TOWARD MOBY-DICK: MELVILLE

AND SOME BAROQUE WORTHIES

DISSERTATION

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By

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Melville read Rabelais, Plutarch, Montaigne, Browne, and Fuller. That reading helped him grow as an artist, and it made a difference in the style of the books he wrote, particularly in *Moby-Dick*. Since one cannot talk about everything in a long prose work, one needs a method of selecting. Stylistic resemblances, from the most particular verbal echoes to the most inclusive organizing patterns, provide my method of selecting (I use "style" in a broad sense which I define briefly in Chapter I). Once focused on a passage in *Moby-Dick*, my approach allows me to consider that section in some detail, not only in relation to one or more of five writers, but also with the option of amplifying a little beyond them. Such an approach has merits for the study of a writer like Melville, whose books depend heavily on other books, as Dickens' and Thackeray's do not. I am thus using one workable technique for discussing a certain kind of long prose fiction—a technique that can deal with relations between the work, its culture, and its creator, all in terms of both large, inclusive patterns within the book as well as of closely examined local passages.

In practice, that close analysis brings out the preliminary evidence concerning Melville's response, for example, to Rabelais or Plutarch. To establish as sure a foundation as possible, I have discussed parallel passages in some detail. This exposition can be interesting and useful in its own right, and it also provides the basis for generalization. However, because it is concentrated and thus requires concentration, the discussion of particulars may sometimes
become tiring. But I eventually return to larger issues, and an active sense of those issues can enliven the more detailed sections of my study.

As much as possible, then, I have let Melville's response to his reading determine those stylistic traits and patterns which are the subject of the individual chapters. As a result, my study does not develop progressively and there has had to be a certain amount of repetition, which, however, I have kept to a minimum. Rabelais, Plutarch, Montaigne, and Browne, for example, are all sometimes relevant to the same passage, theme, or formal pattern; and, with variations, I return to that passage, theme, or formal pattern in more than one context and in connection with more than one writer.

One more remark. "Style," "the baroque," and "the anatomy" are three concepts which have helped me define what to look for in Moby-Dick. I have used them to guide, not to establish boundaries. As I use the three terms (I define them in a little more detail in Chapter I), "style" is a comprehensive idea which includes the other two. "The baroque" and "the anatomy," however, are not strictly parallel, but rather intersect and overlap. Rabelais, Plutarch, Montaigne, and Browne are all important in the history of one (and sometimes both) of them. Fuller, however, can hardly be included under either category; and if I had been using the concepts rigorously to determine whom to include and exclude, I should have had a chapter on Burton instead. But the Fuller section has some new and unexpected material; and what I have had to say about Burton, I have been able to say in passing. What the five writers do have in common is that for
my purpose their prose is seventeenth century English, since Melville read Plutarch, Rabelais, and Montaigne in seventeenth century translations. I stress the baroque and the anatomy, however, since these concepts are more genuinely revealing than that historical similarity.

A final note. Melville, of course, is the author of Moby-Dick, but he is not the narrator of the story; if one takes it on its own terms as a fiction, Ishmael is the author of Moby-Dick. Although he and Melville clearly have much in common, Ishmael is also autonomous—not, perhaps, in exactly the same way as any fictional character, but autonomous nonetheless. I think that it is important to keep the distinction clear. To emphasize it, I often talk as if Ishmael had a "real" existence: as if he himself had ideas and feelings and, because he had an imagination, was writing about them. Since I am also concerned with Melville's reading and experiences as they helped him create Moby-Dick, I sometimes say that "Ishmael does thus and so" when obviously Melville himself had done it and Ishmael, a fictional character, never could have. When I have Ishmael doing thus and so, however, it is not because I am equating him with Melville, but rather because I want to avoid the autobiographical fallacy, and I do so by insisting on the narrator's independence from his creator. I have not been perfectly consistent about point of view, however, and I sometimes shift, now referring to Melville, then to Ishmael. When I do so, I am not at all implying that Ishmael is Melville's spokesman (see Chapter IV/4 and Chapter VII).
ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the text to indicate primary sources. One of the first three footnotes in each chapter summarizes the evidence concerning Melville's familiarity with the particular edition used in that chapter.


OC for Garden of Cyrus.
RM for Religio Medicus.
UB for Urn Burial.

I omit the volume number and in parenthesis cite the work, part or book, subsection, and page:
(RM/I/xI/16).

Fuller, Thomas. The Holy State and the Profane State, ed. James Nichols. London: 1841. Since I quote only from "The Good Soldier" and "The Good Sea Captain," both from Book II, I omit the book number and cite the chapter, maxim, and page:
(XX/vili/l13).


I cite the volume and page:
(Log/I/312).


For the text of the novels, I cite chapter and page:
(LXV/299). The notes in the Mansfield-Vincent edition are cited according to page:
(M-V/706). Representative Selections is cited:
(Rep. Sel./308).


OC for "Of Cannibals."
R. Seb. for "The Apology for Raymond Sebond."
(OC/89) or (R. Seb./214).
EF for "Whether It Be Lawful to Eat Flesh or No" ("Of Eating Flesh").
LB for "Whether Creatures Be More Wise, They of the Land, or Those of the Water" ("Land Beasts and Water Beasts").
(EF/474) or (LB/789).

I omit the volume and cite the book, chapter, and page:
(III/xxxvi/51).

(Sealts, No. 417).
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

During his early twenties, Melville lived an active life on whalers, warships, and South Sea Islands. During his late twenties and early thirties, he led an even more deeply active life in libraries and closed rooms. His reading and his writing helped him become increasingly aware of his depths and of his imaginative power. That imagination, in turn, transformed both his whaling and his reading experiences, which together, unpredictably combined, account for much of the distinguishing force and quality of his books.

As an artist, that is, Melville always found his reading as basic and exciting as his life in the South Seas or in London. More than almost any creator of comparable power, he depended on the stimulation of books to set his imagination going. And in Moby-Dick, that imagination working at full force, Melville shaped the finest tribute one writer can pay to those who have helped him—he created an integral work of art which, on its own unique terms, matched the power and stature of those who had inspired him. We, in our turn, can pay tribute to Melville, whose imagination was vital enough to give unity and coherence to the diverse and often sharply conflicting sources from which his greatest book emerged.
I am studying some of those sources because they provide crucial insights into the style of *Moby-Dick*. And since style is an important concept in that study, I begin by defining my use of the term.

Like "tragedy" and "realism," "style" has—and can have—no single meaning which will satisfy everyone. Even on the most precise definition the word inevitably has a margin of ambiguity and a range of implication. Far from being a disadvantage, that fact makes the term particularly valuable as a guide in literary studies, since along with all of its variation, it does have commonly recognized senses, too. Following some recent theorists, I thus use style as a quite inclusive concept which directs us to attend to what a writer sees, his way of seeing it, and his manner of rendering what he feels and thinks and sees.1 Because of its connotations in art history and some Romance criticism, the word also allows us to take a literary work out of its isolation and to see its inner workings in relation at once to a living culture and a living creator. (I should add that, approached from the perspective of traditional rhetoric, the word does not encourage one to move outside the poem or novel.2) The concept of style thus implies a historical dimension. To talk about *Moby-Dick* and its style in any totally comprehensive way is, of course, out of the question. One has to select and focus, as in all criticism. I am using Melville's reading of a group of prose writers--Rabelais, Plutarch, Montaigne, Browne, and Fuller--to help me focus on some aspects of the style of *Moby-Dick*.
Whatever such an approach leaves in the dark, it also brings into relief patterns and qualities which are worth attending to.

They are frequently, to consider my two other main concepts, the patterns and qualities of seventeenth century "baroque" prose and of a genre which, following Northrup Frye, I am calling "the anatomy." That genre is made up of books like Vulgar Errors, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Tristram Shandy, Sartor Resartus, and Moby-Dick—works which have always been hard to classify but which fall into an intelligible pattern once they are grouped together. They are all encyclopedic (as are Montaigne and Plutarch). They all make extensive use of out-of-the-way learned allusions and quotations, real or faked; they are all concerned with genealogies, precedents, and the paraphernalia of scholarship, often in a mocking way. They are frequently satiric and, like writings in the baroque manner—the classifications overlap—they are often irreverent or blasphemous (or to a nineteenth century reader in general and to Herman Melville in particular, Rabelais and Sterne would have appeared so, and Burton, we know, did). These books mix fiction and non-fiction, drama and essay, autobiography and epic in combinations that defy conventional categories. Moreover, they are directly concerned with philosophic and moral issues in a way that Moll Flanders, Emma, Pickwick Papers, and other ordinary novels are not. Another distinguishing trait is that their structure often appears chaotic; but as recent scholarship is demonstrating with one after another of them, the chaos is deceptive. Melville shows his insight into the underlying formal principle of his book and his predecessors', when, at the start of a chapter whose information, attitudes,
and technique derive from the anatomy, he says: "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method" (LXXXII/359). The digressions and irregularities which have bothered critics of Moby-Dick and Tristram Shandy, which have been excused as "quaint" in Burton or blamed in Melville, should perhaps be accepted and valued as integral to the method of some of the world's most vital works of the imagination.

The same applies to the so-called shifts in voice and point of view; the pervasive asymmetry and abrupt leaps; the piling up of words and allusions; the characteristic loose ligatures and strong metaphors which help to define what its most perceptive student has called "baroque" prose style. Burton and Browne are its classic practitioners; Montaigne is a borderline figure; and Rabelais, deeply, and Plutarch, less deeply, influenced the writers in this style. Beyond the seventeenth century proper, Laurence Sterne is in a direct line of descent; and Emerson and Thoreau both illustrate something intermediate between its "curt" and its "loose" versions. What is more important for my study, Melville has also recreated this style in Ishmael's most characteristic medications and commentaries: the anatomy and the baroque are basic to the style of Melville's narrator. Ishmael, who is made to employ other styles as well, is able to do so because of the freedom which the anatomy and the baroque allow him. What is more important for my study, Melville has also recreated this style in Ishmael's most characteristic medications and commentaries: the anatomy and the baroque are basic to the style of Melville's narrator. Ishmael, who is made to employ other styles as well, is able to do so because of the freedom which the anatomy and the baroque allow him.

The prose style, some of whose variations I am studying, can be defined still further. It is committed to flexibly and sensitively rendering a mind, an "I," that is inquisitive and idiosyncratic; typically sceptical and irreverent; sometimes whimsical and always
intelligent; a mind that ranges sharply, perceptively, and sometimes ecstatically over the facts and possibilities of human life, from the pismire to predestination, from the navel of a man or of a ship to "the fabled heavens with all their countless tents" that, "far beyond the utmost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying Fish," perhaps "lie encamped beyond my mortal sight." This prose style is committed to the "I" in all its tough, imaginative, individuality. The fact is worth stressing, since some recent critics of Melville would have him "championing" the surrender of self to God or to group. He does not use Ahab to this end; and for Ishmael he chooses a style whose every nuance is a denial of that surrender—and often an explicit denial, at that.

Melville, like his baroque predecessors, turned to "other writers, ancient and modern." As a result, mine is in part a study of the interaction between Europe and America, between a past and a present.

Any European intellectual faces the recurring problem of his relation to the accumulated learning of the Western world. Stephen Daedalus, for one, feels that he is doomed to be "nothing more than a poor guest at the feast of the world's culture." The periodic battles of the ancients and moderns—Walter Map in the Twelfth Century Renaissance or Dryden and Swift in the Restoration, for example—are another version of the same problem. But the burden on an American intellectual is increased simply by virtue of his being an American, a new man aware both of his newness and also of
the resonant Old World. Cotton Mather and the lady in Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning," to pick examples widely separated in time, both confront the issue, and in Melville's period Emerson's "American Scholar," the program of Young America, and Melville's own "Hawthorne and His Mosses" all show how alive it was.

Melville's personal development, his own unfolding, are inseparable from his conquest of a past, which in turn is inseparable from his creation of a style. In bringing Rabelais, Plutarch, Montaigne, Browne, and Fuller to bear on Moby-Dick in order to illuminate some aspects of that style, I am thus viewing Melville as one vital instance within the larger historical and cultural context of the American intellectual who must inevitably come to terms with the European past, who must inevitably "make it new."

In Moby-Dick, Melville chooses to do so in a prose style which, in the nineteenth as in the seventeenth century, "aims at freedom, and chooses several . . . writers, ancient and modern, as the models by which it seeks, through the method of imitation, to escape from the method of imitation. Rabelais is the chief of these. Montaigne adds the taste for Plutarch's essays; and the form of Montaigne's own style, from 1600 onward, mingles with that of Rabelais' in almost equal proportions in the prevailing forms . . . in the seventeenth century."11 If he had explicitly mentioned Browne and Burton (who are implicit here), Professor Croll could have been describing the development of central features of Melville's style, instead of that of the seventeenth century "libertine" and "baroque" writers who are his immediate subject. After reading these baroque writers, Melville
made the earlier method his method. All art is artificial; but for
every artist some ways of doing things seem natural and right.
Melville's sense of what was natural and right, I suggest, was
shaped by his reading in the anatomy and the baroque.

Knowing about their shaping role, we can better understand
what distinguishes Moby-Dick from most English and American novels.
Recent discussions of the romance have been concerned with the same
issue, and the perspective I have indicated can supplement them.12
As for the novel proper, a distinguishing mark of many English
novelists—Defoe, Richardson—and it holds also for Dickens and
Thackeray—is that they have little use for traditional, humanistic
learning.13 Melville not only took such learning seriously—so did
Fielding and George Eliot—but he was also willing to let it make a
pervasive difference in the style of the books he wrote. That style,
from the minutiae of syntax and movements within a paragraph through
to the apparently disorganized quality of the whole, was shaped and
transformed by his reading in the baroque and the anatomy. Melville
read other books intensively; but the writers we are concerned with
provided a style which could accommodate the diverse styles generated
by that reading and his own independent thinking and feeling.

Its very diversity of styles, its apparent confusion of genres,
were precisely what bothered Melville's contemporaries most about
Moby-Dick. Their response was to continue buying Typee and to leave
Moby-Dick largely alone. At a time when he was becoming aware of
the problem, Melville wrote to a friend that "the two great things
yet to be discovered are these—The Art of rejuvenating old age in men, and oldageifying youth in books.—Who in the name of the trunk-makers would think of reading old Burton were his book published for the first today?" (Rep. Sel./374.)

2. From Typee to Moby-Dick

_Typee_ and _Omoo_, however, show that Melville had not always had the interrelated problems of an unconventional approach and a disappointing volume of sales. By the time of _Moby-Dick_, his style had changed. Style is a way of seeing; _Typee_ and _Omoo_ caught on to the extent that they did partly because _Robinson Crusoe_ and the travel books had given their audience a way of seeing. Paraphrasing Wordsworth's insight, we can say that every innovating artist has to train his own audience, has to create that audience, has to condition it to a new way of seeing before his own works are accepted. Melville did not have to create or train an audience for _Typee_ and _Omoo_, books which did not put pervasive and well-established nineteenth century modes of perception under any strain at all. Even hostile critics of these novels understood them, which is not true of _Mardi_ or _Moby-Dick_. In like manner, I suggest that, when Melville himself came to write his first two novels, _Robinson Crusoe_ and the travel books also gave him a usable way of seeing his South Sea experiences, which he would not have rendered as he did without such predecessors. In a further study, I plan to use _Robinson Crusoe_, the travel books, Smollet, and
perhaps Washington Irving as the focus for my discussion of Typee and Omoo. Melville had always turned to "other writers, ancient and modern."

With Mardi, however, a different kind of writer and a different kind of adventure story and voyage book condition the style. The Heroic Deeds of Garagantua and Pantagruel replaces the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe; Religio Medici and Vulgar Errors become more important than Bougainville's Voyage. Whereas Robinson Crusoe had helped Melville and his audience view things from a very similar perspective, Rabelais and Browne did not at all prepare that audience for Mardi or Moby-Dick, and Melville's income suffered accordingly. Melville, that is, was becoming an innovating artist, and one who unfortunately was not able to condition an audience to his way of seeing. I am concerned with the role of certain books in transforming him into that kind of artist.

3. From Mardi to Moby-Dick

The writers of the baroque and the anatomy gave Melville a style which his audience did not understand, partly because it appeared chaotic. But for all its emphasis on spontaneity, it is not an undiscovered style, nor one that can be mastered without training. The differences between Mardi and Moby-Dick show that Melville had finally become a master, and we can now trace that process of growth.
In Mardi we can see Melville as an apprentice. While he was writing that exploratory book, Browne, Rabelais, Montaigne, and the others had given him "an incurable distaste for [my narrative of facts] ... and a longing to plume my powers for a flight, and [I] felt irked, cramped, and fettered by plodding along with dull commonplaces" (Log/I/274). Melville was becoming dissatisfied with Defoe and Bougainville. In the many individual and sometimes splendid passages of Mardi which echo Browne or Rabelais, we can see him for the first time opening up and trying out his powers. Melville, however, was also the first to see that Mardi was a failure, that individual passages worked but that they were not fused into a unified whole (Log/I/274). He had sporadically imitated Browne's style, for example, but, because he had not assimilated that style deeply enough, he was not able to make it shape a fictional world for him.

Melville, however, had tried. He had mechanically taken over Rabelais' suggestion of a satiric voyage, which he used as a framework for satirizing contemporary politics and religion, just as Rabelais had done in his visits to the Island of the Macreons and the Island of Pope-Figland. Certainly from the time he changed Mardi from another Typee into a speculative romance, one of Melville's dominant impulses was to render the whole of a world, to get everything in that he knew and felt—to encompass the universe within his books. The encyclopedic range of men like Rabelais, Browne, Burton,
and Montaigne helped awaken him to his deepest interests and to suggest more and less successful ways of rendering those interests in works of fiction.

Rabelais' satiric island-hopping, for example, proved to be less than satisfactory for Melville. But from Thomas Fuller, he took the hint of "the world in a man-of-war," a phrase from "The Good Sea Captain" which became the sub-title for White Jacket. Fuller's Holy and Profane States renders a society, a world, from "The King" to "The Good Yeoman"; and the section on "The Good Sea Captain" focuses specifically on the ship as a world in itself. Instead of circling Mardi's archipelago, in White Jacket Melville makes the ship a self-contained world. The archipelago is condensed into the microcosm of the ship, but it is still the whole of a world that Melville is dealing with. Browne's views on the microcosm did not inhibit this move.

In Moby-Dick the ship-as-world comes into its own: the Rabelaisian-inspired archipelago of Mardi has been transformed into the Pequod, and Melville has a perfect vehicle for dealing with both the particular and the universal. The quest for the abstract, white-skinned Yillah, moreover, is replaced by the hunt for the forbiddingly concrete White Whale. But the Whale also has special possibilities for symbolism, and Rabelais and Browne helped to show Melville those possibilities. Browne in particular suggested a way of making fact and science merge into poetry and symbolism. What I am concerned with here is how that suggestion bears on the structure of the novel as a whole.
At the risk of some repetition, I can make my point by returning in a little more detail to a few important similarities and differences between Mardi and Moby-Dick. In Mardi, it is generally agreed, Melville was trying to project imperfectly mastered ideas and feelings which his reading had stimulated. And because his reading of Rabelais, Browne, and the others had conditioned some of these ideas as well as the structure of both Mardi and Moby-Dick, we can gauge Melville's relation to their style by looking at the two books.

Melville, to restate one of his major problems, was searching for a form that would allow him to encompass the world: that would allow him, that is, to comment on all of the speculative issues that concerned him and also to create a unified fictional whole. In Mardi he takes care of the philosophical and moral commentary through the mechanical devices of island-hopping and of unconnected dialogues between characters. Someone proposes a topic; Yoomi, or Babbalanja, or Media talks on it; someone argues; and they go on to the next island or the next observation. The move from island to island or topic to topic, however, has very little organic connection to its ostensible purpose, the quest for Yillah. But in many ways the procedure does resemble the travels and conversation of Pantagruel and his followers in their quest for the bottle or in their allegorical dialogues on marriage. The dialogues or monologues also frequently resemble brief essays like Montaigne's or sections of Religio Medici or Vulgar Errors. The issues and allusions, moreover, often reflect Melville's reading in these and other writers. On the surface, then, the organization of Mardi resembles
that of Gargantua and Pantagruel, Vulgar Errors, Religio Medici, and Montaigne's Essays. But Melville's grasp of these works is superficial. He has not really seen deeply into them; he has not really made their style his own; as a writer of fiction, he has not really put that style to his own uses.

He has done so in Moby-Dick. In place of the unconnected dialogues, Melville has contrived the cetological chapters, which allow him to range freely over the same kind of issues his characters debated in the earlier work. But in Moby-Dick, far from being unconnected, these chapters are intimately related both to the quest and to the creation of a believable fictional world. Fact merges into symbol, and both fact and symbol help to unify the book. At many different levels, that is, discussions of the whale's anatomy serve to integrate Moby-Dick. The idea of building up and holding Moby-Dick together by means of the cetological chapters—this organizing idea, I think, grows out of Melville's deepened insight into works like Vulgar Errors (and Religio Medici) and The Anatomy of Melancholy. Moreover, Melville's style of arguing within these chapters—his learned allusions and the sceptical conclusions they are often made to support—as well as his ability to keep in productive tension the diverse and sometimes conflicting implications of the symbols which also unify the book; these traits, too, derive in important ways from writers like Montaigne, Browne, and Rabelais. Melville's execution shows that he had mastered their style so thoroughly that he was now able to put that style to his own uses.
In discussing style, I have often stressed generic considerations in order to help define the style of Moby-Dick. But Melville did not think impersonally about genre when he was reading the five writers whom I study in particular. They had quite distinct, individual identities for him. We can say that his Rabelais or his Fuller had some of the qualities of a person, partly because his relation to them was one of active give and take. What Melville gave in return for what he took was Moby-Dick. Or to vary the metaphor, he engaged in an active dialogue with these five men. Sometimes, as in Fuller's case, it was not a particularly friendly dialogue, and the disagreement emerges in remarks about the destructive sea as well as more genially in the very syntax and structure of "Knights and Squires." But in any case, Melville characteristically took on the inflexions, turns of phrase, and often the habits of mind of those with whom he was intimately engaged. In the following pages I will study five important, individual instances of that exchange which, in large ways and small, contributed to the creation of the style—and thus the meaning—of Moby-Dick.
Chapter II
THE TWO VERSIONS OF RABELAIS

1. Introduction

One of the stylistic patterns in *Moby-Dick* can be called Rabelaisian. As I use it, the term refers both to the literary style of the Urquhart-Motteux translation of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* and to a derivative but contrasting "social" style which marked the writing and manners of a group of Melville's acquaintances, "the New York Rabelaisians." As a result, I will be concerned partly with a trans-historical, primarily literary relation, with the extent to which Melville recreated in *Moby-Dick* a style which he assimilated from his reading in Urquhart's Rabelais. I will also be concerned, on the other hand, with Melville's relation to a narrow and particular milieu, so that I will also be placing him solidly in the history of his own time.

But the reading of a great book is of course always historically conditioned; and when that reading is transmuted into a work of the imagination, as aspects of Urquhart's Rabelais were into *Moby-Dick*, a historically definable style is at once received and transformed. And in this case, the problem of such a style is especially complicated, for by the time of *Moby-Dick*, Melville's Rabelais had become significantly different from the Rabelais of his friends (and thus to an important extent, of his period), and Melville plays upon this difference. He had responded deeply to the symbolic
techniques and the cutting, irreverent moral and religious satire of Gargantua and Pantagruel; and in Moby-Dick, he frequently turns precisely those techniques and attitudes against the orthodox religious and aesthetic values of the New York Rabelaisians. One result is the recurring pattern of criticism and conciliation which I shall be defining. Stubb, the second mate, is a key figure in this pattern. He can be more fully understood than he has been if both the literary and the social versions of Rabelais are kept in mind.

A final introductory note. I am assuming that it is intrinsically valuable to study the relations between two of the world's liveliest and most creative minds, that a special interest and importance attaches to that in Rabelais which Melville found useful for Moby-Dick, and that although the Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick is not always a dominant one in the book, it is nonetheless worth paying attention to. The New York Rabelaisians themselves, moreover, have an importance which goes beyond their minor and justly forgotten role in American social history. Their basically genteel, common sense approach to literature represented the taste and opinion of a large part of Melville's American book-buying public; and if Evert Duyckinck, for example, is insignificant, that body of taste and opinion is not. In order to write his own radical, symbolic fiction, Melville thus had to part company with his friends (and his audience). In important sections of Moby-Dick, he makes his dissent an active part of the book itself, and in the process he turns what I shall
call his authentically Rabelaisian style into a vehicle for light and sometimes sharp satire of the values of the New York Rabelaisians.

2. The Social and the Literary

I now turn to a passage in "The Whale as a Dish," because by looking closely at it I can begin to indicate specifically what I mean by "The Two Versions of Rabelais": "Cannibals? asks Ishmael/ who is not a cannibal? I tell you it will be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine; it will be more tolerable for that provident Fejee, I say, in the day of judgment, than for thee, civilized and enlightened gourmand, who nailsest geese to the ground and feasteest on their bloated livers in thy paté-de-foie-gras" (LXV/299). Earlier in the novel, Stubb has been shown to be "more of shark dan Massa Shark hisself" (LXIV/297), and the cannibalism of the sharks has already helped Ishmael explore civilized man's diabolic cannibalism. The passage continues sharply with one of Melville and nineteenth century America's characteristic concerns, the relation of the savage (here, the Fejee) and the civilized (here, the gourmand). But the pressure of a complex of ideas and feelings impells Melville to have Ishmael render the contrast in the syntax and manner of Rabelais.

The opening words in Gargantua, to select a representative example, illustrate some of the similarities: "Most noble and illustrious drinkers, and you thrice precious pockified blades, (for to you, and none else, do I dedicate my writings,) ..." In "noble and
illustrious," to begin with, the second word essentially repeats and barely expands the meaning of the first, which is exactly the relation of "civilized and enlightened." The parallel between "drinkers" and "gourmand" is obvious enough, and both Rabelais and Melville often turn directly to the reader (here, "for thee" and "you thrice precious . . .").\(^2\) The brutality of crucifying and then eating a living being and the attention to gross, unpleasant details of anatomy ("their bloated livers") are all characteristic of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. Although the cannibals and the "lean missionary" look back to *Typee*, *Omoo*, and Melville's life in the South Seas, Melville's hostility to missionaries must have been reinforced by Rabelais' anti-clericalism; and eating, devouring large amounts of food and drink—cannibalism itself—are also typically Rabelaisian.\(^3\) The Biblical forms ("nailest," "feastest") and perspective ("in the day of judgment") also add to the force of the passage.

The passage operates in part by exposing the barbarism latent in the most civilized behavior, and the Rabelaisian elements help powerfully to make the case. But one other way to convince a civilized Christian of his savagery and enormity is to associate an apparently innocent act with the most emotionally charged episode in the Christian past, which is what, at least momentarily, the nailing image does here. Finally, the full impact of Ishmael's assertion is partly concealed and thereby made bearable by a tone of frontier humor and mock oratorical rhetoric ("I tell you it will be more tolerable
for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine; it will be more tolerable for that provident Fejee, I say . . ."

The excerpt thus illustrates Melville's characteristic fusion and intermingling of disparate kinds of experience: he uses the techniques of frontier humor to make a wry joke out of material supplied by his firsthand knowledge of South Sea savages; and, at another extreme, he shows an intimate acquaintance with some of the Western world's most learned writers. In addition to Rabelais, Plutarch and Montaigne are also immediately involved (see Chapters III and IV); and the Bible and oratory are other elements, different from the first three as well as from each other. But I want to apply this commonplace about "the metaphysical sensibility" to my earlier view of Melville as American intellectual whose creation of a style involved his conquest of a past. Here we see that conquest and that creation in action.

I am not arguing that Melville actually turned to Rabelais and "The Author's Prologue," but rather that he had thoroughly assimilated Gargantua and Pantagruel, that the whole of Rabelais had helped him create his style, and that, when he needed to, he could adopt a Rabelaisian manner because in part it had become his own. Gargantua and Pantagruel, of course, is not all of a piece. Rabelais' intentions changed, Book II was probably written before Book I, and the bitter fifth book is different enough from the others so that its authorship has been questioned. Melville's English Rabelais, moreover—and it is the English, not the French version that I am considering—has two
translators, which compounds the diversity of style present even in the original. It is precisely this irregularity and diversity which connects Rabelais to the anatomy and the baroque, and which also influenced the form of Moby-Dick.

In the present case, I feel justified in my point of departure, which emphasizes "The Author's Prologue," because that "Prologue" has become a conventional symbol for the whole of Rabelais, and one whose style, moreover, is echoed in all of the five prologues. I think it very probably that Melville, who had a well-developed capacity for such imitation, was here patterning his style on a characteristically Rabelaisian passage. I have already indicated some of the reasons why Rabelais was appropriate and needed in the quoted excerpt; and I should now like to range out beyond a strictly bookish context to suggest some other reasons.

Those "civilized and enlightened gourmands" whom Melville knew best were New Yorkers, had soirées—punch and pâté-de-foie-gras or its more pedestrian equivalents—and helped constitute "the New York Rabelaisians," a term current in the 1840's and one to which Perry Miller has recently called our attention. One of their central figures was Evert Duyckinck, who introduced Melville to both Rabelais and the New York literary world (and Literary World). Duyckinck was one of Melville's friends and literary advisers. He half patronized Melville, was hardly aware of his friend's genius, and he must have aroused considerable ambivalence in a man as sensitive and as forceful as Melville. The most obvious surviving evidence of conflict centers around Melville's refusal of Duyckinck's request to write for Holden's
Magazine: "I cannot write what you want" (Rep. Sel.:384). And that the disagreement about what to write had its depths is indicated by Melville's letter to Hawthorne, in which he uses identical language: "What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches" (Rep. Sel.:390). Another cutting, deeply-felt passage is even more to the point for our purposes. Within a year and a half, Duyckinck's request for the article and daguerreotype for Holden's clearly and bitterly associates him in Melville's thinking with "the personal profaneness of gentlemen of the Captain Kidd school of literature" who evoke "an ugly devil in /Pierre/ sometimes, . . . though /he was/ the sweetest-tempered youth in the world when but decently treated." 6

And that the animus against well-meaning friends (and, perhaps, literary mentors) enters into Moby-Dick (as it clearly does into Pierre) is shown by a passage in the same section of the novel as the one we have been looking at. Tashtego and Daggoo are benevolently protecting Queequeg from the sharks, but "in their hasty zeal to befriend him . . . those indiscreet spades of theirs would come nearer amputating a leg than a tail. . . . Well, well, my dear comrade and twin-brother, thought I, as I drew in and then slacked off the rope to every swell of the sea—what matters it, after all? Are you not the precious image of each and all of us men in this whaling world? That unsounded ocean you gasp in is Life; those sharks, your foes; those spades, your friends; and what between sharks and spades
you are in a sad pickle and peril, poor lad" (LXXII/319-20). At its outset and at its broadest, the passage points at all well-intentioned philanthropists, at all of this world's confidence men, but at its conclusion and at its most particular, I suggest that for Melville, Duyckinck was one of those friends.

Friends (including, perhaps, Duyckinck), spades, and sharks are associated here. In the excerpt that we first considered and to which I am going to return eventually, Stubb, Sharks, and gourmands are also interconnected in a Rabelaisian context. Duyckinck, that is, may sometimes be associated with sharks, which is revealing and not very flattering. I think it is no accident, moreover, that "jolly Stubb" is so often connected with, to risk an anti-climax, a punch bowl. In his letters, Melville writes that "the jolly knights of the Round Table" often "made merry . . . over a bowl of the fine Duyckinck punch;" and "jolly," "merry," and that same "fine Duyckinck punch" are precisely the identifying marks of the New York Rabelaisians. These words and ideas are strongly enough connected with Stubb so that, even after Melville has Ishmael prepare for the tone of the Pequod's catastrophe by announcing that "all humor, forced or natural, vanished" (CXXX/527); nonetheless, one of the few exceptions is the flicker of a drinking pun in the midst of "The Chase—Second Day": "the White Whale, . . . diving down into the sea, disappeared in a boiling maelstrom, in which, for a space, the odorous cedar chips of the wrecks danced round and round, like the grated nutmeg in a swifly stirred bowl of punch. While the two crews were yet circling
in the water, reaching out after the revolving line-tubs, oars, and other floating furniture, . . . Stubb was lustily singing out for some one to ladle him up" (CXXX/551).

Earlier, Stubb is in the process of pitchpoling:

"That drove the spigot out of him!" cries Stubb. "'Tis July's immortal Fourth; all fountains must run wine to-day! Would now, it were old Orleans whiskey, or old Ohio, or unspeakable old Monongahela! Then, Tashtego, lad, I'd have ye hold a censakin to the jet, and we'd brew choice punch in the spread of his spout-hole there, and from that live punch-bowl quaff the living stuff!"

Again and again to such gamesome talk, the dexterous dart is repeated, the spear returning to its master like a greyhound held in skilful leash. The agonised whale goes into his flurry; the tow-line is slackened, and the pitchpoler dropping astern, folds his hands, and mutely watches the monster die. (LXXXIV/366-67)

The opening metaphor was immediately suggested by a line in Rabelais, one that occurs two paragraphs after the extract from his Works:

"Did it /the whale/ but spout good, brisk, dainty, delicious white-wine, instead of this damned bitter salt water, one might better bear with it" (IV/xxxiii/312-313). The syntax ("would now it were" and "Did it but spout") and idea are related to Rabelais, and the wine also comes from him. The energy comes from Ishmael, the hyperbole and the whiskey come mainly from the frontier, and the punch and punch-bowl come from Duyckinck's New York.

The attitude toward Stubb, in this passage as elsewhere, is ambivalent. Ishmael certainly values "choice punch," "gamesome talk," and a Rabelaisian "spirit of godly gamesomeness" (XXXII/140), but, although he does not sentimentalize the whale, neither does he sympathize with those who inflict pain and then mutely watch an agonized monster die. (This passage is a less vivid version of a
slightly earlier and much more powerful episode which, though it involves Flask, still colors one's response to Stubb's behavior.) The approval of Stubb's jollity and vigor is characteristically qualified by disapproval of his special form of cruelty. "Stubb was one of those odd sort of humorists, whose jollity is sometimes so curiously ambiguous, as to put all inferiors on their guard in the matter of obeying them" (XLVIII/217). In his "curiously ambiguous" way he bullies Fleece into a sermon and then "eats a newly murdered thing of the sea, and eats it too by its own light" (LXV/299). More tragically than Fleece, Pip is another "inferior" not sufficiently "on his guard in the matter of obeying."

But at his most compelling, Stubb, like Bulkington, has his apotheosis. He leaps beyond his history into a mythic realm infused with the golden light of Ishmael's imagination and there becomes transmuted into a timeless symbol of potency and joy. In the process, Stubb momentarily represents one limit of Moby-Dick's Rabelaisianism: "And that same day, too, gazing far down from his boat's side into that same golden sea, Starbuck lowly murmured: . . . And Stubb, fish-like, with sparkling scales, leaped up in that same golden light:--'I am Stubb, and Stubb has his history; but here Stubb takes oaths that he has always been jolly!'' (CXIV/487.)

It is unfortunately necessary to move from such prose and from that timeless realm back into the world of Stubb's history and to coldly assert that the "jolly" of this passage is identical with the "jolly" of another and more negatively critical one. Nonetheless, in language which applies as well to Stubb as to Duyckinck and the New
York Rabelaisians, Ishmael says: "So, therefore, that mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man cannot be true— not true, or undeveloped. . . But he who dodges hospitals and jails, and walks fast crossing grave-yards, and would rather talk of operas than hell; calls Cowper, Young, Pascal, Rousseau, poor devils all of sick men; and throughout a care-free lifetime swears by Rabelais as passing wise, and therefore jolly;— not that man is fitted to sit down on tomb-stones, and break the green damp mould with unfathomably wondrous Solomon" (XCVI/422).

The critic, here as elsewhere in Moby-Dick, must be aware of the two versions of Rabelais which I have already mentioned— of what it is useful to call an authentically literary version that stems directly from Gargantua and Pantagruel, as well as of a social mode that is Rabelais filtered through Duyckinck, the jolly knights of the Round Table, and the New York Rabelaisians. We note that here Ishmael does not give his personal opinion of Rabelais, does not say in his own voice that Rabelais is jolly and therefore not true or undeveloped or inferior to Solomon. Rather, he presents "that man's" view; and I suggest that both this form and also the substance of his statement are conditioned by Melville's acquaintance with Duyckinck and his circle.

Further, I think that some of Stubb's complexity, some of the ambivalence with which he is treated and the uses to which he is put in the novel derive from his being conceived in part within a Rabelaisian context which has the two dimensions that we have observed. On the personal and social levels, the same diction, imagery, and attitudes which Melville associates with Duyckinck and his set, Ishmael
also associates with Stubb. I am not arguing that Stubb and Duyckinck are by any means identical, and I am sure that Stubb also reflects a transmuting of many other people and experiences. And Melville's firsthand experience of Rabelais does not close the account, either. But viewing Stubb in the context that I have indicated is nonetheless useful. In the remainder of the chapter I shall thus use Stubb as a focus, but I shall range beyond him to related matters and will periodically return to him.

3. Conciliation and Criticism

To begin with some minor uses: recognizing the personal reference and the Rabelaisian setting can, for one thing, give us increased insight into the conclusion of the episode in which Tashtego and Daggoo quite ambiguously befriend Queequeg. Ishmael has twitted his friends, Duyckinck among them, and beyond this, the orthodox Duyckinck particularly would not have liked a part of the passage which irreverently alludes to Queequeg and his gods.8

In the perspective which I am proposing, the remainder of "The Monkey Rope" can be seen as in part a concession to Duyckinck's values, as an effort to soften the criticism which precedes it. The pattern and even the tone and diction occur in Melville's letters to Duyckinck, and such external support is worth noting. To take one example: after disagreeing with Duyckinck about Emerson at the start of a letter ("I love all men who dive"), Melville returns to the subject at the end: "I was going to say something more--
It was this.—You complain that Emerson tho' a denizen of the land of gingerbread, is above munching a plain cake in company of jolly fellows, & swigging /sic/ off his ale like you & me. Ah, my dear sir, that's his misfortune, not his fault. His belly, sir, is in his chest, & his brains descend down into his neck, & offer an obstacle to a draught of ale or a mouthful of cake. But here I am. 

Good bye—" (Rep. Sel./572-3). In "The Monkey Rope," Ishmael also vigorously mocks a gingerbread outlook, represented by "tepid ginger and water": "But courage! there is good cheer in store for you, Queequeg. For now, as with blue lips and bloodshot eyes the exhausted savage at last climbs up the chains and stands all dripping and involuntarily trembling over the side; the steward advances, and with a benevolent, consolatory glance hands him—what? Some hot Cogniac? No! hands him, ye gods! hands him a cup of tepid ginger and water!" (LXXII/320.)

Stubb, in his ambiguously humorous, good-natured but blustering way, dominates the remainder of the scene. He speaks, as we by now expect, for popular Pantagruelian virtues of roast beef and strong ale:

"Ginger? ginger? and will you have the goodness to tell me, Mr. Dough-Boy, where lies the virtue of ginger? Ginger! is ginger the sort of fuel you use, Dough-Boy, to kindle a fire in this shivering cannibal? Ginger!—what the devil is ginger?—sea-coal?—fire-wood?—lucifer matches?—tinder?—gun-powder?—what the devil is ginger, I say, that you offer this cup to our poor Queequeg here?"

... 

When Stubb reappeared, he came with a dark flask in one hand, and a sort of tea-caddy in the other. The first contained strong spirits, and was handed to Queequeg; the second was Aunt Charity's gift, and that was freely given to the waves. (LXXII/320-21)
The episode itself, I think, is a kind of conciliatory gift to the New York Rabelaisians.

Other variations on the theme we have been studying appear in one of the novel’s gam sequences, "Leg and Arm" (C) and "The Decanter" (CI). The surgeon of the "Samuel Enderby" has this to say about whales:

"Do you know, gentlemen"—very gravely and mathematically bowing to each Captain in succession—"Do you know, gentlemen, that the digestive organs of the whale are so inscrutably constructed by Divine Providence, that it is quite impossible for him to completely digest even a man’s arm? And he knows it too. So that what you take for the White Whale’s malice is only his awkwardness. For he never means to swallow a single limb; he only thinks to terrify by feints. But sometimes he is like the old juggling fellow, formerly a patient of mine in Ceylon, that making believe swallow jack-knives, once upon a time let one drop into him in good earnest, and there it stayed for a twelfth-month or more; when I gave him an emetic, and he heaved it up in small tacks, d’ye see. No possible way for him to digest that jack-knife, and fully incorporate it into his general bodily system."

(C/438-439)

The speech, particularly the first part, satirizes all those who learnedly explain away evil by refusing to acknowledge the whale; and for Ishmael, unless you own the whale, you are but a provincial and sentimentalist in Truth" (LXXVI/336).

Among those provincials are Duyckinck, Dr. Francis, and the other New York Rabelaisians, and my reason for singling them out is that the last part of the speech puts their own style to work against them. That style is defined partly by the jokes Dr. Francis delighted in: "Francis related how Louis XVI grew so jealous of Benjamin Franklin—the Doctor’s hero—that he ‘caused certain pots de chambre to be painted at Sévres with the philosopher's head
at the bottom and sent to the ladies." We get a glimpse of what the town meant by his Rabelaisian wit as we find him exulting in the reply of Brougham to Hiram Fuller when the editor asked the actor if he had seen the review of his latest performance in the Mirror: "Sir, it's only five minutes since I hold the Mirror up to Nature." "I gave him an emetic, and he heaved it up in small tacks, d'ye see" is exactly the "pots de chambre," "hold the Mirror up to Nature" sort of joke which, along with the salty language of the sailor, established the peculiar tone of Rabelaisian New York.

Melville had mastered that style so well that he could turn it against his former instructors in a way which he, if not they, would be aware of. To paraphrase the surgeon, there was "no possible way for the New York Rabelaisians to digest the fact of the whale, and fully incorporate it into their general intellectual system." In contrast to Aunt Charity's gift, the speech itself is one of the many small tacks which Ishmael sticks into that system.

In addition to the social Rabelaisianism of "Leg and Arm," in "The Decanter" Melville has Ishmael employ the authentically literary version as well. Part of Melville's resentment against his whaling sources here expresses itself through insulting names. The Germanic authors Fitz Swackhammer and Dr. Snodhead are close relatives of Sterne's Slawkenbergius and Dr. Slop and are in the same family with Carlyle's Teuflesdrökh. Rabelais is one of the ancestors of these generally nasty children. Scoresby's information (M-V/807-8), like Beale's, is also reworked in a Rabelaisian manner. The statistics on food and drink, for example, are taken over unchanged
from Scoresby, but in their new context their magnitude and Ishmael's commentary give them Gargantuan connotations: "400,000 lbs. of beef . . . 550 ankers of Geneva . . . 10,000 barrels of beer" (CI/443).  

And the excess is emphasized and approved in a large way that would satisfy any "noble and illustrious drinker," including Duyckinck: "Most statistical tables are parchingly dry in the reading; not so in the present case, however, where the reader is flooded with whole pipes, barrels, quarts, and gills of good gin and good cheer" (CI/443).  

The very flood of words is reminiscent of Burton and Rabelais (see "Gargamelle" ff. in note11). Ishmael also shows a genuinely Pantagruelian capacity to digest both food and philosophy: "At the time, I devoted three days to the studious digesting of all this beer, beef, and bread, during which many profound thoughts were incidentally suggested to me, capable of a transcendental and Platonic application" (CI/443-4).

But these "transcendental and Platonic applications," since they appear in a beer and beef context, also more than incidentally suggest Melville's correspondence with Duyckinck and accordingly the social mode of the style with which we are concerned. Having only a few chapters earlier disposed of "that man who . . . swears by Rabelais as passing wise, and therefore jolly" (XCVI/422), Ishmael here tries to make some amends. As we will see elsewhere, he is often more accommodating when he is speaking in his own voice than when, as in "Leg and Arm," he is presenting dramatized action or dialogue. In any case, although Duyckinck and the New Yorkers probably would have missed the satire in the preceding chapter, they might very
well have seen the Platonic allusion as a private and pleasantly ironic gibe at Emerson and the New England transcendentalists. Duyckinck, for example, knew that Melville had called Emerson "a Plato who talks through his nose"; and he knew that Melville had ideas about Emerson's belly, brains, and ale. Some of the ruffled feelings of Duyckinck and his acquaintances must also have been soothed by the popular Pantegruelianism in the chapter; for example, that involved in the praise of "such famous, hospitable ships; that passed round the beef, and the bread, and the can, and the joke; and were not soon weary of eating, and drinking, and laughing" (CI/442). But Ishmael cannot quite maintain the tone: by this point in the novel his energy is too involved in developing other matters for him to be willing to support the values of popular Rabelaisianism throughout a complete chapter. At the end, the best he can salvage is "For, say they, when cruising in an empty ship, if you can get nothing better out of the world, get a good dinner out of it, at least. And this empties the decanter" (CI/444).

For those empty ships, Duyckinck, Cary, and their like, a good dinner morality may do. Ishmael is not as outspoken as he was earlier: he does not expand and invoke Solomon; he ends as tolerantly as he can. His imagination has momentarily quickened to the prospect of "the beef, and the bread, and the can, and the joke, and . . ./the/ eating, and drinking, and laughing"; he is willing to be accommodating up to a point, but the ships are empty and "this empties the decanter," which is Ishmael's way of saying something about his own sympathies and patience.
4. "The Bower in the Arsacides":
The Defense of a Style

"The Bower in the Arsacides," the next chapter, is Ishmael's deliberately placed alternative to the good dinner ethos of the empty ships. "The Bower in the Arsacides" shows Ishmael as intellectual, as poet, and as myth-maker in the difficult process of using his mind and imagination, and by his example showing that mind and imagination can be taken seriously. In opposition to the complacent triviality that the empty ships and the good dinners stand for, Ishmael offers as values sustained, independent thinking and creating. The author of Mardi and Moby-Dick is here implicitly declaring for that title as over against "The author of Typee, Omoo, etc., etc." He does so by self-consciously writing a chapter whose very existence and style show his acquaintances and his countrymen that those who are not empty "can get something better out of the world."

1. From Moby-Dick to Mardi:
A Social Rabelaisian Beginning

Ishmael is going to "set /leviathan/ before you in his ultimatum; that is to say, in his unconditional skeleton" (CII/445). But before he catches himself ("that is to say . . ."), Ishmael, who likes to pun, has announced that "setting him before you" is exactly that—an unmalicious but firm ultimatum. He begins good-naturedly enough:
But how now, Ishmael? . . . Explain thyself, Ishmael. Can you land a full-grown whale on your deck for examination, as a cook dishes a roast-pig? Surely not. A veritable witness have you hitherto been, Ishmael; but have a care how you seize the privilege of Jonah alone; the privilege of discoursing upon the joists and beams; the rafters, ridge-pole, sleepers and under-pinnings, making up the frame-work of leviathan; and belike of the tallow-vats, dairy-rooms, butteries, and cheeseries in his bowels. (CII/445)

For the general reader such bantering is a warning that serious matters are to follow. By now this reader knows that Ishmael deals with important issues in a seriously comic way, in part so that he can keep himself and his novel from destroying themselves. To sustain "The Candles" over the course of 500 pages would be unbearable for both reader and author. Ishmael is also anticipating, and through his good-natured manner is trying to allay, the objections of his orthodox contemporaries, many of whom would feel that the symbolic part of the chapter is an abuse of "the privilege of discourse," partly because of its technique and partly because of its irreverent treatment of sacred matters.

For certain readers, however, the passage has an even more particular meaning, because in anticipating the inevitable objections, Ishmael adopts the idiom and perspective of Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians. He engages in a dialogue with them, but, as usual, the implications range far beyond them. If they had known what was in store for them, however, they would have said precisely, "Explain thyself, Ishmael." The characteristic eating simile, "as a cook dishes a roast-pig," comes from their milieu, and, as Melville well knew (and as Duyckinck's review of Moby-Dick confirms), these pious
Episcopians were the very ones to warn Ishmael to "have a care how you seize the privilege of Jonah alone." In "the joists and beams; the rafters, ridge-pole, sleepers, and under-pinnings, making up the framework of leviathan," the syntax, the piling up of words, and the metaphoric vigor derive from the baroque prose writers whom Melville first read in Duyckinck's library. Still, the afterthought—"and belike of the tallow-vats, dairy-rooms, butteries, and cheeseries in his bowels"—this hearty afterthought stems from and is another apparently conciliatory gesture in the direction of the jolly knights of the round table. The passage, that is, functions partly as a cheerful reminder to Duyckinck and the others that Melville is aware of their position and, despite the end of "The Decanter," that he is willing to defer to them, at least to the extent of using their social Rabelaisian style.

As he progresses, his use of that style and its derivatives becomes even more insistent: "And as for my exact knowledge of the bones of the leviathan in their gigantic, full grown development, for that rare knowledge I am indebted to my late royal friend Tranquo, king of Tranque, one of the Arsacides. For being at Tranque, years ago, when attached to the trading-ship Dey of Algiers, I was invited to spend part of the Arsacidean holidays with the lord of Tranque, at his retired palm villa at Pupella; a sea-side glen not very far distant from what our sailors called Bamboo-Town, his capital" (CII/446). Here and in much of the remainder of "A Bower in the Arsacides," the tone, setting, and manner are so noticeably different from the rest of the novel that the chapter could pass
for an excerpt from _Mardi_. This is exactly the connection that I think that Melville wanted at least some of his readers to make. To emphasize the association, Ishmael drops his mask as tough, speculative, and knowledgeable whaleman and deliberately, humorously adopts that of the poetry-writing wanderer of the earlier romance: "The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed; as in my wild wanderings at that period, there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics. But... I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing" (CII/448-9). And in the quotation which I have placed immediately before this one, the setting is similarly humorous and exotic and equally distant from the hard world of the Pequod. The imaginary, Arcadian Arsacides are an extension of another imaginary archipelago, the Mardian. "My late royal friend Tranque" could also have been visited on the same philosophic voyage that introduced the royal Donjalolo and the royal, Rabelaisian Borabolla. "Tranque" was so named, partly because what he reveals is not tranquil, but even if Duyckinck missed the irony he would not have missed the surface similarity with "Franko," "Mondoldo," and "Yarno." Duyckinck, to continue, may have been pleased with one of the punning senses of "Pupella," formed in a good popular Pantagur elistic way from the cider- brandy called "pupelo." Melville may have served him the word and the beverage at Arrowhead, just as he certainly showed him the Icy Glen of a slightly later passage. Finally, the holiday and "the lord of Tranque, at his
retired palm villa . . . "up the Pupella glen" (III/446)—these
details are from the world of Donjalolo's palm-shaded glen, and
later we will consider further resemblances.

But to recapitulate. By this point in the chapter Ishmael
has begun to move from the style of the New York Rabelaisians
(see the quotation on p. 33) to that of Mardi. But the Donjalolo's
and the Franko's, the satire and the speculation, the shift from a
literal travel book to a philosophic romance in quest of truth--
many of the elements, that is, that give Mardi its distinctive
style—are themselves outgrowths of Melville's reading in
Duyckinck's library—in Rabelais and Browne, among others. In
Mardi this reading and the aspirations of Duyckinck and Mathew's
Young America, all impinged on and reinforced Melville's personal,
individual bent. Ishmael, in short, is beginning to recreate
Melville's earlier version of a style which Duyckinck would recognize
as immediately derived from his group's Rabelaisianism. "My late
royal friend Tranquo," the "Pupella glen," and the other mannerisms
in the paragraph would make the identification obvious. And as far
as the chapter is concerned, at this point Duyckinck would have no
solid reason to feel displeased.
But beyond this point, Ishmael gives him several reasons to be displeased. He does so by intensifying the resemblances with Mardi, and he uses the authentic Rabelais to help him. Although South Sea primitivism is also involved, Willard Thorp gives an important insight into the source of the outline and inspiration of the entire chapter. He observes about "King Tranquo of the Arsacides and his museum housed in a whale's skeleton" that it is "a trick Melville learned from his master Rabelais." The framework of the chapter thus derives from Rabelais, and its substance and approach also show the influence of the "abstractor of quintessence." But more about that later.

First, the resemblances with Mardi. The dead Sperm Whale "with his head against a cocoa-nut tree, whose plumage-like, tufted droopings seemed his verdant jet" was reduced to a skeleton which "was carefully transported up the Pupella glen, where a grand temple of lordly palms now sheltered it." Over Donjalolo's House of the Morning "waved the tufted tops of the Palms, green capitals to their dusky shafts" (M/LXXVI/203). The whale, both god and temple, was "all woven over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure, but himself a skeleton." The temple-like House of the Morning in Mardi is similarly formed of the dead intermixed and inseparable from the green, the growing, and the living: "its quadrangular foundation had been laid in seed-cocanuts, requiring /five hundred moon/ to sprout
up into pillars. In front, these were horizontally connected, by elaborately carved beams, of a scarlet hue, inserted into the vital wood; which, swelling out, and overlapping, firmly secured them. The beams supported the rafters, inclining from the rear; while over the aromatic grasses covering the roof waved the tufted tops of the Palms (M/LXXVI/203). "Through and through this vibrating verdure /Mardi continues/, bright birds flitted and sang" (M/LXXVI/204), just as "the ever-woven verdent warp and woof intermixed and hummed around" the skeleton of the whale. The "gorgeous carpet . . ., whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures" causes Ishmael to ask "whither flows the fabric? what palace may it deck?" (OII/447). It might have decked Donjalolo's second palace, the House of the Afternoon: "Streaming from the cleft, vines swung in the air; or crawled along the rocks, wherever a tendril would be fixed" (M/LXXVII/205). "The ribs /of the skeleton-temple/ were hung with trophies; the vertebrae were carved with Arsacidean annals in strange hieroglyphics" (OII/446). In the pavement of the same House of the Afternoon "the reputed skeletons of Donjalolo's sires were inlaid," their arms and similar trophies imbedded nearby, a likeness of a scepter over each skull, the whole forming the annals of Donjalolo's kingdom (M/LXXVII/207-208).

Moreover, the resemblances with Mardi do not stop at the surface. What most reviewers explicitly and Duyckinck implicitly objected to in the earlier book was that it dealt seriously with fundamental speculative issues, that it rendered these issues by means of what George R. Ripley called a "huge, unwieldy allegory" (Log/I/303)—
symbolically, as we would say—and that it failed to confirm decisively orthodox religious and moral views. Ripley put the first two charges concisely:

The story has no movement, no proportions, no ultimate end; and unless it is a huge allegory, bits of which peep out here and there—winding its unwieldy length along, like some monster of the deep, no significance or point . . . Mr. Melville, a writer not only of rare promise, but of excellent performance, . . . has failed by leaving his sphere, which is that of graphic, poetical narration, and launching out into the dim, shadowy, spectral, Mardian region of mystic speculation and wizard fancies. (Log/I/303)

Melville knew Duyckinck's views on religion and the clergy, and he was also in a much better position than we to understand what is apparent even from the distance of the twentieth century: Redburn, Duyckinck means, is "not quite Rabelaisian; but happily it does not have engrafted upon it any of the speculative characteristics of transcendentalism. The unspoken implication is that Mardi had so erred in this direction that friendship would resolve never to mention it again—as long, that is, as Melville continued to adhere to the great school of Nature." ¹⁹

To become even more specific. In his review of Mardi, Duyckinck gave special praise to the Donjalolo episode: "The descriptions of the natural scenery of his retreat of Willamilla, of its hanging groves and sequestered gardens, of its regal device of the twin palaces of the Morning and Afternoon, following the course of the sun, of the feastings and banquetings, not unmingled with more solemn tints; all these are in the highest style of invention, oriental richness, and moral truthfulness to the whole
race of man. Many a reader will turn back again and again after he has concluded this book, accomplishing the many wanderings through the isles of Mardi, to the sensuous, melancholy Donjalolo, imprisoned monarch of Willamilla. Duyckinck, however, was much cooler toward the speculative sections, particularly those involving religion. He devoted a fraction of his own space to what is by far the larger portion of Mardi itself, and despite his tempered praise, he was unhappy: "As for our unphilosophic friend Jarl, of the first volume, he seems to have not been wanted in this learned company; so he was left behind at one of the islands to be killed off by the natives. The discourse of these parties is generally very poetical, at times quite edifying, excepting when they get into the clouds, attempting to handle the problems of the universe."

In "A Bower in the Arsacides," Melville again "gets into the clouds." He not only begins to get there by using a social Rabelaisian style, but also, what is equally cutting, he turns the valued, comprehensible "oriental richness and moral truthfulness" of the Donjalolo section into precisely the "cloudiest" of attempts "to handle the problems of the universe." Melville has in effect given Donjalolo's world all of the "bad" qualities of Babbalanja's, and I think that Duyckinck was intended to be aware of it.

I think, in short, that "A Bower in the Arsacides," at first deliberately and later carried along by its own mood, does precisely what Duyckinck and his contemporaries disapproved of most in Mardi; and I think that the chapter does it more suggestively and hence more offensively than the earlier romance. To continue supporting this
view, I turn to additional resemblances between "The Bower" and its predecessor.

Babbalanja, for example, asks a series of abrupt questions which derive a little too blatantly from Ecclesiastes but which end disquietingly enough with: "Ah gods! in all this universal stir, am I to prove one stable thing?" (M/LXXIX/209). Ishmael also addresses "the great sun, . . . the weaver god," and asks a similar series of abrupt questions: "whither flows the fabric? what palace may it deck? wherefore all these ceaseless toilings?" (CI/447.) Babbalanja is preoccupied with the paradoxes of time and eternity, of life and death: "But dead, and yet alive; alive, yet dead . . . thou art death alive" (M/LXXIX/208). Ishmael, who says of the skeleton-god, "Life folded Death, Death trellised Life," is concerned with similar paradoxes, and he presents them in an "allegory" that is even huger and cloudier than Mardi's.

Babbalanja irreverently says of the Christian after-life:
"Where is it? Not one of Oro's priests telleth a straight story concerning it; 'twill be hard finding their paradises" (M/LXXIX/208). The priests intolerantly sacrifice the "impious boy" at the Temple of Oro because "he exclaimed, 'Oh Oro! I can not see thee, for the crowd that stands between thee and me!'" (M/CXII/299). Ishmael, like Babbalanja and the willful boy, is also outspoken about priests and what they have revealed: "'How now,' they shouted; 'Dar'st thou measure this our god! That's for us.' 'Aye, priests—well, how long do ye make him, then?' But hereupon a fierce contest rose among them, concerning feet and inches; they cracked each other's
sconces with their yardsticks—the great skull echoed—and seizing that lucky chance, I quickly concluded my own admeasurements.

Such comments led Duyckinck to criticize Moby-Dick because it "inveigh against the terrors of priestcraft" and because of its "piratical running down of creeds and opinions, the conceited indifferentials of Emerson, or the run-a-muck style of Carlyle . . . " (Log/I/437). Duyckinck does not mention Rabelais, because his coterie conveniently overlooked (or forgot) Rabelais' devastating satire of priests and priestcraft and his "extravagant daring speculation" (to borrow again from Duyckinck's criticism of Moby-Dick)

Much of that speculation is of a sort which leads a distinguished modern authority to view him as essentially irreligious. Whether M. Lefranc is technically correct or not is less important than the fact that Gargantua and Pantagruel offered Melville every opportunity to see a Rabelais much more heretical than Duyckinck's, and the Melville who delighted in "old Burton as atheistical—in the exquisite irony of his passages on some sacred matters" (Log/II/523)—this man was not likely to miss many opportunities.

The genuine Rabelais, "the abstractor of quintessence," to quote from the title page of the Urquhart translation, was also one of those who showed Melville the possibilities of symbolism as the central way of saying what he had to say (although neither the sixteenth nor the nineteenth century writer would have used the twentieth century term). Still, in deliberately presenting his alternative to the good dinner morality of the empty ships, Ishmael
not only validates what *Mardi* tried to do but also the way it tried to do it. In the process he uses a symbolic technique, employs a general framework, and writes a religious satire, all of which are inspired partly by Melville's sympathetic, independent reading of Rabelais. Thus, in "The Bower in the Arasacides," Melville again puts the attitudes and techniques of the genuine Rabelais to uses directly opposed to the values of the New York Rabelaisians.

Although Duyckinck probably would not have understood the substance, his very inability to understand would have shown him that "the mystic Head's . . . vapory spout" and "the green, life-restless loom of that Arsacidean wood" place the chapter and the novel in the very center of what he called "the regions of the incomprehensible" or of what Ripley called "the dim, shadowy, spectral Mardian region of mystic speculation and wizard fancies."²³ It is a region that can only be rendered symbolically, which is exactly what Ishmael does. Perhaps he mentions the Icy Glen to emphasize what he is doing through a contrast with the known and the literal.

In any case, he transforms literal nature into an active, flowing process impregnated with "living sap" and "living flowers." This realm of verdure and fertility is presided over by "the great sun, . . . the weaver god." Ishmael longingly goes for the meaning and secret of life to this representative of all-flowing, all-potent nature. He would like to be reassured for one thing, that "the flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure" is forming something
more than a tomb-stone's "green damp mould" (XCVI/422). He would like the weaver-god, as a spokesman for life, to provide an alternative to Pip's prospect that "the green miser'll hoard ye soon" (XDX/432). But with the indifference of Pip's God who "goes 'mong the worlds blackberrying," "The weaver-god, he weaves, and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice; and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it" (XII/447).

