable to humanity, or mankind aligned with the will of Nature. Chapter 44, "The Chart," explains that a whale's instinct is so marvelously exact it can be mapped. More so, "The Chase" chapters, 133, 134, and 135, show that Moby Dick only attacks when compelled, out of self-defense. When opposing Ahab in "The Quarter-Deck" chapter, Starbuck calls Moby Dick a "dumb brute" who ". . . simply smote [Ahab] from blindest instinct!" (163-64). And Ishmael describes the whale in chapters such as "The Tail" and "The Grand Armada" as sublimely beautiful. Thus in such incidences Beauty permits an open-minded Ishmael to transcend the material world to glim the All. The sperm whale, Moby Dick included, is a naturally peaceful animal whose will is aligned with Nature; if a whale is interpreted as evil, it is because in self-defense it turns and attacks its persecutor. Ahab, himself claiming persecution by a whale and therefore the All of which the whale is part, arouses the crew's pity (Ishmael included, at this point): "that accursed white whale that razeed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!" (163). Like Commodity, Ahab manipulates Beauty to engage the crew to do his will, to mystify and seemingly transmute the will of Nature.

Thus Ahab entrances the crew--"The crew, man, the crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale?" (164)--by also using and perverting Language and the symbol of unity, the circle. Taunting the men--"What say ye, men, will ye splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look brave" (163)--Ahab cries, "The measure! The measure!" (165), daring each to measure up to his challenge. While "the ship heaved and *rolled*" (emphasis mine; 165), "the ship's company formed a *circle* round the group"

(emphasis mine; 165), which consists of Ahab and his harpooners (four men, like the four points of a compass). Ahab demands, "stout mariners, *ring me in*" (emphasis mine; 165). With a host of expletives corresponding to what I consider the most important word in the novel--"roll," for it threads, weaves, and blends each episodic part into a cohesive whole--and with a few rounds of grog, Ahab transforms the wills of the crew, making theirs one will aligned to his:

"Drink and pass!" he cried, handing the heavy charged flagon to the nearest seamen. "The crew alone now drink. *Round with it, round!* . . . So, so; it goes *round* excellently. It *spiralizes* in ye; forks out at the serpent-snapping eye. Well done; almost drained. That way it went, this way it comes. Hand it me--here's a hollow! Men, ye seem the years; so *brimming* life is gulped and gone. Steward, refill!

"Attend now, me braves. I have mustered ye all *round* this capstan. . . ." (emphases mine; 165)

While Ahab's vocabulary reeks of the perversion of the most impeccable symbol of Nature, so too does his imagery. The dual meanings of "hollow" and "flagon" relating to his leg; emptied and refilled, the vessel is recirculating around the crew--"That way it went, this way it comes." Encouraging the men in this fraternal bond, Ahab identifies the cyclical nature of life--"Men, ye seem the years; so *brimming* life is gulped and gone."¹³ But submission to a will not of Nature has its toll. The crew enlists in a blind, mindless, mechanical existence:

¹³ In a corresponding passage, Emerson writes, The spirit of the world, the great calm presence of the Creator, comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision

"D'ye feel brave, men, brave?"

"As fearless fire," cried Stubb.

"And as mechanical," muttered Ahab. (562)

Only Starbuck, in contrast, openly rebels and does not mechanically adhere to Ahab's will. To Starbuck, life is a matter of right and wrong, good and evil, white and black, and he cannot imagine why anyone would want to do wrong. So steadfast to his idea of rightness and goodness, Starbuck wishes to be blind to the perils and evils of the world:

Loveliness unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride's eye!--
Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal
ways. Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and
do believe. (492)

Thus pragmatic and prudent Starbuck ships only to kill whales for a living, and can only concede to killing dumb brutes for monetary gain.

Traditionally conservative, he is imbued with the Quaker idiom, as his first opposition to Ahab shows--". . . I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance. How many barrels will thy vengeance yield thee if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market" (163). Starbuck, then, seemingly takes up the voice of Reason,

comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body. ("P"
256)

Thus Ahab inebriates the men in a pagan-like ritual of bonding still prevalent in some societies today. Intoxication leads one to react on impulse rather than instinct, a characteristic of Nature. Ishmael defines it: "instinct-say, rather, secret intelligence from the Deity" (*MD* 199). Like one of Melville's "Bachelors of Maids," Ahab woos and wins his crew with wine and song, and forgetting their Discipline, their common sense and morality, they surrender.

"What do ye do when ye see a whale, men?"

"Sing out for him!" was the impulsive rejoinder from a score of clubbed voices. (161)

protesting Ahab's autocratic desires--"Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous" (164). Because it "seems blasphemous," because it lies on the wrong side of his faith, Starbuck cannot consign himself to this will. Although "Starbuck would ever be apt to fall into open relapses of rebellion against his captain's leadership" (212)--he only opposes and does not rebel against Ahab--"My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; . . . he drilled down deep, and blasted all my reason out of me!" (169)--because "Starbuck's body and Starbuck's coerced will were Ahab's, so long as Ahab kept his magnet at Starbuck's brain. . . ." (212). Even when in chapter 123, "The Musket," Starbuck has the opportunity to shoot Ahab in his sleep he does not, but like Hamlet cannot decide--"Great god, where art thou? Shall I? Shall?" (515). Thus Starbuck confesses that Ahab has affected his Reason, challenged his simple, dichotomous world-view, and left him powerless, commanded by a madman, dominated by "a heathen crew that have small touch of human mothers in them!" (169). Though Ahab upsets Starbuck's Reason, it is not a Reason contingent to the All but is a Reason related to Starbuck's particular brand of faith; while Starbuck's faith may be stronger than most of the crew's, it still is not a Discipline of Nature and Spirit and is therefore impermanent and bendable, however inflexible Starbuck may appear.

But in chapter 38, "Dusk" (foil to Ahab's previous soliloquy in chapter 37, "Sunset"), Starbuck, though out of balance, conserves his mores, offering a version of events which juxtaposes Ahab's "iron way":

The white whale is their demigorgon. Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward! mark the unfaltering silence aft! Methinks it pictures life. Foremost through the sparkling sea shoots on the gay,

embattled, bantering bow, but only to drag dark Ahab after it, where he broods within his sternward cabin, builded over the dead water of the wake, and further on, hunted by its wolfish gurglings. (169-70)

Thus Starbuck sees that "Cause and effect are two sides of one fact." With "white whale" and "dark Ahab," the "revelry" forward and "silence aft," the natural state of the "sparkling" and "gay" sea versus the "wolfish gurglings" which Ahab brings upon himself, Starbuck orders the world founded on Reason proscribed by his dualistic belief. Since he falls to neither side, for none represent his brand of eternal good, Starbuck conserves his traditional values, assumes the role of mediator between dictator-captain and heathen-crew. Because of ". . . the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or rightmindedness in Starbuck. . ." (186), he remains steadfast to and preaches his views and cannot be responsible for killing Ahab, even if it means saving the crew. In the shadow of Ahab, Starbuck says, "Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like this, with soul beat down and held to knowledge,--as wild, untutored things are forced to feed--Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent horror in thee! but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me!" (170). In contrast to the material Me of Ahab, Starbuck's Me is of a supernal sort, dwells beyond Ahab's iron hold. But while aboard the Pequod, Starbuck's Not Me is Ahab's.

