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THOUGHT AND STRUCTURE IN MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK
AND HIS LATER WORKS

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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1973

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I am grateful to Professor Julian Markels, who inspired me to study Melville, and whose painstaking comments made this work far less chaotic than it might have been. His influence on this work is so pervasive that it cannot be acknowledged adequately in the space allotted here. And I want to thank Young for being the pillar of my life, and Susie, who made my proofreading a tolerable task, and Danny, who was always ready to help me whenever I needed him.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter

### I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

### II. THE BEGINNING OF THE CYCLE: MELVILLE'S METAPHYSICAL VOYAGE

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE CYCLE: MELVILLE'S METAPHYSICAL VOYAGE

### III. THE STRUCTURE OF MOBY-DICK

III. THE STRUCTURE OF MOBY-DICK

1. Loomings: The Development of Ishmael's Function and the Evolution of the Structure of the Novel

2. Melville's Conception of Ahab's Tragedy and the Dramatic Section (I)

3. Ishmael and the Metaphysical Center

4. The Dramatic Section (II) and Its Organic Relation to the Dramatic Section (I)

5. Toward the Epilogue: Dynamics of Structure and Melville's Vision of the World

### IV. PIERRE: MELVILLE'S AESTHETIC AND METAPHYSICAL PARALYSIS

IV. PIERRE: MELVILLE'S AESTHETIC AND METAPHYSICAL PARALYSIS

1. Melville's Strategy and His Early Structural Problems

2. The Hyperborean Regions: The Causes of Melville's Metaphysical and Aesthetic Stasis

### V. MELVILLE'S SHORTER WORKS: TOWARD REALISM

V. MELVILLE'S SHORTER WORKS: TOWARD REALISM

### VI. THE CONFIDENCE-MAN: AMBIGUITIES IN THOUGHT AND STRUCTURE

VI. THE CONFIDENCE-MAN: AMBIGUITIES IN THOUGHT AND STRUCTURE

### VII. BILLY BUDD: "MAN'S FINAL LORE"

VII. BILLY BUDD: "MAN'S FINAL LORE"
Chapter One

Introduction:
The Shifting Relations between
Melville's Thought and Form

Despite the wide range of his reading, Melville's metaphysical ideas had probably more serious effects upon his style than any single author who might have influenced him. As Melville was often under pressure from his constantly unfolding ideas, the tension between his aesthetic mind and his metaphysical mind made his major works highly idiosyncratic. Attracted by the immensity of Melville's metaphysical preoccupations and the genius and elusiveness of his mind, many scholars have devoted themselves to his life and works. Yet, as Walter E. Bezanson observes in "Moby-Dick: Work of Art," "curiously enough, it is in the area of art that our reading and scholarship have been least adequate," especially with respect to Moby-Dick. "Interest in Moby-Dick as direct narrative, as moral analogue, as modern source, and as spiritual autobiography has far outrun commentary on it as a work of art." Even those critics interested in Melville's art have often
dismissed *Moby-Dick* as too elusive or prophetic to be analyzed, or as too haphazard to be considered a work of art. For instance, E. M. Forster, in his highly suggestive discussion of *Moby-Dick*, sees the "prophetic" character of Melville's art in the elusive connection between the "delight" expounded in Father Mapple's sermon and the *Delight* met by the *Pequod* before the final catastrophe, and between the Ishmael-Queequeg relationship developed in the early part of the book and the symbolic meaning of Queequeg's coffin that serves as a life-buoy for Ishmael. Nevertheless, Forster refuses to examine how Melville's prophecy is translated into art, or how these elusive connections mirror his prophetic mind: "What the connection was in the prophet's mind I cannot say, nor could he tell us . . . this again is no coincidence, but an unformulated connection that sprang in Melville's mind . . . nothing can be stated about *Moby-Dick* except that it is a contest. The rest is song."²

To R. P. Blackmur, Melville "added nothing to the novel as a form, and his work nowhere showed conspicuous mastery of the formal devices of fiction he used . . . there was nothing formally organized enough in his work to imitate or modify or perfect."³ This commentary serves as a stimulating inquiry into Melville's fiction, but Blackmur's details of evidence are questionable: 1) his
evaluation of Melville's art is based solely on *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*: 2) he lumps the two works together without distinguishing between their structural differences: "how did Melville go about controlling his two novels, *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*? ... haphazardly"; 3) he attributes shifts in the "compositional centers" of *Moby-Dick* to Melville's "ineptitude and failure to discriminate": "In *Moby-Dick*, after setting up a single consciousness to get inside of, he shifted from that consciousness at will without sense of inconsistency ... without making any effort to warrant the shifts and make them credible." These shifts, however, when analyzed, might provide insights into Melville's creative process, his aesthetic efforts, his structural pattern, and justify his method against Blackmur's criticism.

To account for the elusive and unconventional form of Melville's fiction, many scholars attest that Melville was interested in reality, not in realism. If realism meant "restricting your report of experience to what you could measure scientifically, that seemed to him even less true ... The most perfected surfaces of verisimilitude could lead, he believed, only to the reproduction of 'the same old crowd round the customhouse counter.' They could give him realism, but not reality." To what extent Melville's preoccupation with reality influenced his aesthetic forms
cannot be measured in precise terms. Based on the following study of Melville's representative works, it can only be hypothesized that his affection for reality created two kinds of tension in his art: 1) a tension arising from his deliberate treatment of the polar elements of life, for instance, "belief" and "unbelief," appearance and reality, good and evil, "calms and storms"; 2) a tension caused by the pressure of his evolving ideas on his aesthetic form. When these tensions are not controlled, as in Mardi and Pierre, they cause characteristic symptoms of structural disharmony: indiscriminate changes in the structure of a work or in its narrative point of view; structural ambiguities; a syndromatic style—eruptive emotional outcries or eruptive passages and chapters whose existence cannot be justified in terms of their relationship to the whole. It can be also speculated that when these tensions are controlled as in Moby-Dick, Melville's thought and form "grow" like living organisms: "Out of the trunk, the branches grow . . . So grow the chapters." Thus, the structure of Moby-Dick might be considered an "organic" and dynamic element inseparable from Melville's philosophy, and highly functional in the development of the thematic material. And in the works after Pierre, as his focus shifts from metaphysical to empirical problems, the tension between his thought and form diminishes.
The present study hopes to substantiate the foregoing hypotheses. Its burden, then, is to characterize the development of Melville's fictional structures in *Moby-Dick* and his later works, in terms of the shifting relations between his thought and form. This is not a study of his philosophy or the genetics of his works, nor a critical attempt to evaluate the fictional structures or styles that bear Melville's "signature"; nor even a historical study of his aesthetic problems. It only explores the interaction between his fictional forms and the thoughts that shaped them, and the ways in which this interaction or tension affected the character of his art.

First, *Mardi* is studied for Melville's early symptoms of incoherence, and *Moby-Dick* for his organic form. The two works then serve as criteria for analyzing the post-*Moby-Dick* works: *Pierre*, representative shorter works written in the 1850's, *The Confidence-Man*, and *Billy Budd*. Interestingly enough, Melville's intellectual activity becomes "eruptive" periodically, with each eruptive period followed by a settling-down period as if to demonstrate his own dictum: "There is no steady unretacing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations . . . calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm." Therefore, I will examine his works chronologically in order to characterize the shifting relations between his
theme and form.

Chapter Two will show that in Mardi, Melville's increasing absorption in metaphysics and his growing interest in the intellectual and political topics of the day cause certain structural disharmonies. Until the narrator and Jarl encounter Aleema's canoe, the narrative proceeds as a romantic adventure, but soon after they rescue Yillah, Melville's new ideas seem to take over the narrative. Yillah motivates a quest, and the quest motive enables Melville to create new characters to accompany Taji. But a little after the quest begins, the narrative becomes a travelogue in which various characteristics of the islands of Mardi are satirized: 1) religious superstition and "priestcraft"; 2) polite society, the hypocrisy and shallowness of professionals, economic injustice, industrialism; 3) war, the political deficiencies of kings, the political struggles of the islands, the imperialism of Dominora (England), the chauvinism of Vivenza (United States). Melville, however, does not clarify the relationship between the quest and the satire. Furthermore, as the quest begins, the function of the narrator gradually changes from that of an actor to that of an observer, who merely describes the islands and relates his companions' conversations. And after Taji becomes an observer, Melville inadvertently changes the narrative point of view: the narrator, now Taji, often indiscriminately refers to
himself as "he" instead of "I," as if Taji were one of the Mardian characters.

There is also confusion in Melville's treatment of Yillah. After her disappearance from Odo, Yillah takes on a symbolic meaning, but that symbolic meaning is not clear. Yillah might stand for "the ungraspable phantom of life," or "the everlasting elusiveness of Truth," which Taji pursues through the islands; she might stand for purity and innocence, which once lost cannot be regained; and Hautia's temptation of Taji throughout his quest for Yillah might suggest a perpetual conflict between good and evil in the mind of man. In some sense, Yillah may be a personified abstraction like Pearl in Pearl. But unlike the Pearl poet, who controls the central meaning of Pearl through the Christian conventions of the time, Melville does not show clearly the function of Yillah in the thematic development of the novel. The uncertainties about the meaning of Yillah are not dictated by Melville's artistic intentions, nor are they "controlled ambiguities." They are caused by the pressure of his unfolding ideas about the allegorical possibilities of Yillah and his uncertainties about metaphysical realities. As Melville himself declares, he has "chartless voyaged."

The structural disharmonies recur in Moby-Dick and Pierre, but to a much lesser degree in Moby-Dick. As
George R. Stewart shows in "The Two Moby-Dicks," _Moby-Dick_ has a number of structural and stylistic "anomalies," yet these anomalies do not impair the harmony of the book. Chapter Three will attempt to show that despite shifts in the function of the narrator and the unconventional form of the book, _Moby-Dick_ as a whole might be considered an organic fusion of narrative, dramatic, and expository elements. The narrative provides an epic story of the whaling voyage; the dramatic portrays Ahab's heroic defiance of the ineffable forces of the universe; the expository presents the philosophical content of the epic drama and its _raison d'être_. Furthermore, a number of structural elements serve as "organic" joints: the Ishmael-Queequeg relationship in the beginning, in the middle ("The Monkey-rope"), in the end (Ishmael saved by Queequeg's coffin; "Epilogue"); the significance of Father Mapple's reference to "delight" and the meaning of the ill fortune the _Delight_ encounters at the end; the way in which "The Quarter-Deck" and "The Candles," the most intense dramatic scenes, are deployed at strategic points; and the gams. These are organic joints because they do not merely achieve the coherence of the book, but they illustrate how these elusive connections mirror Melville's prophetic mind. For instance, even seemingly unformulated connections such as the Ishmael-Queequeg relationship help to intimate the
Chapter Four examines *Pierre* in order to determine the ways in which Melville's metaphysical preoccupation affects the structure of the book. Melville appears to have intended to penetrate the mask of appearance more deeply in *Pierre* than he did in *Moby-Dick*. I hope to show, however, that when he becomes preoccupied with his nihilistic view that "the cave of man" consists of "nothing but surface stratified on surface," his nihilism tends to paralyze not only his aesthetic effort but also his metaphysical exploration. As the "clay" of man and God's "silence" become presiding motifs of the book, Melville seems to anticipate what Pierre is to discover toward the end: "appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man."

If man is made of clay, and there is nothing in the soul to control one's unconscious mind, and if his unconscious motives are determined by forces beyond his control, then the exploration of the mystery of the human mind will terminate in nothingness. Thus, Melville ceases to explore the mysteries of Isabel and of the "chair portrait" in the main part of the second half. In *Mardi*, Melville's expanding metaphysical horizon is too immense to be artistically charted; in *Pierre*, he becomes too introspective to be able to articulate his findings in the depths of Pierre's soul. He questions not only the existence of metaphysical
realities but also the validity of human thoughts and the fictional art that represents them.

In his shorter works, Melville approaches the problems of reality in terms of perception and in relation to the world which conditions it. Accepting the limitations of human intellect and the limitations of fictional form, he treats his metaphysical problems circumstantially. Chapter Five attempts to show how Melville's focus shifts from the metaphysical to empirical problems, and how this shift affects the structure of his shorter works. In "Bartleby," for instance, Melville's metaphysical preoccupations are kept in the background, and he maintains an artistically detached stance. Although Melville still attempts to penetrate metaphysical and psychological realms as he did in Pierre, he controls his form by creating an aesthetic distance between himself and his narrator from the very beginning of the story. This aesthetic stance, manipulated through a subtle ironic tone, becomes a structurally functional element in showing two forms of alienation explored in the story: Bartleby's alienation from society and the lawyer-narrator's alienation from life itself. Melville's shift in focus and his aesthetic control of his works, then, become characteristic of his shorter works written in the 1850's. In "Benito Cereno," Melville's philosophical preoccupation (e.g., appearance
and reality) does not disturb his form. His form suits, reinforces, and fulfills his purpose; it reflects the inner conflict of Captain Delano as well as the conflict between appearance and reality. In *Pierre*, Melville could not create a sustained structure to portray Pierre's struggle to penetrate the ambiguity of Truth. In "Benito Cereno," he builds structurally a rhythmic tension, as he did in *Moby-Dick*, to show the alternating patterns of Delano's wavering mind and the successions of his antithetical feelings: intuition and belief, suspicion and faith, doubt and assurance. Also in "I and My Chimney," in which the symbol of the "ungraspable phantom of life" is a homely chimney rather than a cosmic White Whale, there is no tension between Melville's thought and form.

His shorter works suggest that Melville finds in "empiricism" a solution to his aesthetic and metaphysical problems, but his solution proves to be temporary as it gives way to the skepticism and satire of *The Confidence-Man*. *The Confidence-Man* begins as a Reynardian satire with a Chaucerian detachment. As in *Reynard the Fox* the victims of the fox are satirized for their greed and stupidity more than the fox is satirized for his cunning and unscrupulousness, so too in *The Confidence-Man*, it is mainly the victims of the Confidence-man that are satirized for their gullibility, greed, or vanity. Despite all the diabolical
intentions attributed to him, the Confidence-man is only an index to the follies of the passengers aboard the Fidèle. Admittedly, Melville was never able to look at humanity from a celestial height as Chaucer did in Troilus, nor could he be amused by his characters on the ship of fools as Chaucer did with his pilgrims. But his point of view was detached enough to present the reader with a panoramic view of the surface of American society in his day, and its typical sojourners. As shown in his Ishmael'sian sense of humor displayed in the book, Melville's satiric intentions and his cynical view of mankind are artistically controlled, and his point of view is handled with the cunning of a confidence-man. It is generally believed that Melville intended to satirize traditional Christian attitudes while considering the complexity of human problems such as those of Pitch and Moredock. Beneath these intentions, however, there seems to be a subtle design to dupe the reading public just as he spoofs the fools aboard the riverboat, and to ridicule the genre of fiction by deflating it while pretending to announce his own theory of fiction. To achieve his ulterior intentions Melville heavily depends on an elaborate artistic strategy. Based on this assumption, Chapter Six attempts to explore the ways in which Melville's thought and intention influence his artistic maneuvers and the structure of
the book as a whole.

At the end of his long quest for "the ungraspable phantom of life," Melville was prepared for his final vision of man: Claggart, "apprehending the good" yet powerless to be good; Vere fumbling between his conscience and his sense of duty; Billy Budd, defenseless before the Satanic mind of Claggart, defenseless before the "fatherly" mind of Vere as well. Thematically, it can be said that *Billy Budd* is continuous with Melville's major works studied in the preceding chapters in its preoccupation with his metaphysical, psychological, and sociological problems. Structurally, however, the work is more characteristic of Melville's shorter works than of the earlier works. It focuses on empirical realities as it explores the theme of appearance and reality in terms of man's sensory experience, and its metaphysical problems remain in the background. Chapter Seven intends to show that the gradual shift in the focus of the work from the cosmic irony involving the mystery of Good and Evil to empirical realities with which Vere becomes preoccupied is characteristic of Melville's shift in focus from the metaphysical realities pursued in *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* to the empirical realities explored in the later works. Thus, the chapter will study Melville's final work as an embodiment of the metaphysical and aesthetic stance reflected in his later
works, and as the final example of how his metaphysical stance affects his aesthetic form.
Chapter One

Introduction


2. E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1929), pp. 139-140.


4. Ibid., p. 81.

5. Ibid., pp. 81-82. Although there have been many illuminating studies of Melville's fiction since Forster's Aspects of the Novel and Blackmur's "The Craft of Herman Melville," their comments on Melville's art provide a starting point of this study, mainly because they focus on the central problem of this study: the relation between Melville's "conceptual faculty" and his "executive faculty"; the way in which his metaphysical preoccupation affects the character of his art.


7. Hawthorne's often quoted remarks about Melville, "He can neither believe, nor can he comfortable in his unbelief," suggest that Melville often wavered between "belief" and "unbelief."

9. As Melville's tree metaphor suggests, his structural element might be considered an organism. This organic principle has affinity to Schlegel's concept of organic structure: "just as the inner force of a phenomenon in nature determines its external nature, so the vitality of a poet's seminal idea or intuition determines its appropriate expression." See Matthiessen's discussion of organic principles in *American Renaissance*, pp. 133-135.

10. *Moby-Dick*, p. 406. Since this statement characterizes Melville's intellectual and aesthetic efforts, it is frequently quoted throughout this study.
Chapter Two

The Beginning of the Cycle:
Melville's Metaphysical Voyage

Scholars generally agree that Melville's plan in the writing of *Mardi* was profoundly affected by his increasing absorption in metaphysics, by his awareness of the limitations of his earlier fictional form (*Typee* and *Omoo*) in dealing with his metaphysical concerns, and by his growing interest in the intellectual and political topics of the day. Understandably, then, *Mardi* has been primarily studied as a source book for Melville's speculative insights, as a forerunner which anticipates his later metaphysical and literary preoccupations, rather than as a literary fiasco. In fact, some scholars have attempted to find a mental "quadrant" to navigate through the "chartless voyage" of the book, in an effort to justify its structure. Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Edgar A. Dryden, for instance, contend that "*Mardi* is both structurally and thematically a voyage from fact to fiction, from object to subject, a voyage to the very center of the writer's creative imagination, and that it is with the process and implications of inhabiting this mental world that the book is centrally
concerned.¹ Merrell R. Davis shows how the book began with factual narration, proceeded through the world of romance after alterations and revisions, and expanded into a travelogue-satire as Melville's reading of Thomas Browne, Burton, Rabelais and others began to take effect. Davis defends the structure of the novel by showing the function of each section and the relation of one to another.² But whether the book moves from the world of fact to the world of romance, whether it is intended to be a romantic adventure or a travelogue-satire, its inherent disharmonies cannot be ignored: the disharmony between the dream-like atmosphere in which the novel begins and the highly artificial allegorical world into which it lapses; the indiscriminate shifts in the center of consciousness through which the events of the novel are viewed; and the author's own uncertainties about the meaning of Yallah. Although the novel shows the immensity of Melville's expanding mind, it is a literary failure: "the rush of this ambitiousness—stylistic, philosophical, satiric, indiscriminately universal—outran Melville's technical competence, overtaxing the natural sense of pace and proportion in narrative which he had shown in the casually assembled but shaped and ordered chapters of Typee and Omoo."³

Melville was aware of his "ambitiousness" and his aesthetic problem of controlling it. About midway through the book, in a rhapsodic monologue called "Dreams"
(Chapter 119) he depicts his exuberant awareness of an expanding mind, expanding like "endless, golden dreams." Significantly enough, the chapter not only celebrates the development of his inner life, but portrays that "sleep-walking mind," which is the source of structural disorder throughout the novel. This chapter, more than any other single chapter in the novel, enables us to define and illustrate Melville's structural problems as it shows the relation between his developing ideas and his aesthetic problem of controlling them. Consider, for example, the opening paragraph in "Dreams":

Dreams! dreams! golden dreams: endless, and golden, as the flowery prairies, that stretch away from the Rio Sacramento, in whose waters Danae's shower was woven;--prairies like rounded eternities: jonquil leaves beaten out; and my dreams herd like buffaloes, browsing on to the horizon, and browsing on round the world; and among them, I dash with my lance, to spear one, ere they all flee.

Melville's mind wanders like a colt in prairies but stumbles in the middle of the passage--"jonquil leaves beaten out"--causing a momentary lapse in the reader's mind. The break occurs as if Melville's mind were bursting through his form, creating a discordant image and thus causing a structural disharmony. The image of "jonquil leaves beaten out" is telescoped, as John Donne's images are, between seemingly harmonious images: "endless, and golden, as the flowery prairies, that stretch away" and "buffaloes, browsing on to the horizon." "Jonquil leaves beaten out," to
be sure, creates the image of spreading out "like gold to airy thinness beat," just as Danae's shower suggests a thinly spreading shower of gold. But this image is not in harmony with the bold, immense dreams that the surrounding images project: "prairies like rounded eternities" and "my dreams herd like buffaloes, browsing on to the horizon, and browsing on round the world." And, the colon in the middle of the paragraph, occurring as it does between "--prairies like rounded eternities" and "jonquil leaves beaten out," makes the relation between the two projected images virtually incomprehensible. Characteristically, this disharmony is created by Melville's swiftly moving mind stumbling on his own ideas and images.

Throughout the chapter on "Dreams," as his mind wanders, his writing becomes a sleepwalking: in his ecstatic state, Melville's soul, like Whitman's "kosmos," hovers over the earth, soars to the skies, roams the eternities; in his exuberant sense of the fullness of the mind, he feels as though he were a frigate with a thousand souls; in his alternating moods of "storm and calm," of excitement and trance, he goes through a thousand metamorphoses. Melville's image shifts from that of the boundless and timeless mind harking to a grand orchestration of the voices of the past (Homer, Shakespeare, Milton) to that of the Mississippi mustering "his watery nations . . . so, with all the past and present pouring in me, I roll down
my billow from afar." Suddenly, his god-like mind that is "served like Bajazet" becomes an instrument of God: "yet not I, but another: God is my Lord; and though many satel­lites revolve around me, I and all mine revolve round the great central Truth, sun-like, fixed and luminous forever in the foundationless firmament." Thus, his rapidly shift­ing dream-like images mirror Melville's rapidly moving mind, but they do not reflect any coherent ideas, aesthetic or philosophical.

In contrast, consider the aesthetic structure of Whitman's "Sleep-Chasings." As the poet sleepwalks, the dream-imagery drifts and changes as in hypnagogic vision, but it often merges into a unifying image of night, a peaceful interval between death and rebirth. The movement of the poem suggests the undulating motions of life (life and death; struggle and peace) or cyclic motions (birth-life-death-rebirth). As the poet wanders through the night in his vision, traveling around the globe, he sees in the "sleepers" the two contradictory visions of peace and struggle which appear alternately (Sections 2-8). The poet is confused as if he were haunted by illusions because the visions he sees are "ill-assorted" and "contradictory." But "as the earth recedes from him into the night, he pierce the darkness," and "new beings appear." He sees that "what is not the earth is beautiful." His perception of the soul and "new beings" signals a new
phase of his visionary experience; as his body is fused
with his soul and the souls of others, he attains "physical
freedom." Thus, the poet "becomes the other dreamers":

I go from bedside to bedside--I sleep close
with the other sleepers, each in turn,
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the
other dreamers,
I become the other dreamers.

With his union with others and the world realized,
the poet imagines himself out of time; he is now the omni-
scient and omnipresent soul, from which nothing can hide
(Section 11); and thus begins the journey of his soul
through the physical world, during which he assumes various
roles (Section 13). He even enters the body of man and
woman, and experiences their sensations and emotions (Sec-
tions 14-28). In this way, the progression of the poem
reveals a conscious planning and an artistic unity; the
dream-imagery changes but merges into a unifying theme:
the night, through which "rebirth" is attained. The dream-
imagery drifts yet progresses toward the poet's ultimate
goal: the attainment of "freedom," by which he hopes to
cross the physical world.

Like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, Melville was im-
bued with a romantic sense of plenitude, and "Dreams"
certainly reflects the infinite possibilities of the new
American. Yet his mind was developing too rapidly; his
thoughts were erupting like a volcano; and the chapter ends
with his own description of the problem of controlling them:
My cheek blanches white while I write; I start at the scratch of my pen; my own mad brood of eagles devours me; fain would I un-say this audacity; but an iron-mailed hand clenches mine in a vice, and prints down every letter in my spite. Fain would I hurl off this Dionysius that rides me; my thoughts crush me down till I groan; in far fields I hear the song of the reaper, while I slave and faint in this cell. The fever runs through me like lava; my hot brain burns like a coal; and like many a monarch, I am less to be en-vied, than the veriest hind in the land. (p. 368)

If this description provides a fairly accurate analysis of the source of Melville's artistic problem, the chapter as a whole then illustrates the structural symptoms of the novel. For instance, the shifting images in "Dreams" exemplify the shifts in the structure of the work and in its point of view; and the way in which the chapter becomes invested with divergent images and thoughts exemplifies the way in which the novel (and often its single chapters) becomes loaded with a variety of topics and ideas that threaten to become incoherent at times. These structural symptoms and their probable causes will be studied in the following pages.

The narrative beginning (Chapters 1-51) should be considered as the most skillfully "charted" part of the Mardian voyage; therefore, the contrast between this part and the ensuing sections will show how Melville's structural problems develop. Soon after the novel begins, Melville creates a dream-like atmosphere, in which the world of fact and the world of romance can be harmoniously
blended, so that the transition from one to the other does not present any structural problem. Bored with his life aboard the *Arcturion*, a dull and routine life in which "the days went slowly round and round, endless and uneventful as cycles in space," the narrator sees prophetic visions of a romantic world:

In the distance what visions were spread! The entire western horizon high piled with gold and crimson clouds; airy arches, domes, and minarets; as if the yellow, Moorish sun were setting behind some vast Alhambra. Vistas seemed leading to worlds beyond. To and fro, and all over the towers of this Nineveh in the sky, flew troops of birds. Watching them long, one crossed my sight, flew through a low arch, and was lost to view. My spirit must have sailed in with it; for directly, as in a trance, came upon me the cadence of mild billows laving a beach of shells, the waving of boughs, and the voices of maidens, and the lulled beatings of my own dissolved heart, all blended together. (pp. 7-8)

The narrator's vision provides a motive for jumping ship and sets the mood for a romantic adventure. And when he jumps ship, his journey into a "terra incognita" is marked by a series of foreboding events "leading to worlds beyond": ominous "calms" that "lie tranced" as in "a vacuum," in which the "inert blending and brooding seemed gray chaos in conception"; the strange lord-like sharks and page-like pilot fish, an unfathomable mystery in nature; the outlandish acts of the "Porki drama" aboard a ghost ship. Finally, the scene of a phosphorescent sea of "pallid white" prepares the way for the appearance of
Aleema's raft, the beginning of the romantic adventure. The mystery of the sea of fire provides the link between the phenomenal world and the romantic world and signals the movement of the narrative from one to the other. The sea of fire can be explained in scientific terms, "but these are only surmises; likely, but uncertain." Therefore, a seeker of truth tends to look for what is "beneath the seeming," to explore what might be beyond the phenomenal world. "After science comes sentiment." According to this sentiment, the nocturnal radiance of the fire-fly is purposefully intended as an attraction to the opposite sex; the artful insect illuminates its body for a beacon of love: "some insect Hero," waiting the approach of her Leander, "may show a torch to her gossamer gallant."

Ironically, however, for the poor little fire-fish of the sea, their radiance lights the way to their destruction, for it reveals them to their foes. Such is the mystery of nature, and the narrator's romantic adventure is a journey into this world of mystery—"a voyage thither."

The ominous sea of fire, then, not only forebodes the events to come, but suggests nature's paradox and mystery. It is a threshold to the marvelous. As the narrator sails through the marvelous sea of fire, he is ushered by a noddy with "snow-white" plumage and "blood-red" bill and legs toward Aleema's raft, where white, mysterious Yillah and the bloody murder of the old priest await him. In the
scuffle with the natives aboard the raft, the narrator kills Aleema and rescues Yilllah, a beautiful maiden, from them; the rescue of Yilllah is not only a part of his romantic adventure but it is the fulfillment of his romantic vision: "oh, Yilllah; were you not the earthly semblance of that sweet vision, that haunted my earliest thoughts?"

When the narrator, with Yilllah and his companions, Jarl and Samoa, arrives on the island of Odo, he is mistaken for Taji (a native god) by the natives and treated as a god. Now the transition from the actual world to a dream world is complete ("All seemed a dream." p. 167).

In the narrative leading up to the rescue of Yilllah Melville controls the structure of the novel. But Yilllah mysteriously disappears, and when she does, Melville's evolving ideas seem to outrun his technical competence. Stimulated by Rabelais's travelogue-satire, attracted by the political and intellectual topics of the day, urged by "something unmanageable" in himself, his mind is now crowded by more than just his ideas about a romantic journey into the mystery of nature. As M. R. Davis suggests, Yilllah's sudden disappearance in the romantic tradition of Keats's Endymion and Shelley's Alastor increases the suspense of the story as well as enriching its meaning. Through her disappearance from her islet of Odo, Yilllah becomes the haunting vision of Taji's dreams and the object of his quest. Yilllah motivates a quest, and the quest
motive enables Melville to create new characters to accompany Taji: Media (a native king), Babbalanja (Media's court philosopher), Yoomy (Media's minstrel), and Mohi ("one of the Keepers of the Chronicles of the Kings of Mardi"). A little after the quest begins, however, the narrative becomes an allegorical travelogue in which various characteristics of the islands of Mardi are satirized; for instance, religious superstition and "priestcraft"; polite society, and the hypocrisy and shallowness of professionals; economic injustice and industrialism; war, the political deficiencies of kings, the political struggles of the islands, the imperialism of Dominora (England), the chauvinism of Vivenza (United States). But in all this Melville fails to clarify the relationship between the romantic quest and the travelogue-satire.

A quest, to be sure, can be combined with a satire in the tradition of Piers the Plowman, or a romance with a satire as in Roman de la Rose. In a manner which is characteristic of his age, William Langland presents his vision of man progressing toward the "Tower of Truth"—the metaphysical cause as it is applied to God, and a goal to be achieved on earth as applied to man. Man's journey to the Tower of Truth, however, is sinuous, and the traveler may encounter numerous obstacles on the road, such as False, Pavel, Lady Meed. Thus, the forces that keep one from the goal of truth are satirized not only as they are antitheses
of truth, but as they are personifications of the "components" of society exhibiting those characteristics of erring mankind which stymie truth. Melville's Taji, like Langland's Dreamer, represents man's unending quest for truth, and he too encounters many spiritual and social ills throughout his pursuit of Yillah. In Mardi, however, the aesthetic relationship between Taji's quest for Yillah and the social ills that are satirized is not clear.

When the quest begins, Taji apparently becomes more interested in describing the peculiar customs and whimsical characters of the islands he and his companions visit than in fulfilling the purpose of his journey. Melville appears to be taken over by a Swiftian satiric impulse (e.g., "the court ceremony of the Pupera" on the Isle of Yams, Valapee); but he does not seem to be aware of the aesthetic problem of establishing the relevance of his satire to Taji's quest, for example, when he describes the customs of Valapee:

So, that in Valapee the very beggars are born with a snug investment in their mouths; too soon, however, to be appropriated by their lords; leaving them toothless for the rest of their days, and forcing them to diet on poee-pudding and banana blanc-mange. (p. 206)

Neither these humorous accounts of the Valapeeans' customs, nor the ambiguous portrayal of the whimsical king of Juam, Donjalolo, nor the detailed description of the visits of Ohonoo and Mondoldo clarify the aesthetic relationship
between Taji's quest for Yillah and the travelogue-satire.

Furthermore, just as in "Dreams" Melville's expanding mind becomes impregnated with diverse images, so in the midst of his satiric and sightseeing interests he becomes preoccupied with a variety of metaphysical problems as he describes the plight of Donjalolo. As soon as the visitors land on the island of Juam, Taji delineates the topography of the island, which immediately suggests the polarities of light and dark:

Shining aslant into this wild hollow, the afternoon sun lighted up its eastern side with tints of gold. But opposite, brooded a somber shadow, double-shading the secret places between the salient spurs of the mountains. Thus cut in twain by masses of day and night, it seemed as if some Last Judgment had been enacted in the glen. (p. 217)

The island contains two villages, "one to the west, the other to the east." Just as Donjalolo, the ruler of the island, moves from east to west, from the phallic "House of the Morning" to the womb-like "House of the Afternoon" and back to the "House of the Morning" every day, so "his mind, like his person in the glen, was continually passing and repassing between two extremes"—virtue and vice. Life is not only cyclic, but it is also full of paradox as the descriptions of Donjalolo's two houses suggest. From the House of the Afternoon springs a stream of life "with blessed breezes of Omi"; "the still, panting glen of Willamilla would have been almost untenable were it not for
the grotto." But it is also the House of the Dead, "where, according to the strange customs of the isle, were inlaid the reputed skeletons of Donjalolo's sires." The vines that grow around the grotto are green at their tops, yet "lower down, they were shriveled and dyed of many colors"; and the royal bacchanals lay slumbering, "prostrate here and there over the bones of Donjalolo's sires." The House of the Morning, a fantastic palace, on the other hand, provides luxury and pleasure for Donjalolo including his nightly affairs with his thirty wives. And yet Donjalolo, "for all his multiplicity of wives, . . . had never an heir."

Moreover, though ruler of his people, Donjalolo is their prisoner; bound by their laws, he can never leave the valley. Thus, he is a living dead man, "buried alive in their glen" in more ways than one.

Whether one is a captive in the valley of Juam, or whether one is free to roam around the islands of Mardi, he would only learn that "nothing abideth"; truth, if any, consists of an eternal revolution through life and death, all things being ephemeral, uncertain, and paradoxical.

"... — But dead, and yet alive; alive, yet dead;—thus say the sages of Maramma. But die we then living? Yet if our dead fathers somewhere and somehow live, why not our unborn sons? For backward or forward, eternity is the same; already have we been the nothing we dread to be. Icy thought! But bring it home,—it will not stay: What ho, hot heart of mine: to beat thus lustily awhile, to feel in the red rushing blood, and then be ashes,—can this be so? But
peace, peace, thou liar in me, telling me I am immortal—shall I not be as these bones? To come to this! But the balsam-dropping palms, whose boles run milk, whose plumes wave boastful in the air, they perish in their prime, and bow their blasted trunks. Nothing abideth; the river of yesterday floweth not to-day; the sun's rising is a setting; living is dying; the very mountains melt; and all revolve,—systems and asteroids; the sun wheels through the zodiac, and the zodiac is a revolution. Ah gods! in all this universal stir, am I to prove one stable thing?

"Grim chiefs in skeletons, avaunt! Ye are but dust; belike the dust of beggars; for on this bed, paupers may lie down with kings, and filch their skulls. This, great Marjora's arm? No, some old paralytic's. Ye, kings? ye, men? Where are your vouchers? I do reject your brotherhood, ye libelous remains. But no, no; despise them not, oh Babbalanja! Thy own skeleton, thou thyself dost carry with thee, through this mortal life; and aye would view it, but for kind nature's screen; thou art death alive; and e'en to what's before thee wilt thou come. Ay, thy children's children will walk over thee: thou, voiceless as a calm." (pp. 237-238)

Now "the great flood gates of the wonder-world" of the mind is swung open, and Babbalanja's ravings about the skeletons of Donjalolo's sires crowd the chapters on Donjalolo, and Taji's "wild conceits" surge through the chapter on "Time and Temples":

Thus deeper and deeper into Time's endless tunnel, does the winged soul, like a night-hawk, wend her wild way; and finds eternities before and behind; and her last limit is her everlasting beginning.

But sent over the broad flooded sphere, even Noah's dove came back, and perched on his hand. So comes back my spirit to me, and folds up her wings. (p. 230)
These chapters surely reflect Melville's metaphysical preoccupations; and as Davis suggests, Taji's philosophical digressions embellish the subject being treated in each chapter. Yet Melville does not clearly establish the relation between the thematic development in these digressions and the philosophical or symbolic import of Taji's quest for Yillah as he shows, for instance, the thematic relations between Ishmael's digressions and Ahab's quest for the White Whale. In fact, Taji's digressions further obscure the purpose of his quest for Yillah, for as the travelogue-satire becomes inundated with the metaphysical ideas, the quest ceases to be the central concern of the novel. The narrator only casually reminds the reader throughout these chapters that he has not forgotten Yillah.

Finding in Valapee no trace of her whom we sought, and but little pleased with the cringing demeanor of the people, and the wayward follies of Peepi their lord, we early withdrew from the isle. (p. 208)

Was Yillah immured in this strange retreat (Willamilla)? But from those around us naught could we learn... As still seeking Yillah, and still disappointed, we roved through the lands which these chieftains ruled, Babbalanja exclaimed—"Let us depart; idle our search, in isles that have viceroys for kings." (p. 217; p. 252)

Things past!—Ah Yillah! for all its mirth, and though we hunted wide, we found thee not in Mondoldo. (p. 293)
As the journey through the Mardian islands progresses further, the pattern of the novel seems to emerge; Melville's satiric intentions, religious (Maramma), social (Pimminee, Diranda), and political (Dominora and Vivenza), become clearer; and the theme of the quest and the satire weaves in and out of the travelogue. Yet the aesthetic relations between the two remain undefined, and therefore the meaning of Ylllah remains unclear throughout the novel. Ylllah might stand for "the everlasting elusiveness of Truth," which Taji pursues through the islands. She might stand for purity and innocence, which once lost cannot be regained: "the maidens of Hautia are all Ylllahs, held captive, unknown to themselves; ... in some wild way, Hautia had made a captive of Ylllah; in some one of her black-eyed maids, the blue-eyed One was transformed" (pp. 648-649). Hautia's temptation of Taji throughout his quest for Ylllah also suggests a perpetual conflict between good and evil (or whatever Ylllah and Hautia might stand for) in the mind of man.

