HERMAN MELVILLE'S VISION OF CONFLICT

by

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INTRODUCTION

For the outstanding non-fiction book published in the United States in 1950, Newton Arvin was awarded the National Book Award in March of 1951 for his Herman Melville, published by William Sloane Associates. The conferring of this award upon Newton Arvin for a work about Melville is as much an indication of current interest in Melville as it is an acknowledgement of Newton Arvin's achievement in scholarship and interpretation.

Living in New York and Massachusetts between the years 1819 and 1891, Herman Melville reached a high point of literary accomplishment around 1850, a time of great development in native American literature. In their lifetime, however, Melville's contemporaries, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Whitman, never enjoyed a greater popularity than did Melville for several years. Melville was known as the writer of lusty sea stories, Typee, Omoo, Redburn, White Jacket, and Moby Dick. With the publication of Mardi in 1850 and Pierre in 1852, Melville appeared more as a philosopher intent on speculation and unraveling of the mysteries of life. His popularity soon waned. Later efforts, such as Israel Potter, The Confidence Man, his poetry, such as Battle Pieces and Clarel, and many short stories including Billy Budd, Foretopman, written just before

his death in 1891, were largely ignored by the American and British reading public.

Interest in Melville did not revive until 1919, the centennial of his birth. Today his star shines brightly in the firmament of American letters. He is popularly considered a novelist who thought long and deeply about the mysteries of good and evil in society and in creation, especially in man.

Melville was extremely conscious of the strain of evil that he felt marred all of God's creation. It is the purpose of this study to examine how the consciousness of this evil in creation led Melville to envision conflicts in all the phases of human living. We shall examine how Melville saw conflicts within society, within man himself, and finally between man and God. Melville's last prose work, Billy Budd, Foretopman, becomes an expression of surrender to and acceptance of the conflicts and antinomies that he felt were endemic to creation.

Although an individualist in thought and even in his own personal conduct, Melville was indebted to his environment and to his heritage for the many patterns and elements of thought that appear in his work. Thus a part of our study will be to examine the influences that were at work on his mind and art.

The first step in our study of Melville's vision of conflict will be an exposition of the topic in relation to the more significant scholarship that has already been done about Melville and his work.

The Constable edition, published in London in 1924, is the only complete set of Melville's works. However, this edition is extremely rare and inaccessible. Hence in our study we have used texts that are more readily available and, in the case of Billy Budd particularly, more valid and authentic. References to Typee, Omoo, Mardi, Moby Dick, Israel Potter, White Jacket, and Redburn are taken from Romances of Herman Melville, published in New York by the Tudor Publishing Co. in 1931. References to Pierre are taken from the text prepared and edited by Henry A. Murray and published by Farrar, Strauss in New York in 1949. References to poetry are taken from the Collected Poems of Herman Melville, edited by Howard P. Vincent and published in Chicago by the Packard and Co. in 1947. References to Billy Budd are taken from Melville's Billy Budd, edited by F. Barron Freeman and published at Cambridge by the Harvard University Press in 1948.

CHAPTER I

EXPOSITION OF THE PROBLEM

Herman Melville left home to go to sea in May or June of 1837. As he was to say of Redburn:

> ... sad disappointments in several plans which I had sketched for my future life, the necessity of doing something for myself, united to a naturally roving disposition, had now conspired within me, to send me to sea as a sailor [1].

Eight years later he came to the end of his wanderings and with the surge of the sea still beating in his ears, he sat down to tell the world what he had seen of it and, above all, what he thought about it. In the long night watches and in the heat of the tropic suns, Herman Melville's genius had come to its full flowering. He tells us:

> Chief among these places {of privacy} is the chains to which I would sometimes hie during our pleasant homeward-bound glide over those pensive tropical latitudes. After hearing my fill of these wild yarns of our top, here I would recline -- if not disturbed -- serenely concocting information into wisdom [2].

When Melville returned from his wanderings, he tried to share his wisdom with the world. He resorted to the written word. However, his two earliest works, Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847) are little more than travel literature.

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1 Redburn, p.1469.

2 White Jacket, p.1300.

Still there is evidence of philosophizing. In both works the reader is warned that a notable cleavage exists between the ideal and the real, between Christianity and Christians. In 1849 the American public was surprised to find that the narrator of South Sea adventures had become an out-and-out philosopher, and an inexplicable one at that. Mardi (1849) is an attempt to analyze things on several levels -- religious, moral, metaphysical, psychological, social, and economic. On the whole it is a proving ground for ideas, confused and inconclusive. "...the book suffers irremedially, as a work of art, from the intellectual precipitateness and prematurity out of the midst of which it was palpably written"[3].

In the same year Redburn appeared, answering the demand of Melville's readers for more adventure stories. White Jacket in 1850 told the story of Melville's return from the Pacific in the much the same style and manner as Redburn had related the story of a boy of seventeen on his first journey before the mast. However, in both tales there is a decided hint at a conflict -- the individual against society. In Redburn this conflict lies in the poverty-stricken lad as a poor outcast among the more respectable and smugly self-centered passengers on a river-boat. In White Jacket there is conflict

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3 Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, New York, William Sloan Associates, 1950, p.99.

in the anti-social attitude of the slightly superior sailor who refuses to have any friends except Lemsford the poet and Jack Chase, captain of the maintop.