Ishmael, however, tries to "escape it" immediately. He does so by transforming the whale into a deity at least as potent as the great sun. The whale is here endowed with one of his many aspects, that of pagan fertility god whom Ishmael simultaneously creates and contemplates:

Now, amid the green, life-restless loom of that Arsacidean wood, the great, white, worshipped skeleton lay lounging—a gigantic idler! Yet, as the ever-woven verdant warp and woof intermixed and hummed around him, the mighty idler seemed the summing weaver; himself all woven over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure; but himself a skeleton. Life folded Death; Death trellised Life; the grim god wived with youthful Life, and begat him curly-headed glories. (XII/447)

The whale, a source of both life and death, here inextricably combines both life and death.

But this primal fertility god has been tampered with: "Now, when with royal Tranquo I visited this wondrous whale, and saw the skull an altar, and the artificial smoke ascending from where the real jet had issued, I marvelled . . . But more I marvelled that the
priests should swear that smoky jet of his was genuine" (CII/447). It is this secularized, domesticated god that Ishmael consults for an insight into the mystery of life, and again he receives no answer: "To and fro I paced before this skeleton—brushed the vines aside—broke through the ribs—and with a ball of Arsacidean twine, wandered, eddied long amid its many winding, shaded colonades and arbors. But soon my line was out; and following back, I emerged from the opening where I entered. I saw no living thing within; naught was there but bones" (CII/447). At the same time that, surely to a Duyseinck's discomfort, Ishmael resumes Mardi's satire of priestly intolerance and bickering and of organized religion's inability to reveal the truth, he simultaneously vindicates his own symbolic approach, the approach both of his earlier book and of his treatment of the whale.

The question he raises about "the artificial smoke" in contrast to "the genuine," "the real jet," are partly questions about the truth that can result from transmuting a skeleton into a splendid fertility god, about that symbolic view of whales and the world which insists "that the skeleton of the whale is by no means the mould of his invested form" because it "only conveys half of the true notion of the living magnitude of that part" (CIII/450-1). In the process of developing this view, Ishmael shows that the land-locked god, however imposing, is itself inferior to its terrifying counterpart of the seas: "How vain and foolish, then, thought I, for timid untravelled man to try to comprehend aright this wondrous whale, by merely poring over his dead attenuated skeleton, stretched
in this peaceful wood. No. Only in the heart of quickest perils; only when within the eddying of his angry flukes; only on the profound unbounded sea, can the fully invested whale be truly and livingly found out" (CIII/451).

In addition to its universal reference, I think that Ishmael's phrase "timid, untravelled man" also has a more particular implication, one which returns us to the issues with which we began. In "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" (LV), Melville had Ishmael refer to those portraits which "challenge the faith of the landsman" (LV/261). As the chapter develops, Ishmael ends by precisely "challenging the faith of the landsman" (see Chapter V); and immediately afterwards he writes about Beale's drawings: "His frontispiece, boats attacking Sperm Whales, though no doubt calculated to excite the civil scepticism of some parlor men, is admirably correct and life-like in its general effect" /my italics/ (LV/266). Melville had used the same phrase about Duyckinck: "There was a spice of civil scepticism about your manner, Sir" (Rep. Sel./368). As his review indicates, Duyckinck was also one of those "landsmen" whose faith was challenged by Moby-Dick. He was, moreover, a "parlor man" whose scepticism would be excited by accounts of dangers, physical and intellectual, beyond his experience. At the time of Moby-Dick, he was also literally untravelled: he had never been abroad; he had never left land for the ocean. Timid, untravelled landsmen like Duyckinck are hardly able to confront the perils of the whale or to dive to the depths of that "profound, unbounded sea" about which Ishmael writes. To such empty men he has already conceded
that "if you can get nothing better out of the world, get a good
dinner out of it at least." And that empties another decanter.

To summarize: I have been arguing that through the stylistic
peculiarities of "A Bower in the Arsacides," peculiarities in-
sistently derived from the style of the New York Rabelaisians,
Melville provides his alternative to the values of those empty men;
or, to put it differently, that he is here affirming both what
Mardi tried to do and the way it tried to do it. In both cases he
used an authentically Rabelaisian style to help him.

As Melville made Moby-Dick, it was articulately and explicitly
at odds with many of its culture's dominant values. In stressing
the role of Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians I do not want
to trivialize a very complicated section of a very complicated book,
but I do want to suggest that Melville, in dissenting from those
widely shared patterns of thought and feeling, was not dissenting
from disembodied abstractions. Duyckinck, to be specific, personi-
fied many of those patterns: he made them concrete, particular, and
immediately present. He did so as a man whose house Melville visited,
whose champagne he drank, and whose books he borrowed; so that what
takes place in "A Bower in the Arsacides," as in the novel as a
whole, has a certain resistance to overcome. Whatever the disagree-
ments about Cornelius Mathews or literary nationalism, on most funda-
mentals Duyckinck shared the assumptions of Gaylord Clark, the Boston
Post, and, in fact, of a distressingly large segment of the American
book buying public. He was, as the anthropologists might say, a
surrogate for his culture; as an editor of popular books and
journals, he almost had to be. That is to say that Duyckinck, as much as anyone, represented the best sort of reader Moby-Dick could expect; and the chapter's position, style, and its very form of address—"Explain thyself, Ishmael"—show Melville speaking to him, gently but firmly, on at least one of the many levels of "A Bower in the Arsacides." Recognizing this level is useful if we remember that the eight foot rib "only conveyed half of the true notion of the living magnitude of that part."

5. "The Bachelor": Spenser, Rabelais, and the Rabelaisians

The "land-like feeling," the "flowery earth," "The long-drawn virgin vales; the mild blue hillsides; as over these there steals the hush, the hum; you almost swear that play-wearyed children lie sleeping in these solitudes, in some glad May-time, when the flowers of the woods are plucked. And all this mixes with your most mystic mood; so that fact and fancy, half-way meeting, interpenetrate, and form one seamless whole" (CXIV/486). The flower-carpeted earth, the humming air, and the green-covered, vine-trellised god of "A Bower in the Arsacides" come from a similar mood; and while in it, Ishmael, as we have seen, longingly asks the weaver of life for ultimate answers: "Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver... whither flows the fabric?... wherfore all these ceaseless toilings?"

"Nor did such soothing scenes, however temporary, fail of at least as temporary an effect on Ahab" (CXIV/486). Under the influence of such scenes Ahab, in accents that for him are strikingly mild,
also asks for ultimate answers: "Where lies the final harbor, whence we ummoo no more? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden?" (CXIV/486-487.) But Ahab does not seek his answers from the weaver-god, the "all-quickening sun, that calls forth life but gives it not again" (CXVI/491). Rather, he looks to the grave and later to the sea, "thou dark Hindoo half of nature."

But the sea of "The Gilder" is golden, not dark. And although we are not allowed to forget "the tiger heart that pants beneath it," "for some few fleeting moments" history is left behind and Stubb, as we have seen, becomes a timeless symbol of fertility and joy: "And Stubb, fish-like, with sparkling scales, leapted up in that same golden light:—'I am Stubb, and Stubb has his history; but here Stubb takes oath that he has always been jolly!'" (CXIV/487). This extreme of the Rabelaisianism of Moby-Dick is, however, inevitably short-lived. Ishmael is often concerned with and repeatedly attracted by the values which Stubb here represents at their most convincing. But that attraction, which has strong resistance to overcome, is often fleeting. It always reasserts itself, however. Still, as in the earlier gam chapter, "The Decanter," so here: another ship approaches, empty for all its overflowing sperm; the temporary attraction ends abruptly, and Ishmael's narrative immediately re-enters the realm of history: "And jolly enough were the sights and the sounds that came bearing down before the wind . . . It was a Nantucket ship, the Bachelor, which had just wedged in her last cask of oil, and bolted down her bursting hatches; and now, in glad holiday apparel,
was joyously, though somewhat vain-gloriously, sailing round among the widely-separated ships on the ground, previous to pointing her prow for home" (CXV/487).

"Jolly" and the feelings and actions associated with it here and later (in Ahab's exchange with the Bachelor's captain) all bring the chapter within the context of the Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick. Not to establish any influence from Spenser but simply to suggest something about the chapter's peculiar quality, we can momentarily digress, however, and say that by this point in the novel the game are so stylized that, far from being a literal whaler, the Bachelor is more like a Spenserian knight, a sort of Braggadocio, "vain-gloriously sailing round among the widely-separated ships on the ground." In place of red-crossed shields and similar identifying emblems, but to exactly the same allegorical effect.

The three men at her mast-head wore long streamers of narrow red bunting at their hats; from the stern, a whaleboat was suspended, bottom down; and hanging captive from the bowsprit was seen the long lower jaw of the last whale they had slain. Signals, ensigns, and jacks of all colors were flying from her rigging, on every side. Sideways lashed in each of her three basketed tops were two barrels of sperm; above which, in her top-mast cross-trees, you saw slender breakers of the same precious fluid; and nailed to her main truck was a brazen lamp. (CXV/487-488)

It is not surprising, given this ritual worship of the sperm, that the Bachelor, particularly in the revels on the quarter-deck, becomes Moby-Dick's Bower of Bliss, which Ishmael, like Spenser, is both attracted to and ultimately rejects. The aura of magic and charms which one expects of the figures in Spenser and the old romances but not of those in a real industry—such an aura also hovers around
the Bachelor: "As was afterwards learned, the Bachelor had met with the most surprising success; all the more wonderful, for that while cruising in the same seas numerous other vessels had gone entire months without securing a single fish" (CXV/488). The Pequod was one of those ships, and, in keeping with the logic of the romance, not of the real world, the charms and omens actually work: "For next day after encountering the gay Bachelor, whales were seen and four were slain; and one of them by Ahab" (CXVI/490). The excess in Ishmael's description of the ship, whose overflowing abundance is the result of the Bachelor's "wonderful" and "most surprising success," thus derives partly from a milieu like Spenser's and the romance's.

But it is even more pertinent to note that the style is derived from that of the New York Rabelaisians and is informed with Ishmael's high spirits:

Not only had barrels of beef and bread been given away to make room for the far more valuable sperm, but additional supplemental casks had been bartered for, from the ships she had met; and these were stowed along the deck, and in the captain's and officers' state-rooms. Even the cabin table itself had been knocked into kindling-wood; and the cabin mess dined off the broad head of an oil-but, lashed down to the floor for a centerpiece. In the forecastle, the sailors had actually caulked and pitched their chests, and filled them; it was humorously added that the cook had clapped a head on his largest boiler, and filled it; that the steward had plugged his spare coffee-pot and filled it; that the harpooneers had headed the sockets of their irons and filled them; that indeed everything was filled with sperm, except the captain's pantaloons pockets, and those he reserved to thrust his hands into, in self-complacent testimony of his entire satisfaction. (CXV/488)
Just as in one way the meeting with the sperm-loaded Bachelor is the obvious counterpart to the earlier gam with the dry, oiless Virgin—and Ishmael's phallic puns about lamp-feeders and oil-cans are mechanical in contrast to the pervasively suggestive imagery of "The Bachelor"—so in another way the beef and bread of the Samuel Enderby ("The Decanter"/C) give place to the Bachelor's "far more valuable sperm" so that Ishmael can simultaneously have fun and also explore still another aspect of his New York Rabelaisian legacy.24

To begin with, the humorous, hyperbolic manner here is an extension of that in "Chowder," where everything is filled with fish instead of sperm: "Chowder for breakfast, and chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper, till you began to look for fish-bones coming through your clothes" (XV/66). The earlier chapter has complicated Rabelaisian implications which deserve attention in a separate section. Here it is sufficient to note that, as in "Chowder" and "The Decanter," the style of the New York Rabelaisians is again carried to what they would have considered an outrageous extreme. Like Henry Cary, Duyckinck, and the others, Melville in "Chowder" was concerned with cookery, which for the New Yorkers was a sort of secular religion. Melville has Ishmael good-naturedly but deliberately emphasize this shared interest when he says irreverently: "and the cabin mess dined off the broad head of an oil butt; ... it was humorously added, that the cook had clapped a head on his largest boiler, and filled it ... that indeed everything was filled with sperm ..." And, not content
with staining such sacred vessels, he continues with innuendo which Dr. Francis would have understood and which all of these respectable New Yorkers would have disliked: "indeed everything was filled with sperm, except the captain's pantaloons pockets, and those he reserved to thrust his hands into, in self-complacent testimony of his entire satisfaction."

Melville knew that "vulgarity and vigor—two inseparable adjuncts" (Pierre/268) would get an American author into trouble but that without them his own writing could not attain its full power. The passage we are considering illustrates that he was not always as grim as he was in Pierre about offending his public and asserting his own artistic integrity. But in that passage, the imagery and tone, the trademarks of a particular style, show clearly what is implicit elsewhere: that Melville was light-heartedly but pointedly spoofing a particular and representative group of genteel critics for reasons that, as in "The Decanter" and "A Bower in the Arsacides," finally involved his right to be the kind of artist they disapproved of. If this seems an excessively heavy burden to place on an admittedly light passage, Pierre's "Young America in Literature" shows exactly how weighty the issue of "vulgarity and vigor" could become. Finally, sperm-filled paragraph is one of several that suggests that Gargantua and Pantagruel (and Tristram Shandy) helped Melville transform the style of the New York Rabelaisians into a vehicle for lightly and sometimes sharply satirizing them.25

As the chapter continues, the tone in the description of the Bachelor's forecastle and quarterdeck becomes noticeably less
frolicsome and more savagely serious, although it is still far from sober. The scene is a somewhat more subdued but equally stylized version of that in the Pequod's forecastle (XL/172-173). It is also one of Moby-Dick's numerous inverted rituals—here a pagan, barbaric, and almost Dionysian one. Earlier, the Pope-like mincer performed his phallic rites invested in the cylindrical pelt of the whale's penis, "the full canonicals of his calling" (XIX/48). The Bachelor's brazen lamp might appropriately have lighted his pulpit, and here the crew sensually celebrates to the "barbaric sound of enormous drums" that were once part of the whale's stomach.

 Appropriately enough for a Bachelor overloaded with sperm and ritualistically celebrating its success, "On the quarter-deck the mates and harpooners were dancing with the olive-hued girls who had eloped with them from the Polynesian Isles; while suspended in an ornamental boat, firmly secured aloft between the foremast and mainmast, three Long Island negroes, with glittering fiddle-bows of whale ivory, were presiding over the hilarious jig" (XVII/488). Here is vulgarity and vigor with a vengeance. And to emphasize the radical subversion of respectability, the try-works, which here stand for steady, exploitative work and the values of the established order—the try-works become "the cursed Bastille" which the crew wildly assaults: "You would have almost thought they were pulling down the cursed Bastille, such wild cries they raised, as the now useless brick and mortar were being hurled into the sea. Lord and master over all this scene, the captain stood erect on the ship's elevated quarter-deck, so that the whole rejoicing drama was full
before him, and seemed merely contrived for his own individual
diversion" (CXV/488). This master of the revels presides over a
more virile and turbulent scene than the one in Cornelius Mathew's
Motley Book, but he is related to Mathew's Bobbylink and the scene
derives partly from the same sort of New York Rabelaisian context,
at the same time that it also reflects back critically on the
tameness of those cakes-and-ale New Yorkers.26

Having asserted his right to be complex and vigorous, Ishmael
follows what is by now a familiar pattern and once again dismisses
the jolly knights of the round table as well as all of those who,
having heard of the White Whale, "don't believe in him at all"
(CXV/489). "The gay Bachelor's commander, lifting a glass and a
bottle in the air" comes at once from the world of Evert Duyckinok's
cellar and the Samuel Enderby's mess, and Ahab repeats a judgment
about such men that Ishmael has made earlier in his own voice:
"Thou art too damned jolly" (CXV/489).

Ahab thus returns to "Leg and Arm" and "The Decanter's" con­
trast between two kinds of men and two sets of values; in so doing
he also returns to the image of the empty ship: "Thou art a full
ship and homeward bound, thou sayst; well then, call me an empty
ship, and outward bound" (CXV/489). Only materially empty, we
are to understand. When Ahab continues, "So go thy ways, and I will
mine," we can thus see Melville on one level again addressing
Duyckinok and the temptations of writing a popular book, a live
temptation for a man who was driven to say that "dollars damn me":
"And thus, while the one ship went cheerily before the breeze, the
other stubbornly fought against it; and so the two vessels parted; the crew of the Pequod looking with grave, lingering glances towards the receding Bachelor; but the Bachelors men never heeding their gaze for the lively revelry they were in" (CXV/489).

Throughout the concluding paragraphs of the chapter, home, land, and prosperity are connected explicitly with the cheerily complacent Bachelor and implicitly with the New York Rabelaisians. And as values, home and land are dismissed as superficial because of that association, even when Ahab is most meditative: "And as Ahab, leaning over the taffrail, eyed the homeward bound craft, he took from his pocket a small vial of sand, and then looking from the ship to the vial, seemed thereby bringing two remote associations together, for that vial was filled with Nantucket soundings" (OXV/489). At least a few New Yorkers must have found grit in that vial. Home and land, however, are not always associated with the New York Rabelaisians, and freed of that association the land symbolism of Moby-Dick can generate a sometimes compelling alternative to the "prouder if a darker faith" that the sea represents.

6. "Chowder," a Ritual Pattern, and the Continuity of Moby-Dick

Having examined one of the last, we might now turn briefly to one of the first of Moby-Dick's Rabelaisian episodes, "Chowder" (XV). We can then consider other relevant sections from the first half of the novel.
Perry Miller relates "Chowder" to an earlier literary controversy on the subject, a dispute between the Knickerbocker's wealthy Henry Cary ("John Waters") and the critic Charles Briggs ("Harry Franco"). "Chowder," George Ripley meant, was accurate enough to serve as a beginning for an allegory, as an opening for speculation. It was solidly in that vein of humor which New Yorkers liked to call Rabelaisian; they owed it to Irving, but the Knickerbocker had perfected it, and John Waters and Harry Franco had become its exemplars.

The "Chowder" chapter is as crucial as Ripley understood. Henry Cary prescribed a fancy, a highly artificial dish; Briggs stuck to the classic and "natural" simplicity of Nantucket. The wealthy banker, the gourmet at St. John's Park, who, as Duyckinck was to say, "pursues refined enjoyments and elevates material things of the grosser kind, as the pleasures of the table, by the gusto corporeal and intellectual with which he invests them," levied against prosaic Briggs a charge of not knowing the difference between metaphysics and chowder. Ishmael would take delight in outraging the pious Cary. Gathering into himself the revolt which Briggs suppressed, Melville's Ishmael, instead of mistaking metaphysics for chowder, in an even more scandalous disorder, out of his chowder brews a metaphysics.27

Moby-Dick, of course, is the metaphysics, and we do not find exactly that in the Try Pots. But it is nonetheless worth looking a little more closely at "Chowder" itself in order to see what we do find.

Most important for our purposes, we discover a robust, "momentarily delirious" initiation feast: 28

Chowder for breakfast, and chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper, till you began to look for fish-bones coming through your clothes . . . "But the chowder said Mrs. Hussey; clam or cod to-morrow for breakfast, men?"

"Both," says I; "and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way of variety." (XV/66)
Queequeg and Ishmael here gaily and ritualistically eat of the fish before they start on their own momentous fishing trip. "Chowder" is thus complicated and "allegorical" (i.e., symbolic) in its own right; it is more than simply a literal narrative introduction to an allegory which is to follow. It is introductory and preparatory, but if they could have fully understood it, its mode surely would have offended Cary, Duyckinck, and Ripley as much as that of Mardi or "A Bower in the Arsacides." Although the episode is gayer and less clouded than some of its successors, it is related, not only to the Bachelor's quarter-deck revels but also, as we shall see, to "Stubb's Supper" and "The Cassock," and part of its meaning as well as of theirs derives from such interconnections. Ishmael's breakfast of clams and cods illuminates and is illuminated by Stubb's call of "Whaleballs for breakfast" as well as by the mate's feast on gamer meat than cod. We will consider the later episode in some detail further on. An experienced and effective storyteller—and Melville was one—also knows that it is sound narrative technique to begin with clams and to work up only gradually to stronger and more savage fare.

"Chowder," as George R. Stewart suggests, may be a relatively unrevised carry-over from an earlier and generally literal whaling narrative which Melville had written and parts of which he had retained even after he had radically altered his original plans for the novel. Stewart feels that such material is jarringly at odds with Moby-Dick proper and hence constitutes an artistic defect,
although he does not say this explicitly. Aside from the fact that he overlooks a great deal of evidence of what might well be revision in chapters I-XV, his argument obscures the relation of these chapters to the remainder of the book and at the same time presents an image of Melville as a much more naive and thoughtless writer than I think he was. I will generalize these objections in my last chapter. Here I simply wish to make a few limited points about the section we have been discussing.

If "Chowder" was written for a much more literal book than Moby-Dick, the fact of its origin is irrelevant to its meaning, relations, and functions in the novel that we know. In the hypothetically factual whaling story, "Chowder" would have been simply a lively and literal episode. In the context of Moby-Dick it becomes something else again: lively, certainly, but not quite literal. Melville did not have to include "Chowder" in his final version any more than he had to include "Stubb's Supper," "The Cassock," or "The Bachelor." Whether the decision in each case was consciously reasoned or not, the decision was made, and by a profound artist who was deeply and completely immersed in his material. Melville, that is, at one level or another of the creative process, knew what he was doing, which does not, of course, make him infallible. In any case there is also enough evidence of conscious patterning in Moby-Dick so that Melville's unconscious processes evidently had some disciplined guides. I mention this conscious control not in order to make Melville into Henry James but in order to offer further support for what might seem an excessively fancy interpretation of
"Chowder," and, in fact, of the entire novel. I do not want to make Melville or Moby-Dick any more complicated than they were, but I do not want to make them any simpler, either. "Chowder" and chapters like it helped Melville to write through to more intense episodes such as "Stubb's Supper"; but "Chowder" is also of a piece with the later chapters, and I think that their connections, not their discontinuities, are the proper focus for a critician of Moby-Dick.

7. "Knights and Squires": Stubb

I discussed "Chowder" in the first place because of its bearing on the Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick. Stubb, as I have indicated, is conceived within the same context, and for this reason the first description of the mate deserves some attention. And since I have been discussing "The Two Moby-Dick's," I should also note that from the outset Stubb is developed more consistently than Stewart allows for.

Although the opening character sketch derives partly from Fuller's Holy and Profane States, much of the substance is popular Rabelaisian: "Good-humored, easy, careless, he presided over his whale-boat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner, and his crew all invited guests" (XXVII/115). As we have seen, imagery from the world of the jolly knights of the round table consistently characterizes this particular knight of the quarter-deck (the chapter, incidentally, is entitled "Knights and Squires"). And as for Melville's alleged
inconsistent handling of small details connected with Stubb, we might observe that the mate continues to "hum over his old rigadig tunes" (XXVII/115) right into the midst of the typhoon (CIX/496).

Stubb is conceived so completely within the milieu of popular Rabelaisianism that, although Melville may not have been completely conscious of the process, that association often conditions his selection of metaphors, as it perhaps does in the following sentence: "Long usage had, for this Stubb, converted the jaws of death into an easy chair" (XXVII/115). The jaws of death could have been converted into any number of objects: a soft couch, a four-poster bed, or a rocking chair, to mention a few. I think that from among all the possibilities the easy chair was pushed into Melville's consciousness and finally into the novel because of its associations in Pope's endlessly quoted "Swift in Rabelais' easy chair," a line which appears on a separate page at the beginning of Melville's edition of Rabelais.

In any case, the observations which immediately follow are certainly from the good-dinner world of popular Pantagruelism: "What Stubb thought of death itself, there is no telling. Whether he ever thought of it at all, might be a question; but, if he ever did chance to cast his mind that way after a comfortable dinner, no doubt, like a good sailor, he took it to be a sort of call to tumble aloft" (XXVII/115). Melville's ambivalence in respect to good nature and a healthy appetite, on the one hand, and an indifference to serious thinking, on the other, is explored at some length in the remainder of the novel. To mention only one
example involving Stubb himself, the potential impiety in "that almost impious good-humor of his" is explicitly and powerfully confronted in "Stubb's Supper."

8. The Authentic Rabelais, the Symbolic Pantagruelion and the Leap of Ishmael's Imagination

For the most part, the last few episodes that I have discussed have involved the social Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick. An important passage at the end of chapter LVII (pp. 271-272) helps to show how deeply Gargantua and Pantagruel themselves had penetrated Melville's sensibility. Melville often remembered or worked directly from unimportant parts of both great and trivial books. He was able to see possibilities in very unpromising material. In the present case, however, one of the most suggestive passages in all of Gargantua and Pantagruel made such a deep impression on him that when he came to express his most intensely-felt longings, he perhaps unconsciously patterned himself on Rabelais. One creator can pay no higher tribute to another. But because Melville's prose typically gathers force as it progresses, Rabelais' shaping influence is less striking at the start than at the close of the passage.

The immediately relevant section in Rabelais is the three page conclusion of Book III, Chapter LI: "Why It Is Called Pantagruelion, and of the Admirable Virtues Thereof." Pantagruelion is a mystic herb, literally hemp but symbolically something much more basic: its precise meaning has never been established satisfactorily. 31
The fact that Melville paid deep, careful attention to such an episode supports my view that Rabelais had an important bearing on the symbolic approach of Moby-Dick. Melville's Rabelais, it would appear from Chapter LVII, was the Rabelais of the symbolic "Pantagruelion" as well as of more earthy sections. Melville has made the passage his own by rearranging, condensing, and putting it to new uses, but the quality of language, the basic patterning, and the sense of far-ranging significance are all related to Rabelais.

Having talked about "Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in Stone" Ishmael begins to describe them "In Mountains; in Stars": 32 "Then, again, in mountainous countries where the traveller is continually girdled by amphitheatrical heights; here and there from some lucky point of view you will catch passing glimpses of the profiles of whales defined along the undulating ridges" (LVII/271). Rabelais says that "Soldiers are now-a-days much better sheltered under it /Pantagruelion/, than they were in former times, when they lay in tents covered with skins. It overshadows the theatres and amphitheatres from the heat of a scorching sun. It begirdeth and encompasseth forests, chases, parks, copses, and groves, for the pleasure of hunters" (III/LI/123). The tents reappear in very different surroundings at the end of Ishmael's chapter. Here his "girdled" (Rabelais' "begirdeth") and "amphitheatrical" (Rabelais' "amphitheatres") begin to connect his account with Rabelais'.
Ishmael continues:

But you must be a thorough whaleman, to see these sights; and not only that, but if you wish to return to such a sight again, you must be sure and take the exact intersecting latitude and longitude of your first stand-point, else so chance-like are such observations of the hills, that your precise, previous stand-point would require a laborious re-discovery; like the Soloma islands, which still remain incognita, though once high-ruffled Mendanna trod them and old Figuera chronicled them. (LVII/271)

In the background is a sentence from Rabelais, one that occurs in the paragraph following the first quotation: "By the help thereof those remote nations, whom nature seemed so unwilling to have discovered to us, and so desirous to have kept them still in abscondito and hidden from us, that the ways through which their countries were to be reached unto were not only totally unknown, but judged also to be altogether impermeable and inaccessible, are now arrived to us, and we to them" (III/LI/124). A common idea—difficulty—and word—"discovery"—connect Ishmael's "laborious re-discovery" to Rabelais' "so unwilling to have discovered to us," an idea that he amplifies in the remainder of the sentence ("altogether impermeable and inaccessible"). And these out-of-the-way places are described in remarkably similar phrases: for Ishmael they "still remain incognita" and for Rabelais nature desires them to remain "still in abscondito."

The specific exotic names in Ishmael's passage do not come from Rabelais, but the Soloma Islands, high-ruffled Mendanna, and old Figuera are the appropriate South Sea equivalents of the similarly exotic places and explorers whom Rabelais immediately mentions:

Those voyages outreached the flights of birds, and far surpassed the scope of feathered fowls, how swift
soever they had been on the wing, and notwithstanding that advantage which they have of us, in swimming through the air. Taproban hath seen the heaths of Lapland, and both the Javas, the Riplaean mountains; wide distant Phebol shall see Theleme, and the Islanders drink of the flood of Euphrates. By it the chill-mouthed Boreas hath surveyed the parched mansions of the torrid Auster, and Burus visited the regions which Zephyrus hath under his command; yea, in such sort have interviews been made, by the assistance of this sacred herb, that, maugre longitudes and latitudes, and all the variations of the zones, the Peraecian people, and Antoecian, Amphiscian, Heteroeian, and Periscian have oft rendered and received mutual visits to and from other, upon all the climates. (III/LI/124)

Even Ishmael's "latitude and longitude" echoes Rabelais' "maugre longitudes and latitudes."

Ishmael expansively continues:

Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of war the Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying Fish. (LVI/271-272)

And as his imagination quickens, he increasingly matches the resonance that Rabelais achieved as he, too, ranged expansively from pole to pole: "From which amazement, when they saw how, by means of this blest Pantagruelian, the Arctic people looked upon the Antarctic, scoured the Atlantic Ocean, passed the tropics, pushed through the torrid zone, measured all the zodiac, sported under the equinoctial, having both poles level with their horizon; they judged it high time to call a council for their own safety and preservation" (III/LI/124-5).
Ishmael conveys a sense of vast expanses as he chases Leviathan "round and round the Pole . . . at the North" to the opposite ends of the world "beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies." The range and the geographical names ("Antarctic," "Pole") are patterned on Rabelais, not only immediately on the excerpt I have just quoted but more generally on the one that precedes it and on others that I will introduce in relation to the constellations and "the starry heavens." But before connecting the latter with Rabelais, it might help to quote the end of Ishmael's chapter, since he has compressed a long passage from "Pantagruelion," and parts of it are interspersed throughout the two paragraphs from Moby-Dick that we are considering:

"With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bitts and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!" (LVII/272).

In Rabelais, "The Olympic gods, . . . affrighted at the sight of such achievements" worry that Pantagruel will have many children and that, discovering "an herb of such another virtue and prodigious energy,"

they may contrive a way for human kind to pierce into the high aerian clouds, get up unto the spring-head of the hail, take an inspection of the snowy sources, and shut and open as they please the sluices from whence proceed the floodgates of the rain; then prosecuting their ethereal voyage, . . . they will set forward to invade the territories of the moon, whence, passing through both Mercury and Venus, the Sun will serve them for a torch, to show the way from Mars to Jupiter and Saturn. We shall not then be able to resist the impetuosity of their intrusion, nor put a stoppage to their entering in at all, whatever regions, domiciles, or mansions of the spangled
firmament they shall have any mind to see, to stay in, or to travel through for their recreation. All the celestial signs together, with the constellations of the fixed stars, will jointly be at their devotion then. Some will take up their lodging at the Ram, some at the Bull, and others at the Twins; some at the Crab, some at the Lion Inn, and others at the sign of the Virgin; some at the Balance, others at the Scorpion, and others will be quartered at the Archer; some will be harboured at the Goat, some at the Water-pourer’s sign, some at the Fishes; some will lie at the Crown, some at the harp, some at the Golden Eagle and the Dolphin, some at the Flying Horse, some at the Ship, some at the great, some at the little Bear; and so throughout the glistening hostelrys of the whole twinkling asteristic welkin. There will be sojourners come from the earth, who, longing after the taste of the sweet cream of their own skimming off, from the best milk of all the dairy of the Galaxy, will set themselves at table down with us, drink of our nectar and ambrosia, and take to their own beds at night for wives and concubines, our fairest goddesses, the only means whereby they can be deified.

Ishmael has turned to "the starry heavens" partly because of Rabelais’ "spangled firmament" and his account of "the fixed stars." The "twinkling asterics" in Rabelais’ image, moreover, become "the bright points" that for Ishmael "first defined (the heavenly whale) to me." When Ishmael "boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus" he was making one of "those voyages (that) outreached the flights of birds"; he was "prosecuting (his own) ethereal voyage." That voyage leads him to Southern constellations that are again the appropriate South Sea equivalents of Rabelais’ Northern stars. Ishmael then wishes that he "could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies" in order to see if the fabled heavens do exist, and if they do, to inspect them for himself; which is to say that he wants to "contrive a way for human kind to pierce into the high aerian clouds, get unto the springhead of the hail, take an
inspection of the snowy sources, and shut and open as they please the sluices from whence proceed the floodgates of the rain." Ishmael longs to range beyond those skies "to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!" He wants, that is, to be one of those "sojourners come from the earth, who, longing after the taste of the sweet cream, of their own skimming off, from the best milk of all the dairy of the Galaxy, will set themselves at table down with us, drink of our nectar and ambrosia, and take to their own beds at night for wives and concubines our fairest goddesses, the only means whereby they can be deified." The heavens of the fables have seldom been made more splendidly attractive.

Rabelais has thus deeply influenced Ishmael's rhythms, diction, and imagery. It is clear, however, that the gods, immortal life, and the fabled heavens are not problems for him as they are for Ishmael, who here as elsewhere longs to be re-assured.

In the pattern of the novel as a whole, to move away from Rabelais, the passage we have been discussing is Ishmael's equivalent of Ahab's pasteboard mask speech. Ishmael, uncertain about what, if anything, lies beyond, dreams of "leaping the topmost skies" to find out. Ahab is also uncertain—"Sometimes I think there's naught beyond" (XXXVI/162)—and partly because he is not sure he stifles thought and stresses action that is as "unreasoning" and "outrageously strong" as the inscrutable thing he hates. Instead of sceptical contemplation or Ishmael's imaginative leap, Ahab heroically,
defiantly, and destructively "will strike, strike through the mask! ... I'd strike the sun if it insulted me" (XXXVI/161-162). The two passages thus sharply define the contrast between Ishmael and Ahab, a contrast which I consider again in Chapter IV.

9. "Stubb's Supper": A Rabelaisian Satire and a Life-Affirming Sacrament

We can now return to Stubb and to the complex interrelations between what I have called the social and the authentically literary versions of Moby-Dick's Rabelaisian style. These terms are particularly useful in examining one of the novel's central sequences, "Stubb's Supper" (LXIV) and "The Whale as a Dish" (LXV), partly because the terms help clarify changes in the episode's attitude toward the mate.

At the outset, Stubb, characteristically a disciple of popular Pantagruelism, "betrayed an unusual but still good-natured excitement" (LXIV/290). The reason—"Stubb was a high liver; he was somewhat intemperately fond of the whale as a flavorish thing to his palate" (LXIV/290-291). But the sharks immediately darken the chapter's treatment of the values of Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians: "Nor was Stubb the only banqueter on whale's flesh that night. Mingling their mumblings with his own mastications, thousands on thousands of sharks, swarming round the dead Leviathan, smackingly feasted on its fatness" (LXIV/291). Throughout the opening of the chapter, part of Ishmael's strategy is to point up the resemblances between the sharks and Stubb, just as in "The Whale as a Dish" he exposes the cannibal latent in the gourmand. Thus, after vividly
describing how the sharks kill and devour their meat, Ishmael returns to the mate, pointedly notes that he and the sharks are equally oblivious to the other's lip-smacking, and then has Stubb continue: "'Cook, cook!—where's that old Fleece?' he cried at length, . . . at the same time darting his fork into the dish, as if stabbing with his lance" (LXIV/292). However hearty the tone, the stabbing image nonetheless insists that Stubb's eating is in some ways as aggressive and destructive as the sharks'. But if Stubb is seen partly in a light reflected from the sharks, it is a reflected light which, as it shines on him, has lost the direct intensity which they are subjected to. As will become more apparent in Chapter III, the full force of Ishmael's outrage is directed, not at Stubb, but rather at his much more vicious and merciless counterparts.

1. A Minstrel Show Farce and the Serious Uses of Comedy

Although "outrage" is appropriate for Fleece's sermon, it may seem premature at this point in the episode. For one thing, here and elsewhere Stubb is intended as a comic character, so that humor moderates the tone. Moreover, because he is both attracted and repelled by their values, Ishmael partially withdraws his criticism, as he often does when the New York Rabelaisians are involved. Most important, in the present case the humor and the minstrel show dialogue allow Ishmael to explore matters which were apparently too forbidding for an explicitly serious treatment.
Stubb thus becomes Mr. Interlocuter to Fleece's Mr. Bones. Fleece's shuffling gait, deformed knee-pans, and stage-negro dialect, to begin with, are all similar to the "Jim Crow" of Thomas Rice and hundreds of his imitators. The exchanges which follow Fleece's first appearance are modelled both on the give-and-take between interlocutor and end-man and also on that between master and menial, a relation which typified many minstrel show jokes and skits. Thus, when Ishmael resumes his qualified digs at Stubb, the mate's role is partly that of the interlocutor, the classic butt in the minstrel show routine. The mate gets the worst of it because he unwittingly admits his resemblances to the sharks; first when he uses them to illustrate his preference for tough whale steak and next when, somewhat deficient himself in civility and moderation, he nonetheless loudly complains that his counterparts must help themselves quietly, "civilly and in moderation" (LXIV/295). And if Stubb is at first more active than a good interlocutor should be, it is partly because he also plays the part of Bones's "old man" who, in countless shows, complained about the cooking and ordered his darkies around, just as Stubb does. The original conception of Stubb as a blustering and "curiously ambiguous humorist" thus fits in well with his role in this chapter.

The mate's command to "take this lantern" and "go and preach to them" is immediately followed by a mock-serious description of Fleece's movements which is in the same comic, minstrel show vein as the earlier account of his shuffling walk: "old Fleece limped across the deck to the bulwarks; and then, with one hand dropping his
light low over the sea, so as to get a good view of his congregation, with the other hand he solemnly flourished his tongue, and leaning far over the side in a mumbling voice began addressing the sharks, while Stubb, softly crawling behind, overheard all that was said.

Such a description could easily have led into one of the lighthearted burlesques or farces which were a standard part of the black-face routines. Fleece's language—"Stop dat dam smackin' ob de lops"—may be stronger than was usual, but "rude expression" was not exactly foreign to Mechanic's Hall and similar popular theaters, and the interlocutor typically corrected Bones's speech: "'Cook,' here interposed Stubb, accompanying the word with a sudden slap on the shoulder,--'Cook! why, damn your eyes, you mustn't swear that way when you're preaching. That's no way to convert sinners, Cook!" Stubb, that curiously ambiguous humorist, is again exposed as a little too blind and blustering.

The remainder of the scene continues the minstrel show farce or burlesque, but with a difference: the comic form is given a tragic substance. An ordinary performance would have capitalized on "the droll absurdity of /Fleece's/ negro stupidities"; for example, on his misunderstanding of words and ideas:

"Where were you born, cook?"
"Hind de hatchway, in a ferry-boat, goin' ober de Roanoke."
"Born in a ferry-boat! That's queer, too. But I want to know what country you were born in, cook?"
"Didn't I say de Roanoke country?" he cried, sharply. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
"Where do you expect to go to, cook?"
"Go to bed berry soon," he mumbled, half-turning as he spoke.
"Avast! heave to! I mean when you die, cook."
Hold your hat in one hand, and clap t'other a'top of your heart, when I'm giving my orders, cook. What! that your heart, there?—that's your gizzard! Aloft! aloft!—that's it—now you have it". (LXIV/295-296)

Repartee and pantomine much like this was typical of the black-face shows. The mock-sermon of a conventional performance, in addition to playing up Fleece's bad grammar and pronunciation, would also have indulged in some light satire, analogous to the following:

"I hear, Bones, you are in the habit of hiding your money in the Bible?"
"Now, who told you dat, Snow?"
"I heard it. Why do you select the Bible as a Saving Bank?"
"'Cause it's de safest place, Snow."
"Why so, Bones?"
"'Cause one half ob de people never look in de Bible."40

"Stubb's Supper" uses minstrel show techniques precisely because contemporary readers had pleasant associations with all of them—with the comic repartee and pantomine, the interrogation, the humorous mispronunciation and illiterate grammar. But in Fleece's sermon and benediction these devices serve to obscure and thus partially to deflect and moderate an indictment which is so extreme, bitter, and dangerous that, as deeply felt as it was, Melville nonetheless drew back from expressing it directly and in anything resembling his own voice. Melville wrote about Shakespeare that "Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, /he/_ craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them" (Rep. Sel./334). Fleece as well as Ahab is described here.
The familiar setting and the stereotyped dialect of Bones's Bible joke are thus retained, but in place of a good-natured mock sermon we have a subversive and intensely serious one in which the Bible is cuttingly and reverently used, although such orthodox believers as Duyckinck and Cary could have seen only blasphemy. Comfortable, respectable men had reason for hostility, because Fleece's criticism pierces through to the social, moral, religious, and economic basis of a capitalistic system. It does so by indicting the individuals who comprise that system and who give it what Melville here sees as its characteristic tone: that of a merciless battle among cruel, greedy, and voracious sharks. The criticism thus reaches out to all of us sharks, to all of us "dam g'uttons" who cannot be preached to until our bellies are full, "and /our_/ bellies is bottomless . . . Cussed fellow-critters! Kick up de damndest row as ever you can; fill your dam' bellies 'till dey bust--and den die" (LXIV/294).

ii. Extreme Language, Two Views of Appetite, and the Shaping Influence of Francis Rabelais

As we will see in Chapter III, Plutarch immediately stimulated the power and moral perspective of much of Fleece's sermon. But Plutarch was able to release Melville's energy because, among others, the satire in Gargantua and Pantagruel had helped condition Melville's sensibility and his feeling for what fiction could and should do. Earlier we saw how an authentically Rabelaisian style helped reveal the cannibal lurking under the skin of the gourmand (see pp. 17-19).
Although the affinities are less immediate than in that case, where syntax and subject converge, I nonetheless think that elements of that same style inform much of Fleece's sermon and the material connected with it throughout "Stubb's Supper," "The Whale as a Dish," and "The Shark Massacre" (LXIV, LXV, LXVI). To be slightly more specific, I think that Melville's ability and willingness to render the brutal details of this sequence owe something important to Gargantua and Pantagruel. The eating, devouring, "gouging out such symmetrical mouthfuls" (LXIV/291), combined with the section's religious issues and its social, moral, and economic satire—these are some of the elements that are involved.

It is common knowledge that Rabelais was influential in transforming Mardi from an adventure story into an intellectual quest. Pantagruel's visits to such islands as the Macreons, the Sneaking Island, and the Wild Island and the accompanying satire of contemporary religion, politics, and institutions are also intimately related to the religious, political, and institutional satire which results from Taji and Babbalanja's visits to such islands as Mondolo, Marama, and Vivenza. The satire in Mardi, however, is often disappointing: Melville, as most critics agree, had not assimilated his reading fully enough to make it available to his imagination in a really deep and controlled way. As he said later, he had "immaturely attempted a mature work" (Pierre/532). By the time he wrote Moby-Dick, however, his reading had had an opportunity to become thoroughly a part of him. And what holds in general applies specifically to Rabelais.
Because the connection that I am trying to establish is basic and pervasive, it is more important than Melville's limited use of a single line from an earlier writer. What Melville does with Pantagruel's speech about the whale who "spouts good, brisk, dainty, delicious white wine" is an example of such a limited use. But to the extent that the relation is formative and fundamental, it is also more difficult to demonstrate than a local and clearly defined borrowing. In this case, moreover, writers other than Rabelais had a similar shaping influence.

Still, Rabelais' scathing satire of religious, political, and social matters provided Melville with some of the precedent and incentive for the satire in Fleece's sermon. For one thing, here and throughout Moby-Dick, Melville was confronting those "terrific truths" which could shatter a man. In addition, he was also taking great risks for a popular author sensitive to hostile criticism and attempting to make his books support a family. What he did required a certain amount of courage, and, although the point cannot be finally demonstrated, I think that Rabelais' example is one of those which counted:

"Neither can I tell / the annotators repeatedly stressed in the edition that Melville used /, whether Rabelais' boldness be more to be wondered at in publishing such a work while fires were kindled, in every part of France, to burn the Lutherans, than his good fortune in having escaped those flames to which many were condemned for less every day where he wrote" (Explanatory Remarks"/IV/194). Melville did not face the fire, but he did confront some nineteenth century
equivalents. I suggest that the image of Rabelais helped him to continue in spite of them.

To use other terms, the strong, cutting, and sometimes untrammeled language of Fleece's sermon and benediction has as one supporting base the language of countless passages in Gargantua and Pantagruel:

Since that, she begot the hypocritical tribes of eavesdropping dissemblers, superstitious pope-mongers, and priest-ridden bigots, the frantic Pistolets, the demoniacal Calvinists, impostors of Geneva, the scrapers of benefices, apparitors with the devil in them, and other grinders and squeezers of livings, herb-stinking hermits, gulligutted dunces of the cowl, church vermin, false zealots, devourers of the substance of men, and many more other deformed and ill-favoured monsters, made in spite of nature. (IV/XXXII/357)

What such passages have in common with "Stubb's Supper" is language that is extreme, biting, and offensive to the orthodox.

To become a little less general, although Rabelais valued good living, gluttony is also one of the recurring objects of his satire. Here, for example, he describes the end of "a smell-feast, a gormandizing hanger-on, a guttling spunger," one whose "whole life was one continual dinner": "But now, having farted out much fat for ten years together, according to the custom of the country, he was drawing towards the bursting hour; for neither the inner thin caul wherewith the entrails are covered, nor his skin that had been jagged and mangled so many years, were able to hold and enclose his guts any longer, or hinder them from forcing their way out" (V/XVII/181-182). Rabelais' vivid criticism, including the bursting
contrails of this passage, forms part of the underlying matrix from which grows Fleece's "fill your dam bellies 'till dey bust."

"Stubb's Supper," as I shall try to show, reveals two opposed attitudes toward appetite: in the sermon, eating and all that it comes to stand for is regarded as gluttony; in Stubb's closing speeches, appetite is something else again. Rabelais is in the background of both parts of the chapter. Gargantua and Pantagruel as a whole is ample and varied enough to encourage more than one opinion on most questions, but in the present case, a single episode (IV/lvii-lxii/32-49) can usefully illustrate two of the ways in which Rabelais treated one of his central concerns.

The more familiar is shown at the beginning and end of the sequence. "Gaster, the first master of arts in the world," is the belly. His dwelling is "so fertile, healthful, and pleasant, that I thought I was in the true garden of Eden, or earthly paradise . . . the seat of Arete— that is as much as to say, virtue" (IV/lvii/32-33). A certain ambivalence, however, marks even this favorable description, and in the remainder of the chapter the belly is shown to be a hard master whom Rabelais neither idealizes, on the one hand, nor wishes to disown or separate himself from, on the other: "We were all obliged to pay our homage, and swear allegiance to that mighty sovereign; for he is imperious, severe, blunt, hard, uneasy, inflexible: you cannot make him believe, represent to him, or persuade him anything" (IV/lvii/33). For better and for worse, "every one is busied, and labours to serve him; and indeed, to make amends for this, he does this good to mankind, as to invent for them all arts, machines,
trades, engines, and crafts" (IV/1vii/34). The good, however, is not considered in the next three chapters, which are devoted to the abuses of appetite. I will discuss these sections later.

Having castigated gluttony, Rabelais then returns to Master Gaster, who becomes the occasion for a deeply-felt apostrophe to appetite as the basis of all culture and civilization:

You know that, by the institution of nature, bread has been assigned him for provision and food; and that, as an addition to this blessing, he should never want the means to get bread.

Accordingly, from the beginning he invented the smith's art, and husbandry to manure the ground, that it might yield him corn; he invented arms, and the art of war, to defend corn; physic and astronomy, with other parts of mathematics, which might be useful to keep corn a great number of years in safety from the injuries of the air, beasts, robbers, and purloiners. . . . He invented carts and waggons, to draw him along with greater ease; and as seas and rivers hindered his progress, he divised boats, galleys, and ships (to the astonishment of the elements) to waft him over to barbarous, unknown, and far distant nations, thence to bring or thither to carry corn. (IV/1xi/44)

We should remember this and similar evaluations of appetite when we read the close of "Stubb's Supper." As in the Gaster episode, that ending grows out of a very hostile consideration of eating, and I now turn to the analogous middle portion of Rabelais' sequence.

In it, Master Gaster is shown to be a false god—he himself "had the manners to own that he was no god" (IV/1x/43)—who is worshipped by his disciples, the Engastrimythes and the Gastrolaters ("those whose god is their belly"). The Gastrolaters, whom "Pantagruel detested," are specifically "the monks, to whom [Rabelais/ bore an old grudge," which he consistently satisfied by indicting their gluttony and lechery. One of his standards was the
Christianity of the Bible, just as Melville's was that of the Sermon on the Mount: "You would have thought that the holy apostle spoke of those /Gastrolaters/ when he said, Phil. chap. 3. 'Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly!'" (IV/lviii/37).

The next two chapters are "Of the Ridiculous Statue Manduce /"the figure of gluttony" (/Explanatory Remarks/IV/197)/; And How and What the Gastrolaters Sacrifice to their Ventripotent God" and "What the Gastrolaters Sacrificed to their God on Interlarded Fish-Days." They copiously satirize established ritual in the interests of essential Christianity, which is precisely what Fleece's sermon does. I think that such chapters in Rabelais—and I will mention others later—helped awaken Melville to the possibilities for fiction of exactly the kind of inverted ritual which pervades Moby-Dick in general and "Stubb's Supper" in particular. Following Fleece's sermon and benediction, Stubb partakes of his wild sacraments. If the episode's form—a meaningful parody—owes something to the minstrel show, Stubb's sacraments and Fleece's sermon are indebted at an even deeper level to Rabelais.

The temper of his language and his satire of monks and sacred matters did not endear Rabelais to those of his contemporaries who were conventionally religious. Whether or not he actually was a heretic and atheist, many of his contemporaries thought he was. Moreover, because of their hostility to Catholicism, his Protestant
translators and annotators exaggerate tendencies which were well enough established even in the original. Moby-Dick also antagonized the orthodox; in his review of Moby-Dick Duyckinck said "We do not like to see what, under my view, must be to the world the most sacred associations of life violated and defaced" (Log/I/457). Duyckinck might well have had Fleece's sermon and benediction in mind. What Emerson says of Rabelais also holds for "Stubb's Supper": the satire "transcends any particular mark, and pierces to permanent relations and interests." But the permanent also involves the particular, and without at all minimizing the general scope of Melville's commentary, it is still possible to see it aimed partly at a specific group, the New York Rabelaisians. Melville certainly could have felt that these prosperous business and professional men were tearing more than their share of "de blubber out their neighbour's mout." The focus of the indictment is also peculiarly appropriate for a group that had a cult of eating, a sort of religion of the dinner table. And the fact that most of them were devout Episcopalians intensifies the sting, because Fleece violates and defames two of "the most sacred associations of life": conventional religion and the religion of the refined palate, to say nothing of what he does to the sacredness of sharkish competition. As is even more obvious in "The Whale as a Dish," Melville is here using the techniques of Gargantua and Pantagruel to say cutting things about the New York Rabelaisians.
As the episode progresses, however, its tone changes, and Stubb's relation to both Rabelais and the minstrel show can help clarify the nature of that change. In the speeches immediately preceding and following the sermon, Stubb loses some of his aggressiveness and increasingly assumes the role of the interlocutor who clarifies, comments, and draws out:

"Right!" exclaimed Stubb, approvingly, "coax 'em to it; try that."

"Well done, Old Fleece!" cried Stubb, "that's Christianity; go on."

Upon my soul, I am about of the same opinion; so give the benediction, Fleece, and I'll away to my supper." (LXIV/293-294)

The last two speeches are broadly but not deeply ironic: Stubb is not quite Christian, and he is also unaware that "his opinion" criticizes gluttons like himself. But the irony is not destructive: the real energy is concentrated on the sharks, and the heartiness with which Stubb is treated helps make Fleece's criticism bearable.

From the Everlasting Nay of the sermon and benediction the episode moves on to its equivalent of the Everlasting Yea. Or in more contemporary language, the forces of Eros here assert themselves against those of Thanatos. Perhaps facing human nature at its bleak and sharkish worst effected a momentary catharsis and allowed Melville to see redeeming virtues in the very activity which Fleece had cursed.

In any case, it is no accident that the episode returns "to the subject of this steak" by way of a dialogue on rebirth and salvation. What is gradually reborn is confidence "in this world," to borrow
Stubb’s phrase. “You must go home and be born over again /Stubb tells Fleece/; you don’t know how to cook a whale-steak yet” (LXIV/295). Far from exposing the mate’s irreverent superficiality in the face of hallowed dogma, these lines begin to re-establish the claims of appetite and of this world as over against those of Fleece’s sermon and the other world. Stubb recognizes that salvation is “a ticklish business”; that if “you expect to get into heaven . . . you don’t get there, except you go the regular way” (LXIV/296). His next remark, however, is even more revealing: “But none of us are in heaven yet.” Stubb then succeeds in validating one of the alternatives open to men who are not yet in heaven. His supper, through the language which renders it, constitutes a sacrament which mocks established ritual in the interests of life itself. Stubb’s supper re-asserts the vitality and value of appetite at the very moment when the sermon’s bitter and destructive indictment has come close to discrediting these claims forever.

To appreciate fully what has happened, it is useful to recognize that the moral perspective and the cutting language of Plutarch’s “Of Eating Flesh” pervade the episode which we have been considering (see Chapter III) but that Stubb is not treated with the unequivocal disapproval, with the strong moral indignation, that Plutarch brings to bear on those who do exactly what the mate has done. Plutarch, to pick only one revealing detail, has this to say about eating raw meat or exposing or not exposing it to fire: “why dost thou against nature eat that which had life? and yet, when it is deprived of life, and fully dead, there is no man hath the heart to eat the same as it
is; but they cause it to be boiled, and to be roasted; they alter
it with fire, and many drugges and spices, changing, disguising,
and quenching (as it were) the horror of the murder" (EF/472).
Stubb is precisely the man who "hath the heart," and yet Melville
presents the same detail with a flash of frontier hyperbole:
"Hold the steak in one hand, and show a live coal to it with the
other; that done, dish it, d'ye hear?" (LXIV/296).

The exuberance of such lines as well as of those that follow:
"'Cook, give me cutlets for supper to-morrow night in the mid-watch.
D'ye hear? away you sail, then.--Hallo! stop! make a bow before you
go.--Avast heaving again! Whale-balls for breakfast--don't forget!"
(LXIV/297). --such energy constitutes a celebration of appetite,
a celebration of life, in exactly the kind of "monstrous supper"
which Plutarch sees as a denial of life. The tone and meaning of
Stubb's "whale-balls for breakfast" are thus a development of that
earlier ritualistic feast at the Try Pots: "'But the chowder
said Mrs. Hussey; clam or cod to-morrow for breakfast, men?'
'Both,' says I; 'and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way
of variety!'" (XV/66). At the end of the scene Fleece passes a
hostile intellectual judgment on Stubb--the perspective is Plutarch's
--and Stubb's earlier behavior partly supports the cook's analogy:
"'I'm bressed if he ain't more of shark dan Massa Shark hisself"
(LXIV/297). But in Stubb's concluding speeches the vigorous
language not only deprives the judgment of its emotional basis but
also implicitly affirms the rightness of what the mate stands for,
here as elsewhere.
Through Stubb, Melville was thus able to assert an alternative which one is surprised to find, particularly in view of Plutarch's importance in the episode. I suggest that Stubb resisted criticism and finally generated lively values of his own partly because he is conceived within a Rabelaisian context. As the Gasterolaters show, Rabelais is not a naive eulogist of unrestrained eating, but at the same time he does compellingly encourage a moral perspective, a view of the world, in which Mrs. Hussey's chowder and Stubb's "whale-galls for breakfast" have a legitimate and important place which Fleece and Plutarch do not allow for.

It is always difficult to separate what I have called the authentically literary from the social mode of Melville's Rabelaisianism, and here as elsewhere both are probably involved. But part of what distinguishes Stubb's instructions on how to cook a whale steak from Cary's "How to Cook a Blackfish" is that Stubb first has to overcome the powerful resistance that Plutarch represents. Much more than Cary or Duyckinck, Melville was philosophically and morally alert, and his position here was correspondingly more difficult than theirs to arrive at, since it had infinitely more obstacles to overcome. Stubb also manages to speak for vitality as he does in a context which searingly castigates all voracious greed, all "dam g'uttons," in a way which Cary and Duyckinck could never do—and would not even wish to do because they themselves are implicated—but which is characteristic of the literary Rabelais, as we have already seen. The philosophic, moral, and emotional complexity and
energy of Stubb's final speeches read in their context of the two related sermons, Fleece's and Plutarch's, all justify viewing these speeches primarily from the perspective of Gargantua and Pantagruel and not of its New York interpreters.

Having disposed of the New York Rabelaisians earlier, Melville has in effect re-established some of their values, but he has stripped these values of their superficiality, emphasized their irreverence, and given them a savage form. In so doing he runs fundamentally counter to the New Yorkers' ethos, which was basically genteel and orthodox. Stubb's wild dinner on raw whale steak would have disturbed the digestion of men accustomed to nothing stronger or more uncivilized than cakes and ale.

iii. "The Whale as a Dish": Rabelais and the Rabelaisians Once Again

"The Whale as a Dish" provides Ishmael's explicit commentary on the action which is dramatized in "Stubb's Supper." The two versions of Moby-Dick's Rabelaisian style also inform this chapter. To begin with, we can look at the paragraph immediately preceding the one which was the starting point of our discussion (pp. 2-3). The whale by this stage of the novel has been so humanized that eating its brains--"breaking open the casket of its skull with an ax," removing "the two plump, whitish lobes (precisely resembling two large puddings)," and "then mixing them with flour and cooking them into a most delectable mess" (LXV/298)--such an act so described has very immediate connotations of murder and cannibalism, two words which,
with the help of Plutarch and Montaigne, Ishmael soon invokes. The information in this excerpt comes from Peale and J. Rose Browne (M-V/757-758), but this information is assimilated and then presented in a Rabelaisian manner. Gargantuan violence, in other words, is rendered with precise anatomical details and a straight-faced, matter-of-fact indifference to what ordinarily evokes protests of horror. Also like Rabelais, Ishmael continues with high-spirited punning about matters which are usually treated more soberly—if, indeed, they are treated at all: The brains are cooked into a most delectable mess, in flavor somewhat resembling calves' head, which is quite a dish among some epicures; and every one knows that some young bucks among the epicures, by continually dining upon calves' brains, by and by get to have some brains of their own, so as to be able to tell a calf's head from their own heads; which, indeed, requires uncommon discrimination. And that is the reason why a young buck with an intelligent looking calf's head before him, is somehow one of the saddest sights you can see. The head looks sort of reproachfully at him, with an "Et tu Brute" expression. (LXV/298)

A mixture of the genuine Rabelais and the hail-fellow-well-met style of the New York Rabelaisians, a style which Melville developed in part under Duyckinck's influence, again implies something unflattering about that very Duyckinck and his epicurean friends.

Rabelais, Burton, and Browne, among others, probably stimulated the choice in the first place; and once made, Ishmael's decision to write the cetological chapters created conditions which encouraged a Rabelaisian rendering of anatomical matters. The details about the whale's brain which we have just considered are thus related both to
the social Rabelaisianism of Dr. Bunger's erotic (p. 11) and to the authentically Gargantuan version of "Ambergris" (XCII).

In the latter chapter, a source's "peck of Brandreth's pills" is exaggerated into "three or four boat loads"; the source's euphemistic "is formed . . . in that state of the /sperm whale's/ system which calls for a cathartic" becomes "the inglorious bowels of a sick whale"; and the timid "would probably remove obstructions in the creature's abdominal viscera" is changed to a typically Rabelaisian image: "How to cure such a dyspepsia it were hard to say, unless by administering three or four boat loads of Brandreth's pills, and then running out of harm's way, as laborers do in blasting rocks (XCII/407. The source, Cheever, is quoted in M-V/794)."

But to return once more to "The Whale as a Dish" and the passage from which we started ("Cannibals . . . in thy paté-de-foie-gras"): we are now in a position to say that Ishmael here as elsewhere uses the style of the authentic Rabelais in part to indict the New York Rabelaisians.

But if it begins with them the indictment ends by going far beyond them, although not as far as that in "Stubb's Supper." Melville was characteristically more pointed and outspoken about the New York Rabelaisians when, instead of having Ishmael speak, he was impersonally dramatizing his characters; and we can now consider some further consequences of this tendency.

The excerpt that we considered at such length earlier (Cannibals . . . in thy paté-de-foie-gras"), from the next to the
last paragraph in the chapter, is the real climax of "The Whale as a Dish." As my discussion tried to show, its range and force are considerable and far exceed anything in the paragraph which follows:

"And with what quill did the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Ganders formally indite his circulars? It is only within the last month or two that that society passed a resolution to patronize nothing but steel pens" (LXV/299). This is merely an anti-climax. Because Ishmael typically builds up to a high point and then ends his chapter there, we may ask, Why not in this case? I suggest that Melville was aware of the personal allusions in the passage we began with; that he wanted to keep that passage because it was a good one and a true one; and at the same time, at some level of his consciousness he also wanted to remove some of its personal sting, to blur the direct references, to again blunt the criticism. Its tone is thus much more restrained than in Melville's immediate source (see Chapter III), and the last paragraph consequently moves away to increasingly inoffensive and unlocalized subjects: roast beef, which is within the Duyckinck orbit; then, more remotely, feathers; and finally, something of a lame duck, the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Ganders.46

10. Stubb and Ahab: A Contrast and a Basis for Re-evaluation

Throughout Moby-Dick, Ahab's character is developed partly through implicit and explicit contrast with the other personages in the novel. The gams are contrived largely for this reason;47 and
Ishmael and the mates, individually and collectively, are at one time or another grouped around the captain in order to define him more sharply. In examining "Stubb's Supper" we found that Stubb should be taken seriously. With that perception in mind, it might help to see what happens to him and his Rabelaisian values when they are brought into direct conflict with Ahab. I do so in some detail, since I think that most previous criticism and scholarship has not properly evaluated Stubb's role. A fairly close reading is needed as a basis for re-evaluating his place in Moby-Dick. The end of Chapter VI rounds out that reconsideration.