Approaching the dominions of one who so long had haunted me, conflicting emotions tore up my soul in tornadoes. Yet Hautia had held out some prospect of crowning my yearnings. But how connected were Hautia and Ylllah? Something I hoped; yet more I feared. Dire presomtiments, like poisoned arrows, shot through me. Had they pierced me before, straight to Flozella would I have voyaged; not waiting for Hautia to woo me by that last and victorious temptation. But unchanged remained my feelings of hatred for Hautia; yet vague those feelings,
as the language of her flowers. Nevertheless, in some mysterious way seemed Hautia and Yllah connected. But Yllah was all beauty, and innocence; my crown of felicity; my heaven below;— and Hautia, my whole heart abhorred. Yllah I sought; Hautia sought me. One, openly beckoned me here; the other dimly allured me there. Yet now was I wildly dreaming to find them together. But so distracted my soul, I knew not what it was, that I thought. (p. 643)

Yllah might also symbolize man's romantic vision of future. The narrator's voyage begins with his romantic visions; he escapes from the world that goes "slowly round and round, endless and uneventful as cycles in space" into a romantic world, in which Yllah is identified as "the earthy semblance of that sweet vision, that haunted [his] earliest thoughts." When the romantic quest progresses, Taji's "winged soul" searches into "Time's endless tunnel . . . and finds eternities before and behind; and her last limit is her everlasting beginning." Although Babbalanja and his companions see a beatific vision in Serenia and accept Alma as their truth, Taji continues his quest for Yllah. And at the end of the book, Taji again finds "eternities before and behind" through "Time's endless tunnel": Taji is still pursued by Aleema's sons (from "behind") and he is still pursuing Yllah ("before") "over an endless sea." Thus, Yllah represents the "future" that man's "winged soul" seeks through the eternities of time. Taji's quest, however, suggests that man's romantic vision is an illusive and futile dream; an endless revolution
between past (e.g., Taji's past deeds symbolized by Aleema's sons) and future (Yillah). Yillah, to be sure, offers us numerous possibilities for allegorical interpretation; but the allegorical or symbolic ideas associated with Yillah are too divergent to be considered artistically coherent; and they are obscured by a variety of topics and ideas (religious, social, political, metaphysical, aesthetic) incorporated into the travelogue-satire; and finally, Yillah's function itself is blurred by the shifts in the structure of the novel as shown earlier.

The shifts in focus from romance to quest to travelogue and then to the metaphysical discourses, not only obscure Yillah's function in the thematic development of the novel but also cause shifts in the narrative point of view. In the early part of the novel, the action is viewed through the consciousness of the nameless narrator who re-creates his past adventure. The narrator is portrayed as a complex character with contrasting moods (transcendental visions and nihilistic despairs); the first-person voice is ever present as the narrator is always self-conscious and self-revealing. Soon after he and his companions arrive on the Mardian islands, the narrator becomes a pretended Mardian demi-god (Taji), as if to show that a new character is created to suit the needs of the Mardian world. The narrator moves from his adventures in the real world to the adventures in the world of his mind (a dream
world, as shown earlier), and when he does, he seems to become a spectator, who observes Taji as one of the adventurers in this world of mind. Taji is thus referred to in the third person as if he were the narrator's alter ego. This mental stance of the narrator explains why the point of view shifts from "I" to "he." However, since the form of the novel shifts continually, the narrative point of view becomes inexplicably confused as it alternates between the first person and the third person; and the shift in Taji's point of view and his function is confusing in more ways than one. First, the point of view shifts haphazardly from "I" to "he" and back to "I," or from "we" to "Taji" to "I," sometimes in the short space of a few paragraphs.

Next morning, when much to the chagrin of Borabolla we were preparing to quit his isle, came tidings to the palace, of a wonderful event, occurring in one of the "Motoos," or little islets of the great reef; which "Motoo" was included in the dominions of the king... (p. 305)

This recital filled Taji with horror. Who could these avengers be, but the sons of him I had slain. I had thought them far hence, and myself forgotten; and now, like adders, they started up in my path, as I hunted for Yillah. (p. 306)

Then, when Yoomy, Mohi, and Babbalanja begin to play their roles as the poet, the historian, and the philosopher respectively, Taji fades into the background. Taji now assumes a detached point of view as if he were only a sight-seer; he merely describes the islands and relates the other characters' intellectual discourses in direct quotations.
And when the pressure from his surging ideas mounts in the travelogue-satire, Melville finds it convenient to convey them through Babbalanja, who is presumably intended as a personified abstraction of Philosophy. When the travelogue-satire turns into a philosophical symposium, Babbalanja becomes the chief voice of the book, and as he assumes the narrator's function of philosophizing, the center of consciousness in the novel seems to move from Taji's consciousness to Babbalanja's.

... Can we starve that noble instinct in us, and hope that it will survive? Better slay the body than the soul; and if it be the direst of sins to be the murderers of our own bodies, how much more to be a soul-suicide. Yoomy, we are men, we are angels. And in his faculties, high Oro is but what a man would be, infinitely magnified. Let us aspire to all things. Are we babes in the woods, to be scared by the shadows of the trees? What shall appall us? If eagles gaze at the sun, may not men at the gods? (p. 426)

Finally when Babbalanja is possessed by Azzageddi just as Melville becomes possessed with his "demonic" spirit, Taji ceases to be even a projection of Melville's mind since the author's ideas are now expressed mainly through Babbalanja.

... Life is an April day, that both laughs and weeps in a breath. But whoso is wise, laughs when he can. Men fly from a groan, but run to a laugh. Vee-Vee! your gourd ... Cups, cups, Vee-Vee, more cups! Here Taji, take that; Mohi, take that; Yoomy, take that. And now let us drown away grief. ... There is laughter in heaven, and laughter in hell. And a deep thought whose language is laughter. Though wisdom be wedded to woe, though the way thereto is by tears, yet all ends in a shout. But wisdom wears no weeds; woe is more merry than mirth; 'tis a shallow grief that is sad. (pp. 612-613)
John Seelye suggests that "though Taji is the narrator, by means of soliloquy and dramatic dialogue Babbalanja is permitted to become a subjective identity," and that "the drift of technique and point of view . . . looks forward to *Moby-Dick*, where the personable Ishmael gives way to pessimistic Ahab." But, although Ishmael stays in the background throughout Ahab's dramatic sequence, it is through Ishmael's consciousness that the drama of Ahab is viewed; it is his analytic and synthesizing mind that reveals the metaphysical import of Ahab's quest for the White Whale. And Ishmael does not give way to Ahab, either philosophically or structurally; he remains the voice of the novel as he remains at the center of consciousness. In the second half of *Mardi*, however, Melville fails to show where the center of consciousness is as it oscillates between Taji and Babbalanja.

From the foregoing study, one might observe that *Mardi* is indeed a celebration of Melville's expanding mind, which explores itself as well as the external world; it is a celebration of his "golden dreams" and jubilant ideas. It expresses Melville's deepest thoughts of woe as well as his comic spirit that permeates *Moby-Dick* and *The Confidence-Man*. And its expansion into a travelogue-satire shows that Melville was searching for an artistic form into which his divergent ideas could be incorporated. As he was aware of the tyranny of his uncontrollable thoughts in "Dreams," so
was he aware of the demonic possession of his inspiration, which led him to a chartless voyage. Significantly enough, however, Melville was more interested in exploring and revealing the world of his mind than in achieving the aesthetic coherence of the novel.

Oh, reader, list! I've chartless voyaged. With compass and the lead, we had not found these Mardian Isles. Those who boldly launch, cast off all cables; and turning from the common breeze, that's fair for all, with their own breath, fill their own sails. Hug the shore, naught new is seen; and "Land ho!" at last was sung, when a new world was sought. . . .

But this new world here sought, is stranger far than his, who stretched his vans from Palos. It is the world of mind; . . . .

But fiery yearnings their own phantom-future make, and deem it present. So, if after all these fearful, fainting trances, the verdict be, the golden haven was not gained;--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. (pp. 556-557)

Thus, the characteristics of Mardi studied in this chapter are significant in several ways. They define and illustrate what may be called the Melville syndrome, a pattern of Melville's structural symptoms caused by his "fiery yearnings" for discovering his new world of metaphysics. They will also help us understand the interaction between Melville's thought and form in his other major works; how in Moby-Dick, for instance, Melville controls his erupting ideas so as to articulate them, and how in Pierre he fails to control them, and how in each of his major works his metaphysical preoccupations determine his fictional form.
Chapter Two
The Beginning of the Cycle:
Melville's Metaphysical Voyage


4. Herman Melville, *Mardi and A Voyage Thither*, eds., Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago, 1970), p. 366. After the initial reference, all the quotations from Melville's works will be referred to by page numbers when the quotations are cited from the same edition.


6. Taji writes in "Faith and Knowledge":

   I was at the subsiding of the Deluge, and helped swab the ground, and build the first house. With the Israelites, I fainted in the wilderness; was in court, when Solomon outdid all the judges before him. . . . I instigated the abdication of Diocletian, and Charles the Fifth; I touched Isabella's heart, that she hearkened to Columbus. I am he, that from the king's minions hid the Charter in the old oak at Hartford; I harbored Goffe and Whalley; I am the leader of the Mohawk masks, who in the Old Commonwealth's harbor, overboard threw the East India Company's Souchong; I am the Vailed Persian Prophet; I, the man in the iron mask; I, Junius. (p. 297)

8. Describing *Mardi* in his letter to Richard Bentley (June 5, 1849), Melville observed: "some of us scribblers, My Dear Sir, always have a certain something unmanageable in us, that bids us do this or that, and be done it must--hit or miss." Quoted from *Melville's Mardi*.

Chapter Three

The Structure of *Moby-Dick*

I

**Loomings:**

The Development of Ishmael's Function and
the Evolution of the Structure of the Novel

The structural disharmonies recur in *Moby-Dick* and
*Pierre*, but to a much lesser degree in the former. As
George R. Stewart shows in "The Two Moby-Dicks," *Moby-Dick*
has a number of structural and stylistic "anomalies," yet
these anomalies do not impair the coherence of its struc­
ture as they did in *Mardi*. Stewart contends that *Moby-
Dick* as we know it is vastly different from the original
version. Based on his careful study of internal evidence,
he claims that chapters 1-15 represent the original story
with a slight revision; 16-22, the original story with a
certain amount of important revision; 22-Epilogue, the
new version with certain remnants of the original story.¹

His study is illuminating; yet his evidence mainly con­sists of what he calls "anomalies," and he tends to over­
look Melville's artistic intentions in constructing the
book as he did. Stewart claims, for instance, that Chapter 16 belongs to the original story which did not deal with the White Whale; for Captain Peleg merely mentions that Ahab's leg was bitten off by "the monstrousest parmacetty," and fails to "indicate that there was something more than a large whale involved in this case."

Stewart lightly dismisses the fact that Melville painstakingly builds suspense before he reveals the metaphysical significance of the conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick in the "Quarter-Deck" drama. Furthermore, Melville makes it clear that Moby Dick is just a monstrous whale to everyone except Ahab and Ishmael; it has no metaphysical significance, either for Captain Peleg or for the captains Ahab meets in the gams toward the end of the novel.

It is generally believed, as Stewart suggests, that the novel was first intended to be a simple whaling story, and that some months after Melville began to write about whaling, "it exploded into a tragic drama of Aeschylean proportion." Therefore, some of the structural and stylistic anomalies might have been caused by the supposed revision, but they could have been also caused by the pressure of his evolving ideas whether Melville was in the process of creating or recreating. Chapters 29 ("Enter Ahab; to him, Stubb"), 30 ("The Pipe"), and 31 ("Queen Mab"), for instance, show how Melville's unfolding ideas about
Ahab affect the structure of the book. In the chapters preceding "Queen Mab," namely "Ahab" (28), "Enter Ahab" (29), and "The Pipe" (30), a tension has been mounting because of the mystery surrounding Ahab and his first appearance on the Pequod, and Melville relieves this tension in "Queen Mab." But perhaps an intense pressure has been also building up in Melville's imaginative center as he becomes preoccupied with the tragic potentialities of Ahab and his grand ideas for developing them. As he feels the mounting pressure of his need to dramatize Ahab's tragic dilemma, he seems to become increasingly aware of the limitations of the first person point of view and of the urgency of modifying it. These inferences are based on the following observations: 1) since his first reference to the "noble" and "morbid" character of Ahab in "The Ship" (16), Ishmael, the actor-narrator, has carefully prepared the stage (e.g., "The Advocate" (24) and "Knights and Squires" (26-27)) for Ahab's dramatic appearance of the Pequod; 2) Ishmael becomes intensely preoccupied with Ahab in the three chapters mentioned above; 3) as Ishmael uses the dramatic form in "Enter, Ahab," he becomes aware of the problem of narrative point of view and attempts to get around it; he manages to report what he could not have known by saying of Ahab "he would mutter to himself":
"It feels like going down into one's tomb," he would mutter to himself, "for an old captain like me to be descending this narrow scuttle, to go to my grave-dug berth."

On the following page, however, Ishmael cannot keep on getting around the problem, and Melville begins to invest Ishmael with a semi-omniscient point of view by allowing him to exercise his synthesizing consciousness (a creative consciousness through which one's memories and impressions are remolded or recreated). Consider, for example, how Melville demonstrates Ishmael's progressively widening point of view; first, at the end of "Enter, Ahab" Ishmael overhears Stubb's soliloquy:

"I was never served so before without giving a hard blow for it," muttered Stubb, as he found himself descending the cabin-scuttle. "It's very queer. . . . Didn't that Dough-Boy, the steward, tell me that of a morning he always finds the old man's hammock clothes all rumpled and tumbled, and the sheets down at the foot, and the coverlid almost tied into knots, and the pillow a sort of frightful hot, as though a baked brick had been on it? A hot old man! I guess he's got what some folks ashore call a conscience; . . . . " (p. 113)

Then in "The Pipe," Ishmael listens to Ahab's soliloquy:

"How now," he soliloquized at last, withdrawing the tube, "this smoking no longer soothes. Oh, my pipe! hard must it go with me if thy charm be gone! . . . . " (p. 114)

With his synthesizing consciousness, Ishmael can now remodel the details of his memories so that he may present to the reader Ahab's and Stubb's soliloquies, or whatever information he has about the whaling voyage he is reconstructing.
Significantly enough, he presents the events and characters being recreated as if they were dramatized in the theatre of his mind and he could observe them as a spectator; and the significance of the events becomes clear to him (and to the reader) only as the story progresses and only as he analyzes them in his own mind. In this sense, Ishmael is now a dramatist, and an explorer of the drama created in his own mind.

Ishmael's function will be studied further shortly, but we must now examine how Melville constructs a transitional chapter, "Queen Mab," to signal a change in Ishmael's function and in the structure of the novel. "Queen Mab" illustrates Ishmael's new role as a dramatist who stages an interlude in which the conversation between Stubb and Flask is related; this new role grants Ishmael an omniscient point of view which allows him to present to the reader a conversation of which he was not a participant. Ishmael's new role also suggests a change in the structure of the novel; as Ishmael recedes from the scene to present an interlude, so will he recede from the scene of the action to present the Ahab drama. Thus, "Queen Mab" is a transitional chapter, an interlude in which Stubb recounts his dream about Ahab. Just as a dream in a movie fades in to suggest a change, e.g., from reality to imagination, so Stubb's dream in "Queen Mab" fades in at
the end of "The Pipe" and fades out before "Cetology."

Even without a detailed autotelic analysis of Melville's manipulation of language, the reader can almost see the curtain fall at the end of "The Pipe" and rise again, after the "Queen Mab" interlude, at the beginning of "Cetology."

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

Chapter 31

Queen Mab

Next morning Stubb accosted Flask.

"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. . . . But now comes the greatest joke of the dream, Flask. While I was battering away at the pyramid, a sort of badger-haired old mer-man, with a hump on his back, takes me by the shoulders, and slews me round. 'What are you 'bout?' says he. . . . I was frightened. . . . But, somehow, next moment I was over the fright. 'What am I about?' says I at last. 'And what business is that of yours, I should like to know, Mr. Humpback? Do you want a kick?' By the lord, Flask, I had no sooner said that, than he turned round his stern to me, bent over, and dragging up a lot of seaweed he had for a clout--what do you think I saw?--why thunder alive, man, his stern was stuck full of marlinspikes, with the points out. . . . 'I guess I won't kick you, old fellow.' 'Wise Stubb,' said he, 'wise Stubb;' . . . I thought I might as well fall to kicking the
pyramid again. But I had only just lifted my foot for it, when he roared out, 'Stop that kicking!' . . . 'lets argue the insult. Captain Ahab kicked ye, didn't he?' . . . you were kicked by a great man, and with a beautiful ivory leg, Stubb. It's an honor; I consider it an honor. . . . "

"What d'ye think of that now, Flask? ain't there a small drop of something queer about that, eh? A white whale--did ye mark that, man? Look ye--there's something special in the wind. Stand by for it, Flask. Ahab has that that's bloody on his mind. But, mum; he comes this way."

Chapter 32

Cetology

Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities. Ere that come to pass; ere the Pequod's weedy hull rolls side by side with the barnacled hulls of the leviathan; at the outset it is but well to attend to a matter almost indispensable to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow.

"The Pipe" comes to an end with a highly tense scene--tense because the scene reflects Ahab's tormented soul. Ahab symbolically breaks whatever tie he had with humanity by tossing his pipe into the sea, and the sentences describing the scene seem to "hiss." To intensify the scene, Melville uses alliteration (p, s, sh), consonance ("t" sounds in "tossed," "hissed," "instant," "shot," "slouched," "hat," "paced"), phonetic intensives (cacophonous plosives, fricatives, affricates), and highly explosive monosyllables.
This explosive language sharply contrasts with Stubb's tension-free colloquial style in the interlude, whose opening is set off by the title "Queen Mab," an allusion to Mercutio's speech on dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*, and by its casual "Next morning Stubb accosted Flask." Stubb's discursive and playful language is appropriate to an interlude; moreover, what happens in his dream, as in most dreams, is not very intelligible to him; yet, his dream is highly reflective and allusive, e.g., in Stubb's reference to "pyramid" and "Humpback," and vaguely prophetic, implying that Ahab the pyramid and Moby Dick the Humpback should not be messed around with. Insofar as Humpback's lecture on Ahab makes the "dream-interlude" comical, it is a comic version of the conflict between Ahab and Stubb; but it also forebodes the mystery of Moby Dick, "the Humpback," and the impending danger that awaits the encounterers of his "marlingspikes."

The curtain rises in "Cetology" with the majestic voice of the narrator: "Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities." The opening sentences, with the poetic "deep" and "unshored, harborless immensities," with the iambic cadence, with the balanced structure, and with the imagery of the giant leviathan, once again sharply contrast with Stubb's colloquialism in "Queen Mab." The
sharp transition from "Queen Mab" to the ensuing "Cetology," along with the contents of "Cetology," suggests another new dimension being incorporated into the book: a new dimension in which Ishmael, who has just become a dramatist, will be also an explorer of metaphysical realms, and as such he will be the presiding consciousness of the novel. And in "Cetology" (32) and "The Specksynder" (33), Melville continues to develop this new dimension. Thus "Queen Mab," a by-product of the pressure of Melville's evolving ideas on the structure of the book, has three functions: it serves as comic relief, it reflects on Ahab and Moby-Dick, and it maintains the coherence of structure by providing one of the key transitional chapters in Moby-Dick.

Before the structure of the novel can be explored, the function of Ishmael must be studied further, for Ishmael's development, along with the cluster of chapters studied above, shows how in the gestation of the book the addition of the new dimensions of the present version to the earlier version is made possible. Also, one must keep in mind that Moby-Dick is Ishmael's book although it is about Ahab and Moby Dick, and that Melville takes pains to develop Ishmael's character as much as he does in order to dramatize Ahab's tragedy. Immediately after establishing Ishmael as a fictional character ("Call me Ishmael."),
Melville begins to portray him as a complex character with complex functions. Ishmael is a romantic adventurer pursuing "the image of the ungraspable phantom of life," because he feels a "damp, drizzly November" in his soul. He pretends to be a determinist, yet he accepts his fate with an ironic sense of humor; "though he cannot tell why . . . those stage managers, the Fates, put him down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage," he accepts his fate as part of the human condition: "Who aint a slave? Tell me that." Throughout the novel, Ishmael is "quick to perceive a horror," but always finds a way to be "social with it," for, as he philosophizes, "it is but well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in" (p. 16). Thus, his wry, ironic sense of humor and his perceptive, philosophic mind shown here and sustained throughout the novel help to stabilize the center of consciousness, especially when the narrative point of view shifts from the first person to the omniscience, and help to qualify him as the narrator, the dramatist, and the philosopher.

Ishmael has a double (even triple, at times) consciousness; as the narrator he reminisces the past events in which he was a participant ("I, Ishmael, was one of the crew."); as the dramatist he re-creates them as if they were happening now; and often, as he reflects upon his
past events a host of philosophical thoughts emerge in his digressive and/or expository chapters. Melville shows Ishmael's double consciousness partly through the tone and style in which the events are described, but mainly through his manipulation of the tenses. When Ishmael is recounting his experience, the events are delineated in the past tense as they are viewed through the consciousness of young Ishmael who took part in them. When he presents the dramatic material and when he provides pertinent c etological information or reflects upon the event being described, the details are presented in the present tense as they are being created in the mind of the sophisticated narrator and the dramatist whose consciousness is closer to that of Melville than that of young Ishmael. This is why the aesthetic distance between Ishmael and Melville appears to be blurred at times. Ishmael's story, then, is not only a record of his past experience, but also a record that is in the process of being made; an account of his present experience, whose meaning is patiently explored as the story progresses.

Ishmael's creative consciousness is demonstrated from the beginning of the novel, when the tenses shift freely until the distinction between past and present seems to dissolve in his synthesizing mind.
Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulat­ing the circulation. . . . (p. 12)

Ishmael's creative consciousness also illustrates the work­ings of his omniscient mind. At the beginning of "The Street" (6), Ishmael tells us that he was taking his "first daylight stroll through the streets of New Bedford," but at the end of the Chapter he describes the summer scene of the town, which he could not have possibly seen during the visit being referred to.

In summer time, the town is sweet to see; full of fine maples—long avenues of green and gold. And in August, high in air, the beautiful and bountiful horse-chestnuts, candelabra-wise, proffer the passer-by their tapering upright cones of congregated blossoms. So omnipotent is art; which in many a district of New Bedford has superinduced bright terraces of flowers upon the barren refuse rocks thrown aside at creation's final day. (pp. 38-39)

In his creative consciousness, his first and subsequent visits are fused; Ishmael can recall his memories simulta­neously, so that he can describe the sweet summer scene of New Bedford while recounting his visit to the town in bleak winter. Thus, the scene of New Bedford, the tragedy of Ahab, or whatever Ishmael deals with are not only the serial records of his memory, but the products of his synthesizing mind. It is by means of this synthesizing
mind that Ishmael breaks through the limitations of first person narrative to enter into the minds of Ahab and other characters.?

Ishmael's creative imagination and his sophisticated mind also qualify him as a tragic dramatist; furthermore, his dramatic method of presenting Ahab's tragedy is anticipated in his narrative technique. From the beginning, and throughout the novel, Ishmael's narrative stance is often "presentative"; Ishmael draws the reader into the scene being described so that the reader may feel himself present at the scene and spoken to personally.

But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand--miles of them--leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets and avenues--north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue in the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them thither? (p. 13)

... Look there! that chap strutting round the corner. He wears a beaver hat and swallow-tailed coat, girdled with a sailor-belt and sheath-knife. Here comes another with a sou'-wester and a bombazine cloak. (pp. 37-38)

Ishmael's later stage directions such as "Enter Ahab: Then, all" are consistent with his earliest narrative stance, "Look there!" As if to say "Look there! Here
comes Ahab. Let's listen to him," Ishmael steps out of
the scene being dramatized (especially during his conspic-
uous absense from the soliloquy sequence), so that the
characters in the scene can reveal themselves. Ishmael,
however, is not only the dramatist but a commentator and
a philosopher as well. A television news commentator
might present on-the-spot scenes of a crucial event, let
the characters involved speak for themselves, and comment
on the event before or after presenting the scenes. So,
too, Ishmael explores the meaning of the conflict between
Ahab and Moby Dick immediately following the dramatic
chapters (36-40).

Viewed in this light, Ishmael is not a mere narrative
device Melville manipulates to convey his metaphysical
ideas. He is the presiding consciousness of the novel;
and his consciousness widens as the novel develops. It is
through his consciousness that the narrative, dramatic,
and expository elements of Moby-Dick become fused as an
organic whole. The narrative provides the framework, an
epic story of the whaling voyage; the dramatic portrays
Ahab's tragic dilemma and his heroic defiance of the in-
effable forces of the universe; the expository presents
the philosophical content of the epic drama and its raison
d'être. Structurally, the novel can be further analyzed
into five major parts based on their dominant mode of
presentation (narrative, dramatic, expository) and their themes and functions: 1) the narrative beginning (Chapters 1-21); 2) the first dramatic section (22-46); 3) the expository center (47-97); 4) the second dramatic section (98-131); 5) the narrative ending (132-Epilogue). This division of the book is illustrated in the following diagram; vertical lines indicate the approximate length of each part, and dotted lines show how certain themes and chapters function as structural joints.
These narrative, dramatic, and expository sections do overlap and intermingle, but in each part Melville tends to use one mode of expression more conspicuously than the others to fulfill his purpose. For instance, Part Two is built around two clusters of dramatic chapters: Chapters 29-31 and Chapters 36-40. The climactic chapter, "The Quarter-Deck" (36), is balanced by two major expository chapters, "Moby Dick" (41) and "The Whiteness of the Whale" (42), yet all the expository chapters in this part are subordinated to the dramatic chapters. For "The Quarter-Deck" dramatically reveals the metaphysical basis of Ahab's tragic dilemma; "Moby-Dick" and "The Whiteness of the Whale" comment on his dilemma; the former shows the history of Ahab's conflict with Moby Dick, and the latter explores the metaphysical significance of the White Whale. Part Four is also built around a cluster of dramatic chapters: 119-123. The gams, narrative chapters, weave in and out, not just to tighten the narrative structure of the novel but to reveal Ahab's progressive alienation from humanity, which is part of his spiritual defiance of God climaxed in "The Candles" (119). The narrative chapters, therefore, assume subordinate roles in this part. Furthermore, "The Quarter-Deck" and "The Candles" serve as organic joints, thematically and structurally. Thematically, "The Quarter-Deck" reveals the metaphysical
and theological basis of Ahab's spiritual dilemma dramatized in "The Candles." Structurally, these two chapters, deployed as they are at strategic points (e.g., in the middle of Part Two and Part Four, respectively), occupy the two climactic points of the novel like the focal pillars of an oval edifice.

"The Whiteness of the Whale" (42) and "The Try-Works" (96) also function as structural joints. Thematically, the former serves as an introduction to Ishmael's cetology as it examines the Lockian, Kantian, and Ahabian assumptions about appearance and reality. As Ishmael is "quick to perceive a horror," he becomes frightened by the implications of Ahab's assumptions about the White Whale. To overcome ("to be social with") the horror of these implications, Ishmael proceeds to explore them in his cetology chapters (Part Three). And on the basis of his findings from the cetological exploration, he formulates his own philosophy in "The Try-Works." Thus, Ishmael's metaphysical exploration moves from "The Whiteness of the Whale" (Introduction) through his cetology (the main body) to "The Try-Works" (Conclusion). It is through these chapters that Part Two (the first Dramatic Section) and Part Three (the Cetological Center) are thematically linked. The burden of the following sections of this chapter, then, is to show how the dramatic and metaphysical
sections of the novel are formulated, how they are related to each other, and how they are fused by organic joints.
Notes

Chapter Three  The Structure of Moby-Dick

I. Loomings: The Development of Ishmael's Function and the Evolution of the Structure of the Novel


2. What is more odd structurally than Peleg's failure to mention the White Whale is Ishmael's complete ignorance, shown during his conversation with Peleg, of "the great whale," which he claims in "Loomings" is his chief motive for going to sea.

3. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), pp. 22-23. Whereas Stewart's theories about the supposed revisions of Moby-Dick are based on his study of internal evidence, Vincent's hypotheses about the revisions are based on his external evidence.


5. The term "synthesizing" is used in the Wordsworthian sense; Wordsworth's creative process (or "the imagination"), like Ishmael's, often begins with and is nourished by his sensory experience.

6. The pipe "is meant for sereneness" and pleasure, as Ahab suggests, but it should be also compared to Queequeg's tomahawk-pipe, a symbol of friendship, which soothes his soul, and the calumet, a symbol of peace.

7. Although Ishmael was not originally intended as the omniscient narrator of the novel, Melville might have been aware of Ishmael's potentiality as a synthesizing narrator, as shown in the early chapters. And it is probable that the shift in Ishmael's function is made possible, partly because of the author's awareness of his potentiality.

8. Ishmael's conspicuous, and consistent absence from the soliloquy sequences substantiate the assumption that
Melville's artistic intention is to establish Ishmael as the presiding consciousness of the novel through which the drama unfolds. If Melville had formally assumed the dramatist's role, as some critics tend to think, and if Ishmael were one of the characters in the drama, then it is most likely that Ishmael would have appeared in the dramatic scenes and the soliloquy sequences.
II

Melville's Conception of Ahab's Tragedy
and
The Dramatic Section (I)

In the preceding section, we examined how in the gestation of the novel the addition of the new dimensions of the present version to the earlier version is made possible; now we will study the conceptual and structural development of Ahab's tragedy in order to explore those new dimensions. Since a great deal has been said about the dramatic chapters in the novel, e.g., their non-novelistic form, their intrusion into the narrative sequence, their meaning, their Shakespearean qualities, this section will confine itself to the following questions: how is Ahab's tragedy conceived, and how is it revealed in the Quarter-Deck sequence? Despite the pervasive Shakespearean influence on Ahab's tragic character—his tragic morbidness, his tragic greatness, and his divine reason in madness, Ahab's tragic dilemma is peculiarly an American dilemma. Especially the fact that Melville chose a Quaker as his tragic protagonist strongly suggests that he intended to explore the cultural sources of Ahab's dilemma in order to create an American tragedy.
If this assumption is correct, then Ishmael's description of "the peculiarities of the Quaker" in "The Ship" (Chapter 16) provides an insight into how Melville might have conceived Ahab's character, and how he might have found the ingredients of "noble tragedies."

So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names--a singularly common fashion on the island--and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin, voluntary, and confiding breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language—that man makes one in a whole nation's census—a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies. Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. For all men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidness. Be sure of this, 0 young ambition, all mortal greatness is but disease. . . . (p. 71)

The concept of "a mighty pageant creature, . . . not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, . . . with a globular brain and a ponderous heart, . . . a half wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. . . . formed for noble
tragedies" appears to be Shakespearean. But this silhouette of a tragic character is only the artistic mold into which Ahab's "unoutgrown peculiarities"—the sources of his tragic dilemma—are poured. As Captain Peleg suggests, Ahab was "a queer man"; he was a curious American paradox: a man of superior natural force, who was brought up in his cloistered Quaker religion but acquired the "daring and boundless" spirit of the frontier in his subsequent life. Even more peculiar about Ahab was the fact that in his character the "unoutgrown peculiarities" of his traditional Calvinism and untraditional Antinomianism were strangely blended, yet remained as the source of his spiritual dilemma. The passage studied here in itself does not indicate that "traditional Calvinism" is one of the sources of Ahab's dilemma, but the conflict between his Antinomianism and his residual Calvinism is revealed throughout his key chapters: the conflict between his audacious Antinomian faith united with the daring spirit of the frontier ("If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? . . . Who's over me? Truth has no confines" in "The Quarter-Deck") and his unshakable fatalism ("I am the Fate's lieutenant . . . we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike"); "I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise" in "The Symphony").
Historically, Antinomianism is considered as a pre-Quaker movement. Both Antinomianism and Quakerism developed from "a movement which had long been maturing in Puritan circles... from a common belief that the union of the elect with the Holy Ghost is immediate and intimate." It can be suggested then that since Quakerism is an Antinomian belief that flowered out of Puritan soil, there might be an inherent conflict in Quakerism between its Antinomian belief and its residual Calvinism. For the Puritan, Salvation is predestined and revealed to the elected few, and as Perry Miller suggests, predestination takes place in "the inmost recesses of divine wisdom," to which man does not have direct access. For the Antinomian, God communes by His Holy Spirit with all men; he believed that man had immediate access to a private source of Truth, since he found Truth in the Divine Light shining in his own soul as he spoke with God. From the orthodox Puritan point of view, then, the Quakers were heretics; Quakerism was "sheer anarchic individualism, unrestrained, unmitigated, unabashed." The conflict between these two irreconcilable beliefs reached a tragic dimension in the New England Colonies as recorded in the annals of American history as well as in Hawthorne's fiction (e.g., "The Gentle Boy"). Even in The Scarlet Letter, there is a conflict between Hester's Antinomian belief in the sanctity of the individual and Dimmesdale's Calvinist doctrine (or his Puritan
conscience) that a sinner cannot "will" his own redemption, that he can be saved only through the grace of God—"Election." There is also a conflict in Hester between her belief that what she did "had a consecration of its own" (Chapter XVII) and her conscience which told her "that her deed had been evil" (Chapter VI), although Hawthorne does not develop this conflict into a tragic dilemma. In light of these historical facts, it can be assumed that Melville observed that the inherent conflict found in the Puritan mind could also be found in the Quaker mind. He might have observed too that Ahab's dilemma would reflect the difficulty his age faced in reconciling Calvinism, which insisted on Original Sin and predestination, and the daring spirit of America (Antinomianism, transcendentalism, the frontier spirit), which asserted "free will."

Ishmael reveals the metaphysical basis of Ahab's spiritual dilemma in the Quarter-Deck speech, and he reveals the cultural significance of Ahab's inner conflict through his soliloquy and through his conflict with Starbuck and Stubb. Structurally, there is a general movement in the Quarter-Deck sequence from Ahab's "intellectual exasperation" to his "spiritual exasperation," and from his external conflict with Starbuck to his inner conflict. This movement indicates that Melville's artistic intention was to dramatize the metaphysical basis of Ahab's dilemma, and that Melville intended Ahab's external conflict to mirror
his inner conflict. As Ishmael steps aside to present
Ahab's drama, we can "see" it unfold just as he would see
it unfold in his own imagination.

"Vengeance on a dumb brute!" cried Starbuck,
"that simply smote thee from blindest instinct!
Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing,
Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous."

"Hark ye yet again,—the little lower layer.
All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard
masks. But in each event—in the living act,
the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still
reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its
features from behind the unreasoning mask. If
man will strike, strike through the mask! How
can the prisoner reach outside except by thrust­ing
through the wall? To me, the white whale
is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I
think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough.
He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous
strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing
it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I
hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the
white whale principal, I will wreak that hate
upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man;
I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could
the sun do that, then could I do the other;
since there is ever a sort of fair play herein,
jealousy presiding over all creations. But not
my master, man, is even that fair play. Who's
over me? Truth hath no confines. Take off thine
eye! So, so; thou redenest and palest; my
heat has melted thee to anger-glow. But look
ye, Starbuck, what is said in heat, that thing
unsays itself. There are men from whom warm
words are small indignity. I meant not to
incense thee. Let it go . . . (Aside) Something
shot from my dilated nostrils, 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, lowly. (p. 144)

Metaphysically, Ahab's Quarter-Deck speech might be consid­
ered as a commentary on the validity of the transcendental
philosophy of Carlyle and Emerson. In Sartor Resartus,
for instance, Carlyle claims that all visible objects are emblems of ideas or spirits, and that all objects are windows through which one can perceive the infinitude. Emerson expresses a similar view in *Nature*. Ahab asserts, as Emerson and Carlyle do, that man's mind has the power to perceive the ultimate reality behind appearances. For Ahab, however, "all visible objects" are not "windows" through which "the transparent eyeball" (Emerson) can perceive the infinitude; they are "masks" molded by "that inscrutable thing," an agent of God, in order to conceal His "inscrutable malice." Through his encounter with Moby Dick, Ahab has discovered that there is a discrepancy between the exteriors of nature and its interiors: behind the benign and serene appearance of Moby Dick is ferocity, malice, and cunning. And since it is not conceivable that such intelligent cunning as demonstrated by the White Whale is inherent in the "dumb brute" itself, Ahab infers that there must be some unknown force that controls the whale from without. For Ahab, therefore, Moby Dick is a symbol which reveals that all visible things are nothing more than dumb, unreasoning masks placed up by "some unknown but still reasoning thing" that controls the universe. Hence, he must "strike, strike through the mask" to discover what is behind it.

Ahab's defiant ontological views have several theological implications, and a study of these implications
will help us understand the sources of his tragic dilemma as well as the ways in which his dilemma is dramatized. As Ahab's inner conflict manifests itself in the texture of his language shown in "The Quarter-Deck" speech and in "Sunset," the reader gradually becomes aware that Ahab's metaphysical problem is inherently connected with his "unoutgrown peculiarities." Ahab's "bold and nervous lofty language" reveals the pervasive influence of the Puritan mind that forces Ahab to see the visible world as the manifestation of the spiritual: "In each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask." "His religious sense is as strenuous and importunate as that of the first generations of Puritans and, like them, it is impossible for him not to see all things as the manifestations of a divine will at work in creation." Thus, in so far as Ahab's Antinomian faith is a part of his Puritanic disposition to see the visible world as a manifestation of the spiritual, there is no conflict between his residual Calvinism and his Antinomian faith. Yet, his Calvinistic and Antinomian conceptions of Divine revelation are irreconcilable as shown earlier, and his discovery of his perceptual limitation finally triggers the inherent conflict between the two. When Ahab discovers the "wall" between himself and God, his Antinomian faith is severely jolted, and his
fatal discovery renews his Calvinistic sense of Original Sin: man, predestined to be a sinner, is incapable of reaching the spiritual. The intruder of "the inmost recesses of divine wisdom ... will enter a labyrinth from which he will find no way to depart." Ahab now feels that he is a prisoner surrounded by the "walls." Yet, even as he feels the burden of Original Sin, his audacious Antinomian spirit would strike through the "wall": "If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?" Instead of submitting to the human limitation, Ahab "wills" to transcend it by sheer defiance, asserting man's freedom and his infinite capacity to comprehend the ultimate truth: "truth has no confines." Thus Ahab battles against his Calvinistic sense, but he deeply feels that he can never "thrust through the wall." Hence his tragic dilemma, and hence his heroic defiance.