It is interesting to note that it was to Jack Chase that Melville was to dedicate Billy Budd, the last work of his life in 1891. The dedication reads: Dedicated/ to/ Jack Chase/ Englishman/ Wherever that great heart may now be/ Here on earth or harboured in Paradise./ Captain of the Main-top in the year 1843/ in the U.S. Frigate "United States" [4] As we shall see, there is significance in the fact that in writing Billy Budd, which embodies his "testament of acceptance", Melville was thinking about a hero who had little love for the mass of men.

Moby Dick reached the public in 1851. As far as the interpretation of the work is concerned, scholars seem to agree on only one point -- that it has something to do with Evil in the universe. In 1852 Melville gave the world Pierre: or the Ambiguities. It seems beyond dispute that the subtitle indicates what the reader will find in an attempt to fathom the message or meaning of this novel. In short, Pierre is ambiguous. However, the book is important in the intellectual development of Melville.

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4 Billy Budd, p.130.

With Mardi and Moby Dick it completes what R. E. Watters calls a trilogy of evil: Mardi, the sociology of evil; Moby Dick, the metaphysics of evil; and Pierre, the psychology of evil [5]. Several years after the publication of Pierre, Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile reached the book shops. In the meantime, Melville had brooded over the bad reception given Pierre. In fact, his moodiness led the Melville family to call in physicians to examine him for his sanity.

> ...Elizabeth said that all the family were worried about the strain on Melville's health; and it has been offered, on the authority of conversations with his daughters and granddaughters, that in the spring of 1853 his behavior was so difficult his family had him examined for his sanity by a number of doctors including Oliver Wendell Holmes [6].

However, by the end of 1854 Melville had completed seven pieces that were published in Putnam's Monthly Magazine and Harper's New Monthly Magazine. "The Encantadas; or Enchanted Isles" and "Benito Cereno" were the most important of these seven, but "Bartleby the Scrivener", the first to appear, has a certain value that cannot be denied. In May of 1856 these three stories were published along with three lesser pieces as The Piazza Tales by Dix and Edwards.

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5 R. E. Watters, "Melville's Metaphysics of Evil", from University of Toronto Quarterly, 9, pp.170-182.

6 Geoffrey Stone, Melville, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1949, p.212.

It was in 1855 that Israel Potter was published. It had been serialized in Putnam's. Two years later Dix and Edwards published The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade. Misanthropy is the key-note of this book. There is a corrosive scepticism that corroborates the fact that Melville in his own personal life was experiencing periods of great depression.

In the winter of 1856-1857 Melville made a trip to the Holy Land, visiting England and Rome on the journey. On his return he seems to have abandoned prose for poetry. However, nothing was published at this time and Melville went off on another journey, this time by sea to San Francisco and back again between May and November, 1860. It was six years later that his verses were published, Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War.

But it was not until 1876 that another work was forthcoming. This time it was Clarel, the 20,000 lines of which are judged by Geoffrey Stone in this wise:

> The tortured syntax, the rhythmic monotomy, the rhymes superfluous to sense, and the failure of the metaphors to flow out into full ontological implication make Clarel a second-rate piece of work, in the kindest judgment [7].

But Clarel renews the expression of conflict that has been noticed in his earlier prose works. There is a constant doubt, a state of balance between two contradictory tenets exemplified in all the characters.

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7 Geoffrey Stone, ibid., p.278.

Shortly after 1885 two late books of poems were privately published: John Marr and Other Sailors and Timoleon. Only twenty-five copies of each book were printed and the over-all quality is inferior even to the pedestrian Clarel. Melville's last expression of his art and thought was Billy Budd written shortly before his death on September 28, 1891.

For the most part, the world of Melville's days cared little for his wisdom. It liked his rich stories of adventure in the South Seas but it rejected his philosophizing, and when he died in 1891, five months after finishing Billy Budd, Herman Melville was a neglected and obscure figure. In fact, he himself well appreciated the fact and as early as 1877 had written to his brother-in-law, John C. Hoadley:

> You are young; but I am verging on three-score, and at times a certain lassitude steals over me -- in fact, a disinclination for doing anything but the indispensable. At such moments the problem of the universe seems a humbug, and epistolatory obligations mere moonshine, and the -- well, nepenthe seems all-in-all [8]

It was thirty years after Melville's death before his star started to rise once again. In writing The American Novel in 1921, Carl Van Doren said that nobody knew American literature who did not know Melville [9]. Four years earlier, writing in the Cambridge History of American Literature, Mr. Van Doren had not been very sanguine about Melville.

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8 Victor H. Paltsits, Family Correspondence of Herman Melville, 1830-1904, New York, The New York Public Library, 1929.

