STEPSON OF HEAVEN

An Analysis of Herman Melville's

Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre

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ABSTRACT

STEPSON OF HEAVEN: An Analysis of Herman Melville's Triptych: Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre

Hendrika Neuburger

Three of Herman Melville's works (Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre) are approached as related works of art -- a triptych. The sustained application of images, symbols, concepts and themes links the works together. The development and intensification of themes introduced in the first panel is traced through the triptych. Colour symbolism is considered of importance, providing one of several strong connections between the independent works.

The main theme, the quest for truth, which runs through the three panels and which is metaphorically presented in three separate voyages, is kept in the foreground; it is linked to an allegory of the biblical banishment of the son by the father. Melville's use of the Bible as a source of ideas, symbols and themes is given ample consideration.

Influence on Melville's work from autobiographical, as well as from social, religious and/or political directions is regarded as an important agent in the shaping of Melville's mind and spirit.

The thesis concludes that, despite the blackness of despair that flows through the triptych and Melville's personal nihilistic outlook, life, in the end, triumphs.

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ABBREVIATIONS

All parenthetical references are to the editions of Melville's works listed in the Bibliography.

The following abbreviations apply:

MD - Moby-Dick

P - Pierre; or, The Ambiguities

RB - Redburn

WJ - White Jacket

CHAPTER I

> Nothing is less real than reality in painting.
>
> Théophile Thoré

During the most creative period of his life, which covered the years 1847 to 1852, Herman Melville wrote a number of books in quick succession. While most of Melville's works show a measure of kinship with each other, especially in the realm of a personal quest, readers have traditionally considered some of his works to be especially closely related. Mardi, Moby-Dick and Pierre stand as examples of this consideration. It is not my intention to challenge this generally defensible premise. Instead, this study means to highlight the interrelatedness of a different set of three of Melville's works, namely, Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre.

The choice of Redburn as a communal source of reinforcement, that is, conjointly with Moby-Dick and Pierre, will focus attention on these three books as a literary totality.

This thesis will argue for the heretofore unexplored existence of a strong literary relationship between Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre, a relationship that allows for a view of the three works as a triptych. Each work serves as an individual tablet or panel in the composition of the whole, while the vital literary bond connecting them enhances the lustre of each.

The relationship between the three works is brought about through the use of images, symbols and themes common to all

three, as well as through the development or intensification of these from one panel to the next.

While Redburn has consistently received scant attention from critics and commentators, even from Melville himself, who called it "a little nursery tale", the importance of the work as a spawning ground for some of Moby-Dick's and Pierre's concepts, symbols and themes will be argued. The book's strength lies in its imaginative creation of symbolic characters who will serve as prototypes for the later works, as well as in its initiation of certain pertinent themes. The suggestive glow of the title, Redburn, contributes to an almost visual recognition of relevant shadows that are thrown ahead, while, in its rich symbolism, it lends additional strength to the work itself.

William Sedgwick is one of the few critics who recognizes a special form of kinship between Redburn and Moby-Dick. He finds that "Moby-Dick bears a family resemblance to all its predecessors among Melville's books" and that: "It has the poignant, penetrating spirituality of Redburn ... including what is of the "heart" in Redburn". [1]

The three works discussed in the present study show a certain symmetry in relation to each other. Redburn and Pierre seem, to an extent, to present mirror images; the surface colouring differs, but the backgrounds appear to be of a comparable hue. The scenario in each is upheld by a like foundation, such as an old ancestral family from whose protective gentility a young man passes ritually through relative innocence into experience while

undergoing strange adventures, adventures originating in an existential famine as each protagonist embarks on a quest for Truth -- a quest for "the ungraspable phantom of life ... the key to it all" (MD 95).

Apart from the foundation of the two outer panels, in the aspect of the quest the three panels are alike, alike with a difference, so to speak.

Redburn embarks on a long-dreamed-of voyage, while giving up his 'birthright' to his brother.

Ishmael sets out on his voyage because of boredom, or a sense of emptiness of life, a condition that will be filled, before long, with the many ocean-going experiences that befall him.

Pierre travels the road to independence while tackling moral obstacles, obstacles which he does not necessarily confront by choice, but which are of his own making.

With regard to the center panel of the triptych, Moby-Dick, Professor Sedgwick states that "superficial colouring aside the mythology of Moby-Dick was born of the age-old presentiments of the human consciousness ...". [2] Sedgwick's observation applies to all three works under discussion. In various ways Redburn foreshadows the vitality of the "age-old presentiments" and in Pierre these shadows lengthen (foreboding Melville's own particular view of the course of life) as at the end of Pierre the persona's annihilation is enacted. In a visit to Hawthorne, in November 1856, Melville confessed "that he had pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated". [3]

Regarded as one, three-part, work of art, the triptych rests on the human forces of aggression and reflection and is, to an extent, framed by them. These forces give the work a peculiar strength as they rise naturally out of Melville's own inner rhythm and are coloured through the fecundity of his imagination. Literary reality presented as imagery, symbolism and allegory, provides colour and texture to the otherwise bare traits of aggression and reflection.

At times one finds in the triptych an explosion of colour, reminiscent of abstract painting, which appears to express plain emotion. Such is the case in Moby-Dick when Ishmael relates his feelings upon awakening in the Spouter-Inn to find Queequeg's arm thrown over him:

> The counterpane was of patchwork, full of odd little parti-colored squares and triangles; and this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which were of one precise shade - owing I suppose to his keeping his arm at sea unmethodically in sun and shade, his shirt sleeves irregularly rolled up at various times - this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt. Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together (MD 118-9).

As part of the story of the White Whale the above quoted scene appears, at first glance, as an abstractly coloured interlude without further meaning than the seemingly detached observation of the particular experience. However, given Melville's characteristic custom of rendering every image meaningful to the overall design of a particular work, the image of the vari-coloured "counterpane" functions as a more meaningful image than that of

a decorative splash of colour alone. Three interpretations spring directly to mind.

First, the term "counterpane", although a regular description of a coverlet or quilt, can also allude to 'counterpoint' which is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, of Melville's preoccupations. Throughout his writings Melville is aware of, and explores, the so-called other side of the coin or, more artistically, the contrapuntal melody in the experiential fugues of life. Second, the patchwork "full of odd little parti-colored squares and triangles" refers to the crazily patched together quilt of life. (Queequeg's arm appears to Ishmael's observation as an integral aspect of the colourful patchwork.) And, third, the Old-Testament-named Ishmael, together with pagan Queequeg, form a living part of this oddly shaped and coloured patchwork of life. Thus emerges from the abstract burst of colour a recognizable pattern of images, symbols and themes which form the mainstay of the story.

The colour and patchwork imagery sets the tone, first of all, for the development of Moby-Dick, the central panel. But, when viewing the three works together as a triptych, the same imagery also extends to the outer panels of Redburn and Pierre.

Further to the realm of colour, Melville begins the story of Redburn, interestingly, with the inherently colourless or transparent imagery of sight or vision which comes before the knowledge of colour. This is the first symbolic aspect of what appears to be a multi-facetted type of imagery.

Following the introduction of colourless imagery, Melville then gently applies the primary colour (red) of Redburn as leitmotif. The young Redburn anticipates the possibility of experiencing "strange (perhaps colourful) adventures" (RB 46). The name is of primary symbolic value; allusions to its colour crop up throughout the triptych. George Creeger, in his unpublished dissertation, terms this spectrum of colour symbolism "natural symbolism (which) differs from conventional symbolism in that it has no precise meaning, only suggestibility". [4]

An "old-fashioned glass ship" (RB 48), which has long had a place in Redburn's home and is one of the first images to exert an influence on Redburn's decision to seek his "fortune on the sea" (RB 48), is counted as another facet in the multi-facetted type of imagery of a colourless or transparent character.

Of course, the colourless and formless imagery of water provides one of Melville's most important metaphors, underlying other aspects of the multi-structured transparent imagery.

The importance of the ocean or water metaphor is, among other things, illustrated in Ishmael's opening remarks regarding his perception of the psychological power of water. He experiences its appeal as a magnetic force:

> There is magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries - stand that man on his legs, set his feet a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water, ... meditation and water are wedded forever. (MD 94)

The wedding of meditation and water is consummated in the observation of the philosophical pleasures of the mast-head watch.

An absent-minded meditating youth, perched upon the mast-head and lulled into a "vacant, unconscious reverie by the blending cadence of waves and thoughts" may take "the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature" (MD 256-7). In its bottomlessness the "blue" is also inherently colourless.

Later, "the visible image of that deep blue, bottomless soul" becomes in the narrator's sensitive words, "one knows not what sweet mystery ... whose gently awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath" (MD 593). Melville develops the metaphor of the union of water and meditation -- of waves and thoughts -- into an intuition of a hidden, but vital Truth.

Paradoxically, the undefined, formless kind of imagery appears to be the foundation of the tree works under discussion. And, although Pierre is not a story of the sea, there are numerous references to it throughout the book, especially in relation to Pierre's particular quest for Truth. In a similar context, Nathalia Wright remarks that "Truth is colorless" [5] observing also that: "It is the unceasing and inconclusive motion of the sea, rather than the sea itself which constitutes (Melville's) symbol of truth". [6] Thus, the comprehensive, transparently formless imagery serves to define the nature of Truth -- a colourless, voiceless and hidden Truth.

If, at first, the individual, undefined or formless images seem unlike each other, their shared colourlessness denotes an inherent kinship. This kinship gives rise to a secondary

relatedness as expressed in a number of cross-references, to be found throughout the three books, between particular aspects of the multi-facetted imagery.

When he was "very little" (RB 49), Redburn already acknowledged his preoccupation with (finding out) the Truth, for he often "used to feel a sort of insane desire to be the death of the glass ship ... in order to come at the plunder" (RB 49).

In a reference to what appears to be the magic spell of an imagined treasure, which in Redburn is conceived to be enclosed in the glass model of an old-fashioned ship, a different yearning for the Truth is expressed by Ahab, in Moby-Dick, in an uncharacteristic yet poignant manner, when he alludes to an inner spiritual vision in his heartbreaking cries to Starbuck: "Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; ... this is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and my child in thine eye" (MD 652). Although the "magic glass" acts, for Ahab, as a mirror, the effect, contained in the presence of an imagined, self-projected treasure, is the same for both Ahab and Redburn, no matter how different their situations are and how unlike each other they appear to be.

In the light of the imagery of sight or vision, Redburn, early in his narrative, draws attention to the perceived magic power of eyes, when the famishing traveller (whose story Redburn recollects), while wandering in the desert, "all at once caught sight of a date tree, with the ripe fruit hanging on it" (RB 46).

In a slightly different vein, but as part of the same pattern of symbols, stands the unforgettable, poetic description of Queequeg's eyes when, near death, their visionary power increases as his body is wasting:

> How he wasted and wasted away in those few long-lingering days, till there seemed but little left of him but his frame and tattooing. 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. An awe that cannot be named would steal over you as you sat by the side of this waning savage, and saw as strange things in his face, as any beheld who were bystanders when Zoroaster died. For whatever is truly wondrous and fearful in man, never yet was put into words or books. (MD 588)

At the end of Moby-Dick, viewing the sinking of the Pequod, ("And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself ... all round and round in one vortex" (MD 684-5)), one is reminded of the "rounding and rounding" of Queequeg's eyes "like the rings of Eternity". At that stage in Ishmael's story "this waning savage" projects a premonition of the end, an end that can be construed in more than one way and will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Returning to the forces of aggression and reflection, we find that Redburn's voyage begins, after some narrow, self-centered reflection, with the aggressive thought "that this indeed was the way to begin life, with a gun in your hand" (RB 53). It is followed by a threat of aggression when the young traveller

"turned to the next gazer, and clicking (his) gun-lock, deliberately presented the piece at him" (RB 56).

Pierre, after a bout of aggressive, albeit more universally oriented reflection (indicating spiritual growth), ends with actual aggression in the form of murder and suicide:

> These are most small circumstances; but happening just now to me, become indices to all immensities. For now am I hateshod! On these I will skate to my acquittal! No longer do I hold terms with aught. World's bread of life, and world's breath of honor, both are snatched from me; but I defy all world's bread and breath. Here I step out before the drawn-up worlds in widest space, and challenge one and all of them to battle! (P 399)

Thus begins and ends the persona's quest into the unknown.

Moby-Dick as the center panel in which, in Milton Stern's words, Melville "united all the implications of his perception" [7], pulsates with instances of aggression and reflection. In cognitive, rhythmic manifestations these forces appear as intertwined traits of the spirit -- a kind of double helix of the soul.

Although the impulses of aggression and reflection frame the beginning and end of the ongoing quest for Truth (a quest marked, in the three works, by three separate travels), Melville stretches the canvas of his work beyond the frame into universal dimensions of time and space. The scope of his work extends to a realm before the beginning of the first voyage, thereby conveying the impression of Redburn emerging out of time, as well as reaches beyond the end of the last journey, creating a sense of the abyss to which the path of Pierre will lead.

The phenomenon of taking his work beyond the stated, lies in Melville's choice of words and images, in order to create an intuition of the spiritual realm to which he alludes.

Independently, Moby-Dick is also stretched beyond its borders. The first and last words in this epic narrative refer to biblical images ("Call me Ishmael" and, with an allusion to the biblical Flood, "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago."), thereby heralding the timeless dimension of endless space. Milton Stern equates the search for the intelligible source of human identity with a going back "to ultimate beginnings in the history of mortality's plight" and, finding none, with a constantly going forward "to the end of mortality's plight", to find that none exists.[8]

Melville's obsession with the exploration of the limits of human existence is, apart from being a personal preoccupation, also a response to the temper of his time. Mankind felt increasingly lost or alienated from that which for ages had been believed to be the focus of human identity -- the relationship with God. The relationship had seemed simple, uncomplicated, with God, the Father, in Heaven and the human children inhabiting the Earth. This belief had been shaken in its foundations with the early scientific revolution and the ongoing march of scientific discoveries and the concomitant God-is-dead syndrome. The three books studied for this thesis are, as Melville's other works, permeated with doubts and questionings, and with analyses of philosophies by what seem to be the majority of their characters.

The choice of the archetypal character of Ishmael, as a modern symbol of the abandoned, fatherless wanderer in Melville's writing, is timely; the character represents modern traits that mankind at large did not yet feel at ease with. Man, like Ishmael, often experienced a sense of alienation. The character of Ishmael is the perfect center of the triptych -- the center through whom all currents flow -- which James Baird names "the aggregate of ... symbols".[9]

The archetypal figure, most apt for Moby-Dick, is supported and reinforced by the two works which form the side panels of this extraordinary triptych. Ishmael is the symbolic character who, in one state of being or another, wanders through all three works. Melville deals with the concept of Ishmael in some of his other writings as well (see Chapter II), but a perceived development in the character takes place especially in the triptych.

Further to the already discussed timelessness, Melville establishes the original dimension with the creation of light or sight in Redburn. He interweaves the physical sense of sight, or outward vision which, naturally, through gained knowledge and experience becomes the venue of spiritual sight, or inward vision, with the apparent re-enactment of the Genesis story of the creation of Light. God said: "Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). In Redburn, Melville acts as (re)creator. First, there was nothing but a jumble of memories and imaginings and then there were the Arabian traveller's "big eyes" which had

"all at once caught SIGHT ..." (RB 46, my emphasis). At this stage Redburn's insight is still marginally connected with the idea of the Church as the bringer or mediator of light, as he transfers the Arabian Traveller's sight to himself, to wit:

> For I very well remembered staring at a man myself, who was pointed out to me by my aunt one Sunday in Church, as the person who had been in Stony Arabia, and passed through strange adventures there, all of which with my own eyes I had read in the book which he wrote, an arid-looking book in a pale yellow cover" (RB 46).

The ability to see gains in intensity as the young Redburn feels that his eyes "must have magnified as (he) stared " (RB 46). The imagery of outward vision changes unobtrusively into spiritual or inward vision, illuminating the three works to a stronger or weaker degree, until its rays hit the walls of the Church of the Apostles in Pierre, when vision begins to deteriorate into almost total blindness. Pierre's cry at the end: "Pierre is neuter now!" (P 403), strengthens that condition, for in his state of despair Pierre feels himself to be genderless -- a mere visionless thing -- tossed about by the tides of events on the ocean of life. Thus, Redburn begins in darkness, before insight, and Pierre ends in darkness, beyond insight. In this way, Melville "got history pushed back so far he turned time into space", as Charles Olson observes.[10]

The imagery of the creation of light and sight also involves the human dilemma of knowledge of good versus knowledge of evil. The narrator, first, employs the imagery solely to symbolize the emergence of light/sight and following this, he applies the imagery to transmute the sense of physical sight into spiritual

vision or comprehension. After the creation of spiritual vision the protagonist is confronted with the unavoidable presence of evil as first perceived by Redburn:

> The long weary day wore on till afternoon; one incessant storm raged on deck; but after dinner the few passengers, waked up with their roast-beef and mutton, became a little more sociable. Not with me, for the scent and savor of poverty was upon me, and they all cast toward me their evil eyes and cold suspicious glances, as I sat apart, though among them. (RB 54)

Shortly after the above quoted scene the allusion to evil is perpetuated by Redburn with another reference to the visual: "Perhaps the gun that I clenched frightened them into respect; or there might have been something ugly in my eye" (RB 54).

With a soured soul and feeling wicked ("the devil in me then mounted up from my soul" (RB 55)), Redburn, the innocent, is a trigger away from committing violence ("I then turned to the next gazer, and clicking my gun-lock, deliberately presented the piece at him" (RB 56)). Redburn ends his reminiscences with the ironically laconic remark: "Such is boyhood" (RB 56).

It may be noted here how the experience of evil keeps pace with the growth of (spiritual) intuition, of which the eyes are considered to be the windows. These human traits are again wholly intertwined.

Redburn's eyes are, before his voyage (from a different perspective than previously mentioned), innocently "magnified" whereas Pierre, grown old beyond his years with experience and a perception of mythical evil, suffers from increasingly poor eye-sight, as well as from waning spiritual vision:

> as if all the leagued spiritual inveteracies and malices, combined with his general bodily exhaustion, were not enough, a special corporeal affliction now descended like a sky-hawk upon him. His incessant application told upon his eyes. They became so affected, that some days he wrote with the lids nearly closed, fearful of opening them wide to the light. (P 381)

The "sky-hawk", in the form of "a special corporeal affliction" appears as Melville's seal or emblem of death. In his fascinating description of the sinking of the Pequod, the narrator in Moby-Dick includes the image of the sky-hawk as a falling angel, sealing the fate of the ship:

> the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, ... and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it. (MD 685)

Of course, hell is also the place where Pierre's path, unalterably leads to, the 'descended (sky-hawk) affliction' is its omen: "Here, then, is the untimely, timely end; - Life's last chapter well stitched into the middle; ... Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds. Well, be it hell" (P 402-3).

In the wake of the Pequod's descent, Pierre's ravings are reiterated by his friend, Charlie Millthorpe: "The dark vein's burst, and here's the deluge-wreck -- all stranded here!" (P 405).

Further to Melville's creation of light, the Redburn narrator, reminiscing about his early youth, relates his version of the biblical story of Adam being confronted with the Tree of Knowledge, giving it a humorous twist in the form of a play-on-words "date tree". The date tree appears to an as yet unnamed wanderer in the desert "with the ripe fruit hanging on it" (RB 46) --

history waiting to be 'eaten' -- the beginning of time.

The "date tree" seems to prefigure the appearance of "Dates", the butler in Pierre, who provides the background against which Pierre's initially idyllic and seemingly timeless existence becomes increasingly disturbed by events occurring in time.

The concept of space and time, presented in the image of the Arabian traveller, the ancestral wanderer in Redburn, appears to the young protagonist's growing vision. This aspect, basic in the quest for Truth, is an important part of the overall design of Redburn and affects, through relevant character development, both Moby-Dick and Pierre.

Far-off time is revealed in the way in which the narrator in Redburn remembers earlier events. Once again, one experiences a sense of unbeginning -- of time and events going on forever -- and wonders which particular time or event marks the beginning of the story.