As the Ahabian drama moves from the Quarter-Deck scene to "Sunset," Ahab's soliloquy provides a further insight into the cultural significance of his tragic dilemma.

What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad—Starbuck does; but I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and—Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer. Now, then, be the prophet and the fulfiller one. (p. 147)
Ahab is exasperated because he feels that he is deluded by God, because he believes that he was struck by a god of vengeance who bullies humanity. Refusing to fall down and worship Him, Ahab defiantly claims that he will do what he has willed. However, Ahab’s residual Calvinism persistently reminds him that his pursuit of the White Whale is blasphemous, and that his fate is predestined. If his destiny is prearranged by the will of Providence, he has no power to avert it, and this awareness of his tragic struggle against God "maddens his madness." Yet, just as Ahab does not yield to his human limitation, he does not succumb to his fate: "I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismem­berer." And as his perverted will struggles against his deep-seated Calvinistic determinism, Ahab claims that he can be "the prophet." This claim is again characteristical­ly an Antinomian assertion. For the Antinomian and the Quaker, the true minister "was a prophet who spoke under a moving and by a power beyond his human powers, and so was, in fresh and living ways, a revealer of present truth, and not a mere interpreter of a past revelation." 10

The determination with which Ahab asserts his "will" shows that his Antinomian spirit unites with the spirit of the frontier in his defiance of God. Ahab’s frontier spirit manifests itself not only in his one-track mindedness in pursuing the White Whale but also in his colloquial language.
I laugh and hoot at ye, ye cricketplayers, ye pugilists, ye deaf Burkes and blinded Bendigoes! I will not say as school boys do to bullies,—Take some one of your own size; don’t pommel me! No, ye’ve knocked me down, and I am up again; but ye have run and hidden. Come forth from behind your cotton bags! I have no long gun to reach ye. Come, Ahab’s compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. . . . The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. (p. 147)

As Ahab’s unyielding spirit wages a tragic battle against his unfair God, his language becomes predominantly colloquial: "hoot," "knocked me down," "cotton bags," and "ye," the colloquial form of "thee." And interestingly enough, as his colloquial language seeps through the passage, it becomes identified with one of the distinctive characteristics of the frontier, the determination of those who won the West and built the railroads: "The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails."

The ensuing soliloquy sequence takes us inside the minds of Starbuck and Stubb to show how their reactions to Ahab’s "heaven-insulting purpose" define their cultural traits; therefore, in their own reaction, they become a reflector and/or foil to Ahab. Starbuck, for instance, represents the Puritanic sense of values; he is an embodiment of orthodox beliefs as he shows his humility before God, exacting obedience to Him. Like Gabriel, a Shaker zealot in the Jeroboam story, Starbuck fears that it is blasphemous to probe into the mystery of the universe; for the dumb brute is a manifestation of God, and hence a part
of Him. His Puritan conscience forces him to object to Ahab's pursuit of the White Whale, but the same conscience that compels him to obey God also compels him to obey his Captain:

My soul is more than matched; she's overmatched; . . . I see his impious end; but feel that I must help him to it. Will I, nill I, the ineffable thing has tied me to him; tows me with a cable I have no knife to cut. (p. 148)

It can be suggested then that Ahab's conflict with Starbuck reflects his conflict with his Puritan conscience, which "maddens" his "madness." Just as Ahab must overcome his own Puritan conscience to fulfill his blasphemous "will," so must he subdue Starbuck's objection to the pursuit of the White Whale. Stubb, on the other hand, is Starbuck reversed, as Ahab suggests. Stubb shows some of the characteristics of the frontier: he is "happy-go-lucky" and reckless. Yet, he is intellectually too deficient to represent Ahab's frontier spirit. Therefore, Ahab's conflict with Stubb does not reflect his inner conflict as his conflict with Starbuck does, but rather it indicates that Stubb serves as a foil to Ahab. In fact, Stubb is perverse in his insistence on viewing life comically, almost as perverse as Ahab is in his tragic vision of life: "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" (p. 149).
Finally, the soliloquy sequence comes to an end with "Midnight, Forecastle," which provides a backdrop for the "Quarter-Deck" drama. The wild revelry shows the reactions of the crew, who represent, not Americans exclusively, but humanity in general. Significantly enough, the wild scene shows that to the crew, Ahab's "heaven-insulting purpose" only brings chaos; the crew, like the captains encountered in the gams, do not grasp the meaning of Ahab's purpose, mainly because they are spiritually deficient, but perhaps partly because Ahab's spiritual dilemma is largely an American dilemma. In light of the foregoing analyses, we might assume that the conflict between Ahab's trans-cultural traits became the source of his dilemma, yet, the implications of his dilemma are too broad to be identified with the specific cultural dilemmas of Melville's time. The extent to which Ahab carries his belief in determinism, however, reflects the difficulty Melville's age faced in reconciling Calvinism, which insisted on the Original Sin, and the "free will" which became the fermenting force in the evolving American society of the nineteenth century. The fact that Melville chooses Pip, a black American boy, as the chorus character, and that the Quarter-Deck sequence comes to an end with Pip's curtain speech on Ahab's "heaven-insulting purpose" provide a further clue to what might have been in Melville's prophetic mind.
"Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!" (p. 155)

Ahab is a fearless, godlike man. His boundless mind, daring spirit, and heroic determination exalt him above the common, but for the fulfillment of his "free will" he imposed his will on the crew. While Pip's remark only shows his fear of Ahab's blasphemous purpose and of those who blindly follow Ahab, it anticipates one of the implications of Ahab's tragedy. For Ahab's tragedy in the end becomes a searching commentary on what might happen if the daring spirit of America were to be driven by an ungodly man, which also is Ahab.

We have thus far studied the metaphysical, theological, and cultural implications of Ahab's tragic dilemma, and the ways in which the structure of the Quarter-Deck sequence reveal these implications. Thematically, the metaphysical implications of Ahab's "intellectual exasperation" are explored in Ishmael's cetology chapters, and Ahab's "spiritual exasperation" is climax ed in "The Candles," Dramatic Section (II). Therefore, the thematic relations between Dramatic Section (I) and the ensuing sections of the novel will become clear as we proceed to the following sections. Structurally, however, the general formation of Dramatic Section (I) must be briefly studied now, for it provides an overview of how Melville's conception of Ahab's
tragedy affects the structure of the first Dramatic Section, and how the thematic connection between the two Dramatic Sections is revealed by their structure. For instance, since Dramatic Sections (I) and (II) are symmetrically constructed to indicate their thematic relationship, the structural pattern of the first Dramatic Section will show how this pattern is repeated in the second Dramatic Section when we come to that section.

For the purpose of identifying the structural elements of the two dramatic sections (I and II), and for the purpose of illustrating the symmetrical structure of the two sections, the first Dramatic Section might be divided into three major parts: Protasis: the first part of the Dramatic Section in which the subject is proposed and the characters are introduced; Epitasis: the part of the Dramatic Section, in which the suspense of the drama is developed; Catastasis: the climax of the Dramatic Section.

Before the Dramatic Section begins, Ishmael painstakingly prepared the formal surface of the drama; he established the Pequod as the stage for tragedy: "A noble craft, but somehow a most melancholy! All noble things are touched with that" (p. 68). Then to be consonant with the classical concept of tragedy (e.g., the tragic protagonist must be a man of high position and of noble character), Ahab was referred to as "a grand, ungodly, god-like man"; "Ahab's above the common," and "Ahab has his humanities"
(pp. 76-77). When the Dramatic Section begins, "whaling," the subject, is introduced as a mighty human endeavor in "The Advocate" (Chapter 24), so that the subject becomes appropriate to a noble tragedy as it is given "all the honor and the glory." In the ensuing chapters, the Pequod's mates and harpooners are introduced as "knights and squires" (Chapters 26 and 27); they are elevated to become the personae of the Ahab drama. These chapters, thus, serve as the Protasis.

The Protasis is followed by "Ahab" (28), "Enter Ahab" (29), and "The Pipe" (30), which serve as the Epitasis. These chapters build suspense by dramatizing the mystery surrounding Ahab and his first appearance on the Pequod in order to make his Quarter-Deck speech climactic. But as mentioned in the preceding section of this chapter, Ishmael, before proceeding to the "The Quarter-Deck" in the Catastasis, further prepares the reader for the shifts that the novel is undergoing by intimating an extension in its structural and intellectual dimension (Chapters 31-33). Thus, "Queen Mab" (31), an interlude between the Epitasis and the Catastasis, serves, along with "Cetology" (32) and "The Specksynder" (33), as a transitional chapter. "Cetology" explores a metaphysical dimension by humorously demonstrating the difficulty of Ishmael's scientific research (classification of the infinite cetological data).
"The Speck Snyder" explains why all these structural maneuvers shown in the preceding pages cannot be overlooked: "God's true princes of the Empire," indifferent to the mundane power, ignore the worldly "forms and usages," but no worldly men, however intellectually superior they may be, "can [never] assume the practical, available supremacy over other men, without the aid of some sort of external arts and entrenchments" (p. 129). Ahab makes use of them to gain control of his crew. So, too, Ishmael as a "tragic dramatist" cannot fail to see the potent effects that his "external arts" would produce in elevating and depicting Ahab's tragic character.

Ishmael's artistic maneuvers shown in the preceding pages illustrate how firmly Melville's aesthetic sense was at the controls, and how carefully Melville stages the Quarter-Deck drama. The Quarter-Deck sequence is also carefully dovetailed by two major expository chapters: "Moby Dick" (41) and "The Whiteness of the Whale" (42), both of which are Ishmael's reflections on Ahab's tragic dilemma as the former reveals the history of Ahab's conflict with Moby Dick and the latter explores the ontological significance of the Whiteness of the White Whale. The fact that "The Whiteness of the Whale" follows the Quarter-Deck sequence suggests that Melville was aware of the difficulty of exploring Ahab's metaphysical problems in the dramatic chapters, which are suited for revealing the personal traits
of his characters, and hence, for revealing the cultural sources of Ahab's tragic character. Certainly Ahab gains in intensity by revealing his own dilemma instead of having Ishmael report it. Nevertheless, it is Ishmael who clarifies the ontological basis of Ahab's dilemma in "The Whiteness of the Whale"; and it is Ishmael who tests and explores Ahab's assumptions about the metaphysical significance of the White Whale in the oetology chapters. It can be suggested then that Ishmael's "The Whiteness of the Whale," being a commentary on Ahab's dilemma as well as an introduction to the ensuing oetology chapters, serves as an organic joint between the first Dramatic Section and the metaphysical center of the novel.
II. Melville's Conception of Ahab's Tragedy and the
Dramatic Section (I)

1. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Melville claims:

   The world is as young today, as when it was
   created; and this Vermont morning dew is as
   wet to my feet, as Eden's dew to Adam's.
   . . . we want no American Goldsmiths; nay,
   we want no American Miltons.

2. As Leon Howard points out in Herman Melville
   (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), there is a "curious
   resemblance between Melville's references to Ahab as
   a character and Coleridge's statement on Shakespeare:

   "One of Shakespeare's modes of creating charac-
   ters is to conceive any one intellectual or
   moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to
   place himself . . . thus mutilated or diseased,
   under given circumstances."

3. Rufus M. Jones, in The Quakers in the American
   Colonies (London, 1911), treats Antinomianism as a
   pre-Quaker movement, and identifies Antinomianism
   with Quakerism.


5. Frederick B. Tolles, Quakers and the Atlantic Culture

6. In "The Dramatic Chapters in Moby-Dick," Dan Vogel
   suggests that "Melville intended to portray the battle
   of Ahab against types of mankind—the hero vs. lesser
   men." (Nineteenth Century Fiction, XIII, December,
   1958, p. 241.) The conflict of characters might
   fulfill one of the formal requirements of tragedy,
   but it can hardly fulfill Melville's artistic in-
   tention in Moby-Dick.

All objects are as windows, through which the philosophic eye looks into infinitude itself. . . . All visible things are emblems; what you seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea, and body it forth . . . .


Ill

Ishmael and the Metaphysical Center

The first part of the drama is done; Ahab's tragic dilemma and its sources are dramatized; and now in his expository chapters, Ishmael "anatomizes" the White Whale, to test Ahab's metaphysical assumptions about it, to see if there is any cause in nature that makes it as malicious and as inscrutable as it appears to Ahab. Is Moby Dick a mystery that exists only in Ahab's demented mind, or can the metaphysical significance of the White Whale be substantiated so that his frenzied defiance of it can be explained reasonably? Thus, in "Moby Dick," immediately following the dramatic sequence, Ishmael shows the basis of Ahab's dilemma by factualizing the mystery of Moby Dick, by demonstrating how the facts and "supernatural surmisings" about the whale are fused to form its myth, and finally by explaining how Moby Dick caused Ahab's "intellectual and spiritual exasperations." Ishmael's supple, and now omniscient mind penetrates Ahab's consciousness and mirrors its contents as if seeing the White Whale swim before Ahab in his "frantic morbidness" as it becomes identified with "all evil."
His three boats stove around him, and oars and men both whirling in the eddies; one captain, seizing the line-knife from his broken prow, had dashed at the whale, as an Arkansas duellist at his foe, blindly seeking with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale. That captain was Ahab. And then it was, that suddenly sweeping his sickle-shaped lower jaw beneath him, Moby Dick had reaped away Ahab's leg, as a mower a blade of grass in the field. No turbaned Turk, no hired Venetian or Malay, could have smote him with more seeming malice. Small reason was there to doubt, then, that ever since that almost fatal encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; to whose dominion even the modern Christians ascribe one-half of the worlds; which the anolent Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil;--Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it. (pp. 159-160)

With the meaning of the fatal conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick clarified, Ishmael proceeds to formulate his own conception of Moby Dick: "It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me. But how can I
hope to explain myself here; and yet, in some dim random way, explain myself I must, else all these chapters might be naught." Ishmael was quick to perceive the horror of the whiteness of the whale as he was appalled by the metaphysical implications of Ahab's symbolic interpretation of the whale. Although Ahab and Emerson would disagree on what the world symbolizes, both see the world as a manifestation of the spiritual, and therefore, Ishmael correctly assumes that Ahab's interpretation of the White Whale is based on his Antinomian, or more broadly, transcendental belief that man's mind may transcend his sensory experience and thus reach spiritual reality, and that it is his symbolic interpretation that attributes evil to the whale.

Ahab's approach to his metaphysical problem is emotional, and his assumptions are primarily based on his intuition: "Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels" (p. 460). If Ahab can be called a Kantian because of his intuitive assumptions about appearance and reality, Ishmael can be called a Lockian because of his analytic and empirical approaches to phenomena. Ishmael has already demonstrated his analytic mind in "Cetology," and in the celebrated chapter on "The Whiteness of the Whale," he shows the immensity of his mind as he explores the psychological and ontological implications of Ahab's "fiery hunt" for Moby Dick. Just as the White Whale's inscrutable malice leads Ahab to his fiery hunt, so its appalling whiteness leads Ishmael
into a taxing analysis of the color white. However, as Ishmael examines the Lockian and Kantian assumptions about the color white, his own assumptions about the world become more and more Ahabian. This movement of Ishmael's mind might be considered a result of Ahab's influence, for he is still under Ahab's "wild mystical" influence at this point in the novel. But more important for the purpose of this study, this movement of Ishmael's mind from the Lockian and Kantian assumptions to the Ahabian assumptions illustrates Ishmael's own doctrine of perception. As Ishmael announced in "Loomings," the first step in becoming "social with" a horror is to perceive it. The way in which Ishmael analyzes the horror of the color white suggests that to perceive a horror is not only to become aware of it through the senses but also to apprehend all the metaphysical implications of it. Therefore, Ishmael does not blink the Ahabian assumptions about the world; he must come to grips with them in his own mind. The second step in becoming "social with" a horror is to familiarize it by analyzing and exploring its details provided by his perception. This is precisely what Ishmael does in his cetology chapters. In "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael "perceives" the terrifying implications of Ahab's assumptions about the world; in his cetology chapters he explores them; and finally in "The Try-Works," he formulates his own assumptions about the world based on the findings from his
exploration. The purpose of this section, then, is to show how Ishmael's doctrine of perception dictates his metaphysical exploration.

The analysis of the color white begins with what appears to be an application of the Lockian theory of association; then it proceeds to the Kantian theory of "Transcendental Aesthetic" before examining the ontological implications of the Ahabian assumptions about the world. The color white is ambiguous because of its associations with both benignity and malignity, its elusive, phantom-like appearance, and the disparity between its appearance and reality. "Whiteness" might evoke a sensation of horror and ghostliness suggested by the white bear of the poles, the white shark of the tropics, or the haunting whiteness of Goney. Or it may remind us of the marble pallor of the dead: "from that pallor of the dead, we borrow the expressive hue of the shroud in which we wrap them. Nor even in our superstitions do we fail to throw the same snowy mantle round our phantoms" (p. 166). But the horror the color evokes in our minds is not caused by its malevolent associations; nor is it caused by its phenomenal character alone. It is caused in part by our imagination, which suggests something beyond its phenomenal character; it is in part the state of one's mind and the distressed circumstances under which one encounters the whiteness that makes this color appalling.
Thus in his analysis of the color white, Ishmael first moves from the Lockian theory of association to the Kantian theory of "Transcendental Aesthetic." In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant suggests that since all qualities and all relations of objects are perceived through the subjective form of our senses, "it remains completely unknown to us what objects may be by themselves and apart from the receptivity of our senses." Furthermore, human perception is not only an association of sensations by contiguity in space and time, or by intensity of experience, but also an association of sensations determined by the purpose and the state of the mind. A myriad of stimuli enters our receptive organs everyday, but not all that call are admitted; only those selected by the mind can be molded into perceptions. The world as we perceive it, then, is a "constructed world"—constructed by the mind and the object—to which the mind contributes as much by its perception and molding processes as the object contributes by its stimuli. So, too, Ishmael hypothesizes that it might be the state of one's mind that makes the white joyful or appalling. Therefore, it is not the phenomenal character of white alone that makes the color appalling; the human mind also plays a part in attributing horror to the color just as Ahab projects the world's horror to the whale's hump.
Toward the end of the chapter, however, Ishmael suggests that there might be some unknown terror, some inscrutable malice, lurking in whiteness, and he uses a pseudo-empirical analogy to show the ineffable fright he has of the color: "the muffled rollings of a milky sea," "the bleak rustlings of the festooned frosts of mountains" and "the desolate shiftings of the windrowed snows of prairies . . . are as the shaking of that buffalo robe to the frightened colt!" (p. 169). All these phenomena intimate that "the visible spheres are formed in fright," and Ishmael's assumptions seem to concur with the Ahabian assumptions:

**Ishmael:** Though neither knows where lie the nameless things of which the mystic sign gives forth such hints; 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. (p. 169)

**Ahab:** To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. (p. 144)

Just as Moby Dick's outrageous strength and inscrutable malice suggest to Ahab that there is an unknown force operating behind the whale, so the ghostliness of a milky sea and the bleakness of frosty mountains suggest to Ishmael some unknown, invisible spheres formed in fright. The affinity between these two statements indicates that
Ishmael is still under the "mystical" influence of Ahab.

In the final paragraph, the purpose and all the implications of Ishmael's metaphysics in this chapter come into focus as Ishmael enumerates all the appalling effects of the metaphysical assumptions examined heretofore. In order to overcome the haunting influence of Ahab on his frightened mind, Ishmael intends to explore Ahab's assumptions; for, to overcome the appalling implications of Ahab's metaphysical problems, he must come to grips with them. Ishmael first ingeniously reduces the Kantian theory of "transcendental aesthetic" to nihilism. If "it remains completely unknown to us what objects may be by themselves and apart from the receptivity of our senses," it follows then that true nature of the whiteness of Moby Dick is ungraspable, for one cannot even ascertain the inherent quality of the color. What one knows about the color is an intuitive and/or empirical knowledge; although one may analyze its phenomenal character or its empirical essence, there is no way he can approach the absolute essence of the color itself—"the thing-in-itself." It is this uncertainty or "ind definiteness" that "shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind the thought of annihilation."

Ishmael then considers the horrifying implications of the Lockian theory of secondary qualities. If secondary qualities such as color are not inherent in substances, if
they are only appearances perceived by the mind of the observer, then all natural phenomena could be allurements that conceal their hidden interiors. Nature might paint herself in false colors as a harlot who puts on a false appearance to hide her true identity:

... all other earthly hues—every stately or lovely emblazoning—the sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; yea, and the gilded velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of young girls; all these are but subtile deceits, not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without; so that all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within; ... (pp. 169-170)

How then are we to distinguish between the implications of the Lockian theory and the implications of Ahab's assumptions about "all visible objects"?

... All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. (p. 144)

The way Ishmael's own assumption concurs with Ahab's intuitive knowledge of the world reveals the extent to which Ishmael becomes immersed in the Ahabian view. Ishmael frightens himself in order to "perceive"; in fact he frightens himself into exploring his metaphysical problems in his cetology chapters.

The shift in focus from Ahab to the cetology is not haphazard; Ishmael indicates one purpose of the shift in a transitional chapter, "Surmises": "that the full terror of
the voyage must be kept withdrawn into the obscure background (for few men's courage is proof against protracted meditation unrelieved by action); that when they stood their long night watches, his officers and men must have some nearer things to think of than Moby Dick." But that the structural function of the cetological chapters is more than to provide an interlude for the crew and the reader becomes clear in the following chapter, "The Mat-Maker." Appropriately enough, in a dreamy atmosphere ("so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea") Ishmael weaves his metaphysical thread into the whaling mat:

I was the attendant or page of Queequeg, while busy at the mat. As I kept passing and repassing the filling or woof of marline between the long yarns of the warp, using my own hand for the shuttle, and as Queequeg, standing sideways, ever and anon slid his heavy oaken sword between the threads, and idly looking off upon the water, carelessly and unthinkingly drove home every yarn: I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermitting dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. There lay the fixed threads of the warp subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and that vibration merely enough to admit of the crosswise interblending of other threads with its own. This warp seemed necessity; and here, thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into these unalterable threads. Meantime, Queequeg's impulsive, indifferent sword, sometimes hitting the woof slantingly, or crookedly, or strongly, or weakly, as the case might be; and by this difference in the concluding blow producing a corresponding contrast in the final aspect of the
completed fabric; this savage's sword, thought
I, which thus finally shapes and fashions both
warp and woof; this easy, indifferent sword
must be chance—aye, chance, free will, and
necessity—no wise incompatible—all inter-
weavingly working together. The straight warp
of necessity, not to be swerved from its ulti-
mate course—its every alternating vibration,
indeed, only tending to that; free will still
free to ply her shuttle between given threads;
and chance, though restrained in its play within
the right lines of necessity, and sideways in
its motions modified by free will, though thus
prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules
either, and has the last featuring blow at
events. (p. 185)

Just as "Surmises" alludes to the artistic plan for the
book, so does "The Mat-Maker" shed light on his method of
approaching metaphysical problems. "Surmises" suggests
that although his main purpose is to pursue Moby Dick, Ahab
realizes he must let his crew "have food for their more
common, and daily appetites," so that "temporary interests
and employments should hold them healthily suspended for
the final dash." So, too, Ishmael, before plunging into
the "fathom-deep life" of the Leviathan to probe into the
mystery of the universe, must formulate a hypothesis that
will render "this strange mixed affair we call life" com-
prehensible, if not acceptable, to him and the reader.
Thus in "The Mat-Maker," Ishmael observes that human affairs
are primarily determined by "chance," and that there is no
way one can discern a systematic principle through natural
phenomena. Structurally, what may be called "The Mat-
"The Hyena," does not merely present Ishmael's view of life; it illustrates the characteristic way in which Ishmael presents his view. Instead of stating a view of life, Ishmael dramatizes a situation in which his philosophy can be applicable. "The First Lowering," for instance, demonstrates the perils of life with a movie-like vividness—a peril of life in which man is at the mercy of chance. In the critical moment of chasing a whale, Ishmael has to resign his life into the hands of Starbuck, who impetuously drives on to the whale in the teeth of a foggy squall. And when the boat capsizes in the midst of squalls, Ishmael is indeed at the mercy of chance. Then in "The Hyena," Ishmael characteristically elucidates the significance of the "mat-maker" philosophy, which he now facetiously calls "desperado philosophy":

There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. . . . And as for small difficulties and worries, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly, good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke. There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy; and with it I now regarded this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object. (pp. 195-196)
It can be observed then that the opening chapters of the cetological section illustrate the organic relation between Ishmael's philosophical preoccupations and the cetological material. The cetological chapters are often so constructed that Ishmael's philosophical assumptions evolve from his observations of the cetological material and are substantiated by it.

"The Mat-Maker" sequence, if the sequence can be rearranged, can also illustrate the workings of Ishmael's mind. Ishmael perceives a horror, a peril of life, in "The First Lowering"; he explores the significance of the "horror" until it becomes a metaphor in "The Mat-Maker," and until it is so tamed that it becomes a joke in "The Hyena." And this is the general mental procedure through which Ishmael comes to terms with his metaphysical problems in the cetology chapters. Ishmael the philosopher seeks the living, spouting whale, impatient with the stuffed and desiccated specimens, the inaccurate and misleading pictures offered ashore as symbols of reality. He explores the physical world in order to test the validity of the metaphysical assumptions examined in "The Whiteness of the Whale." First, he tests an intuitive vision: "with a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bits and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal
sight!" (p. 233) But he finds that even the mystery of the Leviathan, let alone "the fabled heavens," is beyond his mortal sight, as he discovers the truth which he knew only intuitively in "The Whiteness of the Whale." Nature is impenetrable because of its duality, the disparity between its appearance and reality.

Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. . . . . (p. 235)

Failing to reach what is beyond his mortal sight, Ishmael now attempts to read "the great book of nature," a "riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume," but only to find that he cannot even penetrate "the visible surface of the Sperm Whale." Its skin is "all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array" like "those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics," or like "the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi." (p. 260) Nor is he able to read the meaning of the "Battering-Ram." The Sperm Whale's head is a "dead, impregnable, uninjurable wall," "a dead, blind wall"--an inscrutable blankness (p. 284). And as he observes that the cranial and facial characteristics of the Sperm Whale are undecipherable, Ishmael
concludes that all sciences that attempt to penetrate beneath the surfaces of phenomena could be passing fictions.

Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable. If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can.

(pp. 292-293)

While struggling to come to terms with his inability to penetrate the surface of nature, Ishmael must also come to grips with his embattled skepticism about the observable behavior of nature. If God is benevolent and nature is the work of God, there should be no evil in the world. How do we, then, account for the "universal cannibalism of the sea"? This was precisely David Hume's dilemma as it was expressed by his character Philo in Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" This Human skepticism is so pervasive in Moby-Dick that even Queequeg remarks: "Queequeg no care what god made him shark ... wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin." But perhaps one of the most revealing expressions of skepticism anywhere is Ishmael's poetic rendition of
ineffable nature's way in "The Funeral": "Beneath the unclouded and mild azure sky, upon the fair face of the pleasant sea, wafted by the joyous breezes, that great mass of death floats on and on, till lost in infinite perspectives" (p. 262).

Life may be regarded as a negligible accident, a by-product of the cosmic process as shown in the mat-making. Whatever the ultimate cause of this cosmic process might be, Ishmael only finds that it is ineffable because its product, its phenomenon, is ambiguous, "blank," and above all, its "weaver" is indifferent to men: "the weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice" (p. 374). Man is but a foundling in the cosmos, abandoned by the forces that created him ("Where is the foundling's father hidden?" p. 406). How can one then come to grips with this deadly truth and still survive to fulfill his being? Unlike Ahab, Ishmael finally comes to terms with his inability to understand God's "design"; and as he does, he endeavors to find a way in which he can accept human limitations, so that he may, with his limited intelligence, find his way about in this inscrutable and indifferent universe. This attitude is suspiciously Lockian. In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, John Locke suggests that although our knowledge is limited, we are equipped well enough with abilities to fulfill our human endeavors:
we are fitted well enough with abilities to provide for the conveniences of living: these are our business in this world. ... it seems probable to me, that the simple ideas we receive from sensation and reflection are the boundaries of our thoughts, beyond which the mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot; nor can it make any discoveries, when it would pry into the nature and hidden causes of those ideas.

Ishmael's attitude toward the world, his acceptance of the limitations of human intelligence, and his buoyant philosophy can be best illustrated in "The Tail." Even after failing time and again to penetrate the surface of nature, Ishmael displays remarkable interests in the perceivable details of the tail. With a Lockian enthusiasm for the empirical details, he indulges in the description of the anatomical facts about the tail: its size, its shape, its power, its five principal motions. It is as though Ishmael revels in perceptions as the perceived details play around in his mind as if they were toys; it is as though he is reducing the mystery of the universe to perceivable details so that he can be "social with" them. Thus his conclusion becomes rather humorous than serious:

The more I consider this mighty tail, the more do I deplore my inability to express it. At times there are gestures in it, which, though they would well grace the hand of man, remain wholly inexplicable. In an extensive herd, so remarkable, occasionally, are these mystic gestures, that I have heard hunters who have declared them akin to Free-Mason signs and symbols; that the whale, indeed, by these methods intelligently conversed with the world. Nor are there wanting other motions of the whale in his general body, full of strangeness, and unaccountable to
his most experienced assailant. Dissect him how I may then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will. But if I know not even the tail of this whale, how understand his head? much more, how comprehend his face, when face he has none? 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. (pp. 317-318)

The fact that the human mind cannot even grasp the structure of the whale's tail is humorous enough, but the way in which Ishmael arrives at his conclusion after giving all the perceivable details about it shows that he is playful rather than serious. Ishmael has been unable to substantiate Ahab's claim that man can strike through the "mask," for man cannot even understand the whale's tail, let alone its head. Man cannot ascertain that "the invisible spheres are formed in fright," for whether the visible world is a "mask" or a "symbol," man cannot understand it, let alone what is behind it. The "mystic gestures" in the mighty tail of the whale may be "signs and symbols" by means of which "that intelligent, reasoning force" communicates with us. Yet the human mind cannot even grasp the structure of its tail. How can it ever understand the mystic gestures of "that unknown force"? Thus, Ishmael accepts his human limitation as a joke as he does the perils of life in "The Hyena." It is this sense of humor and this buoyant philosophy of life and the ability to become "social with" his sense of the horror of the world which enable him to with-
stand Ahab's morbid influence and his own skepticism.

Ishmael finally formulates his own view of the world in "The Try-Works," and the progression of his argument further reflects the development of his philosophic view. Ishmael argues, one must "look not too long in the face of the fire": "give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me." One must not brood too long, as Ahab did, over "Virginia's Dismal Swamp," "the universal cannibalism of the sea," and the inscrutable malice of the faceless White Whale. Yet, one must not refuse to see (Stubb) or refuse to accept (Starbuck) them; for "evil lies not merely in the artificial fire kindled by humans but also in the cosmos itself . . . nature is darkness and death as well as light and life." The sun does not hide the ocean, which is the dark side of this earth, and "which is two thirds of this earth": it does not hide "Virginia's Dismal Swamp, nor Rome's accused Campagna, nor wide Sahara, nor all the millions of miles of deserts and of griefs beneath the moon." Therefore, Ishmael exhorts, one must not be afraid to explore "the blackest gorges": "that mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him . . . cannot be true—not true, or undeveloped." Neither should he lose sight of the sunny spaces—light and life. Ideally, we should do what a Catskill eagle can do: "there is a Catskill eagle
in some souls that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces." Yet, even if we do not have a Catskill eagle in our souls, we should at least fly within the gorge as the eagle does, in order that we may not lose touch with the dark side of this earth and still not sink into darkness, for "that gorge is in the mountains; so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain." Ishmael's argument suggests his increasing awareness of the polar elements of life and his recognition that one's view of life must evolve from a continuous reconciliation of the opposite views if he is to fulfill his human responsibilities.

This reconciling attitude develops from Ishmael's recognition of the need for men to fulfill their responsibilities toward each other. As Ishmael comes to terms with the horrors of the world by being "social with" them, he attains a vision of the world in which men can fulfill their being by accepting their human responsibilities. Through his relationship with Queequeg, Ishmael comes to feel that if man is a foundling in this ineffable world, in which his fate is often determined by "chance" rather than by his own free will ("The Mat-Maker" sequence), and by the deeds of his inmates rather than by
his own, then he must accept his responsibility to others however "chance" may fall out ("The Monkey-rope"). With this recognition, Ishmael is able to conceive an "attainable felicity" from which Ahab progressively alienates himself. Thus accepting his human limitation and his human responsibility, Ishmael is able to move from his "visions of the night" toward his visions of "long rows of angels in paradise," and survives Ahab's haunting influence to offer an alternative to his demonic quest.

Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! 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. In visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti. (p. 349)
III. Ishmael and the Metaphysical Center

1. "The Whiteness of the Whale" was originally studied in my Master's thesis, "Appearance and Reality in the Later Works of Melville" (1964) under the direction of Professor Julian Markels, The Ohio State University.


8. It might be said that Ishmael's concept of human responsibility is tested through the post-*Moby-Dick* works: through Pierre's idealism, the lawyer-narrator's pragmatism in "Bartleby," the narrator's stoicism in "I and My Chimney," Israel's exile, the Confidence-man's quest for faith in men, finally in *Billy Budd*. 

104
The Dramatic Section (II) and Its Organic Relation to the Dramatic Section (I)

Ahab's intellectual and spiritual dilemmas are dramatized in the first Dramatic Section; his metaphysical assumptions are tested in the Cetology Section; now Ishmael proceeds to present the climax of Ahab's spiritual drama. Structurally, we have seen a movement in the first Dramatic Section from Ahab's external conflict to his inner conflict: the Quarter-Deck drama moves from his conflict with Starbuck to the soliloquy which reveals his inner conflict. We have also seen that Ahab's dramatic speech gradually shifts its focus from the metaphysical to theological implications. So, too, Ahab's drama moves from his intellectual exasperation to his spiritual exasperation as the novel moves from the first Dramatic Section to the second (e.g., even the object he defies changes from the "mask" and "wall" to the "spirit of fire"). As Ahab pursues Moby Dick to test his faith in the existence of a principle in nature that will make intelligible the White Whale's "intangible malignity," he too is pursued by the shadows.
of his Puritan conscience and his unshakable belief that he is fighting against his fate.

It becomes increasingly clear at the end of the first Dramatic Section that Ahab has already become a monomaniac and reached the point of no return when he announces his "demonic" purpose in "The Quarter-Deck." Yet Ahab progressively alienates himself from humanity, as shown through the gams, which will be briefly examined in the ensuing section; and his emotional defiance of God rises to its climax in "The Candles." In order to show the inherent connection between the two dramatic sections, Ishmael builds the second section symmetrically, following the pattern established in the first. The ensuing diagram will show that although the second Dramatic Section appears to be more loosely constructed than the first, since the gams weave in and out of the dramatic section to reveal Ahab's progressive alienation, its structure indicates a clear pattern as it follows the general order of the first Dramatic Section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The First Dramatic Section</th>
<th>The Second Dramatic Section</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protasis &quot;The Advocate&quot;</td>
<td>Protasis &quot;Stowing Down&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Knights and Squires&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The Doubloon&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epitasis &quot;Ahab&quot;</td>
<td>Interlude &quot;The Deck. Ahab and the Carpenter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Enter Ahab&quot;</td>
<td>Epitasis &quot;The Cabin. Ahab and Starbuck&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Pipe&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The Forge&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude &quot;Queen Mab&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The Dying Whale&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Whale-Watch&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Quadrant&quot;</td>
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As "The Advocate" and "Knights and Squires" serve as the Protasis in the first Dramatic Section, so do "Stowing Down and Clearing Up" and "The Doubloon" serve that function in the second. In "Stowing Down," Ishmael clears the deck, as it were, for the resumption of the Ahab drama; and he explains the process of "stowing down" the oil so that the reader can understand the later conflict between Ahab and Starbuck when, in "The Cabin," Ahab refuses to stop the ship and check the leaky casks. "The Doubloon" links the second Dramatic Section to the first by calling the roll of the dramatic personae introduced in "Knights and Squires"; by calling the reader's attention to the doubloon, "the White Whale's talisman," introduced in "The Quarter-Deck"; and by alluding to the insoluble problem of defining the symbolic meaning of Moby Dick: "some certain significance lurks in all things," yet the various reactions to the doubloon show that objects merely reflect the individual observer's mind. Furthermore, "The Doubloon" demonstrates once again Melville's aesthetic control of
the structure of the novel by reminding the reader that Ishmael is the implied author of the dramatic section. Just as Ishmael recedes from the dramatic sequence in the first Dramatic Section to assume the role of the implied dramatist, so does Ishmael recede again from the doubloon scene to assume the same role. Thus, Ishmael's conspicuous absence from the doubloon scene and from the ensuing "The Candles" sequence clearly indicates that Ishmael's "formal" role is kept activated in the structure of the novel by Melville's aesthetic purpose.