"The central Unity is still more conspicuous in actions," writes Emerson. "An action is the perfection and publication of thought" (N 31). After Ahab's indoctrination, in chapter 40, "Midnight, Forecastle," the crew's revelry continues and concludes in a fight, symbolic of the lack of community, the manifest disunity of the crew. The natural inclination to rebel against an oppressor is misunderstood by a crew suddenly short of

common as well as uncommon sense; they take sides against each other. Similarly, Ahab's oppressed will rebels against him. When in "The Symphony" Ahab allows himself to open to Nature, his will, his conscience recognizes Beauty and Oneness, however temporarily. When in that most natural of states, sleep, Ahab's soul mutinies against his body, reacts against his malign will:

For, at such time, crazy Ahab, the scheming, unappeasedly steadfast hunter of the white whale; this Ahab that had gone to his hammock, was not the agent that so caused him to burst from it in horror again. The latter was the eternal, living principle or soul in him; and in sleep, being for the time dissociated from the characterizing mind, which at other times employed it for its outer vehicle or agent, it spontaneously sought escape from the scorching contiguity of the frantic thing, of which, for the time, it was no longer an integral. (202)¹⁴

Thus Ahab's power of mind controls his will--a power of mind misaligned with Nature; for the "characterizing mind" alone suppresses the "soul," the Me.

But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab's case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own

¹⁴ In two other similar instances Ahab reveals his troubled soul when asleep. While in chapter 111, "The Pacific," Ishmael enjoys a relation to Nature unparalleled in *Moby-Dick*, sleeping Ahab's "ringing cry ran through the vaulted hull, 'Stern all! the White Whale spouts thick blood!'" (*MD* 483). After Starbuck opts not to shoot Ahab in "The Musket" chapter, calmly telling his captain that the typhoon has settled, somnambulist Ahab screams, "'Stern all! Oh Moby Dick, I clutch thy heart at last!'" (515).

sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. (202)

Ahab's independence is beyond "Self-Reliance." Ahab is not, as Hoffman contends, ". . . Emerson carried to the extreme" (6), for Ahab's peculiarity is of a different sphere than that called for by Emerson. The similarity lies in the word "independent" alone. Both Ahab and Emerson's self-reliant hero claim "non-conformity," but with opposing intentions. Emerson observes a universal principle of Discipline--"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles" (164). Ahab openly rejects the entire universe--"I'd strike the sun if it insulted me" (MD 164)--and like a mad, undisciplined dictator demands universal obedience to his monomaniac will.

Chapter VI
Idealism and Spirit

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. (MD 179)

Two observations need to be made regarding this passage, the opening lines of chapter 41, "Moby Dick." The initial appositive is significant because it shows Melville's narrator attempting to regain and redefine his assumed identity after the suasion of Ahab in chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck." While chapter 35, "The Mast-Head," belongs entirely to Ishmael--and offers the first significant transcendental incident of Idealism and Spirit in Moby-Dick--thereafter the narration shifts from first person to third-person omniscient and for five chapters Ishmael's presence is lost to the second class of the subtitle to chapter 36--"(Enter Ahab: Then, all.)" (160). The third-person narration then continues through chapters 37, 38, and 39, in which Ahab, Starbuck, and Stubb each recount their views of the events earlier that day on the quarter-deck; and in chapter 40, "Midnight, Forecastle," the omniscient narration relates the revelry of the sailors--22 total, a cosmopolitan gathering of 18 different nations (five are Nantucket sailors)--a mate's voice (probably Flask, the lowest in rank), Pip, and Tashtego and Daggoo--Ishmael and Queequeg do not speak individually, unless Ishmael is referred to as a Nantucket sailor, but must be included in the four chants of "All." As shown above, chapter 41 presents Ishmael reclaiming his

persona, and thus his will, after temporarily loosing it to Ahab's bullying. Throughout Moby-Dick Ishmael oscillates between first person narrator and an unaccounted for, anonymous sailor during third-person narration.

The second important point involves the narrator's identity (and I call him "Ishmael," for the sake of clarity, and because with the first line of the novel he requests it). Of Ishmael's past we know he was recently broke, depressed, and curious; we know he is from the country; we assume he was once a school teacher (for a sailor he is surprisingly well read); we know, as he tells Peleg, he had been in the merchant marines on several voyages previous to his venture on a whaler. Of Ishmael's future we learn in chapter 54, "The Town-Ho's Story," that some time after the tale of Ahab and Moby Dick, Ishmael is in Lima, Peru, smoking cigars, drinking chicha, and telling sea stories to "cavaliers, the young Dons, Pedro and Sebastian" (243).¹

¹ In "'The Town-Ho's Story': Melville's Original Whale," James Barbour begins, "One of the peculiarities of Moby-Dick is that the early portion of the book matches up very poorly with the remainder" (111), concluding that Melville had intended another book altogether, based on this chapter, for it is "a capsule rendering of the first" chapter of Moby-Dick (114). I will agree with Barbour only if he will concur with me that Steelkilt is Ishmael's true identity; for Steelkilt was a "backwoods seaman" (MD 224) and "had long been retained harmless and docile" (245) like the younger Ishmael, and both are from "the country; in some high land of lakes" (4). And Steelkilt has the "coffer-dam" chest of Bulkington (16), Ishmael's first hero. Thus after returning to Nantucket aboard the Rachel, Ishmael (a.k.a. Steelkilt) ships out on another whaler, the Town-Ho. Having been blamed for the murder of Radney (in a situation strikingly similar to the events in Billy Budd), Steelkilt hides out in "corrupt" Lima (249), adopting a new identity, calling himself "Ishmael"—for he is outcast, an orphan of his home-land as well. The cavaliers, who never call the narrator of "The Town-Ho's Story" by name, inquire about a Moby Dick, and Ishmael/Steelkilt says, "Nay, Dons, Dons--nay, nay! I cannot rehearse that now" (256); when questioned of the veracity of the story and asked to swear on a stack of bibles, the narrator acts extremely calm for having related third hand information (at least, according to his acquiring of it)—he says, "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" (259). Since the ship went one way, the crew another,

Ishmael tells very little of his history, before and after his adventure upon the Pequod. But in the 135 chapters and epilogue of Moby-Dick we witness the gradual education of Ishmael; from the green of his youth in chapter 1 to chapter 111, "The Pacific," where he becomes a "meditative Magian rover" (482), until the "Epilogue," the final word on events, in which Ishmael becomes Emerson's Transcendentalist, his "transparent eyeball" (N 11). Thus Ishmael says that "Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine" because many roles seem Ishmael's--"I try all things; I achieve what I can" (MD 345). Willing Ishmael tries-out the role of whaler, of bowsman in Starbuck's boat and later in Ahab's, of linguist, of poet, of philosopher, of historian, of scientist, of epistemologist, and of narrator. He seems to be many things until finally he just *is*. "What noble emotions dilate the mortal as he enters into the councils of the creation," writes Emerson, "and feels by knowledge the privilege to BE!" (N 27). Thus with the third-person narration Ishmael looses his "I," for a division or separation of narrator-persona and object-event occurs, a gradual loss of ego, of id, of all mortal and material things which keep one from knowing the All. Thus the narrator's personality disappears with the intervention of third-person, and the narration is of others, of events, of all things in the All.