First, the narrator in the Redburn story is ten years older than the Redburn who undertook the voyage to Liverpool. Second, the younger seafaring Redburn whose thoughts and adventures are remembered by an older self is reported to be thinking of the time when he was a young boy and is afterwards reminiscing of the time when he was "very little" (RB 49). Consequently, the narrator is thrice removed from the earliest remembered experiences -- from the very little boy who already wished to know the secret of things and "made no doubt, that if he could but once pry open the hull, and break the glass all to pieces", he

"would infallibly light upon something wonderful" (RB 49). Viewers/readers are given two concepts at once. Not only would there be a revealing of "something wonderful" which implies the uncovering of the-longed for Truth but there is also an allusion to the simultaneous presence of light or vision ("I would infallibly light upon ..."). Only the glass is considered to be an impediment -- a barrier between ignorance and knowledge, between innocence and experience. Harold Beaver, in his "Introduction" to Redburn, speculates on Redburn having to break out of "the realm of pure reflection ... (through) the looking glass of art--which must be shattered as he steps from home into a world of adult experience".[11]

Redburn's musings on how he would come face to face with the imagined treasure (of Truth), contained in the hull of the glass ship, is reflected in Moby-Dick when, as the crew is considering the use of Queequeg's coffin for a future life-buoy, the carpenter goes through a kind of ceremony with Starbuck concerning the nailing down of the lid, the caulking of the seams and the tarring of same. Queequeg, when ill, had tried out the coffin, had for a spell inhabited this 'hull' and filled it (spiritually) with the savage mystery by which it seemed that "to live or die was a matter of his own sovereign will and pleasure" (MD 592). "Queequeg's conceit" (MD 592) here sets up a dichotomy between mankind and universe. We are reminded of the sovereign indifference of the universe towards humanity (a circumstance which Ishmael/Melville in his questing voyage somewhat perplexedly

comes to recognize), when it appears that a man can decide his own fate or, in a different scenario, is left to his own fate. At the same time, the conceit firmly posits the "noteworthy difference between savage and civilized" (MD 592) with Ishmael favouring the savage side.

Through his temporal presence in the coffin, Queequeg transfers to the casket his "mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth" (MD 593). This treatise, however, will be forever undecipherable as the coffin is to be nailed shut, its seams caulked and tarred over (MD 634), and used as a life-buoy. After protesting the apparent incongruity of the job, making a coffin into a life-buoy, the carpenter tells himself: "But never mind ... not for us to ask the why and wherefore of our work" (MD 635). It is, of course, significant that much is made of the idea to transform a coffin into a life-buoy, especially a coffin that is so thoroughly closed that, although theoretically it could still be opened, no thought of doing so arises here. Queequeg's mystical treatise, as does Redburn's imagined treasure, remains forever as unattainable as "the image of the ungraspable phantom of life ... the key to it all" (MD 95).

The development of Moby-Dick and the role the 'pagan' coffin plays in the godless, sovereignly indifferent universe of Ishmael's Epilogue is nothing short of outrageous. Outrageous, in the fantastic manner of Ishmael's escape, as the "unharming sharks ... glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths" (MD 687). Outrageous also, because Ishmael, he whom "God hears"

(MD "Commentary" 965), and who strongly sympathizes with (even if he does not adopt) pagan beliefs, "escaped alone to tell thee" (MD 687). In a sense, Melville implies that as long as mankind is intrigued by the mystery (which is of a mystical pagan nature and is larger than any confining religion can make it although it may, paradoxically, be contained within a coffin), mankind will continue to survive. Filled with mystery, the coffin functions in Ishmael's reality as a life-buoy, as "owing to its great buoyancy", it rises "with great force" to the surface of "the closing vortex" (MD 687). With Ishmael's escape, Melville creates a new way of being, when linking pagan and Old Testament beliefs in a fascinating double helix of faith. Here again, we see an illustration of Melville's custom of intertwining two textural strands into one.

Pierre continues the pattern of symbolic imagery, peculiar to the quest for Truth. As may be expected from the title, Pierre; or, the Ambiguities, Pierre's attempts at uncovering the "phantom of life" (MD 95), or Truth, also become ambiguous.

On the one hand, the effort grows more sophisticated; Pierre will write a book. "(He) will gospelize the world anew, and show them deeper secrets than the Apocalypse!" (P 310). By writing the book he will not only attempt to unravel the secrets for himself, but he also intends to declare what he finds out to the world: "I will write it, I will write it!" (P 310).

On the other hand, however, Pierre is little different from his fellow questers -- his brother-protagonists -- he is not up

to the task of finding out the Truth. And, although "that which now absorbs the time and life of Pierre, is not the book, but the primitive elementalizing of the strange stuff which in the act of attempting that book, has upheaved and upgushed in his soul" (P 344), it will never see the light of day for, as his name indicates, the Truth will become petrified in Pierre. Petrification is prefigured in Redburn, in the image of the traveller to "Stony Arabia" which in its stoniness does not (cannot) reveal any Truth, nor can the traveller himself -- he was famished for Truth, instead.

Throughout the panels of the triptych a kind of inverse progression takes place (from glass, to wood, to stone) in which the Truth, as the questers discover, becomes less and less attainable. The possibility of ever coming near the Truth becomes more and more remote until, with the death of Pierre, everything dissolves into the unknown. As formulated in Moby-Dick, the whole process begins anew and will continue to do so for ever and ever: "There is no steady unretracing progress in this life. ... But once gone through, we trace the round again; and are infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally" (MD 602). "Where", Ishmael muses,

> lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it. (MD 602)

A clarion call ("We must there ...") pre-charts the course of a

following quester's life. Pierre, in his despair of ever finding a harbour for his tide-tossed soul, follows the previous narrator's scenario to the letter: "His soul's ship foresaw the inevitable rocks, but resolved to sail on, and make a courageous wreck" (P 380).

Parallel with the quest for Truth, going on throughout the triptych, and notwithstanding the circumstance that each successive quester seems farther away from its uncovering, another process takes place, namely, a progressive shedding of bodily or spiritually experienced confinements, apparently symbolizing conventional beliefs and dogmas.

Traditional conventions and symbols are variously expressed in each of the three works under discussion. In the first work we see the young and naive Redburn wearing a green shooting-jacket, with green symbolizing his comparative innocence; we read about his ill-fitting pantaloons which at his "yard-arm gymnastics ... were all the time ripping and splitting in every direction" (RB 126); and finally we are confronted with the gossip about his friend, Harry Bolton. Redburn "never could entirely digest some of his imperial reminiscences of high life (and) at times it made (him) feel ill at ease in his company; and made (him) hold back (his) whole soul from him" (RB 302). These three (Redburn) symbols of conventional confinement are eventually discarded or abandoned.

In the second work, Moby-Dick, the symbolic expression of confinement, created by conventional customs and beliefs, is

differently expressed than in Redburn. Melville's insistence on cosmic vastness as the background for his work contrasts with an apparent hankering after small snug locales. The manner in which this hankering is expressed comically calls up an almost visual snugness, such as is to be found in paintings of seventeenth century Dutch interiors. A genetic memory from his Dutch ancestry or thoughts of an early Calvinistic confinement of spirit may colour Melville's apparent predilection for cozy, more or less enclosed spaces -- for "anything approaching to a cosy inhabitiveness, or adapted to breed a comfortable localness of feeling, such as pertains to a bed, a hammock, a hearse, a sentry box, a pulpit, a coach, or any other of those small and snug contrivances in which men temporarily isolate themselves" (MD 253). Even though Melville paints a seemingly desirable, cozy state of being, as a relief from feelings of cosmic vastness the shoreless ocean creates, the tension occurring in the description through the allusions to "a hearse" and "a pulpit" among the more naturally occurring situations, as well as referring to them as contrivances, suggests his particular irony. By cataloging a number of dissimilar places and situations, Melville transforms the seemingly cozy condition into a kind of smothering situation, a situation in which Ishmael could not ever partake, since his soul prefers "the open independence of her sea" (MD 203).

The nature of Pierre demands a totally different symbolic expression to illustrate the shedding of confining beliefs and

traditions. In this particular work the abandonment of family and friends, and ultimately of the self, serves as a symbolic freeing of the spirit:

> Thus, and thus, and thus! on thy manes I fling fresh spoils; pour out all my memory in one libation! - so, so, so - lower, lower, lower; now all is done, and all is ashes! Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity and no past; and since the Future is one blank to all; therefore, twice-disinherited Pierre stands untrammeledly his ever-present self! - free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end! (P 232)

In his misguided enthusiasm Pierre feels that he has freed himself from the ties that bind. In Problematic Rebel, Maurice Friedman comments on Melville and other modern writers who "help us to understand the man who knows existence emptied of God and himself as alienated and divided".[12] Friedman analyzes the Greek moral order, "a qualitative order in which man finds his place again and again through discovering his potentialities and his fateful limitations" and, focussing on "Oedipus the tragic hero [who] is also Oedipus the exile", remarks: "to the Greeks there could be no more horrible tragedy than that of the man who is destined to cut himself off from the order, for this man is an exile from his very birth".[13] Denying his "paternity and his past" Pierre is in such a position -- he fits the mantle of a tragic hero.

Thinking of Pierre as a type of Oedipus, combined with the privileged pleasure of viewing Melville's three books, Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre, as a triptych in which new perspectives may continuously be discovered, even in parts or aspects that

have been viewed, one is reminded of Melville's preoccupation of bringing past time into the present. This is especially noticeable in both Redburn and Pierre, highlighting the earlier discussed degree of symmetry between the two works.

In Redburn there are various references to a time long before his birth with mention of a great-uncle, Senator Wellingborough, "after whom (Redburn) had the honor of being named" (RB 48).

Furthermore, the narrator remembers paintings, books and art-objects in his parental home, in relation to his father's early travels to France. He is especially moved by fond memories of his father, memories which later change into close to (psychological) strangling sensations. This will be further discussed in Chapter V.

In Pierre, the past is brought into the present by means of a narrative intrusion which informs the reader in an exaggerated, slightly ridiculing manner of the memorable deeds of Pierre's ancestors: "The Glendinning deeds by which their estate had so long been held, bore the ciphers of three Indian kings, the aboriginal and only conveyancers of those noble woods and plains" (P 26). In a subtle fashion the narrator deprives the ancestral Glendinnings of a historic grandeur, ending the particular description with an apprehended delusion:

> Thus loftily, in the days of his circumscribed youth, did Pierre glance along the background of his race; little recking of that maturer and larger interior development, which should forever deprive these things of their full power of pride in his soul. (P 26)

The narrator thus sets the stage for Pierre's eventual breaking

out of "his circumscribed youth". There is in Pierre, as in Redburn, also mention of paintings, but they are of personal significance, rather than serving as mere ornaments. The portraits of the father play an important role in Pierre's psyche. In an above quoted, almost Gothic scene, Pierre commits the "chair-portrait" of his father, that had been given to him by his aunt, to the fire, thereby symbolically killing his already dead father and becoming "twice-disinherited". (See page 23).

Although the generations have moved forward, they are, as well, stretched far back in time which creates a tension and which lets the reader (and viewer of the triptych) experience a strong sense of the past in conjunction with the present.

Long before the beginning of the ancestral generations in the work as a whole drifts the Arabian traveller in the desert. In a strangely mysterious, but purposeful way, the lone figure appears as a kindred spirit or forebear to the biblically named Ishmael. The Arabian traveller was one of the first human inspirational "foreign associations" which "bred in (Redburn) a vague, prophetic thought that (he) was fated ... to be a great voyager" (RB 48). In the context of the three books as triptych, Redburn foreshadows the exploits of Ishmael in Moby-Dick and, in a spiritual sense, of Pierre in Pierre.

The introduction of a French aspect in Redburn with reference to the father's travels to France and especially to the previously mentioned "old-fashioned glass ship ... of French manufacture" (RB 48), when regarded in the context of the triptych,

points to Pierre and the French experiences of Pierre's father and of Isabel.

First, there "are arrived in the port, a cabin-full of French emigrants of quality" (P 101), refugees from the French Revolution with whom Pierre's father, as a young man, became acquainted (and especially with "a beautiful young girl" among them), during the efforts of "humane gentlemen of the city" to provide "for the wants of the strangers" (P 101). In view of what transpires in Pierre (the unexpected, but probable existence, and arrival of an illegitimate half-sister) Melville's Christianity-targetting-irony seems in evidence here.

There is also the implication that the ship on which Isabel came to America was of "French manufacture" or was sailing under the French flag and employed a French-speaking crew.

Isabel's gothic reference to "an old half-ruinous house ... a wild dark house" (P 141-2) which in her memory bore a likeness to "the outside of French Chateaux" (P 142) and which, according to the dim image she recalls, was "perhaps in France" (P 142), seems to consolidate her own French ancestry. The French fact in the books provides an example of the interconnectedness between them.

Another important point of comparison between the side panels of the triptych is the relative sense of disappointment that the two protagonists experience concerning the image they each had formed of their fathers -- they find the image tarnished.

Redburn's father's guide-book of Liverpool, which proves in-

adequate when Redburn discovers that the hotel where his father used to stay when visiting that city had been demolished long ago, seems to lead in Pierre to

> this shrine ... of marble - a niched pillar, deemed solid and eternal, and from whose top radiated all those innumerable sculptured scrolls and branches, which supported the entire one-pillared temple of his moral life; as in some beautiful Gothic oratories, one central pillar, trunk-like, upholds the roof. In this shrine, in this niche of this pillar, stood the perfect marble form of his departed father; without blemish, unclouded, snow-white, and serene; Pierre's fond personification of perfect human goodness and virtue. (P 93)

The eventual spiritual ruin of this marble perfection is augured by the poverty and vice Redburn finds in Liverpool, instead of the genteel landmarks he expected.

Furthermore, the irrevocability of the absence of the fathers weighs heavily on the protagonists. In both works, Redburn and Pierre, the looming absence seems, in a strange way, to grow or multiply as the images tarnish and as actions are taken to discard their reminders ("guide-book" in Redburn, "chair-portrait" in Pierre), and the young men must actively internalize the new, less than perfect images.

In Moby-Dick, the biological father of Ishmael is never mentioned which is in line with the concept. Ishmael has, allegorically, only a stepmother (Sarah), who abandons him to the loneliness of the dark room (MD 119), or to the biblical wilderness. Throughout Moby-Dick there are various references to (substitute) non-biological father-figures, such as Father Mapple, Ahab as father of the crew, and to God the Father.

In the realm of ancestors, biological or otherwise, it may be interesting to observe once more the unobtrusive apparition of the Arabian traveller. Although this foreigner attends the same church service as the young Redburn and his aunt, the older (narrating) Redburn sets the man apart from the congregation by mentioning his visionary eyes. He separates the inquisitive mind from the sheep-like tendencies of the majority and covertly alludes to the changing, but as yet not wholly accepted social-religious or intellectual climate in which more and more individuals began to question the validity of traditional, but time-worn conventions.

The traveller, as noted, not only leads the way in Redburn's dreams of becoming "a great voyager", but in his original role of an as yet unnamed "famishing" wanderer, he foreshadows the figure who will later make his appearance and who, through the many implications of his name -- Ishmael -- links more than any other symbol the three works together.

On the Highlander, the ship sailing to Liverpool, Redburn emerges from an open-ended perspective as a "sort of Ishmael (RB 114), a descendent of the Arabian wanderer. Earlier, in a wave of self-pity, Redburn had felt "thrust out of the world" (RB 83).

Moby-Dick's Ishmael, as a more mature character, also experiences a sense of not belonging, inspired not so much by self-pity as in Redburn, as by an inability to comprehend or embrace what is known as reality.

Pierre, of course, feeling compelled by existential problems, makes the conscious choice not to belong.

In the context of experiencing a sense of not belonging to common humanity, or to the world as it is humanly known and lived in, Raymond Weaver states:

> Melville made no ... capitulation with reality. Between the obdurate world of facts and his ardent and unclarified desires there was always, to the end of his life, a blatant incompatibility. Alongside the hard and cramping world of reality, and in more or less sharp opposition to it, he sets up a fictitious world, a world of heart's desire; ... he hugged his dream in jealous defiance of reality. [14]

In evidence of the above, the narrator in Pierre shows the unhappy young man to be spiritually unable to make peace with reality. For, in his final state of despair, "the more and the more that he wrote, and the deeper and the deeper that he dived, Pierre saw the everlasting elusiveness of Truth" (P 380). In a physical analogue, seized by a sudden, unwonted sensation, "He knew not where he was; he did not have any ordinary life-feeling at all. He could not see; though instinctively putting his hand to his eyes, he seemed to feel that the lids were open" (P 382).

William Sedgwick, echoing both Weaver's and the words of the narrator of Pierre, states that Melville "was forever precipitating himself against the ultimate truth of creation; reasoning" (in Hawthorne's words) "Of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken." [15]

NOTES

[1] William Ellery Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 83.

[2] Sedgwick 93.

[3] Newton Arvin, ed., The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967) 230.

[4] George R.Creeger, "Color Symbolism in the Works of Herman Melville: 1846-1852" (Yale University: Ph.D. dissertation, 1952) 21.

[5] Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) 33.

[6] Wright 28.

[7] Milton R.Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957) 150.

[8] Stern 185.

[9] James Baird, Ishmael (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) xv.

[10] Charles Olson, Call me Ishmael (San Francisco, Cal.: City Lights Books, 1947) 14.

[11] Harold Beaver, "Introduction" to Redburn (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1987) 9.

[12] Maurice Friedman, Problematic Rebel (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970) 4.

[13] Friedman 28-29.

[14] Raymond M.Weaver, Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic (New York: Pageant Books, 1961) 132.

[15] Sedgwick 9.

CHAPTER II

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.
Shakespeare

The first chapter shows, among other things, how the Arabian traveller, "the person who had been in Stony Arabia" (RB 46), literally paved the way for young Redburn to emerge as "a sort of Ishmael" (RB 114). Keeping the image of the Arabian traveller before the reader's eyes, in order to further familiarize him/her with the concept of the lone human journey through the desert of life (the implied theme of the triptych), the narrator, Redburn, sprinkles the desert sand throughout the pages of his book (46, 131, 210), while visualizing "a level Sahara of yellowish white" (RB 210) as part of a map of the town of Liverpool which he finds folded (thus unrevealed) in his father's old guide-book and which town he (Redburn) must explore while being his own guide, if he is to gain any knowledge of that particular place.

The father's outdated guide-book is, in its irrelevance, significant in a larger and different realm than that of Liverpool. The guide-book's outdatedness serves to remind the young man of the necessity of a journey or quest to be undertaken anew by each new generation. At the same time, the particular guide-book lends through the implied father-son relationship a special poignancy to the quest as the revelation of the book's irrelevance begins to dawn upon the narrator. The young man's

"sad ... solemn, and ... most melancholy thought" (RB 224) reveals to him that the

> book on which (he) had so much relied; the book in the old morocco cover; the book with the cocked-hat corners; the book full of fine old family associations; the book with seventeen plates, executed in the highest style of art; this precious book was next to useless. Yes the thing that had guided the father, could not guide the son. (RB 224)

Afterwards he is able to admonish himself with the lesson just learnt that guide-books "are the least reliable books in all literature. ... Every age makes its own guide-books, and the old ones are used for waste paper" (RB 224-5).

The absence of a physical father-son relationship is one of the salient aspects that hinges the three works together. The absence, paradoxically, increases the viewer/reader's awareness of a looming psychological-spiritual presence of such a relationship and, true to biblical precedent, creates the proper background for the emergence of an Ishmael.

In the context of Melville's genius, it is no accident that the guide-book chapter in Redburn follows on the narrator's reflections on the role of sailors in the cosmic scheme with a reference to a perception of the sailor's situation "as a neglected step-son of heaven" and with the seemingly self-deluding statement that "yet we feel and we know that God is the true Father of all, and that none of his children are without the pale of his care" (RB 205).

While ironically mitigating its impact on a still largely religiously devout public, thereby creating a deliberate front to

appease possible public wrath with Redburn's seemingly faithless musings, the latter statement, in reality, brings into focus the whole Christian human dilemma as expressed in Redburn's dawning realization that man or sailor is indeed a step-son of heaven. As a ship's boy, Redburn is scorned by his shipmates, an experience which is of a kind with the confrontations which befall him on the way to the ship and which together constitute part of his immersion into experience. The immersion helps to change his outlook on life from the vantage point of a socially sheltered "gentleman's son" to that of a man of the world.