The interlude, "The Deck. Ahab and the Carpenter," which corresponds to "Queen Mab," is placed between the Protasis and the Epitasis, and serves as a prelude to the Ahab drama instead of as comic relief. The Epitasis consists of two separate chapters ("The Cabin. Ahab and Starbuck" and "The Forge") and a cluster of tension-building chapters that lead into the Catastasis. The falling action begins with "The Musket" and extends the drama through "The Log and Line," "The Deck," and "The Cabin."

As in the first Dramatic Section, the drama gradually moves from Ahab's external conflict to his inner conflict: from "Ahab and Starbuck" to "The Forge" to "The Dying Whale" to "The Quadrant," and finally to "The Candles." In defiance of his fate, Ahab has become a "demoniac," and now in defiance of God, he symbolically sells his soul to the
Devil in "The Forge" as he tempers (baptizes) his harpoon and barbs in the name of the Devil: "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" (p. 404).

He would fain believe in light and hence God, "yet dost thou, darker half, rock me with a prouder, if a darker faith"; for he cannot oust fact--his scar and mutilated leg, "the wall," "the dying whale." In "The Pipe," the first Dramatic Section, Ahab symbolically abandoned all human pleasure in order to pursue his "demonic" purpose by tossing the pipe into the sea; now in "The Quadrant," by destroying the quadrant he rejects science, in fact, all human endeavors to pursue truth, because they are not only futile but are betrayed by God. The quadrant reminds Ahab of the human limitation as it forces him to look heavenward for aid: "Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him, as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light."

Finally, Ahab's perverted will reaches a fantastic dimension in his satanic defiance of God in "The Candles."

"Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act so burned by thee, that to this hour I bear the scar; I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance. To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed. No fearless fool now fronts 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. Though but a point at best; whencesoe'er I came; wheresoe'er I go; yet while I earthily live, the queenly personality lives in me, and feels her royal rights. But war is pain, and hate is woe. Come in thy lowest form of love, and I will kneel and kiss thee; but at thy highest, come as mere supernal power; and though thou launchest navies of full-freighted worlds, there's that in here that still remains indifferent. Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee. ... Light though thou be, thou leapest out of darkness; but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee! ... Oh, thou magnanimous! now I do glory in my genealogy, but thou art but my fiery father; my sweet mother, I know not. Oh, cruel! what hast thou done with her? There lies my puzzle; but thine is greater. ... There is some unsuffusing thing beyond thee, thou clear spirit, to whom all thy eternity is but time, all thy creativeness mechanical. ... 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!" (pp. 416-417)

If Ahab's "Quarter-Deck" speech reveals the metaphysical basis of his spiritual conflict, this apostrophe to "fire" dramatizes Ahab's religious perversion. In challenging the doctrine of love, Deus caritas, Ahab boldly brings charges against the clear spirit of fire (the Holy Spirit, the burning bush of Sinai). To Ahab the scar he bears is a symbol of God's cruelty and vengeance: "To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed." Ungodly, god-like Ahab does not fall back on the Christian stoicism as Hamlet did upon his discovery of man's fate. With his perverted
Antinomian spirit and his demented Quaker head and his obsession for vengeance, Ahab would defy God by annihilating himself, by hurling himself against the spirit of fire: "I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee." He would even transcend God by asserting a Gnostic view: ² "There is some unsuffusing thing beyond thee, thou clear spirit, to whom all thy eternity is but time, all thy creativeness mechanical." There is a Supreme power beyond God, and therefore Ahab can defy Him; but paradoxically, Ahab knows that he cannot fight God. Ahab insists on free will; yet he knows too well that his fate is predestined. His perverted will and his perverted Antinomian spirit can be united in his defiance, but only in Satanic defiance, only by throwing himself into the hands of the Devil. And his Calvinism—his belief in determinism and in the omnipotent God—persists, despite his titanic effort to assert his will, in revenge on God. Here again lies Ahab's tragic dilemma.

Ahab's tragic dilemma cannot be resolved, but his conflict with Starbuck can; it is resolved in "The Musket" as Starbuck fails to seize the last opportunity to save himself and the crew from Ahab's demoniac venture; and there quickly ensues what might be termed the falling action of the second Dramatic Section: "The Log and Line," "Ahab and the Carpenter," and "The Cabin. Ahab and Pip." This extension of the dramatic section achieves two functions:
it shows Ahab's emotional reasons for his grievance, and it shows his awareness of his tragedy, thereby paving the way for "The Symphony." Moreover, these brief dramatic chapters, strategically placed as they are among the chapters of "omen" foreshadowing the final catastrophe, move the action toward the end: the narrative moves the external action; the dramatic chapters reveal Ahab's internal drama. In Pip's madness, for example, Ahab sees the truth whose glimpses made him demoniac--"all thy creativeness mechanical . . . ye frozen heavens . . . did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines." Thus, Ahab, who distrusts reason and science ("the dead, blind wall butts all inquiring heads at last"), turns to Pip's heaven's sense: "I do suck most wondrous philosophies from thee! Some unknown conduits from the unknown worlds must empty into thee!" (p. 433).

If Ahab's climactic defiance of the clear spirit of fire shows the extent of his madness, his dramatic coda has some sobering effects on his madness. As dramatized in "The Candles," and as shown in Ahab's mocking remark to the carpenter ("Thou art as unprincipled as the gods, and as much of a jack-of-all-trades"), Ahab's main grievance is that God is unprincipled and indifferent to human suffering. Ahab now shows that "man, though idiotic, and knowing not what he does, [is] yet full of the sweet things of love and gratitude"; his sympathy with Pip reveals his
humanities, which were only alluded to by Captain Peleg: "Come! I feel prouder leading thee by thy black hand, than though I grasped an Emperor's!" And Ahab's contact with Pip also gives him a chance to become aware, once again, of his madness. Ahab is tragically aware that he is so far gone "in the dark side of earth," and that he must leave Pip. As the last act of the Dramatic Section (II) "Ahab goes," bidding farewell to Pip: "God for ever bless thee; and if it come to that,—God for ever save thee, let what will befall" (pp. 436-437). And significantly enough, just as the first Dramatic Section came to an end with Pip's speech, so does the second, as if to suggest not only that the symmetry of the two dramatic sections is designed, but also that the end of the drama is at hand.
IV. The Dramatic Section (II) and Its Organic Relation to the Dramatic Section (I)

1. Although there are many allusions to Pagan gods in the novel, one might assume that Ahab is defying the Judaean-Christian God here not only in view of his Quaker background, but also in view of his apostrophe to "clear" fire. "Clear" in the sense of the Latin clarus (bright, brilliant, illustrious) suggests the Holy Spirit and the burning bush of Sinai.

V

Toward the Epilogue:

Dynamics of Structure and
Melville's Vision of the World

The final act of Ahab's drama begins with "The Symphony," in which Ahab momentarily recovers his inner harmony; and his tragic awareness reveals the depth of his noble mind. When the enchanted calm of the sea and innocence of the blue air seem to soothe Ahab's tormented soul, the sanity of his consciousness makes him aware of his tragic plight. Ahab has taken arms against "that intangible malignity which has been from the beginning": "He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it." Now Ahab feels the burden of the cross he has borne, the burden of humanity he has taken upon himself; for the more defiantly he pursues the White Whale, the more painfully he becomes aware of the futility of his pursuit as he deeply feels the tyranny of his Puritan sensibility: "I feel deadly faint, bowed, and
humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise." And he is aware of the price he has paid, and yet to pay, for his "demonic" venture:

"... God! God! God!—crack my heart!—stave my brain!—mockery! mockery! bitter, biting mockery of grey hairs, have I lived enough joy to wear ye; and seem and feel thus intolerably old? Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God. By the green land; by the bright hearth-stone! this is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and my child in thine eye. No, no; stay on board, on board!—lower not when I do; when branded Ahab gives chase to Moby Dick. That hazard shall not be thine. No, no! not with the far away home I see in that eye!" (p. 444)

For these few calm moments, the conflict between his "daring" will and his Calvinistic determinism appears to be at a standstill. But soon Ahab is swayed first by his fatalism as he begins to feel that his pursuit of Moby Dick is decreed and sanctioned by God. It seems to dawn on him that the demonic power that commands him against "all natural lovings and longings," and Ahab himself are both controlled by the same God, and therefore he must accept his fate—"the fate of all men.

"... Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself; but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I. By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in
Then gradually Ahab's inflexible will to be revenged on his "unprincipled" God asserts itself as his speech takes on a mocking tone implicating God in the murderous act of the Albicore: "Look! see yon Albicore! who put it into him to chase and fang that flying-fish?" And once again, under the benign appearance of nature lurks inevitable "death"— cruel reality.

"... Where do murderers go, man! Who's to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar? But it is a mild, mild wind, and a mild looking sky; and the air smells now, as if it blew from a far-away meadow; they have been making hay somewhere under the slopes of the Andes, Starbuck, and the mowers are sleeping among the new-mown hay. Sleeping? Aye, toil we how we may, we all sleep at last on the field. Sleep? Aye, and rust amid greenness; as last year's scythes flung down, and left in the half-cut swaths--Starbuck!" (p. 445)

Ahab's tragic awareness shown in "The Symphony" marks the beginning of the last act of his drama—his catastrophic confrontation with Moby Dick. But why is the chapter called "The Symphony"? The structure of the final three chapters suggests that Melville named this chapter as he did, not merely to show the harmonious atmosphere momentarily achieved by Ahab's sanity and tragic awareness, which often ushers in the final act of a tragedy, but also to signal the symphonic movement of the concluding chapters. Ishmael dramatized Ahab's tragic dilemma in the dramatic sections; he expounded the meaning of Ahab's defiance in
the cetological center; now in the final chase he orches-
trates the central themes of the novel in order to recapit-
ulate the metaphysical and theological implications of
Ahab’s drama as it rapidly moves toward its final scene.
As the chase moves from the first day to the third, the
major themes move as if the entire novel has been progress-
ing symphonically (e.g., from the exposition, the Dramatic
Section I, to the development, the cetological center and
the Dramatic Section II, to the recapitulation, "The Sym-
phony" and the three days of "The Chase").

No sooner is Moby Dick sighted in "The Chase--First
Day," than the theme of the duality of the White Whale
emanates from the imaginative center as if it were a pre-
lude to Ahab’s final confrontation with the whale:

... No wonder there had been some among the
hunters who namelessly transported and allured
by all that serenity, had ventured to assail
it; but had fatally found that quietude but the
vesture of tornadoes. 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 destroy-
ed before.

And thus, through the serene tranquillities
of the tropical sea, among waves whose hand-
clapplings were suspended by exceeding rapture,
Moby Dick moved on, still withholding from
sight the full terrors of his submerged trunk,
entirely hiding the wrecked hideousness of
his jaw. ... (pp. 447-448)

The duality of Nature has been explored in the "The White-
ness of the Whale," in the cetological chapters, and now
all the significance of the duality alluded to heretofore
seems to become identified with the duality of Moby Dick.
Furthermore, when the first confrontation is over, Ishmael
recapitulates some of the minor themes involving Ahab,
Starbuck, and Stubb by showing their reactions to the
first disastrous encounter with the whale: "The thistle
the ass refused; it pricked his mouth too keenly, sir;
ha! ha!" (Stubb); "Aye, sir, 'tis a solemn sight; an
omen, and an ill one" (Starbuck); "Whose is the doubloon
now? . . . Omen? omen?--the dictionary! If the gods
think to speak outright to man, they will honorably speak
outright; not shake their heads, and give an old wives' darkling hint.--Begone! Ye two are opposite poles of one
thing; Starbuck is Stubb reversed, and Stubb is Starbuck;
and ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands alone among
the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men his neighbors!" The scene in which these remarks are made is
a re-enactment of the Quarter-Deck drama. Stubb is just
as jolly and soulless as he was in the "Quarter-Deck"
sequence; Starbuck is just as fearful of God's vengeance;
Ahab's pride is as blasphemous as before.

In "The Chase--Second Day," when Moby Dick staves
Ahab's boats again and Starbuck objects to the pursuit of
the whale for the last time ("Oh, oh,--Impiety and blas-
phemy to hunt him more!")}, Ahab strikes the keynote to his
fatalism as if it were the keynote to an orchestra.
"... in this matter of the whale, be the front of thy face to me as the palm of this hand—a lipless, unfeatured blank. Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fate's lieutenant; I act under orders. . . . Ye see an old man out down to the stump; leaning on a shivered lance; propped up on a lonely foot. 'Tis Ahab—his body's part; but Ahab's soul's a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs. I feel stranded, half strained, as ropes that tow dismasted frigates in a gale; and I may look so. But ere I break, ye'll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet." (p. 459)

Here again, Ahab's conflict with Starbuck brings out his inner conflict. On the surface, Ahab seems to have resigned himself to "the fates," but he is actually pitting his perverted will against the fates until his fatalism itself becomes distorted. He mockingly asserts that since he is predestined to fight the fates, he will fight them to the bitter and until "ye'll hear me crack." He is determined to control his own fate even if he must annihilate himself by dashing at the White Whale, if that is the only way he can assert his free will, his cherished sovereignty—to "be the prophet and the fulfiller."

The final chase begins with Ahab's soliloquy, reviewing yet another aspect of his dilemma. Ahab's perverted will is often fueled by his feeling—a part of Antinomian spiritualism: he feels that his faith is betrayed; he feels that God is unfair and unprincipled; he feels that his fate is predestined. Ahab now jeeringly concedes:
"Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels; that's tingling enough for mortal man! to think's audacity. God only has that right and privilege. Thinking is, or ought to be, a coolness and a calmness; and our poor hearts throb, and our poor brains beat too much for that."

However, Ahab's "feeling" is confined to his metaphysical intuition since he has not let his human feeling interfere (except for a few tender moments with Pip and Starbuck) with his "demonic" purpose. In defiance of his heartless God, Ahab has become heartless, and as cold as his Calvinist mind: "I've sometimes thought my brain was very calm—frozen calm, this old skull cracks so, like a glass in which the contents turn to ice, and shiver it" (p. 460).

Feeling "deadly faint, bowed, and humped," Ahab makes his final charge against his "unprincipled" and unfair God by alluding to the "vile wind."

"... A vile wind that has no doubt blown ere this through prison corridors and cells, and wards of hospitals, and ventilated them, and now comes blowing hither as innocent as fleeces. Out upon it!—it's tainted. Were I the wind, I'd blow no more on such a wicked, miserable world. I'd crawl somewhere to a cave, and slink there. And yet, 'tis a noble and heroic thing, the wind! who ever conquered it? In every fight it has the last and bitterest blow. Run tilting at it, and you but run through it. Ha! a coward wind that strikes stark naked men, but will not stand to receive a single blow. Even Ahab is a braver thing—a nobler thing than that. Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most
exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless, but only bodiless as objects, not as agents. (pp. 460-461)

That Ahab's mocking remark on the wind is not a misplaced reflection becomes clear when it begins to echo his earlier remarks on "all visible objects" and on God. In "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab said, "all visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask"; now he says, "Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless, but only bodiless as objects, not as agents." The wind exasperates Ahab, as Moby Dick does, because it is intangible (bodiless) as the "intangible malignity" of the White Whale, although visible in what it does to men as an agent. In "The Quarter-Deck" and in "Sunset," respectively, Ahab said, "not my master, man, is even that fair play" and "I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies,—Take some one of your own size; don't pommel me! No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again; but ye have run and hidden. Come forth from behind your cotton bags!"; he now says, "Ha! a coward wind that strikes stark naked men, but will not stand to receive a single blow. Even Ahab is a braver thing—a nobler thing than that."
Ironically, however, in his defiance of the unfair god, Ahab himself has become unfair, subjecting his crew to his "demoniac" purpose, and leading them to destruction. In his heroic defiance of "thy creativeness mechanical," Ahab himself has been mechanical. Ahab's jeering reference to Stubb's being "brave as fearless fire (and as mechanical)" is an indication of his awareness of how close he has become to being a Stubb, whose blind courage he detests. Ahab's "audacious, daring, and boundless" spirit has become a blind fury. Thus, as he prophesied in his apostrophe to fire, he hurls himself against the White Whale, asserting his will and freedom against the ineffable force to which he is forever tied—the "whole act's immutably decreed... a billion years before this ocean rolled."

"Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all 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!" (p. 468)

So far, the present study has shown how Melville's "seminal idea or intuition" determines its appropriate expression in Moby-Dick: "just as the inner force of a phenomenon in nature determines its external structure, so the vitality of a poet's seminal idea of intuition determines its appropriate expression." Melville's seminal
idea of Ahab's tragic dilemma determines the character-oriented dramatic mode of expression; his metaphysical preoccupation manifests itself in the subject-oriented expository chapters; and his prescience of Ahab's fate dictates the symphonic movement of "the chase." The three methods also function as organs (e.g., in the biological as well as in the Pauline sense\(^2\)). The structure of Moby-Dick, however, is organic yet in another sense. Its dramatic and expository chapters are not only fused by the narrative, the themes, the creator's intuition and prescience, but they are fused and pulsated by its organic joints and its rhythm which provide the dynamic forces in the novel. The life-like rhythm that pulsates the entire novel seems to spring from Ishmael's own view of life: "mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof: calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretrograding progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause." This undulating rhythm functions on many different levels: structural, syntactic, and ideological.

Structurally, the entire novel moves rhythmically: from the fast beginning (the narrative beginning and the Dramatic Section I) to the slow development (the Cetological Center) to the climax (the Dramatic Section II), and to the rapid ending; but this rhythmic movement can be observed in almost any part of the novel. The movement
of the Dramatic Section I, for instance, is that of an undulating motion, with each "calm" followed by a "storm." The movement is created not only by the varying length of the chapters ("Merry Christmas"—long—"The Lee Shore"—short—"The Advocate"—long—"Postscript"—short) but also by the alternating pattern of tension-building chapters (dramatic) and tension-relieving chapters (expository). Peaceful notes ("Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,/ Stand dressed in living green./ So to the Jew old Canaan stood,/ While Jordan rolled between." ) in "Merry Christmas" are quickly followed by the mysterious event in which Bulkington "perish es in that howling infinite," and "The Lee Shore" is followed by tension-free expository chapters (24–27); next tension mounts as the Ahab chapters begin (28–30), but it is relieved by comic and expository chapters (31–35); finally, the action rises to the climax in "The Quarter-Deck" and the dramatic tension is sustained by an intellectual tension through "Moby Dick" and "The Whiteness of the Whale," but again the tension is relieved by "The Affidavit" and "Surmises." 3

This rhythmic movement can be further observed on the syntactic level. Consider, for example, the "Moby Dick" passage quoted earlier.

1) His three boats stove around him, and oars and men both whirling in the eddies; one captain, seizing the line-knife from his broken prow, had dashed at the whale, as an Arkansas duellist at
his foe, blindly seeking with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale.

2) That captain was Ahab. 3) And then it was, that suddenly sweeping his sickle-shaped lower jaw beneath him, Moby Dick had reaped away Ahab's leg, as a mower a blade of grass in the field. 4) No turbaned Turk, no hired Venetian or Malay, could have smote him with more seeming malice. 5) Small reason was there to doubt, then, that ever since that almost fatal encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. 6) The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. 7) That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; to whose dominion even the modern Christians ascribe one-half of the worlds; which the ancient Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil;—Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. 8) All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. 9) He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it. (pp. 159-160)

The rhythmic pattern is established in the first two sentences and followed throughout the paragraph. SI begins in the midst of "oars and men both whirling in the eddies," portraying the confusion of the scene; then the periodic structure moves the action suspensefully toward its emotional and intellectual climax as it dramatizes the
captain's assault on Moby Dick, his daring spirit, and his futile attempt. S1 creates a tension, not simply because it dramatizes Ahab's initial confrontation with Moby Dick, but because its periodic movement and its evocative diction provoke a thought; Ahab's dashing at the whale with a six inch blade dramatizes his madness, the futility of his insane attempt, more broadly, the futility of man's attempt to fathom, in his puny mind, the ineffable mystery of the immense universe. S2 reveals the identity of the captain dramatically, yet it also relieves the tension built up in S1. The periodic movement of sentences 3, 4, 5 again builds up to "all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations," and its tension is relieved by the loose structure of S6 ("The White Whale swam before him"), although a dramatic tension is sustained by the malicious image of the White Whale and the vicious tonal quality of the remainder of the sentence. S7 heightens Ahab's rage, and the consecutive periodic sentences move toward the climax of the paragraph until the White Whale is identified with "all evil" in Ahab's tormented soul. S9 becomes loaded with Ahab's hate and rage, as if they were the charges of explosives; then, like a loaded gun, it releases them with explosive monosyllables and alliterations.

The movement of the novel on the ideological level cannot be defined in precise terms, nor can it be isolated
from the entire structure and the organic joints that help to achieve the coherence of the book. The novel generally moves from the premise of the Old Testament (Father Mapple) to the Ahabian individualism to the Ishmaelianism, and finally to Melville’s own vision of the world. Father Mapple’s doctrine is clearly stated in the early part of the novel: “if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists” (p. 45). As if set in motion by Mapple’s doctrine, two alternative views are advanced by Ahab’s assertion of selfhood and his progressive alienation from humanity shown through the gams, and by Ishmael’s increasing awareness of human responsibilities developed through his relationship with Queequeg. These thematic developments create dynamic forces as well as providing the organic joints of the novel. Considered in terms of the Ahab theme, the gams perform several functions: weaving in and out of Part III and Part IV, they tighten the structure of the book; they move the action of the Ahab drama not only chronologically but thematically by showing the increasing distance between Ahab and humanity, and by offering alternatives to Ahab’s attitude toward Moby Dick. “The Pequod meets the Albatross,” for instance, shows his awareness of his painful alienation: when Ahab sees a school of fish that were following the
Pequod dart away, he murmurs, "Swim away from me, do ye?"

"the tone conveyed more of deep helpless sadness than
the insane old man had ever before evinced." "The Town
Ho's Story" reflects on Ahab in another way. Just as
"Queen Mab" is a comic version of the conflict between
Ahab and Stubb, this story might be considered as a comic
version of Ahab's inner conflict; the conflict between
Steelkilt and Radney mirrors the sub-cultural sources of
Ahab's dilemma. The story also reflects a vision of just
God, since Moby Dick destroys Radney, the ship's tyrannical
mate: "Heaven itself seemed to step in to take out of his
Steelkilt's hands into its own the damning thing he
would have done" (p. 221).

It seems that Melville wanted to explore, while show­
ing Ahab's alienation, all the representative attitudes of
mankind toward Moby Dick (whatever mystery of the universe
it may represent): fanatic (the Jeroboam); ignorant (the
German Virgin); innocent (the French Rosebud); evasive
(the Samuel Enderby); jolly (the Bachelor). That these
alternatives are unacceptable to Ahab is too obvious to be
elaborated on, but the final two gams are significant
thematically and structurally. The Rachel represents human
responsibility. It is interested in the White Whale, but
after losing one of its boats in an encounter with the
whale, its interest shifts from the whale to the lost men.
And Ahab shows the extent of alienation by ignoring the plea of the Rachel's captain to help search for the lost men. If the Rachel anticipates the act of rescuing Ishmael in "Epilogue," the Delight refers back to "Delight," one of the subjects of Father Mapple's sermon. Just as Father Mapple's sermon forebodes Ahab's eventual doom by warning against those who disobey God, so does the Delight forebode the impending doom of Ahab by warning that "the harpoon is not yet forged that will ever do that"—kill Moby Dick, disobey God. From Ishmael's point of view, the Delight is "miserably misnamed," yet from Father Mapple's point of view, the ship is not misnamed at all. It is not even ironic, for Father Mapple's sermon is vindicated by the Delight's near disaster; those that disobey God are punished. God is avenged: like Jonah, the Delight had its lesson, and changed its attitude about Moby Dick. Indeed, "eternal delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final breath—O Father!—chiefly known to me by Thy rod—mortal or immortal, here I die" (p. 51). Delight to Him, who makes men suffer by demanding absolute obedience. This is precisely why Ahab is rebelling against God.

Ishmael's development suggests another thematic movement: from the rigid Old Testament doctrine to the New Testament doctrine of love. Ishmael's concept of charity,
of the brotherhood of mankind, however, is not developed by his affinity with Christianity but through his association with Queequeg. Ishmael explains why his friendship with Queequeg is redeeming: "I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy" (p. 53). Through his experience with Queequeg, Ishmael is able to penetrate the veneer of the Christian world and see the true meaning of charity, not the doctrine expounded by the worldly Christian (e.g., the narrator in "Bartleby the Scrivener"), but the act of charity displayed by Queequeg. In strategically placed chapters, Ishmael shows the significance of his redeeming friendship with Queequeg in terms of the thematic development of the novel. Ishmael's "splintered heart" begins to melt ("A Bosom Friend," 10); he gains a perspective on himself and his place in the world which is incompatible with Ahab's: "I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two: that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death" ("The Monkey-rope," 72); he becomes increasingly aware of his human responsibilities, and with this awareness come the healing of his spiritual wounds and the rejection of the Ahabian view of the world: "I forgot all about our horrible oath; in that inexpressible
sperm, I washed my hands and my heart of it" ("A Squeeze of the Hand," 94). Queequeg, who worships heathen gods, is the counterpart of the White Whale, which is supposedly an agent of God, just as Ishmael is the counterpart of Ahab. The White Whale, outwardly dumb and innocent, shows its inward malice; Queequeg, outwardly dark and seemingly terrifying, is inwardly benign. Queequeg stands close to unadulterated Nature, and he is free from that "intelligent malignity" which seems to control the White Whale. This soothing savage is a link between Nature and civilized men, "a creature in the transition state—neither caterpillar nor butterfly" (p. 34). Queequeg is also a link to eternity: "his eyes seemed rounding and rounding, like the rings of Eternity . . . a wondrous testimony to that immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened" (p. 395). He transcends life and death. He has no fear of death, for he believes that life and death are part of eternity, and that he is part of that eternity. It is a small wonder then that Ishmael, who is disenchanted by the Christian world, is resurrected by Queequeg’s coffin. It is through his relationship with Queequeg that Ishmael comes to terms with himself, with Nature, with the White Whale, and sees his relationship to humanity and man’s place in the universe.
Yet, Ishmael's symbolic resurrection does not take place in the final scene, where the sinking Pequod carries down with it "the bird of heaven," even as Satan would not sink to hell without dragging "a living part of heaven" along with him. It occurs in the "Epilogue," after the drama is done. Ishmael floats into a world where "the unharming sharks, . . . glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks." As Ishmael's splintered heart was redeemed by the "soothing savage" so that "in visions of the night," he "saw long rows of angels in paradise," so now Ishmael, buoyed up by Queequeg's coffin, sees a vision of the world in which men could be immune to the world's demonisms. Such a vision could be fulfilled if men were responsible toward each other as Ishmael and Queequeg have been. This is Melville's vision of the world, a world based on his prophetic vision that "man may have his proper fullness of being if he will enact his human responsibilities with whatever sufferance is required." If the Rachel's effort to fulfill her responsibility to her lost crew is a vindication of Melville's vision of the world, then Moby-Dick is a dramatization, and a test of that vision.
V. Toward the Epilogue


2. Things essentially different from, yet complementary to, one another.

3. That this rhythmic movement is characteristic of Melville's art is suggested by Ishmael's discussion of the artistic plan for the book in "Surmises."

4. This passage is one of the representative samples in that it illustrates Melville's characteristic use of periodic sentences. An extensive analysis might be redundant since his style has been widely studied.

5. There is a striking resemblance between Ishmael's description of "Quakers with a vengeance" and his descriptions of Steelkilt and Radney. Since "The Town-Ho's Story" is generally believed to have been written before the final version of *Moby-Dick*, one might conjecture that Melville might have conceived from these characters (and possibly Jackson in Redburn) the germ of the ideas to be developed in Ahab.

6. Here again, the events are viewed from Ishmael's point of view, and not from Melville's. Thus, we can say that the center of consciousness is maintained throughout the novel.

Pierre: Melville's Aesthetic and Metaphysical Paralysis

I

Melville's Strategy and
His Early Structural Problems

In spite of the divergent elements and idiosyncratic nature of its fictional form, the center of Moby-Dick holds, as its unity is achieved through the consciousness of Ishmael. Melville may not keep "his feelings in abeyance"; one might even suggest that Melville projects his "feelings" into Ahab and Ishmael, but he maintains his aesthetic distance from his creations. Ungodly godlike Ahab and wryly humorous Ishmael have personalities of their own. And as we have seen, the structure of Moby-Dick shows that Melville made use of a wide range of technical devices not only in dramatizing Ahab's tragedy but also in developing Ishmael as the narrator of the novel. Strangely, however, Melville's handling of the narrative point of view in Pierre is so inartistic that one tends to attribute his failure to mental exhaustion: Melville was
so deeply engaged in Pierre that "he began to cut himself off from normal communication and live for long hours of the day entirely in his book." He was also involved in his hero's problem with a "morbid excitement which Mrs. Morewood feared might injure his health as well as the recluse life which she told him made his city friends 'think that he was slightly insane.'" In view of the substantial biographical evidence, it is reasonable to assume that Melville's mental state seriously affected the character of his work. Nevertheless, if we study Pierre in terms of its artistic and metaphysical intentions, it is clear that his problem is another form of the Melville syndrome which caused the structural problems in Mardi. In Mardi, Melville's rapidly developing mind led him to a "chartless voyage"; in Pierre, his emotional involvement in Pierre's metaphysical dilemma leads to his aesthetic and metaphysical paralysis. Yet, unlike Mardi, Pierre is carefully charted. The work becomes structurally incoherent, not because the narrator is constantly seeking "a new land," a world of mind, as Taji did, but because the narrator founders in this world of mind and thus fails to fulfill his aesthetic function. Therefore, a study of the discrepancy between Melville's artistic intentions and the novel's structure will reveal what might have happened in the course of its development, and how his metaphysical
concern might have caused his aesthetic problems.

"Melville's circumstances surrounding the composition of *Pierre* were similar to those which followed the completion of *Mardi* and impelled him to write *Redburn* and *White Jacket* as commercial jobs"; but its early sections indicate that *Pierre* was carefully planned at its inception to be more than a public-pleasing romance: it was intended to be a romantic satire. The world of Saddle Meadows, to which we are introduced at the beginning of the novel, is a world of appearances. Seemingly idyllic in landscape and Edenic in innocence, Saddle Meadows soon reveals its bastion of worldly structures: its feudalistic heritage, its aristocratic tradition, and its pragmatic ethics. And Pierre, dreaming in a world of "the Spenserian nymphs," is not aware that his seemingly glorious world is built on Palmyra's quarries. The opening sections also suggest that beneath the surface of the satire, Melville wanted to explore the mystery of Pierre's unconscious mind, for "from without, no wonderful effect is wrought within ourselves, unless some interior, responding wonder meets it." In the beginning, Melville sets about carefully to veil his metaphysical and psychological interests behind what he told Mrs. Hawthorne would be a "rural bowl of milk." But as Pierre journeys from the transcendental world of "humming birds" in the first half of the book to the
nihilistic region of the "sarcophagus" in the second half, Melville becomes more and more preoccupied with his own ontological questions, which constantly interfere with his artistic intentions. Melville's structural problem, however, does not begin in the second half of the novel (Books XIII-XXVI); even in the first half, his satiric impulse and his metaphysical preoccupation make it difficult for him to manipulate his narrator as he planned at the outset. This chapter attempts to show how Melville's structural problem begins, how it becomes more serious as the work progresses, and how it is inseparable from his ontological and psychological problems.

Although it is generally believed that Melville was in firm control of his narrative point of view in the first half, the narrator's tone is not consistent even in the early sections of the first half, and this inconsistency in tone provides clues to Melville's problems in manipulating his narrator. In order to fulfill his multiple purpose of writing a romantic satire with psychological and metaphysical implications, Melville must have needed not only an omniscient narrator who could provide an inside view of Pierre so that the reader can see the hero's dilemma sympathetically, but a versatile narrator who could also assume an ironic stance as he adapts himself to Pierre's style, mentality, and idealism. Readers familiar
with Melville's literary style and his metaphysical views, then, could see through the narrator's ironic mask and perceive the book as a satire on Pierre's naive idealism. In the following passage, for instance, the narrator distances himself from Pierre by forecasting the impending danger of Pierre's naive faith, yet he readily adapts himself to the milieu of Saddle Meadows as his language of "Religion's silken sash" and "Glory's shroud" shows.

Thus in Pierre was the complete polished steel of the gentlemen, girded with Religion's silken sash; and his great-grandfather's soldierly fate had taught him that the generous sash should, in the last bitter trial, furnish its wearer with Glory's shroud; so that what through life had been worn for Grace's sake, in death might safely hold the man. But while thus all alive to the beauty and poesy of his father's faith, Pierre little foresaw that this world hath a secret deeper than beauty, and Life some burdens heavier than death. (p. 7)

It might be assumed, then, that Melville as the implied author of the novel was counting on his readers to distinguish between the narrator's style characterized by such figurative excesses as shown here and his own, and thus see the ironic distance between the two. The narrator's style would please the reading public, while, from the ironic distance, Melville could parody the florid literary style in which Pierre was supposedly immersed.

The above hypotheses concerning Melville's method of handling the narrator can be further substantiated by the
following passage. Here the narrator clearly distances himself from Pierre as he warns Pierre against Nature's ambiguity and Fate's power, and yet he is poker-faced enough to keep himself in tune with warbling Pierre by playfully rhapsodizing the Emersonian doctrine of nature.

In the country then Nature planted our Pierre; because Nature intended a rare and original development in Pierre. Never mind if hereby she proved ambiguous to him in the end; nevertheless, in the beginning she did bravely. She blew her wind-clarion from the blue hills, and Pierre neighed out lyrical thoughts, as at the trumpet-blast, a war-horse paws himself into a lyric of foam. She whispered through her deep groves at eve, and gentle whispers of humanness, and sweet whispers of love, ran through Pierre's thought-veins, musical as water over pebbles. She lifted her spangled crest of a thickly-starred night, and forth at that glimpse of their divine Captain and Lord, ten thousand mailed thoughts of heroicness started up in Pierre's soul, and glared round for some insulted good cause to defend.

So the country was a glorious benediction to young Pierre; we shall see if that blessing pass from him as did the divine blessing from the Hebrews; we shall yet see again, I say, whether Fate hath not just a little bit of a word or two to say in this world; we shall see whether this wee scrap of latinity be very far out of the way—Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus Ipse.

The narrator accomplishes a double function: his transcendental rhapsody will continue to please the "enthusiastic" readers, and his remarks about Nature and Fate forebode a reversal of Pierre's fortunes. Pierre will soon discover that he has lived in a world of appearances, a world of "seems." Nature has pandered in whispers to Pierre's
heroic dreams; and his idealism is built upon the illusory world of Saddle Meadows characterized by Mrs. Glendinning's vain pride and empty social forms, by the false image of the Glendinning family (e.g., Pierre's grandfather, "a sweet-hearted, charitable Christian," who "annihilated two Indian savages... in whose meek, majestic soul, the lion and the lamb embraced—fit image of his God." pp.29-30), and by the Reverend Falsegrave's pragmatic Christianity. When Pierre takes arms against this world of "lies," he will discover, to his horror, that he is fated to be betrayed not only by the world but also by its Creator. This metaphysical insight distances the narrator from Pierre, and yet the narrator's style, suggesting an aesthetic distance between the narrator and Melville, shows that the narrator is not free from the literary milieu of Saddle Meadows. This highly complex narrative stance enables Melville to maintain the multiple distances between himself and the narrator and between the narrator and Pierre.

So far, Melville has been able to keep his feelings in abeyance by maintaining his aesthetic distance from the narrator; but in the passage cited above, there is already a faint tension between his effort in the first paragraph to maintain his narrative mask and his urge in the second paragraph to satirize the enthusiast's views more openly
and explore his own views more explicitly than his mask can allow him to, and this tension seems to cause a shift in the narrator's stance and tone. There is, for instance, a shift from "She lifted her spangled crest of a thickly-starred night, and forth at that glimpse of their divine Captain and Lord, ten thousand mailed thoughts of heroiness started up in Pierre's soul" in the first paragraph to "we shall yet see again, I say, whether Fate hath not just a little bit of a word or two to say in this world" in the second. In the first paragraph, the narrator's stance is emotionally detached from what he describes—the beneficent effect of Nature on Pierre, and if a satiric effect is created by this passage, it is created by his playful description of Nature's influence on Pierre. In the second paragraph, the narrator's stance is no longer detached as he anticipates Pierre's fate, and although his tone is still playful, it becomes more personally involved, and more openly derisive than in the first paragraph. The taunting tone, created by Melville's urge to express a personal sense of how human affairs are dictated by fate, breaks through the narrative surface; and the narrator's playful tone diminishes as he repeats "we shall see" in each clause as if he had a score to settle with those who fail to see man's helplessness before Fate, and before God: "Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse."
Soon Melville's satiric intention becomes more and more overt, and as it does, he finds it increasingly difficult to maintain his complex stance. The following passages show how Melville's satiric impulse begins to interfere with his artistic endeavor. In the first passage Melville effectively controls his narrator's stance as he portrays the mentality of vain, domineering Mrs. Glendinning, who is fatuously obsessed with the docility of Pierre and Lucy.