Emerson concludes his "Discipline" chapter thus,

We are associated in adolescent and adult life with some friends, who, like skies and waters, are coextensive with our idea; who, answering each to a certain affection of the soul, satisfy our desire on that side; whom we lack power to put at such focal distance from us, that we can

and Steerkilt a third, either by some wild coincidence Ishmael happened to meet them all or was one of the crew--Steerkilt.

mend or even analyze them. We cannot choose but love them. When much intercourse with a friend has supplied us with a standard of excellence, and has increased our respect for the resources of God who thus sends a real person to outgo our ideal; when he has, moreover, become an object of thought, and, whilst his character retains all its unconscious effect, is converted in the mind to solid and sweet wisdom,—it is a sign to us that his office is closing, and he is commonly withdrawn from our sight in a short time. (31-2)

We as readers become associated with the adolescent and adult life of Ishmael, who more than satisfies our desires to know about whales and whaling, who is both focal point of and focus (*camera obscura*) for the novel. In action, Ishmael provides "a standard of excellence" and increases "our respect for the resources" of Nature and Spirit through his discussions of and demonstrations with them. As we come to know Ishmael we learn to trust and value his opinion, his ability to narrate fairly and objectively (as in "The Doubloon" chapter). Besides being informational, the cetological chapters function to effectuate trust in the narrator.² Thus through the third-person Ishmael "is converted in the mind to solid and sweet wisdom" and "become[s] an object of thought" alone. Thus "it is a sign to us that his office is closing" and he will be "commonly withdrawn from our sight in a short time." Though Ishmael's office closes—in chapter 111, "The Pacific"—it is only for a holiday—for the transcendental process is temporary, teaching us lessons and universal truths by which we may better live; for we are

² In "Ahab's Name: A Reading of 'The Symphony,'" P. Adams Sitney writes, "The narrator calls himself by his pseudonym three times in 'A Bower in the Arsacides,' as if, taking the side of his readers, he felt the need to demand evidence of his authority for the whalelore he was about to expound" (134).

always aware of his presence though he refrains from asserting his "I"; for Ishmael reappears in the Epilogue, calm and genial despite the precariousness of his new situation.

It is difficult to separate Emerson's "Discipline" from "Idealism"; they are in effect one. But they are not the same. The difference lies in the focus of each chapter. "Discipline" expounds an individual's relation to Nature, whereas "Idealism" explains a societal or cultural relation to Nature. "Idealism" also espouses the individual's responsibility or duty to a culture or "joint-stock company," which in turn is responsible to Nature and ultimately Spirit. While an individual works to learn Discipline, Idealism is Discipline put to work for the good of culture. The final goal of culture, like an individual, is to understand and demonstrate daily the Ideal and to therefore attain Spirit. Thus an individual needs to participate within and for the good of a culture.

If Ishmael at all fails in his ascendancy toward Spirit it is because his Transcendentalism, however Ideal, does not behoove the whole, help the crew aboard the Pequod.³ Yet, Ishmael is powerless to help them. He would have to become that which he is not--of fire--to strike irons with Ahab. More so, Ishmael would have to relinquish both his nature and Nature to reproach Ahab. Thus Ishmael would be dealing with Ahab on Ahab's terms--a battle Ishmael would surely lose, an encounter a Transcendentalist must forego. Ishmael succeeds as a Transcendentalist because he achieves a glim of Spirit. In this sense, he does offer assistance to the Pequod's crew. Had they

³ The monogram to the Epilogue is Job's, "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (*MD* 573); like Job spreading the word of his God, Ishmael survives to tell the tale of the Pequod, to share the merits and virtues of Transcendentalism.

retained some hint of Discipline, of their original relation with Nature; had they given themselves to inquiring into the meanings within and behind things; had they had some self-reliance and restrained, however minutely, from Ahab's malevolent coercion; had they done all of this, the crew would have noticed Ishmael and, similar to Ishmael's earlier preoccupation with Bulkington, would emulate him and his indifference toward Ahab, his achieved state of transcendency.

However, this is an Ideal hypothesis. It certainly would not cool Ahab's passion.⁴ Nor would it stop the men from fulfilling Ahab's wrath. Though beyond Ahab's direct circumspection, Ishmael still participates in the drama and enacts his role as bowsman in Ahab's boat. He is part but not cause of the final destruction. Likewise, he is part of the universe but not cause of universal misery. Irresponsible, fragmented men like Ahab cause their own suffering and torture others with it. Though when at the beginning of the novel Peleg claims, "Ahab has his humanities!" (79), I can only wonder what he means. But Peleg, like his compatriot cohort, Bildad, is not trustworthy. These three who are called captain--Peleg, Bildad, Ahab--never learn Discipline and would suck Idealism from culture. It is an unfortunate, commonplace characteristic of power.

In "Circles," Emerson writes, "There are degrees in idealism" ("O" 223). Thus in "Idealism" the degrees "indicate the effects of culture" (N 34) on one's ability to recognize and know Spirit.

⁴ A few afternoons on the quarter-deck and some late nights in his cabin with Robert Bly's Iron John, however, may have helped Ahab immensely. Understanding the error in shifting blame outside of himself, Ahab could learn how to forgive Moby Dick, and how to embrace his grief.

1. Our first institution in the Ideal philosophy is a hint from Nature herself. (34)

2. In a higher manner the poet communicates the same pleasure. (35)

3. Whilst thus the poet animates nature with his own thoughts, he differs from the philosopher only herein, that one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth. (37)

4. Intellectual science has been observed to beget invariably a doubt of the existence of matter.

5. Finally, religion and ethics, which may be fitly called the practice of ideas, or the introduction of ideas into life, have an analogous effect with all lower culture, in degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit. (39)

For each of these gradations, Ishmael experiences corresponding stimuli which lead him to Spirit; for "Idealism sees the world in God" (40), and God in the Emersonian sense is Spirit. Alfred Kazin writes,

The book grows out of a single word, "I," and expands until the soul's voyage of this "I" comes to include a great many things that are unseen and unsuspected by most of us. And this material is always tied to Ishmael, who is not merely a witness to the story--someone who happens to be on board the Pequod--but the living and germinating mind who grasps the world in the tentacles of his thought. (41)

Though he does not use "material" in the Emersonian sense, Kazin is in part correct. The story is Ishmael's, and does grow out of his "I," but the material--even in the Emersonian sense--is only tied to him in the beginning. In time, Ishmael loses all earthly ties and is of the All.

I do not mean to posit that Ishmael's education is, like the above outline, linear; rather, as John Seelye has it, the geometric metaphor for Ishmael's growth is concentric circles encompassing as much of reality as possible.⁵ As Emerson writes in "Circles," "The life of a man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end" ("O" 230). Ishmael's growth, then, rushes outward until like his vision--demonstrated by the shift in narration--he encompasses all things, is universal.

The first of these degrees of "Idealism" is manifold throughout Moby-Dick. As Emerson writes, "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us. . . . The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air" (N 34). In each of his earlier experiences Ishmael admits Nature's influence. Ishmael's getting out to sea, for example, has a medicinal and aligning effect on him, a universal effect--"If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree . . . cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me" (MD 3). While afflicted by his "hypos" in chapter 1, "Loomings" (3), in chapter 42 Ishmael confronts himself--"though surrenderest to a hypo, Ishmael" (194)--and this malaise affects him no more, is never mentioned again. Thus pessimistic Ishmael's eye opens to admit the horizon and his view of the world changes.

When Ishmael reaches the Spouter-Inn in chapter 3 he has shucked his earlier dark humor--"Let us scrape the ice from our frosted feet. . . ." (11)--for a more curious mood which later saves him from a scrape with

⁵ In contrast, the metaphor for Ahab's horizontal goal is the straight line of a harpoon's hemp when stuck in the blubber of a fleeing whale. Long, straight, thin, the hemp has one catch--it loops round Ahab's neck and destroys him in a single sentence.