1. "Queen Mab": Dreams, Pyramids, and the Sermon on the Mount

Stubb and Ahab are brought together for the first time in the chapters "Enter Ahab; to him Stubb" (XXIX/123-124) and "Queen Mab" (XXXI/127-129). The characterization of the mate here is consistent with other passages that are clearly Rabelaisian, as my examples have been defining the term, but there is nothing distinctively Rabelaisian about Stubb's statement of principles: "'Damn me, it's worth a fellow's while to be born into the world, if only to fall asleep. And now that I think of it, that's about the first things babies do, and that's a sort of queer, too. Damn me, but all things are queer, come to think of 'em. But that's against my principles. Think not, is my eleventh commandment; and sleep when you can, is my twelfth'" (XXIX/125). In his dialogue with Fleece, Stubb continues his concern with "being born into the world"; but, as we
have already seen, "being born again" there involves eating, not sleeping. But if Stubb's two commandments are not central to the Rabelaisianism of Moby-Dick, they are nonetheless part of a generally similar pattern, and in "Queen Mab" the mate as character functions very much as we will see him doing in contexts that more definitely and definably belong to my topic. It is in this extended but still relevant sense that Stubb's dream forms a legitimate and necessary part of my study.

Stubb begins his account: "'Such a queer dream, King-Post, I never had. You know the old man's ivory leg, well I dreamed he kicked me with it; and when I tried to kick back, upon my soul, my little man, I kicked my leg right off! And then, presto! Ahab seemed a pyramid, and I, like a blazing fool, kept kicking at it.'" (XXXI/127). Ahab has kicked Stubb, and on one level the dream simply reverses the roles. But there are deeper connections between the captain and the mate. To list two obvious facts: Ahab lost his leg in an encounter with Moby-Dick; and he is grandly and defiantly committed to kicking back, to "striking, striking through the mask . . . I'd strike the sun it it insulted me." This is Ahab's characteristic response to insult and to the loss of his leg. Stubb's dream offers a contrasting response. In it, the mate is insulted and he also loses his leg in a context of revenge. Ahab thus becomes Stubb's White Whale, which helps to account for the symbol of the pyramid. Like the pyramid, the sphinx, and the hieroglyphics, all of which constitute a related cluster of images, Moby-Dick is ageless,
inscrutable, indestructable, and mysterious. Ahab and Stubb each kicks his own pyramid.

But Stubb does not continue. He receives some advice that is difficult both for him and for us precisely because it clashes with American ideas about independence and authority in a democracy:
"'In old England /the dream's humpbacked merman said/ the greatest lords think it great glory to be slapped by a queen, and made garter knights of; but be your boast, Stubb, that ye were kicked by old Ahab, and made a wise man of. Remember what I say; be kicked by him; account his kicks honors; and on no account kick back; for you can't help yourself, wise Stubb. Don't you see that pyramid!''"

(XXXI/128.) Although Ahab sometimes feels that he is the Fate's lieutenant, that he acts under orders, and that he cannot help himself, either, his powerful action continually belies the belief. He does kick back, and in the process becomes one of the most compelling heroes in our literature. Stubb, who does not strike back, hardly approaches Ahab's stature. But Stubb's response is not a contemptible one for all of that. He accepts the inevitable and is willing to live with it; he does not try to destroy it. In this respect he is like Bulkington, although he is less heroic than that dark helmsman. Melville, who took the Sermon on the Mount seriously, might also have believed that there was something to be said for turning the other cheek as opposed to destroying that which has hurt you. At the end of the scene he underscores that opposition by juxtaposing two characteristic remarks. Stubb, who has taken the merman's advice, says moderately, "'Well, the best you can do,
Flask, is to let that old man alone." And in contrast to Stubb's typically more passive and everyday response, Ahab, the hero who transcends the everyday, for better and for worse immediately and impatiently calls out: "Mast-head, there! Look sharp, all of ye! There are whales hereabouts! If ye see a white one, split your lungs for him!" (XXXI/126). Ahab is still kicking his pyramid.50

ii. Predestination, the High Perception, and the Low Enjoying Power

The contrast between Ahab and Stubb is returned to in the monologues of "Sunset" (XXXVII/165-166) and "First Night-Watch" (XXXIX/168), and this time Stubb's Rabelaisian traits are more clearly involved than they were in "Queen Mab." Ahab, "sitting alone, and gazing out," has a moment of insight: "Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise!" (XXXVII/165). Almost immediately after, Stubb announces the results of his own meditation about himself and his situation: "Hal! hal! hal! hem! clear my throat!— I've been thinking over it ever since, and that ha, ha's the final consequence. Why so? Because a laugh's the wisest, easiest answer to all that's queer; and come what will, one comfort's always left—that unfailing comfort is, it's all predestinated" (XXXIX/168).

The laugh has connotations of popular Rabelaisian, and Stubb's position is obviously intended as the antithesis of Ahab's. Stubb is not "gifted with the high perception," but he unmistakably
possesses "the low, enjoying power," and particularly in his whale-steak supper that power is shown to be a valuable one. The question here, however, is whether the laughing is trivial and negligible or whether, as I think, Stubb again offers a partial but genuine alternative to Ahab.

That it is partial is clear at the outset of the episode, and that it is trivial is also a possibility, but one that becomes much less tenable by the end of the scene. Stubb is limited because he is not reflective or speculative, and as a consequence he sometimes appears superficial, as a man does who takes "the easiest answer to all that's queer." In this context Stubb's recourse to predestination, "that unfailing comfort," implies a shallow surrender of will and of responsibility that is in marked contrast to the heroic, demoniac, and active style of Ahab's version of the identical doctrine. Ahab's defiance of the gods and his iron statement of his fixed purpose in "Sunset" are thus thrown into relief by Stubb, since Ahab and the mate address the same problem.

To begin with, the idea of predestination underlies Ahab's assertion, "Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourself! man has ye there" (XXXVII/156). He continues by using the metaphor of the mighty and unswervable locomotive which runs on iron rails through every obstacle. Along with its connotations of defiant power, which are the ones that Ahab intends, that metaphor can also suggest blind obedience to the impulses of primal force, which is a possibility that he does not emphasize here, although he does later (e. g., CXXXIV/554). The metaphor also conceals the
problem of who laid the rails on which the locomotive runs to its goal. The issue of predestination is thus latent even in Ahab's figure of speech, a figure which stresses the characteristic energy and activity of Ahab's position and temper. One measure of the stature of a literary character is the quality of language which his commitments generate. Ahab is more compelling than Stubb in exactly the same proportion as his metaphor is superior to Stubb's literal and perhaps superficial "it's all predestinated."

But Stubb's commitments issue in other statements which qualify the impression that I have been developing and which suggest that, as in "Queen Mab," the contrast with Ahab is more complicated than a simple one of black and white. Stubb, for one thing, only infrequently turns to that last "unfailing comfort," and he never passively rests in it. Like Ahab, he also acts, and the style of his action provides another relevant contrast to the intense and deadly serious captain: "I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, I'll go to it laughing. Such a waggish leering as lurks in all your horribles!" (XXXIX/168). Stubb's laughter grows out of his recognition of the "leering as lurks in all your horribles," and for this reason, although it may be "the easiest answer," it is neither trivial nor superficial. In the world of Moby-Dick, "easy" means something considerably more difficult than it does on shore.

To take his mind away from those horribles, Stubb turns his attention to more pleasant matters: "What's my juicy little pear doing at home now?" He then voices the standard complaint of all absent sailors: "Crying its eyes out?--Giving a party to the last
arrived harpooneers, I dare say, gay as a frigate's pennant, and so am I" (XXXIX/168). Conventional responses do not have to be deeply felt. Stubb uses this kind of standard sentiment, not because he has stopped loving his wife (as W. H. Auden suggests), but because by its very nature an impersonal formula offers protection against that "waggish leering."51 Stubb's unwillingness to confront life's horribles is a serious limitation, but his response—laughter in the face of the unknown and a song instead of dark thought and revengeful action—is one which, if it is finally rejected, nonetheless provides more than a token alternative to Ahab's heroic and destructive quest.

iii. "The Candles," "The Doubloon," and the Conclusion: The Emergence of Stubb and the Celebration of Life

Both Melville's continued interest in Stubb's values and his ability to forcefully dramatize them are even more apparent in "The Candles" (CXIX), one of the novel's most powerful chapters. "All of your horribles" have broken loose and are raging, not as a possibility from which to turn away, but as a battering and inescapable actuality. In this fierce setting, Stubb's Rabelaisian drinking song represents a positive achievement. Although its function—"to keep up /his/ spirits" (CXIX/496)—is the same as the earlier song's (XXXIX/168), the results here are less qualified in exactly the same proportion as the storm is more violent than the earlier tranquil sunset. 

"But I am not a brave man /Stubb replies to Starbuck's plea for reverent silence/; never said I was a brave man; I am a coward; and I sing to keep up my spirits. And I tell you what it is, Mr. Starbuck,
there's no way to stop my singing in this world but to cut my throat. And when that's done, ten to one I sing ye the doxology for a wind-up!" (CXIX/496-497). Like the gravedigger in Hamlet and as he himself has done at the end of "Stubb's Supper," the mate here speaks for life in the midst of death and the grave.

He continues to do so even after the corporants have changed his accents:

"What thinkest thou now, man / said Starbuck /; I heard thy cry; it was not the same in the song."

"No, no, it wasn't; I said the corporants have mercy on us all; and I hope they will, still. But do they only have mercy on long faces?--have they no bowels for a laugh? And look ye, Mr. Starbuck—but it's too dark to look. Hear me, then: I take that mast-head flame we saw for a sign of good luck; for those masts are rooted in a hold that is going to be chock a' block with sperm-oil, d'ye see; and so, all that sperm will work up into the masts, like sap in a tree. Yes, our three masts will yet be as three spermaceti candles—that's the good promise we saw." (CXIX/499)

Even in the midst of chaos Stubb can turn the masts into sperm-filled candles which ritualistically celebrate his faith in growth and potency. The masts are also central to Ahab's very different ritual, his worship of the fire. But defiance, destruction, and power, not love and fertility, are Ahab's key words. He is at his greatest when he defiantly worships the force behind the fire and simultaneously asserts the integrity of his earthquake life in the midst of the storm's "speechless, placeless power." But in this scene as elsewhere, Stubb's much less heroic response is present to illuminate through contrast the expense of Ahab's kind of greatness.

In "The Doubloon" (XCIX) as in "The Candles," Stubb focuses on that which is life-giving——on "the sun, which comes out of it all
alive and hearty" (XCIX/430). He also uses the language and draws the conclusion of popular Rabelaisianism: "'Jollily he, aloft there, wheels through toil and trouble; and so, alow here, does jolly Stubb. Oh, jolly's the word for ayel!" (XCIX/430). Ishmael has already considered the claims of "the glorious, golden, glad sun" and has associated the image with "that man who swears by Rabelais as passing wise, and therefore jolly," a man who, as we have seen, "cannot be true--not true, or undeveloped" (XCVI/422). The fact that Stubb is undeveloped, however, does not prevent Ishmael from dealing sympathetically with what is developed in him—with the Rabelaisian virtues of appetite, laughter, and song.

That Stubb's limitations do not prevent a sympathetic response is particularly apparent in Ishmael's report of the mate's final speech, which gathers together and puts in perspective the motifs of the earlier episodes. Ishmael here drops his sometimes critical tone and endows Stubb with a vigorous, complex language, a last and lasting index of the inspiring power of the mate's Rabelaisian values.

Like his song in "The Candles," Stubb's grin assumes heroic proportions: it is his equivalent of Ahab's final act of defiance; it is his deeply comic, unfunny challenge to the whale: "I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Who ever helped Stubb, or kept Stubb awake, but Stubb's own unwinking eye?" (CXXXV/564.) Involved here is also his version of Starbuck's plea: "My God, stand by me now!" (CXXXV/564.) Stubb relies on self, not on God: here as in "Stubb's
Supper" he speaks for this world and for some of those who are not yet in heaven. Rabelais may well have contributed to the unorthodoxy and implicit irreverence of his position. As Stubb continues, the idiom of the New York Rabelaisians receives its final transmutation into genuine art: "'Look ye, sun, moon, and stars! I call ye assassins of as good a fellow as ever spouted up his ghost. For all that, I would yet ring glasses with ye, would ye but hand the cup!'" (CXXXV/564.) The context, however, perhaps partly because of Melville's sense of Rabelais himself, has subverted the orthodoxy of the jolly knights and good fellows of Clinton Square.

Throughout the speech, the agility and energy of Stubb's puns testify to their creator's lively interest in him as a character. The jokes—about beds, grins, drinking, and drawers—also represent a kind of triumph, a survival of the spirit of life and lightness in the very face of death.

This spirit is given its most poignant expression in Stubb's final line: "'Cherries! cherries! cherries! Oh, Flask, for one red cherry ere we die!'" (CXXXV/564.) In a single image, Stubb powerfully suggests the appeal and value of the land and earthiness, of appetite, physical beauty, ripeness, sexuality, and of joy in the senses. Images of eating—and particularly of drinking—have helped to define the Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick. Stubb's final allusion, which is well within the bounds of that style, is also one of its finest achievements.
11. The Phallicism of Moby-Dick

Rabelaisianism is generally associated with eating, drinking, and sex; and we have seen that the first two bear on the Rabelaisian style of Moby-Dick even in the more specialized sense which, following my social and literary sources, I have given to that term. Sexual imagery and motifs are also relevant to the style I am attempting to define. In the following section, however, I shall concentrate on the authentic literary Rabelais (and his English admirer, Laurence Sterne), and shall allude only in passing to the New York coterie. Here, unlike the earlier sections, the distinction is clear. My emphasis has a certain historical justification; since, although in the "phallic" episodes of Moby-Dick there may be a few concealed gibes at New York tastes, the stress is on that literary figure whom the Boston Post's critic had in mind when he said of Mardi that it was "Rabelais emasculated of everything but prosiness and puerility."52

But Moby-Dick, whose white whale D. H. Lawrence calls "The Great American Phallus," is anything but an emasculated book. Between Mardi and Moby-Dick Melville's capacity developed—"three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself" (Rep. Sel./393)—and in the process he grew up to Rabelais; or to carry out Melville's imagery, the seeds that his reading of Rabelais had planted had begun to grow and to take firm root. Some of the phallicism in Moby-Dick, some of its sexual imagery and concerns, show that Melville had been willing to
respond to Rabelais and Sterne and that he had finally developed the power to put them to his own uses.

That power and the dark, obscure personal depths from which it emerges are crucial, particularly in a matter that finally is as intimately personal as this. But the evidence of Moby-Dick suggests that Melville had also seen depths in Rabelais—there are certainly there to be seen. It is, then, his response to what is beneath as well as upon the surface of Gargantua and Pantagruel which, I think, helps to account for the frequently huge, deep, and oddly good-natured, grotesque phallicism of Moby-Dick. Melville's experiences in the South Seas are also relevant here, but they do not bear on the important question of literary form and patterning. Melville's reading of Rabelais and Sterne does bear on this question.

A final introductory note. I think that the sexual motifs in Moby-Dick should be taken seriously, which does not mean that they should always be taken soberly. Since I find a considerable range in tone and intention, my comments will take that diversity into account. I do not want to trivialize Melville by urbanely writing off "the sort of bawdiness / he / delighted to hide in his books," as if it were all an innocuous game of hide-and-seek; but neither do I want always to make him sound unhumorously apocalyptic. I shall accordingly start with some light passages which nonetheless come to have serious implications.
Melville put his reading of Sterne and Rabelais into the service of that side of his sensibility which had a robust, free-wheeling contempt for coercive systems and their makers. I think that Melville himself had contradictory impulses; that he projects some of them through Ahab and some through Ishmael; and that the resulting tensions between and within these two characters account for much of the energy and interest of Moby-Dick. Here I am dealing with Melville's open, pluralistic side, a side which Ishmael often but not always represents.

In the chapter "Cetology" (XXXII), however, he most surely does. The very classification of whales into books reinforces more explicit statements and indicates that the chapter is concerned, often in a satiric way, with bookish issues, with matters of aesthetics and metaphysics, with those "systematizers" (XXXVI/136) in any discipline who think "in vain to attempt a clear classification of Leviathan" (XXXII/135). Walter Shandy as well as Captain Scoresby is relevant here. Like Sterne's Tristram, Melville's Ishmael is also made to turn to the reader to explain his view and his way of writing: "I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete must for that very reason be faulty" (XXXII/131). And with what I think is more than an accidental echo of Walter Shandy's incomplete systems--I will return to the similarities in more detail in another context--Ishmael ends: "But I now leave my cetological System standing thus unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the cranes still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower" (XXXII/142).
In the midst of this vigorously open chapter, Ishmael plays with the image of the narwhale, "that is, nostril whale," whose "ivory horn or lance" can be used for many far-fetched things—"for a rake in turning over the bottom of the sea for food," "for an ice piercer," "for a folder in reading pamphlets" (XXXII/159). Then, in the manner of one of Burton's anecdotes, Ishmael goes on:

Black Letter tells me that Sir Martin Frobisher on his return from that voyage, when Queen Bess did gallantly wave her jewelled hand to him from a window of Greenwich Palace, as his bold ship sailed down the Thames; "when Sir Martin returned from that voyage," saith Black Letter, "on bended knees he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn of the Narwhale, which for a long period after hung in the castle at Windsor." An Irish author avers that the Earl of Leicester, on bended knees, did likewise present to her highness another horn, pertaining to a land beast of the unicorn nature. (XXXII/159)

Because it is concealed, the exact phallic innuendo behind the mock learning is more like Sterne than Rabelais, and the passage is similar to one which appears in a context very much indebted to Tristam Shandy. But without going into that now, we can observe that this paragraph also moves from a black letter source to a phallic pun:

"In his treatise on 'Queen-Gold,' or Queen-pinmoney, an old King's Bench author, one William Prynne, thus discourseth: 'Ye tail is ye Queen's, that ye Queen's wardrobe may be supplied with ye whalebone.' Now this was written at a time when the black limber bone of the Greenland or Right whale was largely used in ladies' bodices. But this same bone is not in the tail; it is in the head, which is a sad mistake for a sagacious lawyer like Prynne. But is the Queen a mermaid, to be presented with a tail? An allegorical
meaning may lurk here" (XO/399). 56 "Leicester, on bended knees" presented his horn to her highness; and "the Queen," in "Heads or Tails," must also "be respectfully presented with the tail" (XO/397), a phrase whose innuendo is pointed up by repetition and an obvious reminder.

One more example. In "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish," which immediately precedes "Heads or Tails," Ishmael is made to summarize "a recent crim. con. case, wherein a gentleman, after in vain trying to bridle his wife's viciousness, had at last abandoned her upon the seas of life; but in the course of years, repenting of that step, he instituted an action to recover possession of her." Erskine, for the opposition, argued that the husband, who had originally harpooned her, "only by reason of the great stress of her plunging viciousness, had at last abandoned her; yet abandon her he did, so that she became a loose-fish; and therefore when a subsequent gentleman re-harpooned her, the lady then became that subsequent gentleman's property, along with whatever harpoon might have been found sticking in her" (LXXXIX/394-395). The source (M-V/791) makes perfectly clear what emerges only by implication in Melville's account: that it is a case of adultery, so that the lady has been a loose-fish all along. Melville has taken a straightforward report and made it suggestive through the sexual innuendo of such phrases as "harpooned the lady"; "had once had her fast"; "the great stress of her plunging viciousness"; and finally, through that gratuitous harpoon which "might have been found sticking in her." The first
two phrases, which come directly from Melville's source, have no double meaning for Scoresby, but in the context of Melville's account, they do. The tone of the entire original report has similarly been transformed by innuendo and indirection.

I do not think that any of these passages fits into a large scheme. In many ways they all bear out the injunctions of "Cetology." They were created—and are to be valued—precisely because of the sheer play and delight of it all, because of their very refusal to be classified and fit into a total system. They, and particularly the first, were written out of an excess of good spirits which no author has to apologize for and which the author of Fleece's sermon and "The Candles" is above all entitled to.

But Melville is typically complex; and these sections also have in common an impelling motive which I have not yet considered. The chapter "Fast-Fish and Loose Fish" provides a good introduction.

In it, Melville has Ishmael begin by defining a technical whaling term, a limited, innocent topic. The practical background, as Ishmael explains it, is that those who have worked hard to catch a whale may lose it in a storm, so that "violent disputes would often arise between the fishermen, were there not some written or unwritten, universal, undisputed law applicable to all cases" (LXXXIX/393). Apparently Ishmael is going to explain that comfortable, useful law. He does, but by the end of the chapter he has also asked sweeping, loaded questions which deny the truth, sanctions, and even the existence of any "universal law" applicable to property, jurisprudence,
political rights, or metaphysics. He has moved considerably beyond the whale fishery to the fundamental assumptions of the modern West, and he has in effect denied those fundamentals. The range and pattern—from the limited and particular to the most general and far-reaching speculation—is the usual one in Moby-Dick; and although the fact of satire in the chapter has been noted before, the good-humored tone can mislead readers: the criticism is actually much more basic than the tone initially suggests.  

Ishmael proceeds by a method of association, and we can see him simultaneously discovering and explaining his approach in a sentence which, for emphasis, is also a paragraph: "Now in the present case Erskine contended that the examples of the whale and the lady were reciprocally illustrative of each other" (LXXXIX/395). Having established this equation, he then summarizes the decision of "the very learned judge." The attitude throughout is ironic, since the decision is obviously unjust: "A common man looking at this decision of the very learned Judge, might possibly object to it," Ishmael observes with commendable understatement. The difficulty is that those who have labored to catch the whale not only lose it but also their own lines and harpoons; "the whale, because it was a Loose-Fish at the time of the final capture; and the harpoons and line because when the fish made off with them, it (the fish) acquired a property in these articles; and hence anybody who afterwards took the fish had a right to them. Now the defendants afterwards took the fish; ergo, the aforesaid articles
"were theirs" (LXXXIX/395). The stress on logical terms only points up the speciousness of the reasoning.

This reasoning is a perversion of the Lockean standards which underlie Ishmael's judgment: "every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labor of his body, and work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property." But in the real world, in the world of "hard words and harder knocks," "very learned judges" reinterpret Locke's premise so that in practice it sanctions plain thievery and the use of force or cunning. The particular whaling case is one instance; and Ishmael then provides a full page of additional examples which forcefully develop and document what has heretofore been implicit.

"This decision of the very learned Judge" is tainted, and it is also crucial to what follows. It is a perversion of Locke and well-established ideas of justice; and it is also a perversion in another sense. Ishmael brings out this sense by associating the decision with his bawdy report of Erskine's example. In terms of the equation which that example establishes, the judge in effect is a pimp to the lady-whale's whore; or to make the metaphor a little more genteel, in giving the whale, line and harpoon to those who "afterwards too: the fish," the judge is sanctioning a clear case of adultery. "The examples of the whale and the lady," we should remember, "were reciprocally illustrative of each other." The
effect of this association is to make the judge's decision immoral and corrupt in terms of the very standards of respectability which Lord Ellenborough piously upholds. The good-humored tone should not blind us to the quite serious indictment which that identification helps Ishmael make: "ploughed up to the primary rock of the matter, the two great principles laid down in the twin whaling laws previously quoted, and applied and elucidated by Lord Ellenborough in the above cited case; these two laws touching Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish, I say, will, on reflection, be found the fundamentals of all human jurisprudence; for not withstanding its complicated tracery of sculpture, the Temple of the Law, like the Temple of the Philistines, has but two props to stand on" (LXXXIX/395). The allusion to the ungodly, despised Philistines is not flattering either.

By a process of association with immoral, corrupt, ungodly perversions of justice, Ishmael has made "the fundamentals of all jurisprudence" shaky indeed. "The Temple of the Law . . . has but two props to stand on," and Ishmael ends by pulling them down.

The contrast between law and morality tormented Melville—it is a major theme in White Jacket, "Bartleby," and Billy Budd, to select works from different periods in his life. That contrast is also involved here, which indicates that the good-humored tone is expressing deeply felt ideas.

By the end of the chapter Ishmael has also pulled out the props from under the West's most basic political and religious institutions, but here I concentrate on his treatment of property and the legal system, which are central to orderly, conventional society.
In "Cetology" Ishmael makes it clear that he has little use for systems of any kind. Here, he presents the legal system in such a way as to separate himself decisively from the established, respectable community. He also makes his point indirectly, not frontally, which shows that he is aware of the power of his public and also of the power of indirect statement. The feelings in "Fast-Fish," I suggest, involve a deeply-rooted animus against the conventional system, an active hostility which is transparently open in Pierre and "Pardieby" but which is not overtly insisted on here. One function of the sexual innuendo is to express that hostility, not only by putting Lord Ellenborough in an unfavorable light but also in a more basic way. In the middle of the Victorian period and in a context involving property rights and the fundamentals of jurisprudence, Melville's sexual allusions become an act of the profoundest disrespect. "We do not like to see," Duyckinck wrote about Moby-Dick, "what, under my view, must be to the world the most sacred associations of life violated and defaced" (Log/I/437). Melville's "bawdy" jokes, are a covert form of nose-thumbing; and indication of his rankling at what he presents as the hypocritical, basically immoral code of the respectable community.

Throughout Moby-Dick, phallic jokes flash out, often at random—Melville's imagination has simply seized on a possibility, elaborated it, and gone on to other matters. The three passages which I have considered from "Cetology," "Fast-Fish," and "Heads or Tails" fall into that category. But along with the high spirits which impell these jokes, a grimmer and less good-natured motive is also involved.
Later in his career—in *Pierre*, "I and My Chimney," and "The Paradise of Bachelors," for example—the good nature has soured considerably and what is implicit in "Fast-Fish" becomes much more explicit.

I suggest, to conclude this survey, that many of the random sexual jokes in *Moby-Dick* become more meaningful when they are viewed in the dual perspective which I have been outlining. They have especially serious consequences when we grant Melville's sense of the primal grandeur of sexuality—that creativity in the midst of serene "dalliance and delight" which is celebrated in "The Grand Armada" (LXXXVII/386).

Thus by no means all of the phallicism in *Moby-Dick* is random. "The Cassock," for example, is part of a larger pattern, that of *Moby-Dick*'s inverted rituals. The chapter is connected with particular intimacy to the irreverent, life-giving sacraments of "Stubb's Supper" and to the revels on the quarterdeck in "The Bachelor." The Biblical allusions in the chapter (M-V/796-797) and its aura of ancient fertility cults make parts of it darker than the passages which I considered above, but the combination of high spirits and underlying hostility also characterizes this grandly phallic episode.

Like Stubb, whose sacraments consist of the whale's flesh, the mincer, one of the black priests of this proceeding, dons the skin of the whale's penis and "stands before you invested in the full canonicals of his calling. Immortal to all his order, this investment alone will adequately protect him, while employed in the
peculiar functions of his office . . . Arrayed in decent black; occupying a conspicuous pulpit; intent on Bible leaves; what a candidate for an archbishoprick, what a lad for a Pope were this mincer!" (XCV/41e). The Rabelaisian (or Shandean) pun in "archbishoprick" (M-V/797) is used to anti-clerical effect, and effect which Gargantuana and Pantagruel could only have encouraged.

Many of Rabelais' scenes, for example, have exactly the quality of the medieval farces from which they derive, performances "in which clergy and laity alike took part; for which the clergy made no bones of lending their vestments as costumes, and in which the most sacred matters and personages were set forth with an informality that a later taste, tinctured by a precisian Protestantism, finds most irreverent."60 By inverting or parodying Catholic rites, typically by emphasizing drinking and sex, Rabelais consistently satirizes monks or the Pope. The Pope's infallibility and the pomp that surrounds him, for example, are turned inside out: "They then kneeled down before us and would have kissed our feet, but we would not suffer it, telling them that, should the pope come thither in his own person, it is all they could do to him. No, certainly, answered they, for we have already resolved upon the matter. We would kiss his bare arse, without boggling at it, and eke his two pounders: for he has a pair of them, the holy father, that he has; we find it so by our fine decretals, otherwise, he could not be pope. So that, according to our subtile decretalin philosophy, this is a necessary consequence: he is pope; therefore, he has genitories (genitals) and should genitories no more be found in the world, the world could no more have a
pone" (IV/xlix/8). Or the chapters on Shrovetide (IV/xxix-xxxiii/301-311), which immediately precede the extract from Rabelais, parody the rituals of Lent, a recurring concern in Gargantua and Pantagruel and one which typically stresses gluttony and lechery. Or the chapter on the Festival of Cuckolds precisely inverts the conventional calendar of Holy Days and then gives an account of the origins and practices of this particular unholy holy day (III/xxxiii/39-43).

The satire in all of these cases is not casual or merely irreverent: it is obviously deeply felt; and it is designed to correct, to recreate, and to reestablish on sounder foundations much of what Rabelais saw as corrupt or outmoded in the world around him. The inverted rituals in Moby-Dick often but not always have the same function. I believe that Melville discovered the possibilities of these black rites partly from Gargantua and Pantagruel, where they constitute a recurring and unmistakable pattern.

But to return to "The Cassock." Inspired by Rabelais, the pervasive, subversive sexual imagery in the chapter satirizes the gentility of the pulpit and of "decent black," although much more moderately than in Pierre, where gentility is bitterly devastated. The old, respectable forms are nonetheless satirized and rejected in "The Cassock"; and we should not minimize the depth of either the criticism or the rejection.

During the 1850's, his most creative period, Melville came increasingly to chafe at what he presents as the restricting, devitalized forms of the conventional community. The inverted rituals of Moby-Dick are one consequence. In "The Cassock" as in "Stubb's
Supper," a lifeless ritual is replaced by an unorthodox, life-giving one, which here centers on that most surprising source of life, the whale's "grandisimus," "that unaccountable cone" (XCVI/417). A recent critic has called attention to the role of South Sea primitivism in shaping Melville's reaction, here and elsewhere. But we should also remember the repeated apostrophes to "the sacred ithyphallion" throughout Gargantua and Pantagruel. Thus, in my turn, I should stress the role of Rabelais and Sterne, who are part of an essentially secular, Western tradition. The similarities which I have noted above suggest that their hostility to conventional forms of belief and their mode of creating and giving life to unconventional alternatives have inspired Melville's style, here and elsewhere. Thus, not only have they deeply influenced Melville's response, but equally important, the way he conveys that response in a work of the imagination.

"The Blanket" (LXVIII) helps prepare for the chapter we have just considered, partly because it shows Ishmael first exploring the phallic possibilities of the whale's skin or blubber, that "Indian poncho alipt over his head, and skirting his extremity" (LXVIII/306). The implications of its sexual allusions also deepen and reinforce those we have been discussing.

Ishmael often uses the cetological chapters to call the reader's attention to the way the book is written, to give hints about how to read; in short, to comment on his writing in a way analogous to and perhaps stimulated by Tristram Shandy. Here, the "quick, observant
eye" of Ishmael's imagination discovers some of the symbolic potential, first in the whale's markings and then in his shape and inner life. He simultaneously addresses the "quick, observant" reader and tells him to be prepared for symbolical, "hieroglyphical" implications in what follows: "In some instances, to the quick, observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphical; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present connexion" (LXVIII/305). A range of pagan references, from the pyramids to the "old Indian characters chiseled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi" (references which are only one of the chapter's bonds with the story "I and My Chimney") help to suggest the undecipherable mystery of "the mystic-marked whale." Then, plumbing to even deeper levels of the primitive, Ishmael "gropes down ... among the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very pelvis of the world" (XXXII/131) and sees the resemblance between the Sperm Whale's "rude stretches" and "those New England rocks on the sea-coast, which Agassiz imagines to bear the marks of violent scraping contact with vast floating icebergs" (LXVIII/305). And now firmly established in a pre-adamic realm of elemental conflict, Ishmael thinks that the whale's markings are made by primal "hostile contact with other whales" (LXVIII/305). His understatement should not prevent us from seeing that hieroglyphic mystery thus involves the "antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which,
having been before all time, must exist after all humane ages are over" (CIV/454).

Having probed to some of its primal depths, Ishmael then examines the implications of the whale's ability to stay warm in the very "hearts of fields of ice" (LXVIII/306):

It does seem to me, that herein we see the rare virtue of a strong individual vitality, and the rare virtue of thick walls, and the rare virtue of interior spaciousness. Oh, man! admire and model thyself after the whale! Do thou, too, remain warm among ice. Do thou, too, live in this world without being of it. Be cool at the equator; keep thy blood fluid at the Pole. Like the great dome of St. Peter's, and like the great whale, retain, O man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own.

But how easy and how hopeless to teach these fine things! Of erections, how few are domed like St. Peter's! of creatures, how few vast as the whale! (306)

The passage is concerned with the moral value, power, and potency—"the rare virtue"—of integrity, integrality, and vital selfhood. A pulsing life is central to this kind of individuality and independence, and the diction—"vitality" and "virtue" in its basic and derived senses—reflects the emphasis. Related but more important for our purposes, Ishmael departs from a source, Mme. de Stael's Corinne (M-V/760), and working a double pun, builds the dome of St. Peter's into a phallic image as diagrammatic as the architecture which is the metaphor's vehicle. This Rabelaisian, Shandean image is also part of the hieroglyphical meaning that we have already been prepared for.

The double pun in its daring and excess, shows how pervasively committed Ishmael is to the values he has just argued for, because it
illustrates, enacts, makes concrete and particular the exhortations which precede it. Its audacious phallicism implicitly represents "a strong individual vitality" actively opposed to the world and in the process of "remaining warm among the ice" of convention. Because for Ishmael the power of self is inseparable from sexual potency, he repeatedly turns to sexual imagery when he wishes to render his sense of his deepest and most basic integrity.

His integrity as an artist, as a creator, is crucially important here; and we are now in a position to return to the Shandean, Rabelaisian conclusion of "Cetology," a chapter in which he talks about his way of creating: "It was stated at the outset, that this system would not be here, and at once, perfected. You cannot but plainly see that I have kept my word. But I now leave my cetological System standing thus unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity" (XXXII/142). As a recent critic has observed, "Sterne never kept a straighter face." And like Sterne, for whom sexuality and artistic creativity are inseparable, Melville uses his phallic joke to convey a precise sense of what creating books means to him.

It means, first of all, a never-ending process of creation, one which has all of the qualities of the sexual process, that basic source of animal life. Romantic writers in general assumed that the active participation of the reader was necessary to complete and give
meaning to a literary work. Melville here goes deeper than most of them—certainly deeper than his New England contemporaries—and audaciously identifies his book with the sexual principle itself. Ishmael's "grand," "true" erection will remain eternally uncompleted; it depends on the successive generations of posterity to give it continued life; and they, in return, presumably receive the pleasure appropriate to such activity. The imagery, one notes, suggests that this pleasure and activity have the attributes of their sexual equivalents, qualities which are highly valued here.

Ishmael's daring imagery is appropriate in still other ways. He has been satirizing systems and systemmatizers, particularly those who, like the critics of Tristram Shandy, want a book to proceed in a regular, classical order. His dislike of conventional aesthetic systems is closely related to his rejection of the respectable social order, including its economic, political, and religious systems. Primal, sexual energy is intrinsically subversive of conventional order and of respectable systems. Such energy can be horribly destructive, but it is also essentially creative, since in the natural world it is the source of all life. Ishmael's gigantic sexual pun is thus a perfect vehicle for conveying his radical rejection of conventional systems and their makers. His enormous phallic imagery also embodies Ishmael's belief that the sources of artistic and sexual creation are closely related. Similarly, the very irreverence of his language renders his view of the artist as an independent man in touch with some of the sources of his creativity and at odds with forces which would restrict it.
In a general sense, the entire structure of *Moby-Dick* is an application of the outlook of "Cetology"; and chapters like "The Blanket" (LXVIII), "The Cassock" (XCX), "The Bachelor" (CXV), and "Fast-Fish" (LXXXIX) develop its different implications more specifically. "Cetology," moreover, implicitly and buoyantly celebrates the value of "vulgarity and vigor." In "The Grand Armada," Melville could thus afford to treat sexuality as sublime. After *Moby-Dick*, he found it increasingly difficult to achieve the varied tone of such chapters. "Vulgarity and vigor," two qualities which he knew were crucial to the power of his art, were actively opposed by the dominant society of his period. The outburst in the "Young America in Literature" section of *Pierre* is one consequence; "The Paradise of Bachelors* and the "Tartarus of Maids" is another. The story "I and My Chimney" is perhaps the saddest and most heroic; sad, despite—or because of—its pervasively funny and finally obsessive pun.

Even when *Melville* does have Ishmael project a sense of "sociality," he often does so in a form subversive of respectability and of the social norms of the community. I emphasize the point, since some recent criticism makes Melville sound a good deal more accommodating than *Moby-Dick* suggests that he was. The chapter "A Squeeze of the Hand" is a case in point. The imagery in the chapter is sexual, though not specifically phallic; and although Rabelais and Sterne may well have exerted a general, sanctioning influence, I am not suggesting anything more specific than that. The themes
and techniques of the chapter are nonetheless so closely related to those we have been considering that they deserve some attention.

In the process of squeezing the lumps of sperm into fluid, Ishmael is carried away. He becomes impregnated with a spirit of good-will; and his imagery throughout is deliberately suggestive:

"I almost began to credit the old Paracelsan superstition that sperm is of rare virtue in allaying the heat of anger: while bathing in that bath, I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever" (XCIX/414). The Christian emphasis on love is here given a sexual basis.

This dual, punning emphasis is immediately developed:

Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my collaborators' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,—Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (XCIV/414)

This is brotherly love of a sort that is frowned on in most Anglo-American communities. The conventional ideas of sociality, love, and comradeship are there, all right, but in a form so intermixed with satire and a sense of their exact opposites that one has to be very cautious about generalizing from the passage. It is not so much that "the isolato theme is followed—-and balanced—-by the
companionship theme"—as that the subversive sexual imagery conveys
Ishmael's rejection of—and deliberate isolation from—social norms,
at the same time that he is apparently affirming Christian brotherhood.65 Similarly, because of the imagery and the ironic exaggeration
throughout the chapter, its surface emphasis on love and charity,
on "the very milk and sperm of human kindness," implies a quite
unloving, uncharitable, and unkind view of the conventional community.

A similar attitude and technique emerge as Ishmael is made to
continue: "Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm forever!
For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have
perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least
shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere
in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed,
the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country; now that I have
perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally" (XCI/415).
Wife, fire-side, and country are the standard symbols of the Fourth
of July orator. Instead of placing them at the pinnacle of his
scale of values, however, Ishmael sees them as representing a lower
plane of "attainable felicity." But he is apparently willing to
accept them, until we recognize that those "many prolonged, repeated
experiences" have been with precisely wife, fire-side, and country;
and that Ishmael is rejecting such felicities for an experience of
quite another kind: "now that I have perceived all this, I am
ready to squeeze case eternally."

It may be, of course, that an opposition does not exist, and
that "squeezing case" is simply a metaphor for the warm, wholesome,
loving activity which is attainable in and represented by "the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country." To read the passage this way, however, one must overlook the unconventional definition which the preceding paragraphs have given the term. And Melville, we should remember, had a habit of "violating and defacing" what, on a Duyckinck's view, "must be to the world the most sacred associations of life" (Log/I/437). The irony and the sense of disillusion in "A Squeeze of the Hand" are, I think, quite real.

The irony focuses most specifically on marital felicity--"the wife, the heart, the bed"--which Ishmael rejects, covertly and with tongue in cheek. He does so through his celebration of those less orthodox forms of sexuality which "squeezing case" has come to represent.

That "genial humor" which Duyckinck had once commented on comes into play again in an extremely funny, irreverent "defacing" of another "most sacred association." Ishmael substitutes jars for harps, and "in thoughts of the visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti" (XIX/415). It is not quite a New England heaven.

In different tones and with different stresses, Ishmael repeatedly uses sexual imagery to convey a sense of the power of self, integral and unaccommodated to the world--in it, as he says, "without being of it." "The Grand Armada" represents his most heroic statement in this style. The denial of God in the preceding
chapter ("The Tail") is followed by an affirmation of self in this one.

The descent into the valley, often connoting the womb and femininity, is one of Melville's recurring symbols. He realizes this symbol perhaps most successfully in that part of "The Grand Armada" which begins: "we glided between two whales into the innermost heart of the shoal, as if from some mountain torrent we had slid into a serene valley lake" (LXXXVII/384). Momentarily isolated from the destruction and distraction of the outside world, they have entered an almost enchanted wonder-world within. And more inward still, "far beneath this wondrous world upon the surface, another and still stranger world met our eyes as we gazed over the side." Through the deep, transparent water they see "the nursing mothers of the whales" suckling their young. And more: "Some of the subtlest secrets of the seas seemed divulged to us in this enchanted pond. We saw young Leviathan anours in the deep" (LXXXVII/386-387). They have gazed on the innermost sources of life itself.

The recreation of this scene of elemental creation carries Ishmael deep within himself; and in imagery inspired by the scene he has just rendered, he talks about the innermost sources of his own creativity: "And thus, though surrounded by circle upon circle of consternations and affrights, did these inscrutable creatures at the centre freely and fearlessly indulge in all peaceful concerns; yes, serenely revelled in dalliance and delight. But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still forever
centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy" (LXXXVII/386). To communicate his deepest sense of the creative power and joy of an integral self, Ishmael turns to imagery of the sex act and of the land.

But in Melville, the vital center can be reached and maintained only with difficulty. It is always imperiled; "the tornadoed Atlantic" and "the circle upon circle of consternations and affrights," -- the forces of evil and destruction, without and within--always reappear. Melville never forgets those forces, and as an artist he is always close to being preoccupied with them. What distinguishes Moby-Dick from his later work is that--to use a metaphor--he has freer access to the vital center, and accordingly he is willing to express his preoccupation through Ishmael and Stubb as well as through Ahab and Moby-Dick. In the process, he shows that he has other interests as well. It is the tone, rhythm, and outlook of the later work that is affected; the quality is not necessarily involved, and in stories like "Bartleby," the quality is very high indeed.

"The Grand Armada" perfectly illustrates some of the most basic turns of Melville's imagination as that imagination expresses itself in the patterned rhythms of action and imagery. It is no accident, then, that the scene of primal creative power is immediately followed by its antithesis. A maddened, man-goaded whale, who thus represents both human and natural forces, breaks in on the scene. Ishmael is made to dwell on the whale who, "in the extraordinary agony of the
wound, ... was dashing among the revolving circles ... carrying dismay wherever he went. ... But agonizing as was the wound of this whale, and an appalling spectacle enough, anyway; yet the peculiar horror with which he seemed to inspire the rest of the herd was owing to the cutting spade "which had worked loose from his flesh. So that tormented to madness, he was now churning through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and tossing the keen spade about him, wounding and murdering his own comrades" (LXXXVII/387-388). This destructive force has its effect: "the submarine bridal-chambers and nurseries vanished; ... the long calm was departing; ... the entire host of whales came tumbling upon their inner centre, as if to pile themselves up in one common mountain" (LXXXVII/388). The imagery is almost prophetic. Pierre is dedicated to a mountain, and the book seems written from a state of the soul in which "the entire host of whales" has indeed come "tumbling upon their inner centre."

In Moby-Dick itself, Melville returns to that vital center for the last time in the "Epilogue." Here, too, the imagery is broadly sexual, since it involves the process of birth from the womb of the orphan-spawning sea. Ishmael and the life-preserving coffin emerge from "the closing vortex," from that "creamy pool," from "that vital centre." He is precariously "born" into life again. He is not, I think, in any theological or psychological sense saved or redeemed. His perplexities, I think, remain unresolved; his achievement has been to hold them in vital tension and to see increasingly deeper
implications in the problems which have plagued him since the start of his narrative. The thoughts of death and destruction, for example, which dominate the opening episodes of Moby-Dick are represented in the conclusion by the "dirge-like main" and by the debris of the shattered Pequod. The "inner centre" is always surrounded—and often demolished—by those black forces. Ishmael, however, speaks of "the great buoyancy" of the "vital centre." He survives those dark forces, I think, because of—to apply his words about the vital center to his own—"the great buoyancy" of his imagination and of his deep creative being.

The most profound and powerful sexual symbol in Moby-Dick is the White Whale himself, "the great American Phallus," in Lawrence's words. Although his sexual dimension does not begin to exhaust the Whale's significance, it markedly deepens that meaning. Melville was self-consciously alert to some if not all of that meaning: he had, after all, read Sterne and Rabelais. Thus, throughout the three day chase—and it is in this final section alone that Moby-Dick himself is presented—the White Whale is consistently described in imagery of the sex act. His breaching is always so presented: "Crushed thirty feet upwards, the waters flashed for an instant like heaps of fountains, then brokenly sank in a shower of flakes, leaving the circling surface creamed like new milk round the marble trunk of the whale" (CXXXV/560). Here is the primal creative act, except that in connection with Moby-Dick, the act
and the energy are destructive: that breaching immediately precedes the fatal battering of the Pequod.

Earlier, Melville has focused on the motion of the breaching whale: "Moby-Dick now lay at a little distance, vertically thrusting his oblong white head up and down in the billows; and at the same time slowly revolving his whole spindled body; so that when his vast wrinkled forehead rose—some twenty or more feet out of the water—the now rising swells, with all their confluent waves, dazzingly broke against it; vindictively tossing their shivered spray still higher into the air" (CXXXIII/542). To emphasize the sexual implications, he adds a note: "This motion is peculiar to the sperm whale (the pun on "sperm" is almost always intended). It receives its designation (pitchpoling) from its being likened to that preliminary up-and-down poise of the whale-lance" (OXXXVII/542).

One more example of "this wondrous phenomenon of breaching": "Rising with his utmost velocity from the furthest depths, the Sperm Whale thus booms his entire bulk into the pure element of air, and piling up a mountain of dazzling foam, shows his place to the distance of seven miles and more. In those moments, the torn, enraged waves he shakes off, seem his mane; in some cases, this breaching is his act of defiance" (CXXXIV/549). The profound sexuality of the Sperm Whale is used to connote his intractable, primal defiance, just as in other contexts similar imagery functions for Ishmael. This imagery also indicates that the defiant force which is the Whale is as deep and powerful as the most potent of nature's elemental drives—his energy comes from "the furthest depths."
Defiance and power, both creative and destructive, are thus associated with Moby-Dick by virtue of the sexual imagery which describes him in the three day chase. The emphasis, however, is on his destructive, not on his creative power: "On each soft side—coincident with the parted swell, that but once leaving him, then flowed so wide away—on each bright side, the whale shed off enticing he has just been compared to "the white bull Jupiter swimming away with the ravished Europa"... Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale! thou glidest on, to all who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same way thou may'st have be juggled and destroyed before... And thus... Moby-Dick moved on, still withholding from sight the full terrors of his submerged trunk, entirely hiding the wrenched hideousness of his jaw" (CXXXIII/539-540). That jaw reappears almost at the final moment, described in imagery which has been made unmistakably clear: "of a sudden, he bore down upon its /the Pequod's/ advancing prow, smiting his jaws amid fiery showers of foam" (CXXXV/563).

And the same metaphor conveys a sense of the full power and fascination of the whale as he destroys the ship and all those aboard: "from side to side strangely vibrating his predestinating head, he sent a broad band of overspreading semicircular foam before him as he rushed / the motion and imagery have been carefully prepared for/. Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttresses of his forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reeled" (CXXXV/564-565).
Moby-Dick is sometimes interpreted as a source of life as well as a cause of death. The consistently developed sexual imagery of the concluding episode, however, emphasizes his destructive power, and that, I think, is what interpretation should also emphasize. Melville, I should stress, used similar imagery to render a contrasting sense of Ishmael's creative power. Apparently when he wished to convey a full idea of potency and defiance of whatever sort, he turned for his imagery to that deep area of experience which we have been considering.

Much recent criticism, moreover, tries to minimize the Whale's deliberate malice. One should note that the concluding view of Moby-Dick is unqualified, and that it is Ishmael's, not Ahab's. Those ultimately mysterious natural and supernatural forces symbolized by the whale are, it would seem, neither blindly neutral or indifferent to man but rather actively hostile to his purposes and desires. Some readers choose to meld that hostile, defiant, destructive power into a tranquil, deep vision of an ultimate, all-embracing, mystically-accepted God within Whom the conflict of good and evil becomes supremely unimportant. Such readers might pay more careful attention to the imagery and emphasis which Melville quite deliberately seems to have intended.

In the final episode, other implications emerge which Melville may have been less aware of. At the outset of the chase, Moby-Dick is compared to Jupiter: "Not the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns; his lovely,
leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid; with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nuptial bower in Crete; not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam" (CXXXIII/539). The image of the "ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns" is basic to much of what follows, since at one—perhaps unconscious—level, the imagery in the remainder of the narrative is that of rape, of primal sexual assault.

Like Jupiter with Europa, "the whale dallied with the doomed craft" (CXXXIII/541); and a little later, "Ripplingly withdrawing from his prey, Moby-Dick now lay at a little distance, vertically thrusting his oblong white head up and down" (CXXXIII/542) in that motion, some of whose significance I have discussed above. On the present limited reading, the Whale is the aggressor, but Ahab's role is extremely complicated, since he both desires and hates, since he is also aggressor as well as victim: "And now, while both elastic gunwales were springing in and out, . . . for the bows were almost inside him /Moby-Dick/, as it were; . . . Ahab, furious with this tantalizing vicinity of his foe, which placed him all alive and helpless in the very jaws he hated; frenzied with all this, he seized the long bone with his naked hands, and wildly strove to wrench it from its grip" (CXXXIII/541). The passage develops from a slightly earlier one in which the whale is described with sensual particularity: "Through and through; through every plank and each rib, it thrilled for an instant, the whale obliquely lying on his back, in the manner of a biting shark, slowly and feelingly taking its bows full within his mouth, so that the
long, narrow, scrolled lower jaw curled high up into the open air, and one of the teeth caught in a row-lock" (CXXXIII/541).

Ahab, again on this limited reading, is attracted by the whale's male, phallic powers ("the whale shed of enticings . . .") at the same time that he hates and is repelled by them. At the same time that the Whale is in Ahab, Ahab is also in the Whale, furiously, impotently resisting the force which he wants to destroy but to which he is also passionately attracted. In this sublimated drama of imagery and action, the Whale is basically male, and his phallic power is viewed as basically destructive. This threatening quality perhaps reveals something about Melville's attitude toward male power. The role of the White Whale, moreover, is as ambiguous as that of Ahab--who is pursuer, who is pursued? The obscurities here have their roots, I think, in the obscurities of Melville's sexual makeup, and perhaps involve that bisexuality which some critics have discussed.  

In the limited interpretation which I have been suggesting, I do not want to vulgarize the force or depth of the ending or of the symbolism of either Moby-Dick, Ahab, or the fiery hunt itself. Instead, I have been trying to indicate another vitalizing, complicating dimension which possibly has received insufficient attention. Something like the tangled motifs which are here submerged come, in Pierre, to occupy the center and the surface of a major work, one which Melville began writing almost immediately after he completed this section of Moby-Dick. Analogous themes, often developed indirectly, are also central to stories and poems which Melville
continued to write during the remainder of his life: "The Paradise of Bachelors," "After the Pleasure Party," and "The Haglets" are a few of them. In our day, the pattern which I detect in the conclusion of Moby-Dick is comprehensible enough so that any mediocre writer can employ it mechanically. For Melville, I suggest, the achievement was more difficult, perhaps more unconscious, but certainly more authentic than that.

In various ways, I have been developing D. H. Lawrence's insight into the phallic significance of the White Whale. Melville's reading in Sterne and Rabelais helped to condition that irreverent, subversive phallicism. But I have not yet associated these two writers with the White Whale himself, and I can do so now only in the most tentative way. I suggest, however, that Melville's imagination responded to Rabelais' size and scope—the amplitude and diversity of Moby-Dick indicate some of the affinities. Similarly, I think that the White Whale answers to Rabelais' size and depth.

Gigantic codpieces pervade Gargantua and Pantagruel, and the energy, value, and prodigious exploits of "the sacred ithyphallion" (III/xxvii/77) are celebrated repeatedly. The natural functions are taken as matters-of-fact; and, described in a matter-of-fact way, they are often cruelly destructive: the urine from Gargantua's mare drowns "all the forces the enemy had" (I/xxxvi/217) and the dead bodies clog the ford. Or Panurge revenges himself on an uncooperative lady: he feeds an aphrodisiac to "a hot or salt-bitch," kills it, cuts up its sexual parts to make a powder, and then
sprinkles it over the lady, whereupon all the dogs in the city—
"above six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs"—"came running to this
lady with the smell of the drugs that he had strewed upon her, both
small and great, big and little, all came, laying out their member,
smelling to her, and pissing everywhere upon her, it was the greatest
villainy in the world... But the chambermaids could not abstain
from laughing" (II/xxii/102-103). Throughout Gargantua and Pantagruel,
moreover, the very flood and multiplicity of names for the sex act
and the sexual parts constitutes an enormous achievement.

The resemblances to Moby-Dick cannot be demonstrated at all
precisely, but I suggest that in some marvellously transformed way,
the destructive cruelty and the Gargantuan phallicism of the White
Whale have been supported and inspired by Melville's reading of Gar­
gantua and Pantagruel.

12. Rabelais, Form, and the Dramatic
Sequences in Moby-Dick

The very size, structure, and diversity of Moby-Dick or Mardi in
contrast to Typee or Omoo show how willing Melville was to respond to
Gargantua and Pantagruel. Here I shall simply indicate that that
response influenced the structure or form of Moby-Dick. That structure
is marked by shifts in voice and point of view, digressions, and the
presence of unnovelistic stage scenes next to encyclopedic surveys
and irreverent satire. Melville's reading in "the anatomy" is rel­
evant at all points here, and Rabelais is one of the masters in that
genre.
But Rabelais' bearing on the dramatic episodes in *Moby-Dick* deserves more particular attention. "There is every evidence," writes a recent scholar, "that Rabelais had a first-class technical acquaintance with dramatic production, ... an easy familiarity with the technique of the stage." \(^{71}\) In particular, "Rabelais adopted from stage-practice the device of the dramatic dialogue, put his trade-mark upon it, and inserted it into his work, whenever he had occasion to do so. The conversation between Panurge and the semi-quaver friar who answered only in monosyllables is exactly in the run of medieval comedy dialogue; and so is the colloquy of Panurge and the sheep-herder Dingdong; it could be put on any stage. The fifth chapter of the First Book is made up entirely of stage-dialogue, so vivid, brilliant, and well-sustained that it would 'produce' perfectly, without the change of a word, in any comedy of the period." \(^{72}\) As in the dialogue between Panurge and "the ephetic and Pyrrhonian philosopher Trouillogan," all of these conversations are printed as they would be in a play:

Trouillogan. There is some likelihood therein.  
Panurge. But if I do not marry? (III/xxxvi/51)

And so on, for pages, thereafter with the customary abbreviations: "Trouil." and "Pan." \(^{73}\) Thus, although he did not know about the sources in medieval drama, Melville could hardly have missed the fact of drama itself.

Soon after reading Rabelais, Melville was profoundly impressed by Shakespeare. He wanted to do for America what Shakespeare had done for England, and the dramatic scenes in *Moby-Dick* show him doing it.
Melville's sense of what a prose fiction could and should do had been shaped by his reading of Gargantua and Pantagruel, among others. I suggest that, because of Rabelais, he was able to write the Shakespearean, Elizabethan episodes with a full sense that they belonged, without giving that matter a second thought. As a result, all of his creative energy was available for the scenes themselves. If his reading had included Dickens and Thackeray but not Rabelais, I suggest that Melville would have had the vexing formal problem of how to express in fiction what he had been inspired to write by Shakespeare. We should not underestimate the crucial importance of Rabelais' shaping influence on the form of Moby-Dick, because in all likelihood that problem never arose, and Melville's response to Gargantua and Pantagruel is a basic reason why it did not.

13. Summary

In stage scenes—and thus within the formal pattern provided by Rabelais—Ismael frequently returns to Stubb and to the values which cluster around him. These values are complicated and often conflicting, as I have tried to suggest by distinguishing between the social and the authentically literary versions of Rabelais; and Ismael, as we have seen, is often critical. But the very frequency indicates that he is much concerned with what Stubb stands for. And that he is deeply concerned appears from the fact that in the course of rejecting the claims of popular Pantagruelism, Melville is stimulated to create perhaps his most successful minor character
and some of his most resonant prose: "both the ancestry and posterity of Grief go further than the ancestry and posterity of Joy. . . . To trail the genealogies of these high mortal miseries, carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods; so that, in the face of all the glad, hay-making suns, and soft-cymballing, round harvest-moons, we must needs give in to this: that the gods themselves are not forever glad. The ineffaceable, sad birthmark in the brow of man, is but the stamp of sorrow in the signers" (CML/460-461).

The concern is deep partly because Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians directly and personally represented much that Melville had to reject in order to write his own unorthodox, speculative, and symbolic fiction. But if his tone toward the New York Rabelaisians is firm, decided, and sometimes impatient, it is rarely bitter, as it is in Pierre's "Young America in Literature," an analogous attack on Duyckinck's group. The recurring pattern of criticism and conciliation which we have noted reflects Melville's ambivalence toward Duyckinck and the standards of the jolly knights of the Round Table. To concentrate on the criticism: we have seen that the style of the genuine Rabelais is often used against the New York Rabelaisians; even their own style is put to such use.

But before summarizing further, I might pause over one theoretical implication which grows out of the foregoing. The concept of a period style includes a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension: that is, poor and mediocre artists as well as great ones reveal the traits of that style. Thus the anonymous and undistinguished preface to
Amanda (1653) has marked stylistic affinities to Religio Medici, affinities which show the pervasiveness of the common style and which also point up Browne's personal superiority. It is fairly easy to relate Melville's style horizontally to such contemporaries as Emerson and Thoreau, which is what F. O. Matthiessen does implicitly in his brilliant discussion of the use these three made of Sir Thomas Browne. It is much more difficult to connect the style of Moby-Dick vertically with mid-nineteenth century popular fiction. Nathan's quest for the Black Vulture in Bird's Nick of the Woods and the mastadon's stalking of the cave-dwellers in Cornelius Mathew's Behemoth are analogous to Ahab's hunt for the White Whale, but such analogies do not involve style in the important sense of a distinguishing and characteristic use of language.

One reason for the difficulty is that the style of Moby-Dick—like that of Gargantua and Pantagruel, Religio Medici, Tristram Shandy, Sartor Resartus, "Experience," and Walden—is designed to render a mind that is independent, imaginative, and speculative. It is a deeply personal style; and because of its demands, it is very difficult to master. Consequently, after its vogue in the early seventeenth century, very few tried to master it. Melville, however, chose to use that style, and that choice set him apart from the popular audience which had admired Typee and Omoo. It is a cliché that increasingly through the nineteenth into the twentieth century the serious artist has been alienated from the majority of his potential readers. In Melville's case, the cliché sums up a tragic fact.
The social Rabelaisian style of *Moby-Dick* is one of the very few examples in which the book shows a vertical relation to a popular style. At the lowest level, Cornelius Mathews practiced it; at a more reputable and philistine level, Washington Irving, Cary, Briggs, and the Knickerbocker also developed it. The style informed the correspondence of most of those, including Melville, who wrote to Duyckinck, and it presumably animated the conversation at New York soirées. It is a well-defined, solidly grounded period style, and it is an interesting commentary on Melville's relation to popular taste that, instead of unequivocally accepting it, he typically turned that style into a vehicle for satirizing or criticizing its originators.

To say this, however, does not do full justice to the positive contribution made to *Moby-Dick* by men like Duyckinck and the body of critical opinion which he represented. In my discussion of "The Bower in the Araacides," for example, I have tried to show Melville dissenting from the generally orthodox and literal-minded preferences for which Duyckinck was one spokesman. Duyckinck, to pick a single revealing example, was fascinated with the coincidence of a sperm whale's actually sinking the whaler *Ann Alexander* at about the time *Moby-Dick* went to press. He was genuinely enthusiastic, and he devoted more space in his review to this confirmation of Melville's fidelity to literal fact than he did to *Moby-Dick's* fidelity to facts of another order. If he had really "owned the whale" in all its symbolic dimensions he would not have been surprised at what happened to the *Ann Alexander* and he would have been less interested in grounding *Moby-Dick's* authority on that event.
But as far as his novel is concerned, it was good for Melville that he had Duyckinck's tastes to reckon with, and it is also to the advantage of his book that when he wrote *Moby-Dick*, he could share as well as reject these preferences. The very interests which caused Duyckinck to focus on the Ann Alexander also forced or encouraged Melville to pay the kind of meticulous attention to matters of fact which distinguishes the narrative level of *Moby-Dick*. As F. O. Matthiessen plausibly and sensitively argues, the novel's symbolism is compelling because it arises from the solid ground of exactly these mundane and exciting details. To approach the matter from a different direction, one can see in *Moby-Dick* a fusion of such public and popular elements as the whaling material and the adventure story narrative, on the one hand, and the private and personal interests of a serious artist, on the other. In *Moby-Dick*, the public and private are successfully and powerfully combined in a way which Melville never again achieved. It is as a representative of the public that Duyckinck can be said to have made a positive contribution to one of America's greatest works of the imagination.