"A noble boy, and docile"—she murmured—"he has all the frolickomeness of youth, with little of its giddiness. . . . A noble boy, and docile. A fine, proud, loving, docile, vigorous boy. . . . His little wife, that is to be, will not estrange him from me; for she too is docile,—beautiful, and reverential, and most docile. Seldom yet have I known such blue eyes as hers, that were not docile, . . . the fine, proud, loving, docile, vigorous boy!—the lofty-minded, well-born, noble boy; and with such sweet docilities!" (pp. 19-20)

Melville seems to enjoy mocking Pierre's mother, making certain that she reels off "docile" until her repetition becomes ridiculous; nevertheless, he maintains the narrator's detached stance by having the narrator mimick her, and thereby letting her reveal her own character. Thus her simple syntax, along with her comic repetition of "docile," allows for the detachment needed to satirize her mentality without showing the narrator's own attitude toward her. In this way, Melville not only controls the narrator's stance but distances himself from the narrator, for the narrator
fulfills his function of reflecting Mrs. Glendinning's thoughts, and clearly not Melville's. In the ensuing passage, however, Melville's satiric impulse begins to affect the narrator's stance. In Book II, Part IV, the narrator parodies the Psalms as he recounts one auspicious morning that Pierre and Lucy celebrated their love, but his tone becomes too blatantly ironic to be considered consistent with his stance we have discussed.

Oh, praised be the beauty of this earth, the beauty, and the bloom, and the mirthfulness thereof! The first worlds made were winter worlds; the second made, were vernal worlds; the third, and last, and perfectest, was this summer world of ours. . . .

Oh, praised be the beauty of this earth; the beauty, and the bloom, and the mirthfulness thereof. We lived before, and shall live again; and as we hope for a fairer world than this to come; so we came from one less fine. . . .

Love was first begot by Mirth and Peace, in Eden, when the world was young. . . . Love is both Creator's and Saviour's gospel to mankind; a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of humming-birds printed with peach-juice on the leaves of lilies. . . .

Endless is the account of Love. . . . Where now are your wolves of Britain? Where in Virginia now, find you the panther and the pard? Oh, Love is busy everywhere. Everywhere Love hath Moravian missionaries. . . . (pp. 32-34)

In the preceding passage, the narrator's stance is emotionally detached from the event and the characters he describes; in fact, his purpose of satirizing Mrs. Glendinning's vanity is achieved in part by his condescending, and playful attitude not only toward Mrs. Glendinning's
view of Pierre and Lucy but also toward Pierre and Lucy themselves. In the present passage, the narrator's stance changes in two major aspects. First, instead of remaining detached, the narrator assumes a mocking stance as he pretends to share Pierre's "enthusiastic" views of the world by praising the beauty of the earth and Creator's love for mankind. Then his stance becomes highly self-revealing as he directly addresses the reader, projecting his overtly ironic views of love. The narrator does not merely parody the Psalms as he does in his repetition of "Oh, praised be the beauty of this earth"; nor does he simply mimic the florid language of the sentimental fiction of mid-nineteenth-century America as in "Love is both Creator's and Saviour's gospel to mankind; a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of humming-birds printed with peach-juice on the leaves of lilies." He reflects Melville's own mocking attitude toward such views of love. Since the passage celebrates Pierre's Edenic vision of love, its ironic implications cannot be mistaken when it is viewed against Pierre's tragic career. Pierre's sense of justice, to be sure, motivates his heroic action of rescuing Isabel from the world of "lies"; but does this heroic sentiment spring from his sense of charity, the cardinal Christian virtue, or from his unconscious desire? If love is all heavenly as Lucy's love for Pierre is, why
Is some love hell-bound? Where does Pierre find the Creator's and the Savior's gospel of love when he struggles with the world of "lies"? These mocking insinuations are expressed only obliquely as the narrator's ironic questions show: "Where now are your wolves of Britain? Where in Virginia now, find you the panther and the pard? Oh, Love is busy everywhere." Yet, since these ironic insinuations are too glaringly clear, and too closely related to Melville's own metaphysical views to be called anything but a reflection of Melville's own mocking attitude, it becomes increasingly difficult for the reader to discern the distance between Melville and his narrator. At this point in the novel, Melville's satiric impulse already seems to break through the aesthetic distance established between himself and the narrator.

Next, Melville's metaphysical preoccupation begins to interfere with his artistic intention as he deals with Pierre's problem of distinguishing between appearance and reality. In the remaining part of Book II and the beginning of Book III, Pierre becomes aware that what he thought "the solid land of veritable reality" is only a world of appearances. His Edenic vision of Saddle Meadows is to be shattered by his discovery that Isabel is his half-sister, the illegitimate child of his late father. But before Pierre makes this shocking discovery, he is haunted by the
mysterious face of Isabel, whom he saw one evening at a sewing bee. From the way the details are arranged, one might assume that by parodying the ravings of lyric love cited above, Melville is setting up Pierre's enthusiastic view of the Creator's love in order to make his sudden fear of the "face" look humorous. And indeed at first, Melville seems to achieve this humorous effect when Pierre, a "humming-bird," suddenly becomes a raving metaphysician as he hears the sad music of humanity from a pine tree and is tormented by the face of a mysterious girl.

"How wide, how strong these roots must spread! Sure, this pine-tree takes powerful hold of this fair earth! You bright flower hath not so deep a root. This tree hath outlived a century of that gay flower's generations, and will outlive a century of them yet to come. This is most sad. Hark, now I hear the pyramidal and numberless, flame-like complaining of this Eolean pine;--the wind breathes now upon it;--the wind,--that is God's breath! Is He so sad? Oh, tree! so mighty thou, so lofty, yet so mournful! This is most strange! Hark! as I look up into thy high secrecies, oh, tree, the face, the face peeps down on me! . . . Oh! wretched vagueness--too familiar to me, yet inexplicable,--unknown, utterly unknown! I seem to founder in this perplexity. Thou seemest to know somewhat of me, that I know not of myself,--what is it then? If thou hast a secret in thy eyes of mournful mystery, out with it; Pierre demands it; what is that thou has veiled in thee so imperfectly, that I seem to see its motion, but not its form? It visibly rustles behind the concealing screen. Now, never into the soul of Pierre, stole there before, a muffledness like this! If aught really lurks in it, ye sovereign powers that claim all my leal worshipings, I conjure ye to lift the veil; I must see it face to face. Tread I on a mine, warn me; advance I on a precipice, hold me
back; but abandon me to an unknown misery, that it shall suddenly seize me, and possess me, wholly,—that ye will never do; else, Pierre's fond faith in ye—now clean, untouched—may clean depart; and give me up to be a railing atheist! . . . Dante! Night's and Hell's poet he. No, we will not open Dante. Methinks now the face—the face—minds me a little of pensive, sweet Francesca's face—or, rather, as it had been Francesca's daughter's face—wafted on the sad dark wind, toward observant Virgil and the blistered Florentine. . . . " (pp. 40-42)

Pierre's pensive mood, his almost paranoiac fear of the "face," his childish warning to God, his imaginary association of the face with a fictional character in Dante's "Inferno"—all this is consistent with his naive, and potentially humorous character portrayed earlier, but the narrator's attitude toward him is no longer ironic. Judging from the narrator's ironic stance discussed in the preceding pages, one must assume that Pierre's ravings about the face are intended to achieve humorous and/or satiric effects, yet the narrator's tone is serious as it reflects Pierre's brooding mind: "Oh! wretched vagueness—too familiar to me, yet inexplicable,—unknown, utterly unknown! I seem to founder in this perplexity." This discrepancy between the narrator's apparent intention and his tone suggests that Melville's attitude toward Pierre is changing, and that this change is beginning to affect his artistic effort. Melville could satirize Pierre's excessive idealism through his narrative mask, but when Pierre
becomes aware of the ineffable mystery of life, Melville fails to maintain his mask. As the direct quotations in the passage cited above show, when the narrator begins to provide an inside view of Pierre to bring the reader into the hero's mind ("into the soul of Pierre"), Melville seems to become preoccupied with his own metaphysical thought, which is immediately reflected in Pierre's apostrophe to the "face": "what is that thou has veiled in thee so imperfectly, that I seem to see its motion, but not its form? It visibly rustles behind the concealing screen. . . . I conjure ye to lift the veil; I must see it face to face." Admittedly, Pierre's thoughts are vague; and since Pierre does not seem to understand fully the implications of his vague thoughts, one might say that Melville still controls his aesthetic distance from his creations. However, the suspicion that Pierre's ravings, occurring eruptively as they do here, might be early signs of Melville's metaphysical syndrome is soon confirmed. In the following passage, it becomes increasingly clear that Melville is now less interested in maintaining his aesthetic distance than in revealing his own metaphysical thought as he explains the significance of the face.

The face, of which Pierre and Lucy so strangely and fearfully hinted, was not of enchanted air; but its mortal lineaments of mournfulness had been visibly beheld by Pierre. Nor had it accosted him in any privacy; or in any lonely
byeway; or beneath the white light of the crescent moon; but in a joyous chamber, bright with candles, and ringing with two score women's gayest voices. Out of the heart of mirthfulness, this shadow had come forth to him. Encircled by bandelets of light, it had still beamed upon him; vaguely historic and prophetic; backward, hinting of some irrevocable sin; forward, pointing to some inevitable ill. One of those faces, which now and then appear to man, and without one word of speech, still reveal glimpses of some fearful gospel. In natural guise, but lit by supernatural light; palpable to the senses, but inscrutable to the soul; in their perfectest impression on us, ever hovering between Tartarean misery and Paradisaic beauty; such faces, compounded so of hell and heaven, overthrow in us all foregone persuasions, and make us wondering children in this world again.

As in the preceding passage, the narrator's tone is sympathetic instead of ironic, and there is no distance between the narrator and Melville. In his metaphysical preoccupation, in his rhythmic syntax of "backward, hinting of some irrevocable sin; forward, pointing to some inevitable ill," in his characteristic use of the periodic sentence at the end, and in his rhetorical engagement of the reader ("us") with the significance of the "face," Melville is directly addressing the reader.

It is conceivable that Melville might be attempting to establish a structural pattern wherein a reflective passage, a passage of direct address to the reader like this one, reveals his true style and thus provides a standard by which to recognize the parody intended in other passages. But while this pattern might show how the
narrator's florid style serves Melville's satiric purpose, it does not provide a rationale for the changes in the narrator's stance. For one thing, the passages studied so far indicate that these changes are not dictated by Melville's artistic purposes, but rather by his changing attitude toward Pierre. From what we have seen, we can understand why Melville's attitude changes, but it is difficult to understand why he changes the narrator's stance, and why he does not maintain his aesthetic distance from the narrator. For another, Melville not only fails to achieve his artistic detachment but also fails to maintain any structural pattern in the remainder of the book as he becomes seriously involved with Pierre's problem and his thoughts become often "eruptive."

What then is Pierre's problem and how does it affect Melville's artistic effort in the ensuing part of the novel? Metaphysically, Pierre's is the same problem that Ahab and Ishmael faced in Moby-Dick—the problem of penetrating a concealing veil that obscures reality: "It visibly rustles behind the concealing screen. . . . I conjure ye to lift the veil; I must see it face to face." Psychologically, however, the veil is further obscured by his inner world, a world constructed by his subjective imagination and emotion. To Pierre, Adam did not really fall from grace, and Saddle Meadows was living proof of
that. His father was a sacred being; his father's life, and in fact, the history of Saddle Meadows testified to his Edenic vision of the world. It is not surprising then that when he discovers his father had an affair with a French woman and an illegitimate child begotten on her, "he felt that what he had always before considered the solid land of veritable reality, was now being audaciously encroached upon by bannered armies of hooded phantoms, disembarking in his soul, as from flotillas of specter-boats" (p. 49). In his deeply disillusioned mind, "Truth" becomes identified with "Fate," the "Black Knight, that with visor down" confronts him, just as in Ahab's mind "the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me"; and like Ahab, Pierre is determined to strike through the "mask" to discover "Truth."

... Doth Truth come in the dark, and steal on us, and rob us so, and then depart, deaf to all pursuing invocations? If this night, which now wraps my soul, be genuine as that which now wraps this half of the world; then Fate, I have a choice quarrel with thee. Thou art a palterer and a cheat; thou hast lured me on through gay gardens to a gulf. Oh! falsely guided in the days of my Joy, am I now truly led in this night of my grief?--I will be a raver, and none shall stay me! I will lift my hand in fury, for am I not struck? I will be bitter in my breath; for is not this cup of gall? Thou Black Knight, that with visor down, thus confrontest me, and mockest at me; Lo! I strike through thy helm, and will see thy face, be it Gorgon! ... Ah! forgive me, ye heavens, for my ignorant ravings, and accept this my vow. ... Oh! thou poor castaway girl, ... Thou movest before me, in
rainbows spun of thy tears! I see thee long weeping, and God demands for thy comforter; and comfort thee, stand by thee, and fight for thee, will thy leapingly-acknowledging brother, whom thy own father named Pierre!

Artistically, the narrator's task is to dramatize Pierre's dilemma, to show that Pierre's mind itself has built a fictitious world, and that his acceptance of Isabel as his sister and his conception of himself as the savior of Isabel are all part of his habit of mind. Pierre has lived in a romantic world in which his life is a "sweetly-writ manuscript," "a volume bound in rose-leaves." When he comes to feel that there is one small "hiatus" in the otherwise perfect, "illuminated scroll" of his life since "a sister had been omitted from the text," he creates a fictitious relationship with his mother, so that "they were wont to call each other brother and sister" (p. 5). When he meets Isabel, who claims to be his illegitimate half-sister, his romantic wish to have a sister comes true: "It must be a glorious thing to engage in a mortal quarrel on a sweet sister's behalf! Now, of all things, would to heaven, I had a sister!" (p. 7). It is small wonder, then, that Pierre must become a romantic hero, a Christian knight-errant who finds "some one whom I might love, and protect, and fight for, if need be" (p. 7). However, because of his changing attitude
toward Pierre and his impulse to reveal truth, Melville is unable to maintain his own aesthetic stance as he oscillates among a variety of narrative stances and tones. When Pierre was dreaming in the bosom of an immense idealism, the narrator's attitude toward him was subtly ironic. Since then the narrator's tone has changed first to a mockingly ironic one, and then to a serious and sympathetic tone. Now when Pierre begins to discover "Truth," the narrator's tone becomes more personally involved as he ex- postulates with his hero:

"Ay, Pierre, now indeed art thou hurt with a wound, never to be completely healed but in heaven; for thee, the before undistrusted moral beauty of the world is forever fled; for thee, thy sacred father is no more a saint; all brightness hath gone from thy hills, and all peace from thy plains; and now, now, for the first time, Pierre, Truth rolls a black billow through thy soul! Ah, miserable thou, to whom Truth, in her first tides, bears nothing but wrecks! (p. 65)

Here the narrator might be mocking at Pierre's early idealism in view of Pierre's discovery that his "sacred father is no more a saint," but the narrator's tone is more sympathetic than mocking. And the tone is more personal than it was in the passage of direct address to the reader quoted from p. 43 (see p. 13 above), obviously because in the present passage the narrator speaks directly to Pierre whereas in the former passage he elucidates Pierre's dilemma for the reader. This personal stance, however, is not
simply an artistic maneuver on the part of the narrator to show his sympathetic attitude toward his hero; it is an indication of how personally the narrator becomes involved with his hero's dilemma. And as he does, the narrator becomes more and more impatient and intrusive, often reflecting his own thoughts instead of Pierre's.

Finally this impatient and intrusive attitude of the narrator becomes symptomatic of his uncontrolled narrative stance; as he portrays the thoughts of Pierre who is appealing to God for heavenly guidance before that mysterious interview with Isabel, the narrator's own thoughts erupt:

But Pierre, though charged with the fire of all divineness, his containing thing was made of clay. Ah, muskets the gods have made to carry infinite combustions, and yet made them of clay!

Save me from being bound to Truth, liege lord, as I am now. How shall I steal yet further into Pierre, and show how this heavenly fire was helped to be contained in him, by mere contingent things, and things that he knew not. But I shall follow the endless, winding way,—the flowing river in the cave of man; careless whither I be led, reckless where I land. (p. 107)

Suddenly, the narrator seems to become self-conscious: conscious of his own dilemma as the narrator of Pierre's story; he is not only the narrator but, along with Pierre, the seeker of "Truth," who must reveal Pierre's unconscious motives ("things that he knew not"). Thus his aesthetic
function is determined by his own creation as he must "follow the endless, winding way,--the flowing river in the cave of man." And with the deepening self-consciousness of the narrator, his tone becomes intensely personal and even raving. Especially his ranting--"careless whither I be led, reckless where I land"--is characteristic of the Melville syndrome in Mardi: "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." Even more crucial than the narrator's ranting tone, is the way in which the passage reveals Melville's attitude toward the artistic problems in Pierre: his quest for "Truth" precedes his artistic considerations.

Thus, what started out as a carefully planned satiric romance becomes a metaphysical quest, and as the narrator becomes involved with Pierre's quest for "Truth," he becomes a quester seeking his own truth. For, as we have seen, the narrator's impulse to seek and reveal truth becomes too urgent to be controlled artistically. The narrator explains what that truth is:

Was not the face--though mutely mournful--beautiful, bewitchingly? How unfathomable those most wondrous eyes of supernatural light! In those charmed depths, Grief and Beauty plunged and dived together. . . . Thus, already, and ere the proposed encounter, he was assured that, in a transcendent degree, womanly beauty, and not womanly ugliness, invited him to champion the right. Be naught concealed in this book of
The way the passage reveals the implications of "Truth" is significant in more ways than one. What begins as a psychological analysis of Pierre's motives abruptly changes into an ontological question: "Ah, if man were wholly made in heaven, why catch we hell-glimpses?" And suddenly, it appears that in the narrator's own mind, God is on trial, not Pierre, for he wishes to examine God's motives as much as Pierre's. This ontological question, however, is not as abrupt as it seems when viewed in light of the pattern of Melville's thought that might have been developing.

Just as in Pierre's disillusioned mind Truth becomes identified with the Black Knight, so in Melville's probing mind, Truth has become identified with man's fate. In fact, Emerson's statement from "Experience" might illuminate the central point of the truth revealed in this passage: "It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made that we exist. That discovery is
called the Fall of Man." We are fated to be what we are, and therefore our unconscious motives, whatever they may be, are determined by forces beyond our control. Thus, the intrusive passages studied heretofore provide an insight into Melville's own thought, and they illustrate the characteristic ways in which Melville's metaphysical preoccupation affects his aesthetic effort. They show how the aesthetic distance between Melville and the narrator becomes blurred, and hence, the narrator's uncontrolled narrative stance reveals how deeply Melville was preoccupied with his own metaphysical problem as he became involved in Pierre's dilemma. If these assumptions were valid, then the ways in which the narrator handles Pierre's problem in the second half of the novel will provide further insights into Melville's aesthetic and metaphysical problems in *Pierre*. 
Notes

Chapter Four

Pierre: Melville's Aesthetic and Metaphysical Paralysis

I. Melville's Strategy and His Early Structural Problems


2. Leon Howard, Herman Melville: A Biography (Berkeley, 1951), p. 188.


6. For the purpose of this study, the book is divided into two parts: the first half (Books I-XII) deals with Pierre's life at Saddle Meadows; the second half (Books XIII-XXVI) deals with his life from the time "They Depart the Meadows" to the end.


8. Wayne C. Booth's terminology used to refer to a psychological insight into characters' motives and/or moral nature. The term is discussed in The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London, 1961), pp. 163-165.

159
9. Admittedly, Melville's style changes from book to book, but such claims as "Love is . . . a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of humming-birds printed with peach juice on the leaves of lilies" cannot be called characteristic of Melville's style.

10. The narrator ridicules Pierre's florid literary style in Books XVII and XVIII.


12. At least, the distance between Melville, the implied author, and his narrator becomes unclear, for the narrator fails to function as Melville's narrative mask.
II

The Hyperborean Regions:

The Causes of Melville’s Metaphysical and Aesthetic Stasis

Melville might have wanted to penetrate the mask of appearance more deeply in Pierre than he did in Moby-Dick, as suggested by his statement to Hawthorne: “Leviathan is not the biggest fish—I have heard of Krakens.” But once he becomes preoccupied with his nihilistic view that “the cave of man” consists of “nothing but surface stratified on surface,” his metaphysical view tends to paralyze not only his aesthetic control but also his metaphysical exploration. As the “clay” of man and God’s “silence” become presiding motifs of the book, Melville, too often, seems to anticipate what Pierre is to discover toward the end: “appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man!” (p. 285). If man is made of clay, and there is nothing in the soul to control one’s unconscious mind, and if his unconscious motives are determined by forces beyond his control, then the exploration of the mystery of the human
mind will terminate in nothingness. Thus, although the plot of his novel does not change, Melville's attitude toward his fiction and his metaphysical quest changes as the following passage shows.

... Like all youths, Pierre had conned his novel-lessons; had read more novels than most persons of his years; but their false, inverted attempts at systematizing eternally unsystemizable elements; their audacious, intermeddling impotency, in trying to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more thin than gossamer threads which make up the complex web of life; these things over Pierre had no power now. ... He saw that human life doth truly come from that, which all men are agreed to call by the name of God; and that it partakes of the unravelable inscrutableness of God. By infallible presentiment he saw, that not always doth life's beginning gloom conclude in gladness; that wedding-bells peal not ever in the last scene of life's fifth act; that while the countless tribes of common novels laboriously spin vails of mystery, only to complacently clear them up at last; and while the countless tribe of common dramas do but repeat the same; yet the profounder emanations of the human mind, intended to illustrate all that can be humanly known of human life; these never unravel their own intricacies, and have no proper endings; but in imperfect, unanticipated, and disappointing sequels (as mutilated stumps), hurry to abrupt inter mergings with the eternal tides of time and fate. (p. 141)

Fictional art cannot be expected to unravel the mystery of life because human life comes from God and "it partakes of the unravelable inscrutableness of God" Himself. And if "Silence" is the only voice of God as Pierre discovers, "how can a man get a Voice out of Silence?" (p. 208). In fact, would-be writers like Pierre who fearlessly seek
truth will founder in those Hyperborean regions where
"all objects are seen in a dubious, uncertain, and refract­
ing light . . . since it is mostly in the heavens them­selves that these wonderful mirages are exhibited" (p. 165).

This view of life and art anticipates "the untimely,
timely end" of Pierre; and what is more important to our
analysis, it accounts for the apparent stasis of Melville's
metaphysical-psychological exploration in the second half
of the work, which becomes heavily interpolated with
satires on the popular literature of America and Pierre's
futile literary efforts. In his search into the cave of
man, Melville has probed too deeply into Pierre's soul,
and like Arctic explorers who followed "the trail of truth
too far," he, too, finding himself in "those treacherous
regions," "loses the directing compass of his mind"
(p. 165). For instance, there is a lacuna, as it were, in
Melville's treatment of Pierre's metaphysical and psycho­
logical problems, between the first half of the novel and
the later sections of the second half. In the first half,
the mysterious and elusive nature of Isabel's beauty is
one of the major ambiguities in the book. Whereas Lucy,
heavenly in her appearance, is earthly in her essence
("the inevitable evanescence of all earthly beauty"),
Isabel, darkly beautiful, is "mysteriously exempt from the
incantations of decay" (p. 140). In the main part of the
second half, however, Melville does not explore the mysteries of Isabel. After Pierre "crosses the Rubicon," Isabel not only ceases to be mysterious, but she behaves like a jealous wife. Then toward the end, there is an intriguing suggestion that Isabel somehow represents Pierre's unconscious thought as intimated in her characterization of herself: "Thy hand is the caster's ladle, Pierre, which holds me entirely fluid. Into thy forms and slightest moods of thought, thou pourest me; and I there solidify to that form" (p. 324). And at the very end, she reveals her mysterious nature again as she longs for the other world—or nothingness—far, far away, "out there! where the two blues meet, and are nothing" (p. 355). Also in the second half, Melville does not explore the ambiguity of Pierre's motives but only insinuates the hero's incestuous, "stirring passions." Neither does Melville explore the ambiguity of the "chair portrait" until the end of the novel; because the ambiguous smile in the portrait tortures Pierre, and because the ambiguity of the evidence the portrait offers about the relationship between his cherished father and Isabel seems to mock at him, Pierre burns the portrait before leaving Saddle Meadows and does not come to grips with the significance of its ambiguity until Book XXVI, "A Foreign Portrait." This gap in Melville's metaphysical exploration indicates that although Melville's
nihilistic vision climaxes in the "sarcophagus" passage, it began to affect his aesthetic effort fairly early in the second half, and more seriously than his ontological questions did in the first half. In the first half, Melville's aesthetic problem was primarily one of maintaining his narrative stance, one of controlling his impulse to be a quester-writer. In the second half, since his ontological view becomes nihilistic, it paralyzes his narrator's function. Thus, Melville openly neglects the formal aspect, not only of the novel but of his metaphysical pursuit as well. Structurally, for instance, the relevance of the satiric chapters on the popular literature of America and Pierre's immature writing to the thematic development of Pierre's quest for truth is not clear. Metaphysically, in view of the complexity of Pierre's metaphysical problem, the narrator should explore the problem, as Ishmael did his in the cetology chapters, by further defining and illustrating it in terms of the mystery of Isabel and/or the ambiguity of the "chair portrait," yet he ceases to pursue the problem in any systematic manner.

It can be suggested then that just as Melville's changing attitude toward Pierre causes the problem of maintaining his narrative stance, so his changing ontological view causes his aesthetic and metaphysical paralysis. In
the following pages, I hope to show the ways in which Melville's attitude toward his ontological problems changes by contrasting his handling of Plinlimmon's pamphlet, which represents his initial attitude, and his handling of the "sarcophagus" passage, which reflects his later attitude. The narrator's presentation of the Plinlimmon pamphlet is consistent with Melville's artistic intention and his treatment of ontological problems manifested in the opening sections of the novel. His narrative stance is ironically detached; and his metaphysical views are consistent with the views suggested in the first half: both the transcendental view of young Pierre and the utilitarian view of Falsegrave and/or Plinlimmon are unsatisfactory, for the transcendentalists like Pierre are not aware of their human limitations, and the utilitarians like Plinlimmon neglect their human responsibility for the expediency of their life. In a way, the narrator's metaphysical view is ambiguous, suggesting as it does Melville's own wavering between "belief" and "unbelief": his sardonic tone throughout the pamphlet suggests that the narrator is hardly optimistic about the attainability of the heavenly soul, yet his implicit dissatisfaction with the utilitarian philosophy reveals his latent belief that man can aspire to attain it.

Since the contents of the Plinlimmon pamphlet have
been discussed by Melville scholars, they will not be examined in detail here. What is important for the purpose of this study is the way in which the narrator presents the pamphlet and the way in which his method reflects Melville's attitude toward his metaphysical problems in the pamphlet. Briefly then, on the morning Pierre and Isabel depart Saddle Meadows for New York City, Pierre finds the Plinlimmon pamphlet on the seat of the coach he is riding. Appearing as it does at the beginning of Pierre's journey toward the city, and in the midst of his struggle to reconcile the world of lies to his soul, Plinlimmon's pamphlet seems to suggest a solution to Pierre's dilemma when it illustrates Pierre's tragic error. The pamphlet states that just as Greenwich time is not practicable in China, so are the chronometrical ideals not practicable on this earth, for man's soul is further moved from its God than the chronometer carried to China.

According to this theory, then, Pierre's error is that he shaped his ideals on the assumption that his soul is chronometric. In contrast to Pierre's early idealism and his subsequent failure to reconcile the world with his soul, Plinlimmon's philosophy offers worldly wisdom as it recognizes man's horological limitations and thus a principle of relativity concerning his moral aspirations: "though the earthly wisdom of man be heavenly folly to God; so
also, conversely, is the heavenly wisdom of God an earthly folly to man" (p. 212). Nevertheless, the ironic way in which the narrator presents the pamphlet indicates that Plinlimmon's philosophy is not presented as a solution, but as another problem, another unhappy approach to Pierre's dilemma.

Two paragraphs before the Plinlimmon pamphlet begins, the narrator clearly distances himself from Plinlimmon's philosophy by establishing his ironic and ambiguous stance, and he maintains this stance throughout his discussion of the pamphlet. First, he establishes his ironic stance by his absurd repetition of "comprehension" and "comprehend" in the same manner in which he mimicked Mrs. Glendinning's repetition of Pierre's "docility." As the narrator begins to explain how a man refuses to, or actually does not, "comprehend" a philosophy of life that illustrates errors in the theory and conduct of his life, he repeats "comprehend" thirteen times in one paragraph. Then, in the same paragraph, the narrator equivocates pretentiously in order to show his ambiguous attitude toward Plinlimmon's pamphlet:

... neither points of the above speculations do we, in set terms, attribute to Pierre in connection with the rag pamphlet. Possibly both might be applicable; possibly neither. Certain it is, however, that at the time, in his own heart, he seemed to think that he did not fully comprehend the strange writer's conceit in all its bearings. Yet was this conceit apparently one of the plainest in the world;
so natural, a child might almost have originated it. Nevertheless, again so profound, that scarce Jugglarius himself could be the author; and still again so exceedingly trivial, that Jugglarius' smallest child might well have been ashamed of it. (pp. 209-210)

It might also be recalled that when Melville as the implied author of the novel satirized Pierre's transcendental views in the first half of the novel, he assumed an ironic stance by affecting a bombastic and/or rhapsodic style. And when he satirized Mrs. Glendinning, he let her speak for herself so that she may reveal her own characteristics. Now, he affects a matter-of-fact style in order to distance himself from the contents of the pamphlet, and here again, he lets Plinlimmon speak for himself:

"Now in an artificial world like ours, the soul of man is further removed from its God and the Heavenly Truth, than the chronometer carried to China, is from Greenwich. And, as that chronometer, if at all accurate, will pronounce it to be 12 o'clock high-noon, when the China local watches say, perhaps, it is 12 o'clock midnight; so the chronometric soul, if in this world true to its great Greenwich in the other, will always, in its so-called intuitions of right and wrong, be contradicting the mere local standards and watch-maker's brains of this earth." (p.211)

Though seemingly unimportant, this curt, unadorned and almost scientific style is functional, for it enables the implied author to maintain his ambiguous stance: the style suggests that he is presenting the author of the pamphlet as a rational and fair-minded person whose philosophy merits the reader's attention, and yet, it also
indicates that the implied author is distancing himself from Plinlimmon. And soon, the function of this ambiguous stance becomes clear as the purpose of the pamphlet comes into focus in the following passage. Behind his narrative mask, Melville pokes, with one stroke, at both Plinlimmon's utilitarian philosophy as an alternate approach to Pierre's dilemma, and at the enthusiasts like Pierre:

"In short, this Chronometrical and Horological conceit, in sum, seems to teach this:—That in things terrestrial (horological) a man must not be governed by ideas celestial (chronometrical); that certain minor self-renunciations in this life his own mere instinct for his own every-day general well-being will teach him to make, but he must by no means make a complete unconditional sacrifice of himself in behalf of any other being, or any cause, or any conceit. (For, does aught else completely and unconditionally sacrifice itself for him? God's own sun does not abate one tittle of its heat in July, however you swoon with that heat in the sun. And if it did abate its heat on your behalf, then the wheat and the rye would not ripen; and so, for the incidental benefit of one, a whole population would suffer.)" (p. 214)

First, Plinlimmon advocates the utilitarian philosophy by overtly suggesting that one must benefit others only if it is expedient for him to do so, so that the deficiency of the philosophy becomes clear to those who want to see it. Then, he gibes at the enthusiasts with a sardonic question: why do you want to sacrifice yourself for any one when the universe, even God's sun, does not sacrifice anything for you? In context, one must assume that
Melville is still exposing the selfish views of the utilitarian philosophy by Plinlimmon's mocking rhetorical question. Yet, in view of his ambiguous stance established through his narrator and through the manner in which the pamphlet is presented, Melville's remark is highly tantalizing to the reader. To make his stance even more ambiguous, Melville places Plinlimmon's mocking remark in parenthesis. In this remark, Melville's sardonic attitude toward God seems to surface, and his ironic tone is reinforced by the following expostulation: "A virtuous expediency, then, seems the highest desirable or attainable earthly excellence for the mass of men, and is the only earthly excellence that their Creator intended for them" (p. 214). Thus, the context suggests that Melville is poking fun only at the virtuous expediency of the utilitarian philosophy, but his tone suggests that he is also jeering at the enthusiasts who believe in their chronometrical ideals without realizing that God made these ideals impracticable on this earth. This controlled ambiguity not only helps to show the inadequacy of both utilitarian and enthusiastic approaches to the ontological-moral questions explored in the novel; but it also reflects Melville's own ambiguous attitude toward his ontological problems; his implicit criticism of the utilitarian philosophy suggests his latent "belief" in the infinite capacities of
man, and his sardonic tone reflects his ever present skepticism—"unbelief."

In sharp contrast to the ironic and ambiguous way in which the Plinlimmon pamphlet is presented, the "sarcophagus" passage reveals in a direct, unambiguous, and uncontrolled manner, that one can never reach the chronometric soul, for there is no chronometric soul. And the passage, one of the climactic passages in the second half of the work, not only reveals the cause of Melville's metaphysical paralysis, but also provides clues as to how the same cause paralyzes his aesthetic function.

Ten million things were as yet uncovered to Pierre. The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king. Yet now, forsooth, because Pierre began to see through the first superficiality of the world, he fondly weens he has come to the unlayered substance. But, far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. To its axis, the world being nothing but superinduced superficies. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid—and no body is there!—appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man! (pp. 284-285)

When Pierre finally confronts the central metaphysical problem which he has been skirting around, the narrator searches into Pierre's mind in order to portray the hero's thought: Pierre must penetrate the layers of the world before he can reach its unlayered substance. As the geological metaphors
suggest, the pyramids of a soul are analogous to the layers of the world: "the old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth," and "it takes time to unwrap" it. But, because Pierre was able to penetrate the illusory surface of the world—the subjective world built on his romantic illusions, and the objective world founded on artificial values and institutions—he thinks that he can find the "unlayered substance" of his soul. Suddenly, the narrator's own thought seems to take over the passage as the point of view shifts from "he" to "we" (humanity). The problem is not one of formal clarity; although the lack of transition from "the world" to "the soul" makes the passage appear to be elliptic, it reflects effectively the imaginative pattern of the narrator. The problem is the uncontrolled and almost unconscious urgency of the narrator's own ontological thought that completely stymies his portrayal of Pierre's thought. Consider how the narrator's tone becomes emotionally tense, serious, and direct as he unfolds his thought: our mind is nothing but a "surface stratified on surface," not only because it receives its substance from the world, a fiction, but also because its "superinduced superficialities"—subjective illusions—themselves are derived from and conditioned by the world. Consider then the appalling truth! What is appalling is not that the mind has no unlayered substance. What is appalling is that the soul, the "central room" in the pyramids of the mind, has
"the soul of a man" is "appallingly vacant" as it is vast.

The dramatic change in the narrative stance from an ironic and ambiguous stance in the Plinlimmon pamphlet to an intensely personal stance in the "sarcophagus" passage might be also compared to the changes in the narrator's stance in the passages studied in the first part of this chapter. Just as his ironic stance becomes direct and serious as the narrator becomes preoccupied with "hell-glimpses" in the first half, so his ironic stance displayed in his treatment of Plinlimmon's pamphlet becomes intensely personal as he gropes into the nihilistic region of the sarcophagus. In fact, in so far as the narrator becomes intrusive as he reflects his own thought, the present passage is similar to the intrusive passages (pp. 107-108) studied earlier. Nevertheless, the narrator's state of mind has changed greatly from his earlier state. In the earlier passages, the narrator was as much conscious of his aesthetic function as he was aware of his problem of revealing "Truth": "Save me from being bound to Truth, liege lord, as I am now. How shall I steal yet further into Pierre, and show how this heavenly fire was helped to be contained in him, by mere contingent things" (p. 107). In the present passage, the narrator is so intensely preoccupied with his thought that he does not seem
to be conscious of his aesthetic function. The elliptic way in which his mind moves from "he" to "we" and from "the world" to "the soul" shows not only his imaginative pattern but also the pressure that is being exerted on his mind. For the thought that weighs heavily on his mind now is no longer that the "heavenly fire" is contained in Pierre, "by mere contingent things." The thought is that there is nothing in the soul of a man except those "contingent things." And since the aesthetic distance between the narrator and Melville has become blurred after the early sections of the first half, the reader finds it difficult to distinguish between Melville's own thought and the narrator's.

The "sarcophagus" passage is symptomatic of Melville's metaphysical problem in the second half of the work. What is uppermost in his mind is that if the soul is empty, or if the soul itself is fiction, merely one of the layers of the superinduced substance, then the social and ideological fiction is a result of the ontological one. Pierre might reach the "sarcophagus" of his mind as he mines into his layered substances, but he will find nothing there. For the chronometric soul is not merely moved from his horological soul; there is no chronometric soul. It can be speculated, then, that the way in which this nihilism leads to the narrator's aesthetic paralysis in the "sarcophagus"
passage reflects the way in which Melville's nihilistic vision leads to his own aesthetic and metaphysical paralysis in the second half of the novel. Just as the narrator's aesthetic function becomes paralyzed when his thought moves toward the "appallingly vacant" soul of a man, so Melville's aesthetic efforts become paralyzed when he is disturbed by a nihilistic thought. Although we cannot determine in precise terms how disturbing was the effect of this nihilism on Melville's aesthetic function, nevertheless, in view of the ways in which his metaphysical concern affected his artistic endeavor in the novels we have studied, and in view of the ways in which the narrator's intrusive comments reflected Melville's own thought in the first half of the present novel, we can be certain that the "sarcophagus" passage reflects Melville's own disillusionment. And his disillusionment manifests itself in the way in which he handles his aesthetic and metaphysical problems in the second half.

Not only does Melville's nihilism paralyze his metaphysical exploration in the second half of the novel, as shown earlier, but it also leads to an aesthetic problem. For unlike Plinlimmon, who has presumably learned the same metaphysical truth with which the narrator is preoccupied, yet prefers to maintain "silence" for the sake of his mental tranquillity and the expediency of his life, the
narrator attempts to reveal the truth through Pierre's writing. Unhappily, however, his attempt to make Pierre a writer leads him to an aesthetic dilemma: Pierre writes to reveal truth, but the act of writing necessarily involves him in the world's artificiality. As the geological metaphors in the "sarcophagus" passage suggest, both the world and the human mind consist of layered substances. The writer cannot do away with his layered substance anymore than the world can do away with its stratified rock formations, for he must build his chapters from the layered substance of his experience. Therefore, by writing a book, the writer is adding another lie to the world of lies as Pierre will discover eventually.