Queequeg. Becoming chummy with his new found friend, Ishmael presents a more jocular and amicable character. Though he becomes likeable, he remains somewhat superficial. Consider his interpretation of a painting he encounters in the Spouter-Inn:

It's the Black Sea in a midnight gale.--It's the unnatural combat of the four primal elements.--It's a blasted heath.--It's a Hyperborean winter scene.--It's the breaking-up of the ice-bound stream of Time. . . . But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan himself? (13)

Like the crew before the doubloon, Ishmael's interpretations, however playful, are spasmodic, superficial, literal. He does demonstrate an affinity for the mystical--as again in chapter 4, "The Counterpane"--and his ramblings do point out ironies and ambiguities, paradoxes and dualisms which play a major part in the novel. But Ishmael is without experience, wisdom, and Spirit, and accordingly his interpretations have not been tested, refined, and trued. He is unaware of symbolic meaning. He has yet to learn to trust himself, to trust his own senses, Understanding, and Reason. He has not yet learned that ". . . a low degree of the sublime is felt, from the fact . . . that man is apprized that whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable" (N 35). At this early stage of the novel, Ishmael is unstable and thinks the grandiose world permanent.

But Ishmael does exhibit the inklings of a potential greatness. In the paragraph following the above, for example, he recognizes ". . . an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads" (MD 13). A Flask or Stubb would not even notice the painting, let alone bother with it.

Spying this and a harpoon opposite, Ishmael at least "shuddered . . . and wondered what monstrous cannibal and savage could ever have gone a death-harvesting with such a hacking, horrifying implement" (13). The key word is "wondered." For Ishmael does not merely accept things for their face value, but *wonders* about them and attempts to achieve some sort of vision or Understanding. He attempts to link the material with its spiritual counterpart. Thus Ishmael is able to transcend the institutionalized social acerbities motivating him to dislike and fear the sight of Queequeg. Ishmael accepts Queequeg as a good fellow, says we should "not fancy ourselves so vastly superior to other mortals" (81), and (showing the flexibility of whatever religion he has) in a magnanimous act of good-will bows down before Yojo. When Ishmael begins to ". . . regard nature as phenomena, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect" (N 33); when Ishmael begins to see beyond the paste-board masks of experience and actively seek symbolic meaning, he commences his spiritual maturation. Likewise, P. Adams Sitney says,

The intense subjectivity of the first twenty chapters quickly dissolves. Ishmael suddenly begins to ventriloquize conversations and monologues to which the circumscribed narrator of the book's initial chapters would have no access. (139)

Ishmael's innate sense of curiosity is responsible for his imagination, which in turn promotes his desire to communicate what he sees. With his Discipline in line, Ishmael's Reason becomes more stable, sound, and able to grasp and understand complex events; for "The Imagination may be defined to be the use which the Reason makes of the material world" (35). Thus Ishmael becomes Emerson's poet of Idealism, communicating the pleasures

of Nature: "The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to thoughts. The one esteems nature as rooted and fast; the other, as fluid, and impresses his being thereon" (35). The one is erudite, mechanical, able to list and classify a sweeping range of facts and trivia, such as in the cetological chapters; the other opens his mind and heart and mouths universal truths. Thus atop the mast-head Ishmael recognizes multifarious Beauty and begins to transcend material, communicating his ethereal flight with incantatory rhythms. But he is not ready, has not fully realized the gradations of Idealism and Spirit; an older and experienced Ishmael, in the process of telling the younger Ishmael's tale, reflects, "And let me in this place movingly admonish you, ye ship-owners of Nantucket! Beware of enlisting in your vigilant fisheries any lad with lean brow and hollow eye; given to unseasonable meditateness. . . . Beware of such an one, I say: your whales must be seen before they can be killed" (MD 158). Thus Ishmael delivers two warnings: if your concern is monetary gain, do not hire an idealist to spot your whales; if your "meditateness" is "unseasonable," as is Ishmael's at this time in his Transcendental education, pay heed to natural laws such as gravity when you transcend. But the growing and maturing Ishmael, the Ishmael who climbs the mast, who actively participates in the episodic events of the novel, learns a different lesson, learns Idealism. "To the senses and the unrenewed understanding," writes Emerson, "belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view man and nature are indissolubly joined. Things are ultimates, and they never look beyond their sphere" (33). Here, Ishmael learns two things: besides Nature, there is something out there; and most

people--for example, ship-owners--are "joined" to material and deny the existence of anything else.

Though a poet in the Emersonian sense, Ishmael also demonstrates his veracity as a philosopher, thereby encompassing the third tenet of "Idealism." Emerson writes, "Whilst thus the poet animates nature with his own thoughts, he differs from the philosopher only herein, that the one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth" (37). Ishmael fulfills the poet's goal, Beauty, while on the mast-head; he achieves the philosopher's object, Truth, first in the cetological chapters. But he fully achieves Truth in the transcendent chapters--i.e., "The Mat-Maker," "The Grand Armada," "The Symphony." As Emerson writes, "The true philosopher and the true poet are one. . . ." (37).⁶

Thus Ishmael is a poet of verbal and aesthetic ability with a mind which tends to lean toward the philosophic.⁷ For in "The Mat-Maker" Ishmael interweaves Beauty and Truth, and Emersonian "Beauty" and "Language" while creating Commodity and learning Discipline; thus he achieves a coherent, universal vision. This is how it is with Idealism:

It is, in both cases, that a spiritual life has been imparted to nature; that the solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and

⁶ Though Laurence Barrett claims Melville's disdain for form is so great "that he failed to recognize [form] as a distinguishing note of the poet and was content to call poet and philosopher by the same name" (615), I think this actually supports the art of Melville's craft, and Emerson would agree.

⁷ Even his erudition proves this: off hand I can recall Ishmael mentioning Shakespeare, Byron, Coleridge, Sydney, Milton, and Chaucer; his naming of philosophers, however, is far greater--Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, Locke, Decartes, etc. . . . Of the 80 citations in "Extracts," only seven are by poets; there are three songs; and the rest can be divided up between prose narrators and philosophers. Considering the poets for which Ishmael/Melville shows an affinity, are they not all metaphysical?

dissolved by a thought; that this feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an informing soul, and recognized itself in their harmony, that is, seized their law. (37)

Thus Ishmael seizes and cedes to the law of the All. But he cannot hold onto his vision for very long, for he is still acquiring his Idealism. Though the mat-making experience is as intense and illuminating as his swoon on the mast-head, Ishmael is still unseasoned, still capable of losing his vision of the All. Thus a superficial "last featuring blow at events" harks Ishmael back to the material--"There she blows! there! there! there! she blows! she blows!" (MD 215). While the Pequod prepares for their first lowering, "five dusky phantoms" (216)--Fedallah and friends--materialize; Starbuck's boat, of which Ishmael is bowsman, gets swamped by a whale; they wait out the night in a squall only to be rolled over by their rescuer. Still susceptible to material, Ishmael's free will is affected by chance and he once again entertains Nature.

Safely landed on board the Pequod, Ishmael is confused, despite his momentous vision of universal truth the previous day. Thus in chapter 49, "The Hyena," Ishmael tries-out a "free and easy sort of genial, desparado philosophy" (226) akin to Stubb's.⁸ While Emerson writes, ". . . we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit" (N 33), Ishmael is now unprepared to withstand the permanence of the universe and does not resist but embraces a malign stoicism. Hence, Ishmael adapts well to the latest role that seems his:

⁸ A parallel is Ahab's, "live in the game, and die in it!" (MD 502). When life is viewed as a joke or a game, death can only be seen as tragic or absurd.