But to return to my survey: I have noted, to shift from the social to the genuinely literary, that *Gargantua and Pantagruel* forms part of the matrix for some of *Moby-Dick*’s most powerful moral, religious, and social satire. The example of Rabelais’ language and perhaps of his life also helped condition Melville’s style. The force of "Stubb's Supper" is one example; and in a lighter vein, Melville often reworked information from his whaling sources in a Rabelaisian manner.
Gargantua and Pantagruel, moreover, probably helped awaken Melville to the possibilities for fiction of the inverted rituals which form an important pattern in Moby-Dick. Even more basic, Rabelais was also one of those who stimulated Melville to his characteristic mode—symbolism. In helping to shape Melville's sense of what constituted a prose fiction, he also made it easy for him to include the important dramatic episodes. Gargantua and Pantagruel, moreover, helped Melville to see in Stubb something more vital than Evert Duyckinck and his Rabelaisian coterie.

This vitality is also expressed in the recurring phallicism of Moby-Dick, a phallicism to which Rabelais and Sterne contributed. In a variety of tones, ranging from the gaily high-spirited through to the sublimely heroic, sexual imagery in Moby-Dick typically conveys a sense of defiance and power. One dominant emphasis is on Ishmael's hostility to the norms of the respectable community and his simultaneous commitment to the potency of an integral, creative, unassimilated self. Another version stresses the White Whale's primal, defiant, destructive force, a force which is not blind or indifferent but rather actively malicious.

One source of the greatness of Moby-Dick is that its range includes Stubb as well as Ahab, the mate's defiant grin as well as the captain's defiant worship. If he is finally committed to the dark and destructive sea, in Moby-Dick, Melville can also respond to the glorious and life-giving sun. In Pierre and the Confidence Man, he had become so little interested in the values which Stubb represents
that he did not even try to create an analogous character. Ahab and
the sea, or versions of them, totally dominate these books. Melville
could no longer create a Stubb, and that fact, I think, is both a
cause and symptom of the relative failure of these two novels.
Melville could no longer manage to be Rabelaisian.
Chapter III
HOLLAND'S PLUTARCH’S MORALS

1. Introduction

"The Whale as a Dish," a chapter we have already looked at, begins: "That mortal man should feed upon the creature that feeds his lamp, and, like Stubb, eat him by his own light, as you may say; this seems so outlandish a thing one must needs go a little into the history and philosophy of it" (LXV/297). Ishmael is preparing the reader for the material which follows, but he is also very precisely describing what Melville did immediately before or during the writing of both the chapter and the sequence to which it belongs. Melville, as everyone knows, worked very closely from sources. Howard P. Vincent has shown that throughout the writing of Moby-Dick Melville used his whaling books extensively, sometimes hardly bothering to change their phrasing but more often transmuting their information, sometimes, as I have pointed out, in a Rabelaisian manner. For the most part, however, the Rabelaisianism of Moby-Dick does not seem to have sprung from a recent re-reading specifically undertaken to recall definite ideas or attitudes. But that Melville did turn directly to intellects more impressive than Scoresby's is clear, for example, from Mardi, where William Brasewell has shown that Melville took whole passages from his personal copy of L'Estrange's Seneca's Morals, attributed them in no dishonest fashion to "an antique Pagan," and worked so closely from the original that he "lined
out in his copy of the *Morals* the words he wished to omit and wrote 'anything,' 'Oro,' the word for God in *Mardi* / and 'Oro' in the margin near where they were to be inserted".  

It should come as no surprise, then, to find that in addition to "going a little into its history" in Scoresby and J. Ross Browne (M-V/757), Melville also went a little into its philosophy. He did so in the Holland Plutarch's "Of Eating Flesh" and the Cotton Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," and not necessarily at the same time or for the same reasons he turned to Plutarch's "Land Creatures Compared to Water Creatures." Melville may also have consulted other writers directly; and as my earlier discussion indicates, the section reveals several literary and social influences.

In other words, an intricate web of experience which no one will ever completely understand enabled Melville to see the shark in Stubb, the cannibal in the civilized, precisely as he does in the chapters we are considering. His direct experience of life both in the South Seas and in New York is basic, and so is the Bible, particularly his intense response to the Sermon on the Mount. A line from L'Estrange—"In this state of corruption, who so fit as a good honest Christian Pagan for a moderator among Pagan Christians"—is related to the characteristic inversions of this sequence as well as to the entire conception of Queequeg and to the theme of the savage versus the civilized. I have already discussed Rabelais' important bearing on the episode. Montaigne's impact is more immediate, and I will go into it in Chapter IV. The whaling books also played their role.
But Plutarch, too, conditioned Melville's way of seeing and of rendering what he saw. I do not want to exaggerate Plutarch's importance or to oversimplify the infinite complexities of the creative process; but many of the details as well as the central perception of the episode we are dealing with derive from him, certainly not exclusively but in a way that is of special importance. The South Seas, Rabelais, and the Bible, among others, provided the base; but Plutarch, I think, opened up specific possibilities and helped give precise shape to what was perhaps previously only partly formed and felt. To use slightly different terms, in contrast to Rabelais and the Bible, Plutarch—and Montaigne—figure here as immediate sources which Melville consulted, to what effect and for what reasons the following pages will try to say.5

2. Cannibalism and "The Whale as a Dish":
From Essay to Essay

Plutarch's "Of Eating Flesh" vividly and at length argues the inhumanity, horror, and sin involved in eating the flesh of beasts. Although Plutarch does not base his case exclusively on Pythagoras or Empedocles, the source of the essay's moral energy is their belief that animals contain the transmigrated souls of the dead: "Consider now a little, whether those philosophers that teach and will us to eat our children, our friends, our fathers and wives when they are dead, do make us more gentle and fuller of humanity, than Pythagoras and Empedocles, who accustom and acquaint us to be kind and just, even to other creatures" (EF/475). In the very process of introducing
his commentary on Stubb's feast and "the whale as a dish," Melville acknowledges the help he has received by rearranging Plutarch's words, phrases, and ideas. "Consider now a little whether those philosophers . . ."; or as Melville has Ishmael put it, "One must needs go a little into . . ., one must "consider a little" the history and philosophy of it." A little earlier Plutarch writes:

"this was certainly a strange and monstrous supper, that any man should hunger after those beasts, and desire to eat them whilsts they still keep into allowing" (EF/470). Melville begins: "That mortal man should feed upon "that any man should hunger after"/ the creature that feeds his lamp, and, like Stubb, eat him by his own light, as you may say, this seems so outlandish a thing . . ." To begin with a minor detail, "creature," as one might expect, recurs throughout Plutarch's essay; once, for example, a few lines before the passage I have quoted. Even Ishmael's phrase "as you may say" ("and eat him by his own light, as you may say") has roots in the same paragraph of Plutarch that Melville has been drawing on: "and as a man may say" or "but this, you will say, is a loud lie." More important, Melville keeps Plutarch's word ("eat") and idea—that it is "monstrous," "outlandish," to devour a newly killed beast—but Melville also departs from Plutarch. He changes that idea first into a grotesque pun ("should feed upon the creature that feeds his lamp") and then into one of his characteristic inversions ("and eat him by his own light, as you may say").

But one function of "The Whale as a Dish" is to moderate as well as comment on "Stubb's Supper." As a result, instead of immediately
pursuing the disturbing implications of his opening, Ishmael introduces a series of good-natured historical anecdotes which he has taken from his whaling sources. He finally leaves these sources, however; and the following sentence marks his move from "the history" to "the philosophy of it": "It is not, perhaps, entirely because the whale is so excessively unctuous that landsmen seem to regard the eating of him with abhorrence; that appears to result, in some way, from the consideration before mentioned, i.e., that a man should eat a newly murdered thing of the sea, and eat it too by its own light. But no doubt the first man that ever murdered an ox was regarded as a murderer; perhaps he was hung; and if he had been put on his trial by oxen, he certainly deserved it if any murderer does. . . . Cannibals? Who is not a cannibal?" (LXV/299.) The continuation of the passage from Plutarch which I quoted on p. 142 is relevant here:

as for the sentences and opinions of Pythagoras and Empedocles, they were the very laws, ordinances, statutes and judgements of the ancient Greeks, according to which they framed their lives, to wit: That there were between us and brute beasts certaine common rights: who were they then, that afterwards otherwise ordained? Even they who first of iron and steel, mischievous swords did forge: And of poore labouring ox at plough, began to cut the gorge. For even thus also began tyrants to commit murders; like as at the first in old time, they killed at Athens one notorious and most wicked sycophant, named Epitideus; so they did by a second, and likewise a third. . . . Semblably, men began at first to eat flesh of some savage and hurtfull beast, then some fouls and fish were snared and caught with nets, and consequently, cruelty (being fleshed as it were, exercised and inured in these and such like slaughters) proceeded even to the poor labouring ox, to the silly sheepe . . . , yea, and to the house-cock; and thus men by little and little augmenting their insatiable greediness, never staied untill they came to man-slaughter, to murder, yea, and to bloody
battles. . . . Are not these reasons yet at leastwise sufficient to reclaim and divert men from this unbridled intemperance of murdering dumb beasts?

Part of what has happened here is that once again words, phrases, examples, and ideas from "Of Eating Flesh" have been telescoped, condensed, and fused into a passage which is new and striking, but which still owes something important to Plutarch. "That a man should eat a newly murdered thing of the sea," coming as abruptly as it does after the elaborate understatement of the two opening clauses, contains a jolting perception sharply phrased and strategically placed. The strategy is entirely Melville's but the phrasing and perception are related to Plutarch's. His abhorrence of "murdering dumb beasts," to begin with, is reflected in Ishmael's hostile and equally general phrase "a newly murdered thing of the sea." Ishmael applies the idea specifically to the whale, but Plutarch vividly renders the horror of eating any newly killed animal: "how could he find in his heart to be served at his table with the dead bodies, and as a man may say, very idols, to make his food and nourishment of those parts and members which a little before did bleat, low, bellow, walke and see? (EF/470.) The question is clearly part of the matrix from which "Stubb's Supper" grew. But to continue.

For Plutarch the killing of "the poore labouring ox at plough" is the first step in a series which inexorably ends in "man-slaughter, murder, yea, and . . . bloody battels." But whereas he moves to that end "little by little," Ishmael, who is made to be more direct, omits the intermediate stages and fuses the start and conclusion of
Plutarch's argument into the blunt statement, "But no doubt the first man that ever murdered an ox was regarded as a murderer." That "first man," moreover, combines the tyrants who "thus also began to commit murders" with some of the words and the turn back to origins of "at first in old time, they killed . . ." and "men began at first to eat the flesh . . ." Finally, Ishmael regards his murderer's punishment as well-deserved, which is exactly the point of Plutarch's essay.

To put more sharply what so far has been mainly implicit inseparable from the words and ideas is the fact that Plutarch has helped Melville discover a moral perspective. Melville was able to view the eating of the whale "with abhorrence," he was able to see the "outlandish" potential of such behavior, partly because Plutarch had set a powerful and direct example for him.

Elsewhere in his essay Plutarch asks, concerning the killing of a poor sheep: "for what know you to the contrary, whether in that sheepe be the soul lodged of some kinsman of yours, or peradventure of some God? Is the danger (before God) all one and the same, whether I refuse to eat of the flesh, or believe not that I kill my child or some one of my kinsfolk?" (EF/476.) To eat that sheep is to risk an act of cannibalism. Plutarch's question thus provides part of the context and stimulus for another question, one with which we are already familiar: "Cannibals? who is not a cannibal? I tell you it will be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine; it will be more
tolerable for that provident Fejee, I say, in the day of judgment, than for thee, civilized and enlightened gourmand, who nailst geese to the ground and feastest on their bloated livers in thy paté-de-foie-gras" (LXV/299). In another relevant passage, which I quote in full on p.154, Plutarch agrees with the Egyptians that the "belly and bowells" are "the cause of all sinnes: ... so we would first cut away all our gourmandise, gluttony, and murdering of innocent creatures, that we might afterwards lead a life pure and holy" (EF/474). Here and throughout his essay, Plutarch makes strikingly apparent that cruelly murdering and then feasting on an innocent creature is a sin that will be judged "before God" "in the day of judgment." He has thus helped Melville to a moral position from which he can see the extent to which the gourmand is as guilty as the Fejee, and by a very short extension, the sense in which it will be more tolerable for that provident Fejee in the day of judgment than for us civilized and enlightened citizens.

But more of Melville's imaginative power is engaged here than in the preceding material, and because he has transformed more, the close verbal parallels are gone. His "gourmand" and Plutarch's "gourmandise" are similar enough, and the general nature of the action is related to Plutarch, who humanizes his animals and insists on the "monstrous cruelty" of slitting a sheep's throat or torturing a pig. Without using any specific example, as he did with the ox, for one, Melville nonetheless draws on some of the emotional charge that Plutarch has built up and associated with a certain kind of behavior:
For some in killing of swine or porkers, thrust them in with red-hot spits; to the end that the bloud being shed and quenched as it were by the tincture of the fiery iron, running through the body, might cause the flesh forsooth to be more tender and delicate; ye shall have others leap upon the udders and paps of the poore sowses ready to farrow, and trample upon their bellies and teats with their feet, that the bloud, the milk, and the congealed bag of the young pigges, knitt within the dammes womb, being all jumbled, confused and blended together, even amide the painfull pangs of farrowing (O Jupiter Piacularis) they might make (I would not else) a most dainty dish of meat, and devour the most corrupt and putrified part of the poor beast . . . whereby it appeareth evidently, that it is not for need of nourishment, nor for want and necessity; but even for society, wantonness, sumptous curiosity, and superfluous excess, that of horrible injustice and wickedness, they make their pleasure and delight. (EF/474)

Melville—in his nailing image, for example—has in effect condensed such passages and made them more subtly indirect.

In "Of eating Flesh" Plutaroh is unequivocally strong, harsh, and direct, whereas Melville, as may be observed in the last quotation, uses a curious sort of humor to take some of the edge from his criticism. In this particular case, his hint of frontier humor and mock oratory deflect the full impact of Plutarch's searingly straightforward indictment—this for reasons, some involving Duyckinck, which I have already tried to indicate (see Chapter II/9/iii). In much of his explicit evaluation in "The Whale as a Dish" Melville consequently does not match Plutarch's power. The Rabelaisian passage which I discussed earlier achieves a subtlety and complexity which are at least as fine as anything in "Of Eating Flesh," but these very qualities point up the difference that I am trying to suggest.
Plutarch, as we have seen, excels in the language and strategy of connected moral argument. He does not attempt to conceal his position or his aim, and he systematically goes about developing that position. When, as he frequently does, he presents his often brutal and concrete examples in the form of questions, they are questions which contain their own answers and lead to explicit and moving judgments:

How could his eyes endure to behold such murder and slaughter, whiles the poor beasts were either sticked or had their throats cut, were flayed and dismembered? how could his nose abide the smell and sent that came from them? how came it that his taste was not cleansed and overthrown with horror, when he came to handle those uncouth sores and ulcers or receive the blood and humours, issuing out of the deadly wounds. (EF/470)

Melville, as we have seen, also asks a question; and, more important, his announced intention in "The Whale as a Dish" gives him an opportunity to use exactly the same language and strategy as Plutarch: that chapter could legitimately have been a moral essay as outspoken as "Of Eating Flesh."

3. Cannibalism and "Stubb's Supper":
   From Essay to Drama

Melville, however, obviously felt more compelled by the dramatic than by the essayistic possibilities of Plutarch's theme. As I have noted earlier, moreover, Melville is often freer and more outspoken when the voice is impersonal instead of Ishmael's "I," particularly when Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians are involved. The fact
that "The Whale as a Dish" contains so many of Plutarch's words, phrases, and ideas is a symptom that—to employ Coleridge's useful distinction—basically the fancy was involved, reordering, eliminating, and sometimes adding; but except in the Rabelaisian passage, not doing very much more. In "Stubb's Supper" and "The Shark Massacre," however, the imagination is engaged, in these chapters transforming into dramatic action hints and suggestions from Plutarch (and several others). And because more of Melville's creative energy is involved, the close verbal resemblances to Plutarch are absent, and the relation becomes that of the synopsis to the acted drama.

I can now consider "Stubb's Supper." I begin with a sentence from Plutarch, part of which has already been quoted: "This was certainly a strange and monstrous supper, that any man should hunger after those beasts, and desire to eat them whiles they still keep alowing; to prescribe also, and teach men how they should feed of those creatures which live and cry still; to ordeine likewise, how they ought to be dressed, boiled, or roasted, and served upon the board" (EF/470). The "supper" of this and other passages probably suggested Melville's chapter title, but more important, the final clause is a precise abstract of Stubb's dialogue with Fleece and hence of the substance of the supper itself. Throughout the scene Stubb "ordeins," "prescribes," and commands how the whale is to be served upon his "sideboard," his "private table here, the capstan." At the very outset, for example, "this old Ebony floundered along, and in obedience to the word of command, came to a dead stop on the opposite side of Stubb's sideboard" (LXIV/292). The negro and his shambling walk, as we have already seen,
come from the burnt-cork world of Thomas Rice; the table, however, comes from a very different world—Plutarch's. Similarly, Plutarch supplies the stage directions for what is finally rendered partly as an act from a minstrel show. Stubb, to be specific, immediately begins "to prescribe . . . how they should feed of those creatures": "'Cook,' said Stubb, rapidly lifting a rather reddish morsel to his mouth, 'don't you think this steak is rather overdone? You've been beating this steak too much, cook; it's too tender. Don't I always say that to be good, a whale steak must be tough?'" (LXIV/295).

And, with some help from Scoresby, he "teaches" and "ordeins" exactly how "they ought to be dressed"—"have them put in pickle, . . . have them soused, cook" (LXIV/296)—and also how "they ought to be boiled, or roasted and served upon the board": "'Well, for the future, when you cook another whale steak for my private table here, the capstan, I'll tell you what to do so as not to spoil it by overdoing. Hold the steak in one hand, and show a live coal to it with the other; that done, dish it, d'ye hear?'" (LXIV/296).

We have already seen how Stubb, because he is conceived within a Rabelaisian context, escapes the full force of Plutarch's indictment. In the mate's concluding speeches, to be more specific, humor operates affirmatively to assert values, not merely defensively to soften criticism. In "The Whale as a Dish," on the other hand, Melville's humor has the latter function.

In Omoo, Melville had vigorously described the makings of a feast which is one predecessor of Stubb's:
"Well, then," said he, in a smugged tone, his eyes lighting up like two lanterns, "well then, I'd go to Mother Mill's that makes the great muffins: I'd go there, you know, and cock my foot on the 'ob and call for a noggin o' somethink to begin with."

"And what then, Ropey?"

"What then, Flashy," continued the poor victim, unconsciously warming up to his theme; "why, then, I'd draw my chair up and call for Betty, the gal wot tends to the customers. Betty, my dear, says I, you looks charmin' this mornin'; give me a nice rasher of bacon and h'eggs, Betty, my love; and I wants a pint of h'ale, and three nice hot muffins and butter—and a slice of Cheshire; and Betty, I wants—"

"A shark steak and be hanged to you!" roared Black Dan with an oath.

Melville's active interest in scenes like this made him particularly alert to certain passages and motifs in Plutarch and Rabelais, whom he read after he completed Omoo. The far-ranging implications of "Stubb's Supper" reveal how productive that reading had been; and the depth and complexity that Melville has added to the lively realism of Omoo show some of what Plutarch and Rabelais had meant to his art.

The combined influence of Plutarch and Rabelais (and the New York Rabelaisians) is also at work in Chapters XCIV-XCV of Mardi. The episode is thus intermediate between the fine, uncomplicated one in Omoo and the deeper and more disturbing chapter in Moby-Dick: it shows Melville moving toward "Stubb's Supper" and Fleece's sermon, but not yet ready to go to their extremes.

We can now examine Plutarch's role in Fleece's sermon. That sermon develops from Borabolla's address to the fish and its Plutarchian, Rabelaisian context; but Melville is now ready to go much farther than either Plutarch, Rabelais, or his own earlier sermon. A quotation from
"Of Eating Flesh" is an appropriate starting point: "O monstrous cruelty! It is a horrible sight to see the table of rich men only stand served and furnished with viands set out by cooks and victualers that dress the flesh of dead bodies; but most horrible it is to see the same taken up, for that the relics and broken bones remaining, be far more than that which is eaten"(EF/472). /See also the last part of the quotation on p. 148. Melville could easily have reworked this and even more outspoken passages into the forceful denunciation of Stubb which he apparently did not wish to write. Instead, the sharp criticism of the rich, of those who wastefully grab "far more than that which is eaten"—this criticism is reserved for the sharks and the social system and the kind of human nature they represent. In "The Whale as a Dish" we saw the extent to which the perspective but not the tone was inspired by Plutarch. It is when Melville is concerned with the ferocious and diabolic sharks that that perspective is inspired with the same moral energy and the same unequivocal hostility which characterize "Of Eating Flesh." Fleece's sermon and the sharks' banquet, however, also spring from many other sources, so that Plutarch's impact is less dominant in exactly those places which most fully combine his tone and outlook.

Melville's or Ishmael's is the dominant voice. Put its accents have been conditioned, among others, by Shakespeare and the Bible, particularly by the Sermon on the Mount. Scoresby makes his contribution, and as we have seen, Rabelais is here at one with Plutarch. The combined force of several writers thus helps to release the power of Fleece's sermon and of the shark passages. That the big mouths
with small bellies should feed the helpless little mouths is part of Fleece's bitter Sermon on the Mount, but Plutarch is also involved. "Of Eating Flesh" and "Land Beasts and Water Beasts" have the same relation to the remainder of the episode: theirs is not the only influence, so that one has the sense that Plutarch has shared to reawaken and reinforce, which is a noble role for any writer to play. It is in this sense that Plutarch may be said to have suggested the idea, perspective, and tone of the sermon itself. To begin with, Plutarch's moral essay reads like a sermon—which is to say that it uses the techniques and language which a strong minister would also use. "The Second Declamation," for example, begins:

Reason would, that we should be fresh disposed, and ready in will, in mind, and thought, to heare the discourse against this musty and unsavory custome of eating flesh: For hard it is, as Cato was wont to say, to preach to the belly that hath no ears... Neither is it any easie matter for them to cast up against the hooke of the appetite to eat flesh, who have swallowed it down into their entrals, and are transported and full of the love of pleasures and delights: But well and happy it were for us, if, as the manner is of the Egyptians, so soon as men are dead, to paunch them, and when their belly and bowells be taken forth, to mangle, cut and slice the same against the sun, and then to fling them away, as being the cause of all sinnes that they have committed: so we would first cut away from our selves all our gourmandise, gluttony, and murdering of innocent creatures, that we might afterwards lead the rest of our life pure and holy. (EF/474)

"For hard it is, as Cato was wont to say, to preach unto the belly that hath no ears"—when Fleece transforms this elevated language into his own dialect, it becomes: "no use a-preaching to such dam g'ttons as you call 'em, till dare bellies is full, and dare bellies is bottomless; and when dey do get 'em full, dey won't hear you
Throughout his sermon Fleece is indicting those "dam g'uttons as you call 'em," but Plutarch, not Stubb, has supplied him with the word: "so we would first cut away from ourselves all our gourmandise, gluttony, and murdering of innocent creatures." That gluttons are "damned souls" is made abundantly clear throughout Plutarch; and as the quotations indicate, he was among those who encouraged Fleece to condemn such behavior as severely as he does.

To continue. "Fleece, holding both hands over the fishy mob, raised his shrill voice" and pronounced his bitter and inverted benediction: "Cussed fellow-critters! Kick up de damndest row as ever you can; fill your dam bellies 'till dey bust--and den die."

"So soon as men are dead, to paunch them, and when their belly and bowells be taken forth, to mangle, cut and slice the same against the sun, and then to fling them away, as being cause of all sinnes that they have committed": the strong diction and unapologetically direct action must have encouraged, supported, and stimulated the creation of Fleece's speech. But the emphasis shifts to the "cussed" and the "damndest bellies," and only very indirectly is there any hint of the value of a life "pure and holy." What this shift indicates is that, although the idea of a sermon may have been immediately suggested by Plutarch, as the idea is carried out, its style—a parody of established ritual—has been influenced from other quarters, Rabelais and the minstrel show burlesques among them.

Gluttony and all that it stands for are nonetheless central in both Plutarch and the sermon. A related way of stating the issue is that they are both concerned with nature—with "wicked nature"
controlled and governed and with that same nature intemperately, voraciously, and cruelly run wild so that it becomes diabolically destructive. Stubb says, "Cook, go and talk to 'em; tell 'em they are welcome to help themselves civilly and in moderation, but they must keep quiet" (LXIV/295). And Fleece, after establishing that we, "his belubed fellow-critters" are "all sharks, and by nature very voracious," goes on: "'Your voraciousness, fellow-critters, I can't blame ye so much for; dat is nature and can't be helped; but to gobern dat wicked natur, dat is de pint'" (LXTV/294).

Plutarch is also willing to accommodate "voracious nature" if it restrains and governs itself "civilly and in moderation": "But say, it is not in our power to effect this much /to "cut away ... all our gourmandise, gluttony, and murdering of innocent creatures"/; ... yet let us at leastwise commit sinne in measure, and transgress with reason: Let us I say eat flesh, but so as we be driven thereto for very hunger, and not drawn to it by a licorous tooth, to satisfie our necessitie, and not to feed our greedy and delicate humour" (EF/474). And Plutarch's account of what happens when "the bounds of nature are passed," when nature is not governed--his description, that is, of the results of intemperance--provided a stimulus and perhaps a general outline for Fleece's treatment of the sharks: "whereby it appeareth evidently, that it is not for need of nourishment, nor for want and necessity; but even for society, wantonness, sumptuous curiosity, and superfluous excess, that of horrible injustice and wickedness, they make their pleasure and delight ... even so intemperance in meats, when it hath passed once the bounds of nature,
and limits of necessity, proceedeth to outrage and cruelty’ (EF/474).
It proceeds, that is, to tearin' de blubber out your neighbour's
mout," gourging to insensibility, and finally, beyond any bounds
that Plutarch imagined, to the very limits of evil and destruction.

"Brit," and "The Shark Massacre"

Quite independent of Plutarch, Melville was tormented by the
problem of essential evil which the sharks posed. He was more than
"startled" by "the sharp slapping of their tails against the hull
within a few inches of the sleepers' hearts." He was not at all
asleep and his heart and mind were very sensitive to what went on
around them: "Peering over the side you could just see them (as
before you heard them) wallowing in the sullen, black waters, and
turning over on their backs as they scooped out huge globular pieces
of the whale of the bigness of a human head. This particular feat
of the shark seems all but miraculous. How, at such an apparently
unassailable surface, they contrive to gouge out such symmetrical
mouthfuls, remains a part of the universal problem of all things"
(LXIV/291). The "outrage and cruelty" of such skill and such
symmetrical beauty accompanying such destructive horror was for Mel-
ville "a part of the universal problem of all things" before Plutarch
became a part of the life of his imagination. But in complicated
ways Plutarch nonetheless re-confirmed and helped give form to what
Melville felt about the sharks.
Along with Scoresby, he may, for example, have incited Melville to use a banquet as the focus for his ideas and feelings about them. In the section of "Land-Creatures Compared with those of the Water" which immediately precedes the extract from that essay, Phaedimus, the spokesman for the creatures of the water, sets down several instances of the "mutual love" and genial society of fish: "As for other fishes that be sociable and love to live and are seen to converse in great companies together, no man is able to number them, they be so many" (LB/799). But among the instances which he continues to set down is the following, from the paragraph just before the extract: "The purple fishes keep in companies together, and make themselves a common cell, . . . wherein by report, they do engender and breed: and look what they have laid up for their store and provision of victuals, . . . those they put forth out of their shells, and present them unto their fellows for to eat, banquetting round as it were every one in their turn, and keeping their course to feast, one eating of another's provision. But no great marvel it is to see such an amiable society and loving fellowship among them" (LB/799).

When Ishmael writes about Stubb's banquet, he ironically echoes this passage: "Nor was Stubb the only banqueter on whale's flesh that night. Mingling their mumblings with his own mastications, thousands on thousands of sharks, swarming round the dead Leviathan, smackingly feasted on its fatness" (cf. Ishmael's "banqueter," "swarming round," and "feasted"; and Plutarch's "banquetting round" and "feast"). Ishmael then gives a series of examples which show the cannibalistic butchery in a sea-fight and the sharkishness of slave ships. In the
process, he describes the sharks at a naval battle congregating
"like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is being carved, ready
to bolt down every man that is tossed to them," and, like the naval
butchers above, "quarrelsonely carving away under the table at the
dead meat." He also mentions the helpful sharks which always
accompany slave ships,

to be handy in case a parcel is to be carried anywhere,
or a dead slave to be decently buried; and though one
or two other like instances might be set down, touching
the set terms, places, and occasions, when sharks do
most socially congregate, and most hilariously feast,
yet is there no conceivable time or occasion when you
will find them in such countless numbers, and in gayer
or more jovial spirits, than around a dead sperm
whale, moored by night to a whaleship at sea. If you
have never seen that sight, then suspend your decision
about the propriety of devil-worship, and the expediency
of conciliating the devil. (LXIV/291-292)

I think that the examples and technique in this scene are intended
partly to reverse Plutarch's Phaedimus. For example, in Ishmael's
opening account of the sea-fight and the slave ship, the irony is
intensified when these instances are seen as a bitter parody of
Phaedimus' cheerful apology for fish, of his habit of "setting down
one or two like instances, touching the set terms, places, and
occasions." As part of this parody, Ishmael inverts Phaedimus'
picture of fish genially sharing their food, "one eating of another's
provisions, banqueting round as it were every one in their turn"--
and for Ishmael's fish, sometimes quarrelsonely out of turn. The
"provisions" in his case are also disquietingly different from Plu-
tarch's.
The connection with "Land Beasts" becomes even closer when Ishmael describes the sharks around the whale. Phaedimus' language and ideas— the congenial, harmonious banqueting; the amiable society and feast—are taken over, exaggerated ("hilarious," "in gayer or more jovial spirits"), and infused with a pervasive irony. Phaedimus has described a scene which is the exact opposite of the sharks' banquet, but it is the very absence of brotherly love and amiable sharing in the sharks and in us which gives a moral fulcrum to the episode, both here and in Fleece's sermon. At the same time that Ishmael parodies Phaedimus' unearned optimism, he invokes values which Phaedimus may have made imaginatively viable for him again, perhaps by inciting him to reestablish these values in a more recalcitrant and more valid setting.

And Plutarch himself supplied a view of the sea and its creatures which may well have helped Ishmael to darken and toughen Phaedimus' picture of amiable and loving banqueters. This is quite aside from the reminder of other qualities in other kinds of water beasts in the end of Phaedimus' remarks: "But no great marvel it is ... considering that the most unsociable, cruel, and savage creatures of all that live either in rivers or lakes or seas, I mean the crocodile, shewth himself wonderful fellow-like and gracious in that society and dealing that is between him and the Trochilus" (LB/799).

More to the point are two speeches by Aristotimus, Phaedimus' antagonist. The first is two pages preceding, the other two pages following another well-established borrowing from the essay: 11
And therefore we must say, that those Philosophers who hold: That there is no communion nor society of justice between us and bruit beasts, say true, if they restrain their speech unto those creatures only, which live in the sea and deep bottomless waters, with whom indeed we can have no fellowship at all of good will, love and affection, as being beasts far remote from all gentleness, sweet converse, and good nature: and therefore Homer speaking unto a man, who seemed to be inhumanly cruel and unsociable, said elegantly thus:

The blackish blew sea I think well,
Engendred thee, thou art so fell.

as if he would thereby give us to understand, that the sea brings forth no creature that is milde, lovely, meek and gentle. (LB/789)

And Aristotimus concludes his part of the dialogue by saying:

To be short, an hundred thousand things there be that God doth shew, foretell and prognosticate unto us by the means of beasts, as well those of the land beneath, as the fowls of the air above. But who that shall plead in behalf of fishes or water-creatures, will not be able to allege so much as one: for, deaf they be all and dumb; blind also for any fore-sight or providence that they have, as being cast into a baleful place, and bottomless gulf, where impious Athiests and rebellious Titans or Giants against God are bestowed; where they have no sight of God, no more than in hell where damned souls are; where the reasonable and intellectual part of the soul is utterly extinct, and the rest that remaineth, drenched or rather drowned (as a man would say) in the most base and vile sensual part, so they seem rather to pant then to live. (LB/794)

This is a "serious plea . . . which might beseem well to be pronounced at the bar in judicial court, or delivered from a pulpit and tribunal before a publick audience" (LB/794). The measured dignity of the prose and the contrast between the diabolical sea and the meek and gentle earth are relevant to much of Moby-Dick's land-sea symbolism, particularly to parts of Ishmael's moving statement of a like contrast at the end of "Brit":
to landmen in general, the native inhabitants of the
seas have ever been regarded with emotions unspeakably
unsocial and repelling. . . . Consider the subtleness
of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under
water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously
hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider
also the devilish brilliancy and beauty of many of its
most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished
shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more,
the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures
prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the
world began.

Consider all this; and then turn to this green,
gentle, and most docile earth; consider them both, the
sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy
to something in yourself? (LVIII/273-274)

Aristotimus is the landman in particular who regards "the native
inhabitants of the sea with emotions unspeakably unsocial and repel-
ling." And his categorical assertion that "the sea brings forth no
creature that is mild, lovely, meek and gentle" perhaps conditions
Ishmael's diction and view of the land—"this green, gentle, and most
docile earth"—as well as of the sea's deceptive "loveliest tints of
azure." The very debate form of "Land Beasts Compared with those of
the Water" would have pervasively impressed on Melville the contrast
between land and sea, and Phaedimus' rejoinder a few sentences after
the passage I have been quoting is another specific example of the
way Melville may have drawn on the fact of that contrast: "And yet
verily in the proofs and arguments drawn from creatures above the
ground, there is nothing to empeach the sight, the view of them being
so apparent and daily presented unto our eye, whereas the sea affordeth
us the sight of a few effects, within it and those hardly and with
much ado (as it were) by a glaunce and glimmering light, hiding from
us the most part of the breeding and feeding of fishes" (LB/794).
Phaedimus' "apparent" and Ishmael's "unapparent"; Phaedimus' "hiding" and Ishmael's "hidden"; even Phaedimus' "the most part" perhaps suggesting Ishmael's "for the most part," all in addition to the shared idea of the sea's glimmering secretiveness—this much Phaedimus' introduction has in common with Moby-Dick. Melville, in short, has apparently remembered words, phrases, and ideas from each antagonist; he has intermingled them; and he has transformed the original context, particularly Phaedimus' argument, to suit his own purposes.

If the central perception of "Brit"—that beauty deceptively conceals destructive evil—owes little to Plutarch, the same is not true of the view of the sea. Ishmael writes: "for ever and for ever, to the crack of doom, the sea will insult and murder him, and pulverize the stateliest, stiffest frigate he can make; nevertheless, by the continual repetition of these very impressions, man has lost that sense of the full awfulness of the sea which aboriginally belongs to it" (LVIII/273-274). Plutarch's Aristotimus was one of those who helped Melville retain his individual sense of the awfulness which aboriginally belongs to the diabolic and shark-invested sea.

But to return to "Stubb's Supper" and "The Shark Massacre." Much of their "great power"—to use Melville's words about Hawthorne's power—"derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free" (Rep. Sel./333). Plutarch's Aristotimus, however, actively reinforces this sense and helps to associate it with the sea and its creatures and they in turn with the damned, the diabolical, and the brutally
sensual. "The same shape or other" becomes the particular shape of "Stubb’s Supper" and "The Shark Massacre" partly because of Plutarch.

"Of Eating Flesh" as well as "Land Beasts" also makes its impact in this connection, and in a way which allows us to see Melville going considerably beyond Plutarch.

for I fear and am loath to touch and set abroch in these my discourses /writes Plutarch/, that great and high principle, that deep and mystical cause of this our position. . . . for that I say the hidden secret and original thereof is so incredible to base and timorous persons . . . /the principle is/ that the souls here, are tied and fastned to mortall bodies, by way of punishment, for that they have been murderers, have eaten flesh, devoured one another, and been fed by mutuall slaughter and carnage . . . for surely that brutish and reasonlesse part of our souls which is violent, disordered, and not divine, but divelish and daemoniack, the azmciexxt philosophers called Titans; and this is that which is tormented, and suffereth judiciall punishment. (EF/473)

At the end of "The Shark Massacre" Ishmael is again describing action in contrast to formally commenting as he did in the preceding chapter ("The Whale as a Dish"):

this brought about new revelations of the incredible ferocity of the foe. They viciously snapped, not only at each other’s disembowelments, but like flexible bows, bent round, and bit their own; till those entrails seemed swallowed over and over again by the same mouth, to be oppositely voided by the gaping wound. Nor was this all. It was unsafe to meddle with the corpses and ghosts of these creatures. A sort of generic or Pantheistic vitality seemed to lurk in their very joints and bones, after what might be called the individual life had departed. (LXVI/301)

Plutarch himself is very reluctant to set forth and insist on his underlying reasons; and Ishmael, who has problems enough, does not make direct, explicit use of "that deep and mystical cause of this our
position." Perhaps Plutarch, who is commenting on Plato, Pythagoras, and Empedocles, is the starting point for Ishmael's observations about the ghosts and their "generic or Pantheistic vitality," but if so, it is only a starting point.

Plutarch, however, supplied more support and substance for other parts of the passage. Particularly relevant is the beginning of his "Second Declamation," which can be found in full on p. 154. The sentence in the "Declamation" which contains the phrase "swallowed it down into their entrails" is strong enough, although it is pale beside what Melville has Ishmael make of the words: "They viciously snapped, not only at each other's disembowelments, but like flexible bows, bent round, and bit their own; till those entrails seemed swallowed over and over again by the same mouth, to be oppositely voided by the gaping wound". But in transferring the order and thereby transmuting the sense, ("entrails ... swallowed" vs. "swallowed ... into ... entrails"), Ishmael has also been guided by Plutarch, who writes that "they have been murderers, have eaten flesh, devoured one another, and been fed by mutuall slaughter and carnage" (EF/473). More important, Plutarch's moral position and the quality of his language—or more accurately, the quality of language capable of rendering the moral horror of such behavior—helped make Ishmael's description and conclusion possible. Having recently read "so soon as men are dead, to paunch them, and when their belly and bowells be taken forth, to mangle, cut and slice the same against the sun, and then to fling them away, as being the cause of all sinnes that they have committed," Melville must have been reconfirmed in a way which helped to release
his own perceptions and make them come alive in his own prose, not only in this one passage but throughout the episode.

5. Resistance, Support, and "the High Hushed World"

Because that episode generates Stubb's celebration of appetite in vital antithesis to Fleece's sermon and the shark massacre, we are not confronted with anything like unrelieved blackness. But leaving Stubb momentarily out of account, it is clear that to penetrate through to Fleece's stark benediction and to the extremes of the sharks' ferocious cannibalism and the equally extreme blasphemy of the conclusion--"de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin"--it is clear that this would be no easy matter for any man at any time, and it was particularly not easy for Melville who was writing in America in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Melville, as we all know, was a professional author who was trying to make his books support a wife and a growing family. As the son-in-law of Chief Justice Shaw and the grandson of General Gansevoort, he also had some incentive to maintain their considerable respectability, which included maintaining safe religious views. As a professional author, Melville knew something about the tastes of mid-nineteenth century American critics and readers; about what, in other words, a book of his needed in order to sell. He knew that he was writing for "Christians who would permit no really serious shuffling with time-honored truths," for people who wanted "sound opinions in a cheerful frame," for an audience who would be "terrified at the directness
and severe simplicity of his language. Melville knew that a book "cooked . . . in hell fire" (M-V/616), a book that he warned a lady friend to avoid, was a book that lady readers and their husbands would also avoid. For a man of Melville's social class, with a sense both of his responsibilities to his family and also of his uncertain income—for him to write a book which he knew in advance would be a financial failure, and specifically to write the episode which we have just considered; which, whatever its attempts to avoid, deflect, and moderate the point through minstrel show dialect and humorous indirection, nonetheless does make a point which he knew his contemporaries would find radically offensive—for him to do this required something more than courage and sheer genius. Even a creative writer as powerful as Melville needed some support from outside.

Hawthorne supplied some of that support, partly by the example of his books and what Melville could make them into; more by allowing "this growing man /to/ dash his tumultuous waves of thought up against Mr. Hawthorne's great, genial comprehending silences." Melville's eloquent and breath-taking gratitude at finding one man in the universe who understood his book is testimony enough to the inner need that Hawthorne satisfied.

Aside from Hawthorne, Melville received practically no support from his contemporaries at the time he was writing Moby-Dick; or, what is more important, he at least felt that he received none. He aspired, however, to "that small but high hushed world which I might not be unreasonably ambitious of" (XXIV/110); and, I suggest, it is from that world that he received the confirmation that any creator
needs and which Melville's own contemporaries were unable to offer. Underlying all of the specific affinities and contrasts, Plutarch, in the episode we have been considering, must have functioned as an implicit reminder of what was permitted or expected of one who wished to join "that small but high hushed world." "Even Shakespeare was not a frank man to the uttermost"; "even Solomon a little managed the truth with a view to popular conservatism" (Rep. Sel./372, 393). But exactly the example of Plutarch's language in the passage I quoted last—and behind Plutarch, Rabelais, parts of the Bible, Shakespeare's Gloucester and Lear's heath—such examples, but Plutarch's most recently, must have encouraged and liberated Melville so that he was able to go on to tell the truth as he saw it without managing its fundamentals very much at all for popular conservatism.15

6. The Civilized and the Savage: A Subversive Rendering of a Shared Idea

As I have been suggesting, it must not have been easy for Melville to arrive at Queequeg's final pronouncement, to focus on the sequence's most extreme statement. That blasphemously direct declaration would have had to overcome a certain resistance. To support this assertion further, we may well conclude by surveying the theme of the civilized versus the savage as it appears in the episode ("Stubb's Supper," "The Whale as a Dish," and "The Shark Massacre") and those immediately preceding it. Such a survey also gives important insights into the way Ishmael creates, and it thereby supplies an extended example from which I can generalize in Chapter VII.
In this middle section of the novel the theme of the civilized and the savage is introduced explicitly in the following form: "Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, i.e. what is called savagery. Your true whale-hunter is as much a savage as an Iroquois. I myself am a savage; owning no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him" (LVII/270). The precise term—"Iroquois"—which Melville uses to make the distinction involves the paragraph in one of America's most complicated and emotionally charged ideas. "Cannibals," moreover, perhaps relates the passage to the unconscious depths of the Jungian archetypes which, according to James Baird, result from a writer's commitment to South Sea primitivism. The passage, that is, can be viewed from the perspective of a world-wide and timeless primitivism, Oriental and Occidental. I am certainly not attempting a comprehensive summary of this intricate, important, and frequently studied subject. In stressing the peculiarly American implications of Ishmael's "Iroquois," I simply intend to call attention to a certain limited and important aspect of Western primitivism.

One value of such an emphasis, however, is that it puts Queequeg's final assertion into its proper context, both in Moby-Dick and in American thought. Professor Baird approaches Queequeg as "an embodiment of Polynesian wisdom"; that is, as serenely and unquestioningly accepting divine mystery. Since Queequeg is made to utter precisely the most blasphemous, unaccepting statement in all of American literature, one finds this reading hard to accept. Melville himself,
however, may have seen a wisdom here which Professor Baird chooses to overlook. The Queequeg of 'The Shark Massacre,' that is, perhaps emerges from 'Melville's full store of images directly acquired in his experience,' not so much 'with Polynesian ethos' as with the fact of evil and with non-Polynesian primitivism. [16]

But to return to Ishmael, who 'is as much a savage as an Iroquois.' Recent scholarship has shown the extent to which the idea of the savage as Indian permeated and compelled the imaginations of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century Americans. [17] The idea in its American form is part of the matrix from which Ishmael's jaunty and defiant statement grows. But if Ishmael has retained the common elements—civilization, God, savagery and the Indian—he has given them a meaning that was not at all common.

Those who took the side of the savage and nature as over against civilization and the city typically regarded nature as grand and sublime, God as benevolent, and the savage as pure and in harmony with God's plan. Charles W. Webber, a contemporary of Melville's, speaks for countless other writers when he says concerning 'The Philosophy of Savage Life': 'The great geniuses are, and have been, essentially savages in all but the breech-clout... they equally scorn all shackles but those of the God-imposed senses, whether corporeal or spiritual, and, with like self-reliance, rule all precedents by the Gospel as revealed within themselves... With them the primitive virtues of a heroic manhood are all-sufficient, and they care nothing for reverences, forms, duties, as civilization has them, but respect each other's rights, and recognize the awful presence of a benignant
God in the still grandeur of mountain, forest, valley, plain, and river, through, among, and over which they pass. This benevolent God becomes Ishmael's less hospitable King of the Cannibals; "the virtues of a heroic manhood" and the rejection of civilized forms lead (here at least), not to "respect for each other's rights" but to a denial of allegiance to any but that King—and it is a very unstable allegiance at that. We will be centrally concerned with the difficult and gradual process which finally culminates in the "moment of rebellion" which is here only a possibility. Ishmael, to continue the ironic parallels, soon redefines savagery itself so that genius and independence are joined with more disturbing traits. The "still grandeur" of nature is similarly scrutinized, and the most dreaded and destructive creatures are shown to lurk hidden beneath its still, lovely surface. In comparison with most of his contemporaries, Ishmael, that is, is subversive, unorthodox, and extreme even at this stage in his development of the key terms which he uses in common with those contemporaries.

But we should also note that at this point Ishmael is high-spirited and good-natured and that his colloquial humor conceals—or at least does not sharply focus on—crucial difficulties. "Savagery," "Iroquois" (or "Indian"), and "cannibal" are interchangeable words, here and elsewhere in Moby-Dick. Since God placed man in a condition of savagery, calling Him "King of the Cannibals" is logical enough, although it is certainly irreverent. Still, whatever the phrase says about the nature of the men whom God rules, it does not go the
blasphemous next stop and explicitly call God a cannibal. That latent possibility is one that Ishmael is not yet ready to confront explicitly.

Carried along by his high-spirits and perhaps unwilling to face some of the issues that he has set in motion, Ishmael then turns his imagination to "the fabled heavens," and, as we have already seen, longingly asks "whether . . . their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight." The gods who people those tents will not be cannibals. But Ishmael's imagination cannot sustain him for long in those splendid and effulgent heavens.

He immediately turns his attention from the skies to the sea, words which in the course of Moby-Dick come to represent one of its central symbolic contrasts. In considering "the universal cannibalism of the sea" Ishmael is returning in a deeper and darker way to the theme of "savagism" from which he had momentarily departed. The idea is so pervasive that the sharks are conceived of as "tribes," a word usually applied to Indians. Ishmael goes on to give concrete and frightening connotations to the earlier passage's undefined "savagery" and "cannibals." "Dreaded," "treacherously hidden," and "devilish brilliance" (LVIII/273-274) are among these associations, and such attributes fit the Iroquois and the Comanche as well as the remorseless sharks.

I do not want to oversimplify the complexity and ambivalence of Melville's attitude. In what might serve as a bitter gloss on Civilization and Its Discontents, he could, for example, contrast the glorious savage with Pierre, cold, poorly fed, and shabbily
housed: "A rickety chair, two hollow barrels, a plank, paper, pens, and infernally black ink, four leprously dingy white walls, no carpet, a cup of water, and a dry biscuit or two. Oh, I hear the leap of the Texan Comanche, as at this moment he goes crashing like a wild deer through the green underbrush; I hear his glorious whoop of savage and untamable health; and then I look in at Pierre. If physical, practical unreason make the savage, which is he? Civilization, Philosophy, Ideal Virtue! behold your victim!" (Pierre/XXII/11/355). The point to stress is that when he wrote Moby-Dick Melville was divided on the issue of the civilized and the savage, and I am here presenting only one powerful side of his response. Queequeg, as he is developed in "A Bosom Friend" (X) and "Queequeg in His Coffin" (OX), though not in "The Shark Massacre," represents another side. The complexity of Melville's attitude is illustrated precisely in the range which Queequeg's role encompasses.19

Melville, of course, was not alone in his dark reaction to the savage. Starting with the Puritans, the Indian had been imagined and experienced as exactly a diabolic, brilliant, and subtly treacherous foe. One source of his greatness and perhaps of his torment is that Melville, the sometime celebrant of savage health, responded as intensely as he did to both sides of his culture's divided feeling toward the threatening and compelling red man.

But to return to the development of that idea in the section of Moby-Dick which we have been considering. The narrative continues to deal with the creatures of the sharkish sea, which has come to stand for "all the horrors of the half-known life" (LVIII/274). One of
these horrors is the portentous great white squid, which may have affinities with the sensational props of a Gothic novel but which nonetheless looms as a disturbing representative of the buried underside of life. Having brought this terrible creature to the surface—of the self, as of the sea—Ismael, almost immediately after, introduces "Stubb's Supper." He interrupts the sequence to tell us how he is proceeding: "Out of the trunk, the branches grow; out of them, the twigs. So, in productive subjects, grow the chapters" (LXIII/288). One result of this comment is to point up the connection between the episode which follows and the material we have been considering.

In "Stubb's Supper" Melville amplifies, reinforces, and deepens the earlier sense of the savage as sharkish, devilish, and ferociously cannibalistic. The devil worship (LXIV/292) which seems appropriate in such a setting is again interchangeable with the ideas and emotions associated with the Indian, so that the cultivated Plutarch reinforces the savage Iroquois. Although the resistance to a direct expression of these grim ideas, a resistance that is one of my concerns, appears in Fleece's dialect and the episode's minstrel-show humor, the sermon and the benediction nonetheless penetrate to bitter depths. Ishmael began with the widely-shared idea that God originally placed man in a condition that is called savagery, and he applied that belief to himself and other whale hunters by calling them savages ruled over by that God. Fleece concentrates on the human nature that is so ruled, a nature that he finds sharkish, "wicked," and cruelly voracious.
"You is sharks," he says, and he means not only whale hunters but all men. Even Fleece, however, does not take the final step: he is concerned with man, not God.

Ishmael, in his own voice, continues that concern, but in more moderate accents. Because of what has preceded it, his question, "Cannibals? who is not a cannibal?" contains powerful implications; but, as we have seen, he chooses to keep them mainly latent and so expresses them moderately and indirectly.

In the group of chapters which we have examined, Melville has Ishmael consistently probe a related cluster of ideas and emotions. His rhythm has been a wave-like one of advance and retreat, but even at his most extreme he has not been impelled to the final rebellion. His creation of the sharks' massacre, however, coming as it does after the earlier explorations of their diabolic nature, evidently brought matters before him in such an intense and concrete form that he finally made the last and blasphemous move: "'Queequeg no care what god made him shark,' said the savage, agonizingly lifting his hand up and down; 'wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin!'" (LXVI/301). Here and in Fleece's sermon, the doctrine is so extreme that Melville (through Ishmael) perhaps unconsciously defends himself by presenting it, not in his own voice or in "literary" English, but masked in dialect and spoken by a Negro cook and a South Sea savage, as if no respectable, civilized, cultivated white man could survive the uttering of these words. In this connection we should remember Melville's observation about
Shakespeare, his dark characters, and their terrible truths.

Queequeg's terrible assertion is that God, the King of the Cannibals, is himself a cannibal, a dam Injin, a shark. As we have seen, these symbols had acquired precise and powerful meaning in Moby-Dick, and it is an index of the resistance involved that Melville, "ready at any moment to rebel against him," struggled as long as he did before he took the final step. Viewed historically, not from the perspective of the inner workings of the novel, what has happened is that the terms of the Puritan antithesis—God and Satan, civilized and savage, white man and Indian—have been devastatingly reversed. The Great White God above has momentarily at least become a diabolic Indian. New England's concern with sin and the savage has come full circle.

Throughout the sequence that we have traced, Melville used as a vehicle for his own probing the symbols and feelings associated with one of his country's central ideas. As I have already suggested, however, the particular mode of Melville's response was probably conditioned by Plutarch. I mention Plutarch again to call attention to the way in which an idea that originates in a peculiarly American matrix is in Melville's case interpenetrated and vitalized by a source as remote and unlikely as the Morals.
Introduction

On a first reading, the great achievements in Moby-Dick are Ahab's dark, powerful soliloquies and Ishmael's passages of rhythmic, suggestive, far-ranging speculation. And even after one has come to know the book more thoroughly, these passages still stand out to distinguish Moby-Dick from all other prose fictions. The moderate prose of Cotton's Montaigne, however, does not obviously resemble either Ahab's nervously wrought speeches or the most resonant of Ishmael's meditations. The fact that long sections of Moby-Dick scan into forceful blank verse, for example, indicates that Melville's rhythms are more pronounced than either Montaigne's theory or Cotton's practice would countenance. Montaigne, furthermore, is a domestic writer: his subject is himself, and his setting is the mundane and near-at-hand. But like Ishmael, Melville can say "I love to sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts" (I/6). He is also a writer who is attracted by the exotic, by "Indian isles by coral reefs" (I/6) and by "the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying Fish." Although, in his own way, Montaigne did not at all avoid barbarous coasts, and although he is as much an explorer of the near-at-hand as Melville is of the adventurous and remote, still, the differences do exist.
A final one involves the sense of tragedy. One of the glories of the Essays is that they lack the tragic sense of life. They show the possibility of living seriously, gaily, and vigorously; of probing and of avoiding superficiality; of being integral and in the twentieth century sense, authentic; and at the same time of lacking a sense of tragedy. Moby-Dick, on the other hand, has that sense, and has it impressively. In many of its distinguishing traits of language and outlook, Moby-Dick thus contrasts with Montaigne's Essays. I do not want to minimize these differences, but in the sections which follow I am assuming them, and I shall concentrate on the affinities which are also present.

But before I consider these affinities, one remark about the Montaigne whom I will be discussing. The Essays developed over a period of time; Montaigne delights in irregularity and contradiction; and he only gradually discovered his style and his subject. Even within individual essays, scholars have dated passages so that the different "strata" are revealed—a passage written originally in 1572 may be juxtaposed with one written in 1588 and that with one from 1580. Aside from this objective diversity of the Essays, different historical periods have had different Montaigne's:

The stoical humanist of the earliest essays was the Montaigne that his contemporaries saw, the one whom Estienne Pasquier called "another Seneca in our language." In the seventeenth century the skeptical revolt against human presumption was seen as the center of Montaigne, the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" as the one important chapter, "What do I know?" as the essence of his thought. . . . Marston, Webster, and probably Shakespeare in England, Pascal in France, found a source of cosmic despair in Montaigne's eloquent catalogue of human limitations. A century after Pascal, Rousseau was struck
by the self-portrait that had become Montaigne's principal aim only after the "Apology." Most modern readers, like Gide, are struck by the sturdy individualism, the faith in self, man, and nature, that emerge so triumphantly in the final Essays. All these attitudes are in Montaigne; none contains him.²

And even within historical periods, it also seems that "we each have our own Montaigne, as we have our own Hamlet and Don Quixote."³ Because Montaigne means different things to different people—and even to the same person at different times in his life—we should be clear about the Montaigne we have in mind.

One immediately practical reason is that, like the author of the Essays himself, Melville's Montaigne changed as the author of "The Tail" and "Stubb's Supper" became older. Specifically, "Montaigne and His Kitten," which Melville wrote late in his life, celebrates a gay, ironic Montaigne and is clearly a response to Melville's sympathetic reading of Book III.⁴ Book III, however, does not seem to have had any impact on Moby-Dick. But two earlier essays, the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" and "Of Cannibals" did make a deep impression. In the following chapter, then, "Montaigne" refers to the author of the "Apology" and "Of Cannibals," and it is not primarily their playfulness and gaiety that Melville invokes.

The similarities that do exist involve Melville's treatment of the civilized and the savage in Moby-Dick; his conception and handling of Ahab in two key speeches; his style of arguing; and last and most important, his creation of Ishmael's sceptical outlook and the style by which he manages to save his narrator from annihilation. However the fundamental contrasts, some of these affinities are
also basic and worth attention. I turn first to Montaigne's bearing on the treatment of the civilized and the savage, because the connections here are pronounced. Having established them, I can then move to other relations.

2. The Civilized and the Savage

Melville made his early reputation as "the man who lived among cannibals." Three years after completing Omoo he started writing Moby-Dick, and in the meantime he had read Montaigne. "Of Cannibals" is one of the essays we would expect him to have looked into, and "The Whale as a Dish," the chapter which provided the starting point for our discussions of Rabelais and Plutarch, confirms that expectation and demands of us that we see one use to which Melville put his reading of Montaigne.

In "Of Cannibals" Montaigne does what he enjoys most. He slaps our complacent provincialism and the pretensions of our reason by reminding us that "there is nothing barbarous and savage in this nation [the newly discovered Brazil], by anything that I can gather, excepting that everyone gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own country; as, indeed, we have no other level of truth and reason than the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the place wherein we live" (00/89). To show that civilized nations overrate themselves, Montaigne reverses the customary relation of "civilized" and "savage" and gives "nature" an unconventional (although not unprecedented) meaning: "This nation
are savages, in the same way that we say fruits are wild, which nature produces of herself, and by her own ordinary progress; whereas, in truth, we ought to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice, and diverted from the common order" (OC/89). The implications of this reversal are explored, extended, and made concrete in the remainder of the essay. Far from being inferior to us, the savage—simple, healthy, and at home in the world—emerges as disconcertingly better and better off.

But Montaigne eventually confronts the most damaging charge that can be brought against the savage—his cannibalism. In a passage that forms part of the background for "The Whale as a Dish" he says: "I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous horror of so cruel an act, but that, seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own. I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than when he is dead; in tearing a body that is yet perfectly sentient limb from limb, by racks and torments, in roasting it by degrees, causing it to be bit and worried by dogs and swine (as we have not only read, but lately seen, not amongst inveterate and mortal enemies, but amongst neighbours and fellow-citizens, and, what is worse, under colour of piety and religion), than to roast and eat him after he is dead" (OC/91). He continues with a passage that bears even more directly on "The Whale as a Dish": "Chrysippus and Zeno, chiefs of the Stoic sect, were of opinion that there was no harm in making use of our dead carcasses, in what kind soever, for our necessity, and in feeding upon them too; as our ancestors, who, being besieged by Caesar in the
city of Alexia, resolved to sustain the famine of the siege with the bodies of their old men, women, and other persons, who were incapable of bearing arms" (OC/91).

We can now return once again to our starting point in Moby-Dick:

It is not, perhaps, entirely because the whale is so excessively unctuous that landsmen seem to regard the eating of him with abhorrence; that appears to result, in some way, from the consideration before mentioned; i.e. that a man should eat a newly murdered thing of the sea, and eat it too by its own light... Cannibals? who is not a cannibal? I tell you it will be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine; it will be more tolerable for that provident Fejee, I say, in the day of judgment, than for thee, civilized and enlightened gourmand, who mailest geese to the ground and feastest on their bloated livers in thy pâté-de-foie-gras. (LXV/299)

To begin with, Montaigne helped Melville to see that "it will be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in his cellar against a coming famine..." The irreverent, colloquial humor is Melville's, although Montaigne's own prose and his general views on language consistently encourage exactly that pungent, racy idiom. More tangibly, Montaigne has given Melville his "famine" ("resolved to sustain the famine of the siege with the bodies of their old men..."). Moreover, the idea that "there was no harm in making use of our dead carcasses" combined with Montaigne's "I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than when he is dead" both reinforce Plutarch's moral position as he adopted it, and help generate Melville's "it will be more tolerable for the Fejee..." In one instance Melville's syntax also suggests that Montaigne has helped condition the passage. The afterthought in
the sentence "in making use of our dead carcasses, in what kind soever, for our necessity, and in feeding upon them too" reappears in a similar construction in Melville's "that a man should eat a newly murdered thing of the sea, and eat it too by its own light." The idea and diction are also similar ("feeding upon them too" and "eat it too").

Montaigne's direct influence is confined to the passage I have just discussed; and that influence is primarily one of attitude, of a way of seeing, as opposed to the quality of language--of a way of rendering. But if Melville read or re-read "Of Cannibals" at about the time he was writing the sequence, then its language and brutal details would have reinforced Plutarch's, and what I have said about the liberating effects of Plutarch's prose would also apply to Montaigne's: "I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than when he is dead; in tearing a body that is yet perfectly sentient limb from limb, by racks and torments, in roasting it by degrees, causing it to be bit and worried by dogs and swine . . ., than to roast and eat him after he is dead"--such passages could well form part of the matrix for the section of Moby-Dick that I have been considering.

Montaigne's impact is not as clearly defined as Plutarch's; but the specific resemblances of attitude, diction, and syntax that I have noted indicate that "Of Cannibals" nonetheless has an important bearing on the reversal of values in "The Whale as a Dish" and on the treatment of savagery and civilization elsewhere in Moby-Dick. Montaigne's maneuver--bringing civilization to the test of
a sympathetically viewed nation of cannibals or savages—had become a commonplace by the middle of the nineteenth century. As Typee and Omoo demonstrate, Melville could share an attitude generally similar to Montaigne's without having read "Of Cannibals" or anything more taxing than a travel book. The two early novels lack Montaigne's intellectual range and vigor, and they have nothing of the subversive depth of "The Whale as a Dish" and the section to which it belongs. That depth and range of implication are what Montaigne and writers like him have contributed to Melville's handling of a theme that he had been concerned with from the start of his career.