For the more and the more that he wrote, and the deeper and the deeper that he dived, Pierre saw the everlasting elusiveness of Truth; the universal lurking insincerity of even the greatest and purest written thoughts. Like knavish cards, the leaves of all great books were covertly packed. He was but packing one set the more; and that a very poor jaded set and pack indeed. (p. 339)

Fiction is not only incapable of unraveling the intricacies of the human mind; it is also a lie, because it is the product of a mind composed of the fictive layers of the world. Melville can either accept the writer's role as a confidence-man (as he does in The Confidence-Man) or lapse into silence as Plinlimmon does (and he himself did after The Confidence-Man). Melville accepts neither
option in Pierre. It can be observed, therefore, that his unwillingness to play the game of writing is often reflected in the early sections of the second half when the narrator speaks defiantly of the conventions of writings as if to break through the layers of the world's artificial conventions by writing as he pleases: "Among the various conflicting modes of writing history, there would seem to be two grand practical distinctions, ... By the one mode, all contemporaneous circumstances, facts, and events must be set down contemporaneously; by the other, they are only to be set down as the general stream of the narrative shall dictate; ... I am careless of either; both are well enough in their way; I write precisely as I please" (p. 244). Then without any apparent justification, metaphysical or aesthetic, the narrator launches a trivial attack on "Juvenile American Literature" and Pierre's rubbish writing which was not even mentioned in the first half of the work. And as he discusses Pierre as "a juvenile author," he facetiously admits his difficulty in maintaining his ironic stance: "—entirely now to drop all irony, if hitherto any thing like that has been indulged in—those fugitive things of Master Pierre's were the veriest common-place. ... It is impossible to talk or to write without apparently throwing oneself helplessly open" (pp. 257, 259).
In light of the foregoing observation, it can be suggested that Melville's aesthetic dilemma accounts not only for the narrator's attack on "Juvenile American Literature," but also for the narrator's failure to fulfill his aesthetic responsibility of objectifying and articulating Pierre's metaphysical and psychological problems revealed in the first half. In the first half of the work, although Melville was unable to maintain his aesthetic distance from the narrator, he was able to distance his narrator from Pierre by dissociating the narrator's thoughts from Pierre's. But now when he sees a parallel between Pierre's aesthetic dilemma and his own, Melville cannot maintain the distance between the narrator and Pierre. The narrator not only feelingly describes the agonizing moments of Pierre's creative experience, "Who shall tell all the thoughts and feelings of Pierre in that desolate and shivering room, when at last the idea obtruded, that the wiser and the profounder he should grow, the more and more he lessened the chances for bread" (p. 305); but he also cries out as Pierre does: "Civilization, Philosophy, Ideal Virtue! behold your victim!" (p. 302). At such "raving" moments in the novel, the reader finds it difficult to distinguish Melville's agony and despair from those of Pierre. Thus, the novel that begins as a carefully planned satire becomes a ranting self-revelation,
for Melville does not objectify his hero's tragic experience, nor does he manipulate his nihilistic views into art.

It is not surprising then that Melville's effort to explore "the cave of man" often becomes an "incomprehensible raving" as Pierre moves toward his own metaphysical stasis.

"But replaced by--by--by--Oh God, Isabel, unhand me!" cried Pierre, starting up. "Ye heavens, that have hidden yourselves in the black hood of the night, I call to ye! If to follow Virtue to her uttermost vista, where common souls never go; if by that I take hold on hell, and the uttermost virtue, after all, prove but a betraying pander to the monstrous-est vice,—then close in and crush me, ye stony walls, and into one gulf let all things tumble together!"

"My brother! this is some incomprehensible raving," pealed Isabel, throwing both arms around him;—"my brother, my brother!" (p. 273)

When Pierre searches into his "furthest inland soul" and there finds the latent sources of his impulses toward Isabel ("hell-glimpses"), he becomes aware of the illusoriness of his vision, not only of the world but of himself. He now feels that nothing can be affirmed; everything is an illusion: "I am a nothing. It is all a dream--we dream that we dreamed we dream" (p. 274). And when his experience with "the inventional mysteries of composition" makes him "uncompromisingly skeptical on all novel visionary hypotheses of any kind" (p. 354), Pierre doubts the validity of every action and concept. He has learned from
his experience that life is fiction just as "writing" is. Thus, the way Melville's nihilistic views cause his aesthetic dilemma, the way his metaphysical exploration becomes an "incomprehensible raving," and the way Pierre reaches his metaphysical dead end are all symptomatic of Melville's metaphysical paralysis in the second half.

At the end, Melville manages to provide a final insight into Pierre's dilemma as he sums up in "A Foreign Portrait" the whole range of his hero's metaphysical-psychological problem. Through "the inventional mysteries" of his book, Pierre has learned how a human mind can create its own illusion, its own fiction. Now as he looks at "No. 99, A Stranger's head, by an unknown hand," he becomes aware that his "presumptive evidence" of Isabel being his sister might have been a projection of his own mind: "the original of this second portrait was as much the father of Isabel as the original of the chair-portrait. But perhaps there was no original at all to this second portrait; it might have been a pure fancy-piece" (p. 353). It dawns upon Pierre that his evidence might have been a product of his "procreative enthusiasm," and that he might have mistaken his unconscious impulses of flesh and blood for his heaven-scented enthusiasm.

Opposite "the Stranger" was hung a portrait of Beatrice Cenci: "Now, this Cenci and 'the Stranger' were
hung at a good elevation in one of the upper tiers; and, from the opposite walls, exactly faced each other; so that in secret they seemed pantomimically talking over and across the heads of the living spectators below" (p. 351).

Both portraits are ambiguous. "The Stranger," to whom Isabel feels affinity, is a darkly handsome young man's head, "portentously looking out of a dark, shaded ground, and ambiguously smiling." The wonderfulness of the Cenci, before which Lucy stands, consists in a striking contrast:

... half-identical with, and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one--... namely, soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, vailed by funerally jetty hair... so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being, being double-hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity--incest and patricide. (p. 351)

These portraits suggest not only the ambiguities of Lucy and Isabel but also the ambiguities of good and evil. Such ambiguities are part of the cosmic irony as they are beyond the comprehension of the "spectators below"; and the exploration of the inscrutable irony of such cosmic design is beyond the pale of a popular romance, and even beyond the pale of literary art. Fiction, like painting, can only represent these ambiguities; it cannot unravel them: "All's o'er, and ye know him not!" And yet, Melville had an unmanageable impulse to reveal his struggle
with the unsolvable problem of existence as he explored Pierre's dilemma, and in revealing his hero's struggle, he wrote like Pierre. Although it expresses the profounder emanations of the human mind, "Pierre is too much like the book one can imagine being produced by its hero."

In conclusion, the structure of Pierre is seriously affected by Melville's refusal to maintain his aesthetic stance, his unmanageable impulse to reveal truth, and above all, his nihilistic vision of the world. The fact that in the second half Pierre reverberates Melville's earlier intimations of Pierre's motives (Book V, VII) and "common novels" (Book VII, VIII) substantiates the assumption that Melville's metaphysical thoughts begin to affect the structure of the book in the first half. Yet, it is his nihilistic thought that causes his aesthetic and metaphysical paralyses, which become inseparable in the second half since the former is caused and often accompanied by the latter.

As we reach "the untimely, timely end" of the novel, we complete the study of Melville's three major metaphysical novels, which are often called his trilogy: Mardi, Moby-Dick, and Pierre. In each of these novels, Melville treats fiction primarily as a means of pursuing metaphysical realities, and therefore, his metaphysical preoccupation has profound effects on the form of his novel. In Mardi,
Melville's expanding metaphysical horizon is too immense to be artistically charted; his erupting ideas are too divergent to be made coherent. In *Moby-Dick*, the relation between Melville's metaphysics and the structure of the novel becomes clear as the novel progresses: Melville portrays Ahab's tragic dilemma in the dramatic chapters, and explores the metaphysical significance of his dilemma in Ishmael's expository chapters. Each mode of presentation becomes functional in the development of Melville's thematic material. In *Pierre*, as in *Mardi*, Melville encounters a number of structural problems. However, the problems Melville faces in *Pierre* are considerably different from those encountered in *Mardi*. In *Mardi*, Melville had to shift in form from romance to quest to travelogue-satire, and then to the philosophical symposium in an effort to find a form into which his divergent ideas could be incorporated. In *Pierre*, since Melville becomes too introspective to be able to articulate his findings in the depths of Pierre's soul, the novel finally becomes a nihilistic ranting. He questions not only the existence of metaphysical realities but also the validity of human thoughts and the fictional art that represents them.

In "A Foreign Portrait," however, Melville seems to come to terms with the possibility that there is no way one can ascertain metaphysical realities, and that there might
be nothing beyond what one can perceive. Melville's concluding discussion of the two portraits, of Isabel's and Lucy's reactions to them, and of the effect of the entire scene on Pierre clearly suggest that Melville is now illustrating that one can know only his own perceptions, and that one's perception is conditioned by his world. This metaphysical stance indicates that he accepts human limitations, perceptual and artistic; and it provides clues to the way in which he treats his metaphysical problems in his shorter works. For in his shorter works, Melville becomes more and more interested in the problems of perception as he approaches the problems of reality in terms of perception and in relation to the world which conditions it.
II. The Hyperborean Regions


2. In addition to what is mentioned here, there are many other intriguing suggestions about the mystery of Isabel in the first half: 1) her face seems to represent the history of mankind ("backward, hinting of some irrevocable sin; forward, pointing to some inevitable ill" p. 43); 2) her ambiguity suggests the mystery of the universe itself; 3) her hazy memory of her childhood suggests the mystery of man's unconscious mind.

3. Although Plinlimmon's pamphlet occurs at the beginning of the second half, it might be conjectured, in view of its affinity to the opening sections of the book, that the idea of the pamphlet might have been crystallized in one of the early stages in the gestation of the novel. And originally, Melville might have intended to show the unhappy consequences of Pierre's transcendental-romantic adventures in the city from a detached stance and in a similar manner in which he views the utilitarian's in the novel: Mrs. Glendinning, Reverend Falsegrave, and Plinlimmon.


5. After The Confidence-Man (1856), Melville only wrote poems, "Battle-Pieces" (1866), "Clarel" (1876), and "John Mar and Other Sailors" (1888), until he wrote Billy Budd (1891).
6. In this passage, it is clear that Pierre is speaking, but since Pierre reverberates the narrator's earlier intimations on Pierre's motives, and since the narrator often raves like Pierre, the aesthetic distance between the two is not always clear.


8. Melville regains his aesthetic control of the novel at the end, but toward the end of the second half, the novel often threatens to become a raving contest between the narrator and Pierre.
Chapter Five

Melville's Shorter Works: Toward Realism

Like "the mingled, mingling threads of life" itself, Melville's intellectual activity is a rhythmic progression in experience; it becomes eruptive cyclically, with each eruptive period followed by a period of calm as if to follow his own dictum: "... calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause" (Moby-Dick, p. 406). If Pierre could be considered a product of Melville's intellectual storm, then his shorter works might be viewed as the products of his intellectual calm. In the final pages of Pierre, there was already an indication that Melville was deeply aware of his limitations in dealing with the metaphysical problems explored in the novel; now in his shorter works written in the 1850's, he begins to re-examine the adequacy of the Ishmaelian view of man's knowledge of the world and of man's "attainable felicity." And accepting the limitations of human intellect and the
limitations of fictional form, he treats his metaphysical problems circumstantially. This circumstantial treatment of his problems suggests that his focus shifts from metaphysical to mundane problems, from "the ungraspable phantom of life" to "the clay of man." And since Melville deals more and more with "the same old crowd round the custom-house," his metaphysical problems often remain beneath the surface, and they no longer disturb the structure of his works.

In view of Melville's own definition of realism, "restricting your report of experience to what you could measure scientifically," his circumstantial treatment of metaphysical problems might be considered as a movement toward realism. In order to illustrate this movement, I want to examine four of Melville's representative works written between 1853 and 1856: "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853); "Benito Cereno" (1855); Israel Potter (1855); "I and My Chimney" (1856). "Bartleby the Scrivener" provides a link between Pierre and the shorter works, for it deals with Melville's old problem of perceiving metaphysical realities as Bartleby struggles to perceive reality in that dead wall revery of his; and it also deals with a psychological and sociological problem of how to respond to the man intent on perceiving reality. "The Encantadas" (1854) defines and illustrates Melville's
vision of ontological realities, the realities of the
fallen world, and it anticipates the ways in which these
realities are to be explored in his shorter works. "The
Encantadas," however, will not be studied in detail since
much of what is to be said here has been fully discussed
by Melville scholars. Once these ontological realities
are understood as the realities of fallen life, they are
explored empirically in "Benito Cereno" and "I and My
Chimney." "Benito Cereno" is almost entirely concerned
with Melville's recurring theme of the discrepancy between
appearance and reality, and as such is primarily concerned
with perception. Yet, the reality with which the story is
concerned is not a metaphysical reality but a reality of
sociological and ontological problems, and finally Delano's
problem of perceiving this reality becomes an epistemolog-
ical problem. "I and My Chimney" re-examines all the im-
plications of the problem of dealing with the realities of
existence as "I" in the story ponders on the mystery of his
chimney. It can be speculated then that "Bartleby," "The
Encantadas," and "Benito Cereno" all converge on "I and
My Chimney," although from different directions, as indi-
cated heretofore.

Israel Potter is not one of Melville's short tales,
yet it is written in the same period in which his other
short works are written, and his fictional method is
consistent with the methods employed in the other short works studied in this chapter. As the ontological and sociological problems in "Bartleby," "The Encantadas," and "Benito Cereno" are treated as part of human history, so are the events in the life of Israel Potter viewed historically. And although the aesthetic distance between Melville and his narrator varies from one work to another, in Israel Potter as well as in all the short works studied here, the narrator assumes a detached stance as he plays the role of a historian. For these reasons, Israel Potter should be considered as part of Melville's developing realism. Furthermore, just as "Bartleby" serves as a bridge between Pierre and the shorter works, so Israel Potter provides a link between the shorter works and The Confidence-Man: the former provides a panoramic view of the history of an American exile in times of the American Revolution, and the latter presents a panoramic view of the surface of American society in Melville's time. Since these works are closely related to each other in theme and method, they will be studied collectively rather than chronologically. Now before proceeding with the works to be examined, I must give brief stipulative definitions of the realities discussed in this chapter since they deal with different levels of reality. Metaphysical realities refer to all divine and natural realities which may be conceived or
contemplated by the human mind but are beyond the reach of human knowledge. Ontological realities refer to the facts of fallen existence which cannot be proved scientifically but may be comprehended by human perception and intellect. Empirical realities include all human and natural realities that can be ascertained by experience; all sociological and circumstantial realities of life that can be shown scientifically.

"Bartleby the Scrivener" is characteristic of Melville's shorter works. Melville's treatment of his metaphysical problem is circumstantial; his narrator plays the role of a historian, and Melville maintains an artistically detached stance. In "Bartleby," Melville is still concerned with metaphysical and psychological problems as in *Pierre*, but his treatment of these problems is circumstantial as they are examined in sociological terms. Instead of coming to grips with the nature of the human soul as he did in *Pierre*, Melville places Bartleby's metaphysical dilemma in a sociological context. Consider, for example, the structure of the lawyer-narrator's office in which Bartleby is placed. The lawyer's office is a prison surrounded by the walls of a business society. Although the view from the office shows two contrasting views of the world, black and white, these views obviously represent the simplified views of life the business world offers, and
they are deficient intellectually and spiritually: the view of "the white wall" might be considered "rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call 'life';" the other view, "an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall, black by age and everlasting shade," brings out "its lurking beauty," yet it represents only "a contrast," and "nothing more." Bartleby is further surrounded by a third wall, a blank wall, and a fourth wall, a social wall, which the lawyer-narrator erects between himself and Bartleby: "a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my voice" (p. 12).

These walls represent the social oppressions of Wall Street, as its subtitle, "A Story of Wall Street," suggests, but the fact that Bartleby stares out his window at the blank wall until his eyes become glazed suggests that he is hemmed in by more than social walls. Just as the White Whale was a wall shoved near to Ahab to obstruct his perception of the metaphysical reality, so the blank wall might be that wall which obstructs Bartleby's perception of reality. Ahab attempted to strike through that wall by sheer defiance; now Bartleby attempts to strike through his wall by vision. Whether Bartleby feels that the blank wall represents a vision of the world as a prison or as an illusion, he attempts to gain a true knowledge of the
world, the reality behind that blank wall, through his sensory perception. But having failed to perceive reality even after breaking through the appearances shown by the black and white views of the world and by the superficial life of the lawyer-narrator, Bartleby refuses to accept the utilitarian version of "attainable felicity" suggested by the narrator's "reason." Like Ahab's failed quest, Bartleby's failed effort to perceive reality in his dead wall revery only leads to his alienation from society, and his tragic "preference" to seek what cannot be known by human perception and his "negative" assertion of "will" ("I prefer not to") to free himself from the prison of his society ultimately leads to his annihilation of himself.

The ways in which Melville characterizes his narrator provide further clues to his intention, his method, and the meaning of the story. First, the narrator is characterized as a man with a considerable biographical and literary interest: "While, of other law-copyists, I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist, for a full and satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature" (p. 3). Implicit in this statement is a suggestion that the story of Bartleby is intended as a biography of a man; strange and incomplete as it may be, nevertheless, it is to be approached as a history of
mankind. Then, Melville distances himself from the narrator by characterizing him as a prudent, methodical, vain lawyer, who "in the cool tranquillity of a snug retreat, does a snug business among rich men's bonds, and mortgages, and title-deeds." The lawyer is also a self-conscious narrator who characterizes himself as "an eminently safe man": "I am a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best" (p. 4). This aesthetic distance between Melville and the narrator, manipulated through a subtly ironic tone, becomes a structurally functional element in showing two forms of alienation explored in the story: Bartleby's alienation from society, and the lawyer-narrator's alienation from life itself. Finally, Melville's early focus on the lawyer-narrator suggests that he is using the narrator as a clue to the story's meaning. As the narrator is pitted against Bartleby, one serves as a commentary on the other.

When Bartleby "would prefer not to" do anything, including copying, the eminently decent and reasonable lawyer attempts to understand the scrivener's incredible behavior, and as he does, he becomes deeply conscious of his own dilemma, of his own irrational and rebellious forces threatening to restore his denied humanity. The initial effect on the lawyer of Bartleby's refusal to proofread a law
The document begins to disturb the tranquility of his snug retreat as the lawyer loses his faith in reason. The lawyer recovers his utilitarian reason to confront Bartleby's "passive resistance": "He is useful to me. . . . To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange wilfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience" (p. 17). But soon, he is beset by his own irrational forces to be rebelled against again, and as he becomes aware of his own irrational force rebelling against his prudent self, his humanity seems to assert itself as if it were breaking out of its snug retreat to achieve a tragic vision of human misery.

. . . what miserable friendlessness and loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible! . . . For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. . . . The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. I remembered the bright silks and sparkling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi of Broadway; and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist, and thought to myself, Ah, happiness courts the light, so we deem the world is gay; but misery hides aloof, so we deem that misery there is none. . . . (pp. 22-23)

The lawyer's inner conflict between his humanity and his reason climaxes in the pivotal passage of the story. As he becomes aware of the intensity of the scrivener's
suffering, he gains a tragic insight: "his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered." But the lawyer's prudential feeling soon overcomes his tragic sense of life, and finally, his common sense triumphs over his humanity.

... To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach. (p. 25)

The lawyer-narrator justifies his pragmatic philosophy by explaining that his prudential feeling does not proceed from his selfishness but from his recognition of "a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill." In the sense that the narrator's philosophy proceeds from his recognition of human limitations in dealing with metaphysical problems, e.g., in reaching Bartleby's soul, it has affinity to Ishmael's philosophy of "attainable felicity." Yet, Ishmael lowers his concept of attainable felicity in order to find ways in which he could fulfill his human responsibilities, whereas the lawyer resorts to his lowered conceit of attainable felicity in order to avoid them, to preserve that mundane felicity which would enable him to keep his snug retreat intact. Bartleby sees through the lawyer-narrator. If being "reasonable" means being afraid
to share human miseries, living a superficial life, alienating from life itself, then Bartleby does not wish to have anything to do with the lawyer's "reason": "At present I would prefer not to be a little reasonable" (p. 26). Viewed in this light, Bartleby's remark toward the end of the story, "I know you, and I want nothing to say to you" (p. 43), serves as a succinct commentary on the narrator's utilitarian philosophy.

The significance of the lawyer-narrator's "reason" is illustrated further in the following passage as his pragmatic sense of charity provides a key to the ironic distance between Melville and the narrator.

... charity often operates as a vastly wise and prudent principle—a great safeguard to its possessor. Men have committed murder for jealousy's sake, and anger's sake, and hatred's sake, and selfishness' sake, and spiritual pride's sake; but no man, that ever I heard of, ever committed a diabolical murder for sweet charity's sake. Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should, especially with high-tempered men, prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy.... (p. 34)

The narrator is afraid to be involved with Bartleby except financially, for how could he involve himself with Bartleby when his business and his professional reputation and his "safety" are at stake? To the narrator, charity is not an errand of life; it is an errand of business.

Curiously enough, the narrator's final words seem to echo Melville's own sentiment: "Ah, Bartleby! Ah,
humanity!" Yet, whereas the narrator's sense of tragedy stems from his superficial sympathy toward men like Bartleby, Melville's sense of tragedy springs from a deeper awareness of the human condition, whether imposed by God and/or by the world of Astors. Melville, to be sure, saw in Bartleby "pallid hopelessness" of humanity, humanity stubbornly resisting enslavement, humanity aspiring to find meaning in a meaningless world. But perhaps Melville might also have seen man's frailty in the narrator's own enslaved life: how difficult for us to break out of our "snug retreat" to assert our humanity; how we aspire to reach our soul, and how we fail. Judging from the way the narrator struggles to free himself from Bartleby, first by attempting to buy him off then by moving his office to another location, one might say that the narrator had to alienate himself from life itself to deny his humanity: "strange to say--I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of" (p. 38). Viewed from Melville's point of view, then, the narrator too was walled in by his own "snug" world. Charitable as he might be, the narrator's sense of life was numbed by "the cool tranquillity of a snug retreat." Though "the bond of a common humanity drew [him] irresistibly to gloom," he could not break out of his snug retreat to reach Bartleby's soul. Thus, only from Melville's point of view, which is aesthetically
distanced from that of the narrator throughout the story, can we see the two inmates of "Wall Street"; and only through this aesthetic distance can we see the function of the narrator in the thematic development of "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street."

Whereas "Bartleby" is preoccupied with some metaphysical reality that cannot be found, "The Encantadas" is concerned with ontological realities that can be explored imaginatively as well as empirically. And the ways in which Melville moves from his general views of the fallen world to the particular incidents and stories that substantiate and illustrate the general views are characteristic of his developing realism. For instance, Melville's evocative descriptions of the hellish Enchanted Isles in the first two sketches represent his vision of the realities of the fallen world. As the narrator suggests, the barren isles blasted by fire look "much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration... In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist" ("The Isles at Large," pp. 49, 51). These isles are a hell inhabited by the damned, the tortoise that toils and struggles for life. Yet, these doomed isles have their bright side, if one looks for it. "The isles are not perhaps unmitigated gloom"; the proof is that the doomed inhabitants of the isles have both black and bright sides: "even the tortoise,
dark and melancholy as it is upon the back, still possesses a bright side" ("Two Sides to a Tortoise," p. 55). This double vision of the fallen world suggested by the first two sketches is illustrated by the particular stories of Hunilla in Sketch Eighth and Oberlus in Sketch Ninth. Oberlus represents the dark side of the fallen world. His appearance is that of "the victim of some malignant sorceress." His nature is so warped and crooked that "the very handle of his hoe seemed gradually to have shrunk and twisted in his grasp ... " (p. 103). Also, like the Enchanted Isles, he is an evil enchanter who lures castaway seamen into slavery; and as a treacherous, misanthropic tyrant, Oberlus's nature suggests "the mystery of iniquity." The Chola widow, Hunilla, on the other hand, illustrates the bright side of the fallen world. The story of her unbearable agony and misfortunes shows the burden of fallen existence, but she displays her noble character in enduring that burden, and there is no evil in her. The story is that a French whaler leaves Hunilla, her husband, and her brother on Norfolk shore to hunt tortoises for oil. The whaler is to return for them after a four months' cruise. But in a few weeks, the two men die in a boat accident. Not only does she have to witness the tragic accident, but she has to endure the long agony of waiting for the returning ship, which never comes. She is
eventually rescued by the narrator's whaler, but only after more than 180 days of waiting and suffering, after experiencing "the sharpest of mortal pangs." Yet despite all her misfortunes, Hunilla nobly endures them without bearing ill feelings toward any one.

If Melville's method of presenting his view of the complexity of the fallen world illustrates a movement toward realism, it also shows his awareness of the limitations of his method. If realism meant "restricting your report of experience to what you could measure scientifically, that/empirical method/ seemed to him even less true." The world is too complex to be explored in measurable terms, for man's perception of it is often inadequate and inaccurate. As Bartleby's failed effort suggests, man's vision, a sensory experience, is inadequate as a means of perceiving reality. And here again, the view from Rock Rodondo illustrates the problems of perception explored in his shorter works. Man's vision is inadequate not only for knowing metaphysical realities but for knowing empirical realities as well. The view from Rock Rodondo provides a broad overview of the isles, and this overview is essential in knowing their relationships to one another and to the wide waters around them. Still, this view is deficient in two major aspects: one, although it provides a comprehensive view of the isles, what is beyond the fading horizon
is beyond the reach of human vision; two, what it appears to be from a distance is different from what it reveals at a close distance.

... It is visible at the distance of thirty miles; and, fully participating in that enchantment which pervades the group, when first seen afar invariably is mistaken for a sail. Four leagues away, of a golden, hazy noon, it seems some Spanish Admiral's ship, stacked up with glittering canvas. Sail ho! Sail ho! Sail ho! from all three masts. But coming nigh, the enchanted frigate is transformed space into a craggy keep. (p. 61)

Melville, therefore, moves to the particular isles in order to take a close look at the "craggy keep" in the ensuing sketches. But does the "craggy keep" reveal its real nature? Can one perceive its real nature at a close distance? Can one gain a true knowledge of the world from an empirical study? These are the major questions examined in "Benito Cereno." Man's perception presents a problem not only because it receives its data from his limited experience, such as visual experience, but also because it is conditioned by his personal disposition and his experience itself. The central question of "Benito Cereno" is, then, to what extent does one's innocence affect one's perception of empirical realities.

... Captain Delano's surprise might have deepened into some uneasiness had he not been a person of a singularly undistrustful good-nature, not liable, ... to indulge in personal alarms, any way involving the imputation of malign evil in man. Whether, in view of what humanity is
capable, such a trait implies, along with a benevolent heart, more than ordinary quickness and accuracy of intellectual perception, may be left to the wise to determine. (p. 256)

Captain Delano's inaccurate perception stems largely from his spiritual innocence, "a singularly undistrustful nature," and from a conflict between his intuition and his innocence. Innocence makes one see the world as harmonious: the lion lies down with the lamb as in Blake's world of innocence; intuition makes one sense the lion's teeth waiting for the innocent lamb. In Melville's discourse of the problems of perception, "innocence" often suggests spiritual naivety and/or religious conscience, a veil that obscures the face of reality, and it is socially acquired as in the case of Starbuck, who looks "deep down and do believe." Captain Delano's spiritual innocence opposes his "involuntary feeling": his intuition makes him suspect the appearance of the San Dominick, but his innocence makes him see only "naked nature" and "pure tenderness and love."

Thus, Melville builds structurally a rhythmic tension, as he did in Moby-Dick, in order to show the wavering of Delano's mind and the succession of his antithetical feelings.

First, Melville uses antithetical syntactic structures to convey Delano's antithetical feelings. Then he deploys a series of short paragraphs, alternately showing
Delano's "belief and unbelief," as the captain oscillates between suspicion and faith, doubt and assurance. Then he pits one long paragraph against another to show a major confrontation between Delano's antithetical feelings. And characteristically, in each long paragraph, Melville creates "periodic" effects by manipulating his syntax in order to reinforce the intensity of Delano's feelings.

Consider, for example, the following long sample, which I must quote in order to show Delano's wavering mind moving toward a climax.

"Confound the faithful fellow," thought Captain Delano; "what a vexatious coincidence."

Possibly, the vexation might have been something different, were it not for the brisk confidence inspired by the breeze. But even as it was, he felt a slight twinge, from a sudden indefinite association in his mind of Babo with Atufal.

"Don Benito," said he, "I give you joy; the breeze will hold, and will increase. By the way, your tall man and time-piece, Atufal, stands without. By your order, of course?"

Don Benito recoiled, as if at some bland satirical touch, delivered with such adroit garnish of apparent good breeding as to present no handle for retort.

He is like one flayed alive, thought Captain Delano; where may one touch him without causing a shrink? (pp. 319-320)

. . . . . . . .

Hitherto, credulous good-nature had been too ready to furnish excuses for reasonable fears. Why was the Spaniard, so superfluously punctilious at times, now heedless of common propriety in not accompanying to the side his departing quest? Did indisposition forbid? Indisposition had not forbidden more irksome exertion that day. His last equivocal demeanor recurred. He had risen to his feet, grasped his guest's hand,
motioned toward his hat; then in an instant, all was eclipsed in sinister muteness and gloom. Did this imply one brief, repentant relenting at the final moment, from some iniquitous plot, followed by remorseless return to it? His last glance seemed to express a calamitous, yet acquiescent farewell to Captain Delano forever. Why decline the invitation to visit the sealer that evening? Or was the Spaniard less hardened than the Jew, who refrained not from supping at the board of him whom the same night he meant to betray? What imported all those day-long enigmas and contradictions, except they were intended to mystify, preliminary to some stealthy blow? Atufal, the pretended rebel, but punctual shadow, that moment lurked by the threshold without. He seemed a sentry, and more. Who, by his own confession, had stationed him there? Was the negro now lying in wait?

The Spaniard behind--his creature before: to rush from darkness to light was the involuntary choice.

The next moment, with clenched jaw and hand, he passed Atufal, and stood unharmed in the light. As he saw his trim ship lying peacefully at anchor, and almost within ordinary call; as he saw his household boat, with familiar faces in it, patiently rising and falling on the short waves by the San Dominick's side; and then, glancing about the decks where he stood, saw the oakum-pickers still gravely plying their fingers; and heard the low, buzzing whistle and industrious hum of the hatchet-polishers, still bestirring themselves over their endless occupation; and more than all, as he saw the benign aspect of nature, taking her innocent repose in the evening; the screened sun in the quiet camp of the west shining out like the mild light from Abraham's tent; as charmed eye and ear took in all these, with the chained figure of the black, clenched jaw and hand relaxed. Once again he smiled at the phantoms which had mocked him, and felt something like a tinge of remorse, that, by harboring them even for a moment, he should, by implication, have betrayed an atheist doubt of the ever-watchful Providence above. (pp. 323-324)

After a series of short paragraphs portraying Delano's vacillating mind, Melville uses a long paragraph to
intensify Delano's suspicion, first by juxtaposing interrogative sentences with expressions of doubt, then by deploying consecutive interrogative sentences to enhance the cumulative effects of doubt. In the second long paragraph, he uses a periodic sentence to depict the gaining force of Delano's faith as he piles up "as" clauses which provide visual evidences that strengthen the innocent captain's belief in "the ever-watchful Providence above." The short transitional interpolation between the two long paragraphs also suggests a conflict in Delano's mind. His intuition, "the involuntary choice," frightens him to "rush from darkness" as it makes him see the "enigmas and contradictions" aboard the San Dominick. And yet, the very next moment he refuses to see them; he dismisses "the chained figure of the black" as a phantom: for being suspicious of such evil acts as he imagined possible would be tantamount to doubting God's omnipresence.

The much criticized legal deposition at the end is just as functional as the structure of the main narrative of "Benito Cereno" in dealing with the problem of perception. It shows a new turn in Melville's handling of the problem as it casts "deeper shadows" in the reader's mind. On the surface, the legal deposition, along with a record of the conversation between Delano and Benito Cereno following the rescue of the latter, continues to show Delano's
spiritual innocence: even at the end when the riddles are unraveled, Delano still fails to comprehend the significance of Benito's spiritual problem, nor does he understand the spiritual miasma of the ancient world, in which Benito was both an agent and a victim. The legal deposition also reveals the discrepancy between the data provided by Delano's sensory experience and the facts furnished by the deposition. Nevertheless, the function of the deposition is not merely to unravel the mysteries introduced in the main narrative. Although the deposition offers an empirical solution to the problem of knowledge, this empirical treatment of the problem does not suggest that Melville is now following the forms of those "common novels" that "complacently" clear up their mysteries at the end. Rather, the deposition suggests that Melville is tantalizing the reader by raising a complex epistemological question. It is true that the deposition reveals the "craggy keep" of the world—the factual data. Yet, do these factual data provide us with the true knowledge of the world? Are they sufficient for us to struggle through the labyrinth of life where the enigmatic structure of its interior is deceptively hidden? Consider, for example, one of the discrepancies between appearance and reality that lead to an epistemological question. The deposition reveals that the negresses, one of whom seemed to Delano a
proof of "naked nature," "pure tenderness and love,"
"would have tortured to death, instead of simply killing, the Spaniards" (p. 346). This revelation, to be sure, shows the existence of evil in the universe, but does the reader gain a true knowledge of evil in terms of its nature and its sources after all the riddles about the negroes are unraveled? Or can the reader even be certain that the negroes are evil in view of the fact that the Spaniards set the black forces in motion by instituting slavery?
Thus, the deposition casts still "deeper shadows" on the true state of things since it suggests that even with the empirical data provided by the official document, our knowledge of the world is still inadequate.

In "Benito Cereno," Melville confronts the problem of perception empirically—in terms of our difficulty of perceiving the true state of affairs in our everyday life. This empirical treatment of the problem of perception and knowledge is continued in "I and My Chimney." In "I and My Chimney," all the aspects of reality which have been studied heretofore are encompassed by the "chimney": ontological realities, the facts of fallen existence, are suggested by the chimney's ugliness and cumbersomeness; empirical realities are represented by the secrets of its encrypted chamber; and metaphysical realities are suggested by the inscrutable structure of the chimney itself. And
although the symbol of the mystery of life in this story is a homely chimney rather than a cosmic whale in *Moby-Dick*, there are some thematic and structural similarities between the two works. Just as *Moby Dick* has an effable structure and force, so does the chimney have an enigmatic structure. In fact, its roof has the shape of "an anvil-headed whale"; its umbrageous cellar, like "far glens of gloom, resembles the dark, damp depths of primeval woods"; and its external appearance is deceptively misleading: "Large as the chimney appears upon the roof, that is nothing to its spaciousness below" (p. 380). One day, the narrator descends into this mysterious cellar to dig around the chimney's base in the hope that he might strike upon some secrets of its history, but he cannot even comprehend the actual dimensions of the cellar. So inscrutable is the chimney that even the master-mason who explores the possibility of its removal echoes the narrator's sense of wonder: "Large as it appears above the roof, I would not have inferred the magnitude of this foundation" (p. 392).

Because of its enigmatic structure, its ugly appearance, and its cumbersomeness which causes many inexpediencies, the narrator's wife proposes that the chimney be removed. But the narrator, an old man with a deeper understanding of the "architecture" of life than his wife, accepts the chimney as the foundation of the house: "a fact
--a sober, substantial fact." In view of the fact that these antithetical attitudes toward the chimney becomes the organizing principle of the story, it might be speculated that just as Ishmael and Ahab represent Melville's antithetical approaches to the metaphysical reality, so may the narrator and his wife represent Melville's conflicting attitudes toward the empirical reality. The wife's philosophy has affinity to Ahab's. Her maxim is not "Whatever is, is right, ... Her maxim is, whatever is, is wrong; and what is more, must be altered" (p. 385), and she also follows Swendenborgianism and "the Spirit Rapping philosophy." It is not surprising then that she, like Ahab who pursues Moby Dick in defiance of the unknown power, persistently searches into the chimney to discover the encrypted treasure in the secret chamber which is supposedly hidden somewhere in the chimney. The narrator, however, like Ishmael, wants to leave the mystery as mystery, and when he finds his wife delving into the chimney, he warns: "You will get your death one of these days, exploring all about as you do" (p. 401). And when the wife, unable to bear the sight of the "horrid old chimney," would destroy it, the narrator explains why the chimney must not be demolished: "if you demolish the foundation, what is to support the superstructure?" (p. 384). If the chimney is demolished, the secret of the hidden chamber
might be uncovered; but the entire house will be crumbled, including the explorer himself.

There is even an intimation in the old man's speech that the encrypted chamber symbolizes the same mystery Ahab was seeking to discover—what is behind "that wall":

"Wife, . . . even if there were a secret closet, secret it should remain, and secret it shall. Yes, wife, here for once I must say my say. Infinite sad mischief has resulted from the profane bursting open of secret recesses. Though standing in the heart of this house, though hitherto we have all nestled about it, unsuspicuous of aught hidden within, this chimney may or may not have a secret closet. But if it have, it is my kinsman's. To break into that wall would be to break into his breast. And that wall-breaking wish of Momus I account the wish of a church-robbing gossip and knave. Yes, wife, a vile eaves-dropping varlet was: Momus." (p. 406)

Even Ahab's doubts about the hidden mystery of life, something beyond the visible world, still lurk in the old man's speech: "this chimney may or may not have a secret closet."