There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a 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. However, nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard things visible and invisible. . . . That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke. (MD 226)

Though Ishmael jests with an insurgency, he has at least not forgotten his recent Transcendental experience. The important line here is the last, for Ishmael acknowledges that "in the very midst of his earnestness . . . a thing most momentous" did occur. Thus Ishmael reclaims his identity, "I survived myself" (228). While the self, the Not Me would have him live in the material, Ishmael escapes it—"a stone was rolled away from my heart" (227)—and continues his pursuit—"here goes for a cool, collected dive at death and destruction" (228).⁹

⁹ Of course "dive" makes fine sense. In his famous letter to Duyckinck (March 3, 1849), Melville wrote of Emerson:

I love all men who *dive*. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five miles or more. . . . I'm not talking of Mr. Emerson now—but of the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving & coming up again with blood-shot eyes since the world began. (292 in Leyda)

But "death and destruction" bother me. Though I can easily write them off as precursor to his latest philosophical whim, I'd rather cite two sources. Ishmael's next use of the word is Ahab's questioning of the know-it-all, thought-diving sphinx: "Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest" (MD

If this seems a nadir in the education of Ishmael, let it. For from a deep dive one can only, if any buoyancy remains, rise and surface. From this dive, then, Ishmael becomes a little wiser.¹⁰ While the Pequod meets other whalers, Ishmael gams with many facets of cetology, awaiting his next major transcendent opportunity, "The Grand Armada." His realizations increasing his experience and wisdom, Ishmael breaches the fourth tenet of "Idealism": "Intellectual science has been observed to beget invariably a doubt of the existence of matter. . . . It fastens the attention upon immortal necessary uncreated natures, that is, upon Ideas; and in their presence we feel that the outward circumstance is a dream and a shade" (N 38). Hence, interweaved with chapters narrated in third-person are Ishmael's numerous epiphanies of the All. In chapter 60, "The Line," Ishmael understands the interconnectedness of all humans, and also claims, "And if you be a philosopher, though seated in the whale-boat, you would not at heart feel one whit more terror, than though seated before your evening fire with a poker, and not a harpoon, by your side" (MD 281); thus he has already

311). And then consider the death defying dive of the Catskill eagle at the conclusion of chapter 96, "The Try-Works":

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. And even if for ever he flies within the gorge, that gorge is in the mountains; so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar. (425)

But more on divers later in this chapter.

¹⁰ In chapter 68, "The Blanket," Ishmael declares that he uses dried bits of whale skin "for marks in my whale-books. It is transparent, as I said before; and being laid upon the printed page, I have sometimes fancied my self with fancying it exerted a magnifying influence" (MD 305-06). Thus the exterior of the whale, a "thin, isinglass substance" (306) is transparent, or non-existent, and an aid with which Ishmael may better see the whale. Similarly, by seeing the effects of a desparado philosophy, Ishmael may better view the antipodal position of Spirit. Though not clearly. First he must remove the fat from his eyes.

begun to surpass his unnecessary fear of material as shown in "The Hyena." In the beginning of chapter 61, "Stubb Kills a Whale," Ishmael explains that he has finally learned how to man a mast-head:

. . . with my shoulders leaning against the slackened royal shrouds, to and fro I idly swayed in what seemed an enchanted air. . . . in that dreamy mood losing all consciousness, at last my soul went out of my body; though my body still continued to sway as a pendulum will, long after the power which first moved it is withdrawn. (282)

Ishmael is now able to coexist with Nature and Spirit. And when indifferent Stubb finally does kill a whale, compassionate Ishmael cries, "His heart had burst!" (286).

Alluding to Queequeg, among other things, in chapter 68, "The Blanket," Ishmael says the "mystic-marked" skin of the whale is an "undecipherable" hieroglyphic which cannot be peeled away and deciphered (306); the meaning lies in the living, breathing body, and like Spirit it is intangible and impermanent. More so, Ishmael waxes on what it means to be, as Hamlet says, "Very like a whale":

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. (307)

Ishmael takes a calm and collective dive beyond the surface of the whale's material and surfaces with universal meaning. Declaring the superiority of whaleness, of a creature who lives aligned with and in the All, Ishmael begs us to "live in this world without being of it." In other words, live with Spirit

in the material world. Be nothing; see all. Corresponding to Ishmael's grand epiphany of Spirit, Emerson says,

Their influence is proportionate. As objects of science they are accessible to few men. Yet all men are capable of being raised by piety or by passion, into their region. And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming in some degree, himself divine. (N 38)

Chapter 85, "The Fountain," expounds further this Emersonian concept expressed in Melvilleian language--"live in this world without being of it." Ishmael's wide-framed vision sweeps the whale's head and fountain into a glorious metaphor for man's mind and intellect.¹¹ "That for six thousand years--and no one knows how many millions of ages before," Ishmael begins, explaining that whether a whale's fountain is air or water, even to "this blessed minute (fifteen and a quarter minutes past one o'clock P. M. of this sixteenth day of December, A. D. 1850)" it still remains a mystery (370); thus Ishmael juxtaposes a great expanse of time to a trivial

¹¹ I think in this chapter Melville alludes to Emerson when he writes, . . .the whale has no voice; unless you insult him by saying, that when he so strangely rumbles, he talks through his nose. But then again, what has the whale to say? Seldom have I known any profound being that had anything to say to this world, unless forced to stammer out something by way of getting a living. Oh! happy that the world is such an excellent listener! (MD 372)

I base my opinion on a letter Melville wrote 22 months earlier to Duyckinck after seeing Emerson lecture; Melville called Emerson "this Plato who talks through his nose" (130 in Howard). Emerson "has no voice" because he is (like all truly great men) largely ignored by the masses. As we know Melville, more so than Emerson, was forced to "stammer out something by way of getting a living." He did claim Whitejacket and Redburn were written "to buy some tobacco with" (327 in Leyda). Nonetheless, Emerson did not lecture for free. But the final irony, however, is that the world is not such an excellent listener. Emerson grew bitter and disappointed; Melville sunk into obscurity.

minute and implies we may never know what the intellect is--"air" of Spirit, or "water" of material. Intellectually discussing a gamut of facts and speculations, he concludes that ". . . 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" (373). The "plain things" of Nature--emphasized by "knottiest"--are after all only illusions; we deceive ourselves by calling them real and trying to discern what we call their true nature. Corresponding to this, Emerson writes,

I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man, wherein to establish man all right education tends; as the ground which to attain is the object of human life, that is, of man's connection with nature. Culture inverts the vulgar views of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent which it uses to call real, and that real which it uses to call visionary. (N 40)

As Ishmael realizes, it does not matter whether science determines the intellect is of "water" or "air," for both are apparitions of Spirit. Ever-encompassing Ishmael concludes the intellect is at once water and air, and nothing; the important point, then, is that whatever the foggy intellect is, it admits clear Spirit.

And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny; but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of all things heavenly; this

combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye. (MD 374)

To doubt Nature and intuit Spirit is an integral part of Idealism; for while one is both an illusion and an allusion, a pasteboard mask, the other permeates all things, is universal. Thus to "regard them both with an equal eye" one must breathe to regard material, but one must not fear death to truly regard Spirit. With an "equal eye," as Emerson writes, "We become physically nimble and lightsome; we tread on air; life is no longer irksome, and we think it will never be so" (N 38).