9 Carl Van Doren, The American Novel, New York,

"His death, 28 September, 1891, after nearly forty silent years removed from American literature one of its most promising and most disappointing figures. Of late his fame has shown a tendency to revive" [10]. In rewriting his book, The American Novel in 1940, Mr. Van Doren was to drop the former statement as too obvious. The intervening years had seen Raymond Weaver publish the first biography of Melville [11] and three years later edit his complete works [12]. Thus in 1924 Billy Budd was published for the first time. Five years earlier, in 1919, Mr. Weaver had commemorated the centennial of the novelist's birth with an article in Nation. It was really this article which marked the beginning of the revival. The following is indicative of Weaver's approach:

> The versatility and power of his genius was extraordinary. If he does not actually rank as a writer of overshadowing accomplishments, it will be owing not to any lack of genius, but to the perversity of his rare and lofty genius [13].

Throughout the next three decades scholars worked to make intelligible "the perversity of his rare and lofty genius". In the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature for the years 1919 to 1935, there are listed thirty-eight

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10 William Peterfield Trent, et alii, ed., Cambridge History of American Literature, New York, Macmillan, 1917, p.323.

11 Raymond Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic, New York, George H. Doran and Co., 1921.

12 Complete Works, Lendon, Constable and Co., 1924.

13 Raymond Weaver, "Centennial of Herman Melville", from Nation, vol. 9, pp.144-146.

articles dealing with Melville. One of the earliest articles points to the "rediscovering" of Melville [14]. As another spot-check for the resurgence of Melville's popularity, the Cumulative Book Index for 1949 lists nine different editions of his various works and three studies of Melville; for 1950, there are five editions of his works, and seven monographs about him.

As early as 1929, Melville was in popular demand. It was in that year that H. M. Tomlinsen edited Pierre [15]. Since then a variety of editions have come from the press, the latest being one edited by Henry A. Murray [16].

Moby Dick has enjoyed the greatest popularity. In fact, it is now ranked among the great classics of all time. A recent edition of this work carries a preface by Clifton Fadiman and exhibits the response it has evoked from a man who represents not a small part of the mere popular critics of literature:

> It is the nearest thing we have to an un-Christian (though not anti-Christian) epic. It is the other face of the Divine Comedy - the product of unfaith, as Dante's work was the product of faith [17].

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14 "Neglected American Classics", from Literary Digest, vol. 70, p.26.

15 H. M. Tomlinsen, ed., Pierre, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1929.

16 Henry A. Murray,ed.,Pierre, New York, Farrar Straus, 1949.

17 Preface printed in Atlantic Monthly, vol. 172, no.4, p.89.

Fadiman's view is subscribed to by a more recent scholar of Melville: "Melville was the antithesis of Dante" [18].

Melville's popularity in the last three decades has been marked by a variety of interpretations of his work. Scholars have approached him from a multitude of angles. Usually in literature there is a problem of how to distinguish between what the author himself really thought and what he has merely put into the mouths of his characters for the sake of the story itself. This difficulty has not been existing in Melville's case. A reliable critic of Melville has remarked just recently:

> There are few important characters in any of Melville's books that are not, in one way or another, identifiable with himself -- even Ahab seems a mask through which he speaks rather than an exponent of a point of view the author assumes only for the purpose of drama....[19]

Thus scholars have found that what Melville wrote and what he himself thought are parallel, if not completely synonymous.

If there is no problem of distinguishing between Melville and his chief characters, there still remains one of Melville's own intellectual and artistic growth. Melville's intellectual life broadened and deepened through his late twenties and early thirties. He was aware of growth.

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18 Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, New York, Reynall and Hitchcock, 1947, p.102.

19 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.23.

Writing to Hawthorne in 1851, during the creation of Moby Dick, Melville stated:

> Until I was twenty-five I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between now and then, that I have not unfolded within myself [20].

This "unfolding" within himself has been the chief challenge to Melville scholars of the past few years. In fact, primarily because Melville had no absolute standards throughout his life, he pressed forward in the search of some, now on the ontological level, then on the moral, again on the social. Following Melville's mental excursions has been a challenge and, quite probably in some cases, a fad among scholars. Growing out of this pursuit is a wealth of valuable criticism that makes us debtors to the men who have plumbed Melville and measured his depths. Much of their work is essential for an appreciation and a perspective of the man. The following are most significant.

A pioneer in the study of Melville, Raymond Weaver has contributed a sympathetic approach to Melville the symbolist [21]. Objective and clear, the work helped revive the fame of Melville in the early twenties and was to stand

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20 Howard P. Vincent, The Try-out of Moby Dick, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949, p.15.

21 Raymond Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic, New York, George H. Doran and Co., 1921.

as the only adequate treatment of the novelist until 1926 when John Freeman wrote the first book on Melville to be published in England. Departing from the framework of Weaver who tried to interpret Melville the thinker, Freeman keeps to a criticism and analysis of his works on a literary basis. Mr. Freeman's biography is especially valuable for the attention it pays to the work of Melville after 1851. In discussing Billy Budd, Mr. Freeman remarks that it is "an appealing tragedy for witness that evil is defeat and natural goodness invincible in the affections of man [22]. Weaver thinks otherwise: "only the disillusion abided with him to the last" [23]. As we shall see in the final chapter of this dissertation, Billy Budd cannot be treated as a tale of high optimism, as Mr. Freeman thinks, nor as a story of disillusion, as Mr. Weaver would have us believe. But both Freeman and Weaver see the significance of Billy Budd, a fact not true of most early Melville scholars. An explanation for this oversight may lie in the fact that Billy Budd lay unknown and unpublished until the Constable edition of Melville's works in 1924.