The end of Queequeg's Ramadan and the ironic interplay between him and Captain Peleg also suggest that Montaigne has operated in the same deepening, complicating way in this episode. In a characteristic perception, part of which I have already quoted, Montaigne says that "everyone gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own country; as, indeed, we have no other level of truth and reason than the example and idea of the place wherein we live. There is always the perfect religion, there the perfect government, there the perfect everything" (0C/89). In Moby-Dick we find Ishmael saying: "After all, I do not think that my remarks about religion made much impression upon Queequeg. Because in the first place, he somehow seemed dull of hearing on that important subject, unless considered from his own point of view; and, in the second place, he did not more than one third understand me, couch my ideas simply as I would; and finally,
he no doubt thought he knew a good deal more about the true religion than I did. He looked at me with a sort of condescending concern and compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety" (XVII/86). "There is always the perfect religion": Ishmael has applied to Queequeg Montaigne's ironic detachment from local prejudice. Of course the attitude in the paragraph from "Ramadan" does not necessarily depend on Montaigne or anyone else; Melville could easily have seen all of it for himself. But the similarities are there, and "Of Cannibals" did make a difference in other parts of *Moby-Dick*. It is at least possible that Montaigne is also involved here.

The patterning and the degree of complexity in the episode suggest that he is. Ishmael's reflections on Queequeg gain some of their meaning and humor from the passage which immediately precedes them and on which they are commenting: Queequeg has had dyspepsia only upon one memorable occasion. It was after a great feast given by his father the king on the gaining of a great battle wherein fifty of the enemy had been killed by about two o'clock in the afternoon, and all cooked and eaten that very evening.

"No more, Queequeg," said I, shuddering; "that will do;" for I knew the inferences without his further hinting them. I had seen a sailor who had visited that very island, and he told me that it was the custom, when a great battle had been gained there, to barbecue all the slain in the yard or garden of the victor; and they, one by one, they were placed in great wooden trenchers, and garnished round like a pilau, with breadfruit and cocoanuts; and with some parsley in their mouths, were sent round with the victor's compliments to all his friends, just as though these presents were so many Christmas turkeys. (XVII/86)
Some of the details here may have come from Wilkes' Narrative of the U. S. Exploring Expedition, although a line from "Of Cannibals" may also be involved: "After that they roast him, eat him amongst them, and send some chops to their absent friends" (OC/90). But wherever the details came from, they are handled in a way that suggests Montaigne's influence. Rabelais has also conditioned some of this passage as well as other parts of the chapter (see note o), but here I am concentrating on Montaigne. "Of Cannibals," to begin with, describes a cannibalistic custom exactly analogous to Queequeg's. It juxtaposes the account with one about the even greater brutality of the Portuguese, and wryly concludes: the cannibals "who thought those people of the other world [the Portuguese] (as men who had sown the knowledge of a great many vices amongst their neighbours, and were much greater masters in all kind of malignity than they) did not exercise this sort of revenge without reason, and that it must needs be more painful than theirs, began to leave their old way and to follow this. I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous horror of so cruel an act, but that, seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own" (OC/91). (The passage quoted above on p. 6 immediately follows this one).

Montaigne's examples unobtrusively and sharply cut both ways. The cannibals are not spared, but at the same time their excesses are used to cast our own into relief. No one would defend the cruelty of savages; many people would praise the zeal of Christians. But Montaigne places his descriptions and comments in such a way
that the latter are forced to see that civilized Christians are as intolerant and brutal as the worst cannibal. In talking about the savage, Montaigne reveals something about the quality of our "piety and religion," to use his phrase again.

Melville proceeds in an identical fashion. First he describes a barbecue which no American would approve of, and then he shows Queequeg as a little hidebound and intolerant about his outrageous practices and beliefs. But we are implicitly and unmistakably reminded that what holds for Queequeg also applies to us: we are as provincial and "dull of hearing" about our beliefs as the savage is about his. Montaigne deftly uses the savage to expose the savagery that can be masked by our "piety and religion"; Melville uses Queequeg's "evangelical pagan piety" and his convictions about "the true religion" to show that in crucial and unflattering ways, we are also one with the cannibal, who is made to sound amusingly like any pious Christian.

Montaigne makes an attempt at impartiality, but he comes out stronger for his barbarians than for his Europeans. And so does Melville. Having established an ironic attitude toward "evangelical pagan piety," Melville (or Ishmael) immediately introduces Captain Peleg, who speaks for evangelical Christian piety. He does so "from his wigwam," which is one of Melville's reminders that for all Peleg's feelings of self-righteous superiority, he is himself as much a savage as the cannibal he looks down on. Peleg's sharkish Christianity does not come off too well, partly because of thrusts like this. Throughout the episode, Peleg's role is exactly analogous to that of Montaigne's Portuguese.
The kind of irony and the kind of complexity that are involved in the passages on Queequeg and Peleg—the patterning and the two-edged uses to which the details about cannibalism and Christianity are put, for example—all show marked parallels with Montaigne. They also define a real advance on the comparatively simple and clumsy handling of similar themes in *Typee* and *Omoo*. I am not suggesting that "Of Cannibals" was necessarily a direct source; but rather that Melville had read Montaigne perceptively and sympathetically, that he had penetrated beneath the surface and had grasped something of the "real meaning of Montaigne" (*White Jacket*) and that he had assimilated and creatively put into practice some of what he had found there.

How much that assimilation contributed to the characterization of Queequeg is a related question, but one which it is impossible to answer definitely on the basis of the evidence that I have been able to collect. Queequeg is far from idealized, and Montaigne and Rabelais helped to show his limitations. But Montaigne's sympathy for the savage's bravery, physical strength, and moral purity and simplicity are also reflected in the treatment of Queequeg, which suggests that "Of Cannibals" certainly did not inhibit and perhaps encouraged Melville to develop his cannibal as he does. If so, Montaigne's role deserves to be mentioned, at the same time that we remember that it was shared by many other writers and experiences.

Queequeg's close relation to Ishmael also suggests the intimacy with Boethie which Montaigne commemorates in "Of Friendship."
But I have not found any concrete indication that Melville had read the essay. If he had, however, "Of Friendship" would have sanctioned impulses which Melville had already dealt with in his earlier novels, in the relations between Toby and Tom in *Typee*, Jarl and the narrator in *Mardi*, and Harry Bolton and Redburn in *Redburn*. In *Moby-Dick*, the close physical and emotional bonds between two men, specifically between a cannibal and a white man, are more extreme than either the analogous relations in Cooper and Dana or in Melville's own earlier work. The emotions that Melville was rendering in "The Counterpane" (IV) and "A Squeeze of the Hand" (XCIV) were not unique in American fiction, but they were an extension into potentially dangerous territory. If he had read "Of Friendship," his knowledge that a writer of Montaigne's stature had explored the boundaries of that territory might have given Melville a certain intangibly important support in his own dealings with a controversial relation.

3. "The Great Montaignism of Ahab"

Now that we have studied Montaigne's bearing on Queequeg and the theme of savagery and civilization, we can turn briefly to Montaigne's connection with Ahab. Montaigne is enough like Ishmael so that we might expect him to contribute positively—as we shall see that he did—to a sensibility similar to his own. Ahab, however, is a less likely case.

To begin with, when he created the heaven-defying Ahab of "The Candles" and other powerful scenes, Melville was not taking
too seriously Montaigne's repeated warning against trying to conquer the Absolute: "there is something of impiety in inquiring too curiously into God, the world, and the first causes of things."

Montaigne, furthermore, insistently demonstrates how little cause we have for pride: man "is fettered and circumscribed, he is subjected to the same necessity that the other creatures of his rank and order are, and of a very mean condition, without any prerogative or true and real pre-eminence... Now this great body, with so many fronts, and so many motions, which seems to threaten heaven and earth... this furious monster, with so many heads and arms, is yet man--feeble, calamitous, and miserable man" (R. Seb./209, 217).

But Ahab has his finest moment when he threatens heaven and earth in "The Candles." In short, although Melville was sensitive enough to Montaigne's views so that they helped condition Ishmael's outlook, for the most part Montaigne has little enough in common with Ahab.

And still other qualifications are necessary. Hamlet's reply to Rosencrantz, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," caused Melville to note in his copy of Shakespeare, "Here is forcibly shown the great Montaignism of Hamlet (Log/I,291)."

The Montaigne who underlies such comments is the one who wrote such passages as: "I always call that appearance of meditation which everyone forges in himself reason: this reason, of the condition of which there may be a hundred contrary ones about one and the same subject, is an instrument of lead and of wax, ductile, pliable, and accommodate to all sorts of biases, and to all measures; so that nothing remains but the art and skill how to turn and mould it"
(R. Seb./263). We can also see the connection between this side of Montaigne, Melville's marginal comment, and that prevalent nineteenth century reading which saw Hamlet as a man "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" and as a result too indecisive to act. Melville, that is, may well have felt that accepting Montaigne's views could paralyze action. It is this response to Montaigne which Melville darkens and elaborates in *Pierre*.

Melville, however, also responded to other impulses in the *Essays*, because in some of the captain's boldest speeches we see what I should call "the great Montaignism of Ahab," a Montaignism that is not at all passive or paralyzed.

Montaigne himself supplies the clue: "And how many stories have I scattered up and down here that I only touch upon, which, should anyone more curiously search into, they would find matter enough to produce infinite Essays. Neither these stories, nor my allegations, do always serve simply for example, authority, or ornament; I do not only regard them for the use I make of them; they carry sometimes, besides what I apply them to, the seed of a richer and a bolder matter . . . to others who shall happen to be of my fancy" ("Upon Cicero"/109). That "richer and bolder matter" is fully developed in Ahab's defiant, heroic speeches at the height of the storm and at the sinking of the *Pequod*. We will be concerned with the seed from which these speeches emerged, but in concentrating on similarities we should not forget the pervasive and basic contrasts between Ahab and Montaigne, contrasts which also involve much of Melville himself.
In "Of Cannibals" Montaigne makes a compelling statement about heroism, valor, and personal integrity:

The estimation and value of a man consist in the heart and in the will; there his true honour lives. Valour is stability, not of legs and arms, but of the courage and the soul; it does not lie in the goodness of our horse, or of our arms, but in ourselves. He that falls, firm in his courage, "If his legs fail him, fights upon his knees"; he who, despite the danger of death near at hand, abates nothing of his assurance; who, dying, does yet dart at his enemy a fierce and disdainful look, is overcome, not by us, but by fortune: he is killed, not conquered; the most valiant are sometimes the most unfortunate. (00/92)

A little later Montaigne returns to his subject, the cannibal, and offers as a specific example of heroism the way a captured barbarian faces torture and death: "Those that paint these people dying after this manner, represent the prisoner spitting in the face of his executioners, and making at them a wry mouth. And 'tis most certain that, to the very last gasp, they never cease to brave and defy them both in word and gesture" (OC/92). Ahab, "cannibal old me" (OXXXII/534), says at his grandest moment:

I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance... No fearless fool now front thee. I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me. In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here... Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee... Here again with haughty agony, I read my sire. Leap! leap up and lick the sky! I leap with thee; I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee! (OXIX/500-501)

This speech grows partly from Melville's reading of "On Cannibals."
If he re-read the essay in preparation for "Stubb's Supper," the passage would have been comparatively fresh in his mind, and the pressure of intense creative activity may have pushed it to the surface.

Although Montaigne has been transformed and made infinitely more powerful, words, phrases, and ideas nonetheless reveal some of the origins of Ahab's speech. Montaigne's "to the very last gasp," to begin with, reappears in Ahab's "to the last gasp of my earthquake life." And Montaigne's unimpassioned statement, "they never cease to brave and defy them both in word and gesture" is an exact, abstract description of Ahab's behavior, here and throughout the novel. At the level of diction, Ahab's "defiance" and "defyingly" are connected with Montaigne's "defy." Furthermore, Montaigne's emphasis on a man's heart and will—"there his true honour lies"—the value he places on the integral, defiant individual whose courage rests, not "in the goodness of our horse, or of our arms, but in ourselves"—this valuation of "the queenly personality" in the face of death and inevitable defeat is another bond with Ahab's triumphant, heroic assertion. Montaigne's forceful defense of the heroic individual gave Melville, I think, the kind of support and reconfirmation that even a great and original creator needs. Montaigne, as I see it, helped make writing "The Candles" that much easier, that much more possible; and like Melville, we are all in his debt as a result.

I am not suggesting that Montaigne was the only writer who performed this function—among others, Carlyle and Shakespeare are obviously and pervasively important. But in "The Candles" and at the
end of *Moby-Dick*, so is Montaigne. Because his relevance is unexpected and not quite so obvious, it might be worth calling attention to.

We can now turn to the conclusion of the book. Ahab "never ceases to brave and defy them both in word and gesture." These are his final words and gesture:

"Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab to thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearse 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!"

The harpoon was darted. (CXXXV/565)

Ahab is here Montaigne's noble barbarian "spitting in the face of his executioners" ("for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee"). His "last breath" also relates to Montaigne's "to the very last gasp." Ahab darts something more tangible than a scornful look, but underlying his final act is Montaigne's vivid assertion of how a man should confront death and overwhelming odds. A man who "darts at his enemy a fierce and disdainful look," who dies, defiant and fighting to the last, "is overcome, not by us, but by fortune: he is killed, not conquered." Such assertions helped Melville to create Ahab, who "grapples . . . to the last" with the "all-destroying but unconquering whale."

The relevant passage from Montaigne (quoted in full on p. 192) continues with material which also deserves commentary:

There are some defeats more triumphant than victories. Those four sister-victories, the fairest the sun ever beheld, of Salamis, Platea, Mycale, and Sicily, never opposed all their united glories to the single glory
of the discomfiture of King Leonidas and his heroes at the Pass of Thermopylae. Who ever ran with a more glorious desire and greater ambition to the winning, than the Captain Ischolas to the certain loss of a battle? Who ever set about with more ingenuity and eagerness to secure his safety than he did to assure his ruin? (OC/92)

One answer to these questions is "Captain Ahab." Ahab's decision to leave Starbuck behind may also have been suggested partly by Montaigne's account. Ordered to defend a pass against impossible odds, Captain Ischolas decided "after this manner: the youngest and most active of his men he preserved for the service and defence of their country, and therefore sent them back; and with the rest, whose loss would be of less consideration, he resolved to make good the pass, and, with the death of them, to make the enemy buy their entry as dear as possibly he could" (OC/92).

In any case, Melville was intimately familiar with this section of "On Cannibals." Its diction, phrases, and ideas reappear in two of Moby-Dick's most powerful episodes. Recognizing the connection with Montaigne provides another dimension, another deepening connotation, to the conclusion of the novel. Melville apparently saw Ahab's defeat and the sinking of the Pequod as a heroic catastrophe comparable to the most splendid of antiquity: "Those four sister-victories, the fairest the sun ever beheld, of Salamis, Platea, Mycale, And Sicily, never opposed all their united glories to the single glory of the discomfiture of King Leonidas and his heroes at the Pass of Thermopylae." But Captain Ahab and his heroes do rival that glory, and recognizing that they do can enhance our sense of their significance.
Melville, to go on to another consideration, knew quite early in his work that he had to transform a mere whaling captain into a majestic hero: "But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shagginess; and in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whale-hunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestical trappings and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air!" (XXXIII/145).

It is an index of Melville's achievement that by the end of Moby-Dick his "poor old whale-hunter" can take a place with King Leonidas, Captain Ischolas, and the glories of Thermopylae.

Montaigne, to make a concluding point, was also one of those who gave Melville a way of seeing positive value in Ahab's quest and final defeat (see the quotations above on p. 192). As we shall see in the next section, "the doubts of Montaigne" (Mardi/CXIX/318) sometimes made the search for ultimate truth, the battle with final reality, seem empty and futile. But it is also worth noting that this same Montaigne helped justify the course that Melville charted for his demonic and tragic hero. "The part that true conquering has to play lies in the encounter, not in the coming off; the honour of valour consists in fighting, not in subduing" (CC/92); such an outlook gives meaning and dignity to Ahab's terrible voyage and its last act of bravery and defiance. It sums up much of "the great Montaignism of Ahab."
4. Montaigne, Ishmael, and the Techniques of the Fox

i. Melville's Style of Arguing

A connection between Montaigne and Ahab exists, and it is gratifying and rewarding to discover it, but Montaigne's is not a dominant influence on Ahab and the connection is hard to find: "it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep." But as I indicated earlier, the relation between Melville's reading in Montaigne and his creation of Ishmael is a pervasive and important one, and it is also easier to demonstrate. We will be concerned initially with one of the dominant techniques of the fox (see Chapter IV/4/ii, final paragraph), with what we might call that style of arguing which Melville has Ishmael use in narrating important sections of Moby-Dick. It is a style which includes Ishmael's use of learning. Montaigne, however, is not the only writer who is relevant here—Browne, Burton, and Rabelais are some others—but if we remember that it is their combined effect which finally made the difference, it is useful to focus on each one separately.

Because we are primarily concerned with that important one-fourth of Moby-Dick which deals with whales and whaling, we might begin with one of the cetological chapters, "The Tail."

Ishmael sees the whale's tail as at once exquisitely beautiful and indescribably powerful: "Could annihilation occur to matter, this were the thing to do it" (LXXVI/373). In the process of conveying a sense of the delicacy and gentleness that are inseparable from this
"Titanism of power," Ishmael makes three learned allusions to the elephant. All three are found both in Plutarch's "Land Beasts and Water Beasts" and in Montaigne's "Apology for Raymond Sebond."

Two of the references probably derive most immediately from Plutarch, and the third could have come from either Plutarch or Montaigne. Melville had undoubtedly read the anecdotes in both authors: the three allusions occur within ten pages of the extract from the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" and also in the same section of Plutarch's "Land Beasts and Water Beasts" that Melville drew on in "Brit," "Stubb's Supper," and the other chapters which I have already discussed (Chapter III). Although in two cases Melville is closer to Plutarch than to Montaigne, a compounding effect can easily help to account for his remembering the stories at all.

The same three anecdotes, then, appear in Plutarch, Montaigne, and Melville; and for our purposes the series is useful for what it reveals about the style of arguing in each author. Plutarch uses the stories in a comparatively simple and literal way. He has Aristotimus introduce them as examples of the "social love and fidelity" of land beasts, and the anecdotes have only two purposes: to entertain and to illustrate the limited point of social love. When Montaigne incorporates these examples into the "Apology for Raymond Sebond," however, something happens to them. Most important, Montaigne takes the stories out of their original rather simple context and makes them serve as part of a complicated and controversial argument. Instead of showing merely that land animals are affectionate in contrast to water beasts, the stories now help to expose man's vain,
presumptuous confidence in human reason. In quick succession, Montaigne accumulates a range of examples, just as Melville was later to do in "The Whiteness of the Whale," "Bart," and countless other chapters. The elephant's ability to pull out darts and javelins from himself and his master helps, in the "Apology," to elevate animals as over against men, and leads to a question which removes man from his pedestal above other creatures: "why do we not say here also that this is knowledge and reason?" (R. Seb./211.) Montaigne's version of another story which appears in all three writers concerns the elephants who, "after several washings and purifications, ... are observed to lift up their trunk like arms, and, fixing their eyes towards the rising of the sun, continue long in meditation and contemplation, at certain hours of the days, of their own motion, without instruction or precept" (R. Seb./214). Montaigne uses the anecdote to argue that "we may also say that elephants have some participation of religion" (R. Seb./214), a statement which deprives man of another valued distinction.

In contrast to their function in "Land Beasts," such examples make a point well beyond themselves: they have a part in a larger scheme, their meaning is complicated as a result, and because they carry a more powerful charge of implication, that meaning now has more than one level. Melville characteristically handles such anecdotal material in exactly the same way. Chapters like "The Whiteness of the Whale," "The Fossil Whale," and "The Tail" show how pervasively the style of Moby-Dick has been conditioned by
Montaigne and the writers, including Browne, Burton, Bayle, and Sterne, who either learned from him or distinctively resemble him.¹⁷

Montaigne helps to account for the very presence of a certain kind of learned allusion in Moby-Dick as well as for the way these and other allusions are arranged and for the sceptical conclusions they are often made to support. But before going into more detail on scepticism in Moby-Dick, I should mention a crucial difference between Montaigne and Melville's use of anecdotal material. Next to Melville, Montaigne's versions look like an accurate prose paraphrase of a poem, but one which deliberately excludes the resonance of the poem itself. Melville typically uses his allusions to convey a sense of the sweep of time and space; to extend the significance of a physical fact to the edges of the cosmos and the beginning of the world; to convey a sense of the grandeur, amplitude, and power of whales and whalers, of sea and ships and sharks. In contrast to Montaigne's account of the worshiping elephants (quoted above, on p. 199), for example, Melville has Ishmael write:

Standing at the mast-head of my ship during a sunrise that crimsoned sky and sea, I once saw a large herd of whales in the east, all heading towards the sun, and for a moment vibrating in concert with peaked flukes. As it seemed to me at the time, such a grand embodiment of adoration of the gods was never beheld, even in Persia, the home of the fire worshippers. As Ptolemy Philopater testified of the African elephant, I then testified of the whale, pronouncing him the most devout of all beings. For according to King Juba, the military elephants of antiquity often hailed the morning with their trunks uplifted in the profoundest silence. (LXXXVI/375-376)
What is a rather spare allusion in Montaigne here stimulates the creation of a sublime scene, "perhaps the grandest sight to be seen in all animated nature" (LXXXVI/375). The resonance of the names—Ptolemy Philopater and King Juba—brings the splendor of pagan antiquity to bear on the whale. "The African elephant" similarly opens up geographic limits. Because the range of reference is thus extended, the whale is elevated and we can see it as partly archangelical.

For Melville, the whale may be archangelical or he may be diabolical or he may be some inscrutable combination, but whatever he is, the whale is larger than life; he is sublime. But on principle, Montaigne avoided the language and techniques which convey a sense of the vast, splendid, and awesome. Melville, however, used precisely such language, and in so doing he parted company with Montaigne, if not with Sir Thomas Browne.

ii. "The Doubts of Montaigne"

Like Ahab, that "ungodly, god-like man," the whale is a god or god-like and, at the same time, demonic and fearomely dangerous. That "the most devout of all beings" (LXXXVI/376) should also be the most irresistably destructive is "part of the universal problem of all things" (LXIV/292), and that problem is at the center of Moby-Dick. Ahab has his answer to the problem; Ishmael has his; and directly or indirectly most of Moby-Dick is a working out and dramatizing of these two responses. Montaigne bears on both of them, most heavily on Ishmael's, and it is to that connection that I now turn.
When the three anecdotes which I have discussed moved from Plutarch's "Land Beasts and Water Beasts" to the "Apology for Raymond Sebond," they helped Montaigne build up to the passage which, we can agree with Jacob Zeitlin, "strikes the dominant note of the essay":

The participation we have in the knowledge of truth, such as it is, is not acquired by our own force. . . . Our faith is not of our own acquiring; 'tis purely the gift of another's bounty: 'tis not by meditation, or by virtue of our own understanding, that we have acquired our religion, but by foreign authority and command; wherein the imbecility of our own judgment does more assist us than any force of it; and our blindness more than our clearness of sight; 'tis more by the meditation of our ignorance than of our knowledge that we know anything of the divine wisdom. 'Tis no wonder if our natural and earthly parts cannot conceive that supernatural and heavenly knowledge: let us bring nothing of our own, but obedience and subjection; for, as it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." (R. Seb./230. The extract from the "Apology" is on p. 219.)

Because this quotation, the three stories, and the extract from the "Apology" all come from the same section of the essay, we have good reason to believe that Melville was familiar with the quoted passage—and he could not have read far in the "Apology" without coming on others very much like it. The conclusion of "The Tail" helps both to confirm the familiarity and to show how in practice that knowledge of Montaigne conditioned the substance and outlook of Moby-Dick itself.

The whale sometimes suggests "the devils," sometimes "the archangels" (LXXXVI/375); and some of the whale's "mystic gestures, . . . the signs and symbols with which he intelligently conversed with the world, remain wholly inexplicable, full of strangeness and
unaccountable to his most experienced assailant" (LXXXVI/376).

Such perceptions lead Ishmael to speculate: "Dissect him how I can, then I but go skin deep; I know him not and never will. But if I know not even the tail of this whale, how understand his head? much more, how comprehend his face, when face he has none? Thou shalt see my back parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall not be seen. But I cannot completely make out his back parts; and hint what he will about his face, I say again he has no face" (XXXVI/376-377). In Exodus (xxxiii/25) God says to Moses: "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen," a line which Ishmael repeats unchanged except that he ironically inserts the appositive "my tail." The whale is not only associated with devils and archangels, but also with God.

But although the Bible is the most direct source for the passage, *Religio Medici* and Montaigne are also at work in the background (see Chapter V/1 for a discussion of Browne). For the Montaigne of the "Apology," because man's reason is thoroughly fallible and severely limited, the unaided individual cannot gain any kind of reliable knowledge about basically important matters: "'Tis no wonder if our natural and earthly parts cannot conceive that supernatural and heavenly knowledge. . . . 'I know by myself,' says St. Bernard, 'how incomprehensible God is, seeing I cannot comprehend the parts of my own being!' (R. Seb./219, 252). Montaigne demolishes the claims of human reason, the force and bite of his argument combine with that of men like Browne and Bayle, and all of them provide the matrix for Ishmael's "I know him not and never will," a line which grows
out of and which shows how seriously Melville took such characteristically Montaignian views as the one I have outlined and quoted.

Montaigne and the others helped make it impossible for Melville to believe that man could comprehend the world through his own unaided efforts. By closing off this possibility, they presented Melville with an acute problem, one which goaded him throughout his most creative period but which he never satisfactorily resolved. Montaigne and Browne were not similarly racked by their insights, because they were able to accept a fideistic position. How literally we are to take Montaigne is a question I will return to later, but at least on the surface he, like Sir Thomas Browne, could humble man's reason and place his reliance on faith and God's grace: "let us bring nothing of our own but obedience and subjection." In some moods Melville has Ishmael approach this solution, but typically he is much more extreme.

At the end of "The Tail," to begin at one limit, we have seen that Melville has Ishmael ask the Montaignian, Brownian question "how understand his head, . . . how comprehend his face?" But the negative answer leads far beyond Montaigne and Browne to the deeply blasphemous assertion that there is no face to comprehend: "thou shalt see my back parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall not be seen. But I cannot completely make out his back parts; and hint what he will about his face, I say again he has no face." The physical fact about the whale's face has been introduced earlier in the novel, in "The Prairie." The whale's brow is so vast and indefinite that you "see no one point precisely; not one distinct
feature is revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper; nothing but that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with riddles; dumbly lowering with the doom of boats, and ships, and men" (LXXXIX/345). In "The Prairie" these facts are made to suggest sceptical conclusions which we shall discuss later. What we should note here is that the existence of the face is not a main concern of the earlier passage, which concentrates on other facts about the whale's head. Literally, the whale's face exists, but it is "no face, proper." Because the observation is not a main issue in "The Prairie," however, we are not expected to be concerned with such subtle distinctions. And when the same physical fact is put in a new context, it acquires new meaning and implications. When Melville has Ishmael state "and hint what he will about his face, I say again he has no face," this time we are close to Ahab's "Sometimes I think there's naught beyond" (XXXVI/162). Ishmael, too, has his grim doubts. "Perhaps after all," as Melville speculated in a letter to Hawthorne, "there is no secret" (Rep. Sel./388). At its extremes, scepticism borders on outright atheism, and at one time or another Ahab, Ishmael, and Melville all make extreme statements.

Violent action is Ahab's answer to his fundamental doubts; Ishmael's is more moderate and more complicated: his style is his answer. My study as a whole aims, partially at least, to characterize that style and that response, so that I cannot hope to comment on it fully at this point. But I can take another step in the direction of a definition by saying something about the passage at hand.
In contrast to Ahab, who buries his doubts in the rush of action, Ishmael brings even his most extreme ones to the surface and contemplates them; but he is wry, irreverent, and indirect about it. What is remarkable is that terms as inglorious and mundane as the lowly backside of a whale can be made the means for a basic and sweeping, if only momentary, denial of the existence of God and the innermost mysteries of his universe. Far from being diminished, the subject's scope, grandeur, and importance are intensified by the indirection and by the disproportion between what is actually said and what is finally suggested. An abstract summary thus makes Ishmael's statement of extreme scepticism appear to lack depth, because Ishmael is doing more than denying.

He does more by virtue of speaking in his own voice. It is a personal voice, an "I," which has the outrageous presumption to set itself over against the universe and, a mere individual voice, to say something complex, enigmatic, and daring about the cosmos: "but I cannot completely make out his back parts; and hint what he will about his face, I say again he has no face." Inseparable from the complexity, mystery, and daring of this statement, however, are countless others uttered by the same voice, by the "I" of "The Whiteness of the Whale" and "The Prairie," for example. Everything that Ishmael has said about the color of the whale and about the fearful blankness of his mystical brow enlarges, deepens, and qualifies the present passage, so that its meaning depends partly on theirs—and, quite aside from this interaction, each of them in its own right has an extensive symbolic range.
Moby-Dick is vitally concerned with how an individual is to reconcile the existence of God with the fact of evil and with how he is to relate himself to a terribly deep, complicated, infinite universe which his finite reason can only imperfectly understand. "But it is this Being of the matter," Melville wrote Hawthorne, "there lies the knot with which we choke ourselves. As soon as you say Me, a God, a Nature, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam" (Rep. Sel./388). We are now in a position to say that part of what allows Ishmael to control and comprehend that problem is an imagination powerful enough to create chapters as different and as similar as "The Whiteness of the Whale," "The Prairie," and "The Tail," for example, and to make them mutually reinforce and extend one another. Ishmael, that is, has succeeded in creating a style in the sense of that word which refers to integrating formal patterns; a style which, among other things, allows him to flexibly explore fundamental questions; to create resonant, vital symbols adequate to those questions; and to both interrelate and hold in productive tension the diverse and sometimes conflicting implications of those symbols. Ishmael's imagination and the style which it shapes allow him to live "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts" in the very threatening presence of the knot which could choke him. At the level of the particular passage, that style has characteristics which also bear on Ishmael's ability to control the destructive forces which his speculation has unleashed. To draw together my earlier comments: that style is wry, irreverent, and indirect; complex,
enigmatic, and daring. Such, in part, are the resources which help Ishmael to survive his encounters with the fearful tail and forehead of the whale.

These resources are those of the fox, to use that word in the sense which Isaiah Berlin gives to Archilochus' line, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." By metaphorical extension, the hedgehog becomes that intellectual and artistic personality who demands a single, absolute, all-embracing, sometimes fanatical explanation of the universe and the facts of experience; the fox, in contrast, is willing to pursue many ends; he is interested in the diverse and shifting levels and implications of experiences on which he does not force a unitary interpretation. Plato and Dostoevsky, in this scheme, are types of the hedgehog; Aristotle and Montaigne are examples of the fox. Melville is one of those in whom the two impulses, both well-developed, are in active tension, one pulling against the other. In Ahab, Melville created a hedgehog; in Ishmael, a fox. But because Ishmael is the narrator, the techniques of the fox dominate the actual telling of Moby-Dick. The book succeeds—as Pierre and the Confidence Man do not—largely because for a time the fox in Melville was deeply entrenched and powerful enough to give those techniques genuine support. As we have seen, Montaigne, Browne, and writers like them raised searing problems for Ishmael and his creator, but their techniques and style—the techniques and style of the fox—also suggested a way of living with those problems and of rendering them in a work of the imagination. In the sections
which follow, I shall consider further evidence of "the doubts of Montaigne" and their painful and creative consequences.

iii. Diversity, Probing, Digression, and the Idiosyncratic "I" of Moby-Dick

In "The Tail" we saw Ishmael push his doubts to their farthest limit, to the point of ultimate denial. In "The Fountain," the chapter immediately preceding it, Melville has Ishmael again ask the Montaignian, Brownian question, "how can you certainly tell," "how do you know" (LXXXV/370), but this time the answer to that question is much less extreme. The occasion for Ishmael's sceptical probing is the whale's ambiguous spout: is it water or vapor? The answer is hard to find because, like the mystery of life which it comes to symbolize, "The central body of it is hidden in the snowy sparkling mist enveloping it. . . . and if at such times you should think that you really perceived drops of moisture in the spout, how do you know that they are not merely condensed from its vapor; or how do you know that they are not those identical drops superficially lodged in the spout-hole fissure . . . " (LXXXV/370). As Melville has Ishmael say repeatedly, to probe that mystery can destroy a man: "The poisonous spout will peel the skin from his cheek and arm, and I do not much doubt it, that if the jet is fairly spouted into your eyes, it will blind you. The wisest thing the investigator can do then, it seems to me, is to let this deadly, spout alone" (LXXXV/371). We should note in passing that the
deadly, blinding spout and "the snowy, sparkling mist enveloping it" are related to the imagery and the dangers that Ishmael has considered earlier, at the end of "The Whiteness of the Whale." We will consider that chapter later.

Ishmael is aware of the destructive consequences of thinking too long about and getting too close to the center of the world's mystery; but, like Ahab, he cannot really leave the whale alone. Again, instead of grappling with it physically, he speculates. In contrast to "The Tail," however, the result of that meditation is a celebration of both doubt and intuition, and a consequent acceptance of the things both of this world and of heaven: "And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny; but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye" (LXXVII/372). Ishmael's "intuitions"—both the word itself and the ideas associated with it—directly or indirectly involve Kant, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Emerson. But having said this, we can also add that Ishmael's position in this one passage also implies the fidelism of Montaigne and Browne, since Melville has Ishmael at least temporarily approach their untortured acceptance of both doubt and faith.
But as we have seen, "The Tail," the chapter which immediately follows, does not sustain the mood. The contrast between these two closely related chapters illustrates some of the diversity of idea and feeling which Ishmael's style has to accommodate.

One of the achievements of this style is that it allows Ishmael, the "I" of the novel, to probe continually deeper into the different and usually disturbing implications of his general position. Writing "The Fountain" enables Ishmael to go beyond it to the wry denials of "The Tail" which in turn make possible the resonant affirmations of "The Grand Armada"—affirmations, however, which are themselves cruelly slashed by the maddened, man-goaded whale. The style thus defines, bodies forth, in fact constitutes an "I," a self, that is various and often contradictory, but which insists on acknowledging the variety and contradictions rather than suppressing or explaining them away. Montaigne, Browne, Burton, Sterne, and Emerson all helped make Ishmael's style possible.

Montaigne, since here we are concentrating on him, not only contributed to the intellectual position of, for example, "The Fountain" and "The Tail," but the force and prestige of his example also, I think, helped counteract the influence of Blair, the other Scotch Common Sense theorists, and such basically literal-minded critics as Duyckinck. Montaigne and the others, that is, made it easier for Ishmael (or Melville) to overlook the demands of strict logical consistency in favor of a flexible and sometimes irreverent or blasphemous exploration of his individual response to the universe. Some formal results are the amount of digression in Moby-Dick;
the apparently chaotic organization of the book as a whole; and its extensive use of the techniques of diverse literary genres. I have mentioned these large issues before, and now it is appropriate to look at some small details which are relevant to the two chapters we have been considering.

These chapters show pervasive signs of Melville's reading in Montaigne and the writers who derive from him. At the start of "The Fountain," for example the parenthetical digression to the writing process and to the exact time—"and yet, that down to this blessed minute (fifteen and a quarter minutes past one o'clock P. M. of this sixteenth day of December, A. D. 1851)"—suggest the impact of repeated allusions in *Tristram Shandy*: "and I am moreover this moment in a handsome pavillion built by Pringles... where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs." At the end of the chapter Ishmael relates an anecdote that we know grew out of Melville's own experience: "While composing a little treatise on Eternity, I had the curiosity to place a mirror before me; and ere long saw reflected there, a curious involved worming and undulation in the atmosphere over my head. The invariable moisture of my hair, while plunged in deep thought, after six cups of hot tea in my thin shingled attic, of an August noon; this seems an additional argument for the above supposition" (LXXXV/371). The biographical basis is established in a letter that Melville wrote to Hawthorne when he was completing *Moby-Dick*: "In a week or so [he wrote in the summer of 1851], I go to New York, to busy myself in a third story room,
and work and slave on my 'Whale,' while it is driving through the press" (Rep. Sel./390). That this episode is worked fancifully, ironically, and idiosyncratically into the novel suggests that Tristram's writing about himself writing, in Pringello's pavillion and elsewhere, has helped Melville give shape and expression to his own experience, which includes encouraging him to use such material in the first place.

Almost immediately after that anecdote, at the beginning of "The Tail," there is a sentence whose syntax appears so repeatedly in seventeenth century prose that it is almost a signature of the curt style: "Other poets have warbled the praises of the soft eye of the antelope, and the lovely plumage of the bird that never alights; less celestial, I celebrate a tail" (LXXXVI/372). But the fact that this syntactic pattern does not characterize Ishmael's most typical and compelling passages again indicates the contrast between his expansive, far-ranging effects and, for example, Montaigne's more restrained and limited ones.

In addition to their frequent irreverence and their willingness to digress, double-back, and to use apparently extraneous material and techniques, Montaigne, Browne, and the others also have at least this much in common: their style renders an individual and often idiosyncratic voice and that voice often considers speculative problems of the sort that also interested Melville. But, as I have noted before, for all that he had in common with these writers, Melville typically goes beyond them. The extreme doubt at the end
of "The Tail" marks one limit, although at another, the tempered but confident acceptance of "The Fountain" does come close to the earlier writers.

"The Prairie," which deals with the vast forehead of the whale, shows Ishmael in between these limits: "But in the great Sperm Whale, this high and mighty god-like dignity inherent in the brow is so immensely amplified, that gazing on it, in that full front view, you feel the Deity and the dread powers more forcibly than in beholding any other object in living nature. For you see no one point precisely; not one distinct feature is revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper; nothing but that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with riddles; dumbly lowering with the doom of boats, and ships, and men" (LXXIX/344-345). "The Deity and the dread powers" relate the passage to "The Tail," with its archangels and devils; and, as we have seen, the physical fact--"no face; he has none, proper"--also prepares for the conclusion of that chapter. As in "The Fountain," but without its affirmations, "that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with riddles, dumbly lowering with the doom of boats and ships and men" also reminds us of the radical danger involved in the pursuit of deep knowledge. Like Montaigne and Browne, Ishmael sees no hope of solving that riddle.

But in view of the affinities with Montaigne, the differences are instructive. Whatever Montaigne was trying to do in the "Apology," he did not see the universe as menacing nor did he find man's inability to comprehend it a threat to his very being.
Ishmael (and his creator) did. "I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can" (LXXIX/345). In statements like this, the scepticism of the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" has been given sinister undertones. "In pursuit of those far mysteries we dream of, or in tormented chase of that demon phantom that, some time or other, swims before all human hearts; while chasing such over this round globe, they either lead us on in barren mazes or midway leave us whelmed" (LII/236). This possibility, very much alive for Ishmael and Melville, was not a part of Montaigne's intellectual world, any more than the cadences and the magnificent sweep of reference were part of his prose style. That tormented chase later came perilously close to annihilating Melville: "Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me [Hawthorne reports] that he had pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation ..." (Log/II/529). But in Moby-Dick, if the threat of destruction and of ultimate, frustrating incapacity is almost always present, darkening and deepening the narrative, still, the narrator does not give in to this mood: the demon phantom does not leave him whelmed, and the style that he develops is a large part of the reason.17

That style often has a buoyancy and verve that simultaneously sustain Ishmael and mislead the reader. This is the case in "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish," a chapter which follows almost immediately after "The Fountain" and "The Tail." We have seen that this section of the
novel was deeply influenced by Montaigne and his successors. In "Past-Fish," for example, the phallic joke which I considered in Chapter II was conditioned by Sterne, and the radical scepticism at the end comes partly from Montaigne himself.

Ishmael's joke, to recall my earlier discussion, helps him to pull down the foundations of the Temple of the Law. He then goes beyond jurisprudence and private property to the law of nations, which his series of examples define as imperialism (LXXXIX/396). In both private and public relations, the governing code is thus shown to be that of force, of might makes right, so that for an ethically alert person, no code at all exists. In practice, even the most basic rights of a human individual in a democracy, even his most personal and innermost beliefs and opinions, are insecure and have no sure foundation: "What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish? What all men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is the principle of religious belief in them but a Loose-Fish? What to the ostentatious smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too? (LXXXIX/396.) On this definition of his two key terms, a Fast-Fish is one that has been harpooned and a Loose-Fish is one who soon will be. It is not an attractive prospect.

The radical scepticism here undermines the foundations of the West's most basic economic, political, and religious institutions. The tone is deceptively good-humored, but if his father-in-law,
Chief Justice Shaw, had understood the passage, he would have been appalled. Evert Duyckinck, who sometimes had sharp insight, had used his review of *White Jacket* to warn Melville about his humor and his scepticism: "A quaint, satirical, yet genial humor is his grand destructive weapon. It would be a most destructive weapon (for what is there which cannot be destroyed with ridicule?), were it not for the poetic element by which it is elevated. Let our author treasure this as his choicest possession, for without it his humor would soon degenerate into a sneer, than which there is nothing sadder or more fatal. In regarding, too, the spirit of things, may he not fall into the error of undervaluing their forms, lest he get into a bewildering, barren, and void scepticism!" In "Fast-Fish," that "genial humor" is indeed a "grand destructive weapon." "In regarding the spirit of things," Melville has precisely "undervalued their forms," and a radical scepticism is the cause and outcome.

In "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish" itself the extremity of the position is obscured by the buoyant tone, but in "The Whiteness of the Whale" its terrifying implications are apparent. In both cases, Melville's reading of Montaigne is one cause: "I always call that appearance of meditation which everyone forges for himself, reason: this reason, of the condition of which there may be a hundred contrary ones about one and the same subject, is an instrument of lead and wax, ductile, pliable, and accommodate to all sorts of biasses, and to all measures; so that nothing remains but the art and skill how to turn and mould it" (R. 3eb./263). Here is one of the roots of what Melville called "the great Montaignism of Hamlet." It is also one
of the sources of the questions at the end of "Fast-Fish," questions which deprive of sure foundation the Rights of Man, his most personal opinions, and "the principle or religious belief" itself.

It is only a short step from these questions to those which Isabel asks Pierre:

"Thou, Pierre, speakest of Virtue and Vice; life-secluded Isabel knows neither the one nor the other, but by hearsay. What are they, in their real selves, Pierre? Tell me first what is Virtue:—begin."

"If on that point the gods are dumb, shall a pigmy speak? Ask the air!"

"Then Virtue is nothing."

"Not that!"

"Then Vice?"

"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."

"Then why torment thyself so, dearest Pierre?"

"It is the law."

"What?"

"That a nothing should torment a nothing; for I am a nothing. It is all a dream—we dream that we dreamed we dream." (XIX/321-322)

Montaigne, among others, underlies the questions from Pierre, "The Whiteness of the Whale," and "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish." At the same time that we value the sustaining tone of the latter chapter, we should not underestimate the expense of spirit which that tone required; and we should not minimize the depth and extremity of the scepticism in even so genial a section as "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish."

iv. "The Whiteness of the Whale"

Ishmael's style derives partly from writers like Montaigne and Browne, men who provided a starting point and a pattern that Melville's
narrator goes beyond and alters. He does so most impressively in "The Whiteness of the Whale." As we have seen before, however, when Melville is writing at his greatest intensity, he transforms his sources until only the most general resemblances remain.

Montaigne, Browne, and the others, I believe, contributed to "The Whiteness of the Whale," but the immediate evidence has often been transmuted. For that reason I first considered "The Tail," where the connection with these writers is most obvious, and then I turned to related chapters like "The Fountain," "Fast-Fish," and "The Prairie," where the same techniques and concerns are present. And because "The Tail," "The Fountain," "Fast-Fish" and "The Prairie" amplify and develop different implications of "The Whiteness of the Whale," they allow us to do more than guess about the impact that men like Montaigne and Browne had on the style of that central chapter.

These writers did not intensify Melville's awareness that good and evil, God and devil exist simultaneously and inseparably. They did not, that is, lead to the crucial insight that "Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright." But the writers we are concerned with did contribute to some of the consequences of such an insight.

As we have seen, they made a striking case for the view that a radically limited and fallible human reason cannot comprehend God and the innermost secrets of the universe. Of course Melville's Dutch Reformed upbringing also impressed similar views on him. But we should not underestimate the impact of the books Melville
discovered in that period of great unfolding which he described to Hawthorne. These books, which liberated him, had a particular authority. In this case, they may have reconfirmed in a new and perhaps more compelling and convincing form an outlook which Melville had been prepared for early in life. In the case of Montaigne, the demonstration that man is radically limited is part of an argument that on some readings also makes God extremely aloof, cool, and indifferent. If Melville read Montaigne as believing in a basically indifferent God and a radically limited humanity, the combination would have intensified his problem. On this view, Montaigne would have provided an outlook which Melville had only to carry a little farther to arrive at the position of extreme indecision which he develops in "The Whiteness of the Whale." And there is suggestive internal and external evidence to support this view of his relation to Montaigne.

To begin with, while comprehensively undermining confidence in human reason in the "Apology," Montaigne turns to the belief in the immortality of the soul: "But 'tis wonderful to observe how the most constant and obstinate maintainers of this just and clear persuasion of the immortality of the soul fall short, and how weak their arguments are, when they go about to prove it by human reason. . . . All things produced by our own mediation and understanding, whether true or false, are subject to incertitude and controversy. . . . Whatever we undertake without God's assistance, whatever we see without the lamp of his grace, is but vanity and folly" (R. Seb./257). A modern gloss on this passage holds that Montaigne "utters a denial of
personal immortality which it is impossible to mistake, no matter how much he may shelter himself behind Epicurus or utilize it as a proof of the impotence of the human reason." Melville, that is, could easily have seen the section as a flat denial of personal immortality. Even taken at face value, its emphasis on uncertainty is relevant to Ishmael's sense that a vast, indefinite, incomprehensible cosmos is a threat which can obliterate him. The inability either to understand or to have faith feeds "the thought of annihilation": "Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way?" (XLII/193.)

By making the universe ultimately inaccessible to the unaided individual, Montaigne, Browne, and writers like them also contributed to other phases of Ishmael's predicament: "pondering all this, the palsied universe lies before us a leper; and like wilful travellers in Lapland, who refuse to wear colored and coloring glasses upon their eyes, so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him" (XLII/194). "The wretched infidel" is the unbeliever, the man who does not have faith, to get to the root of the word. "The colored and coloring glasses," then, can suggest the transforming effect of faith, and the blindness which results from gazing "at the monumental white shroud" becomes the consequence of trying to probe the mystery of the universe alone and without reliance on God. Montaigne writes: "And those people both abuse themselves and us
who will pretend to dive into these mysteries by the strength of human reason. . . . We are to content ourselves with the light it pleases the sun to communicate to us by his rays, and he who will lift up his eyes to take in a greater, let him not think it strange if, for the reward of his presumption, he there lose his sight" ("That a Man is Soberly to Judge of Divine Ordinances"/94). This and many other passages may have contributed to the end of "The Whiteness of the Whale."

But to leave it at that is to oversimplify, because, as I have already indicated, neither Montaigne nor Melville was quite as orthodox as this interpretation would have them. Melville, for one thing, "loved a man who dived"; and the Montaigne of the "Apology" accumulates arguments that frequently do not at all support a belief in God or Christianity. Sainte-Beuve, for example, sees the surface of the essay as a deceptive mask, and holds that Montaigne actually "aims to make dupes only of those who wish to be duped." Melville clearly did not wish to be. "What Montaigne wants to do," on Sainte-Beuve's reading, "is to ruin transcendental faith for the heart of man."

His object attained, and to those who would admit that faith in such things is chimerical, he will know what to whisper in their ears about the manner of conceiving man and the world . . . . Sainte-Beuve pictures the essayist leading you into his labyrinth with a thousand seductive speeches and, at every mark which you want to make to help you in finding your way back, telling you: "'All this is only error or doubt; do not count on it, do not regard it too much, in a hope that it can guide you in returning; the only sure thing is this lamp I am showing you; throw away the rest; this sacred lamp is enough for us.' And when he has walked you
around long enough, when he has bewildered and exhausted you in a thousand Daedalian passages, all of a sudden he blows out the lamp, or snuffs it out, and you hear nothing but a thin chuckle."21

The Melville who could see "old Burton as atheistical—in the exquisite irony of his passages on some sacred matters" (Log/II/523) may also have seen an equally atheistic Montaigne, although there is no evidence that he saw him as a deceptively sinister figure.

And many critics who do not go as far as Sainte-Beuve nonetheless "look upon the 'Apology' as not only anti-Christian in tendency but as the true expression of a non-religious temper."22 One of the more moderate responses holds that, although Montaigne was probably a sincere believer, "His God is so remote that man can do nothing to rise toward him either morally or intellectually; nor does his God apparently raise many men by the special action of his grace. The appalling practices of Montaigne's time seem to convince him that Christianity has hardly any moral effect at all."23 And because T. S. Eliot, like Melville, has had his own encounter with "the demon of doubt," he writes with particular authority: "what makes Montaigne a very great figure is that he succeeded ... in giving expression to the scepticism of every human being. For every man who thinks and lives by thought must have his own scepticism, that which stops at the question, that which ends in denial, or that which leads to faith and which is somehow integrated into the faith which transcends it."24 On all of these views, from Sainte-Beuve's through Eliot's, Montaigne would have undermined Melville's faith;
and with this in mind, we can return to "The Whiteness of the Whale."

One main problem at the end of the chapter is that Ishmael can neither believe nor calmly accept his disbelief. He is seeking the truth, but one implication of the "colored and coloring glasses" of faith is that they prevent him from seeing bare, ultimate reality, a reality which he feels is at its core godless, horrible, and destructive. At the same time, willfully to reject the aid of the "colored and coloring glasses" and to ponder the mystery alone—this brings no relief, either, for reasons which Montaigne's critique of human understanding helps to explain.

There is evidence to suggest, moreover, that Melville would have responded to a Montaigne as atheistic as Sainte-Beuve's. Even on more moderate readings, Montaigne would have contributed to the other side of Ishmael's (and Melville's) dilemma, the unwillingness and inability to believe. On any of the views which I have outlined, he would have aroused the extreme doubts which lead to that "atheism from which we shrink." A sense of such atheism darkens the background of Moby-Dick, and at least in "The Tail" Ishmael does not shrink from expressing it in an almost unqualified form.

5. Summary

But not all of Moby-Dick is so dark, and not all of Montaigne's influence is on such sections. We have seen, for example, that Montaigne's account of his friendship with Boethie may have given
Melville a certain intangibly important support in his own dealings with a controversial relation, that between Ishmael and Queequeg. "Of Cannibals," moreover, probably reinforced the generally sympathetic treatment of Queequeg as savage. But Montaigne's main contribution to the theme of the civilized and savage was to give depth and a complicating range of implication to Melville's handling of a topic that he had been concerned with from the start of his career. Melville, that is, created independent episodes like the exchange between Queequeg, Ishmael, and Peleg or "The Whale as a Dish," episodes whose patterning and whose complex, ironic outlook show that he had so thoroughly assimilated Montaigne that he was able to use him for his own creative purposes. Montaigne, seems similarly and unexpectedly to have affected Melville's handling of Ahab at the height of the storm and at the conclusion of the novel. Recognizing that "Of Cannibals" bears on these scenes allows us to see another deepening connotation, particularly in the conclusion, since Melville apparently regarded Ahab's defeat and the sinking of the Pequod as a heroic catastrophe comparable to the most splendid of antiquity. Montaigne was also one of those who encouraged Melville to value Ahab's independent, heroic, defiant struggle: "The part that true conquering has to play lies in the encounter, not in the coming off; the honour of valour consists in fighting, not in subduing."

As we have seen, Montaigne, Browne, and writers like them also intensified Melville's problems by demonstrating the feebleness of human reason and, in Montaigne's case, by making the existence of
God distressingly uncertain. But equally important, they also helped to create the style which allows Ishmael to endure these perplexities. The learning and allusions; the piling up of alternatives and the resulting tension, sometimes almost fatal, between them; the flexibility and the willingness to acknowledge rather than suppress contradiction and diversity; the digressions and the variety of literary genres; the wry humor and the characteristic irreverence, all bodied forth by Ishmael's idiosyncratic "I," which probes continually deeper into his general position—these traits do not begin to define Ishmael's style, but they do suggest the extent to which that achievement drew support and inspiration from Montaigne and the other writers who constitute that line of descent (and dissent) which I have been calling that of the fox.
Chapter V

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

1. Introduction

In both England and America, one of the major facts about the first half of the nineteenth century is that a religious faith which had been alive and inspiring in the seventeenth century had gradually lost its power and had left sensitive men to experience the consequences of that loss. Their diverse reports of the experience and its meaning constitute a large part of nineteenth century literature, from the spiritual crisis of Thomas Carlyle to the nervous breakdowns of Kingsley, Mill, and Symonds; from Arnold's ebbing Sea of Faith and loss of certitude and peace to Emerson's hard-won affirmations; from the psychological destruction of the typical Hawthorne character—Young Goodman Brown, for example—to the final rebirth which the writing of Walden makes possible. In America, however, the consequences of that loss of faith were more extreme than in England, at the same time that the seventeenth century habit of mind also survived more pervasively and more obviously. The symbolic techniques and the characteristic moral or metaphysical concerns of Hawthorne and Melville, to confine our examples to prose fiction, contrast noticeably with their English counterparts and contemporaries, Dickens and Thackeray. These concerns and techniques, however, have close ties with the seventeenth century.
The historical changes which I have outlined are the backdrop against which to view Melville's relations to Sir Thomas Browne, since the similarities and differences between these two writers constitute a specific, concrete instance of a much more general shift in feeling and thought. That shift bears on the important use Browne and Melville made of a section of Exodus as well as on the similarities and differences in their relation to science, scepticism, and symbolism. Although I cannot pause to call attention to it as I proceed, the basic significance of that larger movement should thus be kept in mind in much of what follows.

To introduce another relevant matter, Browne, like Rabelais and Montaigne, is not the same throughout. Like them, he developed and he did not worry about contradicting himself. From Religio Medici to Urn Burial, for example, his style became heavier and more resonant, so that to talk about that style as if it were static and uniform from beginning to end is not quite accurate. For my purposes, however, the differences between Religio Medici and Urn Burial are relatively unimportant. But in long stretches of Vulgar Errors or the Commonplace Book the style is only occasionally relieved by the flashes that we associate with Browne at his best. And even contemporary scholars disagree about whether to stress Browne's mysticism or science, his religion or scepticism, his speculation or his experiments. To resolve the problem I have taken my clues from Melville's explicit statements and from the internal evidence of his work, so that if the Browne who emerges in this chapter is not
necessarily the "real" one, I hope that he at least approaches the Browne who made a difference in the writing of Moby-Dick. ³

I now turn to some of the characteristics which I think did make a difference.

Browne was willing to digress and he had a habit of accepting diverse and even contradictory scientific and philosophic views.⁴ He often slighted logic and was "content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition," a tendency which harmonized with his interest in symbolism and which allowed Melville to see him as a mystic.⁵ I think that all of these traits contributed to the style of Moby-Dick in the sense of that word which refers to overall, integrating formal patterns. I also think that Browne suggested a way of making fact and science merge into poetry and symbolism. What I am immediately concerned with is how that suggestion bears on the structure of Moby-Dick as a whole.

To be more specific: in place of the unconnected dialogues of Mardi, Melville has contrived the cetological chapters, which allow him to range freely over the same kind of issues his characters debated in the earlier work. But in Moby-Dick, far from being unconnected, these chapters are intimately related both to the quest and to the creation of a believable fictional world. Fact merges into symbol, and both fact and symbol help to unify the book. At many different levels, that is, discussions of the whale's anatomy serve to integrate Moby-Dick. The idea of building up and holding Moby-Dick together by means of the cetological chapters—this organizing idea, I think, grows out of Melville's deepened insight into works like Vulgar Errors,
Religio Medici, and The Anatomy of Melancholy; and his execution of that idea shows that he had mastered their style so thoroughly that he was now able to put it to his own uses. In dealing with the individual chapters which will supply the evidence for this view, I will not be able to call attention to the total pattern, but I should like to assume its relevance to the particulars that I will be studying.

I have now made some necessary preliminary remarks and, in the process, I have also indicated briefly the concerns of the following chapter. I now turn to the first of those topics.

2. Faith, Scepticism, and the Jehovah of Exodus

Both Browne and Melville (or Ishmael) echo the same section of Exodus (xxxiii/20-23), and, as with the elephant anecdotes, the series is illuminating. In Exodus, a vigorous, powerful, jealous God acts directly in tribal affairs. He gives the law to Moses in a personal interview, but, friendly as He is, He tells the patriarch: "Thou cannot see my face: for man shall not see me and live" (xxxiii/20). Then, in a line that Melville uses almost unchanged and Browne more indirectly, God says: "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen" (M-V/786). Here is the taboo of a primitive tribal god. In both Browne and Melville that primitive taboo becomes a part of a sophisticated probing of the problem of knowledge and the nature of reality, but Moby-Dick at least also re-creates and thus retains a sense of
the deadly prohibition which is appropriate to a primitive
god.

To talk about the whale as a primal deity is hardly original, but to connect him in this sense with the Jehovah of Exodus is less ordinary. Because the relation is unexpected, it might be worth exploring. The reason for doing so in a chapter on Sir Thomas Browne is that time and again the relevant passages show the impact of the scepticism of Montaigne and Browne.6

Browne, for example, makes the section from Exodus into a metaphor: "I know God is wise in all; wonderful in what we conceive, but far more in what we comprehend not: for we behold him but asquint, upon reflex or shadow; our understanding is dimmer than Moses' eye; we are ignorant of the back parts or lower side of his divinity; therefore, to pry into the maze of his counsels, is not only folly in man, but presumption even in angels" (BM/1/xi/16). Moses literally and physically could not see God, a literal fact which Browne metaphorically applies to "our understanding" and uses in the service of his lively scepticism. Man, for Browne, has neither the capacities nor the right to probe God's innermost mysteries; but, in contrast to Melville and much more unequivocally than Montaigne, Browne eagerly accepted his own limitations and God's incomprehensible superiority. He was content to do so; he was happy to "teach my haggard and unreclaimed reason to stoop to the lure of faith" (BM/1/x/15) because for him, that faith was still a strong and vital one. "Be Sir Thomas Browne our ensample," Melville wrote in Mardi,
"who, while exploding 'Vulgar Errors,' heartily hugged all the mysteries in the Pentateuch" (M/13/33).

But in Moby-Dick Melville was not able to "heartily hug" those mysteries; he was not able to "lose / himself / in a mystery; to pursue / his / reason to an O Altitudol" (PM/I/ix/15); and it is precisely the loss of a by then devitalized faith that separates him from Browne, since he accepted Browne's scepticism about the impossibility of comprehending ultimate reality. (Even in Mardi, Melville does not follow Browne's "ensample" in any literal way. See Footnote 11). As I indicated earlier in connection with Montaigne, at one extreme this dilemma sometimes produced an outright denial of the existence of God and his hidden mysteries: "and hint what he will about his face, I say again he has no face" (MD/LXXXVI/377). In "The Tail" the prohibition of the Jehovah of Exodus--"Thou shalt see my back parts, /my tail, he seems to say, / but my face shall not be seen"--thus combines with the scepticism of Browne and Montaigne, but instead of producing Browne's sophisticated and joyous acceptance of God, it becomes part of a basic denial.9

But Melville's response to Exodus, his scepticism, and his loss of a vitalizing faith like Browne's had other, less grandly negative consequences. The most important positive one was that he penetrated beneath the forms and doctrines that Browne lovingly embraced and re-created a sense of a primitive god whom it is possible to associate partly with the Jehovah of Exodus.
At the end of the "Whiteness of the Whale," for example, Melville has Ishmael write: "pondering all this, the palsied universe lies before us a leper; and like wilful travelers in Lapland, who refuse to wear colored and coloring glasses upon their eyes, so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol" (XLII/194). The tension between belief and extreme scepticism contributes to the power of the passage as of the entire book, but inseparable from the intellectual issue and also contributing its energy to the symbolism is the sense of the White Whale as that primitive god who, like the Jehovah of Exodus, is under a deadly taboo. To violate the taboo, to look on the god, brings the threat of extreme punishment: "Thou cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live." Partly because of his experiences in the South Seas, partly because of the deeply challenging scepticism of men like Browne, Montaigne, and Bayle, Melville, I think, was stimulated to see beneath the surface of Exodus; to recapture a sense of its underlying, primal energy; and thus to re-create and associate with the White Whale some of the primitive qualities of Jehovah.