Thus Ishmael passes through the novel, learning to live in this world without being of it, transcending material whenever possible. In chapter 87, "The Grand Armada," exemplary of Beauty, a grand metaphor of wholeness, calm and collective Ishmael says, "Some of the subtlest secrets of the seas seemed divulged to us in this enchanted pond" (MD 388). Absorbing their material nourishment, the whale calves seem to understand how to live in this world without being of it. Thus poet Ishmael conforms Nature to his thoughts, intuitions of Spirit. This mood of Ishmael's continues into chapter 96, "The Try-Works." While in the Commodity-making process, Ishmael transcends Language and arrives at a vision akin to Emerson's introduction to Nature, a demand for "new men, new thoughts" (N 7).¹² In chapter 98, "Stowing Down and Clearing Up," Ishmael literally and metaphorically stows

¹² Richard Sewall writes, "With 'The Try-Works' [Ishmael's] main function in the novel is done. He has cast off his green and dreamy youth and brought us to the edge of the vortex" (49). First, as I have shown, the transition is less abrupt, more of an organic process. Second, Ishmael functions throughout the novel as the main character. That he cedes to a dualistic vision is the fundamental fault of Sewall's reading.

down and clears up. He cleans both the deck and himself and emerges clean as a bridegroom, preparing to shuck the vicissitudes of his youth.

In chapter 102, "A Bower in the Arsacides," Ishmael playfully posits his "I" and calls himself by name three times, serves the final requisite of Idealism, and thus prepares for his last Transcendental excursion. With the Ideal theory, Emerson writes, "religion and ethics, which may be fitly called the practice of ideas, or the introduction of ideas into life, have an analogous effect with all lower culture, in degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit" (39). Ishmael, of course, understands this to an uncommon degree. But the priests of Pupella do not. While in this obscure locale, Ishmael discovers that a beached whale's dry bones have been converted into a temple of worship. Though on the surface reminiscent of a scene from Typee or Omo, the effect is more similar to Mardi. The bones inscribed with "hieroglyphics" become Ishmael's metaphor for the mysteries of life; and "in the skull, the priests kept up an unextinguished aromatic flame, so that the mystic head again sent forth its vapory spout" (MD 449). The intellectual spout of the dead head is praised and revered after life by priests and preachers, keepers of the ancient hieroglyphics, the written spoutings of the seers of the mysteries of life, the acknowledgements of Spirit. But the priests are enraged when curious Ishmael measures their temple, examines the spout, and attempts to reduce it into scientific data:

"How now!" they shouted; Dar'st thou measure this our god! That's for us." "Aye, priests—well, how long do ye make him, then?" But hereupon a fierce contest rose among them, concerning feet and inches; they cracked each other's scones with their yard sticks. . . .

(450-51)

The skeleton of *Pupella* equated with similar ones found in England and the United States, Ishmael says, "I did not trouble myself with the odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all enter a congenial admeasurement of the whale" (451). Of course the frivolous inches of the whole whale are analogous of the various religions which want to represent the whole of the universe, the All. Emerson writes,

Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul. Therefore the soul holds itself off from a too trivial and microscopic study of the universal tablet. It respects the end too much to immerse itself in the means.

(N 40)

Aware Ishmael transcends the material inches to arrive at a vision of the whole, to realize that whaleness is wholeness. Reviving his mat-maker metaphor, Ishmael sees that the "earth beneath was as a weaver's loom" and "the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof" which wrapped around the skeletal frame (449). In a euphoric rhapsody, Ishmael begs for universal secrets to the problems of mortal life: "Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver!-- pause!--one word!--whither flows the fabric? what palace may it deck? wherefore all these ceaseless toilings? Speak, weaver!" (450). But he knows he cannot ask, but rather must let Spirit speak to him:

Nay--the shuttle flies--the figures float forth from the loom; the freshet-rushing carpet for ever slides away. The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving he is deafened, that he hears no mortal

voice; and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it. For even so it is in all material factories.
(450)

Universal truths do not come to he who is occupied with the "humming" of mortal life--he must unoccupy himself, he must live in the world without being of it, he must live "Very like a whale." The "weaver-god," interblender of Spirit, only speaks through those who "escape" the "material factories," who transcend to know the All, and in six thousand years or more they are but a mere "thousand." Ishmael says succinctly, "Life folded Death; Death trellised Life" (450); thus recognizing the interblendedness of the All--that Life folds to Death, that Nature trellises Spirit. As Emerson writes, "The first and last lesson of religion is, 'The things that are seen, are temporal; the things that are unseen, are eternal'" (N 39). But do not tell this to the priests of Pupella.

With thirty chapters remaining, Ishmael is wise to the world, but not completely Emerson's Transcendentalist. Though he intellectually accepts and understands the All, he has not wholly given up his Not Me. Although with Emerson Ishmael knows, "And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, himself divine. Like a new soul, they renew the body" (38); Ishmael has still to accept death as an inevitable part of life. He is too much of the body. Thus Ishmael's bosom friend--to whom he is wedded, to whom he is tied by the monkey-rope--enacts a symbolic death in chapter 110, "Queequeg in his Coffin." Emerson writes, "Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or

behind his individual life. . . " (N 20). Seeing the universal behind the individual, Queequeg's eyes--round; symbol of unity; synonym for that significant, interblending word, roll--influence Ishmael.

But as all else in him thinned, and his cheek-bones grew sharper, his eyes, nevertheless, seemed growing fuller and fuller; they became of a strange softness of lustre; and mildly but deeply looked out at you there from his sickness, a wondrous testimony to that immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened. And like circles on the water, which, as they grow fainter, expand; so his eyes seemed rounding and rounding, like the rings of Eternity. (MD 477)

Thus Queequeg calmly and quietly becomes aware of the impermanence of Nature, of eternal Spirit. What his eye communicates is testimony to Spirit. Corresponding to this, Emerson writes,

The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary form is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world. . . . We are all our lifetime reading the copious sense of this first of forms. . . . Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens. ("O" 228)

Though he thinks his material form, his Not Me, is about to become immaterial, Queequeg understands he is part and parcel of the All, of Spirit, and whether dead or alive there is that "immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened." Watching Queequeg, realizing he is viewing the inexpressible, Ishmael continues thus,

An awe that cannot be named would steal over you as you sat by the side of this waning savage. . . For whatever is truly wondrous and fearful in man, never yet was put into words or books. And 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. So that--let us say it again--no dying Chaldee or Greek had higher and holier thoughts than those, whose mysterious shades you saw creeping over the face of poor Queequeg, as he quietly lay in his swaying hammock, and the rolling sea seemed gently rocking him to his final rest, and the ocean's invisible flood-tide lifted him higher and higher towards his destined heaven. (MD 477)

Ishmael tells us one--whether author or human--would have to die to know Spirit. Thus it is appropriate that Queequeg nearly dies; for had it been Ishmael's experience, we would expect a better, more exacting description of this vision. In comparison, Emerson's chapter "Spirit" is also his shortest. Both may intuit Spirit, but they have to depart from the Not Me to the Me to know truly. Yet, something of Spirit can be seen in Queequeg's calm face, something in death not to be feared--call it immortality. Appropriately, Emerson writes,

Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can see God in the coarse, and, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. (N 41)

Though Queequeg and Ishmael and Emerson are all as helpless as fools and savages when it comes to expressing the inexpressible, we can still learn

from and be influenced positively by Queequeg's near-death experience. Emerson writes, "No man fears age or misfortune or death in their serene company, for he is transported out of the district of change" (38).