True to Melville's custom of introducing images, concepts and themes into his work in an unobtrusive manner, 'en passent' as it were, the idea of the sailor -- "one of the wheels of this world" (RB 205) -- as a seemingly "neglected step-son of heaven", has an impact on the course of the three-part work as a whole which will be discussed later.

However, it is interesting to note that in Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews, one finds a passage appraising the importance of sailors in the same vein as Redburn speaks of sailors as one of the wheels of the world. To wit Joseph Andrews' narrator-host's questioning statement:

> 'Of what use would learning be in a country without trade? What would all you parsons do to clothe your backs and feed your bellies? Who fetches you your silks and your linens, and your wines, and all the other necessaries of life? I speak chiefly with regard to the sailors'.[1]

Redburn's positive and humorous appraisal of the role sailors fulfil, uttered prior to his musings on the low esteem in which they seem to be held by society at large, is quite similar to the inn-keeper's rhetorical question put to Parson Adams in Henry Fielding's work. Redburn musingly states:

> Now sailors ... go and come round the globe; they are the true importers, and exporters of spices and silks; of fruits and wines and marbles; they carry missionaries, embassadors, opera-singers ... they are the primum mobile of all commerce, and, in short, were they to emigrate in a body to man the navies of the moon, almost every thing would stop here on earth except its revolution on its axis, and the orators in the American Congress. (RB 204)

Redburn's appellation for the sailor as a "neglected step-son of heaven" allegorically intensifies the "sort of Ishmael" concept, since "step-son of heaven" alludes to circumstances behind the ancient name. The biblical Ishmael is a step-son of Sarah, wife of Abraham. He is, on Sarah's recommendation, but with God's encouragement or, at least, agreement, by Abraham (his father) cast out into the wilderness. To wit:

> So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendents be named. ... So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. (Gen.21:10-14)

Thus, focusing the reader's attention on the novice-sailor as a "sort of Ishmael" (having inherited this mantle from the Arabian traveller), Redburn prepares its audience for the appearance of

the fully named Ishmael in Moby-Dick.

The phrase, "step-son of heaven", is a truly remarkable find. With one stroke Melville not only paints the circumstances and the condition of the archetypal character, but he also spells out, and with immediate force, his own psychological state and the state of mankind as he perceives it to be. (It is no secret that Melville all his life felt 'short-changed' by God).

As a consequence of Redburn's preparation, the Moby-Dick Ishmael does not wander into New Bedford and onto the deck of the Pequod unanticipated; his shadow is being thrown across the water by the Highlander's boy, Redburn, who thereby reinforces the charged power of the first words in Moby-Dick: "Call me Ishmael". Redburn's foreshadowing of Ishmael accentuates the implied generational aspect in those first words.

In turn, Ishmael's shadow lengthens in the next panel of the triptych as, in terms of "an infant Ishmael" (P 115-6), Pierre's journey speeds to its forever unfulfillable end.

Where the shade of Ishmael's shadow contributes to a somber hue in the work as a whole, the modern (Redburn) precedent of the ancient character also infuses the work with the "pale yellow" (RB 46) and "yellowish-white" (RB 210) of the endless desert sand. In a darkening melodramatic manner this is scooped up by Pierre when he, in moments of misgiving following upon his decision to adopt the stranger, Isabel, as his sister (misgivings mainly spurred on by reflections on his "mother's immense pride" (P 115) and his anticipation of a correlative negative

attitude on her part toward this kind of undertaking), undergoing a kind of revelation,

> felt that deep in him lurked a divine unidentifiableness, that owned no earthly kith or kin. Yet was this feeling entirely lonesome, and orphan-like. Fain, then, for one moment, would he have recalled the thousand sweet illusions of Life's Truth; so that once more he might not feel himself driven out an infant Ishmael into the desert, with no maternal Hag r to accompany and comfort him. (P 115-6)

The narrator's remark, as we'l as previous allusions to desert locales, reflect Melville's own state of mind. Hawthorne assessed Melville's concerns accurately in an observation he wrote in his Journal after having spent a few days with him.

> Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated'; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation, and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists ... in wandering to and fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sandhills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature and is better worth immortality than most of us. [2]

In addition to previously discussed devices Melville employs to create a sense of timelessness, allusions to biblical names and events, which punctuate his writing, further support the cosmic dimension. Moreover, allusions and references to the Old Testament give the author's work an aura of authenticity, as well as continuity. In a sense, they cultivate almost visually the impression of hairline cracks associated with the surface of old paintings.

The calling up of Old Testament names, and the allegorical adaptation of some of its symbols and themes, is a way in which the author pushes back reality, while proving, at the same time, the perceived repetitiveness of events and experiences by relevantly recreating the ancient occurrences and demonstrating that the archetypal truths apply to all time.

Apart from the name - Ishmael - implications and foreshadowings of the ancient character may be found in works other than the three under discussion: Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre. References occur notably in White-Jacket, to some extent in Typee and Omoo, and especially in Mardi and later in Israel Potter and Clarel.

Nevertheless, "a sort of Ishmael" (RB), "Ishmael" (MD) and "an infant Ishmael" (P) form a generational, if not a genetic trinity of Ishmaels, together lending reinforcement to each individual panel, as well as continuity from one panel to the next.

The generational aspect, inspired, among other things, by the timeless nature of the biblical archetype, illustrates the ongoing fate of mankind. There have always been and, for all time to come, there will be Ishmaels as, short of annihilation, it appears to be the future of the human race to wander in the wilderness and, in the context of Melville's writings, to hope or to have faith that God, indeed, is hearing the cry for (water) knowledge, or the revelation of Truth, as was promised in the naming of "Ishmael".

Pertinent to the Ishmaelean probing for Truth, Nathalia Wright

disregards the ultimate deliverance of Ishmael from the wilderness of water as illusory, rather than real, for

> reality itself, the abstract and the ultimate, resides in the wilderness, whether of land or of sea; in the inhuman, indefinite, perilous waste. That is, it is to be found here if it is to be found anywhere. The going is lonely and rough, but, harshest fact of all, the end may never be reached. For Melville's heroes ... are engaged in a quest rather than an achievement. In the wilderness through which they pass no divine voice speaks, as it spoke to Hagar. But here the unanswerable question is asked. It is a place of revelation. And if nothing more is revealed than that the nature of reality is like the nature of the desert - vast, voiceless, and fearful - that is itself a mature, a profound, and a positive discovery. 3

Although Wright's statement imparts a universal dimension to "the wilderness through which they pass" and names it "a place of revelation", there is in Melville's writings a convincingly developed concern with perspective or angles of vision to be found. Development of perspective is especially noticeable in Moby-Dick where the narrator, Ishmael, analyzes the striking difference in outlook between Ahab and the officers and crew aboard the Pequod. Ishmael plays a decisive role in the philosophical analysis of the various personal premises in narrating his own mostly opposing view from Ahab's and in describing Starbuck's rational perspective, as well as Pip's and others', each for its own circumstantial reasons.

Carl Bredahl, in his study of Melville's Angles of Vision, asserts that "... concern with perspective, the implications of the relationship between place and vision, never ceased to fascinate (Melville)". 4

Ahab, blinded by his monomaniac obsession of conquering the White Whale, is incapable of changing course (or his perspective) and, instead, in Melville's scenario, will go to the ends of the earth -- over the boundaries of common sense, "... I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up" (MD 261). He ignores the pleas from his first mate, Starbuck, and from Pip who in a state of impaired reason or "heaven's sense" (MD 526), represents the germ of Truth. In Pip, a seed-like knowledge of the Truth is deposited as currency for the "infinite of his soul" (MD 525). Once again, Melville creates an atmosphere of timelessness, centered in the present. (Chapter I discusses a similar observation with regard to Redburn and Pierre).

In his desire for certain anchorage in uncertain waters, Melville appears to ground or personify so elusive an element as infinity in the figure of Pip -- mad Pip -- and thus fertilizes one with the other, the material with the spiritual and vice versa. Pip becomes, in Charles Olson's words, "prelusive of the eternal time" [5], yet he is clearly anchored to the world of the ship through the umbilical cord leading to "the ship's navel, this doubloon ..." (MD 546).

In Pip, too, the fascination with angles of vision (perspective) is epitomized and brought to a climax with the boy's recital of the seemingly simple conjugation of the verb "to look".

Despite Ahab's refusal of the redemption, offered in the love of Pip, this stubborn man is also a seeker after universal Truth, albeit a misguided one. When listening to the narrator, exclaiming "God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture feeds upon that heart forever; that vulture the very creature he creates" (MD 303), one receives a strong impression of Ahab's overwhelmingly solipsistic isolation. Such a state of mind is on Melville's palette devoid of colour: "a blankness in itself" (MD 303), yet holds extreme fascination for him.

The restless seeking after the talismanic secret, a secret which seems to favour fertile soil such as "heaven's sense" in Pip (which is a distinction foreshadowed in Redburn's brave musing that "there is one Holy Guide-Book ... that will never lead you astray, if you but follow it aright" (RB 225) and is intensively developed in Pierre with the "fanciful and mystical ... Lecture (on) Chronometricals and Horologicals" (P 243-4) contained in the pamphlet Pierre finds), does not so much emphasize the difference in personal perspectives as a reason for impairing the search for Truth, as the difference between a subjectively individual versus a universally oriented perspective. The wholly solipsistic point of view will in the end destroy, rather than reveal, any glimpse of the nature of Truth.

Ahab serves as the model par excellence of the totally individual (subjective) angle of vision. He sees the whale, Moby-Dick, in Bredahl's words, as a "personified malignancy" [6] and the animal's actions as actions of intent, rather than of instinct. Consequently, Ahab regards the White Whale as his personal challenge,

> yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. Nay, could grimly live and burn, while the common vitality to which it was conjoined, fled horror-stricken from the unbidden and unfathered birth. (MD 302)

Ishmael, on the other hand, perceives the Whale "omnisciently, as a possible intelligible microcosm in a possibly intelligible cosmos" [7], according to Bredahl's perception.

Something interesting is happening here. By adopting a telescopic view, it appears as if Ishmael indeed receives a glimpse of the Truth, that is, of the nature of Truth, while avoiding a glance at the Whale's face. For, the Whale seems to admonish, and Ishmael is the only one to understand and to respond to the admonition: "Thou shalt see my back parts, my tail ... but my face shall not be seen" (MD 487). The religious doctrine that God cannot ever be directly known to mankind, only intermediately, is here metaphorically alluded to, suggesting the particular (Ishmaelean) intrinsic nature of the White Whale, a perception which in itself constitutes a form of spiritual insight. Ishmael had earlier meditated on the inherent unknowableness of

the Whale.

> And how nobly it raises our conceit of the mighty, misty monster, to behold him solemnly sailing through a calm tropical sea; his vast, mild head overhung by a canopy of vapor, engendered by his incommunicable contemplations, and that vapor - as you will sometimes see it - glorified by a rainbow, as if Heaven itself had put its seal upon his thoughts. ... 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. (MD 482)

These meditations point to Ishmael's dawning recognition of an existential inability in mankind to truly or directly know the deep spiritual reality -- the "ungraspable phantom of life ... the key to it all" (MD 95).

A more 'scientific' approach to the unknowableness of the Whale, setting aside Moby-Dick's symbolic attributes and bringing the work into the realm of literary theory, is contained in the remarks by Robert Scholes in his scholarly essay on Textual Power. The particular study reaches, in effect, the same conclusion as Ishmael does: Moby-Dick is unknowable. For, "to write the fish in many modes (the Melvillean perspectives or angles of vision) is finally to see that one will never catch THE FISH in any one discourse".[8]

Scholes maintains, what Melville's Pip knew instinctively, that it is right to question the status of texts (doubloons). As Stanley Fish, according to Scholes, has pointed out, "no text (doubloon or fish) is as simply "there" as we have sometimes assumed it to be. Interpretation does enter the reading (knowing) process ...".[9]

In this sense, Nathalia Wright speaks of "a double image" when Melville employs biblical allusions. First, there is the perception of the biblical connotation regarding the person, event or theme referred to, but then there is also the connotation engendered by the author's imagination. In Wright's words:

> To the Bible itself Melville could be quite unfaithful, with the same simple artistic purpose. Sometimes it is his own connotation regarding a verse rather than the verse itself to which he alludes. A double image results: one perceives, in addition to the immediate object, not only a Biblical scene but one suggested by it which existed only in the author's mind.[10]

Further reflections on the impossibility of knowing the essence of life -- of God -- are crystallized in the following Ishmaelian thoughts: "Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will" (MD 487).

In the triptych as a whole, the quest for the "ungraspable phantom" is evident in Redburn (as noted, in the imagined and longed for treasure presumed to reside in the hull of the glass ship); it moves along with Moby-Dick (as discussed above, notably spurred on by the various motives or perspectives with which the voyage is undertaken) until (after too long and too deep "probings at the very axis of reality" (MD 690)) reason is compromised and brought to its final dissolution in Pierre when the hapless young author -- "a peak inflexible in the heart of Time" (P 343) -- speaks despairingly with Isabel of the vanity of all things and betrays a bleak, blank state of mind with a perception of nothingness as the substance of morality: "Look:

a nothing is the substance, it casts one shadow one way, and another the other way; and these two shadows cast from one nothing; these, seems to me, are Virtue and Vice" (P 310).

Isabel counters with a voice of apparent reason: "Then why torment thyself so, dearest Pierre?" (P 310). And Pierre, tottering on the edge of the abyss, answers: "It is the law ... That a nothing should torment a nothing; for I am a nothing. It is all a dream - we dream that we dreamed we dream" (P 311).

Marius Bewley, in "Melville and the Democratic Experience", comments that what "paradoxically ... finally confronted him was not a polarity between good and evil ... but a tragic confusion in which good and evil were indistinguishable". [11]

The stage is set. Pierre's reflections on the unsubstantiality of life lead inexorably to the twin impulse: aggression -- aggression against the perceived ogre of social and religious convention. Pierre, like Ahab, a misguided seeker after Truth, will also "with ... breath of flame, breathe back (his) defiance!" (P 403), thereby aligning himself (in what is, notwithstanding Pierre's initial noble intentions, solipsistic isolation) with Ahab who, in his final lament, defies the great mystery of the White Whale: "Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (MD 684).

With a flourish, worthy of the most dramatic theatrical

gesture, Pierre's nemesis echoes almost verbatim Ishmael's words on the unknowableness of the Whale. Isabel's words, sheathed in "ebon vines", are flung at friends and foes alike, thus colouring the panel a primordial black, "All's o'er, and ye know him not!" (P 405).

NOTES

[1] Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews (New York: Penguin Group, 1977) 182.

[2] Newton Arvin, ed., The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967) 230-31.

[3] Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) 48-49.

[4] Carl Bredahl, Jr., Melville's Angles of Vision (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972) 1.

[5] Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1947) 56.

[6] Bredahl 3.

[7] Bredahl 3.

[8] Robert Scholes, Textual Power (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 144.

[9] Scoles 150.

[10] Wright 40-41.

[11] Marius Bewley, "Melville and the Democratic Experience", A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962) 94.

CHAPTER III

Call me Ishmael.

Melville

We did call him Ishmael and it has been an honour. We have come to know him better and perhaps ourselves as well.

The opening words in Moby-Dick establish an immediate relationship between narrator and reader and, given the nature of Ishmael, this relationship will endure until the end of time.

Melville, most explicitly, lends the stage to his persona. In directly addressing his audience and inviting it to call him by name, the narrator puts (in Coleridge's words on Hamlet), "an effect in the actor's power" [1] and holds the audience's attention to the last, when one is told that he (the narrator) alone is escaped to tell the foregoing story.

Ishmael, the archetypal symbol with its many connotations, generates or nurtures more than any other figure in the triptych, the topical lines and developments which run through the three panels. He functions, if not as the doubloon, at least as "the navel" (MD 546) - the very center of the triptych to and from which many cords are attached or lead.

The character of Ishmael is not only central, filtering or reflecting the various traits which make up the experiences on the whaling ship, but in an interesting way he also redeems the tale from sinking into the deep.

The image of the figure of Ishmael on the coffin-lifebuoy, at the end of Moby-Dick, strangely points to a remote, spiritual

connection (or perhaps a wistfully hoped for connection), with the Father. Ishmael's wanderings had been by God ordained and thus was their outcome -- Ishmael's fate -- pre-ordained. The name, Ishmael, serves as the instrument through which 'God is hearing'. Ishmael's promised survival thus guarantees the literary resurrection of crew and events aboard the Pequod: "... and I will make him a great nation" (Gen.17:20).

An archetypal symbol such as Ishmael transcends the individual and collective consciousness wherein the symbol temporally exists, the consciousness of literature and of oral recollection and transmission. It leads the reader to the realm of the symbol's primal origin: the unconscious, no matter how consciously the symbol has been "organized and controlled".[3]

Taking into account the sentient profundity of Melville's writings, it is clear that the author harbored an intuitive awareness of the full meaning of the character of (ancient) Ishmael, an awareness which guided him to an artistic (temporal) resurrection of the symbol.

James Baird sees the "genuine symbol of feeling (as) formed in the grasp of the imagination" and he goes on to say that a particular symbol "was never before seen in exactly the same shape which it exhibits. It is a newly struck medal from a unique alloy, cast of material which lay potential to art in the consciousness of the artist ...".[4]

With the charged first words in Moby-Dick the narrator rolls

out aeons of time and oceans of space which at the end of Moby-Dick dissolve in an allusion to another archetypal symbol: the Biblical Flood. "Space and time were not abstraction, but the body of Melville's experience and he cast the struggle in their dimension", writes Charles Olson.[5]

Melville succeeds, especially with the reference to the Flood, in combining the ancient (archetypal) with the present (temporal) and vividly calls up a sense of continuity in the ever recurring cycles of time as "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (MD 685).

In the light of Ishmael's character traits and his central position in the pattern of symbols in the three works combined, one of the most, if not the most harshly coloured stroke in all of the triptych's spectrum which is filtered and reflected through his (Ishmael's) presence (and which provides at the same time the richest texture in the overall work), is the motif of violence. The three works, Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre, are riddled with violence or aggression, either in the form of allusion, threat or actual violence resulting in death.

In chapter I the characteristics of reflection and aggression are mentioned as being of psychologically structural importance. In the present chapter the presence of violence in the three works will be further analyzed, especially as an outcome of the Melvillean theory or philosophy, developed in a number of his works (including Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre; White-Jacket and

Billy Budd are other examples), that "(n)ature has not implanted any power in man that was not meant to be exercised at times ... The privilege, inborn, and inalienable, that every man has of dying himself and inflicting death upon another, was not given to us without a purpose" (WJ 286-7).

The theory has been analyzed from a psychological premise by Henry A.Murray in his essay "In Nomine Diaboli" which seeks to discuss Melville's psychologically coloured, literary reaction to "the dominant ideology, that peculiar compound of puritanism and materialism, of rationalism and commercialism, of shallow, blatant optimism and technology, which proved so crushing to creative evolutions in religion, art, and life".[6]

In the latter context, Murray sees Melville as knowingly belonging to what William Blake has termed (with regard to Milton's Paradise Lost) the Devil's party and he observes that Melville, "while writing Moby-Dick so gloried in his membership that he baptized his work "In Nomine Diaboli".[7]

Before discussing the characteristic of aggression and its ubiquitous manifestations in some detail, it may be useful to take a brief look at what seems to be an important related aspect, namely, Melville's choice of names for the figures which 'people' his writings.

The thought comes to mind that Melville, in his enthusiasm of discovering the works of Shakespeare and relying on a number of them for some form of literary or stylistic guidance, may have

derived indirect (oppositional) assistance from a particular Shakespeare play.

Melville has created characters who are, or seem to be, inseparable from the (traditional) meaning of their names. In a sense this contradicts Juliet's (Romeo and Juliet) observation regarding the name "Montague":

> 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;-
> Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.
> What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
> Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
> What's in a name? (Act II Scene II).

Shakespeare questions the philosophical and psychological power of names -- of language, indeed, touches on the question of epistemology when Romeo answers Juliet:

> I know not how to tell By a name thee who I am (Act II Scene II).