Yet, Melville now explores the mystery of life in empirical terms. Melville's empirical method is shown not only in the homely symbol of the chimney but also in his characterization of the narrator and in his style which reflects the homely details of life. The narrator is characterized as a practical old man, who is interested in discovering the secrets of the chimney with a historian's interest, not with a quester's obsession. And although the narrator is like Ishmael in his acceptance of the human limitation
in exploring the mystery of life, his intellectual stance
should be contrasted with Ishmael's, especially with
respect to his attitude toward empirical realities.
Ishmael accepts the empirical realities only as the im-
pressions of the things perceived; convinced that he can
never know their real nature, he only plays with their
impressions until these impressions provide him with gener-
al ideas of the things, or until he can be "social with" them. The narrator, however, does not play with the im-
pressions of the chimney as Ishmael might have; he con-
fronts the chimney empirically, and accepts it as a sub-
stantial fact.

The narrator's tone is also as humorous and as wryly
ironic as Ishmael's: "that wall-breaking wish [Taji's,
Ahab's, Pierre's?] of Momus I account the wish of a church-
robbing gossip and knave." But even his tone is more home-
ly than Ishmael's poetic tone, as shown when he finds his
wife delving into the interior of the chimney: "What
devil, wife, prompted you to crawl into the ash-hole!" (p. 401). The contrast between Ishmael's and the present
narrator's comments on life will further illustrate
Melville's stylistic change:

... But the mingled, mingling threads of life
are woven by warp and woof: calms crossed by
storms, a storm for every calm. There is no
steady unretracing progress in this life; we do
not advance through fixed gradations, and at the
last one pause:—through infancy’s unconscious
spell, boyhood’s thoughtless faith, adolescence’
doubt (the common doom), then scepticism, then
disbelief, resting at last in manhood’s ponder-
ing repose of If. But once gone through, we
trace the round again; and are infants, boys,
and men, and Ifs eternally. Where lies the
final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? (Moby-
Dick, p. 406.)

... Going through the house, you seem to be
forever going somewhere, and getting nowhere.
It is like losing one’s self in the woods;
round and round the chimney you go, and if you
arrive at all, it is just where you started,
and so you begin again, and again get nowhere.
... ("I and My Chimney," p. 389)

Except for the metaphors in the first sentence, Ishmael’s
passage consists mainly of a series of abstract words, and
these abstract words show Ishmael’s mind at work, revealing
itself to the reader as he unfolds his thoughts. Although
the passage moves swiftly, it is tense as the pressure of
Ishmael’s thoughts move toward the ever increasing emo-
tional climax: “Where lies the final harbor, whence we
unmoor no more?” In contrast to the rhythmic tension
created by Ishmael’s evolving thoughts, the old man’s style
is simple and relaxed. The old man’s style does not re-
fect the metaphysician’s mind as does Ishmael’s. The
narrator’s mind is not in constant progression, discovering
and revealing new truths as Ishmael’s does; rather his mind
revolves around the old truth he has long since discovered.
The old man comments on the mystery of life as if he were
telling a familiar story, by comparing the house with the
chimney in the center with "the woods": to go through the house one must go around the chimney, and while going around it, one is likely to get lost as one might in the woods.

Both in Moby-Dick and "I and My Chimney," Melville is in control; his intellectual concerns and his artistic procedures are suited to each other, and in this respect these two works can be contrasted with Mardi and Pierre. Yet, as we have seen, there is a clear difference in Melville's stance and style between Moby-Dick and "I and My Chimney," and in that difference we see Melville accepting appearance as a part of reality and moving toward realism. Indeed, the "blank wall" in "Bartleby," the "craggy keep" in "The Encantadas," "naked nature" and "the secret mines" in "Benito Cereno," and perhaps death itself, are only "surfaces"--the mossy chimneys. But in "I and My Chimney," Melville comes to terms with these surfaces and accepts them as the "sober, substantial facts" of life.

We finally come to the historical dimension in which Melville's narrator portrays himself as a biographer in order to achieve a detached stance in revealing the futility and meaninglessness of Israel's wandering life. Although Israel Potter bears some of its creator's idiosyncrasies, its structure is coherent as a whole, and the work is consistent with the thematic development of
his short stories. As the biographer-narrator portrays Israel as an unsung hero, the victim of his fate and the prisoner of this world, he shows man's misery, man's suffering, man's fated life through the symbolic imagery of stone walls, mud, and fog, and through artistically coherent structures suggested in the opening paragraph and sustained throughout the story.

How little he thought, when as a boy, hunting after his father's stray cattle among these New England hills, he himself like a beast should be hunted through half of Old England, as a runaway rebel. Or, how could he ever have dreamed, when involved in the autumnal vapours of these mountains, that worse bewilderments awaited him three thousand miles across the sea, wandering forlorn in the coal-fogs of London. But so it was destined to be. This little boy of the hills, born in sight of the sparkling Housatonic, was to linger out the best part of his life a prisoner or pauper upon the grimy banks of the Thames.

"So it was destined to be": Israel was born in a prison surrounded by the stony walls and bewildering fog described in the first chapter; he was entombed alive in a stony secret chamber in the country house of Squire Woodcock (Chapter 12); and near the end of the book, he shivers "at the stone base" of a brickyard, and finally "in that London fog," Israel enters "the City of Dis" for his long "immurement" there.

If his metaphysical stance in "I and My Chimney" shows that Melville is moving toward realism, then Israel Potter
might illustrate how his historical approach contributes to his realistic portrayal of Israel's life. As a biographer, Melville's narrator presents Israel's life "unupholstered" by avoiding the act of "enlarging" it:

But these experiences, both from their intensity and his solitude, were necessarily squalid. Best not enlarge upon them. For just as extreme suffering, without hope, is intolerable to the victim, so, to others, is its depiction without some corresponding delusive mitigation. The gloomiest and truthfulest dramatist seldom chooses for his theme the calamities, however extraordinary, of inferior and private persons; least of all, the pauper's; admonished by the fact, that to the craped palace of the king lying in state, thousands of starers shall throng; but few feel enticed to the shanty, where, like a peeled knuckle-bone, grins the unupholstered corpse of the beggar. (p. 214)

We recall how Ishmael, as a tragic dramatist, was concerned about the "external arts" and the formal "trappings" in dramatizing Ahab's tragic character. Now the narrator, as a biographer, suggests that he deliberately chose to deal with the unheralded life of a pauper in order to present the truthful account of his unsung hero without the aid of the fictitious seriousness provided by "the craped palace of the king lying in state." Unwilling to accept the classical concept that the tragedies of men of high social position create more serious effects on the reader than those of commoners, the narrator has portrayed a pauper's life as it was lived without either enlarging its seriousness or mitigating its suffering. "The craped palace of
the king lying in state," to be sure, will attract more "starers" than "the unupholstered corpse of the beggar." Yet, "the unupholstered corpse" will bring the reader closer to the truth, however meaningless and however painful that truth might be.

Israel Potter illustrates Melville's developing realism yet in another way. Israel's wandering life represents more than the history of an American exile; it represents the history of mankind. It goes beyond Wall Street and the mossy "Chimney" to present a panoramic view of human destiny. As Israel approaches London, it becomes increasingly clear that he is enacting the history of tormented humanity:

... The sheds were for the bricks. Unless, indeed, according to the phrase, each man was a "brick," which, in sober scripture, was the case; brick is no bad name for any son of Adam; Eden was but a brickyard; what is a mortal but a few luckless shovelfuls of clay, moulded in a mould, laid out on a sheet to dry, and ere long quickened into his queer caprices by the sun? ... (p. 206)

As Eden was but a brickyard, so was Israel's birthplace. Born among the rugged stones of the New England hills, in the Housatonic valley, he was born a prisoner surrounded by the stony walls. Then, as Bartleby was surrounded by the social walls in the lawyer-narrator's office, so Israel was imprisoned in a stony secret chamber, a political "tomb," in the country house of Squire Woodcock. And as
Bartleby was abandoned by his employer and was buried alive in the Tombs, so was Israel abandoned by his employer when the Squire died, and was "buried alive" in a "tomb" with a "cavernous gate." Israel's journey toward the City of Dis, then, Everyman's journey: "it seemed as if some squadron of centaurs, on the thither side of Phlegethon, with charge on charge, was driving tormented humanity with all its chattels, across" (p. 212). The burden of life Israel had to bear was the burden that Bartleby, Hunilla, and the old man of "I and My Chimney" had to bear, and in this sense, Israel Potter might be considered part of Melville's developing realism as it records the history of mankind.

Finally, it can be suggested that the way in which Melville shows the meaningless of Israel's life is not only realistic but also satiric. The world about which Israel wanders for fifty years moving from America to Europe and back to America is a meaningless stage where a man like Franklin plays his many parts, and a man like Paul Jones wears his civilized costumes but is "a savage at heart." Thus, in Melville's adherence to the "unmitigated" details of Israel's "unupholstered" life, in his increasing interest in man's relationship to the world in which he lives, and in his satiric view of the world, we see not only the place of Israel Potter among the shorter
works we have studied but also its thematic and aesthetic relationship to *The Confidence-Man*.
Chapter Five  
Melville's Shorter Works:  
Toward Realism


3. These realities are arbitrarily defined for the sake of illustration.


5. F. O. Matthiessen's discussion of Melville's realism, cited on p. 3.

6. It must be admitted that when Israel approaches London, the mood and tone of the story becomes gloomy. And as the thought of Israel's fate, and man's, weighs heavily on his mind, Melville seems to lose his aesthetic poise. Yet, Melville's emotional involvement in Israel Potter does not disturb the structure of the book as it did Pierre.


9. For instance, Melville organizes his account of Israel's wanderings around a set of Biblical analogues: Israel is the "prodigal son" (II), "Jonah in the belly of the Whale" (III), Daniel in the lion's den (V), a Christ-like "bescarred bearer of a cross" (XXVII); he is associated with the Israelites as he labors in the "English Egypt." These details are worked out by Edgar A. Dryden in Melville's Thematics of Form (Baltimore, 1968), pp. 143-144.
Chapter Six

The Confidence-Man

Ambiguities in Thought and Structure

We have observed how in his shorter works Melville's focus shifts from metaphysical to empirical problems, and how this shift is reflected in his fictional method. The fictional form of Moby-Dick can be called a "Romance,"¹ since it mingle the "Marvelous" with the actual in order to explore the metaphysical realm. In Pierre, which was intended to be a romance, Melville's fictional form collapses as he is disturbed by the discovery that his form cannot serve as a vehicle for exploring metaphysical realms. Romance presupposes that it can show "more reality than real life itself can show,"² and indeed, as long as the world of romance is removed from the actual world as Ishmael's theatre of mind is removed from the external world, romance can serve as a valid means of exploring the mystery of life. But the inner world cannot remain completely removed from the external world, and sooner or later one must come to terms with the fact that the mind itself consists of the "layered substances" of the world,
and that therefore, fictional art, at its best, is the product of a mind composed of fictive layers of the world. Pierre discovers, not only that his inner world and the external world do not coincide, but also that his inner world is as "fictive" as the world outside. And as we have seen, Pierre's dilemma reflects much of Melville's own difficulty of finding a valid form which will enable him to penetrate the fictive layers of both the mind and the world. His shorter works suggest that Melville finds in "empiricism" a solution to his aesthetic problem created by Pierre's dilemma. Feeling insecure about his world of romance, he now deals with empirical realities, which might reveal the relation between man's perception of the world and the world that conditions his perception; and distrustful of his own emotion and his own mind, he assumes a historian's stance so that he can get at the true state of affairs as objectively as he can. Yet his resolution proves to be temporary, as it gives way to the skepticism and satire of The Confidence-Man. In The Confidence-Man, Melville finally accepts fictional art for what it is, a fabrication, a game of writing, and he plays the game to the hilt. Thus, the novel provides another example of how his thought and intention influence his form and his aesthetic manipulation.

As scholars have shown, Melville uses various
allegorical and symbolic devices to satirize traditional Christian attitudes, transcendental views, and human nature itself. Behind these allegorical devices, however, there seem to be two obscure designs: to present the Confidence-man as an original character, and to dupe the reading public just as he spoofs the fools aboard the riverboat Fidele. For satirizing the reading public and fiction Melville heavily depends on his elaborate artistic strategy, and his manipulation of structural ambiguities becomes the major part of his strategy. First, Melville makes the Confidence-man's character and mission ambiguous from the beginning: the Confidence-man could be God's agent testing man's faith in God and in his fellow men, or he could be Satan luring humanity into damnation. With his "flaxen head," "his whole lamb-like figure," the white "fleecy nap" on his hat, and his tidings of charity to mankind, the mute appears to be God's messenger. The "tossed look" of the lamb-like figure, lying motionless at the foot of a ladder, seems to be an embodiment of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And yet, "as some sugar-snow in March, which . . . startles the brown farmer peering out from his threshold at daybreak" (p. 4), the mute's "white placidity" makes his nature mysterious, especially because in Melville's color scheme the colors white, gray, and
cream suggest an ambiguity and an inscrutability. The mute, in fact, becomes an object of suspicion and a promoter of anti-Christ ("No Trust") feelings among the passengers. The mute prepares the way for Black Guinea by arousing the passenger's suspicion about the Christian message so that the Negro cripple can further expose damned human nature and the inefficacy of Christianity to confront the problems of the world, where "charity" has become a game, and "where the wolves are killed off, but the foxes increase" (p. 2). This initial maneuver is designed to cause some confusion among the readers, so that Melville, behind the mask of ambiguity, might be able to suggest his own views either ironically or seriously and even assume the Confidence-man's role without being identified.

Second, Melville makes his narrative point of view ambiguous. His narrator seems to have such a sweeping vision of the world that it can be called Melville's own. Still, the narrator often appears to be a perfunctory and/or ironic commentator, as shown in his comment on the one-legged man: "this shallow unfortunate, after sundry sorry observations of the negro, began to croak out something about his deformity being a sham, got up for financial purposes, which immediately threw a damp upon the frolic benignities of the pitch-penny players" (p. 8). Third,
Melville appears to be directly addressing the reader in Chapters 14, 33, and 44, expounding his aesthetic theories, and these chapters should prevent suspicious readers from identifying Melville with the Confidence-man since they will formally identify Melville as the narrator. But there are a number of ironic discrepancies between the narrator and Melville. In Chapters 14 and 33, for instance, the narrator creates an illusion that his aesthetic theories explained in these chapters are practiced in *The Confidence-Man*, when in reality Melville is only deflating the genre of fiction as conceived by "most novelists." These ironic discrepancies between Melville and his narrator, and between what Melville appears to be doing and what he is actually doing provide the major structural ambiguities for Melville's intellectual masquerade.

A story that takes place on All Fool's Day, and that bears the subtitle *His Masquerade*, is expected to be a game of some sort, literary or metaphysical. One must, then, piece together Melville's clues, as with a jigsaw puzzle, in order to understand the meaning of his masquerade. Consider, for example, the cryptic way in which the titles of the first three chapters provide clues to the function of the Confidence-man. Just as these titles provide a clue to the Confidence-man's function when they are examined as a unit, so do the three chapters dealing with aesthetic
theories, 14, 33, and 44, reveal a clue to their function when they are considered as a unit. We must therefore examine in detail the first three titles before studying the three "theoretic" chapters, in which the purpose of Melville's masquerade is revealed.

"A mute goes aboard a boat on the Mississippi" (Chapter 1), "showing that many men have many minds" (Chapter 2), "in which a variety of characters appear" (Chapter 3). These titles as a unit help to provide significant clues to the meaning and function of the "original character," especially in view of what happens in each chapter. The "mute" in Chapter 1 is at once reminiscent of the motif of "silence" in Pierre: "in silence the child Christ was born into the world. . . . Silence is the only Voice of our God" (Pierre, p. 204). The "mute" is suggestive of divinity, and this assumption is encouraged by the symbolic descriptions of the mute: he is a man "in cream-colors," wearing a white fur hat "with a long fleecy nap," and he is, "in the extremist sense of the word, a stranger. . . . quite an original genius in his vocation" (p. 1). "Cream-colors" and "white" also suggest the ineffability of a cosmic force—a manifestation of an original or primal force in the universe. Indeed, as if he were a messenger from "the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us," the mute appears suddenly as "Manco Capac," the
Peruvian demigod, a child of the sun. He appears to have come from "some far country beyond the prairies" with tidings to us: "charity." He is also a stranger, and as such he is distinguished from the "river barber" who represents common humanity.

The second title, "Showing that many men have many minds," refers to the variety of the passengers aboard the *Fidèle*, but because of its participial structure its function is ambiguous. It can either modify Chapter 2, e.g., "Chapter 2, showing that many men have many minds"; or it can be continuous with the first title, e.g., "A mute goes aboard a boat on the Mississippi, showing that many men have many minds." If the second title is part of the first, then it should be considered an initial clue to the function of the mute as an original character; his function is to illuminate the world: not only the variety of people in it but also their minds. Such an enlightening character also reflects the mind of his creator: the mind that creates an original character is divine. Therefore, when the mute appears on the boat, Melville's divine mind is illustrated by his immense vision that sweeps across the world in the first two chapters. In his sweeping vision of the world, time and space seem to dissolve as Melville sees the "river barber" on the deck that is like "some Constantinople arcade or bazaar," and "Chaucer's
Canterbury pilgrims, or those oriental ones crossing the Red Sea towards Mecca in the festival month," and "the dashing and all-fusing spirit of the West, whose type is the Mississippi itself, which, uniting the streams of the most distant and opposite zones, pours them along, helter-skelter, in one cosmopolitan and confident tide" (p. 6). 7

The function of the third title, "In which a variety of characters appear," is more ambiguous than that of the second title. The title obviously refers to the variety of people who appear in the chapter; but since it is a relative clause, it can modify "a boat" in the first title: "A mute goes aboard a boat on the Mississippi, on which a variety of characters appear." Structurally, therefore, the third title serves as a clue revealing Melville's artistic method. Just as its title could be a part of the first title, Chapter 3 could be an integral part of Chapter 1: for instance, Black Guinea is one of the parts the mute plays in "his masquerade." In fact, there are strong indications that the mute introduced in Chapter 1 is playing the part of Black Guinea who appears in Chapter 3; as the mute is related to Manco Capa, a child of the sun, so is Black Guinea to the sun; and the one-legged man, supposedly a perceptive observer, suggests that Black Guinea is "some white operator, betwisted and painted up for a decoy." It also becomes fairly clear
that Black Guinea begins to perform the function of the original character. As he plays the game of charity, he illuminates the characters around him: the "drover," the "wooden-legged man," the "young episcopal clergyman," and the "Methodist." Clearly, Black Guinea's function is not to gain a few pennies from the passengers, but to reveal their nature: for instance, the wooden-legged man's cynical view of life, and the Methodist's militant innate quality, which cannot be tamed by his sense of charity.

In light of the foregoing analysis, it can be suggested that the first three titles are intended as a statement providing initial clues to the function of the Confidence-man: "A mute goes aboard a boat on the Mississippi, in which a variety of characters appear, showing that many men have many minds." Although there are many other suggestive titles in the novel, especially the first three titles are intended as a tip-off to the design of the work; Melville will provide puzzles, and the reader must piece them together in order to understand the meaning of "His Masquerade."

Melville's masquerade can be best studied in Chapters 14 and 19, and two clusters of chapters (30 and 33; 43 and 44), for, just as the titles examined provide clues to the Confidence-man's function, these clusters provide clues to the meaning of the masquerade. Immediately before Chapter
14, Henry Roberts, the merchant, who has been duped by the Confidence-man three consecutive times, suddenly bursts out with insightful remarks:

"Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or confidence percolate down through all the stony strata of hard considerations, and drop warmly and ruddily into the cold cave of truth? Truth will not be comforted. Led by dear charity, lured by sweet hope, fond fancy essays this feat; but in vain; mere dreams and ideals, they explode in your hand, leaving naught but the scorching behind!"

(p. 57)

And the narrator begins Chapter 14 arguing that the inconsistency of Roberts's character reflects real life. The consistency in the depiction of a character might be a requirement in fiction, yet, "is it not a fact, that, in real life, a consistent character is rara avis?" Those authors who portray only transparent sections of a character for the sake of clarity and consistency fail to reflect real life, whereas those who draw a character "as the flying squirrel, and, at different periods, as much at variance with itself as the caterpillar is with the butterfly into which it changes, may yet, in so doing, be not false but faithful to facts." Just as nature, which produces duckbilled beavers, is full of inconsistencies, so is life full of perplexities; and human nature, as the divine nature, is often beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

But let nature, to the perplexity of the naturalists, produce her duck-billed beavers as she
may, lesser authors, some may hold, have no business to be perplexing readers with duck-billed characters. Always, they should represent human nature not in obscurity, but transparency, which, indeed, is the practice with most novelists, and is, perhaps, in certain cases, someway felt to be a kind of honor rendered by them to their kind. But whether it involve honor or otherwise might be mooted, considering that, if these waters of human nature can be so readily seen through, it may be either that they are very pure or very shallow. Upon the whole, it might rather be thought, that he, who, in view of its inconsistencies, says of human nature the same that, in view of its contrasts, is said of the divine nature, that it is past finding out, thereby evinces a better appreciation of it than he who, by always representing it in a clear light, leaves it to be inferred that he clearly knows all about it. (p. 59)

The narrator seems to reflect Melville's concept of fictional characterization: in the portrayal of characters, fiction should be faithful to facts on which it is supposedly based. There are, however, a number of discrepancies between what the narrator purports to be doing and what is actually happening, and these discrepancies suggest that there are ironic discrepancies between the narrator's announced intention and Melville's ulterior design in the theoretic digression. First, the narrator purports to defend the inconsistency of Roberts's character by explaining his reflective or mimetic theory of art, but Roberts fails to show any inconsistency or complexity to which the narrator refers. It is true that a simple merchant suddenly bursts out with insightful remarks.
Still, Roberts's sudden outburst shows his humor rather than the inconsistency or complexity of his character, mainly because Roberts is not even aware of the significance of what he has just said: "the merchant stared about him, and then, with altered mien, stammeringly confessed, that he was almost as much surprised as his companion, at what had escaped him. He did not understand it; was quite at a loss to account for such a rhapsody popping out of him unbidden" (p. 57). If there is a complex character in the novel, it has to be the Confidence-man himself, who is ambiguous in his intention and appearance and hence deserves an aesthetic dissertation. The Confidence-man has many faces; the transformation of his form from a caterpillar-like appearance (linty cream-colored suit) into a butterfly-like "gaudy cloak" (a "vesture barred with various hues") suggests the deceptiveness of his appearance. And indeed, his appearance would tempt "a metaphysical lover of our species to doubt whether the human form be, in all cases, conclusive evidence of humanity" (p. 50). For one's external form does not always reveal his inherent nature, e.g., whether he is an angel or a devil: "You can conclude nothing absolute from the human form" (p. 193).

Next, according to the narrator's reflective theory, fiction must be true to reality; but it is often difficult
to ascertain reality, because nature itself is deceptive, for instance, "the duck-billed beaver of Australia." Furthermore, "no one man can be coextensive with what is" (p. 59). How can fiction then be true to reality, which is essentially unknowable? One must, therefore, assume that while appearing to defend his reflective theory, Melville is actually showing its limitations by exploring its problems (and these aesthetic problems are further discussed in Chapter 33). In fact, the portrayal of the Confidence-man itself is half serious and half comical, showing as it does the author's sense of the limitations of fictional art and his skeptical attitude toward it. For example, the complexity and intricacy of the Confidence-man's mind are fully explored, and the implications of his "divine nature" might be enormous. And yet, the way in which the Confidence-man changes his roles and costumes is as mechanical and as comical as the way in which the characters in the "Mission Impossible" change their identities by means of their rubber face-masks. It might be also observed that Melville typifies his characters for the most part: the barber, the merchant, the miser, the skeptic, etc. And thus, he portrays human nature in transparency (except for the Confidence-man), "which indeed, is the practice with most novelists." It can be seen then that Melville's ulterior design in this theoretic digression is
to explore not only fictional theories but also their inadequacies to deal with fictional problems. He is poking at formalists as well as "common novelists," and he shows his satiric attitudes toward them by parodying the way in which fictional characters are portrayed by "most novelists." Yet in his masquerade, Melville's aesthetic stance is so ambiguous that in order to understand his satiric intention the reader must be always aware of the ironic discrepancies between the narrator's and Melville's views on fiction, and between what appears to be happening and what is actually happening in the novel.

The way in which Melville manipulates the Confidence-man in order to achieve his satiric purpose is just as intriguing as the way in which he manipulates his narrator. In Chapter 19, for instance, Melville first satirizes popular fiction by ironically defending "sugared" fiction through the Confidence-man, the herb-doctor. Melville voices his satiric views so deceptively that the Confidence-man does not appear to be his mouthpiece; nevertheless, the "metaphysical scamp" is unmistakably Melville's agent, or Melville himself is masquerading behind the mask of the Confidence-man when he says of the cripple ("a soldier of fortune") who, like the popular novelist, sells his "sugared" story:

"... A ripe philosopher, turned out of the great Sorbonne of hard times, he thinks that
woes, when told to strangers for money, are best sugared. Though the inglorious lock-jaw of his knee-pans in a wet dungeon is a far more pitiable ill than to have been crippled at glorious Contreras, yet he is of opinion that this lighter and false ill shall attract, while the heavier and real one might repel. . . . " (p. 84)

If we recall how Melville chose to deal with a pauper's life in Israel Potter, so that he could portray his life without either enlarging its seriousness or mitigating its pain, we can be certain that Melville is mocking at "sugared" fiction—to be sold for money, and at the "strangers" (the readers who do not have "an ear for Earnestness") by referring to the fact that the "lighter and false ill shall attract . . . when told to strangers for money . . . while the heavier and real one might repel."

Then, a few paragraphs later, the Confidence-man expounds the traditional Christian world view in a deceptively ambiguous tone:

" . . . Grant, for the moment, that your experiences are as you give them; in which case I would admit that government might be thought to have more or less to do with what seems undesirable in them. But it is never to be forgotten that human government, being subordinate to the divine, must needs, therefore, in its degree, partake of the characteristics of the divine. That is, while in general efficacious to happiness, the world's law may yet, in some cases, have, to the eye of reason, an unequal operation, just as, in the same imperfect view, some inequalities may appear in the operations of heaven's law; nevertheless, to one who has a right confidence, final benignity is, in every instance, as sure with the one law as the other. I expound the point at some length, because these are the considerations, my poor
fellow, which, weighed as they merit, will enable you to sustain with unimpaired trust the apparent calamities which are yours." (p. 84)

The tone is ambiguous, for in terms of its logic, the Confidence-man's argument might be considered earnest, yet the way he piles up the Christian platitudes leads one to suspect that his argument might be hogwash. The reader's suspicion is soon born out by the cripple's remark, "What do you talk your hog-latin to me for?"; and when the reader becomes aware of his satiric intention, Melville provides further clues by letting the Confidence-man preach the Christian doctrine of hope:

"To mere reason, your case looks something piteous, I grant. But never despond; many things—the choicest—yet remain. You breathe this bounteous air, are warmed by this gracious sun, and, though poor and friendless, indeed, nor, so agile as in your youth, yet, how sweet to roam, day by day, through the groves, plucking the bright mosses and flowers, till forlornness itself becomes a hilarity, and, in your innocent independence, you skip for joy." (p. 85)

The Confidence-man only offers seemingly insignificant clues as to the intention of the statement, but such clues as "to mere reason," "you breathe this bounteous air, are warmed by this gracious sun" help to identify the transcendental basis of his argument. And that his argument is ironic is clear when viewed in light of what the lawyer-narrator tells Bartleby while visiting him in the prison a few days before his death.
"And to you, this should not be so vile a place. Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass." ("Bartleby," p. 43)

Whereas the lawyer-narrator's consolation is based on his ever present "reason" (how can any place that offers a view of the sky and grass be sad?), this Confidence-man's ironic consolation is based on Emersonian transcendentalism. But in both cases, the doctrine of hope, whether based on reason or transcendentalism, is not relevant to Bartleby and the cripple since it ignores the central question: how do we account for the human condition that produces Bartleby and the cripple? Thus, it becomes clear that through the Confidence-man's ironic views, Melville exposes the inefficacy of Christianity in dealing with the human and/or social problems such as encountered by the cripple. The Confidence-man's ironic views create an ambiguity, and behind the mask of that ambiguity, Melville satirizes the follies of humanity that prefers "fiction" to "reality," and questions the validity of the Christian premises that ignore the human condition.

In Chapter 30, Melville's masquerade becomes more complex, so complex that some scholars tend to think that "There are coils within the coils of logic in this book, as Melville tries to strike through, or peel away, the masks that hide the truth. And he finds, time and again,
that the masks conceal yet other masks."¹⁰ This is what Melville appears to be doing. But neither Melville, nor the Confidence-man, is what he appears to be. The Confidence-man appears to be a mere Yankee swindler, but his discourse is full of philosophical and aesthetic implications. Melville appears to be trying to strike through the masks that hide the truth, yet in reality he is manipulating those masks. It is therefore the reader who must strike through Melville's masks and peel away his coils of logic. By the time the Confidence-man assumes the role of the Cosmopolitan, he is ambiguous as the whiteness of Moby Dick; he is a sartorial rainbow. His discourse in the following passage, for instance, has "coils within the coils of logic," as it undulates between his seemingly earnest views and seemingly ironic views. Still, if one can peel away the Confidence-man's mask, he might see Melville himself: although the passage presents the Cosmopolitan's comment on Shakespeare and his character Autolycus, it can be viewed as representing Melville's commentary on the Confidence-man and his own theory of fiction.

"... 'This Shakespeare is a queer man.' At times seeming irresponsible, he does not always seem reliable. There appears to be a certain--what shall I call it?--hidden sun, say, about him, at once enlightening and mystifying. Now I should be afraid to say what I have sometimes thought that hidden sun might be. ... How is one to take Autolycus? A rogue so happy, so
lucky, so triumphant, of so almost captivatingly vicious a career that a virtuous man reduced to the poor-house (were such a contingency conceivable), might almost long to change sides with him. And yet, see the words put into his mouth: 'oh what a fool is Honesty, and Trust, a very simple gentleman.' Think of that. Trust, that is, confidence—that is, the thing in this universe the sacredest—is rattlingly pronounced just the simplest. Yes, Autolycus would seem a needy varlet acting upon the persuasion that less is to be got by invoking pockets than piking them, more to be made by an expert knave than a bungling beggar; and for this reason, that the soft heads outnumber the soft hearts. When disturbed by the character and career of one thus wicked and thus happy, my sole consolation is in the fact that no such creature ever existed, except in the powerful imagination which evoked him. And yet, a creature, a living creature, he is, though only a poet was his maker. It may be, that in that paper-and-ink investiture of his, Autolycus acts more effectively upon mankind than he would in a flesh-and-blood one. Can his influence be salutary? True, in Autolycus there is humor; but though, according to my principle, humor is in general to be held a saving quality, yet the case of Autolycus is an exception; because it is his humor which, so to speak, oils his mischievousness. The bravadoing mischievousness of Autolycus is slid into the world on humor, as a pirate schooner, with colors flying, is launched into the sea on greased ways." (pp. 149-150)

The Cosmopolitan's comment on Shakespeare is tantalizing, for the same comment can be made about Melville himself: Melville is a queer man; there appears to be a certain hidden sun about him, at once enlightening and mystifying. How, for instance, is one to take his character, the Confidence-man, a swindler who preaches charity, hope, and trust? The Cosmopolitan appears to be puzzled that he
hears such a dark truth ("what a fool is Honesty") from a rogue like Autolycus, yet there is a deeper irony in his comment. The words honesty and trust, like the word charity, are meaningless in this world of "no trust": "not unlike the left-hand numeral of a printed date, otherwise left for convenience in blank" (p. 3). Just as in Melville's days the word of charity was rejected by the passengers aboard the Fidele when advocated by the "mute," so in Shakespeare's days, too, the words honesty and trust might have been unheeded by the people if spoken by a lamb-like Christian figure. It is not surprising then that Shakespeare slid a rogue into the world as a sardonic commentary on the follies of mankind, for a humorous character attracts the audience more effectively than a serious one just as "Autolycus acts more effectively upon mankind than he would in a flesh-and-blood one." Thus the Cosmopolitan's discourse on Autolycus reflects not only his cynical view of mankind but his satiric attitude toward "the more indulgent lovers of entertainment."

In fact, Melville is obliquely commenting on the purpose of The Confidence-Man. Melville was always interested in reality and truth, and hence, in a fiction that illuminates as a lamp, and in true characters--characters that are even truer than one's life experience can reflect. But since Pierre, Melville has learned that "true"
characters do not act effectively upon mankind. Only phony characters and "the lighter and false ill" attract shallow human nature, "while the heavier and real one might repel." So the Confidence-man "is slid into the world on humor, as a pirate schooner, with colors flying," not only to humor humanity, but as a wry commentary upon human nature and the art of fiction itself. This assumption about the aesthetic function of the Confidence-man is strengthened by the narrator's formal discussion of fiction in the closely ensuing chapter, Chapter 33. And it is clear that the Cosmopolitan's discourse on Autolycus paves the way for the narrator's discussion of fiction.

In Chapter 33, Melville provides further clues as to what the novel's satiric purpose is and how the Confidence-man fulfills this purpose. But again, Melville's intention in this chapter is ambiguous: the chapter is apparently intended to be another discourse on his theory of fiction, but behind this apparent intention there is a satiric intention aimed at "the more indulgent lovers of entertainment." There are several indications of the ironic discrepancy between Melville and the narrator, and this ironic discrepancy serves as a mask that obscures Melville's intention. The narrator defends the "unreal" appearance of the Cosmopolitan; but the reader is puzzled by the inconsistency of his fictional theory, for his
defense is based on a fictional theory that refutes the reflective theory explored in Chapter 14. In Chapter 14, the narrator defended Roberts's inconsistency by arguing that serious writers must represent real life, including its complexity and inconsistency. Now he finds it strange that any one should demand a severe fidelity to real life in fiction:

Strange, that in a work of amusement, this severe fidelity to real life should be exacted by any one, who, by taking up such a work, sufficiently shows that he is not unwilling to drop real life, and turn, for a time, to something different. . . . (p. 157)

Is Melville careless, is he deliberately being inconsistent, or is he showing the ironic distance between himself and the narrator? The ensuing passages suggest that there is a discrepancy between what the narrator illustrates and what Melville implies by the narrator's illustrations.

There is another class, and with this class we side, . . . . They look that fancy shall evoke scenes different from those of the same old crowd round the custom-house counter, and same old dishes on the boarding-house table, with characters unlike those of the same old acquaintances they meet in the same old way every day in the same old street. And as, in real life, the proprieties will not allow people to act out themselves with that unreserve permitted to the stage; so, in books of fiction, they look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show. Thus, though they want novelty, they want nature, too; but nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed. In this way of thinking, the people in a fiction, like the people in a play, must dress as nobody exactly
dresses, talk as nobody exactly talks, act as nobody exactly acts. It is with fiction as with religion: it should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie.

If, then, something is to be pardoned to well-meant endeavor, surely a little is to be allowed to that writer who, in all his scenes, does but seek to minister to what, as he understands it, is the implied wish of the more indulgent lovers of entertainment, before whom harlequin can never appear in a coat too parti-colored, or cut capers too fantastic. (pp. 157-158)

Implied in these comments are two different classes of readers: those who "look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show"; and "the more indulgent lovers of entertainment." Interestingly, the theory to which the first class of readers adheres has an affinity to Hawthorne's theory of "romance" shown in his "Preface" to The House of the Seven Gables: the writer of romance "may so manage his atmospheric medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture... to mingle the Marvelous" with the actual. It might be conjectured then that Melville is echoing Hawthorne's theory as he formulates his own. The propensity of the second class of readers, however, is satirized throughout the novel as shown earlier. Melville explores a romantic theory, yet his theory has very little to do with the Cosmopolitan's harlequin-like appearance, which is designed to bedevil "the more indulgent lovers of entertainment."
It becomes clear, then, that the narrator not only fails to distinguish between the two classes of readers implied by Melville but also fails to perceive the ways in which the theory of fiction discussed in this chapter is manipulated in the novel to fulfill Melville's satiric intention.

The world of the Confidence-man is "another world," a fictional world, as the narrator suggests, but not in the sense that the world of *Moby-Dick* is another world; for the world of *Moby-Dick*, to which we feel the tie, is a marvelous world, more real than the real world itself. In so far as the Confidence-man's world presents familiar characters and familiar details, *The Confidence-Man* can be called more realistic than *Moby-Dick*, and in so far as it boasts a harlequin-like character, it can be called another world. It is "another world," to be sure; but as Melville wryly remarks behind the mask of the narrator, it is a fiction which "seek [s] to minister to what, as he understands it, is the implied wish of the more indulgent lovers of entertainment, before whom harlequin can never appear in a coat too parti-colored, or out capers too fantastic." Surely then, those who look for more entertainment will be entertained—duped—by the Cosmopolitan's appearance. And only those who can penetrate his appearance, those who look for "more reality
than real life itself can show," can see that his aes-
thetic function is to enlighten the world by revealing
human nature and the ways of the world.