From buoyant Queequeg, Ishmael learns ultimate whaleness--how to live in this world without being of it. Thus in chapter 111, "The Pacific," Ishmael is prepared for his final transcendental excursion of the novel; for it is in the "contemplative Pacific" (MD 244) that Ishmael finally achieves Spirit, transcends his material form and departs from the chapters of Moby-Dick.¹³ In essence, "The Pacific" is the precursor to "The Symphony"--both greatly affect the two main characters of the book, both describe the Beauty of the sea, both recall youth and youthfulness. Though he totters, Ahab is

¹³ Before he resurfaces in the Epilogue, Ishmael does make one final, strange appearance. After the scene of miraculous and transpiring Beauty in chapter 132, "The Symphony," the paragraph runs thus:

Oh, immortal infancy, and innocency of the azure! Invisible winged creatures that frolic all around us! Sweet childhood of air and sky! how oblivious were ye of old Ahab's close-coiled woe! But so have I seen little Miriam and Martha, laughing-eyed elves, heedlessly gambol around their old sire; sporting with the circle of singed locks which grew on the marge of that burnt-out crater of his brain. (MD 543)

This is a difficult passage to interpret. While the Miriam and Martha and their old sire's identities are unknown, they really do not matter, add nothing to the symphonic description--except that they are of interest to Ishmael, the "I." F. O. Matthiessen has said that "Some of Melville's most memorable passages are those in which you feel that you are sharing in the very process of his developing consciousness" (129). For Ishmael, then, the reposition of his "I" could arise from the intense "fond, throbbing thrust, the loving alarms" (MD 542) of the air and water, the undeniable sexual implications which result in the references to childhood; therefore the narrator's consciousness is borne out of the terrific Beauty of the scene. Also, note the positions of the characters. Nature is to Ahab what Miriam and Martha are to their old sire; in both cases, "I" is witness, is on the outside looking in. "I" does not interject subjectivity, narrates objectively and faithfully, and is only guilty--to use a derogatory term--of a somewhat irreverent but appropriate allegorical connection. For if I read it correctly, neither Ahab nor the old sire want to be bothered but are still affected by the natural distractions.

too bent to be trued; Ishmael, in comparison, needs little inspiration at this point--the whole of the novel has been preparing him for the present. Mild Ishmael says, "now the long supplication of my youth was answered; that serene ocean rolled out eastwards from me a thousand leagues of blue" (482). Of the visible sphere, Ishmael had said he wanted to see the watery part of the world, and by arriving at the Pacific he has nearly circumnavigated the globe. With the invisible sphere, however, Ishmael announces that he is prepared to fulfill his earlier supplication: ". . . take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me" (37). With the All-corresponder "roll," the darkness of blackness converted to a serene and mystic "blue," Ishmael looks "eastward," toward morning, toward re-birth. He sees that "the world is a divine dream, from which we may presently awake to the glories of the day" (N 42).¹⁴ "There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea," says Ishmael, "whose gently awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath" (MD 482). As whaleness is wholeness, the sea, harbor of sweet mysteries, is soul. Like Emerson's woods and Thoreau's pond, Melville's sea is his soul. Thus, "meditation and water are wedded for ever" (4). Ishmael becomes a "meditative Magian rover," a herald of perpetual youth, a doer of wisdom, a knower of the All.¹⁵ He embraces

¹⁴ "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star" (221); so Thoreau concludes Walden.

¹⁵ Melville knew for whom he was writing. After the poor reception of Moby-Dick, in a rather gloomy--say, snowy November in his soul--letter to Hawthorne (November 17, 1851), Melville wrote,

If the world was entirely made up of Magians, I'll tell you what I should do. I should have a paper-mill established at one end of the house, and have an endless riband of foolscap rolling in upon my desk; and upon that endless riband I should write a thousand--a million--billion thoughts, all under the form of a letter to you. The

Spirit. For Ishmael has known that if he ". . . only deny the existence of matter, it does not satisfy the demands of spirit. It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end" (N 42); for Ishmael has wandered and wondered himself up to this point. Ishmael says, "Thus this mysterious, divine Pacific zones the world's whole bulk about; makes all coasts one bay to it; seems the tide-beating heart of earth" (MD 483). The whole world is one by the soul, the Pacific, the material presence of Spirit. Ishmael is "lifted by the eternal swells" (483) of the sea into a final and absolute vision of the One, the All. No longer does he interject subjective, first-person narration; the tale is no longer his. It is of the All. No longer does he descriptively or discursively intellectualize, fit facts to the form of his imagination, of his Understanding, of his Reason. Ishmael's id, his ego, are gone. Had he left an "I," Ishmael could say, "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God" (N 11). But he cannot. He has resigned his ability to speak so to Spirit. He is without form, matter, and tongue. He is transparent. At the apex of chapter seven, "Spirit," Emerson writes,

We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man; that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound it does

divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds. Which is the biggest? A foolish question--they are *One*. (436 in Leyda)
Melville's ideal reader? A world of Magians with Hawthornian minds.

not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us. . . . (N 42).

Ishmael learns Transcendentalism, universal knowledge; we might learn it from Ishmael if we read Moby-Dick as he would have us read--with a "transcendental . . . application" (MD 446).

Chapter VII

Prospects

A wise writer will feel that the ends of study and composition are best answered by announcing undiscovered regions of thought, and so communicating, through hope, new activity to the torpid spirit.

(N 46)

Study of whales and whaling, pursuit of the Whole and Wholeness, Moby-Dick answers and unanswers questions-problems-riddles-mysteries. Thus Melville's narrator Ishmael communicates his history of awakening, of the voyage of his mind and soul's search for Truth and Beauty. Beginning with a disclaimer in Etymology--"leaving out" a letter, an odd inch, a fact, "you deliver that which is not true" (MD xv)--with Genesis in Extracts, and with an announcement of his assumed identity in chapter 1, Ishmael concludes Moby-Dick, and rightly so, with the beginning of his own new beginning.

Having made his fantastic voyage, having discovered Truth in the Pacific of his soul, in a maelstrom, Ishmael must be capable of "announcing undiscovered regions of thought." So he writes a book. A book in which he names himself and many other things, wild and mundane, while searching for communion with universal meaning, a goal of all conscious persons.

But does he tell us Truth, new regions of thought? Not wholly. Ishmael gropes and grasps and in passing says many profound and beautiful and truthful and wonderful things. But he is never "outright"; he never says that the secret of the universe is, for example, forty-two. Ishmael wants to unweave all mysteries, but his concerted efforts find behind them naught

but more mystery. For there are no mysteries in the universe but mystic hieroglyphics erected by man. Spirit is not a mystery. Nature is. Yet it is transparent as blubber--if we are as Ishmael willing to look at man's catalog of mysteries we too may glimpse Truth through them. But rather we measure odd inches, consider trivialities, praise them as icons of something which they are not. Nature is nothing. It is both illusion and allusion. "The foundations of man are not in matter," writes Emerson, "but in spirit" (N 46). Nature is a funny-house of mirrors, is a vacuum of existence. Only Spirit truly exists. Even Ishmael does not exist, but then who will deny his Spirit? He surely breathes in my mind.

Ishmael does not speak the secret of the universe for it cannot be said. It can only be unsaid. Only that which is not fully true can be formed into words. That which is Whole is unsayable. Though he tries, Ishmael cannot speak the unsayable. Rather, he speaks many odd inches, many half-truths.¹ And he lives the Whole--"Only in the heart of quickest perils . . . on the profound unbounded sea, can the fully invested whale be truly and livingly found out" (454). Only unbounded and free can the Whole be truly and livingly found out. That is the Truth Ishmael relates. He communicates hope, he arouses the torpid regions of the spirit, he shows new thoughts in action.