Melville appears to realize in his chosen names an awareness of the nature of a character. In the case of biblical names, the persona bearing the ancient name immediately calls up, either his biblical character or the prophesied conduct of this character. Nathalia Wright ascribes the perceived relationship running through all of Melville's writings to the author's intensive use of the Bible as a source of literary wealth, "yielding history, literature, humor, speculation, spiritual exercises, a multiplicity of styles".[8]

However, names not derived from the biblical source appear to have been chosen and applied with equal care so as to match the

psychological make-up of a particular character. They provide a sense of comfort or familiarity within the realm of Melville's work, since confrontation with a named character, predictably, implies a measure of exposure of his nature. In short, the names of Melville's characters signal the author's intent.

Drawing on the Bible for inspiration of names, symbols and themes for his writings did not hold Melville back from baptizing Moby-Dick in the name of Satan, instead of God.

The first chapter deals among other things with a metaphorical expression of confinement of spirit as experienced by each of the three protagonists, and the symbolic shedding of these confinements has been briefly discussed. To this effect I have quoted Pierre's 'monologue of defiance' (my term). Pierre, perceiving himself to be fancy-free, is inevitably headed for the place where all those of similar persuasion congregate, that is, the netherworld or, in Pierre's words, "one blank Future" (P 232). He will slide into that world along a slippery path marked by a "fanciful and mystical ... (l)ecture" (P 243), reaching his ultimate destination after having been confronted with various unsolicited, yet self-inflicted aggressive situations which lead inexorably into an annihilating nihilism, culminating in Pierre's observation: "Tis speechless sweet to murder thee!" (P 402), as well as his further enacted murder-suicide at the end of the book.

Dr Murray, paraphrasing Toynbee, likens the psychological downsliding process Pierre is undergoing or engaged in, to a failing

of the creative imagination: "Nihilism springs up when the imagination fails to provide the redeeming solution of an unbearable dilemma".[9]

Murray applies the theory, based on Melville's already quoted analysis of Man's inborn "privilege ... of dying himself and inflicting death upon another", equally to the character of Ahab who, of course, is a striking example of the need "to avenge a private insult".[10]

Ahab, too, considers himself to be free of all restraining powers, a sovereign nature indifferent to any human entreaties to change the fatal course on which he has set not only himself, but also his ship's entire crew. Instead, he worships the fire of defiance - Satan - which is expressed in the following monologue. (Because of its strong rhythmic colouring the monologue stands out as a poetic interlude in the prose of Moby-Dick)

> Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire ... I
> now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I
> now know that thy right worship is defiance.
> To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be
> kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill;
> and all are killed.
>
> Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou
> madest me, and like a true child of fire,
> I breathe it back to thee. (MD 616)

Dramatic actions springing from Ahab's nihilism rush the final climax as anticipated in his self-fulfilling prophesy:

> ... from all your furthest bounds, pour ye
> now in, ye bold billows of my whole fore-
> gone life, and top this one piled comber
> of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all

> destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! THUS, I give up the spear! (MD 684)

Ishmael's reasons for going to sea, spiritual emptiness or boredom, and joining a whaling expedition still allow a creative solution to an evidently "unendurable existence".

> Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off - then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. (MD 93)

Thus, in Ishmael's case (as in White-Jacket's), Melville brings his philosophy to bear on a particular situation, without the theoretical "privileged" solution taking place, instead, showing the possibility of a "redeeming solution". However, whereas in White-Jacket the theory is tested: "There are times when wild thoughts enter a man's heart, when he seems almost irresponsible for his act and his deed" (WJ 286), the solution, while redeeming, is provided by others (Colbrook and Jack Chase) rather than the protagonist himself.

Ishmael's solution is further creative in that to join a whaling expedition is also a way of trying to conquer the fear of

uncertainty, of the unknown, and to test not only physical, but also psychological limits.

The road to nihilism is invariably a lonely road. It is travelled by individuals wrapped in solipsistic isolation who, at some point, seem to be or to feel scorched by the emotional, reason-impairing heat of those powers White-Jacket recognized as "the last resources of an insulted and unendurable existence" (WJ 287).

Armed with awareness of Melville's philosophy, we now come to the world of Redburn, the first of the three books under study, yet approached last in the context of the present discussion. Treating Redburn last here demonstrates, among other things, the wholeness -- the triptych nature -- of the three works together. It also shows how themes, symbols and images flow from one panel to another.

The Redburn narrator, when reporting on his first voyage out, initially creates an impression of a naive, inexperienced "boy". Nevertheless, the naive and inexperienced ship's boy shows to be affected also by the seemingly overwhelmingly irrational, or powerfully instinctive forces.

In his assessment of Melville, D.H.Lawrence writes: "He needed to fight. It was no good to him, the relaxation of the non-moral tropics (Typee & Omoo). He didn't really want Eden. He wanted to fight ... But with weapons of the spirit, not the flesh".[11]

At first glance, Redburn does not seem to fit the category of

Ahab and Pierre who are both clearly subject to inflicting violence. On closer reading, however, Redburn, too, inflicts death, even if in a remote and somewhat laconic manner. Harry Bolton is Redburn's victim. Redburn appears to be quite aware of the inborn powers to inflict death, ironically, not in relation to himself (although he has already, unwittingly, committed such an act), but as an affliction Harry may possibly have suffered from.

> Remembering our adventure in London, and his conduct there; remembering how liable he was to yield to the most sudden, crazy, and contrary impulses; and that, as a friendless, penniless foreigner in New York, he must have had the most terrible incitements to committing violence upon himself; I shudder to think, that even now, while I thought of him, he might no more be living. (RB 405)

A little earlier, while recounting his leave taking from Harry after the completion of his Liverpool voyage, Redburn narrates his ironically facile, Christian admonition to Harry on how to survive in New York without his (Redburn's) guidance: 'Now my dear friend,' said I, 'Take my advice, and while I am gone, keep up a stout heart; never despair, and all will be well' (RB 403).

Metaphorically, Harry represents Redburn's "unendurable existence" for, as quoted earlier, Redburn was at times "ill at ease in (Harry's) company" (RB 302). Harry Bolton represents a privileged, but socially confining status and reminds Redburn of his own erstwhile traditional beliefs and highborn attitude which, upon his return from Liverpool, do not 'fit' him any longer. Like his moleskin jacket, similar attitudes as Harry (still) holds dear have grown too tight for him. Redburn has grown out of both

his jacket and the frame of mind his friend represents. 'Shedding' Harry, like the jacket, leaving him to fend for himself in a strange land with hardly a penny to his name, leads indirectly to Harry's death.

The English sailor's question, posed to an older Redburn, then serving on a whaling ship: "Harry Bolton was not your brother?" (RB 406), has a slightly accusing tone. In the light of the whole episode and Redburn's earlier relationship with Harry the question seems to hint at the biblical passage in which God addresses Cain.

> Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is
> Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not
> know; am I my brother's keeper?"
> And the Lord said, "What have you done?
> The voice of your brother's blood is
> crying to me from the ground." (Gen.4:9-10)

The sailor's question, together with Redburn's enigmatically responsive thought: "Harry Bolton, it was even he!", supports the phenomenon that Harry indeed once formed part of Redburn's make-up. When "Redburn introduces Master Harry Bolton to the favorable consideration of the Reader" (RB 294), he, at one time, thinks of Harry in terms of "... my own bosom friend!" (RB 302). However, at the end of Redburn's first voyage into experience, Harry with his "imperial reminiscences of high life" (RB 302) has become an undesirable part of Redburn, an embarrassment.

In the concluding thought of his narrative: "But yet, I, Wellingborough Redburn, chance to survive, after having passed through far more perilous scenes than any narrated in this,

MY FIRST VOYAGE - which here I end" (RB 406), Redburn makes a distinct separation between himself and Harry, his one-time 'brother' (Harry, too, "was a gentleman's son" (RB 406)) -- his brother -- whose keeper God certainly meant him to be.

True to Melville's style, the above quoted reminiscences present, at the same time, the original human dilemma of not being able to measure up to the (Christian) God-imposed ideal.

The dilemma is, in a different way, accentuated in Moby-Dick with Ishmael's love and friendship for the non-Christian Queequeg and his obvious reverence for this man who lives in harmony with the cosmos and who sincerely feels and believes that "to live or die was a matter of his own sovereign will and pleasure" (MD 592). Further emphasis occurs when Queequeg's mystery-filled coffin buoys up Ishmael "for almost one whole day and night" until his rescue by "the devious-cruising Rachel" (MD 687). With fine genial strokes Melville again brings together two disparate perspectives, the pagan and the Christian, and intertwines them into one. With the doubly coiled outlook put into action (Epilogue), Melville strikingly highlights, through Ishmael, a glimpse of the Truth of Reality -- the first and most important one -- the act of living.

In Pierre the theme is taken up, as discussed above, with a lecture on chronometrical and horological time which in its own metaphysical way implies the impossibility for mankind to live according to God's time (or will).

Interestingly, the author of the lecture-pamphlet is introduced as a wholly solipsistic character who, remotely, appears to contribute to Pierre's slide into despair, to wit:

> The whole countenance of this man, the whole air and look of this man, expressed a cheerful content. Cheerful is the adjective, for it was the contrary of gloom; content - perhaps acquiescence - is the substantive, for it was not Happiness or Delight. But while the personal look and air of this man were thus winning, there was still something latently visible in him which repelled. That something may best be characterized as non-Benevolence. Non-Benevolence seems the best word, for it was neither Malice nor Ill-will; but something passive. (P 328)

Thus, in the three books under study, as well as White-Jacket and Billy Budd among others, Melville treats of mankind's apparent (genetic) disposition towards aggression which, at the beginning of historical time, gives rise to the God-ordained banishment: "... you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:12).

It is Melville's aim to expose through his writings the discrepancy between what God, in Melville's conditioned Calvinistic view, seems to have had in mind for Man upon his creation, and the actual nature of Man.

In Redburn, Melville cautiously begins to bring the noted disparity forward in the guise of irony so that his meaning can be read in two ways, if necessary.

In Moby-Dick, Melville is much bolder. Aside from Ahab, who represents a different aspect, there is much philosophical questioning going on during the voyage on the Pequod. An openness to different forms of worship is clearly noticeable.

In Pierre, however, Melville declares himself. He lets God know in no uncertain terms (that is, the Christian God), what he thinks of Him. Pierre epitomizes Melville's frustration or anger with God's unfulfillable program for mankind.

NOTES

[1] Donald A.Stauffer, ed., Selected Poetry and Prose of Coleridge (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1951) 455.

[2] Harold Beaver, "Introduction" Moby-Dick (London: Penguin Books, 1972) 33.

[3] Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967) 167.

[4] James Baird, Ishmael (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) xviii.

[5] Charles Olson, Call me Ishmael (San Francisco, Cal.: City Lights Books, 1947) 84.

[6] Henry A.Murray, "In Nomine Diaboli", A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962) 73.

[7] Murray 73.

[8] Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) 7.

[9] Murray 72.

[10] Murray 72.

[11] D.H.Lawrence, "Typee and Omoo", Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962) 17.

CHAPTER IV

O formose puer, nimium
ne crede colori.

Virgil

In the first chapter, Redburn is mentioned as leitmotif. The present chapter takes a more in-depth look at the same concept, viewing especially the meaning of the primary colour symbolism in Redburn, as well as analyzing the literary implications of both colour and character symbolism for Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre.

As is Melville's custom, and as has been noted with regard to the impulses of aggression and reflection, as well as with the linking of pagan and Old Testament beliefs into one strand of faith, colour symbolism in Redburn is interwoven with character symbolism.

With a name as sizzling as Redburn or, as Harold Beaver remarks in his Introduction to Redburn, "that flaming name" which, according to the chief mate upon Redburn's introduction, "scorch you to take hold of ..." (RB 73), the character was forged and the scene set for his exploits and experiences immediately following his emergence from the mist of time, or from the chaotic collection of his memories.

An excellent example of the aforenoted practice of combining colour with character symbolism occurs, first of all, overtly within the story of Redburn itself, and in more than the one instance noted above; the practice is definitely intentional.

In what could be considered (in the context of the triptych) the first of three allegorical character representations, Esau, (the other two being Cain and Ishmael), the implied intertwining of colour and character symbolism, apart from the overtly alluded to instances in Redburn, is also clearly noticeable.

With the choice of name, Redburn, which differs one letter from red-born, Melville seems to be hinting at the biblical character of Esau as an allegorical model for Redburn who, on the ship, becomes "a sort of Ishmael" (RB 114).

The allusion to Redburn, dressed in his newly bought red shirt which, "(a)s soon as he got into (it)" made him "feel a sort of warm and red about the face, which (he) found was owing to the reflection of the dyed wool upon (his) skin" (RB 68), calls to mind the biblical red which adorns Esau at the moment of his birth:

> When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they called his name Esau. Gen. 25:24-5

It is one of a number of allusions to the figure of Esau during the narrative of Redburn.

Incidental to the concept of Esau as archetype, biologically akin to the archetype of Ishmael (Esau is nephew to Ishmael), is the consideration that Melville based his later novel, Israel Potter, on the story of Esau and Jacob. It is conceivable that Melville not only found Esau a fitting type to represent the homeless, fatherless youth, Redburn, who, like Esau, had been

deprived of his father's blessing, but also tried out the concept in preparation for his later work. There is a reference to Esau in Moby-Dick as well, in a footnote on the breeding habits in the sperm whale, where the author informs his readers that "in some few known instances (the whale gives birth) to an Esau and Jacob" (MD 498).

Although not firstborn, like Esau, Redburn apparently goes to sea to make room for his siblings at the family hearth and, as it were, 'sells his birthright for a mess of pottage' which on the ship "was like mush, made of Indian corn meal and water" (RB 103). A propos Redburn's mess of pottage, it will be interesting to view the picture of Esau's experience:

> Once when Jacob was boiling pottage, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red pottage, for I am famished! ... Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.
> Gen. 25:29-34

The "skilful hunter" image of Esau (Gen. 25:27) is in Redburn kept in the foreground through the various ironic remarks by those the protagonist comes in contact with, especially on the ship. For, after having disposed of the "fowling piece", in order 'to live by it', the boy still wears the shooting-jacket as a sort of hunting licence.

Redburn's birthright consists of more than one aspect.

First, he feels morally or filially obliged (if not forced), to give up his right to live the sheltered life of a gentleman's son. Secondly, the loss of the social aspect of his birthright is linked to a personal loss which is vividly described by Redburn when speaking of "The Melancholy State of his Wardrobe" (RB 126).

Melville's narrator then unobtrusively introduces the plight of the Indian people when, on the violently pitching ship, the young Redburn compares himself to "an Indian baby ..." (RB 129) and thus identifies with (red-skinned) people who were forced to give up their genuine birthright -- their land -- "for the promise of food", in Michael Rogin's words [2].

Chapter VI will deal more fully with the influence of the above mentioned socio-political situation on Melville's art and will look in greater depth at the employment of this theme in the triptych.

Returning to Melville's allegorical application of the biblical figure of Esau in Redburn, the image of Redburn, walking alone on the long and muddy road leading to the waterfront, with his brother's fowling piece slung over his shoulder (and reflecting, as quoted, that "this indeed was the way to begin life, with a gun in your hand!" (RB 53)), presents a somewhat incongruent picture in the story of a young man, setting out on his first voyage. The thought contains an oxymoronic reflection: the beginning of life tainted with an allusion to

evil--to death. It recalls Isaac's words to Esau:

> Behold, away from the fatness of
> the earth shall your dwelling be,
> and away from the dew of heaven
> on high.
> By your sword you shall live,
> and you shall serve your brother;
> but when you break loose
> you shall break his yoke from your
> neck.
> Gen. 39:40

The last three sentences of the Genesis quotation seem to infer Redburn's break from Harry Bolton. Taking the Esau and Jacob story as the prefiguring scenario, it is Harry who appears to set out to fulfil Jacob's part, that is, not so much Harry personally, so much as the socially confining, privileged status he represents. As discussed above, Harry's high-born attitude has become too spiritually restrictive to Redburn who, on completion of the Liverpool voyage, feels morally compelled to break the yoke, which is Harry, from his neck.

The implication of Harry as the high- or well-born 'brother' allows Melville to indulge in a sleight-of-hand performance in which Redburn/Esau becomes Redburn/Jacob, demanding the birthright (the right of kinship with Redburn) from his symbolic sibling.

Further to Redburn's hostile frame of mind and forlorn mood, in which he sees himself in the role of "cast-away" and finds he is an unobserved, unheeded "wayfarer passing" (RB 53), Melville displays, as he does in Pierre, his ironic, melodramatic touch which, with one stroke, sets the tone of the scene.

Fingering "the stock and trigger" (RB 53) of the rifle is for Redburn, in reality, a prelude to his later, threatening pose on the ferry where he cocks his gun and presents it point blank at a fellow passenger which in turn is a foreshadowing of the real shooting-death by Pierre of his cousin.

In this respect, the seemingly oracular remark by the Highlander's chief mate on hearing Redburn's name ("scorch you to take hold of it" (RB 73)) is fulfilled in Pierre when Charlie Millthorpe, finding Pierre near death in prison, cries out: "What scornful innocence rests on thy lips, my friend! - Hand scorched with murderer's powder, yet how woman-soft!" (P 405).

With the picture of Redburn threatening a fellow passenger, Esau's hunter-image glides almost unnoticed into the biblical prophesy of ancient Ishmael's character:

> He shall be a wild ass of a man,
> his hand against every man
> and every man's hand against him;
> and he shall dwell over against
> all his kinsmen.
> Gen. 16:12

Literary kinship is thus established between the two archetypes, consolidating their ancient biological kinship. Note how Melville again adapts biblical legends to his literary requirements, using part of one and part of another, mixing their colours into a distinct colour of its own.

Establishing the literary kinship between the characters of Esau and Ishmael with Redburn as mediator is one of the most

important occurrences in the work; it firmly marks Redburn as leitmotif of the three books making up the triptych.

The colour symbolism inherent in Redburn is repeatedly represented and radiates throughout the three panels of the work as a whole. The context of this study does not allow for the naming of all of the colour symbolism instances, but a few important cases have to be mentioned.

Beginning with the name Redburn, it is singled out as being dangerous almost as soon as the bearer of it embarks on the ship destined for Liverpool. The chief mate (as previously quoted) rudely addresses the young man and tells him sarcastically that his name is a "pretty handle to a man; (and that it) scorch you to take hold of it" (RB 73).

Then there is the sailor, Jackson, who was "wearing a pair of great over-all blue trowsers, fastened with suspenders, and three red woolen shirts, one over the other for he was subject to the rheumatism, and was not in good health, he said" (RB 106). While the red in Jackson's case is thus associated with ill-health, the fact that Redburn saw this Jackson as having "such a deal of brass and impudence, such an unflinching face, and withal was such a hideous looking mortal, that Satan himself would have run away from him" (RB 107), gives the Jackson-red a sinister quality as well.

There is furthermore a red-reference to Max the Dutchman. Although this Max is in Redburn's eyes "perhaps the best natured

man among the crew" (RB 134), the colour of his "hair, whiskers, and cheeks (was) of a fiery red; and as he wore a red shirt, he was altogether the most combustible looking man (he) ever saw. Nor did his appearance belie him; for his temper was very inflammable; and at a word, he would explode in a shower of hard words and imprecations" (RB 134).

Red is, of course, a primary colour and best expresses primary emotions, such as aggressiveness and anger. Other primary colours, green, blue and yellow, play a role throughout the three works as well, however, with the ubiquitousness of red they seem to take on a secondary role on Melville's palette.

Moreover, every application of colour seems to harbour either a note of sadness, as when the ship Redburn sails on "passed the green shore of Staten Island" and he "would have given anything if instead of sailing out of the bay (they) were only coming into it" (RB 79), or of dissolution, as in the case of the father's outdated guide-book, "bound in green morocco" (RB 208). It can also take on the suggestibility of something ominous which is especially noticeable in Pierre. Lucy, when feeling undefinably uneasy, observes: "Blue is the sky, oh, bland the air, Pierre" (P 60). Or, upon quitting the hills after the outing with Pierre, Lucy leaves "all tears behind to be sucked in by these evergreens" (P 61), and further with Pierre's "blue chintz-covered chest" (P 229) of which the key is ill-bodingly missing.

Finally, towards the end of Pierre, the frequent emphasis on

"purple precipice (or) promise" flanked by "lofty terraces of pastures" whose green growth of grass becomes increasingly smothered (choked) by a thickly sprouting carpet of "small white (immortal) amaranthine flower(s)" (P 384), transforms the snow-white of innocence, at the beginning of the particular panel, into an enveloping shroud.