The whale is typically a threat who will blind you, who will obliterate you, and whom we are repeatedly advised to leave alone; "if the jet is fairly spouted into your eyes, it will blind you. The wisest thing the investigator can do then, it seems to me, is to let this deadly spout alone" (LXXXV/371). To move from this suggestive, symbolic level to that of the merely personal is to risk an anticlimax, but to understand some of the origins of passages like this, we must
turn to certain details in Melville's life. To be more specific: blindness is the punishment for daring to view the unviewable, partly because of the physiological and psychological fact that Melville had weak eyes which were badly strained by his reading, writing, and intensely disturbing intellectual activity. Melville, that is, had every personal reason to associate the loss of sight with the unsettling activity which was carrying him into forbidden regions. But at another level, Jehovah's prohibition, "man shall not see me and live," also conditions the emphasis, sometimes on death, sometimes on the loss of sight as the price one pays for pursuing "the grand god" (CXXXIII/539). The personal and the impersonal thus reinforce one another. Perhaps Melville was able to see depths in Exodus, partly because his own experience made the Biblical account painfully immediate.

That God will blind those who "stare at his bright essence" was of course a proposition as conventional in the pulpits of mid-nineteenth century America as in those of early seventeenth century England, and the position has many other analogues. But I am suggesting that in a passage of Exodus which he knew well, Melville was able to see beneath this conventional surface and to recapture some of the emotions connected with a relatively unintellectualized, relatively primitive religious experience. I am not suggesting that this passage is the only relevant stimulus, but simply that it is one and that concrete evidence helps to demonstrate its bearing.

The "glorified White Whale" is associated with an impressive range of pagan and primitive gods; with "the sacred White Dog . . .
of the noble Iroquois;" with "the tongueless crocodile" of "the young Orient world;" with the primal fertility gods--"the merry May-day gods of old"--with "the primal sources . . . among the oldest Hindoo, Egyptian, and Grecian sculptures;" with "the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of a leviathan;" with Jove himself, "that great majesty supreme." Melville does not have Ishmael explicitly mention the God of Exodus, partly because of the proprieties of mid-nineteenth century America, but implicitly and indirectly an unreconstructed, primitive Jehovah, a god under an extreme taboo, also lords it along with the others.

That section of Exodus which Melville incorporated almost unchanged into "The Tail" thus suggests itself as one direct source for an important dimension of the symbolism of the whale--the whale as a threatening, primitive deity under an awful taboo. Jove or the Sacred White Dog are not similarly forbidding: partly, at least, the sense of danger associated with the whale-as-god derives, I think, from Melville's penetrating beneath the surface of Exodus. At another level, the problem of scepticism and belief is involved, and it is part of Melville's achievement that he was able simultaneously to reach very primitive sources of energy and attitude and also to grapple with extremely complicated and perplexing intellectual issues. In Moby-Dick the results are impressive. Sir Thomas Browne was able to "heartily hug the mysteries of the Pentateuch"; Melville was able to do something else again. Perhaps this is why "for all his faith could see, we would not have him the good doctor be."

But "faith" and "mysteries" apply to more than the Pentateuch and the dogmas of conventional religion: "Though America be discovered, the Cathays of the deep are unknown. And whose crosses the Pacific might have read lessons to Buffon. The sea-serpent is not a fable; and in the sea, that snake is but a garden worm. There are more wonders than the wonders rejected, and more sights unrevealed than you or I ever dreamt of. Moles and bats alone should be skeptics; and the only true infidelity is for a live man to vote himself dead. Be Sir Thomas Browne our example; who, while exploding 'Vulgar Errors,' heartily hugged all the mysteries in the Pentateuch" (Mardi/13/33).

The sentence from Mardi which I have been using takes its meaning from its context. As that context indicates, Browne was a vitalizing example, not because he accepted the mysteries in the Pentateuch but because he encouraged an eager belief in mysteries of another kind, a kind represented by the fabulous sea-serpent and the terrifying wonders of the deep. By following Browne's example, one could keep a grip on both fact and fable; or to put it a little differently, one could deal in an apparently scientific, factual, common-sensical way with material that was fabulous, mythic, and beyond the realm of common sense. In so doing, one could simultaneously satisfy the common reader's demand for authentic factual detail and his equally strong interest in the strange and unusual; and at the same time one could tell the complex truth about "the sea-serpent," the White Whale,
who shows that "there are more wonders rejected, and more sights unrevealed than you or I ever dreamt of." In the sense that "fable" means "lie," one could show the profound sense in which "the sea-serpent is not a fable," and at the same time one could establish the claims to truth and belief of exactly that dark, mythic realm which the sea-monster represents.

I have now indicated one of Browne's major contributions to Moby-Dick: he suggested a way of handling scientific, technical, factual material—a way, a style, that would allow Melville to make the poetry run from the whale's blubber; that would, to use Melville's synonymous phrase, allow him "to give the truth of the thing" in all of its depth and complexity (Log/1/574).

So far we are on ground similar to that which F. O. Matthiessen first explored in one of the finest sections of American Renaissance. But Matthiessen's excellent account of Melville's relation to Browne stops with Browne's positive contributions and does not take the next step. The paradox involved in that step appears in the idea of "faith in mysteries," to use the terms with which we started. Browne encouraged Melville's faith, but in mysteries which he himself rejected, disapproved of, and disowned. "Though neither knows where lie the nameless things of which the mystic sign gives forth such hints," Melville has Ishmael write, "yet with me, as with the colt, somewhere those things must exist. Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in
fright" (XLII/193). To "own the whale" one must accept this view of the invisible spheres, and Browne did not:

I am sure there is a common spirit, that plays within us, yet makes no part of us; and that is, the spirit of God; the fire and scintillation of that noble and mighty essence, which is the life and radical heat of spirits, and those essences that know not the virtue of the sun; a fire quite contrary to the fire of hell. This is that gentle heat that brooded on the waters, and in six days hatched the world; this is that irradiation that dispels the mists of hell, the clouds of horror, fear, sorrow, despair; and preserves the region of the mind in serenity. Whosoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this spirit, (though I feel his pulse) I dare not say he lives; for truly without this, to me, there is no heat under the tropick; nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the sun. (FM/I/xxxii/46).

For Browne, love—the warm, life-giving spirit of God—not fright is the central fact of creation. Browne thus helped to liberate Melville by showing that "there are more wonders than the wonders rejected." He helped open "the great flood-gates of the wonder-world" (MD/I/6), but he did not contribute to the deepest level of "the grand hooded phantom" who dominates that world, nor did he contribute deeply to the tragic perspective from which that world is seen. Such qualifications are necessary in order to give Browne's positive contributions their proper balance. 11

In a moment I shall turn to some specific examples of that major contribution with which we are immediately concerned. The present section amplifies the earlier one on "Melville's Style of Arguing" (Chapter IV/4/1), a sub-heading which could also serve here. In connection with Browne, however, I have stressed "science" and "fact" rather than the more general idea of learning and learned allusions
because, much more than Montaigne and in some ways more than Burton, Browne had self-announced and easily recognized scientific interests. But his science included much that by Melville's time was regarded as simply antiquarianism, and it is exactly a "science" that had a central place for wonder and abstruse learning that helped make Browne a vitalizing figure.

A final introductory note. For my purposes, the discussion of science loses meaning unless it is related to the sections on scepticism and symbolism. Because the three topics are interrelated, my comments on any one passage in Moby-Dick should be read in the light of the entire discussion. The reason is that the intellectual issue of scepticism often converges in Moby-Dick with the artistic concern with symbolism. What is common to both is the problem of how one knows the truth, a problem which was much more alive for Melville than my abstract language here indicates. In important ways the style of Moby-Dick grows out of these interrelated concerns, and Browne is relevant to all of them.

In order to show how, I turn to Chapter LV of Moby-Dick. I shall focus on this short unit and shall incidentally range out beyond it. Having established a groundwork, I can then proceed to related questions.

i. The Groundwork: "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales"

In the first twenty-two chapters of Book V of Vulgar Errors, Browne explodes "many things questionable as they are commonly
described in pictures" (VE/V/1/87). Melville knew the section well enough to draw directly on three of the chapters (2, 17, and 19): "Of the Pictures of Dolphins," "Of the Picture of St. George," and "Of the Pictures of Mermaids, Unicorns, and Some Others." The twenty-two chapter headings all follow the same form: "Of the Picture/s/ of . . . ." Thus, when Melville came to write titles for chapters LV-LVI of Moby-Dick, his reading in Browne obviously conditioned his choice: "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" and "Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales."

And Browne also influenced the substance and approach of the chapters themselves. Melville, for example, has Ishmael begin the first of them: "I shall ere long paint to you as well as one can without canvas, something like the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the eye of the whaleman when in his own absolute body the whale is moored alongside the whale-ship so that he can be fairly stepped upon there. It may be worth while, therefore, previously to advert to those curious imaginary portraits of him which even down to the present day confidently challenge the faith of the landsman. It is time to set the world right in this matter, by proving such pictures all wrong" (LV/261). Ishmael is ostensibly setting out to explode some vulgar errors on his own, "to set the world right in this matter by proving such pictures of the whale all wrong." But the bantering tone conceals serious and recurring interests and we should know Melville's technique better than to take
the passage and the chapter as simply one-sided and literal. Browne's example had shown him that he could "explode 'Vulgar Errors!'" and simultaneously "hug the mysteries."

a. "Science"

But to begin at the literal level. Ishmael provides a knowing criticism of the occasional accuracy and more general inaccuracy of detail in pictures ranging from "the oldest Hindoo, Egyptian, and Grecian" through those of "the scientific Frederick Cuvier's (LV/261, 264). His comprehensive, meticulous account gives further evidence that he is an authority on the technicalities of whales and whaling and one who, because he is an expert, can be relied on to tell the truth about even the most apparently unbelievable matters--about, for example, the terrific dangers of whaling or the matter of a whale's actually sinking a ship. That he is a safe, trustworthy man--none of your wild-eyed poet--also appears in his surface commitment to sober, unimaginative truth, a commitment which emerges from his critical remarks about "imaginary portraits" and his commonsense view of the fabulous as false: "as for the book-binders whale . . .--that is a very picturesque but purely fabulous creature" (LV/262). A man with such a sober outlook will not strain "the faith of the landsman."

The method and attitude at this literal level are related closely to Vulgar Errors, although pervasively and indirectly Burton and other writers are also involved. In both "Of the Monstrous
Pictures of Whales" and the *Pseudodoxia*— in the section on erroneous pictures, for example—the authors give a comprehensive survey of the often abstruse and fabulous literature on a given subject, a survey which goes back to the origins of things and is likely to be concerned with matters like the dolphin and St. George. Their account is designed partly to tell the literal truth about the subject: to present "the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the eyes of the whaler when in his own absolute body the whale is moored alongside the whale-ship"; or, as Browne puts it in a chapter that Melville draws on:

we shall tolerate flying horses, black swans, hydias, centaurs, harpies, and satyrs, for these are monstrosities, rarities, or else poetical fancies, whose shadowed moralities require their substantial falsities. Wherein indeed we must not deny a liberty; nor is the hand of the painter more restrainable than the pen of the poet. But where the real works of nature, or veritable acts of story are to be described, . . . art being but the imitator or secondary representor, it must not vary from the verity of the example, or describe things otherwise than they truly are, or have been. For hereby introducing false ideas of things, it perverts and deforms the face and symmetry of truth. (*IX*/148)

Melville's philosophical terms—"true form," "absolute body," and "faith"—allow for a margin of ambiguity large enough to encompass Browne's "symbolical sense" (*IX*/48) and "shadowed moralities" as well as his demand for a description of "things as they truly are." It is exactly Browne's range that made him a vitalizing example. But here we are concerned with the literal, not the "symbolical sense."

At that level, both Browne and Melville are willing to label as "substantial falsities" such "picturesque but purely fabulous
creatures" as the book-binders whale or the flying horse. That "book-binder's whale winding like a vine-stalk round the stock of a descending anchor—as stamped and gilded on the backs and title-pages of many books both old and new . . . and introduced by an old Italian publisher somewhere about the 15th century, during the Revival of Learning" (LX/262); that creature, incidentally, appears on the title pages of all four volumes of Wilkin's edition of Browne, a book "both old and new," and the information about the publisher seems to be Melville's embellishment on one of Wilkin's notes to the chapter "Of the Pictures of Dolphins" (V/III/92). Melville's willingness to include such details—and he does it massively throughout Moby-Dick—owes as much to his sympathetic reading of Browne as the information here seems to owe to Wilkin's edition. We have here one further if minor instance of that impulse toward the encyclopedic which Browne helped awaken in Melville.

To return to other affinities. As hard-headed experts who bring imaginary paintings to the test of reason, direct observation, and experience, both Browne and Melville—Ishmael delight in saying: "We cannot but observe that in the picture of Jonah and others, whales are described with two prominent spouts on their heads; whereas indeed they have but one in the forehead, and terminating over the windpipe." The quotation is from a page of Vulgar Errors that Melville uses more than once (X/xix/146), but throughout the cetological chapters Ishmael is often made to be as literal and meticulous. In the present chapter, for example, he criticizes a
picture: "To mention but one thing about it, let me say that it has an eye which applied, according to the accompanying scale, to a full grown sperm whale, would make the eye of that whale a bow-window some five feet long" (MD/LV/263).

But Scoresby and dozens of others supplied a language and outlook as literal as that side of Browne which we have been considering. As I have indicated, however, Browne also suggested possibilities which these men never dreamed of, and now we might consider that other side.

b. Symbolism

To begin with, in the process of "exploding 'Vulgar Errors'" concerning "the primal source of all those pictorial delusions," Ishmael simultaneously ennobles and enlarges the significance of the whale. He does so by associating him with the glory of "the oldest Hindoo, Egyptian, and Grecian sculptures"; with, in fact, "the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of leviathan." He thus uses the "scientific" outlook, techniques, and allusions of Vulgar Errors (and Religio Medici) to establish the symbolic, mythic stature of the whale. Melville has responded to Browne's sometimes serious, sometimes playful acceptance of "the symbolic sense" and of that realm of mystery which Browne was "content to understand without a rigid definition, in an easy and Platonic description"; he has shared Browne's interest in the improbable and esoteric—in Hermes and hieroglyphics, in St. George and dolphins—he has assimilated and
put to his own uses that Browne who encouraged a man to believe that "the sea-serpent is no fable." "The living whale in his full majesty and significance" can be appreciated only in reference to such considerations, and Browne helped make them possible. Browne, that is, suggested a style—a way of seeing and a way of rendering those perceptions—a style which is central to the creation of *Moby-Dick*.

c. Scepticism

As I have already stressed, that style is closely related to the intellectual issue of scepticism. In "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales," for example, Ishmael, having exploded vulgar errors enough, builds up to the concluding section of his chapter: "Though elephants have stood for their full-lengths, the living Leviathan has never yet fairly floated himself for his portrait. The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen in unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight, like a launched line-of-battle-ship; and out of that element it is a thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations" (LV/264-265). In one sense what we have here is Emerson's organic theory given destructive undertones by the war imagery ("launched line-of-battle ship") and the titanic size and power of the whale. But that widely shared outlook, which is relevant to the loss of "his mighty swells and undulations," does not bear on the earlier part of the passage. Sir Thomas Browne, however, was
one of those who contributed to Melville's sense that the waters
and the whale are ultimately unfathomable.\textsuperscript{12}

d. Interrelations and Implications

The interrelation between scepticism, symbolism, and the style
of \textit{Moby-Dick} is illustrated in the remainder of "Of the Monstrous
Pictures of Whales":

But it may be fancied /\textipa{i}s\textipa{h}m\textipa{a}l\textipa{e}l\textipa{c}ontinues/, that from
the naked skeleton of the stranded whale, accurate
hints may be derived touching his true form. Not at all. For it is one of the more curious things about
this Leviathan, that his skeleton gives very little
idea of his general shape. Though J\textipa{e}\textipa{r}e\textipa{m}y B\textipa{e}nt\textipa{h}am's
skeleton, which hangs for candelabra in the library
of one of his executors, correctly conveys the idea
of a burly-browed utilitarian old gentleman, with all
J\textipa{e}\textipa{r}e\textipa{m}y's other leading personal characteristics; yet
nothing of this kind could be inferred from any
leviathan's articulated bones. In fact, as the great
Hunter says, the mere skeleton of the whale bears the
same relation to the fully invested and padded animal
as the insect does to the chrysalis that so roundingly
envelops it. (LV/265)

\textipa{i}s\textipa{h}m\textipa{a}l\textipa{e} uses B\textipa{e}nt\textipa{h}am and the utilitarians to represent a practical,
unimaginative, literal, and common-sense outlook, an outlook which
is hostile to symbolism and the imagination and, closely related,
which also makes the quest for truth too easy. It does so by over-
emphasizing what logic and reason can reveal and by ignoring that
area of experience which the whale stands for.\textsuperscript{13}

The position attributed to Bentham dominated popular taste and
belief in Melville's period; and Browne, like Carlyle, was an im-
portant countering force. Since "the mere skeleton of the whale
bears the same relation to the fully invested and padded animal as the insect does to the chrysalis," if one wants to get any idea at all of "his true form," one must use his imagination. As Ishmael says when he is developing the symbolic dimensions of the whale's color, "in a matter like this, subtlety appeals to subtlety, and without imagination no man can follow another into these halls" (XLII/190).

The imagination is important because for Melville the relation between appearance and reality, between surface and depth, is not clear-cut and rigidly defined but rather fluid and, in a word, symbolic. Thus, such representative passages as the present one, "The Whiteness of the Whale," and Ahab's characteristic assertion, "All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks" (XXXVI/162) all reflect different versions of Browne's central belief: "The severe schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly, but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some real substance in that invisible fabric" (RM/I/xii/17). Although the position is common enough so that Browne was not alone, his role was nonetheless among the most important in helping Melville develop that symbolic approach which is fundamental to Moby-Dick.

We can now turn in more detail than heretofore to the related question of scepticism. Browne, of course, never doubted the
existence of the "real substance in that invisible fabric." Melville was not always so sure. And, unlike Browne, he was often tormented by the "counterfeit" and the "equivocal shapes." Browne had helped convince him that "there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like" (LV/265), as he has Ishmael say at the end of the chapter we are considering; but Melville felt driven to find out anyway.

That drive is explored and rendered at its most extreme in Ahab. As I have already suggested, Ahab is impelled to know all and occasionally suspects that there is finally nothing there to know. Partly because of the doubts, the impulse in Ahab takes the form of destructive action: he is going to tear into the invisible fabric, "strike, strike through the mask," as he says in the chapter "Moby-Dick" (XXXVI/162). Earlier in the same speech from which I have just quoted, the diction and syntax are similar enough to Browne's to suggest a direct influence (cf. Ahab's "visible objects . . . are but" and Browne's "this visible world is but," quoted above on p. 247). But the similarities only point up even more basic contrasts, since it is clear that Ahab's relation to "the equivocal shapes" is infinitely more passionate, destructive, and extreme than Browne's. The pattern is similar to the one I brought out in connection with Montaigne: the closest affinities are not with Ahab, the hedgehog, but rather with Ishmael, the fox.

And like Ahab, Ishmael in his own way goes beyond the Browne who helped both to set the terms of his problem and to suggest the style, including the very texture of the language, with which he
renders that problem: "So Ishmael concludes "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" / there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. And the only mode in which you can derive even a tolerable idea of his living contour, is by going a whaling yourself; but by so doing, you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk by him. Wherefore, it seems to me you had best not be too fastidious in your curiosity touching this Leviathan" (LV/265-266). Unlike both Melville and Ishmael, Browne was able to "derive a very tolerable idea of his living contour," the "his" for Browne (though not altogether for Melville) referring to the Christian God and his infinitely complex works, the created universe. Browne derived that tolerable or liveable idea by reading in the two books of God, the Bible and the creation, an enterprise which is his version of "going a whaling yourself." But however challenging, his quest was infinitely less dangerous than Melville's.

Browne, first of all, was perfectly willing "to suck divinity from the flowers of nature" (RM/I/xvi/22); to probe the relation between "these dead bones" and "that infallible perpetuity unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in angles of contingency" (UB/V/496); in short, to range in his way between "the naked skeleton" and "his true form." But Browne also genuinely accepted that "our understanding is dimmer than Moses' eye," and he did not push his belief in the correspondences beyond certain limits: "to pry into the maze of his counsels, is not only folly in man, but presumption even in angels" (RM/I/xiii/18).

Although he made probing forays, he was also and ultimately content
The flowers of nature" for a rigidly defined answer to that mystery. It was enough for him that God’s beautiful order existed, and if it was finally inscrutable, Browne still knew that it was and that it was beautiful: "I hold there is a general beauty in the works of God, and therefore no deformity in any kind of species or creature whatsoever" (FM/I/xvi/23). As a result, those "equivocal shapes" never became threatening— they never assumed, for example, the shape of sharks who gouge beautifully symmetrical hunks of flesh from a dead whale, nor did they take on the crooked shape of the White Whale’s jaw. Where Browne was quick to accept a mystery, Ishmael is "quick to perceive a horror," and it is much harder for him than for Browne to "still be social with it" (MD/I/6).

Thus, partly because he was more agonizingly aware of the evil in the universe, partly because his position in history did not encourage a sustaining faith, Melville could not accept for himself Browne’s tolerant, vital fideism. Ishmael says at the outset of Moby-Dick: "I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote" (I/6). Browne, who contributed to that itch, was not tormented. In contrast to Melville (and in their different ways, Ahab and Ishmael), he found it easy to accept the "equivocal shapes," the dimness of our understanding, and the ultimate inscrutability of that remote "invisible fabrick."

But for Melville and Ishmael, because of the presence of evil and the absence of faith, a man who pushes out on his own, who "goes a whaling himself, runs no small risk of being eternally stove and
sunk by him." To the extent that the whale symbolizes the conventional Protestant God, that "eternally stove and sunk" suggests the eternal damnation which punishes those who "sail forbidden seas" and blasphemously "pry into the maze of his counsels" (the contrast between "earthly" and "eternally" supports such a reading). Even at this orthodox level, however, the contrast with Browne is marked. His acute Bible criticism does suggest that he had his moments of irreverence: they seem the flashing out of that "demon of doubt which is inseparable from the spirit of belief." But in Browne's case that demon does not seem disturbingly active; and for the most part, what prying he did, he did reverently. Another contrast is that, as he says in Religio Medici: "I thank God, and with joy I mention it, I was never afraid of hell, nor ever grew pale at the description of that place. I have so fixed my contemplations on heaven, that I have almost forgot the idea of hell" (RM/I/LII/75). Ishmael, who "runs no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk," has not "forgot the idea of hell," at the same time that he often suspects that there is no heaven to contemplate.

This introduces one of the closely related risks of his kind of whaling: it can end in extreme doubt or denial of that God and of "that infallible perpetuity" which Browne looked forward to. When those certainties are shaken or lost, the indefiniteness that warmed Browne's imagination comes to "shadow forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, /and/ thus stab us from behind with the thought of annihilation." The color white comes to suggest the possibility of atheism, that "dumb blankness, full of meaning." In
a universe that does not offer personal immortality, "you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk," as you do if there is no god vitalizing its immensities. The Whale, who symbolizes much more than the conventional Christian God, in one of its dimensions suggests an extreme scepticism, bordering on and sometimes constituting an outright denial of that God. Thus, there is a superficial resemblance between Ishmael's advice, "Therefore, it seems to me you had best not be too fastidious in your curiosity touching this Leviathan" and Browne's view of the folly and presumption of "prying into the maze of his counsels." But Ishmael's remark conceals terrifying and blasphemous possibilities which are foreign to Browne's world. In contrast to Browne, moreover, Ishmael never intends to take his own advice. He uses understatement and indirection to point up the fundamental issues and the underlying danger of his enterprise, whereas Browne in this case is direct and straightforward.\textsuperscript{15}

One basis of Ishmael's scepticism is an intense awareness of evil which produces suspicion and mistrust of Browne's God as well as of the sterner Calvinistic God of the Dutch Reformed Church. Sir Thomas Browne had little to do with awakening that sense of evil. He could advise his reader always to expect the worst (Christian Morals/III/xvi/105); in some moods he could count this world "not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live but to die in" (RM/II/xi/110); but his dominant emphasis is elsewhere. Browne, however, did contribute to another basis of Ishmael's scepticism:
to the distrust of the capacities of man on earth and the consequent belief that he could not fathom ultimate reality; to the view that "there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like." At one extreme, as in "The Tail," this view could lead to an understated denial; at another, in "The Fountain," to acceptance; and in the "Whiteness of the Whale," to the intense doubts and fears which we have examined.

But as I mentioned in connection with Montaigne, Browne was one of those who suggested the style which allows Ishmael to endure those doubts and fears. In discussing Montaigne, I focused on style in the sense of integrating formal patterns, a sense which is also relevant to Browne's contribution to Moby-Dick. But that contribution also involves other elements, and I am now in a position to relate my earlier view of style to my remarks both about Ishmael's handling of science and about his symbolic approach to the problems which Browne's scepticism helped to make acute.

Specifically, we saw in considering "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" that Browne contributed to a style which made a learned survey and scientific data the vehicle for a symbolic probing of a universe which Ishmael views with varying degrees of scepticism. The commitment to symbolism and an imagination powerful enough to bring those symbols alive and to hold their diverse implications in productive tension: all of these traits involving symbolism are central to Ishmael's style; and we should note that Browne contributed as much to this phase of Ishmael's precarious
and momentarilysuccesful solution as he did to the problem to
which in part the symbolic mode is a response.

11. The Style and the Style Reversed:
"The Whiteness of the Whale"

Keeping in mind these observations about science, scepticism,
and symbolism, we must now turn to "The Whiteness of the Whale" to
see how Browne's connection with these interrelated concerns bears
on that central chapter. His section "Of the Blackness of Negroes"
is a good starting point:

It is evident, not only in the general frame of nature,
that things most manifest unto sense, have proved
obscure unto the understanding; but even in proper
and appropriate objects, wherein we affirm the sense
cannot err, the faculties of reason most often fail
us. Thus of colours in general, under whose gloss
and varnish all things are seen, few or none have yet
beheld the true nature, or positively set down their
incontrollable causes. Which while some ascribe unto
the mixture of the elements, others to the graduality
of opacity and light, they have left our endeavours
to grope them out by twilight, and by darkness almost
to discover that whose existence is evidenced by light.

(VE/VI/x/263)

At the outset, Browne associates the fallibility of our senses
and reason with the deceptiveness of color and the difficulty of
establishing its "true nature." In so doing, he may have helped to
associate color with the problems that haunt Ishmael in the "Whiten-
ness of the Whale," a chapter which explores, among other matters,
the ultimate deceptiveness of things and the difficulty or im-
possibility of discovering final truth. I should add that in "Of
the Blackness of Negroes," Browne does not intend to shake our
confidence in reason or to advance the position of Religio Medici.

But Melville was quick to take hints, and I have here suggested one
that he might have taken.

Others appear as Browne frames a series of questions to develop
the view that

Their general of first natures being thus obscure,
there will be greater difficulties in their particular
discoveries. . . . Thus although a man understood the
genral nature of colours, yet were it no easy problem
to resolve, why grass is green? . . . Moreover, beside
the special and first digressions ordained from the
creation, which might be urged to salve the variety in
every species, why shall the marvel of Peru produce
its flowers of different colours, and that not once,
or constantly, but every day, and variously? Why
tulips of one colour produce some of another,
and running through almost all, should still escape
a blue? And lastly, why some men, yea and they a
mighty and considerable part of mankind, should first
acquire and still retain the gloss and tincture of
blackness? (VI/x/263-264)

The important point here is not what Browne is saying but the
rhetorical pattern he uses in saying it. He opens up difficulties
through a series of asymmetrical sentences, all of which ask "why."
The pattern—or variations on it—recur throughout Browne's work
and is one of the signatures of his style. The technique, for one
thing, allows a writer to bring to bear a whole range of fact and
fable, which is perhaps one reason Melville assimilated it and put
it to use throughout Moby-Dick. Elsewhere in Browne—later in "Of
the Blackness of Negroes," for example—because the facts and fables
are more impressively resonant than here, they come closer to the
tone of the details which cumulatively give meaning to the "Whiteness
of the Whale." But in the excerpt and much of the "Whiteness
of the Whale," the basic syntactic pattern is the same, and in Moby-Dick both the pattern and the combination of fact and "fabulous narration" derive in large part from Melville's reading of Browne, Burton, and other baroque writers.

To continue. The interrogatory form which I noted in the quotation from Browne also helps a man pose the disturbingly enigmatic questions which Melville was impelled to ask, as he has Ishmael do in the "Whiteness of the Whale":

Why to the man of untutored ideality, who happens to be but loosely acquainted with the peculiar character of the day, does the bare mention of Whitsuntide marshal in the fancy such long, dreary, speechless processions of slow-pacing pilgrims, downcast and hooded with new-fallen snow? Or, to the unread, unsophisticated Protestant of the middle American States, why does the passing mention of a White Friar or a White Nun, evoke such an eyeless statue in the soul? . . . Tell me, why this strong young colt, foaled in some peaceful valley of Vermont, far removed from all beasts of prey—why is it that upon the sunniest day, if you but shake a fresh buffalo robe behind him, so that he cannot even see it, but only smells its wild animal muskiness—why will he start, snort, and with bursting eyes paw the ground in phrenses of affright? . . . But not yet have we solved the incantation of this whiteness, and learned why it appeals with such power to the soul; and more strange and far more portentous—why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind. (XLII/190-193)

Like Ishmael in his final sentence, Browne, in his (see p. 255), connects color with the sense of large issues lurking in the background, a sense which comes partly from the idea that "a mighty and considerable part of mankind" is involved. That phrase is
added in a digressive amplifier introduced by "yea": Browne, like Melville, is given to "accumulating and piling" (MD/XLI/176) within the sentence (as in larger and smaller units of prose). Although one is declarative and the other interrogative, the sentences still have a certain pattern in common: "why . . . nay/yea (amplifying unit) . . . should . . ." But I do not want to press the similarities too far, since, even limiting ourselves to Browne and Melville, the passage from the "Whiteness of the Whale," like much of Moby-Dick, represents an assimilating, not of one section of Browne but of the whole: Religio Medici, Urn Burial, and the Garden of Cyrus, for example, as well as of a particular chapter from Vulgar Errors.

Even in the course of that chapter, moreover, Browne may have provided other relevant suggestions. To begin with, in speculating on the "scientific" causes of black skin, Browne turns to the origins of white:

and in the history of Heliodore, /we read/ of a Moorish queen who upon aspection of the picture of Andromeda, conceived and brought forth a fair one. And thus perhaps might some say was the beginning of this complexion, induced first by imagination. . . . Thus many opinion that from aspection of the snow, which lieth along in northern regions, and high mountains, hawks, kites, bears, and other creatures become white; and by this way Austin conceiveth the devil provided they never wanted a white-spotted ox in Egypt; for such an one they worshipped, and called Apis. (VI/x/270)

This association of white with the devil is reinforced later in the chapter. Browne has been considering one of the two main explanations for the blackness of Negroes; namely, that it is "the curse of God on Cham and his posterity" (VI/x/213): "Lastly, whereas
men affirm this colour was a curse, I cannot make out the propriety of that name, it neither seeming so to them, nor reasonably unto us, for they take so much content therein, that they esteem deformity by other colours, describing the devil and terrible objects white" (VI/xi/278).

And in trying to, "if not overthrow, yet shrewdly shake the security of" the commonly accepted explanations, Browne emphasizes the relativity and ambiguity of our judgments of beauty: "For beauty is determined by opinion, and seems to have no essence that holds one notion with all. . . . Thus we that are of contrary complexions accuse the blackness of the Moors as ugly; but the spouse in the Canticles excuseth this conceit, in that description of hers, I am black but comely. And howsoever Cerberus, and the furies of hell be described by the poets under this complexion, yet in the beauty of our Saviour, blackness is commended, when it is said, his locks are bushy and black as a raven" (VI/xi/279-280). The elevation to the religious level and the suggestion that a color can simultaneously describe "the furies of hell" and "the beauty of our Saviour"—this perception may have conditioned one of the basic insights of the "Whiteness of the Whale": "why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, may, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind." The syntactic pattern which I mentioned earlier helps to communicate this insight, so that Browne seems to have influenced both its form and substance.
In the course of the "Blackness of Negroes" Browne thus suggests that both good and evil, God and devil, beauty and terror are at once associated with white (or with black, depending on the context), a suggestion which Melville seems to have made good use of. And in giving body to the perception, he uses a style of arguing—a way of bringing together fact and fable, science and speculation—that derives from his reading in, among others, Browne, Montaigne, Burton, and Rabelais. At the start of the chapter, for example, Ishmael provides a majestic catalogue of white used in royal, noble contexts. Although Rabelais supplies some of the examples, most of the specific details do not come from the writers I have mentioned. What they did offer, however, was the basic idea of massing and accumulating such information in the first place. Their works are full of references analogous to the "Lord of the White Elephants" and "among the Romans a white stone marked a joyful day" (XLII/185-186). Even the White Steed of the Prairies and the fearful White Squall of the South Sea have their counterparts in the legends and "natural history" that Browne explores in Vulgar Errors.

Throughout the chapter (and the book), moreover, such information is conveyed in syntactic patterns that also derive from these writers. The pervasive asymmetry; the series of questions—"why...why"—the loose ligatures at the start of sentences—"Or what is there apart from the traditions of dungeoned warriors and kings..."; "Nor is it, altogether..."; "And when we consider..."; all characterize the prose of the baroque writers who helped Melville create Moby-Dick.
At the beginning of the "Whiteness of the Whale" Ishmael states one of the major technical problems which faced him both in the chapter and in the book as a whole: the White Whale aroused a "vague, nameless horror . . . , and yet so mystical and well nigh ineffable was it, that I almost despair of putting it in comprehensible form" (XLII/185). Browne, to concentrate on him, reinforced Melville's sense of the mystical and symbolic, and he was also one of those who suggested the style which allows Ishmael "to put it in comprehensible form."

But along with all of the similarities we should once again note fundamental contrasts. One is that Ishmael uses Browne's style to communicate a sense of horror, and in so doing he reverses its originator's emphasis on love. Unlike Ishmael, moreover, Browne positively looked forward to annihilation, to that "Christian annihilation" which he commends at the end of Urn Burial. The sense of profound nihilism, of nothingness, that "the thought of annihilation" connotes in the "Whiteness of the Whale" marks a crucial difference between Browne and Melville and between the two historical situations in which their works are rooted.

iii. Science and Humor

But Moby-Dick is not always concerned with the threat of annihilation, and the tone of the book is not always grim. One of the characteristics of its style, as a matter of fact, is that it allows Ishmael to express a wide range of moods, ideas, and attitudes. In his willingness to encompass diversity and to render different shades of
personal response, Melville's *Moby-Dick* resembles, among others, *Religio Medici* and *Vulgar Errors*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Rabelais, and the *Anatomy of Melancholy*; and, as I have suggested, the form of *Moby-Dick* as well as the range within individual sections grows partly out of Melville's reading in the anatomy and the baroque. The chapter "Cetology" is humorously concerned with exactly the question of the total scheme of *Moby-Dick*, and both because of its tone and its interests, it is an appropriate one to mention here.

I have already commented on Ishmael's defense in "Cetology" of an open, asymmetrical, uncompleted form which the reader's imagination has actively to help create if the "system" is to function (see Chapter II/11). Ishmael's own flexible classifications lightly but firmly satirize logic-choppers and coercive system makers. His open form, his union of the "scientific and poetic" (XXXII/131), and his hostility to rigid logic all derive partly from *Vulgar Errors* (and *Religio Medici*), *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and *Tristram Shandy*; and in a more general way, from Rabelais, Montaigne, and writers like them. But in discussing the role of science, scepticism, and symbolism, I have already considered the question of form. Here I want to concentrate on a narrower matter, the use of science or learning for humorous effect.

In the section on the Narwhale, whose phallic innuendo I have already discussed, Ishmael expands on that whale as "a curious example of the Unicornism to be found in almost every kingdom of animated nature" (XXXII/139). His information comes from "certain cloistered old authors," one of whom seems to be Sir Thomas Browne. To begin
with, Browne's chapter "Of the Unicorn's Horn" (VE/III/xxiii) comes a few pages before "Of the Spermacenth Whale," which is quoted directly in Moby-Dick. Ishmael, to continue, says that he has "gathered that this same sea-unicorn's horn was in ancient days regarded as the great antidote against poison," a view which Browne advances in order to modify it:

none of the ancients ascribed any medicinal or antidotal virtue unto the unicorn's horn; and that which Aelian extollieth, who was the first and only man of the ancients who spake of the medical virtue of any unicorn, was the horn of the Indian ass; whereof, saith he, the princes of those parts make bowls and drink therein, as preservatives against poison, convulsions, and the falling sickness. . . . And thus, though the description of the unicorn be very ancient, yet was there of old no virtue ascribed unto it; and although this amongst us receive the opinion of the same virtue, yet is it not the same horn whereunto the ancients ascribed it. Lastly, although we allow it an antidotal efficacy, and such as the ancients commended, yet are there some virtues ascribed thereto by moderns not easily to be received . . . (III/xxii/502)

When Ishmael continues, "as such, preparations of it brought immense prices," he may be transferring to the antidote an idea that Browne connects with the horn itself: "The horn at Windsor was in his second voyage brought hither by Frobisher. These, before the northern discoveries, as unknown rarities, were carried by merchants into all parts of Europe; and though found on the sea-shore, were sold at very high rates" (III/xxii/501). Browne's reminders about the horn's "precious rarity" and his reference to Frobisher may also have reinforced such lines as "Originally it was in itself accounted an object of great curiosity. Black Letter tells me that Sir Martin Frobisher . . . " And Ishmael has other information: "It was also distilled to a volatile salts for fainting ladies the same way that the horns of
the male deer are manufactured into hartshorn." Unless he has other sources, he has beautifully simplified and condensed a much longer and cloudier account from Browne's text and Wilkin's notes:

nor will they afford a jelly or mucilaginous concretion in either; which notwithstanding we may effect in goat's horns, sheep's, cow's, and hart's horn; in the horn of the rhinoceros, the horn of the pristis, or sword-fish. "It would appear that Browne had confounded true horn (which is composed of coagulated albumen, with a little gelatin, and about a half per cent of phosphate of lime), with hart's horn, and others of a similar nature, intermediate between bone and horn." W's note./... antidotally used, and exposed for unicorn's horn, it is an insufferable delusion, and with more venal deceit it might have been practised in hart's horn. . . . the princes of those parts make bowls and drink therein, as preservatives against poison, convulsions, and the falling sickness. (III/xxiii/500-501)

Ishmael, that is, presents information which is like Browne's and which perhaps comes partly from him; but which in any case is information of a "cloistered," antiquarian variety. This data is the occasion for the phallic play which I have already connected with Rabelais, Burton, and Sterne: "When Sir Martin returned from that voyage," saith Black Letter, "on bended knees he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn of the Narwhale, which for a long period after hung in the castle at Windsor." An Irish author avers that the Earl of Leicester, on bended knees, did likewise present to her highness another horn, pertaining to a land beast of the unicorn nature" (XXXII/159).

But Sir Thomas Browne is also relevant. In "Of the Pictures of Mermaids, Unicorns, and Some Others," immediately following a passage which Ishmael draws on in Chapter LXXXII, Browne writes: "We are unwilling to question the royal supporters of England, that is, the
approved descriptions of the lion and the unicorn. Although, if in the lion the position of the pizzle be proper, and that the natural situation, it will be hard to make out their retrocopulation, or their coupling and pissing backward, according to the determination of Aristotle; all that urine backward do copulate . . . , or aversely, as lions, hares, lynxes." (V/xix/146).

Browne's understated leg-pulling of "the royal supporters" and "the approved descriptions" is masked by his "scientific" objectivity, which he resumes in earnest in the next paragraph: "As for the unicorn, if it be made bisulcous or cloven-footed, it agreeth unto the description of Vertomannus, but scarce any other . . ." Or for our purposes, the tone and subject of the paragraph which follows this one may be more useful: "We cannot but observe that in the picture of Jonah and others, whales are described with two prominent spouts on their heads; whereas indeed they have but one in the forehead, and terminating over the windpipe" (V/xix/146).¹⁹ The chapters from Moby-Dick and Vulgar Errors both juxtapose scientific, antiquarian seriousness with sexual or scatological horse-play, the "scientific" tone serving as a mask in both contexts. I suggest that in treating the Narwhale, Melville has responded to Browne's way of handling material like "the position of the pizzle." Browne's tone and patterning, that is, should be noted along with the influence of Rabelais, Burton, and Sterne. Because Vulgar Errors is only infrequently concerned with such matters, the live possibility that Melville responded to the hint is worth commenting on for what it reveals about some of his insights and interests.
Browne is not primarily a humorous or satiric writer, and *Moby-Dick* is not primarily a humorous or satiric book. But we have just examined one special case of Browne's humor and Melville's response to it, and I now turn to some others.

In developing "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" (LXXXII), Ishmael says: "Akin to the adventure of Perseus and Andromeda—indeed, by some supposed to be indirectly derived from it—it is that famous story of St. George and the Dragon; which dragon I maintain to have been a whale; for in many old chronicles whales and dragons are strangely jumbled together, and often stand for each other" (LXXXII/360). In justifying the honor of the order of St. George, Browne writes: "As for the story depending hereon, some conceive as lightly thereof, as that of Perseus and Andromeda, conjecturing the one to be the father of the other; and some too highly assert it" ("Of the Picture of St. George" V/xvii/139). Ishmael's information about Perseus and Andromeda and one of his phrases ("by some supposed"—of Browne's "some conceive") connect his passage with Browne's.

Ishmael goes on: "Let not the modern paintings of the scene deceive us; . . . bearing all this in mind, it will not appear altogether incompatible with the sacred legend and the ancientest draughts of the scene, to hold this so-called dragon no other than the great Leviathan himself. In fact, placed before the strict and piercing truth, this whole story will fare like that fish, flesh, and fowl idol of the Philistines, Dagon by name; who being planted before the
ark of Israel, his horse's head and both the palms of his hands fell off from him, and only the stump or fishy part of him remained" (LXXXII/361).

The framework here comes from two chapters in Vulgar Errore (V/xvii, xix). At the start of "Of the Picture of St. George" (xvii), from which I have already quoted, Browne writes: "The picture of St. George killing the dragon, and as most ancient draughts do run, with the daughter of a king standing by, is famous amongst Christians. And upon this description dependeth a solemn story . . . and all this according to the Historia Lombardica, or golden legend of Jacobus de Voragine" (V/xvii/158). Ishmael's concern with paintings, particularly his concern to reconcile "the sacred legend" and the "ancientist draughts," derives from Browne, who also supplied the last phrase (cf. his "ancient draughts") and probably the preceding one (cf. his "golden legend").

And to confine ourselves for the moment simply to the literal level, a reference in Browne a few pages after this one probably suggested the allusion to Dagon: "these pieces, so common among us, do rather derive their original, or are indeed the very description of Dagon, which was made with human figure above, and fishy shape below: whose stump, or, as Tremellius and our margin render it, whose fishy part only remained, when the hands and upper part fell before the ark" ("Of the Pictures of Mermaids, Unicorns, and Some Others" V/xix/145). Ishmael's "and both the palms of his hands" comes directly from the Bible, but his "only the stump or fishy part of him remained" is simply Browne's phrase with the parenthetical
element removed and the "only" shifted from the end to the beginning of the unit. Even Ishmael's "fell off" in place of the Bible's "cut off" seems conditioned by the "fell before" which occurs in Browne.

But in addition to supplying such details, Browne—or Browne and Wilkin—also suggested the comic perspective from which these details are viewed. Ishmael's high-spirited exaggeration, his mock reasoning and manipulation of improbabilities into "the strict and piercing truth" parodies Browne's technique of "emblematical construction" (V/xix/140). Browne, who does not believe that a historical St. George actually existed, nonetheless finds in a symbolical interpretation a way to value the legend:

the picture of St. George, wherein he is described like a cuirassier or horseman completely armed, &c. is rather a symbolical image, than any proper figure. Now in the picture of this saint and soldier, might be implied the Christian soldier, and true champion of Christ: A horseman armed cap à pié, intimating the panoplia or complete armour of a Christian combating with the devil, in defence of the king's daughter, that is, the Church of God. And therefore although the history be not made out, it doth not disparage the knights and noble order of St. George: whose cognisance is honourable in the emblem of the soldier of Christ, and is a worthy memorial to conform unto its mystery. Nor, were there no such person at all, had they more reason to be ashamed, than the noble order of Burgundy, and knights of the golden fleece; whose badge is a confessed fable. (V/xix/140)

Ishmael also values legends, symbolism, and possibility—the "Whiteness of the Whale" is simply one example of his unequivocal seriousness—but here he gives a good-natured parody of Browne's approach. Browne's "might" ("might be implied"), for one thing, multiplies in Ishmael's version, and just as Browne's "might"
transforms a historical falsehood into a symbolic truth, so
Ishmael's "might" blatantly transforms even more obvious falsehoods
into something "not altogether incompatible" and then into "the
strict and piercing truth." Ishmael continues deliberately to
stretch logic in his good-natured ribbing of Browne. He defends the
honor of his Nantucket whalemens, which is exactly what Browne does
for the knights of St. George; and he uses Browne's language to help
him: "Thus, then, one of our own noble stamp, even a whalener, is
the tutelary guardian of England; and by good rights, we harpooneers
of Nantucket should be enrolled in the most noble order of St. George.
And therefore, let not the knights of that honorable company (none
of whom, I venture to say, have ever had to do with a whale like their
great patron), let them never eye a Nantucketer with disdain, since
even in our woollen frocks and tarred trowsers we are much better
entitled to St. George's decoration than they" (LXXXII/361).

For one thing, Ishmael's insistence on logical terms ("Thus,
then, . . ."); "And therefore . . .") exaggerates Browne's mannerism:
"And therefore although the history . . ." And Ishmael's passage
also redistributes some of Browne's words and phrases. Both begin
sentences with "And therefore . . ." Browne then mentions "the
knights and noble order of St. George," a phrase which Ishmael breaks
up into two parts: "the most noble order of St. George" and "the
knights of that honorable company." Ishmael's "honorable," however,
also appears in Browne's sentence: "whose cognisance is honourable
. . ."
By echoing Browne's words and phrases and by deliberately making his logic strained and absurd, Ishmael humorously comments on the practice of transforming facts in the course of exploding vulgar errors. Browne’s symbolic interpretations, of course, are not the only butt here: Ishmael is having fun at the expense of all excessively ingenious explanations, including those literal-minded "attempts to rationalize miraculous events" which come to the surface in his next chapter ("Jonah Historically Regarded").

Although Browne is criticized, he and Wilkin in diverse ways both encourage this irreverence. For example, in the Dagon passage which Melville drew on, Browne reduces to "the very description of Dagon" all the world's accounts of mermaids, including the descriptions of "those that attempted upon Ulysses" (V/xix/143-144). Since the Dagon passage comes immediately before the one on "the position of the pizzle" and is commented on in a long, humorous footnote by Wilkin, Melville may have felt that Browne was joking—or at least he was encouraged to see the humorous possibilities in Browne's reductionism. In any case, he has Ishmael perpetrate a monstrous pun which fuses Dagon's "stump or fishy part" with St. George's transformed dragon, an act of reductionism which dramatizes "the truth" about his fish story.

Wilkin's gloss on the paragraph preceding the account of Dagon is also relevant. Wilkin's long, mock-serious argument that the fabulous mermaids exist may well have given Melville the idea of arguing in the same tone that the fabulous dragon-as-whale also exists:
The existence of mermaids has been so generally ridiculed, and high authorities have so repeatedly denounced as forgeries, delusions, or travellers' wonders, the detailed narratives and exhibited specimens of these sea-nymphs, that it must be a quixotic venture to say a word in their defence. Yet I am not disposed to give up their cause as altogether hopeless. I cannot admit the probability of a belief in them having existed from such remote antiquity, and spread so widely, without some foundation truth. . . . I must be allowed, then, to hold my opinion in abeyance for further evidence. Unconvinced even by Sir Humphry Davy's grave arguments to prove that such things cannot be, and undismayed by his asserted detection of the apes and salmon in poor Dr. Philip's "undoubted original," I persist in expecting one day to have the pleasure of beholding—A MERMAID! (V/xix/143 note 5)

Wilkin's twist, however, is that the mermaid is actually a seal or lamantins—"not in short, the creature of poetry or fiction: but a most supposable, and probably often seen, though hitherto undescribed, species of the herbivorous cetacea (the seals and lamantins), more approaching, in several respects, the human configuration, than any species we know" (note 5/143-144). He then meticulously and with tongue in cheek rebuts the arguments of literal-minded, scientific unbelievers like Sir Humphry Davy:

It is the more remarkable, as Sir Humphry actually mentions some species of this very tribe as having probably given rise to some of the stories about mermaids. And as to mammae and hands, to which he also objects if in company with the fishes tail, we must here again have recourse to the protection of Cuvier against our mighty assailant. "The first family" (herbivorous cetacea), says Cuvier, "frequently emerge from the water to seek for pasture on the shore. They have two mammae on the breast, and hairs like mustachios, two circumstances which, when they raise the anterior part of the body above water, give them some resemblance to men and women, and have probably occasioned those fables of the ancients concerning Tritons and Syrens." . . . Thus
I have sketched the sort of creature which may be supposed to exist; nor can I deem it unreasonable to expect such a discovery. (notes/144)

To return to Moby-Dick. Ishmael's mock hypothesis that "the animal ridden by St. George might have been only a large seal, or sea-horse" follows Wilkin's lead, and in the interests of establishing "the truth" of a fable, changes "the animal" into a seal, which is exactly what Wilkin does to the mermaid. The same mock-serious tone, the use of negatives (Ishmael's "not altogether incompatible"; Wilkin's "nor can I deem it unreasonable"), and the manipulating of suppositions and possibilities—although Ishmael is more extreme here—also characterize both Wilkin's and Ishmael's accounts. The fact that material from the same section of Vulgar Errors pervades the Moby-Dick passage strengthens the likelihood that Wilkin's note also conditioned the mock-serious approach of the *Honor and Glory of Whaling."

Less immediately relevant than these chapters from Vulgar Errors are others from the Garden of Cyrus, which also provide a pattern for the humorous turns of the "Honor and Glory of Whaling." To begin with, the Garden of Cyrus as a whole shows the possibilities of an analogical fancy run wild. Melville probably knew from Wilkin's introduction that:

The Garden of Cyrus has, by general consent, been regarded as one of the most fanciful of his works. The most eminent even of his admirers have treated it as a mere sport of the imagination, "in the prosecution of which, he considers every production of art and nature, in which he could find any decussation or approaches to the form of a quincunx, and, as a man once resolved upon ideal discoveries, seldom searches long in vain, he finds his favourite figure in almost every thing;"—"quincunxes," as Coleridge says, "in
heaven above, quincunxes in earth below, quincunxes in the mind of man, quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in everything."

(G0/Preface/380)

Coleridge's concluding phrases may have conditioned the chapter title "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars"; and the habit of mind which he describes can also support the creation of the "Whiteness of the Whale." On the other hand, that way of seeing can also lead to the humorous perspective that we have been considering.

Browne, for example, finds quincunx formations in the vineyards and vine plantations of Greek and Hebrew antiquity. In the process, he reduces Saturn to Noah: "And since, from judicious enquiry, Saturn, who divided the world between his three sons, who beareth a sickle in his hand, who taught the plantations of vines, the setting, grafting of trees, and the best part of agriculture, is discovered to be Noah,—whether this early dispersed husbandry in vineyards had not its original in that patriarch, is no such paralogical doubt" (G0/1/392). Browne then half seriously—but no more than that—probes even further into the past and celebrates the even more ancient heroes who do honor to the quincunx: "And if it were clear that this was used by Noah after the flood, I could easily believe it was in use before it:—not willing to fix to such ancient inventions no higher original than Noah; nor readily conceiving those aged heroes, whose diet was vegetable, and only or chiefly consisted in the fruits of the earth, were much deficient in their splendid
cultivations, or (after the experience of fifteen hundred years), left much for future discovery in botanical agriculture" (GC/1/392).

The mock hyperbole, the turn to the past and to its ancient heroes, the reduction of one myth to another: all of these qualities reappear in Ishmael's account: "Whether to admit Hercules among us or not, concerning this I long remained dubious: for though according to the Greek mythologies, that ancient Crocket and Kit Carson—that brawny doer of rejoicing good deeds, was swallowed down and thrown up by a whale; still, whether that strictly makes a whaleman of him, that might be mooted... at any rate, ... I claim him for one of our clan" (LXXXII/361) /cf. Browne's "whether this early dispersed husbandry in vineyards had not its original in that patriarch, is no such paralogical doubt"./.

After mentioning the connection between the Hercules and Jonah stories, a relation which Browne, among others, also noted (CB/410), Ishmael then concludes: "If I claim the demi-god then, why not the prophet?" Browne also relies on the conditional: "And if it were clear that this was used by Noah after the flood..." Ishmael then goes even deeper into antiquity in order to ennoble his whalers: "Nor do heroes, saints, demigods, and prophets alone comprise the whole roll of our order. Our grand master is still to be named; for like royal kings of old times, we find the headwaters of our fraternity in nothing short of the great gods themselves" (LXXXII/362). Browne, too, has gone beyond Noah, "unwilling to fix to such ancient inventions no higher original than Noah; nor readily conceiving
those ancient heroes . . . were much deficient in their splendid
cultivations."

The parallels, of course, are not exact, but Melville seems to
have assimilated the Garden of Cyrus thoroughly enough so that its
tone and its turns of mind and language helped him create "The Honor
and Glory of Whaling." In that mock-serious tone, Ishmael has had fun
at the expense of Browne's reductionism, and he has pulled British legs
by elevating lowly American whaleman over exalted British Knights of
the Order of St. George. But the upshot of all this play is to make
us take whalers and whales seriously. As he typically does, Melville
makes serious points in a deceptively humorous tone. That tone allows
him to establish another dimension of the whale through "that wondrous
oriental story . . . from the Shaaster, which gives us the dread Vicsh-
noo, one of the three persons in the godhead of the Hindoos; gives us
this divine Vicshnoo himself for our Lord;—Vishnoo, who, by the first
of his ten earthly incarnations, has for ever set apart and sanctified
the whale" (LXXXII/362). Ishmael keeps his sense of humor in regards
to mythological reductionism, but he also keeps his sense of the
whale's symbolical depth and diversity. His good-natured tone, more-
over, succeeds in making us accept the improbable—makes us accept, for
example, that his crew of "meaniest mariners, and renegades and cast-
aways" is as significant as he claims: "Perseus, St. George,
Hercules, Jonah, and Vishnoo! there's a member role for you! What
club but the whaleman's can head off like that?" (LXXXII/362).
The tone and language which "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" shares with *The Garden of Cyrus* reappear elsewhere in *Moby-Dick*. In his search for quincunxes, Browne, for example, scientifically examines the favango: "He that would exactly discern the shape of a bee's mouth, needs observing eyes, and good augmenting glasses; wherein is discoverable one of the neatest pieces in nature, and he must have a more piercing eye than mine who finds out the shape of bulls' heads in the guts of drones pressed out behind, according to the experiment of Gomesius, wherein, notwithstanding, there seemeth somewhat which might incline a pliant fancy to credulity of similitude" (GC/III/416-417). Ishmael scientifically examines the inside of the right whale's head:

The edges of these bones are fringed with hairy fibres, through which the Right Whale strains the water, and in whose intricacies he retains the small fish, when open-mouthed he goes through the seas of Britain in feeding time. In the central blinda of bone, as they stand in their natural order, there are certain curious marks, curves, hollows, and ridges, whereby some whalmen calculate the creature's age, as the age of an oak by its circular rings. Though the certainty of this criterion is far from demonstrable, yet it has the savor of analogical probability. (LXXV/332-333)

"Wherein, notwithstanding, there seemeth somewhat which might incline a pliant fancy to credulity of similitude"; "though the certainty of this criterion is far from demonstrable, yet it has the savor of analogical probability": at the very least, it indicates an affinity of mind that the two scientific accounts end with understated phrases whose polysyllabic Latinisms celebrate the power of metaphor.

And perhaps the *Garden of Cyrus* has influenced Ishmael's practice. Browne, for example, is concerned to trace out the correspondences
which "declare how nature geometrizeth and observeth order in all things (GC/III/417), an outlook which also encourages Ishmael at the end of his chapter to leap "with the savor of analogical probability" from the right whale's head to ancient philosophy: "Does not this whole head seem to speak of an enormous practical resolution in facing death? This Right Whale I take to have been a Stoic; the Sperm Whale, a Platonian, who might have taken up Spinoza in his latter years" (LXXVI/334). This habit of mind, which I have commented on earlier, was supported not only by explicit statements but pervasively by Browne's practice, as in the whole of the Garden of Cyrus. In the Garden, even more than in Vulgar Errors, Browne's explicit scientific concerns are developed in the interests of something beyond the immediate scientific details, so that exact descriptions of plants and honeycombs serve to demonstrate the principle of correspondence as well as the pervasiveness of the quincunx. In addition to an occasional humorous turn, the cetelogical chapters in Moby-Dick may also owe an undefinable and basic debt to this way of endowing factual information with general significance.

iv. Further Reversals: The Turn to the Past and the Essayistic "I"

Ishmael, we have seen, can turn to the past in a humorous, mock-serious way. But that turn of mind to the origins of things, to the headwaters of eternity, to the antiquity of the whale and of the universe—that characteristic turn of mind is typically expressed in passages whose tone is not at all light. Sir Thomas Browne's
recurring meditations on time, death, and antiquity provided Ishmael with stylistic precedents for this more serious tone, and I now turn to some examples.

Just as the dead bones in the urn carried Browne deep into the past, so the whale's skeleton acts on Ishmael:

When I stand among these mighty Leviathan skeletons, skulls, tusks, jaws, ribs, and vertebrae . . .; I am, by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time itself can be said to have begun; for time began with man. . . . Then the whole world was the whale's; and, king of creation, he left his wake along the present lines of the Andes and the Himmalehs. Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? Ahab's harpoon had shed older blood than the Pharaoh's. Methuselah seems a schoolboy. I look around to shake hands with Sham. I am horror-struck at this antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all humane ages are over. (CIV/454)

Browne, too, penetrates beyond time and antiquity to the unsourced existence of things: "For that, indeed, which I admire is far before antiquity; that is, Eternity; and that is, God himself; who, though he be styled the Ancient of Days, cannot receive the adjunct of antiquity, who was before the world, and shall be after it, yet is not older than it: for, in his years there is no climacter: his duration is eternity; and far more venerable than antiquity" (RM/I/xxviii/41-42).

Browne is deeply satisfied, because for him it is God "who was before the world, and shall be after it." Ishmael also writes of that "which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all humane ages are over," but for him the whale takes the place of God and terror replaces joy. The contrast with Browne highlights the heretical, blasphemous nature of Ishmael's position here. His Manichean
tendency dominates, at least for the moment; and in any case, Browne’s joyous faith is gone.

Later in Religio Medici Browne writes: "methinks I have outlived myself, and begin to be weary of the sun; I have shaken hands with delight in my warm blood and canicular days; I perceive I do anticipate the vices of age; the world to me is but a dream or mock-show, and we all therein but pantaloons and anticks, to my severer contemplations" (RM/I/xlii/60). The passage recalls Ishmael’s "Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? Ahab’s harpoon had shed older blood than the Pharaoh’s. Methuselah seems a schoolboy. I look around to shake hands with Shem. I am horror-struck at this antamosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all humane ages are over."

Syntax accounts for some of the similarities: the short stabs of clauses or sentences, the omission of transitional words, and the shifts in point of view characterize both passages. Furthermore, both rely on a lively, individual voice, on an "I" that expresses its individuality through metaphor. In this case, the colloquial metaphors have a common base, since Browne’s "I have shaken hands with delight" is part of the matrix for Ishmael’s "I look round to shake hands with Shem." The similarities of syntax, voice, and metaphor reflect a habit of mind, a style, which Melville had made so much a part of himself that he could now use it to express a terror the exact opposite of Browne’s delight.

We have noticed that pattern of similarity and change before, and it emerges again in other passages which meditate on the origin and
end of things. The ones in *Moby-Dick* that I turn to now, however, are written, not from Ishmael's but from Ahab's point of view.

In the first of them, Ishmael reports: "both the ancestry and posterity of Grief go further than the ancestry and posterity of Joy /thought Ahab/ . . . To trail the genealogies of these high mortal miseries, carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods; so that, in the face of all the glad, hay-making suns, and soft-cymballing, round harvest-moons, we must needs give in to this: that the gods themselves are not for ever glad. The ineffaceable, sad birthmark in the brow of man, is but the stamp of sorrow in the signers" (CVI/460-461). But Melville does not always clearly distinguish the voices of his characters, and by the end of the passage, the real point of view is as much his own and Ishmael's as Ahab's.

I have made it a point to consider the narrator and Ahab as distinct from each other and from their creator, and in general I think the principle is sound. But in some cases—and the passages will differ from reader to reader—to insist on the distinction is to blind oneself to the effects of the stylistic tradition within which Melville conceived *Moby-Dick*. When he was completing the book, he thought of himself as busy putting together some "chapters and essays." Rabelais, Sterne, and Carlyle had shown the possibility of combining the two in a work of prose fiction—although *Sartor Resartus* escapes that category, too—and in important ways the style of the "essays" derives from Browne and Montaigne. The distinctively personal voice which each of them developed finds a counterpart in
Ishmael's colloquial, metaphoric reflections and his equally independent, idiosyncratic "I." Like Ishmael's, the "I" of the Essays is in a sense a created persona, a marvellously convincing selection of trivia and commentary that bodies forth Montaigne's subject—himself. But for all the spontaneity and disclaimers of artifice, that self is an artfully created one; the restraints and the avoidance of the innermost depths suggest some of what has been left out. Still, Montaigne and Browne were speaking for themselves; the voice may have been created and the evidence that it was, concealed; but they had the stage entirely to themselves, they did not have to vary the voice for different characters, and they alone were responsible for the opinions of "On Cannibals" or Religio Medici. As a result, they were able to put something close to the full force of their personalities behind the "I" of those works: they had the freedom of the essayist.