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22 John Freeman, Herman Melville, London, Macmillan, 1926, p. 135.

23 Raymond Weaver, op.cit., p.381.

Lewis Mumford is another early biographer of Melville. Impressionistic and based on Freudian psychology, his work is interesting but lacks completeness and accuracy [24]. Of the three biographers already mentioned, Mumford seems to come closest to a true interpretation of Billy Budd when he speaks of Melville accepting the paradoxes of Pierre as a tragic necessity and finding ultimate peace in resignation.

The 1940's have seen a wealth of publications about Melville. In 1944 William Sedgwick produced a masterful work, making quite reasonable the theory that Melville and Shakespeare had much in common. The basis of Sedgwick's thesis is that there is a mutual attempt to apprehend "the absolute condition of present things" [25]. Sedgwick treats Melville primarily as a tragedian, seeing in Clarel and Billy Budd various degrees of Melville's acceptance of tragedy in life.

Fortified by a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in 1947, Charles Olson emphasized the relationship between Melville and Shakespeare. Olson sees a similarity in the plight of Macbeth and Ahab. He compares them:

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24 Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, New York Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929.

25 William Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1944.

"They both endure the torture of isolation from humanity. The correspondence of these two evil worlds is precise. In either the divine has little place" [26]. Olson's work centers only about Moby Dick and for reason of this exclusiveness is not a completely adequate study of Melville's thought.

In 1949 Richard Chase approached Melville with a bias toward Freudian psychology. Chase tells us:

> ... purpose is to contribute a book on Melville to a movement which may be described (once again) as the new liberalism -- that newly invigorated secular thought at the dark center of the twentieth century [27].

Chase is on safe ground in describing Moby Dick as the American epic, and is extremely interesting in interpreting Melville against the background of native American humour and native American story technique. But Chase insists that the Promethean-heroic theme in Melville is evidence of Melville's "search for the father". Even Pierre's eye-strain is interpreted as a symbol of his sexual response to Isabel and Lucy. Chase exploits Melville's short story, "The Paradise of Bachelors" as well as "The Tartarus of Maids" as an indication that the sexual theme in Melville's writing is deeply intended.

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26 Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947, p.54.

27 Richard Chase, Herman Melville: A Critical Study, New York, Macmillan, 1949, p.vii.

Geoffrey Stone scolds Chase for his Freudian interpretation and insists Chase is guilty of a petitio principii with which it is impossible to argue [28]. In his own study, Stone writes a chronological review of Melville and fits in the works to correspond to each particular phase of Melville's growth. Thus Redburn is examined before Typee and Omoo, although published later, because it is a reflection of Melville's experience as a young sailor when he left home in 1837 to go to sea. Stone is especially succesful in seeing Moby Dick in proper perspective. Here he understands Ahab as confronting God as an equal.

The year 1949 was extremely fruitful in Melville scholarship. Nathalia Wright added to the growing pool of information and interpretation with a study of Melville's use of the Bible. Much of Melville's imagery, theme and plots, characters and types, and even style are rooted in the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament. Miss Wright shows how the Biblical incidents to which Melville repeatedly referred fall into two groups: events of violence and destruction, and events of vision and revelation [29].

Three worthwhile studies of Melville were published

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28 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.72.

29 Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible, Durham, Duke University Press, 1949, p.25.

during the past year. In the American Men of Letters Series, Newton Arvin contributed a study that emphasizes the literary appreciation of Melville [30]. Arvin sees significance in Melville's early Calvinistic and Presbyterian training but falls into the specious reasoning of Freudian psychology to interpret Ahab's ivory leg as a symbol of impotence. Arvin darkly suggests that the relations of Melville and his mother were perverted and that Melville himself was of homosexual tendencies. Arvin's style is facile and extremely readable.

The second work of significance is Percival's reading of Moby Dick in the light of Soeren Kierkegaard's philosophy of suffering and despair. Percival's approach is cogent and plausible, certainly one of the most reasonable and sober interpretations of Melville's classic [31]. Percival hints at the influence of the Book of Job in Melville's writing of Moby Dick.

One of the most comprehensive studies of Moby Dick was published by Howard P. Vincent in 1949. Vincent has a deep respect, almost reverence for this novel:

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30 Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, New York, William Sloane Associates, 1950.

31 M. O. Percival, A Reading of Moby-Dick, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1950.

> Moby-Dick is rich and complex above any other novel in American literature. With a boldness of plan and a breadth of scope unequaled since the Renaissance ...and with a vigor of animal spirits which sweeps all before it, Moby-Dick brings into magnificent focus the emergent forces of the western world [32].