Thus, while Melville makes good use of colours, in the light of the development of the three separate stories, Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre, as well as of the theme of the quest that runs through all three and the intensity that Melville as author brings to it, his colours are not joyous ones; they never suggest a happy occasion. Even the usually cheerful colour yellow is in Melville's work used to denote the endless sands of the desert with its connotation of endless wandering, or refers to ill-health as in the case of the sailor, Jackson. The deep black of a nihilistic outlook which evidently covers the background of the three-part work, appears to draw the colours into itself.

The most striking example of the latter phenomenon occurs in Moby-Dick, in the viewing of the "try-works" on the Pequod, where the indigenous activities wholly support the aforementioned colour alchemy:

> By midnight the works were in full operation. We were clear from the carcase; sail had been made; the wind was freshening; the wild ocean darkness was intense. But that darkness was licked up by the fierce flames, which at intervals forked forth from the sooty flues, and illuminated every lofty rope in the rigging, as with the famed Greek fire. (MD 533)

The necessary whaling ship operations are transformed into a satanic scene which unfolds before the viewer/reader's eyes.

> Opposite the mouth of the works, on the further side of the wide wooden hearth, was the windlass. This served for a sea-sofa. Here lounged the watch, when not otherwise employed, looking into the red heat of the fire, till their eyes felt scorched in their heads. Their tawny features, now all begrimed with smoke and sweat, their matted beards, and the contrasting barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were strangely revealed in the capricious emblazonings of the works. As they narrated to each other their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth; as their uncivilized laughter forked upwards out of them, like the flames from the furnace; as to and fro, in their front, the harpooners wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks and dippers; as the wind howled on, and the sea leaped, and the ship groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea and the night, and scornfully champed the white bone in her mouth, and viciously spat round her on all sides; then 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. (MD 532-3-4)

That 'flaming name', Redburn, has led the viewer/reader's attention to the central image in the triptych. And, after the almost visual voyage (following Redburn, the 'scorching' young man in his red-reflecting shirt, meeting his fellow sailors -- the ill and evil Jackson in three red woolen shirts and the combustible, red-haired and red-whiskered, Max the Dutchman, also in a red shirt, viewing the "try-works" in operation and observing Ahab in thought and (aggressive) action, taking the (red) Indian named ship, the Pequod , down with him into the deep), it is improbable that any viewer or reader will be able to look at the "rich, crimson flower (which) a trailing shrub has softly rested (against Lucy's) snow-white glossy pillow"

(P 23) in Pierre, with an unprejudiced mind. In view of the colour associations in Redburn and Moby-Dick, one is immediately alerted to the contrast between the snow-white and the rich crimson. The original associations with red come to the fore and colour the viewer's impression in such a way that one seems to be confronted with a drop of blood, rather than a flower. Even the qualifying "odoriferous" seems to add to this impression as the word 'scent' is most often used to describe a flower's odor.

In the above noted light, the story of Pierre begins with a red stain whose crimson power ultimately spreads through the narrative and turns into "(s)pa'terings of his own kindred blood" (P 402).

Colour symbolism is not the only aspect to mark Redburn as leitmotif. It has been mentioned that Redburn gives rise to various concepts, images, symbols and themes which are repeated and developed in Moby-Dick and Pierre.

Peter Bellis, in his No Mysteries Out of Ourselves, emphasizes "the thematic and formal continuity between (Redburn) and Moby-Dick, treating them as a sequence of deliberately increasing formal complexity".[3]

Redburn and Pierre are also referred to as, to some extent, mirror images.

Apart from the colour and character symbolism which runs in vividly confident strokes through the three works under discussion, the individual tales consist of other interesting aspects

which link them together into a literary triptych and which aspects also have their origin in Redburn.

A telling example, one that demonstrates the mirror imaging of Redburn and Pierre, is the bread Redburn "dropped down into the vault" (RB 255) to where the starving woman and her children were huddled. The young man is devastated by the scene, by the pitiable condition of the woman and children, and although he tries to change the situation (going for help, addressing strangers to ask what can be done for the woman), Redburn is powerless in this respect, confronting only scorn and indifference towards the woman and children, as well as to himself. (It is interesting to note that here, innocently and impulsively, Redburn tries to be his 'sister's keeper').

The bread finds its way through Redburn and Moby-Dick and lands, at the end of Pierre, with Lucy who (being now also a poor starving woman with her paintings for children), while "holding a crust of bread ... was lightly brushing the portrait paper, to efface some ill-considered stroke. The floor was scattered with the breadcrumbs and charcoal dust" (P 400).

Effacing "some ill-considered stroke" seems to allude to the erasing of a progeny -- the erasing of a consciousness to which Lucy is unable to feed the thoughts of what Pierre has become or is shortly going to become. The latter consideration is supported by what Pierre sees behind the easel: "his own portrait, in the skeleton" (P 400).

The anger Redburn experiences when meeting with the social indifference and hostility in his attempts to give aid to the starving woman and her children in the alley of Launcelott's-Hey is also mirrored in Pierre.

Narrow-minded indifference and hostility with a poor local woman's plight (Delly's) and the refusal to accept any social responsibility on her behalf, as expressed by Pierre's mother and the Reverend Falsgrave (who, appeasing his benefactress, smoothly concurs with her stridently voiced opposition) angers Pierre. Not only does his mother's and the pastor's opposition to any social responsibility in this case anger Pierre for the particular woman's sake, but it also affects him in his imagined fraternal duty to be his recently discovered, illegitimate sister's saviour. He is frustrated in his projected saviour's role by his mother's anticipated haughty attitude towards what was conventionally considered human weakness.

With the particular scenes in Redburn and Pierre Melville's irony pokes holes in the Christian religious veneer, exposing the unchristian practice underneath. The chapter in Redburn dealing with the starving family ends with the young Redburn's prayer-like exclamation: "Tell me, oh Bible, that story of Lazarus again, that I may find comfort in my heart for the poor and forlorn" (RB 257).

In Pierre, Melville's biting irony almost jumps at the reader with Isabel's plea: "No more, oh no more, dear Pierre, can I

endure to be an outcast in the world, for which the dear Saviour died" (P 89).

Although the anger and frustration do not prevent Pierre from taking on the saviour-like mantle, at the end of the book Pierre gives up, a beaten man. In his despair, he utters his "most undiluted prayer" while addressing Lucy and Isabel: "that from your here unseen and frozen chairs ye may never stir alive; - the fool of Truth, the fool of Virtue, the fool of Fate, now quits ye forever!" (P 400). Thus, Pierre condemns both to death. And poor starving Lucy does die, like the woman and her children in the alley of Launcelott's Hey. She dies because of a similar, albeit indirect, social indifference and hostility as meets the plight of the woman and her children in Liverpool.

Further to the mirror imaging of Redburn and Pierre, there is a reference to Captain Kidd's sunken ship or hull that lay submerged "in the gorge of the river Hudson's Highlands" (RB 49, (P 160).

Although no truth of any kind is implied in the reference itself and it appears as if Melville used the allusion as a handy metaphor (anchoring the two protagonists' philosophical musings to a memorable occurrence, whether real or fictitious), the reference creates a kind of mysterious and anticipatory climate which is in league, first with Redburn when as a young boy he dreams of discovering "something wonderful, perhaps some gold guineas" (RB 49) and later with Pierre when the narrator reveals

that "yet had the youthful Pierre been the first known publishing discoverer of this stone, which he had thereupon fanc[illegible]ally christened the Memnon Stone" (P 160).

The Memnon Stone, "its crown being full eight fathoms under high-foliage mark during the great spring-tide of foliage" (P 160), alludes prophetically to the (allegorical) discovery of what is perceived to be the truth about himself by Pierre. Pierre sees himself first vaguely, but in the light of his intentions and subsequently unfolding events, evidently, as a type of Hamlet who, like ancient Memnon, was a noble youth of royal birth whose "flower of virtue", in Pierre's case, is cropped not "by a too rare mischance" (P 164), but by "a bantering, barren, and prosaic, heartless age" (P 164). At the end of the book, Pierre now fully aware of the heartlessness of the world, laments:

> Here then, is the untimely, timely end; Life's last chapter well stitched into the middle; Nor book, nor author of the book, hath any sequel, though each hath its last lettering! - It is ambiguous still. Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven! Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds. (P 402-3)

In the latter work which in Melville's own words was meant to be a land's tale, rather than a sea tale, it is clear throughout that Melville did not get entirely away from the magnetism of the sea. (There is a reference to the sea's magic or magnetic power early in Moby-Dick). The qualifying phrase for the Memnon Stone (quoted above) is one of the best instances in

which Melville uses sea language to describe a detail of the land. It comes forward as one of the happiest, if not the happiest, descriptions in all of Pierre, and with 'happiest' is meant that the phrase is uncontaminated (or seems to be) with sadness, dissolution or evil.

Professor Sedgwick calls the sea "perhaps the most wonderful of Melville's symbols. The sea is the element of truth. ... It leads away from all definitions, all traditional sanctities, all securities" [4].

The above quotation brings to mind the, in the present author's opinion, most poetic ocean metaphor of the three books combined. It occurs in Ishmael's narration (after the sinking of the Pequod) of how "the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (MD 685). Melville's genius is certainly in evidence here, as it is when he uses his literary brush and palette to apply "a sullen white surf" just before the "great shroud ...". Melville again becomes a visual artist.

The great image, like many others, originates in Redburn (necessa· ly less great, but clearly visible) so as to cast Ishmael's thoughts in its wake. Redburn is speculating on being successful or not, going up and down the high masts on the ship that will take him on his first voyage:

> I thought sure enough that some luckless day or other, I would certainly fall overboard and be drowned. And then, I thought of lying down at the bottom of the sea, stark alone, with the great waves rolling over me, and no one in the wide world knowing that I was there. (RB 79)

Following, in Moby-Dick, as was prophesied, Ishmael, too, escapes, although the ocean fulfils Redburn's thoughts to this effect with regard to the crew of the Pequod.

Pierre fulfils Redburn's prophetic thoughts with regard to himself when, as quoted above, in his fatal condition, Pierre's "soul's ship foresaw the inevitable rocks, but resolved to sail on, and make a courageous wreck" (P 380).

When an author, through at least three of his works, sustains the theme of death by drowning, there must be reasons other than a mere interest in the topic. The following chapter will deal with possible reasons for this and related topics and will discuss relevant critical theories.

NOTES

[1] 'arold Beaver, "Introduction" to Redburn (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1987) 26.

[2] Michael Rogin, Fathers and Children (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1975) 127.

[3] Peter Bellis, No Mysteries Out of Ourselves (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) 84.

[4] William E.Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962) 98.

CHAPTER V

> There are no mysteries out of ourselves.
>
> Melville

Melville's biography informs us that as a young boy he experienced traumatic events similar to those of his literary persona, Redburn, of which the death of his father had the greatest emotional impact.

Since the early twenties, when interest in Melville's writing began to flourish in earnest, critics have pointed to these experiences in Melville's early life as possible psychological precedents for his books.

As previously mentioned, personal events are as a matter of course of importance in the psychological and emotional make-up of an artist and by extension will influence his/her work. Experiences cannot be divorced from life -- they are part of living and as such an author's creations are subject to an autobiographical input.

Nathalia Wright puts it quite succinctly when discussing the widening of Melville's "literary horizons". She writes:

> To this lateness of date at which Melville began to read is due in part the complexity of relationship between his life, his reading and his art. His introduction to literature, in unacademic sequence, followed rather than preceded his first brush with common life which happened to be a rough and hazardous one. And partly because he brought to his reading nearly a decade of intense experience, he was able to make it come astonishingly alive and to assimilate it with unusual thoroughness. Between his physical and his mental activities there was never a gaping gulf. [1]

Various interesting theories have been advanced which have sought to explain the importance of individual, biographical events in

Melville's literary oeuvre. This chapter will discuss apparent effects of Melville's early (traumatic) experiences as they relate to some of the critical theories, with special focus on Peter Bellis' work No Mysteries Out of Ourselves and Neal L. Tolchin's theory "Mourning, Gender, and Creativity", as well as the latter's analytic citation of the "Harvard Study of Bereavement". It will be interesting to see how far the theories are instrumental in highlighting the relationship between the particular works.

While relevant to the importance of early experiences in the forming of character and psyche (especially of creative minds), a brief look at Melville's style may be in order, since to an extent, his style creates the impression of viewing a visual work of art, a phenomenon that, among other things, prompted this author to approach Melville's three works, Redburn, Moby-Dick, Pierre, as a traditional triptych.

In his Art of Fiction, Henry James observes that "(e)xperience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue".[2]

Whereas the above quotation may be found in the Introduction to Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy [3], James' words could with equal strength be applied to introduce Melville's work. Melville is an artist who, like Laurence Sterne, catches every air-borne

particle in his web-like consciousness or, more appropriately, in the rigging of his sails and who, subsequently, brushes all particles together like golddust and fashions them into a seemingly realistic, almost visual work of art.

Melville's creations remind one of the precise seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. The author pays minute, detailed attention to every image, every symbol, every theme. Nothing in his work occurs by accident -- every brushstroke counts -- and as a result Melville's work is rich in content and texture.

Whereas a look at Melville's compositions stirs the viewer's imagination to great depths, wading seriously into the literature provides the reader with a sense of quietude -- of confidence, in the sense that nothing is left to chance. To this effect, Professor Sedgwick notes "... there is nothing on which Melville digresses that does not serve his meaning ...".[4]

This is not to say that Melville's work is in any way predictable; it is not. An important aspect contributing to the unpredictability in Melville's work is his manner of going forth and back over universal questions. Or, to stay in character, Melville's writing is reminiscent of ocean surf, with waves rolling in, gaining in intensity to beat at the strand of human consciousness, at the same time as losing momentum and receding into the roar of a new mass of thoughts, a scenario that also represents his preoccupation with the ever recurring repetition of events and experiences.

Melville's nature was of a mystical, oceanic quality. Charles Olson, himself an apparent mystic, observes that the ancient and perpetual reverberation of mankind's oceanic beginning "is the salt beat of (Melville's) blood" [5]. That thought places Melville's continual pushing against apparent reality -- his testing of the limits of human existence (already partly discussed in Chapter I)-- in a characteristic light which concurs with his custom of using the largesse of the Bible as a valuable source of images, symbols and concepts, and relates to his peculiarly individualistic development of these. Professor Sedgwick comments on the latter practice:

> Melville's consciousness was richly responsive and malleable. It could mould its entire substance to the form of an action or a thought. ... Lending itself to the tangential variety of impressions on all sides, when it came to Melville's deepest creations and most vital symbols, his consciousness impressed itself on them, moulding them to its own realizations of itself. [6]

In light of the biblical names, characters and themes Melville chose (using them either directly as with Ishmael, Ahab and others, or else alluded to or implied, as discussed in the previous chapter), his choices appear to be a natural outcome of his intuitive artistic imagination (which was sufficiently haunted by Old Testament stories and prophesies), rather than a conscious employment of a literary device. Nathalia Wright attributes Melville's literary practice of invoking the Old Testament to an early saturation "with its stories, its ideas, its language. The allusions made to it", she writes, "were not

studied but involuntary; they came from him spontaneously, as idioms in his vocabulary, as patterns of his thought" 7.

It is remarkable that Melville in his choice of symbolic, biblical characters as protagonists or even as supporting figures, focusses on the 'absent' presence of a dominant father-figure. In all three works the physical absence of the father becomes, paradoxically, a spiritual presence in the sense that the absence looms large and appears to account directly for the overwhelming sense of rootlessness all three personae experience. This circumstance plays a significant role in the triptych. The image of the biblical father as dutifully authoritative while possessed of an unbounded faith in God -- the Hebrew God, yet remote from kith and kin, has a strong bearing on the conduct of the biblical sons and thus, allegorically, on the literary sons of Melville.

Redburn meditates on just such a perceived paternal presence as mentioned above when comparing

> sea captains (who) are fathers to their crew ... (to) such fathers as Solomon's precepts tend to make - severe and chastising fathers, fathers whose sense of duty overcomes the sense of love, and who every day, in some sort, play the part of Brutus, who ordered his son away to execution, as I have read in our old family Plutarch. (RB 120)

Note how Melville brings the ancient biblical theme of abandonment of the sons by the father into the secular realm with the allusion to Brutus, while not deviating from the original theme. This is all the more interesting since Melville, as mentioned and quoted, constantly impresses his intuitive consciousness on

his "deepest creations and most vital symbols" and adapts them to his own emotional and literary requirements. Apparently, the aspect of the biblical symbol that deals with the father-son relationship needed no adaptation. Melville treats it as he finds it in the Bible.

In the context of its psychological impact, Melville links the absence of the father-figure in the three works to a sense of failure. A sense of failure in Redburn, while not salient, is nevertheless present throughout the narrative in one guise or another; it comes to the fore almost unnoticed, sheathed in Melville's personal irony. One example, which will be referred to in a different context as well, stands out especially.

Redburn sadly reminisces about a visit he made as a child, accompanied by his father and an uncle, to the ruins of "a great castle or fort", and then bitterly reprimands himself not to think of "those delightful days, before my father became a bankrupt, and died, and we removed from the city; for when I think of those days, something rises up in my throat and almost strangles me" (RB 81-2).

It is then also, at the end of his unhappy thoughts about his present condition and as the ship has passed through the protective "Narrows" and "got fairly outside" (RB 83), that Redburn felt metaphorically "thrust out of the world" (RB 83). Melville has used the imagery of birth to portray Redburn's entering into experience and, thus, into the world. From this moment on Redburn will grow and gain in stature.

In Moby-Dick it is not so much a direct sense of failure that becomes apparent upon Ishmael's laconic request to call him by his name (accompanied by an explanation of his reasons for going to sea which serve as justification for the choice of name), as it is a sense of resignation, of seeing no way out of despair, other than embarking on a whaling voyage.

In the context of the social structure of nineteenth-century society, the story of Pierre is built on the premise of individual moral failure.

Adele Lehrman, in "The Influence of Hawthorne and Shakespeare on Melville", discusses the concept of "Father Figures and Failure in Moby-Dick and Pierre" and looks at the fictionally reflected, authorial need for paternal approval (the biblical 'blessing). She remarks on Melville's extraordinary burst of creativity -- the inspiration to re-write Moby-Dick -- after meeting Hawthorne, "who represented the father he had long been searching for". [8] Lehrman emphasizes Hawthorne's appreciation of Moby-Dick, stressing mutual recognition of a spiritual kinship between the two men.

Despite the presence of an autobiographically inspired sense of failure, Melville's works attest (in a double helix of human characteristics) to the indomitableness of the spirit. Of course, this indomitableness is rooted in the author's own spirited willingness to literarily 'take on the world, even God'.

In the triptych Melville paints a picture of the stubbornness of the protagonists-questers; a trait which is clearly present

in Moby-Dick and Pierre, but which also shows up in Redburn. Ishmael (Ahab also) and Pierre are not only stubborn, but willing (ready) to fight the state of the world and its conventional conception of God. In Lawrence Thompson's view:

> Melville began to take increasingly crafty and covert delight in asserting his scepticism; when he became increasingly preoccupied with glorifying ... concepts of man-centered Man's inalienable rights and with ridiculing Calvinistic concepts of God-centered Man. [9]

In short, Melville becomes a rebel with a cause and

> pursues the truth as the champion of man, leaving behind him all traditional conclusions, all common assumptions, all codes and creeds and articles of faith. Although the universe of sea and sky opens around him an appalling abyss, and although the abyss seems the visible apprehension of his mind that the truth will prove that there is no truth, still he sails on. [10]

Sedgwick's words seem to reiterate Thompson's view. The above quotation expresses exactly what Pierre has decided upon as his course of action.

Thompson asserts further that Melville created an "allegorical framework within which he dramatizes and illuminates his own dark concepts as to the "unjust ways of God to men" [11].

An example, already discussed in Chapter IV, of Melville's perception of "the (conceptually) unjust ways", is Redburn's existential failure to be Harry Bolton's (his symbolic brother) keeper. Instead, Redburn, faced with the choice, displays a kind of morally deficient courage when, in a man- versus God-centered way, he abandons Harry who represents the social attitudes and restrictive conventions Redburn has grown out of

and now rebels against. Whereas, in a sense, it is a form of spiritual resilience, this kind of courage points also, in Sedgwick's terms, to the "solipsism of consciousness" [12] and as such, presents one of the human dilemmas. As can be seen in the different perspectives and angles of vision which are given their proper due in his works, Melville refers often to the theme of solipsism.