Melville was clearly attracted by that freedom. The fictional characters—Ishmael, Ahab, and Fleece and Queequeg, for example—were a convenience in some ways simply because they were not identical with Melville. As a result, he could project and test—"essay"—ideas which he might have been reluctant to deal with in his own voice. But Melville's impulse was also similar to Browne and Montaigne's; he had his narrator use a style which derived from theirs; he was putting together essays as well as chapters; and because of the convention of the personal "I," sometimes he could forget to distinguish between himself, his narrator, and his heroic, demonic captain. Browne and Montaigne did not have the problem of neglecting this
distinction, and that Melville did illustrates what could happen when a style committed to rendering an individual mind and voice is used in prose fiction, a form which requires more than one voice.\textsuperscript{22}

Melville, of course, was expert at varying his voice, and it is worth noting that he typically uses the language of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists to distinguish Ahab from his other main character, Ishmael. That is, he goes outside the prose tradition which we have been considering, perhaps because the nervous intensity of "The Quarterdeck" or "The Candles" cannot be rendered in a style which, although it has the immediacy of speech, is nonetheless a record of "man thinking." Its reflective, meditative quality, although often wry, sharp, or humorous, is not really suited to projecting Ahab's violence. But when Ahab has his moments of calm, as he does increasingly towards the climax, his monologues or Ishmael's reports approach the style of Browne and the other baroque writers whom we have been studying.

That is the case in the passage which "carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods." Carlyle and Byron contribute to the idea that "at bottom, all heart-woes have a mystic significance," and they even influenced the expression. The hyphenated term, for example, is a favorite of Carlyle's, and so is "mystic." But Browne also has analogous meditations on time, miseries, and felicities:

The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto
that current arithmetick, which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily hanunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callousities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. (UB/44-45)

Browne uses the imagery of sun and of light and dark—so does Ishmael—to convey a sense of life as transitory, insecure, and shadowed by an always approaching death. For him, at least in this context, "our felicities" (Ishmael also uses the word) are soon forgotten; and "miseries . . . fall like snow upon us." Both writers combine metaphoric language with the connectives of logic in order to give a sense of reasoned finality to their conclusions (cf. from Moby-Dick: "since both . . ."; "For . . . it is an inference . . . that while"; "but, on the contrary"; "whereas"; "For . . . while"; "so do . . . not belie their obvious deduction"; "so that . . . gives in to this: that . . ." (CVI/460-461) and from Urn Burial: "And since . . ."; "Since . . ."; "and therefore . . ."; "Since . . .: Diuturnity . . ."). Both writers also see life as "a mixture of our few and evil days," but whereas Ishmael has misery overbearing felicity, Browne shows them both as temporary and inevitably
forgotten, because our weak senses cannot keep the pain immediate. For Browne, who can accept "the metaphysics of true belief," pain, misery, and approaching death show the pettiness of this life in contrast to the glory of a Christian eternity. Ishmael, however, traces "the genealogies of these high mortal miseries," and finds, not Browne's supernal happiness, but rather that "the gods themselves are not forever glad. The ineffaceable, sad birth-mark in the brow of man, is but the stamp of sorrow in the signers." This is a slightly heretical version of that same doctrine of correspondences which Browne put to quite different uses. Through the device of understatement, the plurals either limit God by suggesting that misery and sorrow originated in other gods, as the Manicheans held; or else they propose that God himself is the source of misery. In either case, Ishmael-Ahab-Melville are again some distance from Browne's orthodoxy.

In the chapter "Moby-Dick" the same is true of a passage in which the point of view is similarly mixed and which also probes "beneath antiquities":

This is much; yet Ahab's larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted. But vain to popularize profundities, and all truth is profound. Winding far down from within the very heart of this spiked Hotel de Cluny where we here stand—however grand and wonderful, now quit it;—and take your way, ye nobler, sadder souls, to those vast Roman halls of Themis; where far beneath the fantastic towers of man's upper earth, his root of grandeur, his whole awful essence sits in bearded state; an antique buried beneath antiquities, and throned on torsoes! So with a broken throne, the great gods mock that captive king; so like a Caryatid, he patient sits, upholfind on his frozen brow the piled entablatures of ages. Wind ye down there, ye prouder, sadder souls!
question that proud, sad king! A family likeness! aye, he did beget ye, ye young exiled royalties; and from your grim sire only will the old State-secret come. (XLI/183)

For one thing, Melville's hostility to the vulgar, for whom it is "vain to popularize profundities," was not at all moderated by his reading of Sir Thomas Browne. Browne was at pains to establish in Religio Medici, Vulgar Errors, and Garden of Cyrus that:

If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do contempt and laugh at, it is that great enemy of reason, virtue, and religion, the multitude; that numerous piece of monstrosity, which, taken asunder, seem men, and the reasonable creatures of God, but, confused together, make but one great beast, and a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra. . . . But as for popular errors, they are more nearly founded upon an erroneous inclination of the people; as being the most deceitable part of mankind, and ready with open arms to receive the encroachments of error. . . . How unequal discerners of the truth they are, and openly exposed unto error, will first appear from their unqualified intellectuals, unable to umpire the difficulty of its dissentions. (RM/II/1/86; VE/XXI/iii/193)

But other affinities and differences deserve more attention. One is that Ishmael-Melville turn beneath the surface to a subterranean world in which an antique grave poses fundamental questions. The turn of mind is similar to that in the opening paragraph of Urn Burial (a passage which Melville had echoed in Mardi/13/33):

In the deep discovery of the subterranean world, a shallow part would satisfy some enquirers; who, if two or three yards were open about the surface, would not care to rake the bowels of Potosi, and regions towards the centre. Nature hath furnished one part of the earth, and man another. The treasures of time lie high, in urns, coins, and monuments, scarce below the roots of some vegetables. Time hath endless rarities, and shows of all rarities; which reveals old things in heaven, makes new discoveries in earth, and even earth itself
a discovery. That great antiquity America lay buried for thousands of years, and a large part of the earth is still in the urn unto us. (UB/I/455)

Melville, of course, goes farther than Browne: he does not stay "about the surface" in his "deep discovery of the subterranean world," but he is concerned with time and in getting "below," to "the roots."

The famous opening of Chapter V of Urn Burial complements the passage I have just quoted: "Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard underground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests: what prince can promise such diuturnity unto his relics...? Time, which antiquates antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these minor monuments" (UB/V/488-489). Here, the sense of pomp and grandeur, of magnificent buildings and buried bones, has affinities with similar effects in "Moby-Dick." The concern with and the play on "antiquities" is an even closer bond (cf. "Moby Dick's" "an antique buried beneath antiquities" and Browne's "time, which antiquates antiquities" and "that great antiquity America lay buried").

But the similarities of phrase and outlook only point up equally basic contrasts. Browne is at home in the universe; he is not bothered by the fact that on earth he cannot find "the old State-secret" because he is certain that "it is but attending a little longer, and we shall enjoy that, by instinct and infusion, which we endeavor at here by labour and inquisition. It is better to sit down in a modest ignorance, and rest contented with the natural blessing of our own reasons, than
buy the uncertain knowledge of this life with sweat and vexation, which death gives every fool gratis, and is an accessory of our glorification" (RM/II/viii/105). Ishmael-Ahab, on the other hand, are not at home in the cosmos: they are "young exiled royalties."

And the answer—if there is one—does not come freely and certainly from God at death, but must be sought from "the captive king," the type of all "nobler, sadder souls" and who, as such, is mocked by the gods. Browne's view of nobility, as he develops it in Urn Burial and Christian Morals, is less tortured; and his God does not mock.

The imagery and concerns of "Moby-Dick" appear again much later in the book, in the "Gilder" (CXIV). Although the voice is probably Ishmael's, he is again commenting on Ahab, and Melville himself also seems to be involved:

There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at last one pause:—through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence's doubt (the common doom), then scepticism, then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose of If. But once gone through, we trace the round again; and are infants, boys, and men, and If's eternally. Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it.

(CXIV/466-487)

Immediately preceding Browne's statement, "it is but attending a little longer . . .," he says: "I have run through all sorts, yet find no rest in any: though our first studies and junior endeavors may style us Peripateticks, Stoics, or Academics, yet I perceive the wisest heads prove, at last, almost all Skeptics, and stand like Janus in the field
of knowledge" (RM/II/viii/104). The pattern in Religio Medici ("I have run . . . it is but attending . . . an accessory of our glorification") is similar enough to the one in the "Gilder" so that again the similarities and differences deserve comment. Both passages deal with scepticism or indecision and both go on to consider death, which both present as the source of the final answer. But Ishmael does not seem confident that he will ever find "in what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary," so that holding that "the secret lies in their grave" offers further uncertainty, in contrast to Browne's assurance. One reason is the insidiously real possibility that the grave brings annihilation instead of glorification; and the passage is also clouded by the sense that "perhaps there is no secret."

Early in his narrative, Ishmael can sound like Browne:

Yes, there is death in this business of whaling—a speechlessly quick bundling of a man into Eternity. But what then? Methinks we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death. Methinks that they call my shadow here on earth my true substance. Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water, and thinking that thick water the thinnest of air. Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me. And therefore three cheers for Nantucket; and come a stove boat and stove body when they will, for stave my soul, Jove himself cannot. (VII/36)

Browne could sustain this hearty assurance, but as Ishmael goes progressively deeper into his preoccupation with death and Eternity, he finds the earlier tone increasingly difficult to achieve.

When his thoughts were fixed on heaven, Browne had no desire for a monument or epigraph to commemorate his remains on earth. Along with his sense of assurance, however, he also had a macabre sense of
humor which prompted him to write in this context: "nor do I alto­gether allow that rodomontado of Lucan; 'He that unburied lies wants not his hearse;/For unto him a tomb's the universe' but command, in my calmer judgment, those ingenuous intentions that desire to sleep by the urns of their fathers" (RM/xli/59). Melville, I think, came much closer to seeing the universe as a tomb. It is tempting to speculate that in Fedallah's riddle, the play on "unburied" and "hears" owes something to the excerpt that Browne quotes; but even if there is no direct connection, Lucan's couplet could stand as a wry, illuminating epigraph to the last act of the Pequod's drama.

But although the attitudes in Browne and Moby-Dick are often conflicting, they are not always as much at odds as in the last few examples. Browne, for instance, was able to accept a fair amount of religious diversity without the rancour which characterized most of his contemporaries: "Nor must a few differences, more remarkable in the eyes of man than, perhaps, in the judgment of God, excommuni­cate from heaven one another" (RM/I/lvi/82). More specifically, he was tolerant of Catholicism in a period not noted for its moderation on this issue: "We have reformed from them, not against them: ... there is between us one common name and appellation, one faith and necessary body of principles common to us both; and therefore I am not scrupulous to converse and live with them, to enter their churches in defect of ours, and either pray with them or for them" (RM/I/iii/4).

This outlook probably contributed, along with many other influences, to the acceptance of Queequeg's Yojo and to Ishmael's
sermon on "The First Congregational Church . . ., the same ancient Catholic Church to which you and I, and Captain Peleg there, and Queequeg here, and all of us, and every mother's son and soul of us belong; the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world; we all belong to that; only some of us cherish some crotchets noways touching the grand belief; in that we all join hands" (XVII/88). Ishmael's crotchets, however, sometimes do "touch the grand belief," but not here and not always.

It is precisely its range of outlook that characterizes Moby-Dick. I mention this diversity here since I have examined several sections that partly confirm Lawrence Thompson's views about Melville's Quarrel with God. Thompson, however, does not give what I think is due weight to the range of attitude in Moby-Dick, and to the extent that he fails to do so, I distinguish my reading from his. Placing passages from Moby-Dick next to related ones from Sir Thomas Browne has revealed a pattern ranging from acceptance to denial, questioning, doubt, and sometimes understated criticism of God, a pattern which Thompson interprets in more extreme terms than I think it deserves. For one thing, although the pattern is an important one, it is not the only important one in Moby-Dick. I have, for example, contrasted Browne's emphasis on love with the stress on fright in Moby-Dick. But I should also note the motif of acceptance and love in Ishmael's relations to Queequeg. God is not involved here, but He is in such sections as those on the "grand belief" and the "intuitions of some things heavenly" (LXXXV/372). It reduces Melville's insight, moreover, to interpret the White Whale simply as an inverted surrogate for the
Calvinistic God. As critics have often pointed out—and as I suggest again in "Faith, Scepticism, and the Jehovah of Exodus"—the Whale has a primitive, mythic dimension that goes beyond and beneath the conventional boundaries and surfaces of Christianity.

I have summarized part of my argument, but in distinguishing it from Thompson's I have also shifted the emphasis of the chapter itself. I now leave aside what quarrels I have with Melville's Quarrel with God and return to a brief restatement of the themes of this chapter.

We have seen that Melville put Browne's style to uses directly opposed to its originator's. Browne nonetheless helped Melville explore that dark, mythic realm which gives Moby-Dick much of its power. By suggesting a way of making fact and science merge into poetry and symbolism, he provided a style which is basic to Moby-Dick.
Chapter VI
FULLER'S HOLY AND PROFANE STATES

1. Introduction

Melville first read Fuller in the middle of April, 1649. The date is important, because, while he was in between books, Melville was renewing his energy and gathering fresh impressions for further work. He had completed Mardi, which was published in America the day after he borrowed Duyokinck's copy of The Holy and Profane States; and he had not yet started— or started intensively— on Redburn. In Mardi he had for the first time explored his depths and discovered himself as a serious writer, one who still had growing to do but who now knew in what general direction. The short interval that preceded Redburn was thus a peculiarly fertile one for Melville. It was then, for example, that he "meditated more creatively on Shakespeare's meaning than any other American has done." As one of his biographers says, it was "a time when all his circumstances combined to make him a sensitive and thoughtful reader." Perhaps because he had begun to find his direction and his depth, his reading of even so limited a writer as Fuller was as meaningful to his future work as the evidence shows that it was. Melville, who was seeing "the most profound implications in the most casual remarks of Shakespeare," was obviously in a mood to be stimulated and to make his reading say something relevant to his own intellectual and artistic needs. He was thus able to see in Fuller an organizing idea for White Jacket (I/3).
More important, his highly charged reading of *The Holy State* provided one basis for his account of the relation between Queequeg and Ishmael; a point of departure for the powerful description of the sea in "Brit"; and, finally, the nucleus for the character of Starbuck.

Reflection and creation transformed that nucleus, but not enough to eliminate the weaknesses of its source. Similarly, the account of the pulverizing sea in "Brit" inverts Fuller's outlook. In both cases, Melville, with an insight which was extremely uncommon in the nineteenth century, has penetrated through to crucial failings in Fuller's sensibility. Most twentieth century readers find Thomas Fuller a little too shallow, didactic, and morally hollow. As his most perceptive recent critic has put it, in Fuller "common sense has left standing only the letter of an old ideal. Hence the important combination throughout the book of a tone shrewd and mundane and down-to-earth, with an overtone hollow and perfunctory." This is not to deny his tolerance and often high if somewhat strained good spirits, which are reflected in his conceits and play of wit. What is remarkable is that Melville apparently responded to Fuller's occasional strengths and frequent weaknesses: instead of elevating Fuller to a height "almost fabulous," as did Coleridge, Lamb and most other nineteenth century critics (including, presumably, Duyckinck's *literati*), Melville seems to have made an independent, implicit judgment which emerges in those sections of *Moby-Dick* which derive from *The Holy State.* Melville as creative artist thus seems to me a deeper and more perceptive critic than his professional contemporaries. I shall try to supply the evidence for this view as I proceed, but I am not
confining myself to Melville's implied critique of Fuller. For example, the insight that comes from a knowledge of Melville's sources is often valuable, and I shall use that insight to re-assess Queequeg's role in Moby-Dick (Chapter VII) and to re-evaluate the conventional treatment of Starbuck and Stubb.

2. The Sea in "Brit": An Instance of the Artist as Creator and Critic

It is always a surprise, as much as we are prepared for it in general, to come on an instance which yet again demonstrates Melville's ability to transform diverse sources into prose uniquely his own. The chapter "Brit" is a case in point. In it, Melville is at his most powerful and distinctively personal, at the same time that words, phrases, and ideas show the pervasive, complex influence of Plutarch, Fuller, and Browne. In "Brit," Melville has Ishmael develop, deepen, and darken a contrast between the creatures of the sea and the land. Plutarch's "Land Beasts and Water Beasts," to recall the discussion in Chapter III, has significantly influenced this contrast and the feelings associated with sea and land. Plutarch has helped to establish the general contrast; and in particular, his Aristotamus has reinforced and helped give shape and expression to Melville's insight into the primal, destructive "awfulness" of the sea. This is the chapter's central point, however strongly Melville was also attached to the land, to the soul's "one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy" (LVIII/274).

But Melville's language and allusions also show that he knew two other accounts of the contrast between land and sea creatures. In
contrast to Plutarch, however, Fuller and Browne have simply provided a point of departure and a reminder of possibilities. In practice, Melville has completely reversed their position; his own is fundamentally opposed to theirs; and where he has responded deeply and pervasively to Plutarch, he has done so only superficially or critically to Fuller and Browne.

But to simply establish that these two writers were involved at all, I turn to "Brit," where Melville has Ishmael say: "For though some old naturalists have maintained that all creatures of the land are of their kind in the sea . . ." (LVIII/273). The clause which I have italicized is almost an exact quotation from the chapter title and first sentence of Browne's "That all Animals of the Land are in their kind in the Sea" (VE/III/xx/504). The chapter is a few pages before "Of the Spermaceti Whale," which Melville twice quotes directly; and it immediately follows "Of the Unicorn's Horn," which Melville draws on in "cetology" (V/3/iii). Browne, like Melville, questions the similarity of land and sea animals, but his reasons are not at all the same. "Lastly Browne concludes/, by this assertion we restrain the hand of God, and abridge the variety of the creation, making the creatures of one element, but an acting over those of another" (III/xxiv/506). God is in control here, but in "Brit" He is completely absent: "No mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad battle steed that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the globe" (LVIII/274). With the help of Plutarch's Aristoteleum, Melville has precisely reversed Browne. But in the process, he employs Browne's style; not that of "Land
Animals" but of *Religio Medici*, *Urn Burial*, and the *Garden of Cyrus*, works which he had thoroughly assimilated. The piling up of clauses, the asymmetry, and the reliance on conditionals; the sweep of allusion from the most remote antiquity to the present moment and from one end of the globe to another—these stylistic devices, which he found in Browne and made his own, are here (LVIII/273-274) and elsewhere put to uses the exact opposite of their originator's (see Chapter V).

Browne is characteristically deep and resonant, qualities which Fuller conspicuously lacks. In turning to the connections between "Brit" and "The Good Sea Captain," then, I shall finally have to take account of this difference, since Melville reverses Browne's outlook as well as Fuller's, but the perspective from which I view that reversal is not the same. First things first, however, and here that means establishing Fuller's presence in the chapter.

The extract from Fuller's "The Good Sea Captain" comes from the paragraph "He daily sees, and duly considers, God's wonders in the deep" (XXI/viii/122). The unit begins, "Tell me, ye naturalists . . ."; and that last word takes us back to the sentence which quotes Browne, since like several later references, Ishmael's exact term, "naturalists" ("some old naturalists . . ."), derives from Fuller.

Immediately before that sentence, Fuller has some commonplaces about the good sea captain, whose "successful industry" should enlarge the world by "discoveries of new countries, imitating the worthy Peter /Christopher/ Columbus" (XXI/vii/122). Two verses ornament
this commonplace, and Ishmael uses some of their words and references for his own diametrically opposed purposes:

The Dove, Columba, first the tidings brought
To Noah's ark, The waters now subsided
Columbus, too, what some had vainly sought,
Was he who first the Western World descried.

When Ararat its head uprear'd
Of Noah's Flood the water-mark,
The Dove (sweet Columbine!) appear'd,
And bore a token to the Ark.
Columbus now, a second Dove,
(For unknown shores his sails unfurl'd)
Tokens has brought, which richly prove
The treasures of the Western World. (XXI/vii/122)

The following is one of the clauses which helps Ishmael create a sense of the aboriginal terror of the sea: "though we know the sea to be an everlasting terra incognita, so that Columbus sailed over numberless unknown worlds to discover his one superficial western one . . ." (LVIII/273). Sir Thomas Browne is in the general background. As I have indicated, his style has conditioned the entire section, and here we see evidence of his fondness for latinate terms (terra incognita, for example) and for the image of Columbus sailing over the unknown to discover America, a figure which recurs in his work and which Melville echoed in Mardi (XIII/33). But if the general style derives from Browne, the specific details come from Fuller's final quatrain. Fuller's "Columbus," to begin with, reappears in "Brit" ("so that Columbus sailed . . ."); and his noun, "sails" ("sails unfurl'd"), occurs in its verb form, "sailed." In Fuller, this sailing is for "unknown shores," which becomes the "unknown worlds" of "Brit." Ishmael's "Worlds," moreover, appears twice in Fuller as "Western World," and the first word of that phrase conditions Ishmael's "his
own superficial western one." To sum up. In the clause, "though we know the sea to be an everlasting terra incognita, so that Columbus sailed over numberless unknown worlds to discover his one superficial western one," Fuller's quatrain has been condensed and rendered in a style like Browne's, but its words and ideas appear throughout Ishmael's line.

We can now return, as Melville does, to Fuller's next unit, "He daily sees and duly considers God's wonders in the deep," which is implicitly criticized in "Brit" but which also helped shape that chapter. Fuller attempts to convey a sense of the wonders of the sea, because he assumes that the sailor who "daily sees" them will take them for granted and so must be reminded that they are wonders and that they are God's. To this end he asks a series of rhetorical questions, and he concludes with the answer that has been clear all along: "Indeed they are God's wonders." This is not quite Melville's answer, but first I turn to some of Fuller's questions: "Tell me ye naturalists, 'who sounded the first march and retreat to the tide, Hither shalt thou come, and no further?' Why doth not the water recover his right over the earth, being higher in nature?" (XXI/viii/122.)

For Fuller, God prevents the water from recovering its rights; but Melville, who had a deep experience both of the sea and of evil, must have felt that Fuller was another inexperienced landsman piously and facilely explaining away certain hard facts about the world. Fuller asks, "Why doth not the water recover his right over the earth," and Melville, who had practical and theoretical experience with such issues, was apparently stirred to answer, Why indeed?
In any case, in his version God is as conspicuously absent as evil is from Fuller's; and consequently "the water," which both agree is "higher in nature," has devastatingly "recovered his right over the earth": "no mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad battle steed that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the globe" (LVIII/274). Fuller's question is one starting point for an answer so powerful as to leave its incitor far behind.

By inciting Melville or by reminding him of dark, overlooked possibilities, I think that Fuller's limitations, here and in the remainder of his unit, influenced much of the remainder of "Brit." External evidence shows that Melville knew "The Good Sea Captain" thoroughly; but before I consider that evidence, I should return briefly to Fuller's verse: "The Dove, Columba, first the tidings brought/To Noah's ark, the Waters now subsided!" I do so because these lines allow us to see what I take to be in part an unqualified evaluation of Fuller. Melville has Ishmael write: "Yea, foolish mortals, Noah's flood is not yet subsided; two thirds of the fair world it yet covers" (LVIII/274). The verbal similarities ("Noah's" elsewhere in Fuller, "Noah's Flood"; "subsided" and "world") suggest that Melville had "The Good Sea Captain" in mind; and the sentence, I think, constitutes a direct, critical answer to Fuller. His cheery optimism must indeed have seemed that of a "foolish mortal." Fuller's tone harmonized with that of the majority of nineteenth century Englishmen and Americans, which only suggests that
Melville's active dissent has implications that extend beyond Fuller himself.

I should now point out that Melville was intimately familiar with "The Good Sea Captain." He had taken the sub-title of White Jacket from the start of the chapter, and he had seen deeply into Fuller's structural principle (see Chapter I). The twenty-fifth extract in Moby-Dick is from this paragraph, and that extract immediately precedes a sentence which Melville refers to in White Jacket: "And as the sea, according to old Fuller, is the stable of brute monsters . . . so it is the home of many moral monsters, who fitly divide its empire with the snake, the shark, and the worm" (M-V/752). Fuller wrote: "Who made the mighty whales, who swim in a sea of water, and have a sea of oil swimming in them? /this is Extract 25/ Who first taught the water to imitate the creatures on land, so that the sea is the stable of horse-fishes, the stall of kine fishes, the sty of hog-fishes . . ." (XXI/viii/183). In the course of working up his own section on land and water creatures, Melville may have reread Fuller, but he did not really have to, since he apparently knew "The Good Sea Captain" so well that simply writing on a related topic could bring its words and ideas to mind. The implicit criticism that results may not have been reasoned out abstractly and at length. But in the heat of creating, above all, Melville was alert; and if his judgment was rendered swiftly and concretely, this only makes the judgment that much more interesting. 6
I now return to Fuller, his limitations, and their role in shaping "Brit." Following his questions about the wonders and wildness of a sea benevolently controlled by God, Fuller makes his own answer explicit: "Indeed they are God's wonders, and that seaman the greatest wonder of all for his blockishness, who, seeing them daily, neither takes notice of them, admires at them, nor is thankful for them" (XXI/viii/123). The man, that is who daily sees wonders, who sees them repeated time and again, can easily lose his sense of wonder. I think that Fuller has reminded Melville of a certain psychological truth and has therefore given him one of his central ideas, except that Melville precisely reverses Fuller. After a full paragraph which piles up evidence of the sea's destructive power, just as Fuller has accumulated evidence of God's benevolent power, Melville concludes: "nevertheless, by the continual repetition of these very impressions, man has lost that sense of the full awfulness of the sea which aboriginally belongs to it" (LVIII/273-274). The psychological insight is the same as Fuller's, but God is left out and aboriginal awfulness replaces wonder.

Perhaps we can account for the changes in a little more detail by examining a final passage from Maxim VIII. In it Fuller offered Melville a view of the wild madness of the sea benignly subordinated to the calm that God brings: "When the winds are not only wild in a storm, but even stark-mad in an hurricane, who is it that restores them again to their wits, and brings them asleep in a calm?" (XXI/viii/122-123.) Melville, however, apparently saw it otherwise: he responded to the pulverizing, wild power of the sea; to the sea as
a "mad battle steed," to use Fuller's word. Melville may well have felt that the calm descended a little too glibly in Fuller's version; that what needed to be stressed was that "for ever and for ever, to the crack of doom, the sea will insult and murder /man/, and pulverize the stateliest, stiffest frigate he can make" (LVIII/273).

"In the destructive element, immerse," Conrad said in defining his tragic view of life. The sea is such an element in Moby-Dick: it represents much of the brute, intractable destructive reality which is basic to Melville's tragic sense. Fuller knew nothing of that primal power which exists before and beneath his (and any other man's or tradition's) religious formulations. The contrast in this respect between "Brit" and "The Good Sea Captain" constitutes an implicit criticism of a crucial weakness in Fuller's sensibility. That weakness is duplicated in Starbuck, and it is no accident that Fuller's "The Good Soldier" provides the nucleus for Melville's characterization of this good sailor.

3. Queequeg: Fuller's Ebony Image of God

But before I leave "The Good Sea Captain" to consider Starbuck, I turn to a slightly earlier section of the chapter than the one I have already discussed. I do so for purposes of contrast and comprehensiveness, because section five presents Fuller at his ethical best and shows that Melville responded favorably to the decent, tolerant side of The Holy State as well as adversely to its frequent shallowness.
Fulher, in an age that too often forgot the mildness of the Sermon on the Mount, could speak in the tradition of a deep and non-doctrinaire Christianity: "What, is a brother by false blood no kin? A savage hath God to his father by creation, though not the church to his mother; and God will revenge his innocent blood. But our captain counts the image of God, nevertheless, his image cut in ebony as if done in ivory; and in the blackest Moors he sees the representation of the King of heaven" (XXX/v/121). This passage has an important bearing on Ishmael's acceptance of Queequeg and his celebration of "the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world."

The affinities appear most directly in the first description of Queequeg's Yojo: "But seeing that it was not at all limber, and that it glistened a good deal like polished ebony, I concluded that it must be nothing but a wooden idol" (III/22). This black figure, "the color of a three days' old Congo baby," is described a little later as "this little hunch-backed image" (III/22). The repetition of "image," "ebony," and the idea of blackness are all strikingly similar to Fuller. Fuller, of course, means that a savage black man is also made in God's image and for this reason should be accepted as a brother; but icons provide the vehicle for this idea.

And as he develops in the first part of Moby-Dick, Ishmael is made to follow Fuller's exhortation: he gradually comes to accept both the ebony idol and the savage black man.
I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Freezerian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? But what is worship? thought I. Do you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth—pagans and all included—can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood? Impossible! But what is worship?—to do the will of God—that is worship. And what is the will of God?—to do to my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me—that is the will of God. Now, Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator. So I kindled the shavings;... salamed before him twice or thrice... and that done, we undressed and went to bed, at peace with our own consciences and all the world. (X/51-52)

Fuller's passage, like much of The Holy State, is aimed precisely at "our consciences." His fine Christian doctrine—that "the savage hath God to his father by creation," is echoed in Ishmael's "the magnanimous God of heaven and earth—pagans and all included." That outlook, of course, is not at all unique to Fuller or Ishmael: the present context has been influenced by L'Estrange and Browne, and all of these writers are spokesmen for one of Christianity's most distinctive if not always practiced beliefs. I call particular attention to Thomas Fuller because elsewhere in Moby-Dick and White Jacket Melville makes detailed use of "The Good Sea Captain" and because the description of Queequeg's idol has marked resemblances at the verbal as well as moral level. Fuller, moreover, is concerned with a "blackest Moor." That phrase, I suggest, has influenced the emphasis on Mohammedanism throughout "Ramadan," in which the rites of a South Sea savage are repeatedly those of a North African Moslem.
Further similarities appear in Ishmael's grand speech which restates Fuller's commitment to the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of **man**, and the secondary importance of the motherhood of the church: "all I know is, that Queequeg here is a born member of the First Congregational Church . . . the same ancient Catholic Church to which you and I, and Captain Peleg there, and Queequeg here, and all of us, and every mother's son of us belong; the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world; we all belong to that; only some of us cherish some queer crotchets noways touching the grand belief; in that we all join hands" (XVIII/88). Aside from influencing the idea, I think that Fuller's antithesis and play of wit—father and mother; ebony and ivory—has encouraged Ishmael's play of wit. In any case, Queequeg is certainly that savage brother, that "blackest Moor," in whom Ishmael comes to see "the representation of the King of Heaven."

4. From Fuller to Starbuck

In "The Good Soldier," Fuller tells how a man in that office should behave. The soldier is so much like the sailor that Fuller's chapter immediately precedes "The Good Sea Captain," and he comments on the similarities at the start of the latter section (XXI/120). Melville came to the account feeling actively about many of its prescriptions as to a soldier's (or sailor's) duty. His experiences on a man-of-war and a whaler had made him sensitive to the problem of obedience and rebellion, and the controversy centering on his cousin Guert's role
in the Somer's mutiny had raised the same issue. *White Jacket*, "The Town-Ho's Story," and *Billy Budd* all focus on these interrelated concerns; and the fact that a story as late as *Billy Budd* is based partly on the Somer's incident suggests how deeply his cousin's dilemma in particular had touched him.

Another early experience which Melville had been pondering for over ten years had to do with the powerful whale which had sunk the ship *Essex*. Melville had heard about that ship in the forecastle of the *Acushnet* and he had been impressed by a series of coincidences: the *Acushnet*'s second mate had sailed with Owen Chase, the captain of the *Essex*; the *Acushnet* had spoken Chase's ship and Melville himself had seen the "large, powerful, well-made man," as he later described him. Prior to this meeting, during a gam with another whaler, Melville had talked with Chase's son about his father's adventure and the boy had given Melville a copy of Chase's *Narrative*. Melville later wrote: "The reading of this wondrous story upon the landless sea, and close to the very latitude of the shipwreck had a surprising effect upon me."\(^9\)

Melville must have read "The Good Soldier" in the context of all of these vital concerns; and they help to account for the fact that he responded to Fuller at all, as well as for what he saw in him and what he eventually made of that perception.

To a man thus "charged to the muzzle" (to use Duyckinck's phrase) and looking for literary game, Thomas Fuller offered what amounted to notes for that valuable creature—a character—which an author is
always searching for and grateful to find. Melville's "Agatha letter" to Hawthorne is particularly relevant here. Tired as he was after writing *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, he was still obviously on the alert for literary material: he was sensitive to the symbolic implications of things—of the shawl, for example, as a symbol of concealment—and to their potential as characters of the human beings in the episode. Fuller functioned for Melville as he thought the Agatha story would function for Hawthorne: "You have a skeleton of actual reality to build about with fulness and veins of beauty." In this case, Starbuck is built around that skeleton. Precisely the abstract, general quality of Fuller's accounts—a quality which distinguishes his sketches from the genre of the character proper—apparently gave Melville ideas for particularizing and dramatizing what in Fuller himself is simply general and static. Fuller's skeleton, that is, provided opportunities: it did not coerce Melville's imagination but allowed that imagination to do its proper work.

In Starbuck's case, however, although Melville's character is of a greater magnitude than Fuller's—partly because Melville has focused sharply on moral dilemmas that Fuller did not confront—still, Melville was not able completely to transform his source. Perhaps because he was not deeply enough compelled by those dilemmas, Melville has not made Starbuck into a fully realized character: his good sailor, like Fuller's good soldier, is still a little too abstract, a little too much like its source.

To begin supporting that judgment, I turn to those parts of "The Good Soldier" which Melville later embodied in Starbuck.
Starbuck is introduced for the first time in "Knights and Squires" (XXVI). Ishmael begins with a physical description, and I begin with the relevant starting point in Fuller. One of the marks of the good soldier is that "He esteameth all hardship easy through hope of victory. . . . He is contented, though in cold weather his hands must be their own fire, and warm themselves with working; though he be better armed against their enemies than the weather, and his corslet wholler than his clothes; though he hath more fasts and vigils in his almanack than the Romish church did ever enjoy. He patiently endureth drought, for desire of honour; and one thirst quencheth another" (XX/iv/l14).

"Knights and Squires" begins: "The chief mate of the Pequod was Starbuck, a native of Nantucket, and a Quaker by descent. He was a long, earnest man, and though born on an icy coast, seemed well adapted to endure hot latitudes, his flesh being hard as twice-baked biscuit. Transported to the Indies, his live blood would not spoil like bottled ale. He must have been born in some time of general drought and famine, or upon one of those fast days for which his state is famous" (XXVI/l11-l12).

Fuller's emphasis on hardship in the form of weather, heat, and drought reappears in the description of Starbuck, and Melville has amplified on Fuller by introducing the idea of climate; but the range from "icy coast" to "hot latitudes" grows out of Fuller's contrast between "cold weather" and fire and warm hands. Fuller's soldier "patiently endureth drought"; Starbuck "seemed well adapted to endure
hot latitudes. That "drought," moreover, combines with the "fasts" which immediately precede it and both provide the basis for another of Starbuck's distinguishing traits: "He must have been born in some time of general drought and famine, or upon one of those fast days for which his state is famous."

All of these details come from Fuller, but equally important, so does the prose style itself. The sentences are abrupt and the pronounced antithesis and conceit--much more dominant here than elsewhere in Moby-Dick--show how thoroughly Melville had grasped Fuller's principle--had, in fact, improved on it. The similarities, that is, show how completely Melville had adopted (and improved) Fuller's mode in the process of describing a character who was born as much from "The Good Soldier" as Starbuck was "in some time of drought." The sentence structure in the description of Starbuck is marked by the repetition of the impersonal "he," frequently at the start of a unit; and since that impersonal pronoun introduces most of Fuller's sentences, we have one basis for the similarity of effect. Also relevant is the cumulative impact of the conceits, antithesis, and play of wit, as in "his live blood would not spoil like bottled ale," which resembles the manner of such a typical Fuller witticism as "he patiently endureth drought for desire of honour, and one thirst quencheth another." The pattern that I am illustrating recurs in both Fuller and "Knights and Squires"--the very frequency is one of my points--and I will call attention to it as I proceed.

Since Fuller is giving the rules of behavior for particular offices--here, that of the soldier--he deals almost exclusively in abstract
moral traits: "He esteemeth all hardship easy" and so on. What Melville has done is convert Fuller's abstractions into physical traits: Starbuck's very "flesh is hard." Melville similarly demonstrates Starbuck's familiarity with hardship, drought, and hunger by having the mate's body itself lean and spare.

He does not, however, leave it at that. As he amplifies into concrete detail Fuller's hint about drought, Melville makes the physical characteristics assume moral and psychological implications: "Only some thirty arid summers had he seen; those summers had dried up all his physical superfluousness. But this, his thinness, so to speak, seemed no more the token of wasting anxieties and cares, than it seemed the indication of any bodily blight. It was merely the condensation of the man" (XXVI/112). Starbuck's "interior vitality" and his association with "a revivified Egyptian" (XXVI/112) add overtones of life and complexities that Fuller had nothing to do with. The summarizing characterization of the mate, however, could have been written by Fuller himself: "A staid, steadfast man, whose life for the most part was a telling pantomime of action, and not a tame chapter of sounds" (XXVI/112). Othello, another brave soldier who preferred the record of his actions to that of speech, has conditioned this passage. But Fuller's good soldier "patiently endureth," and "He is as quiet and painful in peace, as courageous in war" (XXI/xv/120). Not only Starbuck's moral traits but also Ishmael's gentle antithesis and mild conceit project an image of a good, steady, courageous man: the unit could be inserted almost at random into "The Good Soldier" and it would harmonize with Fuller's tone, values,
and characteristic technique. Even the sentence fragment duplicates Fuller, who has five of them in "The Good Soldier" alone.

Fuller, however, would not have gone beyond that summary. He is concerned to establish norms of behavior for soldiers and yeomen, kings and bishops. He recognizes the imperfections of human beings—if not their contradictions and complexity—but he does so indirectly and, like modern religionists, he stresses the positive. His good soldier, for example, "Chiefly avoids those sins [swearing, drinking, whoring] to which soldiers are taxed as most subject" (XX/11/113). The "sins" are there, but not in our soldier, any more than disloyalty or indecision are. Partly because Fuller is shallow and uninterested in speculative problems, partly because he is presenting models for individuals to pattern themselves on, Fuller does not concentrate on moral dilemmas. Because they are potentially tragic and usually insolvable, they are "impractical" in that they do not yield generalities which the everyday person can readily act on. Fuller is perfectly willing to debate both sides of an immediately practical—and important—contemporary social issue like duelling. Although he finally comes out against it, not only does he see the other side, but, more important, he is actively aware that another side exists. The very debate form makes this antagonism central. But on more complex and controversial issues, he hedges by not even acknowledging that a real antagonism is involved.
Melville, however, does not stop with the model portrait; he immediately begins to complicate it, and he does so by focusing on the dilemmas which Fuller had obscured.

Conscience is one of the dominant emphases in The Holy State in general and "The Good Soldier" in particular, and in the latter chapter it appropriately shares a central role with the military virtues of valor and honor. Fuller's first maxim about the soldier is that "He keepeth a clear and quiet conscience in his breast, which otherwise will gnaw out the roots of all valour," and he concludes the paragraph—which we will consider in another context—by asserting that "a good conscience is a continual feast" (XX/i/113). Starbuck is "uncommonly conscientious for a seaman" (XXVI/112). A related trait in both the soldier and the seaman is their respect for God: "None fitter to go to war than those who have made their peace with God in Christ" (XX/i/113); and, to select one from several other examples concerning the soldier, "He looks at (and also through) his wages, at God's glory, and his country's good" (XX/v/115). Starbuck is "endued with a deep natural reverence" and his reliance on God, perhaps his most distinguishing trait, is stressed repeatedly. But in contrast to Fuller, in Moby-Dick, "the man who has made his peace with God" is not necessarily "the fittest to go to war." Starbuck's tragedy is precisely that "his quiet conscience," which, if it does not completely "gnaw out the roots of all valour," nonetheless "bent the welded iron of his soul" (XXVI/112) instead of strengthening that soul as Fuller would have it. Starbuck's chief virtue thus becomes the very cause of his downfall, an insight which Melville has arrived at by reversing Fuller.
The possibility of a conflict between conscience and valor never occurred to him, but Melville has seized on that possibility and made it basic to Starbuck's tragic situation—or more precisely, to the idea and outline of that tragedy, since its promise is not realized in quite enough depth to justify an unqualified use of such a value-loaded word.

"Honor," valour," 'conscience," and "God" define one dominant group of concerns in both "The Good Soldier" and Melville's portrait of Starbuck; "calling" or "vocation" and such related ideas as "practical," "reasonable," and "ordinary" define another group. Again, Fuller does not see any conflict between the two, but Melville does, and as a result he creates another aspect of Starbuck's character and problem.

Fuller's good soldier, brave as he is, "will not in a bravery expose himself to needless peril. . . . or . . . go out of his calling to find a danger" (XX/vi/115). "Starbuck was no crusader after perils" (XXVI/113). Fuller continues: "but if a danger meets him as he walks in his vocation, he neither stands still, stands aside, nor steps backward, but either goes over it with valour, or under it with patience" (XX/vii/115). The description of Starbuck continues—and we should note the connection between his courage ("valour") and the practical business or vocation he is in: "in him courage was not a sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him, and always at hand upon all mortally practical occasions. Besides, he thought, perhaps, that in this business of whaling, courage was one of the great staple
outfits of the ship . . . and not to be foolishly wasted. Wherefore he had no fancy for lowering for whales after sun-down; nor for persisting in fighting a fish that too much persisted in fighting him.

For, thought Starbuck, I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs" (XXVI/113).

Starbuck is precisely Fuller's good soldier who "will not in a bravery expose himself to needless peril . . . or . . . go out of his calling to find danger," but who, "if a danger meets him as he walks in his vocation," will accept it with practical courage. Melville has added the examples of "needless peril" appropriate to the vocation of whaling; and as he does so, he again slips into Fuller's manner: "For . . . I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living and not to be killed by them for theirs" has the same kind of parallelism and turn of phrase--note the verbs in each case--as the extract from "The Good Sea Captain": "the mighty whales, who swim in a sea of water and have a sea of oil swimming in them" (XXI/viii/123). The same kind of word play characterizes Melville's other example: "nor for persisting in fighting a fish that too much persisted in fighting him."

That idea has also been influenced by another passage in "The Good Soldier," who "in some cases, . . . counts it no disgrace to yield, where it is impossible to conquer" (XX/ix/118). Starbuck is there to kill, not to be killed; and the soldier can yield "when swarms of enemies crowd about him, so that he shall rather be stifled than wounded to death. . . . if he throws up his desperate game,
he may happily win the next: whereas if he playeth it out to the last, he shall certainly lose it and himself" (XX/ix/118).

Such advice effectively undercuts the point which immediately precedes it: "our soldier—had rather die ten times than once survive his credit" (XX/viii/117) by flying, and it puts the expediency of the earlier doctrine into sharper focus: "he begrudgeth not to get to his side a probability of victory, by the certainty of his own death" (XX/viii/118). But as Melville knew, in the heat of danger "probabilities" are hard to judge, as it is to tell when a peril is "needless." Montaigne provided standards against which to measure Fuller's equivocations: "He that falls, firm in his courage, . . . if his legs fail him, fights upon his knees'; he who despite the danger of death near at hand, abates nothing of his assurance; who, dying, does yet dart at his enemy a fierce and disdainful look, is overcome, not by us but by fortune: he is killed, not conquered . . . The part that true conquering has to play lies in the encounter, not in the coming off; the honour of valour consists in fighting, not in subduing" (C.C./118). Melville had responded deeply to Montaigne's heroic idea and he had consistently shown acute insight into Fuller's strengths and failings. I think it entirely likely that he also responded to the weakness of Fuller's position here, and that Fuller's ethics of expediency made him alert to the potential conflict between "conscience," "honour," "valour," and "vocation," a conflict which he came to dramatize in Starbuck. I am not suggesting, however, that Starbuck is shabbily expedient: in the passage of Moby-Dick which
I have been discussing, he is presented sympathetically, although the depth of that sympathy is another matter.

But it is clear that in Montaigne's sense, Starbuck is not heroic, which helps to account for the degree of Melville's interest—or lack of interest—in him. That absence of heroism in the highest sense is communicated partly by the words which are associated with Starbuck: "careful," "useful," "practical," "reasonable," "ordinary." These words also accurately describe the temper of Fuller's writing and the models whom he presented for emulation. In Starbuck, Melville has thus captured Fuller's pervasive temper as well as individual details from "The Good Soldier."

I now return to more of those details and to the conflicts which Melville, but not Fuller, associated with them.

Starbuck is based on Fuller's ordinary good man, a man of whom Fuller says:

He keepeth a clear and quiet conscience in his breast, which otherwise will gnaw out the roots of all valour. . . . None fitter to go to war than those who have made their peace with God in Christ; for such a man's soul is an impregnable foot; it cannot be scaled with ladders, for it reacheth up to heaven; nor be broken by batteries, for it is walled with brass; nor undermined by pioneers, for he is founded on a rock; nor betrayed by treason for faith itself keeps it; nor burnt by grenades, for he can quench the fiery darts of the devil [Ahab's fiery darts are baptised "in nomine diaboli"]; nor be forced by famine, for a good conscience is a continual feast (XX/1/113).

Concerning Starbuck it is said: "And brave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales,
or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man" (XXVI/113). Under certain circumstances, Starbuck's "soul is an impregnable fort": he can withstand the assaults of "seas, or winds, or whales," which are the appropriate equivalents of Fuller's military examples. I think that Fuller's details impressed Melville as instances of "the ordinary irrational horrors of the world."

What apparently interested Melville, however, was the potential for tragedy in the situation of "such a man's soul" not being "an impregnable fort" but rather being unable to "withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man." The idea of the tragedy involves "the fall of valour in the soul"; we are to witness "the spectacle of a valour-ruined man" (xxvi/114). The elements of tragedy are that a good, ordinary, conscientious man is "valour-ruined" partly by his very conscience, which bends instead of strengthens "the welded iron of his soul," partly because his good, ordinary virtues are not adequate to a conflict with a mighty, Satanic, extraordinary man. Fuller, whose easy optimism always rewards good and makes virtue triumph, has apparently challenged Melville again and stimulated him to see the potentialities for tragedy in the unheroic world of "The Good Soldier."
In reflecting on those possibilities, Melville turns for justification to the ideas of God and democracy, which he feels are interrelated. Except for helping Melville to focus on the ordinary and the everyday, Fuller has no bearing on the democracy in the passage, but he has conditioned its tone and turns of phrase. Fuller, for example, writes: "But reputation is so spiritual a thing it is inestimable, and honour falls not under valuation" (vii/117). Ishmael is made to write, "but man in the ideal is so noble and so sparkling ... a ... creature" (XXVI/114). The two passages are connected by common syntax and a shared emphasis on the ideal or spiritual, both in a context dealing with valor, honor, and reputation. Fuller continues: "besides, to complain ... showeth no manhood," and a little later he writes: "indeed God is the fountain of honour, God's word the charter of honor, and godly men the best judges of it" (vii/117). Ishmael celebrates "That immaculate manliness we feel within ourselves"; that is, a deep sense of honor and manhood, two ideas—and words—which Fuller also stresses. Ishmael develops the idea in an apostrophe to "that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! The great God absolute! The center and circumference of all democracy!" (XXVI/114.) Fuller's emphasis on honor, manhood, and reputation conditions the idea of "dignity"; and his image of God as the fountain and character may have influenced Ishmael's image of God as source, sanction, and circumstance. But those of Fuller's words and ideas which reappear near the end of "Knights and Squires" have been given deeper, broader, and more general implications than in their original context.
Fuller has been discussing the rights and wrongs of duelling, a historically limited, practical, and often mundane problem, which frequently encourages Fuller to sound equally limited and mundane: "besides, to complain to the civil magistrate sheweth no manhood, but is like a child crying to his father, when he is only beaten by his equal" (vii/117). By eliminating any sense of "the civil magistrate" and by concentrating on large moral and speculative issues, Melville has transformed Fuller by universalizing him. At the start of "Knights and Squires" he particularizes his source; at the end he generalizes beyond it. In both cases he has created an independent work which is stronger than its original.

"Knights and Squires" and the group to which it belongs (XXVI-XXVIII) are unnovelistic, and Fuller as well as the Elizabethan dramatists can help to account for the fact. In one sense, the chapters are to Moby-Dick what the editor's "Preliminary Remarks" or the author’s "Prologue" are to Melville's Shakespeare or Jonson: they introduce problems and characters before the dramatic personae enter in the drama proper—"Enter Ahab; to him, Stubb" (XXIX/123-126). But in many different ways, "Knights and Squires" is also a chapter like "The Good Soldier" or "The Good Sea Captain" transformed from The Holy State into Moby-Dick. The very hierarchy which the title introduces and the content reinforces suggests, as in White Jacket, the influence of Fuller's hierarchical principle, which Melville has acutely perceived. Don Quixote and the knightly romances are also relevant here.
Even more important, the prose style is pervasively similar to Fuller's; and Starbuck is a concrete version of Fuller's abstract model. Just as Fuller devotes a single chapter to his good soldier, so Melville, in re-creating that soldier, devotes a single chapter to his own version. I have noted that in particular sentences Melville repeatedly slips into Fuller's manner in the process of writing about Starbuck. I can now point out that the presence of the entire chapter as a unit in itself shows Melville doing the same thing. He could have introduced his characters in some other way—as Dickens has Pip introduce Joe or as Thackeray introduces Becky. But in presenting a figure who derives from Fuller, Melville apparently felt that it was perfectly appropriate to do so in Fuller's style, to write a one chapter equivalent of "The Good Soldier" for his own Moby-Dick. The fact that Fuller is not a novelist helps to account for the un-novelistic quality of "Knights and Squires." Melville in general was not deeply touched by the approach of his English contemporaries or of conventional novelists. The fact that instead he responded to the techniques of pre-novelistic writers like Fuller, the Elizabethans, and Rabelais has implications for the form of Moby-Dick as a whole and for its mode of characterization in particular.

ii. From Outline to Action: The Rise and Decline of an Unheroic Hero

In "Knights and Squires" Melville makes Fuller's abstractions particular and concrete; in the remainder of Moby-Dick he transforms them into dramatic action.
Fuller, who was concerned about duelling, wrote on it at length in two sections of "The Good Soldier." In the paragraph "He will not in a bravery expose himself to needless peril," which contributed important details to the outline of Starbuck's character, Fuller goes on to say: "All single duels he detesteth, as having no command in God's word; year, this arbitrary deciding causes by the sword subverts the fundamental laws of Scripture" (vii/115). As that duel is deepened and universalized in Moby-Dick, it becomes Ahab's single contest against the White Whale. Sometime in the process of conceiving Moby-Dick, Melville apparently associated Owen Chase's catastrophe, Thomas Fuller's duel, and Ahab's fiery hunt; and he came to see the possibility of complicating the moral problems of his own conscientious good soldier. Starbuck, too, "detesteth" Ahab's "single duel . . . as having no command in God's word; yea, this arbitrary deciding causes by the sword subverts the fundamental laws of Scripture." In the mates' first encounter with Ahab in "The Quarter-Deck," he cries out "To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous" (XXXV/162); and at the height of the storm he shouts: "God, God is against thee, old man" (CXIX/501).

Starbuck's abhorrence of the duel thus supplies a large part of the action as far as his role goes; and his dilemma is played out in three separate scenes. In the first of them, this good, ordinary man is overmastered by a mighty, enraged, and extraordinary one: "'Something shot from my dilated nostrils /says Ahab/, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine; cannot oppose me now, without rebellion.' God keep me!—keep us all! murmured Starbuck,
A little later, "Starbuck's downcast eyes lighted up with the stubbornness of life," which allows his part in the drama to continue. Melville's technical problem here and elsewhere is that a character conceived like the decent, unheroic Starbuck is in danger of being demolished by a character conceived like the diabolic, heroic, and exceptional Ahab.

The idea of rebellion, which is central to Starbuck's predicament, also represents a complicating of what in Fuller is simplified. The feelings and reflections aroused by his own naval experiences and his cousin Guert's dilemma help to account for Melville's interest in Fuller's treatment of this theme, and they also help to explain why he saw considerably deeper into its possibilities. Fuller's emphasis is on unquestioning obedience: "He counts his prince's lawful command to be his sufficient warrant to fight" (XX/iii/114). But he does concede that "if the conscience of a counsellor or commander-in-chief remonstrates in himself the unlawfulness of this war, he is bound humbly to represent to his prince his reasons against it" (XX/iii/114). Fuller leaves the topic at that and does not go on to the consequences of such a remonstrance, although one feels that he would be as bland about them as he is about most moral problems. Melville, however, has seen the potentialities for tragedy in the spectacle of an officer whose "conscience . . . remonstrates the unlawfulness of this war" but who is "over-manned" (XXXVIII/166) and, what is worse, is sharply aware of his dilemma: "Oh, I plainly see my miserable office--to obey, rebelling" (XXXVIII/166). Fuller's views on the office of the soldier have been somewhat complicated.
Moreover, as Starbuck fills his "miserable office," we can see further evidence of the transmuting of Fuller's outline into the substance of drama. In "The Quarter-Deck" and "The Candles" Melville's dramatic sense leads him to have Starbuck "remonstrate" more violently than "humbly"; and, more obviously in accord with Fuller, in "The Symphony (CXXXII) he transforms into a finely realized scene the same stage direction from "The Good Soldier": "he is bound humbly to represent to his prince his reasons against it." In all three cases, Fuller has provided the starting point.

More generally, Fuller has also provided the starting point or outline for much of Starbuck's character and role. Despite his interesting prospects, however, Starbuck does not become a major force in Moby-Dick. His origin in Thomas Fuller and his reflections on his first encounter with Ahab can help to explain why.

In one of the strongest speeches in Moby-Dick, Starbuck, at his finest moment, defines his relation to evil and tragedy: "Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like this, with soul beat down and held to knowledge,—as wild, untutored things are forced to feed—Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent horror in thee! but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me! and with the soft feeling of the human in me, yet will I try to fight ye, ye grim, phantom futures! Stand by me, hold me, bind me, O ye blessed influences!" (XXVIII/167.)

The non-tragic view of life is here given a stature which makes it a possible alternative to the tragic views of Ahab, Ishmael, and
finally--because of them--of Moby-Dick. Whatever their differences, Ahab and Ishmael have more in common with each other on this basic issue than either has with Starbuck.

With Fuller's help, Melville had defined an admirable conflict: he has his good, ordinary conscientious man say in all his decency, "that horror's out of me! and with the soft feeling of the human in me, yet will I try to fight ye." On the basis of this speech and the outline provided in "Knights and Squires," another genius could have created a tragic character central to an important story. This genius would have had to be deeply interested in the tragedy of a man with a non-tragic sense of life; a man who denied that the horror was in him, as many of us at times would like to, but who still fought it "with the soft feeling of the human." This author would have had to be deeply interested in an ordinary, reasonable, conscientious, God-fearing man; a man strong and courageous up to a point but not beyond. In order to give depth to his character, the artist would have had to sympathize more than a little with the decent, respectable values whose conflict torments the conscience of such a man. A character of this sort presents a difficult technical problem, because, since he is not unusually strong or heroic, he can either be defeated too easily or else tempt the author into making him too vital and uncommon, which would destroy the grounds of the original tragic conflict. To wish to make such a character into a major figure, the writer would have to have the kind of interest and sympathy I have been stressing. Because he
presents the challenge of whether or not the average man can be made to fill a central role in serious literature, such a character would be particularly interesting to an American author.

I am not suggesting that Melville was indifferent to any of Starbuck's qualities, but I am suggesting that he was not deeply enough engaged by them to wish to make Starbuck's dilemma a crucial one in his greatest book. Melville was apparently more interested in the possibilities represented by Ahab and Ishmael, two characters who "feel the latent horror" and do not deny that it is in them. Melville apparently felt that "the feeling of the human" was too soft and uninteresting unless toughened by a sense of tragedy as it is in different ways in both Ishmael and Ahab. If he ever intended Starbuck to play a major role, Melville must have realized as he developed the mate's outlines into actual scenes, that he was not the author to make such a character into a central one.

The ability to sense when a character or theme is right for his particular talent is one of the marks of a great writer. Melville had seen possibilities in Fuller's "Good Soldier" and he also apparently saw that those possibilities could not be developed into a full-scale figure in Moby-Dick. As he has Ishmael put it, he came to feel "the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness in Starbuck" (XLI/184), a judgment which applies to Fuller as well. Furthermore, Fuller's good soldier, we can imagine, resembled many of the Americans Melville knew in Boston and New York, which probably helped capture his attention in the first place. Melville apparently found their limitations similarly uninspiring.
iii. Fiery Darts and Sleeping Temptation: From Tragedy to Pathos

In the remainder of the book Starbuck is made to play out the role which I have outlined, but that role is a subordinate one. Fuller's abstractions are dramatized, but except for "The Symphony" (CXXXII), not with sustained power.

In "The Candles," for example, Starbuck puts into action and speech the abhorrence Fuller's good soldier feels against "single duels" which subvert "God's word" and "the fundamental laws of Scripture": "As the silent harpoon burned there like a serpent's tongue, Starbuck grasped Ahab by the arm—'God, God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued; let me square the yards, while we may, old man, and make a fair wind of it homewards, to go on a better voyage than this" (CIX/501). As the scene develops, however, although a line from Fuller provides a nucleus, Starbuck himself does not figure in any direct, important way. The crew momentarily responds to Starbuck: "For the moment all the aghast mate's thoughts seemed theirs; they raised a half-mutinous cry" (LXIX/501). But Ahab, "snatching the burning harpoon," beats them back: "Petrified by his aspect, and still more shrinking from the fiery dart that he held, the men fell back in dismay" (CIX/501).

The conflict here originated in that first maxim of "The Good Soldier" which provided Melville with ideas for Starbuck's tragic dilemma: "for such a man's soul is an impregnable fort. It cannot be . . . betrayed . . . for faith keeps it; nor be burnt by grenadoes, for he can quench the fiery darts of the devil." But instead of
focusing on Starbuck's conflict with Ahab and "the fiery darts" which have been baptized in the name of the devil, Melville is so little interested in the mate that Starbuck disappears completely from the foreground and Ahab struggles with "the men." If he had wished to, Melville could have made Starbuck into a dominant figure in "The Candles"; clearly this is the scene to put to the test the abstract ideas about the mate.

The same is true of "The Musket," which carries through the potentially tragic theme of Starbuck as a conscientious man whose valor is weakened by his conscience. The mate visits the sleeping Ahab and debates whether or not to kill him. His conscience is torn between his (and Fuller's good soldier's) obligation to obey both his captain and the moral law against murder, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, his knowledge that his captain is violating fundamental laws and that failure to act will condemn himself and the crew to destruction. The details of this conflict, as well as the emphasis on conscience and casuistry, derive from Fuller.

In the sentence immediately following the maxim, "He will not in a bravery expose himself to needless peril," Fuller writes: "It is madness to hollow [i.e., halloo] in the ears of sleeping temptation, to awaken it against oneself, or to go out of his calling to find a danger" (VII/115). In "The Musket," Starbuck, "an honest, upright man," confronts a temptation--"but out of Starbuck's heart, at that instant when he saw the muskets, there strangely evolved an evil thought" (CXXIII/506). The details of the temptation itself have
evolved from Fuller, since it is the sleeping Ahab who gives him his opportunity.

First of all, the emphasis throughout the chapter on "sleeping" and "awakening" represents a transmuting of Fuller's phrase into one of the elements in a real if not deep dramatic conflict. "Yes, just in there,—in there, he's sleeping. Sleeping? aye, but still alive, and soon awake again" (OXXIII/501). And after poignantly recalling his wife and child, Starbuck, at the climax of his inner struggle, says: "But if I wake thee not to death, old man, who can tell to what unsounded deeps Starbuck's body this day week may sink, with all the crew!" (OXXIII/507-508.) After he has decided not to act, Starbuck, at the close of the chapter, turns to Stubb: "'He's too sound asleep, Mr. Stubb; go thou down, and wake him!'" (OXXIII/508). The pathos if not the tragedy of Starbuck's situation is that he is not the man "to hollow in the ears of sleeping temptation, to awaken it against oneself." It is not that he is a coward but that he is too conscientious, too alert to the moral consequences of "awakening it against oneself"; and his valor is not of the kind to assume the horrible responsibilities of cold-blooded murder.

The idea of and the attitude toward murder also come from Fuller; his eleventh maxim is "He counts it murder to kill any in cold blood. ... Some excuse there is for blood enraged; and no wonder if that scaldeth which boileth. But when men shall call a consultation in their soul, and issue thence a deliberate act, the more advised the deed is the less advised it is" (XX/xi/119). This passage apparently fused with the one on "sleeping temptation," and the "consultation in
"Starbuck's soul" was the result. In that consultation on whether or not to "issue thence a deliberate act," Starbuck is a casuist who debates both sides of a moral problem just as Fuller does; for example, in his section on duelling.