In view of the painstaking scholarship that marks this book, it can be considered one of the finest critiques of Melville in the twentieth century. Vincent clearly traces Melville's debt to whaling literature of his day and, what is most interesting, works out the thesis that the story was already written when Melville met Hawthorne in 1850, but was then revised and rewritten to serve as a vehicle for the philosophizing that was inspired in Melville by this friendship. Howard P. Vincent is also editor of the only recent edition of Melville's verse [33].

In recent years innumerable dissertation on Melville have been accepted by the universities. Some survey phases that receive little emphasis in the published works. A detailed account of Melville's reading and of the ideas that were influencing him between his return to America in 1844 and his moving to Pittsfield in 1850 can be found in the doctoral dissertation of Luther S. Mansfield [34].

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32 Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-out of Moby-Dick, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949.

33 Howard P. Vincent, Collected Poems of Herman Melville, Chicago, Packard and Co., 1947.

34 Luther S. Mansfield, Herman Melville: Author and New Yorker, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1936

EXPOSITION OF THE PROBLEM

The work is based on first-hand examination of what remains of Melville's library and correlates material that is found in memoirs and journals of contemporary figures.

For the serious student of Melville there is a valuable index to his ideas cataloged by Gordon Roper [35]. This also is a doctoral dissertation and consequently is available only in manuscript form. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Roper sees the significance of Billy Budd in the thought of Melville. Roper has restricted his work to the four major prose works of Melville, Mardi, Pierre, Moby Dick and Billy Budd.

In the way of general criticism, the following works are noteworthy. More as an indication of the extent of interest in Melville than as a work of exceptional value is the study published by K. H. Sundermann in Berlin [36]. The work groups appropriate texts according to the idea they convey. However, it is rather brief and lacks the synthesis that can be found in works mentioned earlier.

Happily combining an over-all view with a detailed and annotated analysis, Willard Thorp is one of the early commentators on Melville. His work is something of an anthology.

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35 Gordon Roper, Index to the Chief Works of Melville, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1943.

36 K. H. Sundermann, Herman Melville's Gedankengut, Berlin, Verlag Arthur Collignon, 1937.

37 Willard Thorp, Herman Melville: Representative Selections, New York, American Book Co., 1938.

However, it fails to give any selections from Pierre or Billy Budd and for that reason is necessarily incomplete. A study that should not be overlooked is Matthiessen's American Renaissance [38]. Matthiessen treats Melville from the point of view of the history of ideas in America. He delineates Melville's place in the world of Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne. It is a sane attempt to understand the philosophy of Melville by simply examining the characters and situations in the novels, without the bias or distortion of preconceived notions. Finally, the informal, chatty chapters in Brook's The Times of Melville and Whiteman deserve a reading [39].

Even a cursory glance at the preceding paragraphs or an occasional reading of book notices reveal the intense interest in Melville in the last decade. To find a reason for such a resurgence in popularity for an author who once enjoyed good sales and then lost the interest of his readers by the very works that today are acclaimed his best, is quite a challenge. Perhaps it can be credited to the perversity of fortune that seems to plague so many literateurs. Literary men, like prophets, are so often rejected by their own mileau. Their magnitude is appreciated after death.

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38 F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, New York Oxford University Press, 1941.

39 Van Wyck Brooks, The Times of Melville and Whitman, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, 1947.

Or again, an explanation may be found in the fact that one of Melville's prominent themes is that there is an elusive reality behind the appearances of things:

> All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event... there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasonable mask....[40]

Thus Ahab in the heat of his search for the white whale! Ahab's discontent with things as they seem and his attempt to reach the absolute reality may find a sympathetic response in the minds of the post-World War generations. Twice cosmic struggles failed to achieve their intended purpose, world peace, in spite of glowing promises and apparent success. It was after the first World War that Melville's star began to rise. Since the end of the second War, Melville's position and prestige has been even higher.

It is not our intention to explore the reasons for Melville's popularity. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Melville's thought itself. Many and varied have been the approaches of scholars to Melville's thought. However, none seems to have elaborated upon the very definite thread of conflict that runs through his work.

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40 Moby Dick, p.857.

The burden of this study will be to examine this conflict in the light of the problem of evil and imperfection which Melville saw everywhere about him. Melville had a vision of conflict that can be studied on three levels: conflict within society, conflict within man, conflict between man and God or, in Melville's terms, between earth and heaven.

Obviously Melville did not approach his problem of conflict in such a tidy order. His works show an inter-weaving of these three basic conflicts. The purpose of this dissertation will be to unravel the skein of Melville's thoughts, knotted and twisted that it is, and sort out the contraries and contradictions that he saw, or thought he saw, in the world about him, within him, and above him.

Melville's output was prodigious, especially in view of the fact that he concentrated his eight best-known, prose works within a span of nine years. His short stories and verse were to fill several more volumes. In fact, the standard Constable edition of all his writing runs to sixteen volumes and a few short prose and poetic works have been published since Weaver edited the Constable edition in 1924. For our study we shall keep to the major prose works; Mardi, White-Jacket, Moby Dick, Pierre, and Billy Budd will share chief attention. They excel in content.

His other writings shall be used for corroborative evidence. In the works mentioned, Melville struck upon all his important themes. The others were more like overtones.