A further example is the normally non-assertive, quietly philosophical Ishmael with his confession of complicity in Ahab's evil monomaniacal quest:

> 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. With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster against whom I and all the others had taken our oaths of violence and revenge. (MD 276)

Ishmael's acknowledgement establishes in a paradoxical manner his 'independence', an independence to choose evil over good. It is a paradoxical situation, however, since Ishmael depends for this independence on Ahab's rhetoric.

Solipsism of consciousness, linked to indomitableness of the human spirit is best expressed in the Epilogue to Moby-Dick. Ishmael, despite all "strange adventures", still ironically holds fast to God's promise of a hearing, thus survival, acknowledging that he alone is escaped to tell (from his perspective) of the scenario which has just been viewed and read. It shows an awareness of the ongoing repetition of events and

experiences; one journey ends, another begins (even in the telling of it), on and on.

Pierre, under a delusion of noble intentions, steadfastly shows the courage of his convictions. He embarks on his ocean-tossed voyage ("in tremendous extremities human souls are like drowning men; well enough they know they are in peril; well enough they know the causes of that peril; - nevertheless, the sea is the sea, and these drowning men do drown" (P 343)) not for the sake of being contrary to conventional wisdom (which he will be), but for the sake of a sister who is perceived to be in need of his courage. It is true that, at the same time, his attitude is one of defiance; it is, however, a defiance in response to anticipated conventional opposition.

With regard to the impact of early experiences on Melville's writing it will be interesting to consider some relevant critical theories in order to observe to which extent those experiences have a bearing on Melville's writing. According to the particular theories, various allegories and metaphors, especially in the triptych books, covertly express the subconscious, but far-reaching anger, hurt and loneliness caused by traumatic early experiences.

Peter Bellis finds, in a statement reminiscent of Friedman's analysis of the Greek moral order (see Chapter I):

> Where Ishmael sees himself as an orphan, cast out of patriarchal structures of authority (as does Redburn) ... Pierre in attempting to escape from genealogy ... finds that he has

> done away with the very ground of self-definition; he ... must resurrect and internalize patriarchal authority, even if it means his own destruction. 13

Mr Bellis' premise, concerning the effects of Melville's personal experiences on the three books of the triptych, rests, in the case of Redburn, Ishmael (Ahab) and Pierre, on the concept of exclusion from the patriarchal structures. Mr Bellis looks at this exclusion as it effects the protagonists' thinking and conduct. He alludes to an autobiographical quality which, as previously discussed, is naturally present in an artistic, creative output and especially so in the oeuvre of Melville, because of a preoccupation with the search for and defining of the meaning of selfhood.

Closely linked with the marked autobiographical quality and the image of, in Bellis' terms, "the self as always thrown back on its own physical, psychic, and verbal resources" 14 , the reader finds a variety of examples throughout the triptych and other of Melville's works as well; White-Jacket is one of them. White-Jacket's allegorical representation of the earth as "a fast-sailing, never-sinking world-frigate (with all of mankind embarked on it), of which God was the shipwright" (WJ 408) stands out, together with his further assertion that "sailing with sealed orders, we ourselves are the repositories of the secret package, whose mysterious contents we long to learn. There are no mysteries out of ourselves". (WJ 408)

In the context of the above (Bellis) quotation White-Jacket's

musings prefigure corresponding sentiments in Redburn's "insane desire to be the death of the glass ship, case and all, in order to come at the plunder" (RB 49).

The sense of longing to know the Truth and the intellectual knowledge that mankind may never know, also extend to Queequeg who "in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold" (MD 593). They especially shadow forth Ishmael's wistful wondering (already partly quoted in Chapter I):

> Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sails the world of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it. MD 602

Further, Mr Bellis' image of "the self ..." (14) is strongly supported in Pierre when, thinking of his mother's "towering and all-forbidding" pride which grew into a "before unthought-of wonderful edifice ... he staggered back upon himself, and only found support in himself" (P 115).

White-Jacket's "secret package" appears conveniently hidden in Pierre by the "adjustable drapery of all stretchable Philosophy. For the more and the more that he wrote, and the deeper and the deeper that he dived, Pierre saw the everlasting elusiveness of Truth" (P 380).

With regard to Melville's (fictional) interest in "patriarchal structures of authority", Bellis does not approach the three protagonists' (Redburn, Ishmael (Ahab) and Pierre) exclusion from those structures as a mere fictionalized auto-

biographical phenomenon, but rather as a way of exploring the effects of it on Melville's "investigation of identity and its representation ...".[15]

Bellis is mainly concerned with Melville's method of literary internalization of "issues that initially appear as merely external ones" [16] of which the structure of patriarchal authority is an important one.

"For Melville", Bellis writes, "a problematic or unstable selfhood simply means a loss of essential meaningful identity".[17] Contrary to a view of Melville's work as an attempt at fictionalization of his own earlier experiences (which would entail placing himself outside or at a distance of those experiences), in order to define their essence to himself, as well as to his readers, Bellis sees Melville's work as

> a passionate embodiment of the desire for a secure identity on which to ground social and personal relations. Fictionality is, to (Melville), always a limit, a condition to be confronted and overcome; we must come to know our "selves" as more than merely fictitious or illusory mystifications. There must be something there that cannot be "written off", explained or interpreted away by either ideological or linguistic analysis.[18]

The concept of a handicapped selfhood is clearly identifiable with the three protagonists under discussion, and Melville's "investigation of identity and its representation" certainly applies here and has, in a different context, already been discussed.

Redburn, after having completed his first voyage (out of innocence), refuses at the end to entertain thoughts of his

own high-born attitude or that of his friend, Harry. Instead, the attitude is entirely rejected and metaphorically crushed to death with Harry. The same attitude, now rejected, represents, however, part of the moral shape into which Redburn's self, through parental (patriarchal) influence, was molded. In this sense, the rejection does not concern itself merely with external factors but seeks, after a process of internalization, to aid the self into establishing its own identity.

Redburn, while taking out his map, "traced (his) father right across Chapel-street, and actually through the very arch at (his) back, into the paved square where (he) stood" (RB 221). The young man, in a newly maturing selfhood, shows his need "to recover ... an integral paternal presence" [19], and to make the authoritative presence part of the foundation ("the paved square where I stood") of the new self.

In Moby-Dick the issue is of a different nature. Ahab attains absolute selfhood directly, irregardless of the nature of that selfhood; it is devoid of the Father's blessing. Instead, Satan 'smiles' on Ahab's undertaking as the Black Mass is celebrated in front of "each of the three tall masts ... silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar" (MD 614). The 'absoluteness' of Ahab's selfhood is convincingly illustrated in a 'closed' context when Ishmael describes Ahab's soul as "shut up in the caved trunk of his body" (MD 222) or, in Mr Bellis' analogy "like a hibernating bear in

a tree" [20]. Ishmael, on the other hand, in his literary kinship with Redburn, appears to test the nature of an autonomous self by presenting the viewer/reader with various possibilities of self assertion, such as his friendship with Queequeg, despite his own Old Testament nature, or his confession of compliance with Ahab's quenchless feud.

The larger and more complex image, however, is in character with Ishmael's ordained nature as the eternal wanderer (representing mankind) and as first foreshadowed in God's command to Cain.

The immensity and complexity of the image which seems, if not to encompass, at least to rival the largeness of Melville's literary canvas (an immensity that is strangely haunting and of which the narrator appears fully aware), is matched in Ishmael's cry to his audience:

> Friends, hold my arms! For in the mere act of penning my thoughts of this Leviathan, they weary me, and make me faint with their outreaching comprehensiveness of sweep, as if to include the whole circle of the sciences, and all the generations of whales, and men and mastodons, past, present, and to come, with all the revolving panoramas of empire on earth, and throughout the whole universe, not excluding its suburbs. (MD 567)

A clear-cut definition of self appears here, more than in any other corner of Melville's canvas, not only elusive as in the narrator's emphasis of "so magnifying, is the virtue of a large and literal theme! We expand to its bulk" (MD 567), but it seems as if Ishmael recognizes, if not the impossibility, at least the

impractibility (even undesirability) of absolute selfhood, to wit: "To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme. No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be who have tried it" (MD 567).

In other words, the 'absolute' in Ishmael is not absolute in the sense that it is hermetically closed, and focuses on one concern only, as with Ahab. Ishmael's self, albeit autonomous, is drawn to grow with the heaving of the universal tides.

Where the ending of Moby-Dick shows a kind of positive, open-ended acceptance of the nature of Truth (which of itself is of an organic quality, forever in flux as is life itself), Bellis has a different reading. He reads into Ishmael's search for self-definition -- for Truth -- a form of textual identity.

Nathalia Wright, previously quoted, has spoken of Truth as being colourless, elusive and voiceless, implying to its nature an inherent fluidity. A textual reading, while interesting, transforms the whole spectrum of self, of truth, of life into a literary monument, an anchored commodity. The fluid, flux-like quality is what the concept of Ishmael tries to express - forever wandering, wondering.

Professor Sedgwick expresses similar sentiments:

> True to the considerations which prompted them in the first place, his idealism and preoccupation with truth remained not a negation but an affirmation of life. What is the truth? he asked in Moby-Dick, the whole force of his nature bent to the question. The question, however, did not lead to a vanishing point. It was ... a lever applied with great force, that heaved up its own only possible answer, the truth of what it is to be alive. It is an act of being. [21]

The ending of Moby-Dick, that is the Epilogue, attests to the above quotation. Paul Brodtkorb, in Ishmael's White World, remarks on the ambiguity of Moby-Dick's ending, observing that Ishmael notes: "It so chanced ... I was he whom the Fates ordained ..." which makes "the ending as ambiguous on this point as any earlier part of the book", Brodtkorb writes. [22]

Incidentally, Ishmael long ago voiced this last philosophical sentiment more comprehensively when, with Queequeg, he was "mildly employed weaving what is called a sword-mat" (MD 315). Musing on the difference between his own and Queequeg's manner of weaving, Ishmael writes:

> aye, chance, free will, and necessity - no wise incompatible- all interweavingly working together. 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 directed by free will, though thus prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events. (MD 316)

Ambiguity continues in Pierre where Melville parodies the textual identity that Pierre tries to achieve.

In accordance with the title, Pierre Or, The Ambiguities, the determined but desperate search for identity (a search triggered by the crumbling 'marble' of the spiritual shrine the young Pierre had erected to the memory of his "perfect father" (P 40) and to which shrine Pierre had dedicated a painted portrait of his father as a young bachelor), remains just that -- a search. Pierre never comes close to any form of self-identification,

although his acts are those of a seemingly autonomous being. His search is steeped in frustration. Peter Bellis declares that a primary theme in the work "is the dissolution of form and meaning; neither self nor reality can be grasped or imaged as a stable unity" [23].

Pierre is gradually losing his hold on the concept of reality and of himself in relation to it; a precarious situation of which the precariousness is heightened by his (already quoted) break with genealogy: "Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past ..." (P 232).

The only way open for Pierre to regain a sense of self is to (metaphorically) concur with Ishmael's (quoted) prophetic philosophy that in order to discover "the secret of ... paternity" or to learn where is "the harbor of the soul", is to die. This, Pierre takes literally, rather than metaphorically, thereby demonstrating the "dissolution of form and meaning ... of self and reality" (see note 23 above). The foundation of a sense of self has shifted, has given way, and Pierre sees not.

A brief look at Neal Tolchin's theory as contained in his work, Mourning, Gender, and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville, as well as at his citation of the "Harvard Study of Bereavement" which funtions in the discussion of his theory, is in order.

While Mr Tolchin appears to make various statements as to the relationship of Melville's real and allegorical rage and grief

as he finds them expressed in Melville's writings, there are a few instances in the individual panels of the triptych in which the application of Tolchin's assertive theories stands out as plausible, at the same time as highlighting the organic connection between the three works.

Mr Tolchin begins his work with Redburn's reminiscences of the happy, carefree days spent with his father, reminiscences which, compared with his present condition, the narrator appears to equate with, in Tolchin's words, "a strangling hand" [24], a reference to Redburn's observation that "when I think of those days, something rises up in my throat and almost strangles me" (RB 82). Tolchin then observes that this psychic phenomenon indicates "that his (Redburn's) mourning has distorted into "unconscious reproach against the lost person, combined with conscious and often unremitting self-reproach". (Tolchin quotes here from John Bowlby's Loss which in turn is based on Freud's seminal essay on grief: "Mourning and Melancholia". [25])

Although the above is an interesting, but metaphorically largely undeveloped idea by Tolchin, it will be useful to show a possible connection of the conceit with comparable metaphors in the other two books, Moby-Dick and Pierre. Melville's use of this type of metaphor may well be the conscious application of a richly potential literary device, rather than an "unconscious reproach against the lost person". (A traumatic emotional loss, causing grief, usually has a choking or strangling effect).

Be this as it may, either grief or reproach, the experience of the strangling hand becomes an instrument, first, of apprehended and later of real strangling in Moby-Dick. The line, after being "carried forward the entire length of the boat, (rests) crosswise upon the loom or handle of every man's oar, so that it jogs against his wrist rowing" (MD 386). Afterwards, a connection is made via the short-warp with the harpoon, "but previous to that connexion, the short-warp goes through sundry mystifications too tedious to detail". The end result is that the oarsmen are thus, as it were, "hung in hangman's nooses; and like the six burghers of Calais before King Edward, the six men composing the crew pull into the jaws of death, with a halter around every neck ..." (MD 387).

The precise prefiguring description of a possible strangling of the oarsmen has its realization in Ahab's death by just such a strangling, caused by what he considered his personal malignancy, Moby-Dick, the White Whale.

The conceit is continued in Pierre where Isabel becomes the strangler or smotherer of Pierre. Pierre's growing sense of self is arrested when "turning from her ... Isabel sprang forward to him, caught him with both her arms round him, and held him so convulsively, that her hair sideways swept over him, and half concealed him" (P 223). Aware of her act and motive to bind Pierre irrevocably to her, Isabel proceeds with her guilt-inducing questioning which is an indication of the ongoing moral

battle between good and evil in Pierre in whom, at that point, a clear distinction between the two is already fading, foreshadowing the end-scene where Pierre professes to see and to believe in no distinction at all. (See Chapter II, P 310).

According to Tolchin then, or rather to the theories he espouses, it is the mourning for the lost father, the source of human intelligibility, that turns metaphorically into a form of rage, a rage that strangles with the perception of the inability of ever retrieving the source.

Tolchin bases some of his other findings on the "Harvard Study of Bereavement". In this study dismemberment is seen as a form of revenge for the traumatic emotional or spiritual loss with physical loss or dismemberment equalling the former. The latest consideration seems more clear-cut and more easily traceable than the earlier discussed theory, if only because in the case of dismemberment or the like, the psychic loss is physically visible.

Citing the "Harvard Study", Tolchin finds that "the imagery of dismemberment pervades Melville's work. (He feels that) Ahab's dismasted state most dramatically performs (the) symbolization of male bereavement" [26]. Manifestations of this theory throughout the triptych will be discussed below.

The theory of "cross-gender identification" as discussed by Mr Tolchin, holds that the "feminized adolescent protagonist in Melville's fiction points back to the moment when Melville's

(personal) grief was frozen by cross-gender identification with (his mother's) bereavement" [27] and thus deals with the social symbolization of female bereavement. Mr Tolchin finds that the incidence of "feminine men" throughout Melville's fiction "announces the presence of (his mother's) unintegrated images of her husband. In Melville's imagination", according to Tolchin, "the paternal model had become confused with maternal influence" [28], which in its fictional, feminized form or forms affirms the theory of cross-gender identification. Melville's theoretic confusion of his mother's bereavement and her view of her late husband with his own sense of bereavement and (child's) image of his father came about through a natural relationship of parent and child and a filial sense of concern with the mother's loss. Thus runs the unresolved grief in a feminine streak through the triptych works, strengthening their linkage with each other.

While not going deeply into the meaning and/or literary merit of this fictional form of transferred grief (which is nonetheless an interesting theory), a brief catalogue of the feminine male presence seems in order.

Beginning with Redburn, after mentioning the curious (glass) ship whose name was "La Reine, or The Queen" (RB 50) within whose hull Redburn wishes to find "something wonderful" (RB 49) and whose presence seems to set the stage for the, later, "queenly personality" in Ahab and the comparison of Pierre's

mother to a Queen, Harry Bolton is, of course, the first to appear, making a great impression on the young protagonist. In the context of Tolchin's theory, one may see an additional motive for the already discussed 'shedding' of Harry in the boyishly adopted female sense of bereavement. Other than Harry there is on the homeward-bound voyage the presence of Carlo, the Italian boy and organ player.

With the celebrated 'wedding' of Ishmael and Queequeg, "Ishmael can be put in a new context, for in a strange negotiation of grief, he turns into the wife of a cannibal who revises Melville's memory of his father. Unlike Allan Melville, Queequeg gets off his deathbed when he recalls his responsibilities ashore" [29], writes Tolchin.

The reference in Moby-Dick to Ahab's "queenly personality ... (feeling) her royal rights" in war and woe, and standing defiant, facing the "clear spirit of fire" (MD 616), calls up another (temporary) feminine male presence. Ahab appears to be glorying in his/her genealogy.

In Pierre, one meets the Reverend Falsgrave, "nobly robust and dignified; while the remarkable smallness of his feet, and the almost infantile delicacy ... of his hands, strikingly contrasted with his fine girth and stature" (P 124). The narrator speaks with admiration of the Reverend's "fine, silver-keyed person" and his "graceful motions (which) had the undulatoriness of melodious sounds" (P 125). The Reverend's ironically drawn, effeminately immaculate appearance underscores Melville's

now far from covert, critique against the hypocritical position of the Christian Church.

In his response to Mrs. Glendinning's undisguised emotional attack upon "Ned", Mr. Falsgrave tries to diffuse her anger with a seemingly more humane interpretation of the biblical tenet regarding the "sins of the father ..." (P 127). However, the fact that Mrs. Glendinning is "the generous foundress and untiring patroness of the beautiful little marble church", as well as, "though in polite disguise - the same untiring benefactress, from whose purse, he could not help suspecting, came a great part of his salary" (P 124), undeniably influences the Reverend's Christian attitude and modifies his utterings. In this light, the clergyman's expressed opinions take on the authorially intended feminine colouring.

With regard to the earlier cited theory of dismemberment, as a way of fictionally coming to terms with unresolved grief, Ahab's dismemberment, which is the most dramatic in all of the triptych and, indeed, becomes the catalyst for the Pequod's lengthy, ill-fated voyage, is both prefigured in Redburn and shadows forth into Pierre.

The figure-head on the Highlander, the ship Redburn sails on, was "a passenger" he "forgot to make mention of before" (RB 175). Redburn then describes the figure as

> a gallant six-footer of a Highlander 'in full fig', with bright tartans, bare knees, barred leggings, and blue bonnet and the most vermilion of cheeks. He was game to his wooden marrow, and stood up to it through thick and thin; one foot a little advanced, and his right

> arm stretched forward, daring on the waves. In a gale of wind it was glorious to watch him standing at his post like a hero ... He was a veteran with many wounds of many sea-fights; and when he got to Liverpool a figure-head-builder there, amputated his left leg, and gave him another wooden one, which I am sorry to say, did not fit him very well, forever after he looked as if he limped. (RB 175)

In its turn the wooden figure-head has its glass ancestor in the "gallant warrior (who) lies pitching head foremost down into the trough of a calamitous sea under the bows" (RB 51), duplicating Redburn, falling headlong into experience when leaving home "to go to sea on this (his) first voyage" (RB 51). Characteristically, with Melville's (in James Baird's words) "emotive and intuitive rather than ... intellectualized" [30] symbolic elements, Redburn alludes to a "secret sympathy" between him and the glass figure, leaving the reader with the impression of the narrator (metaphysically) having willed the glass warrior's simultaneous fall into life's symbolic, more turbulent experiences.