That Ishmael returns in the Epilogue is obvious and therefore obviously important. The first line is essential: "The drama's done" (573). The conflict and the play are complete. The almost melodramatic, theatrical

¹ In his poem "Herman Melville," W. H. Auden writes, "But now he cried in exultation and surrender / 'The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces.' / And sat down at his desk and wrote a story" (34).

words and actions of Ahab, a most unnatural man, who manages and directs the crew's actions in his horrible play, are done. Ishmael's role in the play is also complete. In "Illusions," Emerson writes, "Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves, but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth" ("I" 384). Now he may shed his assumed name, for he needs not to *seem* another's role. He is himself, and he is aware of it.

It so chanced, that after the Parsee's disappearance, I was he whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman, when that bowsman assumed the vacant post; the same, who, when on the last day the three men were tossed from out the rocking boat, was dropped astern. (573)

During the climactic chase, anonymous Ishmael fills a vacancy, and, corresponding to the third-person narration, becomes "the third man helplessly dropping astern, but still afloat and swimming" (569). Thus Ishmael is free-floating, redefining himself on the sea of his soul. And what should arrive but the coffin Queequeg carved with "a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth" (480), the undecipherable hieroglyphics of an antiquated way. P. Adams Sitney remarks:

There is a deliberate gesture of calling our attention to the loss of the first-person voice by the end of the book. Even the phrase "I was he" reflects, on the level of grammar, the fated substitution of Ishmael from the otherwise unknown bowsman, who, replacing the dead Fedallah, left a position to be filled. (142)

While "he" is not neutral, it is, when compared to the "I" who we know, without character. Yet, this is not the same "I" of the book's second line.

This is an experienced "I," who has seen the horizon, and in the Blakean sense has gained innocence.²

In chapter eight of Nature, "Prospects," Emerson writes, "When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we awake from dreams" (N 47). Though Ishmael's Ahabian dream has been a nightmare, nonetheless he awakes to immortality.³ For he wakes to tell us his story, thereby securing his place in the chronicles of Time, on a bookshelf and in the heart of the mind.⁴ The Epilogue, then, can be read as a re-birth. On the one hand, as Michael T. Gilmore writes, "[Ishmael] may be regarded as a type of the Saviour. . . ." (159); but, on all hands, Ishmael's re-birth is both archetypal and stereotypical, symbolic of both a new and all births at once. On one level, this would seem to negate the Transcendental reading for which I have been arguing. If the transformation from first person to third-person omniscient is supposed to represent an achieved state of transcendency, why didn't Melville write the Epilogue in third-person? Or, more simply, why the Epilogue?

² Like Emerson, Blake was a reader of Swedenborg.

³ Richard Sewall writes, "If the world [Moby-Dick] presents is the starkest kind of answer to the Emersonian dream, it is not a world for despair or rejection—as long as there is even one who escapes to tell its full story" (54). By "Emersonian dream" Sewall refers to Ishmael's mast-head revelry, which according to Sewall is the greatest danger Ishmael faces. Sewall contends spiritualism in the Emersonian sense is a falsity, a dream. He would rather have the flat sun of noon, life without shadows, without things which are unseen. Sewall reads Moby-Dick as a rejection of Spirit, which is supposed to be acceptable, so long as someone escapes the holocaust to tell its story.

⁴ Howard P. Vincent's position on this point is intriguing and unique. Beginning with the popular notion of two Ishmaels, actor and spectator-narrator, first versus third-person narrator, Vincent goes on to say we need to understand "three Ishmaels." Ishmael the spectator was not the narrator, or was not *then*. Later, a new-born man, he became his third persona, Ishmael the Writer. Because the third Ishmael is so completely interblended into Moby-Dick we forget what he says: that he alone survived to tell us, to be a writer.

The Epilogue is the final word and image. Had the last words been the crews'--"The ship? Great God, where is the ship?" (MD 572)--and the last image that of Tashtego nailing a sky-hawk to the subsiding spar, and "the great shroud of the sea roll[ing] on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (572), we would have been left imaging man's hopelessness, recklessness, despair. We could read the conclusion as Melville's damning of culture, of the loss of the Ishmaels or the individuality of the world, of foreshadowing impending and catastrophic destruction by the hands of a single maniac, without Nature or Spirit, with power and an urge. Rather, Melville gives us hope and Ishmael: "Why then here does any one step forth?--Because one did survive the wreck" (573).⁵ Not just "one" survived the "wreck," but one who knows Oneness "steps forth," survives, progresses, lives to chronologue and to speak of Spirit. Thus Ahab's tragedy is succeeded. If Ahab is to be seen as a hero it is for this reason only: he dies so that one lives.⁶

Ishmael is the Transcendental hero of Moby-Dick. Melville's Moby-Dick pursues, tests, and proves the Transcendental ideas expounded in Emerson's Nature. The correspondences are vast, and I have only touched

⁵ Adrienne Rich's "Diving into the Wreck" supports a similar Transcendental vision: "I came to explore the wreck. / The words are purposes. / The words are maps" (611). Rich clearly understands that language is subjective and when in the mouth of one like Ahab is used to suppress rather than stand for Spirit.

⁶ Nor is Ishmael a passive element of the plot; he weaves his way into the Loom of Time. As Emerson writes in "The Transcendentalist":
 You think me the child of my circumstances: I make my circumstance. Let any thought or motive of mine be different from that they are, the difference will transform my condition and economy. I--this thought which is called I--is the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax. The mould is invisible, but the world betrays the shape of the mould. ("T" 95).

The shape of Ahab's world is one closing vortex; Ishmael's is the wide-open sea of hope on which he floats.

upon a few. Both texts clearly explain the need for an alternative culture, one of the Me over the Not Me, founded in Idealism rather than Materialism. Thus Melville's Ishmael is parent to a Transcendental novel, a tome of Spirit. As Emerson writes in Nature, Ishmael knows:

Build therefore your own world. As fast as you can conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit. So fast will disagreeable appearances, swine, spiders, snakes, pests, mad-houses, prisons, enemies, vanish; they are temporary and shall be no more seen. (N 50)

For "floating on the margin of the ensuing scene," in third-person, yet "in full sight of it," Ishmael "was then, but slowly, drawn towards the closing vortex" of Ahab's magnetism (MD 573). Like the coffin--a symbol of death, of the permanence of nature--bouyant Ishmael is free of "that slowly wheeling circle" of Ahab's design, is "liberated by reason of its cunning spring" (573). Likewise, Emerson writes, "The wheels and springs of man are all set to the hypothesis of the permanence of nature" (N 33). But not Ishmael, hero of Moby-Dick, harbinger of hope, of new thought. Ishmael learns Truth, discovers the impermanence of Nature and the permanence of Spirit. He survives, an orphan of his past, of the patriarchal ways of Old World Men--such as helpless Ahab who, Lear-like, watches the Pequod sinking and in denial cries, "I grow blind. . . . Is't night?" (MD 570). Ishmael survives and is, as Emerson concludes Nature, "the blind man who is gradually restored to perfect sight" (N 50). I let the conclusion to Emerson's "Illusions" serve as symbiont:

The young mortal enters the hall of the firmament; there he is alone with them alone, they pouring on him benedictions and gifts, and beckoning him up to their thrones. On the instant, and incessantly, fall snow-storms of illusions. He fancies himself in a vast crowd which sways this way and that and whose movement and doings he must obey: he fancies himself poor, orphaned, insignificant. The mad crowd drives hither and thither, now furiously commanding this to be done, now that. What is he that he should resist their will, and think or act for himself? Every moment new changes and new showers of deceptions to baffle and distract him. And when, by and by, for an instant, the air clears and the cloud lifts a little, there are the gods still sitting around him on their thrones,--they alone with him alone.

("I" 386)

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