Every man is a product of his age in one way or another. Melville too was dependent upon the welter of ideas in which he moved and breathed. In his The Trying-out of Moby-Dick, Howard Vincent shows how Melville drew heavily upon Beale's Natural History of the Sperm Whale. If Melville was indebted to a specific book for material that he himself knew from personal experience before the mast, how much more was he dependent upon the ideas that formed the fabric of his times, ideas that were in the conversations and writings of his contemporaries, ideas that were the very keystones of books that he read, of systems of thought in which he was trained as a lad and into which he delved as a young man. Hence, the first step in this dissertation will be a study of Melville and his age, the source of Melville's vision of conflict.

CHAPTER II

MELVILLE AND HIS AGE

Melville had an alert mind. In many respects he can be said to personify the ideal of the Latin poet Terence, "Nihil humanum a me alienum puto". He responded emotionally and intellectually to what he saw, heard and read. His mind, too, was philosophical: he was anxious to pierce to the depths of things, to analyze their ultimate causes. As an artist, he wanted to experience the ultimate as well as define it. Immediately about him were the Transcendentalists, Thoreau, Emerson, who emphasized the immaterial reality that lay behind external objects. To Melville, as to some of his contemporaries this view gave birth to a dualism, or conflict, that seemed to lie at the heart of things and have a counterpart in the very mind of man.

> There was a painful division in his mind, as in the minds of many of his contemporaries, between his distrust of the discursive reason and his respect for it; ...he suffered deeply from the inner dissociation of his age. Yet his aspiration, like Thoreau's for example, was to triumph over them; to do justice both to visible "objects", masks as they are, and to the immaterial reality that, as he believed, lies behind them. It was an impossible task, so profoundly split, so dualized was the mind of his time, and his own as representative of it [1].

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1 Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.169.

The mind of Melville's time did not produce itself. For its heritage it had the Cartesian and Kantian schools of thought which had been working like a ferment in the intellectual life of Europe and England, and consequently of America itself. Descartes's philosophy presumed an absolute antithesis of mind and matter. After Descartes. philosophy became anthropocentric and reduced itself to the study of individual consciousness. Inevitably it bred an antagonism between spiritualism and empiricism. Descartes' dichotomy was to show itself in such a writer as Blaise Pascal whose Pensees contain a thought that might just as well have been written by Melville himself: "The heart has reasons of which reason itself knows nothing".

Descartes was responsible for an entirely new philosophical system, but other men were to be the more immediate influences on the 19th century mind and on Melville in particular. Descartes' dichotomy was to find fresh and varied expression in the writings of 18th and 19th century philosophers like Spinoza, Berkely, and Hume. These men had tried to solve the antithesis of mind and matter that Descartes had posited. One tried pantheistic monism; Berkeley tried idealistic monism; Hume denied the substantial nature of both mind and matter.

Kant reacted to the "pan-phenomenalism" of Hume and, fearing for the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of the will, the existence of God, and the obligation of the moral law, posed once more the question, What are the conditions of knowledge?

Melville knew Kant's theories, along with those of Hegel and Schlegel. On his trip to England in October, 1849, Melville fell in with Franklin Taylor and George Adler, the latter a professor of German language and literature at New York College. In his journal, Melville noted a warm companionship among the three and refers specifically to the evening of Monday, October 22, when Adler and Taylor came to his room and the three indulged in whiskey punches. "We had an extraordinary time & did not break up till two in the morning. We talked metaphysics continually & Hegel, Schlegel, Kant ...."[2]

By this time, October, 1849, Mardi had been written and published. But Moby Dick and Pierre were still to flow from Melville's pen. In fact, the deep, tortured philosophizings of Melville date, for the most part, from this period of approximately 1849 and 1850. Although influences other than Kant were to have an even greater impress upon him, there is a strain of Kantian philosophy in Melville.

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2 Eleanor M. Metcalf, editor, Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948, p.12.

In The Critique of Pure Reason Kant claimed that phenomenon are nothing but representations. There is a transcendental object, the thing-in-itself (Ding an Sich) which our understanding cannot fathom. How closely related is this theory to Melville's vision of Ahab piercing the "pasteboard masks" to attain reality, and, what is even more significant, of Ahab going down to defeat in the attempt!

In Kant's Critique of Pure Reason there is elaborated the "cosmological idea" that to every thesis formulated concerning the ultimate nature of matter, may be opposed an equally plausible antithesis. Two of Kant's four antimonies have relevance to Melville's thought. First, besides the causality which is according to the laws of nature and, therefore, necessary, there is causality which is free. The antithesis: There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place entirely according to the laws of nature. Second, There exists an absolutely necessary Being belonging to the world, either as a part or as a cause of it. The antithesis: There nowhere exists an absolutely necessary Being, either within or without the world.

Kand felt that both the thesis and antithesis of these two antinomies are plausible. They show that such cosmical concepts as cause and necessary Being are beyond the limits of empirical knowledge and rational experience.