In Pierre, the concept of dismemberment is first employed in "the long-cherished image of his father now transfigured before him from a green foliaged tree into a blasted trunk" (P 114). (The reader is here also reminded of Ahab in whom, contrary to the literary norm, reality precedes the image: "Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. ... Ye see an old man cut down to the stump; leaning on a shivered lance; propped up on a lonely foot" (MD 672)). Or, as in a true triptych, the viewer can look from left to right (Redburn to Pierre) and from right to left (Pierre to Redburn), always crossing the ocean between them in which Moby-Dick and

the Pequod swim and sail.

Where, in Pierre, the dismemberment is introduced as having occurred passively, that is to say, as if it came uninvited, and altered, without Pierre's active participation, the image he had hitherto had of his father, Pierre engages also in a defiantly emotional and active alteration which, together with the fictional strangling phenomenon would concur with the already quoted theory of "unconscious reproach ... combined with conscious and often unremitting self-reproach".[31]

The conceptual imagery finds its final 'fulfilment' in Pierre's trance-like state, when the young, would-be author in his strange vision knew:

> Nature, more truthful (than art), performed an amputation, and left the impotent Titan without one serviceable ball-and-socket above the thigh.
>
> Such was the wild scenery - the Mount of Titans, and the repulsed group of heaven-assaulters, with Enceladus in their midst shamefully recumbent at its base; - such was the wild scenery ... no longer petrified in all their ignominious attitudes, the herded Titans now sprung to their feet; flung themselves up the slope; and anew battered at the precipice's unresounding wall. Foremost among them all, he saw a moss-turbaned, armless giant, who despairing of any other mode of wreaking his immitigable hate, turned his vast trunk into a battering-ram, and hurled his own arched-out ribs again and yet again against the invulnerable steep.
>
> "Enceladus! it is Enceladus!" - Pierre cried out in his sleep. That moment the phantom faced him; and Pierre saw Enceladus no more; but on the Titan's armless trunk, his own duplicate face and features magnifiedly gleamed upon him with prophetic discomfiture and woe. With trembling frame he started from his chair, and woke from that ideal horror to all his actual grief. (P 388)

NOTES

[1] Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) 4.

[2] Henry James, "Introduction" to Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1985) 24.

[3] Laurence Sterne, Tristram Shandy (Markham,Ontario: Penguin Books, 1985).

[4] William E.Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 120.

[5] Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (San Francisco, Cal.: City Lights Books, 1947) 13.

[6] Sedgwick 11.

[7] Wright 7-8.

[8] Adele Temin Lehrman, "The Influence of Hawthorne and Shakespeare on Melville: Father Figures and Failure in Moby-Dick and Pierre" (Ph.D. dissertation: George Washington University, 1987) 86.

[9] Lawrence Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952) 44.

[10] Sedgwick 109.

[11] Thompson 204.

[12] Sedgwick 111.

[13] Peter Bellis, No Mysteries Out of Ourselves (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) 7.

[14] Bellis 15.

[15] Bellis 11.

[16] Bellis 12.

[17] Bellis 15.

[18] Bellis 15.

[19] Bellis 64.

[20] Bellis 200, note 40.

[21] Sedgwick 132.

[22] Paul Brodtkorb, Jr., Ishmael's White World (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965) 114.

[23] Bellis 144.

[24] Neal L.Tolchin, Mourning, Gender, and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988) 7.

[25] Tolchin 7.

[26] Tolchin 117.

[27] Tolchin 34.

[28] Tolchin 34.

[29] Tolchin 34.

[30] James Baird, Ishmael (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) xvii.

[31] Tolchin 7.

CHAPTER VI

> You are uneasy; you never sailed with me before, I see.
>
> Andrew Jackson

The truth of Wordsworth' profound observation that the "Child is Father of the Man" has never and nowhere been more clearly demonstrated (and celebrated) than throughout Melville's writing in general and the triptych works in particular. This psychological genealogy has been discussed in some detail as far as Melville's early (often traumatic) personal and/or family-related experiences are concerned and as they are reflected in his work.

There is, however, another large area of possible influence that, albeit less directly, plays an important role in the shaping of an individual's mind and spirit, an influence that, filtered through a creative imagination, will find its way, allegorically and/or metaphorically, into the artistic creations of a particular artist.

In the case of Melville, the social, political and cultural events which took place during his lifetime, especially during the early years and some which occurred even prior to it, have become important venues to the essence of his thinking as they have evidently contributed considerably to the molding of his mind.

In Chapter III, Melville's choice of symbols in his treatment of, what he regards as, mankind's genetic (after-the-Fall)

disposition towards aggression, has been briefly dealt with. Melville seems to advance the notion that the biblical God holds mankind responsible for its 'ordained' disposition, thus his life-long "Quarrel with God".

Melville's preoccupation with the biblical banishment of Man, who would henceforth be "a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:12), is noticeable in one form or another in most of his writings. In the three works presently under discussion the theme appears to be strongly developed.

Melville's allegorical appropriation of the biblical theme in the figures of the fictional sons and wanderers (Redburn, Ishmael and Pierre), seems to be psychologically and spiritually correlated to the early traumatic loss Melville himself suffered with the death of his father. His seemingly unresolved filial grief is reflected in the thoughts and actions of his fictional sons. They are not only searching for their fathers' blessing (the origin of human intelligibility), but they are, as their biblical ancestors, doomed to do so forever.

One of Pascal's "Pensées", which Melville may have read, expresses Melville's concern with the ongoing search for the Truth of reality as it is manifested in the triptych works.

> We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes forever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But ... the earth opens to abysses.[1]

Similar thoughts can be traced through each of the three books under discussion. Man, as a type of Ishmael, is forever kept from consciously knowing the Truth of Reality.

In Moby-Dick, especially, the essence of the foregoing quotation is presented in a number of similar sounding instances. (In Sedgwick's terms, is is a "landsense - a harkening back to an Edenesque ex stence" [2], that takes topmost place in the human mind). The infinite, boundless ocean -- its being in flux forever -- represents the dreadful homelessness or Ishmaelean loneliness and its apprehended wandering in the wilderness. We already find in Redburn the cosmic fear as it is given voice in the narration of the beginning of the voyage to Liverpool:

> At last we got as far as the Narrows, which everybody knows is the entrance to New York Harbor from sea; ... and when you go out of these Narrows on a long voyage like this of mine, it seems like going out into the broad highway, where not a soul is to be seen. For far away and away, stretches the great Atlantic Ocean; and all you can see beyond is where the sky comes down to the water. It looks lonely and desolate enough, and I could hardly believe, as I gazed around me, that there could be any land beyond, ... And to think of steering right out among those waves, and leaving the bright land behind, and the dark night coming on, too, seemed wild and foolhardy; and I looked with a sort of fear at the sailors standing by me, who could be so thoughtless at such a time. (RB 80-1)

However, with Melville's characteristic sense of ambiguity of things, Ishmael can, contrary to the above quoted Redburn musings, meditatively philosophize as follows:

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

Apprehending a looming spiritual inertness that landlife seems to hold for him, Ishmael continues to voice existential doubts: "Terrors of the terrible! is all this agony so vain?" (MD 203).

Despite an apparent ambiguity, the ocean, in its infinite movement, its boundlessness, its unpredictability, is Melville's most celebrated metaphor. He shows time and again "that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea" (MD 203). In his creative maturity the Calvinism of his youth with its spiritual rigidity must have been anathema to Melville.

Other events than the autobiographical have helped form the framework of Melville's mind and are reflected in his writings. Socio-religious and cultural concerns which had filtered through society at large as an indirect result of Copernicus' heliocentric calculations in the sixteenth' century, which overturned all of the traditional ecclesiastical beliefs of the time, have played an important role in the creation of Melville's allegories and metaphors, as well as in the choice of symbols and themes. People began to experience more and more the existential loneliness incumbent on the growing individualism; eventually, artists began to reflect these feelings in their work.

Melville attests in his writings to a profound awareness of external forces as modifiers of the traditional human mold. Ishmael's already cited cry: "Friends, hold my arms!" and his assertion that: "To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme", illustrates clearly the (conscious) authorial

application of a spiritually and socially more comprehensive concept than the strictly autobiographical one.

One of the important political occurrences in the early years of Melville's lifetime which certainly influenced his thinking and was an occurrence that had far-reaching social consequences as reflected in his writing, was the election of Andrew Jackson as President of the United States.

In Redburn the topic is first off-handedly introduced with the narrator's reminiscences of the sailor Jackson's appearance, a sailor who, in his own words, "was a near relation of General Jackson of New Orleans" (RB 106).

Continuing the narrative of the role of this Jackson aboard ship and emphasizing his own position as but a ship's "boy" (a position that is later strengthened through the image of "an Indian baby tied to a plank and hung up against a tree like a crucifix" (RB 129), Redburn appears 'unconsciously' to enact the scenario that was taking place at or around the time of his narrative, between President Jackson and the people of the Indian nation, as well as 'unconsciously' to identify himself with the plight of the 'red-skinned' people.

General Jackson adopted the habit of alluding to himself, in relations to Indians, as 'the great white father' and referred to the Indian people and addressed them as 'his red, or first children' in an almost Machiavellian attempt to transfer their traditional allegiance from the land (which they regarded as

their spiritual mother) to him, in order to be, thus, in the (paternal) position to encourage the (red) children to 'obey' his government's resettlement decrees. In this context, Michael Rogin, in Fathers and Children, describes at length the psychologically tested tactic, termed "infantilization", which was practiced by the white American Government 'fathers' on their Indian 'children', in an attempt to wean them from their interdependence with nature so as to help them develop into 'civilized' citizens.[3] Naturally, despite the offers of (financial) assistance with resettlement which did not at all take the Indian way of life into account, the misguided (if not malignant) paternal benevolence threatened and, to an extent, succeeded to strangle the Indian spiritual reality as, at the same time, through the affected 'benevolence' on the part of the Government, the people were deprived of an outlet for their anger.[4]

The image of Redburn as an Indian baby reflects several things. First, it appears as part of the narrator's description of his own "trials and tribulations":

> I had no mattress, or bed-clothes, of any sort; for the thought of them had never entered my mind before going to sea; so that I was obliged to sleep on the bare boards of my bunk; and when the ship pitched violently, and almost stood upon end, I must have looked like an Indian baby tied to a plank, and hung up against a tree like a crucifix. (RB 129)

The image reflects with a salient immediacy the poignancy of Redburn's own state of mind, as well as his wish to be

acknowledged on his own terms. At the same time, the trials and tribulations together with the baby-image allude to the Indian people's pitiable condition in the ongoing conflict with the mainstream leaders, or 'fathers'.

Furthermore, the reference to "crucifix" clearly means to denote the course of the Indian way of life and the apprehended end. The people will be 'crucified', or sacrificed on the indifferent (marble) altar of white civilization.

The idea of Jackson, the sailor, perceived by Redburn to be "by nature a marvelously clever, cunning man, (who) understood human nature to a kink and well knew whom he had to deal with" (RB 107), is interesting. The character description of the shipboard Jackson could equally well be applied to General Jackson of whom it has been said that he "would sublimate instinctual rage into authority" 5.

The latter phenomenon is exactly the feat that Jackson on board ship seems to have mastered as can be learned from the manner in which he holds sway over his fellow seamen, while all the time suffering from a malady, that is, a rage "that was eating up his vitals" (RB 109). Redburn goes on to tell of the sailors' stance

> against anything like sogering ... any thing that savored of a desire to get rid of downright hard work; yet, I observed that, though this Jackson was a notorious old soger the whole voyage (I mean in all things not perilous to do, from which he was far from hanging back), and in truth was a great veteran that way, and ONE WHO MUST HAVE PASSED UNHURT THROUGH MANY CAMPAIGNS; (emphasis mine) yet, they never presumed to call him to account in any way. (RB 109)

The above gossip reminds one of what was said of General Jackson by those who were against his election as President. "Friends of Adams" questioned Jackson's ability.

> You know that he is no jurist, no statesman, no politician (and) that he is destitute of historical, political, or statistical knowledge; that he is unacquainted with the ortography, concord, and government of his language; you know that he is a man of no labor, no patience, no investigation; in short that his whole recommendation is animal fierceness and organic energy. He is wholly unqualified by education, habit and temper for the station of President.[6]

In true Melvillean manner, Redburn shifts his standpoint and begins to look at the seaman Jackson from a different perspective. As a boy, Redburn found Jackson's countenance, especially his "infernal looking eye", frightening and as older narrator he is still haunted by it: "It was a horrible thing; and I would give much to forget that I have ever seen it" (RB 107).

However, in his growing maturity, Redburn begins to see in this shipboard Jackson a likeness with "a wild Indian, whom he resembled in his tawny skin and high cheek bones, he seemed to run a muck at heaven and earth. He was a Cain afloat; branded on his yellow brow with some inscrutable curse" (RB 163). The protagonist continues right after his assertion with the observation:

> ... there seemed even more woe than wickedness about the man; and his wickedness seemed to spring from his woe; and for all his hideousness, there was that in his eye at times, that was ineffably pitiable and touching; and though there were moments when I almost hated this Jackson, yet I have pitied no man as I have pitied him. (RB 163)

Redburn, who in this context is entirely honest with himself,

resembles Melville to the utmost. In the case of Jackson, the reason for his candidness may be Melville's discovery (presumably on one of his voyages as a sailor), that he had, within himself, in F.O.Matthiessen's words, "hitherto unsuspected capacities for violence". [7]

Another consideration may be, however, that growing away from the tendency, in his early work, to define American Society as "a cultural matrix that fully defines the self" [8], Melville in his personal and literary honesty begins to introduce an apparently perceived category of (Indian) otherness as a not to be denied aspect of the social (American) order. Thus, "Melville's search for self-definition ... shaped primarily by internal factors" [9] moves for a large and important part also in the direction of the cultural context.

The 'Indian theme' is, albeit on a different level, continued in Moby-Dick where Ishmael, too, refers to General or President Jackson, in a more ironically direct manner. Towards the end of the first chapter on "Knights and Squires", Ishmael, carried away by seeming religious zeal, addresses God directly, praising Him:

> ... thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God! ... Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war-horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all Thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God! (MD 212)

Reading the afore quoted piece of Ishmaelean rhetoric, one can almost imagine hearing Andrew Jackson's detractors and opponents crying out election campaign demagoguery and including God in the process. To wit: "Jackson", they said, "was a Tyrant, Usurper, Dictator, King Andrew I, King of Kings, who was trampling on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights" ... Screamed one anti-Jackson headline: "THE KING UPON THE THRONE: THE PEOPLE IN THE DUST!!!" [10]

Further to Melville's interest in this socio-cultural and highly political problem, there is, of course, Ahab's Indian-named ship, the Pequod. The sailor Jackson in Redburn is a literary ancestor of Ahab who in his bullying and overbearing way resembles Ahab perfectly. ("... the men were afraid of him, and durst not contradict him, or cross his path in any thing" (RB 107)). Even their 'shadows' call up a literary kinship. Redburn's statement: "Nothing was left of this Jackson but the foul lees and dregs of a man; he was thin as a shadow; nothing but skin and bones" (RB 108) reminds one of Ahab's ghostly, but equally dominating shadow, Fedallah.

The importance of the name, Pequod, extends to the broad, geographical reality of America as the ship is a world in itself, bearing out Charles Olson's poetic observation of "SPACE (spelled) large, because it comes large here ... (as) geography at bottom". [11] This concept establishes space -- Indian space -- as the epic grounding of Melville's work.

The geographical reality is further borne out in the extent of its intensification in Moby-Dick as compared with Redburn. In Redburn, the sailor, Jackson, who resembled "a wild Indian", falls alone to his death. In Moby-Dick, Ahab, as the great white 'father' (of the crew), takes the whole Indian (Pequod) world with him. And here, too, in an entirely different context as previously discussed, lies the importance of Ishmael's survival. The knowledge of the tragedy of the American-Indian world -- a tragedy allegorized in the sinking of the Pequod -- will forever be part of Ishmael's knowledge and, thus, by implication, of all of mankind's.

The figure of Queequeg, the "waning savage", forebodes the Pequod's fate during his illness. (See page 9). An intuitive knowledge of the collective end is reflected in his eyes, eyes which show an individual "immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened" (MD 588).

Thus, Melville, as a socially aware author, has anchored his epic tale securely in the social fabric of the mundane American world and, in the context of the discussed reading, appears to demonstrate that the existence of the same American world as a nation is based on the solipsistic deeds of its captains -- its 'fathers' -- who rejected the uniqueness of their first children, ultimately denying them the (spiritual) birthright to their land.

Charles Olson, summing up the various aspects of Ishmael's

role in the drama of the White Whale, links him undeniably to the fate of the Pequod.

> Ishmael alone hears Father Mapple's sermon out. He alone saw Bulkington, and understood him. It was Ishmael who learned the secrets of Ahab's blasphemies from the poet of the fog, Elijah. He recognized Pip's God-sight, and moaned for him. He cries forth the glory of the crew's humanity. Ishmael tells their story and their tragedy as well as Ahab's, and thus creates the Moby-Dick universe in which the Ahab-world is, by the necessity of life - or the Declaration of Independence - included. [12]

In Pierre, the Indian theme is lightly touched upon, almost as an afterthought. Perhaps, Melville felt that he had said everything there was to say on the subject and wished the record of it (Moby-Dick) to speak for itself.

Despite the marginality of the theme in Pierre, the narrator begins the book with a dedication to "Greylock's Most Excellent Majesty" which appears to be a natural monument to a people whose spirituality is expressed in an already discussed interdependence with nature or, in Rogin's words, "a tribal tie to the land" [13]. "Greylock" is clearly an Indian appellation.

Melville, once again, demonstrates his complete mastery when expressing in one stroke his own allegiance ("Greylock - my own more immediate sovereign lord and king") as well as pays homage to the Indian spirituality with the dedicated gratitude to the Mountain, as part of the land and, following, with an allusion to his "loyal neighbors, the Maples and the Beeches, in the amphitheatre over which his central majesty presides" (P v).

Further allusion to the Indian question in Pierre, which appears to be a kind of off-hand reiteration of the topic in Moby-Dick, seems designed to mock a certain arrogant sense of ancestry Americans in general and the Glendinnings in particular might wish to celebrate. Authorial intrusion in Pierre's story, linked to the mockingly light tone perfectly relating the perfection of Pierre's world, instead, seems to ridicule that world. The modulation of the narrator's voice, especially when alluding to "the historic line of Glendinning", appears to cast that "historic line" in the form of a caricature.

> An excellent English author of these times enumerating the prime advantages of his natal lot, cites foremost, that he first saw the rural light. So with Pierre. It had been his choice fate to have been born and nurtured in the country, surrounded by scenery whose uncommon loveliness was the perfect mold of a delicate and poetic mind; while the popular names of its finest features appealed to the proudest patriotic and family associations of the historic line of Glendinning. On the meadows which sloped away from the shaded rear of the manorial mansion, far to the winding river, an Indian battle had been fought, in the earlier days of the colony, and in that battle the paternal great-grandfather of Pierre, mortally wounded, had sat unhorsed on his saddle in the grass, with his dying voice, still cheering his men in the fray. This was Saddle Meadows, a name likewise extended to the mansion and the village. Far beyond these plains ... rose the storied heights, where in the Revolutionary War his grandfather had for several months defended a rude but all-important stockaded fort, against the repeated combined assaults of Indians, Tories and Regulars. From before that fort, the gentlemanly, but murderous half-breed, Brant, had fled, but had survived to dine with General Glendinning, in the amicable times which followed that vindictive war. All the associations of Saddle Meadows were full of pride to Pierre. (P 25-6)

Albeit meted out with velvet glove, in the above quoted passage the Glendinning ancestors receive their due and the narrator

leaves no doubt as to whose side he is on. Throughout the book the intruding voice seems to guide Pierre away from his "circumscribed youth" (P 26), even if Pierre, apparently autonomously, makes his own fateful decisions.

Further to the discussion of the socio-cultural and religious context, a context that enlarges the scope of Melville's work, a look at what Lawrence Thompson has titled "Melville's Quarrel with God", may be of interest.