Those who can penetrate appearances might observe
that the Confidence-man's appearance is intended not only
as a joke but also as an embodiment of one of Melville's
major metaphysical preoccupations: that reality cannot
be ascertained by its external form. The metaphysical
implication of the Confidence-man's "form" manifests it-
self in the way in which Melville brings the Confidence-
man and the barber together: the mute and the barber in
the beginning, the Cosmopolitan and the barber toward the
end. The function of the meeting between the two charac-
ters is to show a contrast between a typical character
and an original character. The barber with his ready-
made label and with his unchanging nature--"no trust"--
represents a typical character. He might be even consid-
ered as Melville's satiric version of a "realistic" char-
acter, for his character is consistent and transparent.
The Confidence-man in his mysterious appearance (in the
beginning), in his changing costumes (in the middle), and
in his harlequin-like costume (toward the end) is appar-
ently an unreal character, yet he reveals the mystery of
man more successfully than is possible for a seemingly
realistic character. As the Cosmopolitan warns the
barber, one cannot determine man's inherent nature by his "form":

"... don't be too sure what I am. You call me man, just as the townsfolk called the angels who, in man's form, came to Lot's house; just as the Jew rustics called the devils who, in man's form, haunted the tombs. You can conclude nothing absolute from the human form." (p. 193)

The "form" refers primarily to man's external appearance as in the case of Goneril: her vicious nature tempts "a metaphysical lover of our species to doubt whether the human form be, in all cases, conclusive evidence of humanity" (p. 50). However, both in the Goneril passage and in the Cosmopolitan's remark, the "form" has several metaphysical implications, for instance, the mystery of creation, the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Therefore, the harlequin-like costume of the Cosmopolitan as part of his external form could serve several aesthetic functions: it is not merely a mask that Melville manipulates in order to achieve his satiric intention; it is a mask that hides the Cosmopolitan's innate quality and his motives. Despite his devilish appearance, he enlightens the world as he reveals the impenetrability of "the human form," the mystery of creation.

As the Cosmopolitan's comments on Shakespeare and Autolycus are followed by the narrator's discourse on fiction (Chapter 33), so are the Cosmopolitan's intimations about the mystery of the "human form" followed by the
narrator's discourse on original characters (Chapter 44). In each discourse on fiction (in Chapters 14, 33, 44), there is an ironic discrepancy between the narrator and Melville, and this discrepancy creates an ambiguity about Melville's intention: behind the "formal" surface of each discourse is an ulterior meaning as shown in the preceding pages. However, the narrator's inconsistency shown in the often quoted Chapter 44 is more puzzling than what we have examined heretofore.

"the original character, essentially such, is like a revolving Drummond light, raying away from itself all round it—everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet), so that, in certain minds, there follows upon the adequate conception of such a character, an effect, in its way, akin to that which in Genesis attends upon the beginning of things... There would seem but one point in common between this sort of phenomenon in fiction and all other sorts: it cannot be born in the author's imagination—it being as true in literature as in zoology, that all life is from the egg. (p. 205)

The narrator suggests that the original character's illumination is like the divine light that attended the creation of the world, and that the creator of such a character is akin to the Creator of man. And yet, two paragraphs later, he casually denies the power of the author's imagination, and compares the creative process to a biological process studied in zoology. What the narrator is suggesting is clear enough; as "all life is from the egg," so does the conception of an original character proceed
from the author's inborn talent (genetic luck): "to produce but one original character, he must have had much luck." But why does the narrator deny the author's imagination? Whether an author's imagination emanates from God, or whether his imagination proceeds from his sensory experience, the imagination is central to the creative processes in literature. This puzzling inconsistency, therefore, has to be considered in terms of the pattern of the narrator's inconsistency. Just as the titles of the first three chapters provide a clue when examined as a unit, so do the theoretic chapters studied here reveal a pattern of the narrator's inconsistency. In Chapter 33, the narrator contradicts his fictional theory advanced in Chapter 14 as discussed earlier. In Chapter 44, his statement that the original character "cannot be born in the author's imagination" refutes not only his own conception of the original character suggested in the chapter but also his fictional theory explored in Chapter 33: "in books of fiction, they look . . . for more reality, than real life itself can show. . . . nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed." These subtly contrived inconsistencies suggest that Melville is obliquely reiterating and even demonstrating some of his "eternally unsystemizable" aesthetic problems stated in *Pierre*.
. . . while the countless tribes of common novels laboriously spin vails of mystery, only to complacently clear them up at last; . . . yet the profounder emanations of the human mind, intended to illustrate all that can be humanly known of human life; these never unravel their own intricacies, and have no proper endings; but in imperfect, unanticipated, and disappointing sequels (as mutilated stumps), hurry to abrupt interm surgings with the eternal tides of time and fate. (p. 141)

This conjecture is strengthened by the equivocal way in which the narrator concludes his discourse in Chapter 44, and the puzzling manner in which the novel ends in Chapter 45. First, the final discourse on fiction ends with:

In the endeavor to show, if possible, the impropriety of the phrase, Quite an Original, as applied by the barber's friends, we have, at unawares, been led into a dissertation bordering upon the prosy, perhaps upon the smoky. If so, the best use the smoke can be turned to, will be, by retiring under cover of it, in good trim as may be, to the story. (p. 205)

Then, the concluding chapter provides one of the final puzzles of the novel. Assuming that since Melville did not wish to clear "vails of mystery" at the end of his novel, he intended his conclusion to be as mysterious as it appears to be, I can only study the chapter in terms of the function of the Cosmopolitan as the "Drummond light."

In the middle of the gentleman's cabin burned a solar lamp, swung from the ceiling, and whose shade of ground glass was all round fancifully variegated, in transparency, with the image of a horned altar, from which flames rose, alternate with the figure of a robed man, his head encircled by a halo. The light of this lamp, after
dazzlingly striking on marble, snow-white and round—-the slab of a centre-table beneath—-on all sides went rippling off with ever-diminishing distinctness, till, like circles from a stone dropped in water, the rays died dimly away in the furthest nook of the place. (p. 206)

Since the Drummond light is described in the preceding chapter, the reader cannot fail to notice a contrast between the Drummond light and the solar lamp. Although both are artificial lights, the solar lamp, unlike the creative light of the Drummond light, produces a light that is filtered and modulated as it passes through the images of the horned altar of Moses (Exodus 27: 1-2) and the figure of Christ.11 Whereas the Drummond light illuminates everything around it and exposes everything lit by it, the solar lamp goes "rippling off with ever-diminishing distinctness." The solar lamp keeps the world in the dark as it white-washes it ("striking on marble, snow-white and round"), and this assumption is supported by the narrator's description of the lamp's effect on the innocent old man, the subject of the Confidence-man's final test of man's faith in his fellow men: "Keeping his lone vigils beneath his lone lamp, which lighted his book on the table, sat a clean, comely, old man, his head snowy as the marble, and a countenance like that which imagination ascribes to good Simeon, when, having at last beheld the Master of Faith, he blessed him and departed in peace" (p. 206). The icon on the lamp suggests that the lamp
represents Christian faith; and the way in which the old man's faith is shaken by the Confidence-man's insinuations about the Bible and the way in which he is sold on the money belt show, once again, the inefficacy of Christianity as a guiding light. The old man kept his vigils under the diminishing light of the solar lamp, yet when the Confidence-man extinguishes that light, both figuratively and literally, there is nothing to guide him toward his final sanctuary except his meaningless money belt, his useless "Counterfeit Detector," and his "hollow" life preserver. The final picture of the old man groping through the darkness with the Confidence-man as his only guide is a pathetic picture of the shallowness of man's faith in God. And it is one of the functions of the Drummond light to illuminate the darkness of the world as it does the plight of the old man: the Confidence-man comes into the scene to "dispense a sort of morning through the night." If Autolyous can be viewed as Shakespeare's "hidden sun," then the Cosmopolitan can be considered as Melville's "hidden sun." Significantly enough, telescoped between the Cosmopolitan's comments about Shakespeare's "hidden sun" and his "illuminating" action in the final chapter is the story of China Aster, who is also a light-giver. And some scholars tend to think that the story is an allegory of Melville as the artist of light-giver. Whether China
Aster was intended as an allegory or not, the story supports the assumption that Melville was concerned with the task of showing the world as it was in his day, satirically or earnestly.

One might observe in summary that the masks of the Confidence-man and the narrator provide two major forms of Melville's masquerade: aesthetic and metaphysical. Melville's manipulation of the formal surface of the novel through the Confidence-man and the narrator is not merely his artistic maneuver; it is a manifestation of Melville's long-standing conviction that all visible objects are as pasteboard masks. If this assumption is correct, then the novel can be viewed as an embodiment of Melville's skeptical views on "external forms," since his intellectual masquerade intends to bedevil formalists as well as the "more indulgent lovers of entertainment." Those who look for "form" in the novel will be bedeviled as much as those who look for more entertainment. The Confidence-man undergoes a constant change of form and character; and the reader, like Charlie Noble, is "at a loss to determine where the fictitious character had been dropped and the real one, if any, resumed," whether the Confidence-man is masquerading or Melville is playing the part of the Confidence-man. The narrator, too, constantly equivocates in his formal discourses on fiction, leaving the reader wondering as he
does about the Confidence-man whether Melville is serious or ironical. All these ambiguities are part of Melville's deliberate structural manipulations as this study has attempted to show, and these ambiguities reflect the mind of a man who once said:

As a statue, planted on a revolving pedestal, shows now this limb, now that; now front, now back, now side; continually changing, too, its general profile; so does the pivoted, statued soul of man, when turned by the hand of Truth. (Pierre, p. 337)
Chapter Six  The Confidence-Man: Ambiguities in Thought and Structure

1. Defined in Hawthorne's "Preface" to The House of the Seven Gables.


4. The narrator presents, not only a panoramic view of American society in his day, but also a panoramic view of the world, especially in the first two chapters.

5. The mute resembles Carlyle's "original man":

Such a man is what we call an original man: he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We may call him Poet, Prophet, God....


7. These passages are reminiscent of the passages in the chapter on "Dreams" (Mardi), in which Melville celebrates his god-like mind.

8. That one of the major targets of Melville's satire is popular fiction is fairly clear. Melville satirizes the genre of fiction by deflating it. And since his characters are deflated by being compared to animals, the novel is full of animal images.
9. Consider, for instance, Emerson's discussions of
1) man's relationship to God in "Spirit" (Nature) and
2) the medicinal effects of nature on man in "Beauty"
(Nature): a) "As a plant upon the earth, so a man
rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by un-
failing fountains, and draws at his need inexhaustible
power"; b) "To the body and mind which have been
cramped by noxious work and company, nature is
medicinal and restores their tone. The tradesman,
the attorney comes out of the din and craft of the
street and sees the sky and the woods, and a man
again."

10. Daniel G. Hoffman, "The Confidence-Man: His
Masquerade," in Melville: A Collection of Critical
Essays, ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, New

11. Edgar A. Dryden, Melville's Thematics of Form
(Baltimore, 1968), p. 185.
Chapter Seven

Billy Budd: "Man's Final Lore"

As if it "had either gone out from exhaustion, or been extinguished by such occupants of berths as the light annoyed, or who wanted to sleep, not see," the Drummond light of The Confidence-Man faded into the gathering darkness of its final pages, and with it Melville's hope for mankind. Yet, thirty years later, and at the end of his long quest for "the ungraspable phantom of life," Melville was able to find a new mood of "acceptance" in Billy Budd; "man's final lore," in which his final vision of reality sweeps across the history and destiny of mankind; Claggart, "apprehending the good" yet powerless to be good; Vere fumbling between his conscience and his sense of duty; Billy Budd, defenseless before the Satanic mind of Claggart, defenseless before the "fatherly" mind of Vere as well.

This broad vision of the realities of life offers numerous subjects for allegorical interpretations: the relationship between the Creator and the created; the conflict between natural goodness and natural depravity; the conflict between the world of innocence and the world of experience.
Thematically, it can be also observed that *Billy Budd* is continuous with Melville's major works studied in the preceding chapters in its preoccupation with his metaphysical, psychological, and epistemological problems; for instance, is our sensory experience reliable in providing our knowledge of the world, reliable enough to help us fulfill our human responsibilities? Structurally, however, the work is more characteristic of Melville's shorter works than of the earlier works in two major aspects. It focuses on empirical realities as it explores the theme of appearance and reality—the appearance of a man versus his innate character and the apparent guilt versus the actual guilt—in terms of man's sensory experience. Consequently, its metaphysical problems, e.g., Divine responsibility for man's flaws, remain in the background. And the way in which Melville handles the aesthetic distance between his narrator and himself is characteristic of the ways in which he controls his narrators in his post-*Pierre* works. In this chapter, I hope to show Melville's final lore as an embodiment of the metaphysical and aesthetic stance reflected in his later works, and as the final example of how his metaphysical attitude affects his artistic methods.

Before examining the structure of *Billy Budd*, we might briefly review the distinctive characteristics of *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, and the later works, so that we can see
the evolving pattern of Melville's metaphysical stance as we proceed with our analysis. Despite all the cetological details studied in the book, the world of *Moby-Dick* is a world of mind; the cetological exploration is carried out as something that is enacted in the theatre of the human mind, whose relationship to the external world remains a mystery. In this theatre of mind, two antithetical approaches to the problem of perception and knowledge are dramatized: Ahab's Kantian theory of knowledge, which views the human mind as an organ that molds and organizes sensations into ideas; and Ishmael's Lockian epistemology, which views the mind at birth as a *tabula rasa*, on which sensory experience impresses its data. Whatever Ahab finds in the White Whale is the projection of his own mind; what the whale is, apart from his own intuition of it, does not matter to him. Ishmael, on the other hand, lets the physical world impress upon his mind instead of imposing his mind on it as Ahab does. Yet, once this process takes place, the details of the world are no longer treated as physical details, but as a bundle of perceptions and impressions, and Ishmael plays with them as if they were the mind's toys. Whereas Ahab defies the phenomenal world as a pasteboard mask, claiming that his mind can reach what is beyond, Ishmael is content to live in his world of mind composed of the impressions of the phenomenal world,
knowing that he can be certain of only his own perceptions and impressions. Although their views of the mind are different, each in his own way, builds his own inner world, which exists independent of the external world. The structure of *Moby-Dick* is an embodiment of this world of mind.

Melville tests Ahab's and Ishmael's approaches to the problem of knowledge in *Pierre* and in the works after that. Pierre, like Ahab, creates his own reality according to his vision of the world: "Nature is not so much her own ever-sweet interpreter, as the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his own peculiar mind and mood" (*Pierre*, p. 342). When Pierre discovers that "the thought and the fact" are all fiction because the subjective reality does not correspond to the objective reality, and that his mind itself consists of nothing but the fictive layers of the external world, he loses all sense of reality; and Melville, troubled by Pierre's metaphysical problems, loses his aesthetic control of the novel. For all the tragic implications of his idealism, Pierre's tragedy is not an Ahabian tragedy. Pierre finally collapses in the nihilistic region of the sarcophagus, since his author is drawn to the skeptical implications of the Lockian theory of the mind. If the mind consists of nothing but the superinduced substances of the
world, a bundle of perceptions, as David Hume called them, then there might be no soul behind the process of thought. Deeply affected by the thought of the "appallingly vacant soul of a man," and by the meaninglessness of his metaphysical exploration, Melville turns his attention in his shorter works from the metaphysical world of mind to the empirical world of "the same old crowd round the custom-house counter." He no longer plays with the impressions of the world as Ishmael did, nor does he search into the soul as he did in Pierre, but rather he explores the world itself. He no longer insulates his world of mind from the uncertainties and horrors of the actual world, but he confronts the world as it is and explores it as a substantial fact: Wall Street, the "Enchanted Isles," the San Dominick, the "Chimney," and Israel's captive life. Still, his empiricism fails to save him from his deepening skepticism that a true knowledge of the world is impossible, for man's perception cannot even penetrate the fictive layers of the world. The Confidence-Man, then, is a manifestation of Melville's profound skepticism, which has been growing since the metaphysical impasse precipitated by Pierre's fatal dilemma. Melville's skepticism still lurks in Billy Budd. Yet, despite its lurking skepticism, the work continues to explore the fictive layers of the world, and it achieves a sense of fulfillment in Billy Budd's acceptance
of his human responsibility, and finally in the author's acceptance of the human condition.

The surface structure of *Billy Budd* is reminiscent of the structure of "Benito Cereno," which is built around the central questions of how does one's innocence (Delano) affect his power of perception and how does one's experience (Cereno) help or fail to save him spiritually. The main narrative of "Benito Cereno" shows Delano's failure to penetrate the appearance that hides the true nature of the *San Dominick*. There follow then the extracts from official Spanish documents which show the records of what transpired aboard the ship, and a flashback which records the conversation between Delano and Cereno following the rescue of the latter. These sequels shed light on the preceding narrative in general and on the questions stated above. In *Billy Budd*, the main narrative deals with Billy's inability to penetrate the appearance of Satanio Claggart and Vere's problem in handling Billy's murder of Claggart. Then the sequels, the narrator's account of Vere's death, the account of the Billy-Claggart incident by an "authorized naval chronicle of the time," and the ballad "Billy in the Darbies," provide further clues to the meaning of the story. *Billy Budd* is not only reminiscent of "Benito Cereno" in its structure; its gradual shift in focus from the cosmic irony involving the mystery of
Good and Evil to empirical realities with which Vere is concerned is characteristic of Melville's shift in focus from the metaphysical realities pursued in *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* to the empirical realities explored in the later works.

Thematically, the question of "innocence and experience" as human conditions that affect man's ability to perceive reality is developed as the central problem in the work. Billy Budd, who is an embodiment of innocence, is confronted with the task of discovering "the hidden nature of the master-at-arms," Claggart; and Captain Vere, a man of experience, is faced with a dilemma: whether to base his judgment on the guilt of Billy Budd to preserve order in society (his ship) at the sacrifice of a blameless human life, or to base his judgment on the actual guilt of Claggart to save an innocent life at the risk of a mutiny. The focus of the work, however, shifts from the theme of the cosmic irony to the theme of the human condition. First, Billy's and Claggart's problems are considered as part of the cosmic irony which is beyond human comprehension, then their problems are viewed as the human conditions they have to face in life, and finally Vere has to face them in handling Billy's case. This shift manifests itself in the structure of *Billy Budd*.

Billy's innocence is defined as both primitive and
primordial; primitive because he is simple-minded, "a sort of upright barbarian"; primordial because of his complete ignorance of evil and his unsuspecting nature. Billy has certain virtues pristine and unadulterate; even his outward appearance reflects his inward purity and goodness, so that he "might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall" (p. 94). In many respects, Billy was "little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company" (p. 52). However, it is part of the cosmic irony that even this pre-Adamic man had a congenital defect. Like the birthmark of beautiful Georgiana in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark," Billy had a fatal defect. Under the stress of emotion, he would develop an organic hesitancy; he would stutter, and even worse, when his speech becomes hampered, he would invariably use his fists in order to compensate for his hampered speech. Clearly, then, Billy is not only a specimen of a primordial man, but also an example of the mystery of creation, a part of the history and destiny of man. In his primordial innocence, he might belong in the heavenly sphere, yet in his invisible blemish he shares the fate of mankind.

It is not surprising, then, that the narrator calls Billy a fatalist: "Like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing, practically a fatalist"; Billy
must have had an instinctive feeling that "we are all in the hands of gods," although he was not aware of his fate. Significantly, however, the narrator does not dwell on Billy's fate or his fatal blemish. The reader is not invited to explore the metaphysical problems involving Billy's fate, but rather to consider the social problems Billy has to encounter. Billy is first likened to "a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court" (p. 51); then one of the central questions explored in the work is defined by the narrator.

... what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man-traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address, and without any touch of defensive ugliness, is of little avail; ... (p. 70)

Billy's inability to discover the hidden nature of Claggart proceeds in part from his inability to see the sinister aspect of nature. His ignorance of the evils of the world and his blind faith in humanity limit his perceptive power: "As it was, innocence was his blinder" (p. 88). In "Benito Cereno," Delano, supposedly a fallen man, is bewildered and perplexed by the panorama of schemes and deceptions as he struggles to discriminate between appearance and reality. Unlike Delano, Billy is not even confused by the ambiguities, human or divine.
His innocent mind would not comprehend the duplicity in any human behavior whether it be a smile, a speech, or a manifestation of human character. It is a small wonder, then, that Billy is unable to penetrate Claggart's affable appearance, and his "self-contained and rational demeanor," which conceals a "subterranean fire" within him.

Billy's difficulty of perceiving the hidden nature of Claggart stems not only from his innocence but also from the ambiguity of Claggart's appearance and his mysterious nature.

. . . the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of strange protuberant broadness in its make that recalled the prints of the Reverend Dr. Titus Oates, the historic deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; silken jet curls partly clustering over it, making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old. This complexion, singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight, though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. (p. 64)

While the strange protuberance of Claggart's chin suggests a historically identifiable trait, treachery, as it "recalled the prints of the Reverend Dr. Titus Oates," and his complexion seems to reveal his defective or abnormal "constitution," his appearance is still deceptive and his
deceptive appearance suggests his mysterious nature. His appearance is as ambiguous as the whiteness of the whale: "a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old." Thus, "to pass from a normal nature to him one must cross 'the deadly space between'" (p. 74): between the empirical and metaphysical worlds.

However, unlike Ahab and Pierre's narrator, Billy Budd's narrator does not attempt to cross that "deadly space between"; he accepts Claggart's nature as a metaphysical problem, e.g., "Natural Depravity," "mysteries of iniquities," and leaves it at that. In fact, the narrator's anatomy of Claggart is clearly indicative of Melville's artistic method in Billy Budd. As the narrator's analysis moves from metaphysical to empirical speculations, it transforms Claggart's nature into a human condition. Consider, for example, how the narrator moves from the metaphysical consideration of Claggart's nature in Chapter 11 through the metaphysical-psychological analysis of his hidden motives in Chapter 12 to the purely psychological analysis of his motives in Chapter 13. At the beginning of Chapter 11, the narrator states the problems to be explored: "what was the matter with the master-at-arms?"; "why should Jemmy Legs, to borrow the Dansker's expression, be 'down' on the Handsome Sailor?" Although the narrator begins to
explore the first question from a metaphysical point of view in Chapter 11, he avoids the issue by suggesting that one has only a superficial knowledge of human nature, especially such as Claggart's, "a depravity according to nature."

Now something such an one was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short "a depravity according to nature." (p. 76)

In Chapter 12, refusing to approach the question "what was the matter with the master-at-arms" directly from a metaphysical point of view, the narrator now approaches the problem from a psychological point of view in order to show the metaphysical-psychological implications of Claggart's hidden motives. Claggart's enmity for Billy is comparable to Jackson's hatred of Redburn, and Radney's antipathy for Steelkilt. Claggart's animosity toward Billy proceeds from his envy of Billy's physical and moral beauty, and his envy leads to his cynic disdain—"disdain of innocence—to be nothing more than innocent!" Yet, Claggart's envy is no vulgar form of the passion, as the narrator suggests. It stems from his painful awareness of the injustice done to him by cosmic forces. "To him, the spirit lodged within Billy" is an ineffability; it is this spirit that made the dimple in Billy's dyed cheek and "suppled his joints, and dancing in his yellow curls made
him pre-eminently the Handsome Sailor" (p. 78). How is it that that spirit lodges in Billy, and not in Claggart; how is it that Claggart finds "the elemental evil" in himself instead of that spirit of beauty? It is this awareness of the cosmic irony, the cosmic ineffability, that makes Claggart resent Billy. Claggart saw the charm of "the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it." He wished to be good as he apprehended the good, but "powerless to be it," for he was powerless to "annul the elemental evil in him, though readily enough he could hide it" (p. 78).

Claggart's enmity for Billy, then, is not only an envy for the moral beauty he lacks, but also an enmity for the ineffable and unfair cosmic force that has done him injustice. Claggart considers himself as a man wronged by the Creator, and Billy is a reminder of the injustice inflicted upon him. Therefore, it can be seen that the narrator's hypotheses concerning Claggart's hidden nature are full of metaphysical implications. It should be observed, however, that these hypotheses are not advanced as metaphysical speculations about creation; they are not explored as metaphysical problems. Claggart's hidden motives are primarily approached from a psychological point of view: why does Claggart behave the way he does?; why should he be down on Billy?
The narrator does not rave, as Pierre's narrator did, that man's unconscious motives cannot be analyzed because they are ultimately determined by God. Rather, he moves from the consideration of Claggart's hidden nature and hidden motives to a discussion of his observable motives so that he can treat Claggart as a mundane problem. Thus in Chapter 13, the narrator suggests that Claggart must have taken Billy's accidental spilling of the soup as a willful insult—"the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part more or less answering to the antipathy of his own." And we can now see that the narrator speculates on Claggart's plausible motives, "plausible self-justification," with a scientist's detachment:

... Probably the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man; but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or even pervert into plausible self-justification; so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart; and, for the rest, not improbably it put him upon new experiments.

(p. 80)

The narrator deliberately avoids exploring "Natural Depravity" as a metaphysical and theological problem, and simply accepts it as a human condition. And especially his treatment of Claggart's enmity for Billy Budd as a psychological problem clearly illustrates Melville's shift in focus from the metaphysical to empirical problems. Evil
forces are no longer pursued in terms of their metaphysical causes, but they are treated as part of this mundane world -- the human condition. If, in this sense, the first human condition that heavenly Billy encounters is a natural force, Claggart, then the second condition Billy faces is a man-made situation--Vere, a man who represents not only society but also its conventions and forms, and whose character is conditioned by them. Vere is a man of experience and sophistication. When Claggart makes accusations that Billy is plotting a mutiny, Vere is not fooled by appearances. He weighs Claggart's allegation against his impression and knowledge of Billy, and he intuitively senses some satanic scheme in Claggart's information. Although, his handling of the situation causes the catastrophic incident of Claggart's death, Vere sees the difference between the apparent guilt and the actual guilt. He is aware that Billy is falsely accused, and that Claggart's death has directly resulted from that false accusation. According to the martial code, Billy is apparently guilty of committing a crime; nevertheless, in terms of "the essential right and wrong involved in the matter," Claggart is guilty of attempting to victimize Billy.

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the Bellipotent, and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. (p. 103)
Vere is aware of the absurdity of the situation in which innocence and guilt are reversed; but he refuses to interpret the law any other way than is required by the surface: "war looks but to the frontage, the appearance." Vere realizes that Billy is innocent before God, yet he is afraid to make a judgment of Billy's guilt according to his private conscience, for his devotion to the King supercedes his private conscience.

"... How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?--Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. ... But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely the heart that moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience. But tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?" (pp. 110-111)

Thus, as the story moves from the analysis of Billy and Claggart to the consideration of Vere's problems of handling Billy's case, it clearly focuses on psychological and social-political problems. And since Vere's problem becomes the focal point of the story, Melville's treatment of Vere's character and motives provides significant clues as to the artistic method employed in *Billy Budd* and the philosophic import of the method. Melville intended his attitude toward Vere to be ambiguous, as Hayford and
Sealts observed, and the way in which he shows his ambiguity illustrates the handling of the narrator which is characteristic of his later works. The following description of Vere, for instance, demonstrates how subtly Melville manipulates the distance between himself and the narrator.

... Vere had a marked leaning toward everything intellectual... With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle, his bias was toward those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world naturally inclines: books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era—history, biography, and unconventional writers like Montaigne, who, free from cant and convention, honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities. In this line of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics, there had to be established in him some positive convictions which he forefelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the troubled period in which his lot was cast, this was well for him. His settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political, and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them not alone because they seemed to him insusceptible of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind. (pp. 62-63).
There are a number of things which do not add up in the narrator's interpretation of the connection between Vere's literary taste and his social and political convictions. The narrator suggests that Vere inclines toward "unconventional writers, . . . who, free from cant and convention, honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities": such skeptical and inquiring writers as Montaigne, who viewed history as a pack of tricks played upon the dead by the living. Yet, Vere's social and political philosophy is not consistent with his literary taste. Vere must be considered peculiarly conventional, especially in view of the fact that Billy's death results directly from Vere's conventional attitude toward crime and from his dependence on the appearance of the case.

Obviously, Vere's character and his views are not influenced by his reading. Why then does Melville include the passage that discusses Vere's literary taste? In view of the obvious discrepancy shown above, we can only infer that behind the mask of the narrator who appears to admire Vere's reading taste Melville is obliquely suggesting that Vere reads skeptical writers in order to study them, so that he can guard against their unconventional views: "his settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political, and otherwise." Vere
hanged innocent Billy in order to prevent possible mutinies and revolutions, which are, to be sure, detrimental to "lasting institutions."

His ambiguous attitude toward Vere suggests that Melville is implicitly questioning the validity of man's knowledge of the world, and of social "forms," without which man may not survive as a social being, yet which are, nevertheless, no more reliable than the Confidence-man's masks. These questions are raised in the sequels just as a number of epistemological questions are raised by the sequels of "Benito Cereno." In the story proper, the narrator defends Vere's action, and Vere appears to have sacrificed Billy out of his sense of duty to the King. Yet, there is something unnatural about Vere's motives: his refusal to accept anything but appearances and his refusal to rely on his instinctive feelings is just as unnatural as Ahab's refusal to accept appearances and his insistence on following his own inner feelings. The reader might suspect that Vere is more concerned about failing to fulfill his duty than fulfilling it, for, although the narrator suggests that Vere's fear of mutiny justifies the urgency with which he executes Billy, this urgency is not indicated by the behavior of the crew. "Indeed, Vere's knowledge of and the men's adherence to usage, and references by both Vere and Melville to the crew's unquestioning
obedience (pp. 87, 112, 127), show how ill-founded is one, at least, of Vere's reasons for executing Billy Budd.

Therefore, Vere's attempt to forestall mutiny by making an example of Billy Budd arouses a further suspicion that he might have acted, not entirely out of his sense of duty, but partly out of his personal ambition to preserve his military reputation. And this suspicion is reinforced when the narrator suggests in the first sequel:

Unhappily he was out off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that 'spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame. (p. 129)

The implication of this suggestion is more damaging than it seems at first, for it casts a shadow not only on Vere's motives behind his execution of Billy but also in the validity of our knowledge of the world in general, and our knowledge of the heroic actions of men in particular, including the heroic action of much admired Nelson himself. Melville might have admired Nelson as the narrator admires him in Chapter 4. Yet in this context which casts a shadow on Vere's action, the glory of Trafalgar is deflated if not satirized; at least, Melville's attitude toward it becomes ambiguous. Viewed in this light, the narrator's earlier comment on Nelson has an ambiguous implication.

At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of opening the fight sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most
magnificent of all victories to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds; if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian is each more heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts. (p. 58)

The narrator openly declares that Nelson's final act of leaving his will and testament before his "glorious death" is a form of vainglory, but at the same time he exalts this act as an act of heroic sentiment, just as affectation and fustian are formal and even poetic expressions of heroic sentiments in the great epics of yore, for instance, warriors' traditional boasting before a combat. However, when this passage is considered alongside Vere's demonstrative acts, his summoning of drumhead court-martial, and his formalism ("With mankind, forms, measured forms, are everything."), the intention of the passage is more ambiguous than it appears to be. Chapter 4, in which the passage occurs, is obviously intended to exalt Nelson's heroic nature showing as it does the contrast between Nelson's "honest sense of duty" and Vere's "love of Glory." Yet, it might also have been intended to suggest the showiness of human affairs: "will and testament"; "jewelled vouchers"; "shining deeds"; "affectation and fustian."

Thus, when the narrator says "truth uncompromisingly
told will always have its ragged edges," Melville is referring not only to the "ragged edges" of his aesthetic forms but also to the "ragged edges" of human affairs: human affairs are "shows," and "forms" are merely appearances. This inference is strengthened in the second sequel when the narrator shows the discrepancy between the true account of Billy's execution and the formal report of the incident:

"On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board H. M. S. Bellipotent. John Claggart, the ship's master-at-arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship's company, and that the ringleader was one William Budd; he, Claggart, in the act of arraigning the man before the captain, was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath knife of Budd. . . . " (p. 130)

The distorted report on the Billy Budd incident as it appears in the authorized "naval chronicle of the time" is just as deplorable as the incident itself. It goes on to state that the assassin was a depraved alien, and that the "enormity of the crime" appears the greater in view of the "respectable," "discreet," and "patriotic" character of the victim. Ironically, the naval chronicle is the only report "that hitherto has stood in human record to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd," and in this only human record the facts are fictionalized. The official report of the Billy Budd incident is more fiction than any fiction that might be developed from the true story, and it is a part of "the world's artificial
system."

As Hawthorne suggests in his "The New Adam and Eve,"
we are prisoners of "the world's artificial system,"
bound by "those iron fetters, which we call truth and
reality," but which are mere illusions. "Measured forms,"
like "true martial discipline," superinduce "in average
man a sort of impulse whose operation at the official word
of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of
an instinct" (p. 127). As the prisoners of the world's
artificial system, the sailors do not question the system
that "hangs" Billy unjustly, but, "like Vere, they seem to regard it as a tragic necessity demanded by the
forms of the world in which they live." They accept that
Billy's punishment was "unavoidably inflicted from the
naval point of view," although they "instinctively felt
that Billy was . . . as incapable of mutiny as of wilful
murder" (the third sequel, p. 131). In this artificial
world moral values are often unstable, for they are known
through appearances, and moral judgments are made by the
social perspective in which they exist. Thus, as the legal
deposition at the end of "Benito Cereno" not only shows
the limitations of human perception, but also questions
the moral foundation upon which the world of the San
Dominick is built; so, too, the sequels of Billy Budd not
only question the validity of man's knowledge of the world
by demonstrating an ironic reversal of the facts in the
authorized "naval chronicle of the time," but also question
the moral foundation of the world of Vere.

"The jewelled vouchers" of Nelson, the "measured
forms" of Vere, and the official records of a naval chroni-
cle, then, are part of this artificial world; and as Billy
Budd's "vocal defect" and Claggart's "Natural Depravity"
are part of the incomprehensible cosmic irony, so is the
world's artificial system an incongruous human condition.
"It is only through the medium of the imagination," as
Hawthorne suggests, "that we can lessen those iron fetters,
which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even
partially sensible of what prisoners we are." Melville
makes us aware of what prisoners we are of these human con-
ditions by having Billy Budd encounter them and become a
victim; and more important, he "lessens those iron fetters"
by making Billy accept and transcend them. Billy, to be
sure, did not perceive the complexity, let alone incongru-
ity, of this artificial system, yet he must have understood
that in his hands he held the key to preserve the order of
the Bellipotent. If he did, then the fact that he saw his
task of preserving the order of the world which was about
to hang him as his responsibility and willingly sacrificed
his life, is an eloquent expression of the magnanimity
which springs from his natural goodness.
magnanimity is Melville's final vindication of natural goodness triumphing over and transcending "the iron fetters" of civilization.

In this final lore, Melville was able to show the "ragged edges" of human affairs; yet, as he did in the post-
Pierre works, he had to accept man's inability to penetrate the "smooth" surface of reality.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low-hanging vapor had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the clearness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer's yard. (p. 128)

As "the men dispersed to the places allotted to them," so did the rising sun disperse "the fleece of low-hanging vapor" as if to restore its own cosmic order. Yet the cosmic operation, "the circumambient air in the clearness of its serenity," like "smooth white marble," is just as ineffable as the whiteness of the White Whale. The image of the "smooth," "white," and "polished" surface of the marble suggests once again the deceptive appearance of the cosmic phenomena, and the fiction that portrays that surface. Significantly, however, the marble is shaped into a "polished block" as it is shaped by Melville's art into a perceptible form of human experience. As Melville shifted his focus from the metaphysical world of mind to the empirical world of "the same old crowd round the custom-house," so did his artistic
form change from the elusive structure of *Moby-Dick* to the "polished blocks" of the later works. And if the serenity of the final scene in *Billy Budd* suggests that Melville's metaphysical exploration came full circle since the chartless voyage of *Mardi*, then Babbalanja's comment on Lombardo's work might serve as a fitting summary of Melville's literary career.

. . . When Lombardo set about his work, he knew not what it would become. He did not build himself in with plans; he wrote right on; and so doing, got deeper and deeper into himself; and like a resolute traveler, plunging through baffling woods, at last was rewarded for his toils. "In good time," saith he, in his autobiography, "I came out into a serene, sunny, ravishing region; full of sweet scents, singing birds, wild plaints, roguish laughs, prophetic voices."10

The scene of Billy's last moment is not full of "sweet scents" and "singing birds," but the rising sun shoots through "the vapory fleece hanging low in the East . . . with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision." And Billy, "ascending, took the full rose of the dawn."
Chapter Seven

Billy Budd:
"Man's Final Lore"

1. It is generally believed that Billy Budd shows Melville's final acceptance of the tragic necessity of law in human society. In this chapter, I want to use the term "acceptance" in a broader sense than it has been used in order to suggest that Melville accepted the human condition in general.


3. Since Billy Budd's character has been widely discussed by Melville scholars, it would be redundant to analyze his character extensively here.

4. Ishmael remarks when Pip leaps out of the boat for the second time: "We are all in the hands of gods; and Pip jumps again."

5. "The cumulative effect—whatever the intention—of his subsequent deletions and insertions, however, was to throw into doubt not only the rightness of Vere's decision and the soundness of his mind but also the narrator's own position concerning him." "Perspectives for Criticism," in Billy Budd, p. 34.


7. "We who are born into the world's artificial system can never adequately know how little in our present state and circumstance is natural, and how much is merely the interpolation of the perverted heart and mind of man. Art has become a second and stronger nature; she is a stepmother, whose crafty tenderness has taught us to despise the bountiful and wholesome ministrations of our true parent. It is only through the medium of the imagination that we can lessen those iron fetters, which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible of what prisoners we are." The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Jefferson Press, 1882), p. 279.
8. **Ibid.**

9. In his "Thoreau on Poverty and Magnanimity" (PMLA 85, January 1970), Thomas Woodson suggests that Billy has "the legendary qualities of the American magnanimous hero." It might be also noted that Billy shares his magnanimity and his "certain virtues pristine and unadulterate" with Queequeg. And therefore, it can be said that Billy's fulfillment of his responsibility is the fulfillment of Melville's vision of the world which was tested and dramatized through the Ishmael-Queequeg chapters and finally revealed in the "Epilogue."

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