In our study of Moby Dick we shall observe both of these antinomies in Melville's thought. In regard to free causality and in regard to God Himself there is evident the inability of the human mind to grasp either. In effect, both terms of these antinomies are plausible in so far as human reason is concerned. As we shall see, the tragedy of Ahab lies in his failure to admit humbly that he cannot grasp the Ultimate but must be content with the paste-board masks.

Kant's Critique of Practical Reason finds an echo in Pierre and ultimately in Billy Budd. Pierre is driven on by a sense of duty. He refuses to take stock of the results and circumstances of his decision to marry Isabel, a half-sister. Untold misery and tragedy ensue, but Pierre is buoyed up by the thought that he has followed his sense of duty. In Billy Budd Captain Vere knows that his decision to hang Billy is more the product of a "practical" reasoning than that of ultimate truth and goodness. But the latter is beyond human comprehension and execution. The only feasible course to follow is that of the law of human conduct and expediency.

Kant's "categorical imperative" is closely related to both of these situations [3]. There is a striking relationship.

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3 For an interpretation of Kant's thought, I am indebted to William Turner, History of Philosophy, New York Ginn and Co., 1929, pp.528-548.

The moral law is autonomous; it is impressed on the will by practical reason and revealed by immediate consciousness. The moral law is imperative; it speaks with the authority of a universal and moral determinant. The moral law is unconditional; it rules the human being unconditionally and authoritatively as a law of human conduct. Thus act both Pierre and Captain Vere.

Melville's debt to Hegel is not so easily traced. In fact, although he was aware of Hegel's ideas, as proven by the fact that he discussed Hegel, Kant and Schlegel with Taylor on the trip to England in 1849, Melville does not seem to incorporate Hegel's philosophy into his works. There is once exception, and that is Billy Budd. Hegel's method consists in following out a triadic development in each concept and in each thing. For example, in regard to freedom, the unrestrained actions of the savage are not repressed in any way. The second step lies in the exchange of this freedom for its opposite, the restraint of law and civilization. Thirdly, the citizen experiences the final stage of development, that is, liberty in a higher and fuller sense than that experienced by the savage. The three stages are, therefore, styled, (1) in itself (An-sich); (2) out of itself (Anderssein); (3) in and for itself (An-und-für-sich).

Billy Budd has something of the same triadic development. His original innocence is primitive, unspoiled. Thus the an-sich. Billy's death-blow to Claggart involves him in the laws and customs of civilized man. Thus the anderssein. Billy Budd's death is actually something of a victory, a development of self. At the moment of being hanged from the yard-arm, Billy seems to experience no pain or death struggle, but is seen by his mates against a vapoury fleece that resembles the fleece of the Lamb of God. Thus, in meekly submitting to law and military or civilized procedure of law, Billy Budd assumes an even greater significance and importance. Thus the an-und-für-sich.

Melville seems to have been influenced more by the spirit of Hegel's philosophy than by its actual principles. Hegel endeavored to achieve a complete synthesis of reality in terms of reason. As we shall see, such an objective could be predicated of Ahab in Moby Dick. And the lesson learned by Ahab, and by Melville, is one which Hegel never grasped.

> ...for it is not given to the human mind to grasp the totality of being, and to find in one formula a rationale of all reality. No philosophical system can consistently claim to comprehend God; it may discover Him, but it must acknowledge that He and His ways are inscrutable. Philosophy must leave room for faith, and its last word must be the necessity of faith[4].

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4 William Turner, ibid., pp.582-583.

Thus Moby Dick and Billy Budd serve as examples of how Melville was influenced by Hegel in apparently contradictory ways. The first, as an artistic expression of what Hegel did not see, namely, that finite man could never comprehend ultimate reality. The second, as an artistic expression of the triadic development of the individual who proceeds from one level through what is apparently antithetical, only to achieve a higher and nobler existence.

Two other European influences were at work on Melville's mind around 1849. A record of his purchases in London, 1849, proves that he bought the Confessions of Rousseau and the autobiography of Goethe [5]. It is the work of Rousseau that has the most significance in relation to Melville. Rousseau, of course, is famous for the ideal picture of man as he originally existed in the state of nature before entering the "social contract" by which society was first formed. Rousseau demanded the abandonment of artificial culture and conventional refinement in favor of what is natural, simple, and therefore of permanent value in human nature.

In Rousseau's Confessions, Melville read one of the most candid of autobiographies. It influenced Melville.

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5 Eleanor M. Metcalf, op.cit., pp.85-86.

Here he saw in fact the man Rousseau with characteristics of the romantic personality; extreme individualism, bordering on megalomania at times, excessive sensibility, a passionate love of nature, rebellion against the established social and political order, the glorification of feelings over ideas, idealization of sensual love, and exaltation of the primitive and natural.

On many of these counts Melville was already a disciple of Rousseau, whether he knew it or not. His purchase of Rousseau's Confessions followed by four years the publication of Typee and Omoo which reflect much the same characteristics as enumerated above. In these books Melville glorifies the simple life of the Marquesan natives. He idealizes his relationship with Fayaway, the island beauty. It was in rebellion against the established order of discipline aboard the ship he sailed that moved Melville to escape into the jungle fastness.