The problem here involves what view to take of a killing: "and would I be a murderer, then . . ." (CXXII/508). Starbuck, who is made to follow his prototype, the good soldier, eventually decides that it is "murder to kill any in cold blood." His problem, however, is more complicated than that of Fuller's soldier. His captain, for one thing, has violated the law. In that case, the good soldier "is bound humbly to represent to his prince his reasons." But Starbuck has tried and failed: "Not reasoning, not remonstrance; not entreaty wilt thou harken to" (CXXII/507). One alternative is "to wrest this old man's living power from his own living hand," a possibility that would have appalled Fuller as, for different reasons, it does Starbuck. The prospect of cold-blooded murder thus has greater moral justification in Starbuck's case than in that of the good soldier.

In this scene, as in the outline of Starbuck's situation, Melville has thus brought almost equally compelling moral claims into insolvable conflict. The elements and often the standards that make for Starbuck's dilemma come from Fuller, but Melville has re-created and reordered them in such a way that conflict emerges from what in the source was simply bland advice. A further change is that a good conscience is not rewarded. The God who inevitably support's Fuller's soldier, moreover, is invoked in vain in "The Musket": "Great God, where art Thou?" (CXXII/508) cries Starbuck. I do not
take this as evidence of Melville's quarrel with God, but rather as another instance of his being stimulated to see the possibilities of tragic irony in a source not quite enough aware of that unsettling quality.

But pathos, not tragedy, finally characterizes the Starbuck of both "The Musket" and the novel. Melville gives a competent account of the mate's inner struggle over the sleeping Ahab: he enlists sympathy for Starbuck and he builds up to a moment of real pathos when the mate cries out to wife, child, and God. But the depth and weight of tragedy are missing, partly because Melville does not choose to convey a sense of sustained suffering or of prolonged, energetic resistance.

4. Starbuck and Stubb: A Re-evaluation

I have tried to show that Melville was interested in the abstract idea of Starbuck's situation, but that, as he came to embody that idea in dramatic scenes, he found that he was not deeply enough compelled by the mate's values and dilemma to successfully develop him into a major figure—or even, I think, into a particularly well-realized minor one. Melville handles Starbuck competently, but I suggest that in Stubb he has created a much more complex and successfully dramatized secondary character.

My judgment reverses the usual evaluation of the two mates. Most critics rather uncritically accept the hierarchy of first, second, and third: they place Starbuck above Stubb, usually because he is asserted
to have more finely-developed spiritual qualities than the gross, soulless second mate; and they typically describe Starbuck with more sympathy and approval than Stubb. These moral evaluations almost never take into account a fact which we take for granted about Melville's metaphors or symbols—that they are complex and cannot be reduced to formula. The usual formulas concerning Stubb and Starbuck place what I think is undue emphasis on Melville's abstract, intellectual judgment of the two characters. I believe, for example, that such descriptions overweight the outline of Starbuck in "Knights and Squires" and fail to attend sufficiently to what happens to that outline in the course of Moby-Dick. I am assuming that the test of an idea in a work of the imagination is what the imagination can make of that idea. In this case, I suggest that Melville makes more out of the complex Rabelaisian values and attitudes associated with Stubb than he does out of those decent, idealistic, and unenergized values connected with Starbuck.

In the climactic chapter "The Candles," for example, which should have been Starbuck's major scene, Melville has him play a minor role. Stubb, interestingly enough, is given a much larger part in precisely the episode which should have featured Starbuck. Stubb's Rabelaisian drinking song, his doxology speech, his reaction to the corporans, and his suggestive and erroneous view of the flaming, sperm-filled masts dramatize a character who is more substantially and profoundly developed than the first mate. Stubb's fine meditation, "I wonder, Flask, whether the world is anchored anywhere" (CXXI/304), should also be recalled. To make a final comparison, I find "Stubb's
Supper" a more powerful, subtle, and deeply realized dramatic episode than either "The Muskete" or "The Symphony," which are Starbuck's other important scenes after the "Quarter-Deck."

Melville conceived of Starbuck as a tragic figure but apparently decided that he was not sufficiently interested in the mate's situation and values to develop him fully. Tragedy, after all, makes forbiddingly severe demands on a writer. Stubb, however, was to be a comic character; he was never intended as a major tragic figure, and partly because he made less severe demands and entailed fewer obligations, Melville perhaps felt freer to develop him than Starbuck. Moreover, he apparently conceived of Stubb within a Rabelaisian context; and Melville had complex, intense feelings about both Rabelais and the New York Rabelaisians. Much good literature emerges from exactly that psychological state. As he wrote deeper into Moby-Dick, Melville apparently found that he could dramatize in a lively, substantial character the values and attitudes connected with Stubb. These values and attitudes, many of which he disliked, seem to have had an urgency and immediacy for him which Starbuck's did not.

For critics to write little moral essays on Starbuck's spiritual superiority to the callous Stubb thus seems to me infinitely less revealing than to point to what I take to be the fact—that Stubb's Rabelaisianism inspired Melville to more vigorous language, more subtle scenes, and a more fully developed and dramatized character than did Starbuck's unimpeachably correct ideals. Moreover, of the secondary figures in Moby-Dick, I think that Melville was more
consistently and successfully concerned with Stubb than with any other except perhaps Queequeg. It is worth noting in this connection that Stubb is and Queequeg is not developed on the voyage proper, since some would place Queequeg in the center of Melville's art, a role he conspicuously does not have in Moby-Dick itself.
I can now provide additional interpretation as well as treat together some of the more general problems which, in the body of my study, I have had to treat separately. For the most part I shall follow the order of Moby-Dick itself, so as to give continuity to material which is of necessity not treated seriatim through my earlier chapters.

I begin, however, with the "Epilogue" to Moby-Dick, with the epigraph, "And I only am escaped to tell thee." Moby-Dick is the tale told; Ishmael the "I" who tells. And one should emphasize not only that Moby-Dick is a tale but also that it is told; that it has a storyteller, a narrator. The narrator is a character in his own story—he has experiences; things happen to him; and as he progresses in his account, ideas and feelings well up in him. These ideas and feelings become increasingly important: they are as forceful and active as the external events which give rise to them. For "a pondering man like me," as Melville described himself, thought naturally had a basic, vital role in the dramas he created. For his narrator, Melville thus appropriately chooses a prose style which renders "man thinking" and which is also flexible enough to accommodate reports of exciting action, dramatic dialogue, and epic apostrophes. Making this style Ishmael's, Melville has him re-create a voyage which the narrator had taken so that he can understand fully the significance of that voyage.
In the first part of his narrative, Ishmael is preoccupied with thoughts of death and annihilation, as he is throughout Moby-Dick. He reports a series of experiences of nightmare quality, all of them stressing "the dark and dismal night, bitingly cold and cheerless" (II/7). "By instinct" Ishmael "followed the streets that took me waterward": "Such dreary streets! blocks of blackness, not houses, on either hand, and here and there a candle, like a candle moving about in a tomb. At this hour of the night, of the last day of the week, that quarter of the town proved all but deserted" (II/8). A sense of doom and foreboding builds up as he considers the coming voyage, which is to be taken over water and in quest of the "one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air," a phantom whose image dominates the thoughts of his "inmost soul" (I/6). The meditative style of Chapter I, the obviously symbolic use of water throughout the opening chapters, and the general sense of foreboding which these chapters establish—all prepare the reader for a symbolic account of a dark, tragic voyage, a voyage of the mind as well as of a ship. As the narrative progresses, Ishmael (and through him, the reader) sees more deeply into the origins and implications of matters introduced and suggested at the beginning.  

In the opening episode, however, Ishmael expresses his forebodings in a tone that is often light and resilient. At the Spouter Inn, for example, he describes "a very large . . . oil painting so thoroughly besmoked, and every way defaced, that in the unequal cross-lights by which you viewed it, it was only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of the
neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose. Such unaccountable masses of shades and shadow, that at first you almost thought some ambitious young artist, in the time of the New England hags, had endeavored to delineate chaos bewitched" (III/10). Moby-Dick is in a quite real sense precisely about "chaos bewitched": the White Whale himself comes first to represent, then to be, that chaos, which is anterior even to that original sin which New Englanders believed in "in the time of the . . . hags." Melville's Ishmael, like Sterne's Tristram, humorously tells the reader how to approach his book, a book whose true seriousness can be understood "only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it."

And Ishmael puts the picture to further uses: "But what most puzzled and confounded you was a long, limber, portentous, black mass of something hovering in the centre of the picture over three blue, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast. A boggy, soggy, squitchy picture truly, enough to drive a nervous man distracted. Yet was there a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity about it that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvellous painting meant" (III/10-11). The comic, colloquial diction and idiom do not conceal the fact that something sublime and terrifying is involved. "That one portentous something in the picture's midst" (III/11) is the key: "That once found out, and all the rest were plain." But at this stage in his narrative, Ishmael is unwilling to insist on the terror, and he again adopts a tone of comic exaggeration: "But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan
himself?" (III/11). He then interprets that picture, whose "masses of shades and shadows" dominated by that "portentous, black mass of something hovering in the centre" resembles quite closely the book he himself is writing: "In fact the artist's design seemed this: . . . The picture represents a Cape-Horn in a great hurricane; the half-founndered ship weltering there with its three dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads" (III/11).

The picture effectively establishes that the whale is capable of appalling acts which defy common sense, which have the status of myth, and which must be interpreted accordingly. In particular, it prepares for "the exasperated whale," who, at the conclusion, "is in the enormous act" of shattering the Pequod. Moreover, it relates directly to the frenzy of "The Candles," in which the Pequod, "torn of her canvas, and bare poled," her "three tall masts" tipped with flame, reels under the impact of the Typhoon. At the outset, the portrait thus associates whales and whaling with danger, terror, and destruction: "portentous," "black," "unnatural," "primal," and "enormous" indicate some of the connotations the word "whale" acquires in this scene (III/11).

At this early stage in Moby-Dick, the suggestions are appropriately general and not closely defined, like the "shades and shadows" of the portrait itself. But as the narrative progresses, Ishmael brings into sharp focus every implication of that "long, limber, portentous, black mass of something hovering in the centre." These implications
range from the naturalistic to the mythic; they are introduced at the very outset, they are developed throughout Moby-Dick, and they are powerfully present in the conclusion. At the opening of his narrative Ishmael describes a painting because he wishes to introduce ideas which strain belief and because he himself has not yet established himself as an authority. The reader will accept from the painting what he would not accept from Ishmael: the very un-tutored primitivism of the picture vouches for its authenticity and underlying truth.

Ishmael speaks in a humorous tone for similar reasons. The themes which he is beginning to develop are deep, complex, and significant. They are also fabulous in the best sense of the word, and it is this which gives them their power. The problem at this stage in the novel is to persuade the reader to accept the incredible. Here, throughout the opening, and in many later passages, humor—because it does not pretend to be serious, true, or common sensical—effectively promotes that willing suspension of disbelief which is essential in a work of the imagination. As a result of the unpretentious tone, Ishmael can introduce and the reader comes to accept implications which do violence to unconditioned common sense. The rhythm of the novel involves a gradual acceleration, deepening, and intensification of motifs which are thus introduced at the start. The humor in the opening as well as in later episodes has a genuine function in this larger scheme: it keeps under control motifs which are eventually raised to the intensity of "The Candles" and the conclusion. And just as the portrait in the Spouter Inn is later
transformed into powerful action, so, for example, the good-natured initiation ritual at the Try Pots is complicated and developed in "Stubb's Supper," "The Cassock," and similar episodes, all of which it helps to prepare for.

At the start of the voyage—and of his re-creation of it— Ishmael is understandably more naive and exhuberant than after he has probed more deeply into his experiences. He can say heartily, "three cheers for Nantucket; and come a stove boat and stove body when they will, for stave my soul, Jove himself cannot" (VIII/36). After he has pondered the meaning of "The Whiteness of the Whale," he finds it more difficult to achieve that tone of hearty assurance.

In the early stages of his narrative, Ishmael also dwells on his relation with Queequeg. Queequeg is that savage brother, that "blackest Moor," in whom Ishmael—following Thomas Fuller—comes to see "the representation of the King of Heaven." And like another representative of the King of Heaven, Queequeg functions as a kind of redeemer: "I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. The soothing savage had redeemed it" (X/50). I should stress that, for Ishmael, this redemption of the world (and perhaps of the heart) is not final. But Queequeg's elemental humanities make it possible for the novel to continue in as deep and complex a way as it does. Queequeg does so in two senses.

The fictional Ishmael, to examine the first of them is probing the significance of a voyage he had made sometime in the past. As
he re-creates that past, the experience with Queequeg can be seen as the one which allowed him to store up those impressions which eventuate in Moby-Dick. Ishmael's heart had been at least temporarily healed; he had at least provisionally accepted the world; and consequently he could thereafter devote his energy to observing and reflecting on that world instead of trying physically to destroy it. Unlike his Biblical prototype, "no more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world."

What is even more important, Queequeg's redeeming humanities are also relevant to the telling of the story; that is, to the Ishmael of the present, to the author of the tale, if we accept it on its own terms as a fiction. In writing through his experiences, Ishmael comes to realize their significance—in this case he brings into full consciousness the meaning of Queequeg's effect on him. Among the most impressive consequences in the present of this sharpened awareness of healing and of at least provisional acceptance of the world are Ishmael's creative meditations, which are often sceptical or blasphemous but which are nonetheless creative and meditative, not destructive. Before he can question the world assearchingly as he does, Ishmael has to take it on something like its own terms, and he confirms or reconfirms himself in that tentative acceptance early in his account.

The other main consequence on the narrative itself is that Ishmael is now liberated enough from a destructive preoccupation with self, with his "splintered heart," so that some of his best energies can flow outward and render Ahab, his quest, and his world. Ishmael,
in other words, gains so full a sense of self that he is now able to
create, not only as novelist and essayist but also as dramatist: to
imagine what Ahab felt and thought; to overhear conversations between
Stubb and Flask; to stage "The Quarter-Deck" and "Midnight—Fore­
castle."

Ishmael's voice, as I hear the book, is fundamental to Moby-Dick.
That voice, like any deeply human one, has many tones and accents;
and, although not everyone agrees, I think that it is the groundchord
of Moby-Dick. But Ishmael, who develops into a good storyteller, often
loses himself in his tale. In this he resembles the Melville who
told Mr. and Mrs. Hawthorne about a fight among cannibals and laid
around so vigorously with a club that, after he had left, the Haw­
thorne's were still hunting for the imaginary weapon. Queequeg's
liberating influence allows Ishmael to develop into exactly the master
storyteller who is needed to tell Moby-Dick, that infinitely complex
story which requires its narrator to draw on the formal resources of
a variety of literary genres.

To digress momentarily, I should note that behind Queequeg, the
baroque and the anatomy are crucial here. Moby-Dick is told, and
although the baroque and the anatomy typically present "man thinking,"
their writers are frequently close to the turns of everyday speech as
well as of uncommon thought. More important, their writers provide
and thereby sanction the basic formal pattern which encourages Ishmael
to shift voice and point of view; to digress and double back; and (to
focus on genre) to combine epic with essay and drama with novel.
Some recent scholars would claim that Ishmael disappears from his
story, a view which helps them conclude that *Moby-Dick* is marred by discontinuity and awkward shifts of tone and intention. An approach to *Moby-Dick* by way of the baroque and the anatomy allows one to discount this negative evaluation of the book's form. As for Ishmael's role, which I think these critics distort, I have been developing an alternative view.

In returning to the inner workings of *Moby-Dick*, I should thus stress that Ishmael's development into speculative essayist and dramatic poet is solidly accounted for in his early relation with Queequeg. Ishmael's later unfoldings are therefore plausible and understandable. Queequeg, in turn, having served his major function, is no longer needed as a major figure. His role is accordingly de-emphasized in the account of the voyage proper.

In that account, Ishmael's meditations and commentaries play as large a role as Captain Ahab or the White Whale. Ishmael is one of the heroes of *Moby-Dick*, but he is less spectacular than Ahab, and as a result it is easy to forget his heroism. I will return to him later.

About Ahab, however, there is no question. His bold action and powerful speeches make an unforgettable impression. He dramatizes his heroic defiance in his prolonged attempt to destroy the White Whale. He buries his doubts—"sometimes I think there's naught beyond"—in the rush of action. He pits himself, all will and mutilated body, against the primal forces of the universe. He is passionately attracted to the very force he would destroy—a power, moreover, which itself represents destruction more than creation—and in the encounter
Ahab affirms the power of an unrepentant human personality. But his intensities are such that they can lead only to that primal, undifferentiated chaos which the Whale, at one basic level, symbolizes. At the end, Ahab thus enters into the Whale—as, in multiple ways, the Whale has entered into him—and he goes furiously into the dark, pulverizing sea. That final death, which is no defeat, has all of the splendor of the most glorious battles of antiquity.

Ishmael does not have Ahab's concentrated intensity. In the place of will and destructive action, he confronts his basic uncertainties with his imagination and its creation, a style. Because it is pervasive and does not have the bodily presence of Ahab coercing the crew or defying the storm, we may sometimes take that style for granted and overlook Ishmael's heroism. But in his way and at great risk, Ishmael asserts his unaccommodated individuality in the face of a hostile cosmos and what he presents as a restrictive community.

His way is not Ahab's, and it is not quite Bulkington's. Ishmael is a tentative Bulkington; I think that he is as close to Bulkington as Melville at the time was able to come. To have developed Bulkington fully, Melville would have had to make him into a palpable, active figure like Ahab. This would have made demands which Melville apparently felt unable to sustain. Melville was preoccupied with the largely destructive forces which he dramatizes in Ahab and the White Whale. Bulkington would have been a countering force, as Ishmael actually is. Bulkington was able to live on the sea without seeking final answers or destroying White Whales. Through him, perhaps we
were to have gained "glimpses . . . of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore" (XXIII/105).

Melville was driven—and able—to embody primal, defiant, destructive impulses in Ahab's action and the Whale's breaching and battering. "The intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea" through "deep, earnest thinking"—he found this alternative more difficult to embody in an overtly heroic, spectacular character. One important reason is that much of his own energy was committed to more destructive possibilities. The developed character who does represent that alternative, however, is Ishmael. The energy that was apparently unable to dramatize Bulkington, instead, I believe, created Ishmael, whose style precariously and successfully embodies an intrepid attempt at independence. The attempt is not as spectacular, but it is certainly as heroic, as that of Ahab or of the undeveloped demigod who is commemorated in "The Lee Shore" (XXIII).

Ishmael's style is often wry, irreverent, and indirect; audacious, complex, and enigmatic. The daring is sometimes expressed through sexual puns which affirm Ishmael's sense of his creative power and, simultaneously, his hostility to those conventional forces which would restrict it. At other times he speculates about ultimate annihilation and sometimes about heavenly intuitions. He is appalled by the ferocious cannibalism of the sea and its creatures, which for him
represent much of the unsolvable enigma of brute evil. Although he can deny God indirectly, it is, however, his friend Queequeg who makes the most directly blasphemous assertion: "de god what made shark must be one dam Ingin."

In the course of his voyage, Ishmael thus explores many of the world's dark possibilities: "to grope down into the bottom of the sea after them; to have one's hands among the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very pelvis of the world; this is a fearful thing" (XXXI/151). It is fearful because, "though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright." That Ishmael nonetheless survives is a tribute to the force of his imagination and the resiliency of the style which it shapes. That style, in turn, is the reward for daring "to grope down into . . . the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very pelvis of the world." For this is also the region of "the vital centre" and of "the innermost heart of the shoal"—of that realm of primal creativity where, "while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland, there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy." From this source, hard to reach and maintain, emerges the energy which inspires the style of Moby-Dick.

That style allows Ishmael to probe progressively deeper into the dark concerns which have troubled him from the start, at the same time that it allows him to hold in productive tension the diverse and sometimes conflicting implications of the symbols which he uses to
guide him. Ishmael does not resolve his perplexities or redeem his soul or give up his quest. He is an orphan surrounded by the evidence of destruction at the end as at the start of his narrative. But he has heroically survived his encounter with the fearful tail and forehead of the whale. In this end is his beginning.
Notes to Chapter I


2 W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson (New Haven, 1941), pp. 1-15 summarizes some received views, and the remainder of his book constitutes what I am regarding as a traditional approach.


4 See Log, II, 356.


6 Morris Croll, "The Baroque Style in Prose."

7 René Welleck, "The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, V (1946), 77-109, would discourage the use of "baroque" beyond a limited historical period. But Sterne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Melville were all deeply influenced by more than one of the writers I have listed. I am less interested in a name for that influence than I am in the fact that the two concepts, the anatomy and the baroque, usefully illuminate aspects of the style of Moby-Dick (and of Tristram Shandy and the others as well).
8 The quotation, which should sound like Sir Thomas Browne, is actually from Moby-Dick (LVII/272). It comes from a passage which derives, however, not from Browne but from Rabelais (see Chapter II/7).

9 For the surrender to God, see James Baird, Ishmael (Baltimore, 1956); to the group, Milton R. Sterne, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana, 1957), pp. 1-28. The quoted word is Sterne's.


Notes to Chapter II

1 Melville borrowed Evert Duyckinck's edition of Rabelais "late in 1847-Mar. 1848" (Sealts, No. 417): "Rabelais Vol 2' and later 'vol 3' and 'vol 4.'" Although the four volume 1844 edition (which Sealts lists) has not survived, the only other edition which is at all likely is the five volume 1750 edition. Both the 1844 and 1750 editions are translated by Urquhart and Motteux and have notes by Ozell, Duchat, and others. The 1844 edition has a few additional notes, but for the most part, text and notes are identical. I have used the 1844 edition and have taken the liberty of calling it "Melville's edition." It is compact; well-printed; and, for its time, authoritatively annotated. Duyckinck, who both valued Rabelais and liked to display his books, would very likely have owned this edition.

Contemporary reviewers of both Mardi and Moby-Dick mentioned Rabelais; Van Wyck Brooks discusses his bearing on the structure of Mardi /in Emerson and Others (New York, 1926), p. 180/; and Edward R. Rosenberry discusses Rabelais, mainly in connection with Mardi /in Melville and the Comic Spirit (Cambridge, 1955) Perry Miller's is the authoritative account of the New York Rabelaisians /The Raven and the Whale (New York, 1956, passim/). Surprisingly little has been done on the relation between Rabelais and Moby-Dick. To my knowledge, mine is the first extended study.

2 Rabelais, of course, is not the only writer to do so. Sterne, for example, repeatedly uses an identical technique.

3 Cf., e.g., the episode in which Panurge is roasted on a spit (II/ xlv/63-39), or "How Pantagruel Became Sick" (II/xxxii/144-146), or "How Gargantua Did Eat Up Six Pilgrims in a Sailed" (I/xxxviii/221-223).

4 For the "paté-de-foie-gras," see, e.g., Duyckinck's account of what Thorp sensibly calls a typical evening, in Rep. Sel., xxii. For the New York Rabelaisians, see Perry Miller, The Raven and the Whale (New York, 1956), index entry, p. 368. Miller's book has been one of my basic sources.

5 In addition to the source material in the Log, Rep. Sel., and Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle (Cambridge, 1955), see also Jay Leyda's biographical note (Log/ xxi-xv); Miller, passim.; and Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville (New York, 1929), p. 80.

6 Willard Thorp first noted this relation (Rep. Sel./xliii), and Jay Leyda's juxtaposition is beautifully revealing (Log/I/405).
7 The first phrase comes from one of Melville's letters to Duyckinck, Nov. 7 (?), 1851 (Log/I/432); the second from an earlier letter to Duyckinck, March 3, 1849 (Rep. Sel./572). See also Miller, passim and Davidson's letter to Duyckinck, quoted in the notes in Melville's London Journal, ed. Eleanor Melville Metcalf (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 159-160.

8 See Duyckinck's review of Moby-Dick (Log/I/437) and Rep. Sel., p. xxi.

9 Miller, p. 17.

10 Miller, p. 19. The surgeon's name—Dr. Bunger—and some of the salt in his and Captain Boomer's talk may also derive partly from Roderick Random. Tom Bowling's nautical language and the suggestively comic names of the book's naval doctors are perhaps in the background.

11 Cf., e.g., Rabelais: "They had killed three hundred sixty-seven thousand and fourteen / of those fat beeses / , to be salted at Shrovetide, that in the entering of the spring they might have plenty of powdered beef, wherewith to season their mouths at the beginning of their meals, and to taste their wine the better... Notwithstanding these admonitions, / Gargamelle / did eat sixteen quarters, two bushels, three pecks, and a pipkin full" (I/iv/126).

12 Miller, p. 361 (index entry under "Emerson").

13 Metcalf, p. 59.

14 Duyckinck, for example, wrote his brother George in November, 1847: "I am getting less fastidious about many things, ... thinking a good digestion infinitely better than an elegantly bound library" (quoted in Metcalf, p. 43). And he valued the library as a display piece. See also the sketch of Cary in Miller, pp. 42-43, 46.

15 Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), pp. 352-361, sees the chapter as addressed to whaling authorities and Melville, the amateur, as asserting his claims to credibility. To the extent that the Scorebees and Duyckincks of Melville's generation represented the sort of literal-minded outlook which I discuss further on, Vincent's account reinforces my own.

16 "Pupelo" is a New England drink (NED). "Pupella" is suggestive in other ways. Later in the chapter the word draws on another root sense, "pupa." The metamorphosis of the pupa is relevant to the chapter's theme of growth and fertility and to the skeleton-god as a combination of Life and Death.

18 The passage from *Mardi* itself derives from Robinson Crusoe, from Defoe's description of Crusoe's stockade. What has happened is that Defoe has been reworked in the direction of Rabelais's description of the chess game (V/xxi-v-xxv/200-209). In both *Mardi* and that section of Rabelais, literal reality (cf. Defoe's stockade) has been transmuted into something vibrantly splendid.

19 Miller, p. 267.

20 *Literary World*, 4 (April 14, 1849), 351.

21 *Literary World*, 4 (April 14, 1849), 352.


23 *Literary World*, 4 (April 14, 1849), 352.

24 The contrast in *Moby-Dick* between the Bachelor and the Virgin foreshadows "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids." Sexual symbolism is important in both cases, and the differences in tone and meaning between the chapters in *Moby-Dick* and the short story are one index of Melville's increasing bitterness. "The Paradise of Bachelors" draws on Melville's 1849 visit to the Inns Court, and since the Samuel Enderby is a British ship, the Templars as well as the New York Rabelaisians probably were in the background of that chapter (a real gam may be involved as well). The Templars may also have contributed to "The Bachelor," which does not take away from what I am suggesting about the New York Rabelaisians. In some ways the two groups were closely related, and what applies to one applies to the other as well as to the sort of sensibility that they both represent.

25 The relation between Tristram Shandy and *Moby-Dick* deserves to be treated in a separate study. Section 11 of this chapter contains some of the material for that study.


27 Miller, pp. 67-68.


I mention Fuller because Starbuck is characterized immediately before Stubb, and the description of the first man clearly grows out of Fuller's "The Good Soldier" (see Chapter VI/4). Cf. the sentence fragment "A happy-go-lucky; neither craven nor valiant; taking perils as they came with an indifferent air..." (MD/XXVII/III) with some of the fragments and examples of antithesis which I discuss in Chapter VI/4.

For the most recent attempt, see V. L. Saulnier, "L’Enigme du Pantagruélion ou: du 3ers au Quart Livre," in Etudes Rabelaisiennes, tome I (Geneve, 1956), 48-72.

The chapter title itself probably derives from a note of Coleridge's in the introduction to the Milkin edition of Browne's The Garden of Cyrus (see Chapter V/3/iii). In the prose style of Pantagruélion, Urouchart comes closer to Browne than at any point in his entire translation. This compounding effect helps to account for the impression the chapter made on Melville, who was reading Browne at about the time he first read Rabelais.

The association continued. In a slightly later episode, one that I have already discussed, Ishmael good-naturedly points up the resemblances between the cutting spades (one's friends) and the sharks (one's enemies), so that in both contexts the sharks are directly or indirectly connected with Duyckinck, his outlook, and his acquaintances. The pattern carries through, since cannibalism is associated with the sharks (see LXIV/222ff, and also the juxtaposition of sharks and "the universal cannibalism of the sea," LVIII/274).


The quotation is from Dixey, p. 5. The second point is from Wittke, p. 142.

My reading of the allegory follows the notes in the edition of Rabelais which Melville used. Robert Marichal recently has given a modern, learned, and sophisticated interpretation of the Easter
episode, *Etudes Rabelaisiennes*, tome I, 1872-202. But I am trying to present the section as Melville, using the scholarship available to him, probably saw it.

42 This long-accepted interpretation has been questioned recently. Robert Mari chal argues that the doctors of the Sorbonne, not the monks, are the objects of satire. Melville, however, had no reason at all to question his annotators here (M. Mari chal makes his case on the basis of the French "coquillons"); and he had every motive for believing them. In cases like this, I have consistently followed the scholarship that Melville probably relied on.

43 *Journal*, VI (1842), 218-219.

44 See the biographical sketches of Cary, Dr. Francis, and the others in *The Raven and the Whale*.

45 See note 3, and, from among other examples: "Ha, Ha, hes, no my Lord Prior, my good little Lord the Prior, I yield, render and deliver myself up to you. And I deliver thee, said the monk, to all the devils in hell. Then at one stroke he cut off his head, cutting his scalp upon the temple bones, and lifting up in the upper part of the skull the two triangular bones called sincipital, or the two bones bregmatic, together with the sagittal commissure or dart-like seam which distinguisheth the right side of the head from the left, as also a great part of the coronal or fore-head bone, by which terrible blow likewise he cut the two meninges or films which enwrap the brain, and made a deep wound in the brain's two posterior ventricles, and the cranium or skull abode hanging upon his shoulders by the skin of the pericranium behind, in form of a doctor's bonnet, black without and red within. Thus fell he down to the ground stark dead" (I/41v/239). In view of the use to which Melville often put his Rabelais, I should mention that the above paragraph is part of an anti-clerical pun, "You shall therefore have by and by a red hat of my giving (That is says the annotator, I will cut off your head, and so give you a red hat)." Thus the allusion to the doctor's bonnet at the end.

46 As for the roast beef, cf. for example, the letter to Duyckinck in which Melville expresses some reservations about Hawthorne: "Still, there is something lacking—a good deal lacking—in the plump sphericity of the man. What is that? He doesn't patronize the butcher—he needs roast beef, done rare" (Feb. 12, 1851).

At this stage in his relations with Duyckinck, Melville was still willing to make a characteristic concession, for the passage I have quoted is from the end of the same letter in which Melville refused the daguerreotype and article for Holden's. Since he was still writing *Moby-Dick* when he wrote the letter, the pattern is worth noting for its bearing on the point I have been developing.
Even in praising Hawthorne, Melville uses a wine image, which shows again what happens to his language when he is writing with Duyckinck in mind: "I think /IIse Told Tales/ far exceed the "mooses"--they are, I fancy, an earlier vintage from his vine" (Rep. Sel./386, 385-386).


48 The parallels are also revealed in the diction. Stubb wonders whether "to go back and strike him" (XXIX/125), and he is told that "the living member--that makes the living insult, my little man" (XXXI/126).

49 Throughout the novel, Melville deliberately or instinctively shows that Ahab has many of the White Whale's characteristics. The wrinkled brow, the whale-bone leg, and the scar are among the physical resemblances; Ahab's hate and malice correspond exactly to his image of Moby-Dick; and there is the pervasive problem, explicit at the end, of who is pursuer and who is pursued. The Pequod is as much a whale as a ship can be; this "cannibal of a craft" is "one continuous jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale inserted there for pins," and, "tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies," she pursues her foes guided by a whale-bone tiller (XVII/6). Ahab is also so involved in the chase that he increasingly becomes like his antagonist. The substitution of the pyramid for Moby-Dick is part of this pattern.

50 Stubb's role in "Queen Mab" raises more issues than I have indicated, since honoring the superior who has kicked one carries Christianity too far. But at this time I cannot pursue the complicated political implications of the merman's advice.


52 Quoted in Leon Howard, Herman Melville (Berkeley, 1971), p. 151.

53 For a discussion of South Sea primitivism, see Baird, op. 278-298.

54 The quotation is from Miller, p. 17. The second point applies to Baird, pp. 278-298.

55 Lawrence Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton 1952), p. 440, has connected the phallicism of the "Cetology" anecdote with Sterne.

56 In this chapter, "Heads or Tails" (XC), the dialogue on the ownership of the whale and the injustice of arbitrary, constituted authority (XC/398-399) is, I suggest, modeled quite closely
on the exchange in *Tristram Shandy* between Tristram and the commisary (Modern Library/VII/25-257/475-478). The information in the episode comes from the Literary World; the basic pattern comes from *Tristram Shandy*.

57 See, for example, Vincent, pp. 310-314.


59 Ishmael thus uses Lockean standards to tear down an edifice, one of whose cornerstones is Locke himself. Ishmael, that is, implicitly uses that philosopher to subvert what Locke had helped to create and justify. In so doing, Ishmael perhaps unintentionally focuses on a genuine weakness in Locke's position on property. It is all very well in an agrarian economy to found property right on a direct working of the land, but difficulties set in when society becomes industrial. America was shifting from an agrarian to an industrial society, and, as Charles Olson has pointed out, the whale ship is a type of the nineteenth century industrial enterprise. See *Call Me Ishmael* (New York, 1947), p. 25.


61 Baird, p. 207.

62 John W. Schroeder, "Sources and Symbols for Melville's Confidence Man," *PMLA*, LXVI (1951), 380 observed that "no critic has satisfactorily accounted for the presence of the cassock chapter in *Moby-Dick*." My reading is one attempt to do so.

63 Thompson, p. 440.


65 Vincent, p. 228.


67 The phrase "the innermost heart of the shoal" gains a sad, ironic dimension because its rhythm and diction are echoed in Melville's famous letter to Hawthorne: "But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb" (Rep. Sel./393). The pathos emerges because in the letter Melville forsees decay, not growth; and unfortunately his powers were affected after *Moby-Dick*.

68 His "bathe me . . ." is marvellously suggestive. It is an unequivocally serious version of the earlier "while bathing in that bath of sperm . . ." ("A Squeeze of the Hand"/XCIX).


Mock and Wilson, pp. 65, 66.

Mock and Wilson, p. 68.

In the lively, allegorical dialogues about marriage, the lamp of discourse passes from one speaker to another, which is one precedent for the analogous dialogues and abstruse questions in *Mardi*, just as the quest for the bottle provides the larger framework for the journey through the Mardian archipelago.

Professor William Charvat has stressed this point in unpublished lectures.
Notes to Chapter III

1 William Braswell, "Melville's Use of Seneca," AL, 12 (1940-1941), 100.

2 These titles are not intended to exhaust what Melville read in either Plutarch or Montaigne, but rather to indicate those essays which bear directly on "Stubb's Supper" and the chapters related to it. Montaigne's "Apology for Raymond Sebond" is also relevant here, but I will consider it in Chapter IV.

No external record survives of Melville's reading of the Morals, but the sixth extract in Moby-Dick is from the Holland Plutarch, and internal evidence in Mardi and particularly Moby-Dick shows that Melville knew Plutarch quite well indeed. The extent of this knowledge has not been noticed, although Plutarch is mentioned in the notes of the Mansfield-Vincent edition and briefly by Merton Sealls, Melville and Ancient Philosophy (unpubl. Ph. D. diss., Yale, 1942), pp. 139-141, 149.

4 Sir Roger L'Estrange, Seneca's Morals by Way of Abstract (Philadelphia, 1845), p. iv. In this connection we should note that the relation between Queequeg and Bildad is explicitly that of pagan and Christian. By the end of "Ramadan," Ishmael has learned something about the relativity of religions, and he makes Queequeg sound amusingly like any pious Christian: "After all, I do not think that my remarks about religion made much impression upon Queequeg. Because, in the first place, he somehow seemed dull of hearing on that important subject, unless considered from his point of view; and, in the second place, he did not more than one third understand me, couch my ideas simply as I would; and finally, he no doubt thought he knew a good deal more about the true religion than I did. He looked at me with a sort of condescending concern and compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety" (XVII/86).

Almost immediately after, Bildad speaks to Queequeg in the accents of evangelical Christian piety:
"Yea," said Captain Bildad in his hollow voice, sticking his head from behind Peleg's, out of the wigwam. "He must show that he's converted. Son of darkness," he added, turning to Queequeg, "art thou at present in communion with any christian church?" (XVIII/87).

Fleece's sermon to the sharks is also ironically paralleled by Bildad's sermon to Queequeg. Bildad and Peleg, of course, are among those greedy, voracious sharks, and their hypocrisy is explicitly pointed up.
"Avast there, avast there, Bildad, avast now spoiling our harpooneer," cried Peleg. "Pious harpooneers never make good voyagers--it takes the shark out of 'em; no
Harpooneer is a worth a straw who ain't pretty sharked. (XVIII/39-40)

As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to be as jaunty as this about sharks.

5 Verbal echoes in Mardi (XCVI/262) suggest that Melville had read Plutarch, but the parallels that we will note in the following chapter are so numerous and particular that they also suggest a recent rereading.

6 "Zogranda" (LXV/298) is one of Melville's satiric names for Scoresby. "Jillard Thorp has suggested that Melville invented this doctor by misspelling the name of the physician of Valladolid, Sangrado ... in LeSage's Sil Blas" (M-V/757). But it is much more likely that the name comes directly from Scoresby's Account of the Arctic Region. "Zorgdrager/Zogranda/, whose authority is highly respected by his countrymen, is cited in both volumes one and two of Scoresby; for example, once immediately before and once immediately following the list that Melville transcribes from Scoresby in "The Decanter." The quotation comes from the first of these, II/151. See also II/152 and I/452.

7 Scoresby contributed the actual word—"abhorrence"—and also the idea that civilized landmen are offended by the flesh of the whale: "Though to the refined palate of a modern European, the flesh of a whale, as an article of food, would be received with abhorrence, yet we find that it is considered, by some of the inhabitants of the northern shores of Europe, Asia, and America, as well as those on the coasts of Hudson's Bay and Davis's Strait, as a choice and staple article of subsistence" (I/475). Mansfield and Vincent quote the sentence which follows, but they do not include this one.

8 Scoresby writes: "Blubber, when pickled and boiled, is said to be very palatable; the tail, when parboiled and then fried, is said to be not unsavory, but even agreeable eating; and the flesh of young whales, I know from experiment, is by no means indifferent food" (I/476). Mansfield and Vincent do not include this sentence. Their note 297.17 on p. 757 perhaps contains a typographical error. Instead of "Scoresby, vol. II, p. 14" it should read "vol. I, p. 476."

9 Quoted in Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville (New York, 1929), p. 83.

10 Scoresby supplied one limited starting point for this passage: "A living whale may be annoyed, though it can scarcely be supposed to be ever overcome by the shark; but a dead whale is an easy prey, and affords a fine banquet to this insatiable creature" (I/474). As we will see, however, the same hint is found in more developed, vivid, and provocative form in Plutarch.
The facts are more complicated than I have indicated. Mansfield and Vincent clearly establish that an anecdote on p. 376 (M-V/V786) comes from "Land Beasts and Water Beasts," two pages before my second quotation. They establish the point, although they do not use the Holland translation. If they had, they should have noted that the anecdote about King Porus' elephant (LXXXVI/375) is related in the same essay (as well as in the Lives and in Montaigne). That anecdote is told on the page following my first quotation (on p. 790)—or more accurately, seven lines after that quotation. I go into such bibliographical details to establish as much as possible from external evidence what seems very probable: that Melville knew the Plutarch essay quite well.

Miller, The Raven and the Whale, pp. 260, 290, 227. The first quotation is from Perry Miller; the second is Evert Duyckinck's statement of what his magazine Arcturus would offer; the third is Briggs' contemporary summary of the majority American reaction to Wuthering Heights. For its bearing on this and the following points, see also Melville's letter of October 6, 1849 to Lemuel Shaw, quoted in Log, I, 316.

From a letter by Mrs. Hawthorne to her sister, quoted in The Raven and the Whale, p. 296.


I offer the "small but high hushed world" as a conscious equivalent of Baird's "unconscious community."

Baird, p. 249.


Quoted in Virgin Land, p. 80

The complexity and ambivalence are bitterly reduced by the time of The Confidence Man (1856). See Roy Harvey Pearce, "Melville's Indian Hater: A Note on a Meaning of The Confidence Man," MLA, LXVII (1952), 942-948.
Notes to Chapter IV

1 Melville bought his copy of Montaigne on January 18, 1846. The entry in his publisher's record reads: "'1 Shakepear elf' and '1 Montagn' [sic]" Seals, No. 366). Apparently it was a one volume edition. Just six years earlier, William Hazlitt had edited what was for his period the definitive edition of Cotton's translation: a one volume *Complete Works*, not simply the *Essays*. Melville would have wanted the best inexpensive edition he could obtain; and, because there is every reason to think that this is the one, I have used it in my study. In any case, the translation was almost certainly Cotton's, since the Florio translation had been out of print for over 200 years and did not receive renewed attention until late in the nineteenth century. With minor changes, the Montaigne extract in *Moby-Dick* agrees with the Hazlitt-Cotton edition and does not at all resemble the Florio. The internal evidence which I develop in the text also indicates that Melville read the Cotton translation. Mansfield and Vincent indicate that the reading was "probably in [the] William Hazlitt translation [sic]" (M-V/582), but their citations from Montaigne are all from the Florio translation.

The date of purchase—January, 1846—is also worth commenting on. At about the same time, Melville was also reading Coleridge, Hartley, Seneca, Browne, Burton, and Rabelais. It is at precisely this time that he changed Mardi into a speculative voyage; and Montaigne played his part in encouraging the change. His influence is also apparent in the disturbed uncertainty of the earlier work (see Chapter V, note 11), but a careful investigation is beyond the scope of the present study.


3 Frame, p. vi.

4 The third stanza, though, lightly, ironically criticizes human pretensions through a contrast with animals in the manner of sections of the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" which Melville drew on in *Moby-Dick*.


6 James Baird consistently overlooks the complexity in the treatment of Queequeg, although he is properly sensitive to the complexity of Queequeg as symbol. Not only is the savage himself a little less serenely accommodating that Baird indicates, however, but the way Queequeg is viewed is also complicated. Queequeg, that is, is
sometimes the object of satire: he is not quite the bland model whom Baird describes. We can see this clearly when we recognize that Rabelais has influenced important sections of "Ramadan." The emphasis on dyspepsia and eating people should be noted as well as the hostility to "Fasting and Humiliation" and the criticism of "all these Lents, Ramadans, and prolonged ham-squattings in cold, cheerless rooms" (XVII/81, 85). The combination is authentically Rabelaisian, and here as elsewhere, that style is turned against the values of Duyckinck and the New York Rabelaisians. Duyckinck, who was sensitive to the irreverent treatment of "heathen" religion in Mardi, would have had an accurate idea of what Melville was doing to Queequeg here. He would not have been misled as, I think, a sophisticated twentieth century Jungian has been.

7 Montaigne's reversal also bears on the passage in "The Whale as a Dish" discussed on p. 182.

8 Also see the quotations from Sartor Resartus (M-V/590), which should be applied directly to this passage.

9 The passage from Montaigne reinforces one from Byron (M-V/829), which is also clearly relevant.

10 Browne is in the latter class. He writes: "In a piece of mine /Religio Medici/, published long ago, the learned annotator hath paralleled many passages with others of Montaigne's Essays, whereas, to deal clearly, when I penned that piece, I had never read three leaves of that author, and scarce more ever since" (quoted by Wilkin/II/10/note 6).

11 I do not want to suggest that Montaigne was the immediate source for this anecdote. Plutarch is the direct source (M-V/786), and the quality of Holland's language is much closer to Melville's than is Cotton's (LB/791).


13 But it is a denial that Melville returns to more than once. See my discussion of Queequeg's "de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin" (Chapter III/4-6).

14 See also Matthiessen, p. 431.


16 Tristram Shandy (Modern Library), VII/28/466-467.
17 Melville had long been preoccupied with "thoughts of annihilation." But in Mardi and Moby-Dick he is heroic about it: destruction is the risk one runs for attempting magnificently impossible voyages, and if he values what the land symbolizes, he values even more the uncharted sea and "the terrors of the half-known life." In Mardi he celebrates his kind of voyage of the mind: "Yet, in bold quest thereof, better to sink in boundless deeps, than float on vulgar shoals; and give me, ye gods, an utter wreck, if wreck I do" (CLXIX/488). In Mardi he was also writing that "the only true infidelity is for a live man to vote himself dead" (XIII/33). By the time he spoke to Hawthorne in 1856, he was very nearly an infidel on his own terms, terms which Albert Camus, in our day, would understand perfectly.

18 Literary World, 6 (March 16, 1850), 271-272.
19 Zeitlin, II, 526.
20 Zeitlin, II, 468.
21 Zeitlin, II, 468.
22 Zeitlin, II, 493.
Notes to Chapter V

1 For the English background, see Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), particularly pp. 54-69. For Emerson and some applications to America, see Stephen Whitcher, Freedom and Fate (Philadelphia, 1954). F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (New York, 1941), particularly pp. 119-132 and Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953) have fine studies of the relation between symbolism and the seventeenth century.

2 See, for example, W. P. Dunn, Sir Thomas Browne, a Study in Religious Philosophy (Minneapolis, 1950); Egon S. Merton, Science and Imagination in Sir Thomas Browne (New York, 1949); and Howard Schultz, Milton and Forbidden Knowledge (New York, 1955), pp. 57-64.

3 "Late in 1847 or early 1848" Melville borrowed Duyckinck's edition of Browne, the 1836 "Milkin's edition (Seals, No. 89), so that it is this edition which first made a difference. When he was in London in 1849, Melville bought the 1686 folio for himself. But I have consistently cited the "Milkin's text, because frequently the notes are relevant.

Browne's importance for Melville has often been studied before. F. O. Matthiessen's account is the best: American Renaissance (New York, 1941), pp. 119-132.

4 See Merton, pp. 63-64.

5 In Mardi Babbalanja says: "In many points the works of our great poet Vavona, now dead a thousand moons, still remain a mystery. Some call him a mystic; but wherein he seems obscure, it is, perhaps, we that are in fault; not by premeditation spoke he those archangel thoughts, which made many declare, that Vavona, after all, was but a crack-pated god, not a mortal of sound mind" (OXXVI/545). In March, 1848--the passage from Mardi was written within the next few months--Duyckinck writes about Melville: "He has borrowed Sir Thomas Browne of me and says finely of the speculations of the Religio Medici that Browne is a kind of crack'Id Archangel" (Metcalf, p. 36). Browne does have mystic tendencies; he often seems obscure; and the combination of "arch-angel" and "crack-pated" strongly suggests that Vavona is Browne.

6 In connection with Browne as scientist, I should note that he was actively interested in anatomy, particularly in the anatomy of the whale and of the elephant (Merton, p. 35). I cannot demonstrate the bearing of this interest on the idea of the cetological chapters as a pattern in Moby-Dick, but Melville did draw on some of Browne's whale lore. In Mardi, moreover, immediately following the passage on Browne ("Be Sir Thomas Browne our ensample . . ."), quoted and discussed on
Melville has a catalogue of sharks which is the direct predecessor of the one in "Cetology." The association of Browne with this catalogue suggests that Vulgar Errors and the Commonplace Book, including the sections on anatomy, helped awaken Melville to the possibilities of a more and less serious use of anatomy. Once he was alert to these possibilities, he was on his way to chapters like "Cetology," "The Fossil Whale," and the organizing pattern constituted by these chapters.

7 At this late date, one might think that the "evidence" should hardly have to be supplied. But beyond Millicent Bell's passing reference to "the method of 'vulgar errors'," in "Pierre Bayle and Moby-Dick," MLA, 66 (1951), 630, there is almost no discussion of Browne's important contribution to this aspect of the style of Moby-Dick.

8 Van Wyck Brooks, briefly /Emerson and Others (New York, 1926)/; Newton Arvin, brilliantly /Herman Melville (New York, 1950), "The Whale"/; and James Baird, at length /Ismael (Baltimore, 1956)/ have discussed the primitivism of the whale. Richard Chase, Herman Melville (New York, 1949) has noted the Old Testament quality of Moby-Dick, and he has commented briefly on the whale as a fearful Jehovah (pp. 51, 125). I am concerned in a little more detail with related matters.

9 In the quotation, Melville has simply inserted the bracketed phrase into the otherwise unchanged Biblical passage.

10 Schultz, p. 2.

11 Melville first explores his beliefs and doubts in Mardi, and although he is never as securely Christian as Browne, he often appears closer to the intellectual position of Religio Medici and Urn Burial than he does in Moby-Dick. I noted earlier that Browne was associated with the catalogue of sharks in Mardi. In that section, one of Jarl's remarks prompts some reflections on love, hate, and evil: "it was one of his sweetest consolations to remember, that in his day, he had murdered, not killed, shoals of Tiger Sharks. Yet this is all wrong. As well hate a seraph, as a shark: Both were made by the same hand. . . . Now hate is a thankless thing. So, let us only hate hatred; and once give love play, we will fall in love with a unicorn. Ah! the easiest way is the best; and to hate, a man must work hard. Love is a delight; but hate a torment" (13/34-35).

Melville returns to these issues in a blacker mood in "The Shark Massacre" (see Chapter III/4), but here it is enough to state that in Mardi he is perfectly willing to talk of love as Browne or any other deep believer would. But even in that section of Mardi, he draws the line at "the ghastly White Shark": "For though we should hate naught, yet some dislikes are spontaneous; and disliking is not hating. And never yet could I bring myself to be loving, or even
sociable, with a White Shark. He is not the sort of creature to enlist young affections" (13/35). The White Shark is the direct predecessor of the White Whale; even the imagery recurs in descriptions of Moby-Dick: "This ghost of a fish is not often encountered... Moon-like, he always swims by himself; gliding along just under the surface, revealing a long, vague shape, of a milky hue; with glimpses now and then of his bottomless white pit of teeth... stealing along like a spirit in the water, with horrific serenity of aspect, the White Shark..." (13/35-36).

Although Melville does not develop these hints, even in Mardi, he is more acutely aware of evil than Browne is; and he parts company with Browne when it comes to loving or being sociable with the White Shark. That White Shark is the father of the White Whale and of all of the sharks in Moby-Dick, none of whom can Ishmael find it in him to love. The deeper, darker level which underlies the White Whale is forming even in Mardi, and there, too, Browne is left out, for better and for worse.

Browne's intellectual position is relevant to other sections of Mardi, and I select a few for comment. The chapter "Faith and Knowledge" reveals that Melville's faith was being put to the test and that he was desperately holding to what he could: "And many infidels but disbelieve the least incredible things; and many bigots reject the most obvious. But let us hold fast to all we have; and stop all leaks in our faith; lest an opening, but of a hand's breadth, should sink our seventy-fours" (97/239). But he can go on to sound like Browne: "Though Milton was a heretic to the creed of Athanasius, his faith exceeded that of Athanasius himself; and the faith of Athanasius that of Thomas, the disciple, who with his own eyes beheld the mark of the nails. Whence it comes that though we be all Christians now, the best of us had perhaps been otherwise in the days of Thomas" (97/259). He begins the next paragraph in the same vein: "The higher the intelligence, the more faith, and the less credulity: Gabriel rejects more than we, but out-believes us all. The greatest marvels are first truths; and first truths the last unto which we attain. Things nearest are furthest off." But by the end of the paragraph, his scepticism has undermined what assurance he had at the outset: "Man has a more comprehensive view of the moon, than the man in the moon himself. We know the moon is round; he only infers it. It is because we ourselves are in ourselves, that we know ourselves not. And it is only of our easy faith, that we are not infidels throughout; and only of our lack of faith, that we believe what we do" (97/259). "Lack of faith" is not really an encouraging grounds for belief, and although Browne undoubtedly stimulated the paradoxes, he would not have sympathized with the last one. Mansfield and Vincent do not take this into account in their allusion to the section (M-V/716). One can make Melville appear close to Browne by quoting out of context, but when one views the passage (and Mardi itself) as a whole, the affinities are qualified by strains and contrast. These tensions become even stronger in Moby-Dick. (In Mardi, the concern with faith and belief is typically associated with the
theme of personal identity, as it is in the passage I have been discussing. The theme is only implicit in Moby-Dick, but it comes to the surface again in Pierre. Perhaps Montaigne and his discovery of self is relevant, but the concern with identity comes mainly, I think, from other sources, both personal and intellectual.

Elsewhere in Mardi, Melville echoes Browne in a context which satirizes a blind reliance on authority: "Mysteries of mysteries!" cried the blind old pilgrim; "is it, then, a stone image that Pan calls a tree? Oh, Oro, that I had eyes to see, that I might verily behold it, and then believe it to be what it is not; that so I might prove the blessing of Alma!" (109/290). Browne's position is not treated sympathetically here, nor is it later in the book when Bab-balanka contemptuously says: "'As old Bardia says--shut your eyes, and believe" (143/304).

Melville was unable to believe, and the criticism in the last two quotations is perhaps his response to the Browne who helped awaken his doubts but who did not offer an acceptable answer to them. Although the confusion of Mardi as a whole reflects the fact that doubt created turmoil, I confine myself to a single passage to illustrate the contrast between Melville and Browne's state of mind: "Off masks, mankind, that I may know what warranty of fellowship with others, my own thoughts possess," says Pan the Pope. He continues: "'All my grave be more dark, than all is now?--From dark to dark!--What is this subtle something that is in me, and eludes me? 'All it have no end? When, then, did it begin? All, all is chaos! What is this shining light in heaven, this sun they tell me of? Or, do they lie? Methinks, it might blaze convictions; but I brood and grope in blackness; I am dumb with doubt; yet, 'tis not doubt, but worse: I doubt my doubt. Oh, ye all-wise spirits in the air, how can ye witness all this woe, and give no sign? 'Would, would that mine were a settled doubt, like that wild boy's, who without faith, seems full of it. The undoubting doubter believes the most. Oh! that I were he!'" (109/292-293). This is not quite the assurance of Religio Medici or Urn Burial.

12 The passage should be related to Emerson's "Snowflake," on the one hand, and, on the other, to Melville's "Aeolian Harp" and "The Berg." The two poems are later versions of Melville's concern with art's attempt to fathom the nature of reality, a reality whose "vast bulk is out of sight" like the whale; the treacherous, waterlogged wreck; and the sinister iceberg.

To return to the passage itself, Browne also provided the very minor detail of "the elephants /which/ have stood for their full-lengths." In the sentence immediately following the one on the pictures of Jonah (quoted on p. 17), Browne writes: "Nor can we overlook the picture of elephants with castles on their backs, made in the form of land castles, or stationary fortifications . . ." (V/xix/145). His juxtaposition associates whales, pictures of elephants, and the idea of "stationary," all of which Melville retains: "Though elephants have stood for their full-lengths, the
living Leviathan has never yet fairly floated for his portrait (my italics). Browne also seems to have conditioned the imagery in the description of Hogarth's whale in the same chapter. Ishmael says: "It has a sort of howdah on its back" (LV/262); Browne writes of "the picture of elephants with castles on their backs." Also see note 17.

13 Also see Melville's poem, "A Utilitarian View of the Monitor's Fight" (Rep. Sel./551).


15 Howard P. Vincent is slightly misleading in his explicit commentary on the chapter I have been discussing: "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales' (55) is an amusing account of pictorial incompetence"—Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (New York, 1946), p. 215. He later allows that a symbolic interpretation of the end of the chapter is possible, but "Time does not permit me to explicate here" (219-220). If he had taken the time, perhaps he would have modified his excessively orthodox reading of the novel.


18 None of the information that I have discussed about the unicorn's horn is in Scoresby. We should thus qualify the note: "Most of the Narwhale information was taken from Scoresby" (M-V/675).

19 I have already quoted the sentence which follows this one: "Nor can we overlook the picture of elephants with castles on their backs, made in the form of land castles." I can now suggest that the sentence has conditioned another passage in "Cetology": This whale . . . has a great pack on him like a peddler; or you might call him the Elephant and Castle whale" (XXXII/136). See note 12.

20 The quoted phrase is from John Kitto, ed., Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature (reprinted in M-V/780).

21 Metcalf, p. 110.

22 Emerson solved a similar problem by writing successive essays and creating a series of personas—the scholar, the poet, the reformer—who dramatized diverse emphases in problems that he was working through. See Henry Nash Smith, "Emerson's Problem of Vocation," NEQ, 12 (1939), 52-67.
Notes to Chapter VI

1 Matthiessen, p. 424.

2 Howard, p. 131.

3 Howard, pp. 130-131.


5 The quotation is from Houghton, p. 4.

6 Henry James wrote: "The term that superlatively, that finally renders, is a flower that blooms by a beautiful law of its own (the fiftieth part of a second often sufficing it)...." (quoted by Feidelson, p. 4). His testimony deserves attention.

I have not attempted to explore fully the implications of my position above. I should note, however, that Dr. Henry Murray's approach to Melville from the perspective of depth psychology makes explicit some of the larger issues that are implicit in my discussion: see his "Introduction" to Pierre (New York, 1949), pp. xiii-ciii.

7 Queequeg "was of a dark, purplish, yellow color, here and there stuck over with large blackish looking squares" (III/20). He is close enough to "black" so that the metaphor applies almost literally.

8 Lawrence Thompson consistently overlooks this fact about Christianity and Melville's relation to it. As anyone knows who has read "An Argument against the Abolishment of Christianity," Christian standards--particularly those of the Sermon on the Mount and early Christianity--can be used to make the most telling criticism of prevailing Christianity. Much of Thompson's analysis of Redburn and White Jacket fails to consider the possibility that Melville was a morally sensitive man critical of respectability and entrenched, hypercritical, orthodox authority; a man whose moral values, moreover, were deeply influenced by the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, so that his criticism of degenerate or hypocritical Christians and Christianity does not at all imply his rejection of certain Christian values. One can satirize a Bildad, a Peleg, or a Captain Claret without impugning all believers or belief.

9 Quoted in Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), p. 28.

10 Metcalf, p. 152.

11 Quoted by Willard Thorp in Rep. Sel., p. lvi. Thorp's analysis is clear and helpful.

Notes to Chapter VII

1 I am indebted for this important point to [R. H. Pearce], "Notes on Reading Moby-Dick," The Growth of American Literature, I (New York, 1956), 603.


3 George R. Stewart, "The Two Moby-Dicks," AL, 25 (1953-1954), sees the first part of Moby-Dick as humorous in tone and literal in intention: "In what might be called general atmosphere UMD differs greatly from MD. UMD is realistic, homey, and even folksy" (p. 425). After walking through the "deserted," "dreary" town, Ishmael stumbles onto what "must needs be the sign of 'The Trap': "It seemed the great Black Parliament sitting in Tophet. A hundred black faces turned round in their rows to peer; and beyond, a black Angel of Doom was beating a book in a pulpit. It was a negro church; and the preacher's text was about the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing there. Ha, Ishmael, muttered I, backing out, Wretched entertainment at the sign of 'The Trap'!" (II/8.) The sense of doom and foreboding, I suggest, is symbolic, not "realistic." And perhaps in the world of Charles Addams the atmosphere might be called "homey, and even folksy," but those words usually apply to a somewhat different kind of atmosphere.

Stewart has detected "only three possible echoes of Shakespeare in Chapters I-XV" (p. 425), but echoes of Sir Thomas Browne, Montaigne, and Burton pervade these chapters as they do the later ones. As a result, there is infinitely more continuity than Stewart grants.

One more point, since I do not intend a thorough analysis of his article. Melville did not want to write popular books: "it is my earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail,'" he wrote Lemuel Shaw less than six months before he began on Moby-Dick (Oct. 6, 1849, Log/1/316). He resented having to do Redburn and White Jacket: "no reputation that is gratifying to me, can possibly be achieved by either of these books. They are two jobs, which I have done for money—being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood" (Log/1/316). He also owed $700 to his publishers, so that Moby-Dick might well have started as another fairly literal bread-and-butter book. But Melville, after all, had written an ambitious symbolic novel in Mardi, and he was "charged to the muzzle with his sailor metaphysics" in 1850 as well as in 1856. That "fairly literal" whaling story would have been packed with implications—Melville was trying to make poetry flow from the whale's blubber, as he wrote Dana soon after he started on Moby-Dick (May 1, 1850, Log/1/374). Let us assume that Melville did change his plans after he began. His first version then becomes a source for the Moby-Dick we know, just as
Scoresby or Fuller are sources. Mine is not the first study to demonstrate that Melville had a genius for transforming his sources. His (hypothetical) original version, which was probably ripe with implication to begin with, would have responded easily to reworking. If Melville could endow Scoresby with symbolic and metaphysical dimensions, he would have had little difficulty with his own story. My reading is one of those which suggests that he was quite successful in transforming that source.
Autobiography

I, Robert Philip Shulman, was born in Syracuse, New York, May 11, 1930. I received my secondary school education at William Nottingham High School in Syracuse, and I attended Syracuse University on a New York State Regents Scholarship. I received the Bachelor of Arts degree, Magna Cum Lauda, in 1952. From Ohio State University, I received the Master of Arts degree in 1954. Between 1952 and 1957 I was successively graduate assistant, assistant, and assistant instructor in the Department of English at Ohio State University. I was research assistant to Professor Roy Harvey Pearce during the year 1954-1955. In 1957-1958 I was appointed University Fellow at Ohio State University, and in 1958-1959 I was made an instructor in the Department of English.