First, the 'Quarrel', which in its nature is of a cosmic magnitude, has its origin in Melville's personal philosophy, or has traditionally been so regarded. The so-called Quarrel has been a rich spawning ground for numerous critical theories on the subject of Melville's psychological and emotional make-up as mirrored in his writings. The present discussion, however, will not deal with these reflections as they emanate from Melville's autobiographical input; enough has been said on this topic. The interest lies in the sociological aspect of the famous (or notorious) Quarrel which, in the context of the triptych works, is not so much a Quarrel with God, as much as a Quarrel with Christendom. The viewer/reader is advised explicitly of the essence and intent of the dispute in a passage in White-Jacket which occurs at the end of the narrator's meditations on Indian exploits:

> And yet, fellow-Christians, what is the American frigate Macedonian, or the English frigate President, but as two bloody red hands painted on this poor savage's blanket?

> Are there no Moravians in the Moon, that not a missionary has yet visited this poor pagan planet of ours, to civilize civilization and christianize Christendom? WJ 273

In the arena of public debate about the traditional merits of a Christian conception of God, Melville does not stand alone. After the centuries-long process of increasing secularization, following the earlier scientific upheavals, Western society was near ready for an (artistic) examining of its Christian values and symbols thereof. Bruce Franklin, in The Wake of the Gods, sees the seventeenth century as the beginning of a growing inquiry "into the ancestry and meaning of all pagan gods" [14] and Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire historique et critique as a kind of (religious) watershed. He states:

> It has been shown that Melville used as sources ... an English translation of Bayle's Dictionnaire and the Reverend Thomas Maurice's Indian Antiquities ... Melville's works make many significant connections between these two examples, the first great modern psychological analysis of mythology and the last major Christian defense against psychological theories of mythology. Melville knew well and used carefully the theories of Maurice and his nineteenth-century followers - that pagan myths were merely Revelation spread by man's travels and distorted by man's mind - and those of Bayle and eighteenth-century followers - that all man's myths and gods were merely products of man's mind. [15]

One with whom Melville has much in common, although each reasons from a different perspective concerning the possible pitfalls of Christian expectations and practices, is the Danish thinker and writer, Søren Kierkegaard, who was a contemporary of Melville.

Kierkegaard thought deeply about what it means to be or, even, to become a Christian and put his thoughts and findings on the

subject into closely reasoned, written discourses in a manner reminiscent, at times, of Socrates' oral delivery as we know it through Plato. Kierkegaard was a prolific writer who did his important work mostly during the time-span that Melville wrote his.

Lee M. Capel, in "Historical Introduction" to Kierkegaard's The Concept of Irony - with Constant Reference to Socrates, states that Kierkegaard wrote about "substantive issues in such a way as to activate his reader". [16]

Melville's writings in the triptych reflect, to a degree, Kierkegaard's strongly reasoned convictions as expressed in his works. The Danish author, as does Melville, shows

> a natural predilection for such ingredients as ambiguity, irony, humour, satire, and polemic, so much so that this same tendency was formalized through the usage of pseudonyms, masks, concealment and postures into a theory of indirect communication which, together with his edifying or direct communications, culminated in the developing construct that he called his "authorship". [17]

Apart from the qualifying descriptions of his writing, which could as easily be attributed to Melville, Kierkegaard's pseudonyms appear to be in league with Melville's various personae, even though Kierkegaard's reasons for his choice of pseudonyms and the use of them, are of an existential nature. Jacques Colette, editor of Kierkegaard's The Difficulty of being Christian, writes:

> Kierkegaard was not able to sign these works with his own name. For as he says, "I count myself higher than Johannes Climacus, lower than Anticlimacus." (Two of his pseudonyms).

> What does this mean? That Kierkegaard, like Simon of Cyrene, considers himself to have borne the cross of Christ only "externally". That he considers it disloyal to publish under his own name Christian works while his own existence is not yet entirely placed under the sign of the imitation of Christ. It will only be so placed when he will have renounced his tranquility and his fear of the public to move to an attack on the state church which reposes, according to him, only on a phantom of Christian faith and which, by pretending to be Christian, commits the most serious of impostures. [18]

(Kierkegaard eventually went on to write, under his own name, Attack Upon "Christendom").

The presence of parallel images and themes in some of the writings of Melville and Kierkegaard presents an interesting circumstance. Melville had no access to Kierkegaard's work or vice versâ, since both authors were writing at about the same time and, moreover, most or all of Kierkegaard's writings began to be translated into English by the late nineteenthirties. Thus, we may conclude that Melville and Kierkegaard belong to what T.S.Eliot thinks of as "an unconscious community".

Eliot's view is contained in "The Function of Criticism" and is introduced by James Baird in Ishmael [19]. Eliot's experience of literature, "not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as organic wholes", gives rise to his speculation that a "common inheritance and a common cause unite artists consciously or unconsciously; it must be admitted that the union is mostly unconscious. Between the true artists of any time there is", according to Eliot, "an unconscious community" [20].

Eliot's view is an interesting one. He appears to regard the

human mind or spirit (especially the artistically creative), not as an absolute individual entity, but as an integral part of a pulsating Whole -- One Spirit. To an extent, this would explain the experience of parallel visions in the writings of Melville and Kierkegaard.

As for Kierkegaard's indictment of the (state) church, reposing on "a phantom of Christian faith", Melville, too, frequently exposes by means of his special kind of irony, twisted into a form of social and/or religious commentary or critique, the ghost of Christian faith practiced. In the triptych his exposures stand out in all three panels, whereby, with Kierkegaard, Melville inhabits or shares in the intellectual climate of his time.

Redburn presents a convincing example of the above observation when the narrator, wandering through Liverpool, is thinking:

> It is a most Christian thing, and a matter most sweet to dwell upon and simmer over in solitude, that any poor sinner may go to church wherever he pleases ... I say, this consideration of the hospitality and democracy in churches, is a most Christian and charming thought. It speaks whole volumes of folios, and Vatican libraries, for Christianity; it is more eloquent, and goes farther home than all the sermons of Massillon, Jeremy Taylor, Wesley, and Archbishop Tillotson. (RB 279)

The similarity between Melville's and Kierkegaard's writing is in some cases so strangely close as to be 'uncanny'.

In the context of this thesis, which is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Melville's three works, Redburn, Moby-

Dick and Pierre, as a traditional triptych, only a few examples can be given of the vision which the two authors appear to have shared -- examples of thoughts and passages in their works that give the impression of 'double exposures' and that play a role in the three works. These examples also mean to show Melville's indebtedness to the larger social, cultural and religious areas of interest, over and above the autobiographical input into his works. Again, quoting Eliot, there is "something outside of the artist to which he owes his allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and obtain his unique position". [21]

In his work, Christian Discourses, Kierkegaard gives voice to his conception of the eternal wanderer (Ishmael) when writing:

> Thus I will remind myself how uncertain everything is; that at birth a man is CAST OUT INTO THE WORLD (emphasis mine) and from that moment lies with a depth beneath him of a thousand fathoms, and the future before him every instant, yea, every instant, is as the darkest night. [22]

The above passage echoes through the three Melville works in the disembodied voices of the three corresponding personae. Although invisible, there seems a network of literary nerves in place and alive here, reciprocally nurturing over (geographical) space, partly autobiographical novels and philosophical treatises, quite unlike each other.

Kierkegaard's former thoughts may be considered an integral aspect of the foundation (as similar thoughts are basic to some or most of Melville's works) on which his intellectual edifices

rest. Earlier in the "Discourses", Kierkegaard holds forth on the desirability of being a Christian. When reading the statement one receives the impression that it had been composed for the benefit of Pierre.

> The heathen ... has this anxiety; for heathenism is precisely self-torment. Instead of casting all his care upon God, the heathen has all the worries; he is without God (without spiritual paternity), and hence he is the worried man, the self-tormenter. For since he is without God it cannot in any sense be God that imposes worry upon him. The situation is not this: without God - no worry, with God - with worry; but it is this: with God - no worry, without God - with worry. [23]

Pierre, we remember, cast out his paternity -- his past -- as he defiantly wishes to be "untrammeledly his ever-present self! - free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end!" (P 232, previously quoted). And, as if to undergird the wild words Pierre utters, the intruding narrator's voice remarks: "Pierre is a peak inflexible" (P 343).

Whereas the terms pagan and heathen are sometimes used interchangeably, Melville's usage of the terms connotes a definite difference between them. Thus, Pierre becomes a heathen. Queequeg is a pagan, certainly not a heathen; that doubtful honour falls to Ahab and, as the three works are indelibly linked, to Jackson in Redburn before him. In this sense, Jackson, Ahab and Pierre are abysmally akin - related.

Consolidating as it were this heathenish triumverate, Kierkegaard in Sickness Unto Death describes the nature of despair which is "a Sickness in the Spirit, in the Self" [24] as self-consuming. He writes: "but it is an impotent self-consumption

which is not able to do what it wills" [25]. It is interesting that the sailor, Jackson, in ill health is "but the foul lees and dregs of a man", that Ahab is "dismasted" and Pierre "is neuter now!"

Another example of the close (unconscious) relationship between Melville and Kierkegaard may be found in Kierkegaard's work, Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology, written in 1843.

At a certain point, Kierkegaard seems to describe Ishmael's near-drowning and miraculous survival when he solemnly chants: "Hail to the solemn exultation of victory! Hail to the dance in the vortex of the infinite! Hail to the breaking wave which covers me in the abyss! Hail to the breaking wave which hurls me up above the stars! [26]

Ishmael's epilogical testimony: "when the half-spent suction of the sunk ship reached me, I was then, but slowly, drawn towards the closing vortex ... Till, gaining that vital centre ..." (MD 687), seems to bear out Kierkegaard's poetic description. Kierkegaard's words appear to link Ishmael's survival with the earlier celebrated Bulkington apotheosis: "... as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God ... Take heart, take heart, O Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing - straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!" (MD 203)

Redburn, too, experiences an apotheosis when he, as already

quoted, meditates on the beginning as contained in the end: "But yet, I ... chance to survive, after having passed through far more perilous scenes than any narrated in this, MY FIRST VOYAGE - which here I end" (RB 406).

Pierre's anticipated apotheosis occurs when he determines that "now to live is death, and now to die is life (and that) now, to (his) soul, were a sword (his) midwife!" (P 403).

One last, striking example will further demonstrate the unconscious kinship of Melville and Kierkegaard as they participate in the artistically intellectual community of their time, each partaking of the contemporary creative climate or the more focused Zeitgeist.

(A separate study could be made of all occurrences of unconscious collaboration between Melville and Kierkegaard in Eliot's projected artistic community. Such a study would prove how diverse artists and thinkers create or enhance the intellectual climate of a given time. At any one time, various forms of human interaction, such as commerce, migration, religious and cultural practices, play an important role in the creation of a specific Zeitgeist. In Melville's case, it was also a time of preoccupation with the creation of a new political land, or continent, of experiencing the "American Renaissance").

In his book, Herman Melville, Newton Arvin finds Melville to be wholly at one "with the deepest sensibility of his age" [27]. Arvin's observation attests to a compatible reciprocity between

Melville and the creative climate of his time which, in view of Melville's legendary opposition to what is consciously known as reality and his attempts to expose the incompatibility of the socio-religious practices with the perceived needs, appears to be, almost, a contradiction. However, the tension originating in the salient incompatibility of what is and what ought to be, evidently creates a climate in which artistic inventiveness can flourish.

The last example of a simultaneous and similar vision and the literary treatment of it by the Danish thinker and the serious American author, lies in Kierkegaard's discourse, titled: "Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle", written in 1847, and Melville's creation of the "Church of the Apostles" and his ironic designation of Pierre as an Apostle. Pierre is not only an Apostle by dint of having chambers in the old church ("the immemorial popular name of the ancient church itself was participatingly transferred to the dwellers therein ... he who had chambers in the old church was familiarly styled an Apostle" (P 305)) or, by holding up "the standard of Right, and (swearing) by the Eternal and True!" (P 307), but also because, in a zealous burst of righteousness, he cries out that he "will gospelize the world anew" (P 310).

Kierkegaard describes an Apostle as someone receiving or having received a mission. To "become an Apostle is not preceded by any potential possibility", Kierkegaard writes, essentially

every man is equally near to becoming one". [28]

As the title of the discourse indicates, Kierkegaard also addresses Genius and its meaning. Concerning the definition of Genius, Kierkegaard writes at one point in his discourse of a certain reaction of the public in relation to the "dialectic of genius" which will, according to Kierkegaard,

> give particular offense in our times, where the masses, the many, the public, and other such abstractions contrive to turn everything topsy-turvy. The honoured public, the domineering masses, wish genius to express that it exists for their sake; they only see one side of the dialectic of genius, take offence at its pride and do not perceive that the same thing is also modesty and humility. The honoured public ... would therefore also take the existence of an Apostle in vain. For it is certainly true that he exists absolutely for the sake of others, is sent out for the sake of others .... [29]

It is the same reaction Melville was aware of and in the beginning of his writing career he guarded against evoking it and applied his special brand of irony to his work so as to 'hide' any enlightened ideas that might be offensive to the public.

From Kierkegaard's perspective, Genius is born ("Genius is what it is of itself, i.e. through that which it is in itself"), an Apostle is called ("an Apostle is what he is by his divine authority" [30]).

Pierre, in true Melvillean style, appears in his impulsive naïveté to have mixed the two. Initially he comes forward as a Kierkegaard Apostle with a revealed mission, that is, to be against all obstacles his sister's moral (and material) keeper. However, he comes to think of himself as a Genius in the writing

of his Gospel which in reality will be an autobiographical one, to wit, "Pierre seems to have directly plagarized from his own experience to fill out the mood of his aprarent author-hero" (P 342).

On Kierkegaard's terms, which seem to be Melville's as well, Pierre thus, ironically, becomes a blasphemer. Kierkegaard asserts to this effect that:

> Although a revelation is a paradoxical factor which surpasses man's understanding, one can nevertheless understand this much, which has, moreover, proved to be the case everywhere: that a man is called by a revelation to go out in the world, to proclaim the Word, to act and to suffer, to a life of uninterrupted activity as the Lord's messenger. But that a man should be called by a revelation to sit back ... momentarily clever, and afterwards as publisher and editor of the uncertainties of his cleverness: that is something approaching blasphemy. [31]

Even though Pierre never manages to have his work published, it is what he is aiming for while living in New York.

A footnote to Kierkegaard's thoughts as expressed in the above quotation explains that his observations refer to Adler, a contemporary follower of Hegel. As discussed in the Introduction to The Present Age by Kierkegaard, the author saw in the Reverend Adolph P. Adler "not only an example of misguided enthusiasm ... confused by a complete misunderstanding of the present age, but a caricature of his own position". [32]

This particular Kierkegaard view could serve as a 'blueprint' for Pierre. Keeping in mind Melville's authorial intrusions into the Pierre narrative, one can easily substitute Melville for Kierkegaard and Pierre, Melville's misguided enthusiast, for

Adler, without in any way altering the strength of Kierkegaard's assertion.

There is further the interesting (and ironic) phenomenon that Melville as the Genius behind Pierre's writing becomes the Apostle, writing the not-to-be-written Gospel. He attempts to demolish the shaky and crumbling edifice of nineteenth-century (traditional) Christian thought and to replace it with a more open and honest (less hypocritical) version. In this sense, Melville and Kierkegaard were both, or tried to be, reformers.

Redburn and Ishmael are Apostles of sorts. They go through a maturing process which, in the context of the triptych as a whole, reaches its apex with Pierre who, blasphemy aside, in the true spirit of an Apostle carries faithfulness to the task he felt called upon to fulfil, to the bitter end. A true Apostle, according to Kierkegaard, indeed leads a life of self-sacrifice.

Despite Pierre's defiant ending and the gloomy (heathenish) despair that permeates the work, one finds here, as in Redburn and Moby-Dick, an affirmation of life or, at least, an acknowledgment of the force of life over death. The viewer/reader is confronted not so much with a kind of New Testament resurrection as with a continuation of life -- Ishmael's "If" -- which is also an important concept for Kierkegaard and employed by him in his Christian Discourses as an allusion to faith "which of all goods is the highest and the only true good". [33]

Despite Melville's seemingly nihilistic outlook, his belief as

expressed to Hawthorne, in his annihilation, one hears in the three separate works' endings, and through them in the whole of the Redburn - Moby-Dick - Pierre triptych, an affirmation of life.

Melville's questioning of the truth did not, as Sedgwick has observed and as has been quoted earlier, "lead to a vanishing point. It was (instead) a lever applied with great force, that heaved up its own possible answer, the truth of what it is to be alive. It is an act of being". 34

Thus, apart from the despair that is often so palpable in Melville, one senses a stronger current yet, one that the reader of Melville's work - the viewer of his triptych - may wish to raise a toast to:

L'chayim! - To Life!

NOTES

[1] Blaise Pascal, Pensées (London: Dent, 1932) nr. 72, 125.

[2] William E.Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 100,paraphrased.

[3] Michael Paul Rogin, Fathers and Children (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1975) 211,paraphrased.

[4] Rogin 217,paraphrased.

[5] Rogin 128.

[6] Paul F.Boller, Jr., Presidential Campaigns (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 45.

[7] F.O.Matthiesen, American Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962) 403.

[8] Peter J.Bellis, No Mysteries Out of Ourselves (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) 14.

[9] Bellis 13.

[10] Boller 55.

[11] Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (San Francisco, Cal: City Lights Books, 1947) 11.

[12] Olson 58.

[13] Rogin 211.

[14] Bruce Franklin, The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1963) 8.

[15] Franklin 8.

[16] Lee M.Capel, "Historical Introduction", The Concept of Irony With Constant Reference to Socrates by Søren Kierkegaard (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965) 7.

[17] Capel 7.

[18] Jacques Collette, ed., The Difficulty of Being Christian by Søren Kierkegaard (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1968) 17.

[19] T.S.Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" quoted in Ishmael by James Baird (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) ix.

[20] Eliot ix.

[21] Eliot ix.

[22] Søren Kierkegaard, Christian Discourses (London: Oxford University Press, 1952) 263.

[23] Kierkegaard, Discourses 79.

[24] Søren Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968) 146.

[25] Kierkegaard, Sickness 151.

[26] Søren Kierkegaard, "Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology", A Kierkegaard Anthology, ed. Robert Bredahl (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946) 136.

[27] Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: The Viking Press, 1957) 28.

[28] Søren Kierkegaard, Of the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 107.

[29] Kierkegaard, Difference 126.

[30] Kierkegaard, Difference 105.

[31] Kierkegaard, Difference 125.

[32] Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 11.

[33] Kierkegaard, Discourses 200.

34 William E.Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 132.

EPILOGUE

The work is done. "Why then here does anyone step forth?" In order to tell thee (in case it has gone unnoticed) that the foregoing thesis explores a vitally organic relationship between Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre and attempts to call up, by means of the six chapters which form the body of the thesis, the visual and literary triptych which Melville with his three colourful stories creates.

The most salient of characteristics, establishing a literary genealogy between the three works, is Melville's genial phrase "stepson of heaven" which serves as title of the thesis. With the three words of the particular phrase the protagonists of the three stories, Redburn, Ishmael and Pierre, are psychologically, emotionally and socially linked.

Employing the above concept and attaching its label to the "sailors of the world" (RB 205), Melville's persona, Redburn, thereby acknowledges his own and his fellow protagonists' psychosentient observations on the subject, as well as characterizes mankind at large with the distinctive title. The narrator in White-Jacket first compares the earth with a ship and mankind with the sailors on this earth-ship as he speaks of "[w]e mortals are all on board a fast-sailing never-sinking world-frigate, of which God was the shipwright" (WJ 408).

Several instances come to mind, throughout the work as a whole, in which a three-book genealogical character-kinship is established, all of which have been discussed in the body of the work. However, the one most closely connected with the stepson of heaven, interchangeable with him, is the character of Ishmael who in Redburn emerges as "a sort of "Ishmael", in Moby-Dick as the mature "Ishmael" and in Pierre as "an infant Ishmael". The figure of Ishmael is, in the true sense of the archetypal as well as the

modern human context, "a stepson of heaven". The epithet implies an impoverished or, rather, emotionally deprived psychological state which, in a universal sense (in the realm of the world-frigate whose crew of mortals forever sails "with sealed orders" (WJ 408)) applies to all of mankind.

The geographical and spiritual voyages narrated in Redburn, Moby-Dick and Pierre demonstrate by means of countless shared images, symbols, concepts (characters) and themes a vital interconnectedness. The interconnectedness creates the triptych image, and alludes at the same time to the one universal voyage of which the three literary voyages form individual, but indistinguishable waves in the Ocean of Life.

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