Other characteristics of Rousseau's philosophy were to be emphasized in the books that Melville wrote after 1849. In particular, the concept of the individual, alone and above common men, was to play a predominant role in Moby Dick, Pierre, and even in the very last book, Billy Budd. In Pierre, the element of isolation intensifies the concept of an individual against society. Pierre is alone.

His contemporaries regard him as insane; he is opposed at one time or another to his mother, his father's spirit, his betrothed, his publishers, his public, his kinsmen-- even to Isabel, toward whom his attitude became divided.

Melville himself, as well as the literary products of his pen, was individualistic. There runs through all his work the thread of revolt, or at very least, of analysis and examination of the traditional American mode of life.

> Melville was nothing if not individualistic.... True as this was, there was much that he had in common with such Americans of his time as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Pope... Going off in their separate directions, they were in accord in that they were all facing off at tangents to American orthodoxy and respectibility [6].

Melville's debt to Goethe may be more significant than is usually conceded. Goethe's Faust has a philosophical content far beyond that of Marlowe or of the legendary Johann Faust, or Faustus, of Wurtemberg. The original Dr. Faust became the popular ideal of one who sought to sound the depths of this world's knowledge and enjoyment without help from God. Faust's selling his soul to Satan for the privilege of twenty-four years of life during which he is to have every pleasure and all knowledge at his command

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6 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.33.

has a most interesting counterpart in Ahab's surrender of himself to the powers of Satan that he might achieve his objective.

But Marlowe also wrote about Faust. To determine how much Melville was influenced by Goethe and whether it was Marlowe rather than Goethe who had more influence upon him is a difficult question to solve. There is little or nothing in his writings to allow a definitive answer. One thing is certain: Melville was as close to Marlowe as he was to Goethe, because on the list of books purchased on the trip to London there is mention not only of Goethe, but of Marlowe's plays as well.

I n f l u e n c e f r o m E n g l a n d.- Melville's tie with England is basic and fundamental, just as was the debt of all 19th century American writers. Indeed the age of Whitman and Melville marks the first real break from the mother country, but such a heritage cannot be disowned in a fortnight. Melville himself visited England on three different occasions: as a young man in 1837, as a successful novelist in 1849, and as a disappointed man in 1856-1857.

In 1849 he returned with a small library of English authors: Ben Jonson, Davenant, Beaumont and Fletcher, Hudibras, Boswell's Johnson, a folio of Sir Thomas Browne,

Castle of Otranto, Charles Lamb, Chaterton, Vathek, Marlowe's plays, Confessions of an Opium Eater [7]. But already Melville had become acquainted with English literary trends. As a friend of the Duyckincks, he had access to their well-stocked library and took full advantage of it. It was Evert Augustus Duyckinck who was closer to Melville. He was the son of the first publisher in New York and became the editor of Wiley and Putnam's Library of Choice Reading. When Evert, along with his younger brother George, became an editor of The Literary World, Melville was given a good share of space in its pages. Each of his works was treated at length and with sympathy.

Evert Duyckinck had a great love for books and his library was well stocked. In fact, it was one of the largest in New York at that time. It was here that Melville had access to many volumes that were to shape and influence his thinking, as well as his art.

> Melville borrowed frequently from it, and his borrowings are indicated not only in the list of them which Duyckinck kept but also in Melville's own writings where the influence of Rabelais, Browne, and Carlyle are most obvious [8].

Although it is more difficult to ascertain the specific authors and influences that were the subject of their

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7 Eleanor M. Metcalf, op.cit., pp.85-86.

8 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.76.

conversations, it is equally significant that Melville was a part of the literary circle that gathered periodically at the Duyckinck residence. Significant, too, is the fact that Duyckinck was an admirer of Coleridge and so must have entered into many a metaphysical discussion with his friend Melville.

As for the influence of Carlyle, there are several points of reference. Sartor Resartus develops a Transcendental philosophy of Universal Spirit. The body of man is the clothing of the God-spirit in him and the material or physical world is the clothing of the God-spirit in the universe. Carlyle goes on to say that man will find his salvation not in material and financial success but only through the action of the spirit. Significantly, Carlyle analyzes the contemporary scene as one of selfish grabbing: "Each, isolated, regardless of his neighbor, turned against his neighbor, clutches what he can get, and cries 'Mine!' and calls it Peace, because, in the cut-purse and cut-throat scramble, no steel knives, but only a far cunninger sort, can be employed".

Melville himself had made this observation in the scene in Redburn where people are too busy in the matter of every-day business to extend help to the hungry woman and her child. Human sympathy is dead because of materialism.

Again in the same book, the passengers aboard the Highlander assume a superiority born merely of financial self-sufficiency. Essentially, it is a conflict within society, a conflict that exists between demands of human nature and the cold sophistication of those in power.

In Mardi, Melville was to cast an even more jaundiced eye over the social scene.

> It is not gildings, and gold maces, and crown jewels alone, that make a people servile. There is much bowing and cringing among you yourselves, sovereign kings! Poverty is aboard before riches, all Mardi over; anywhere it is hard to be a debtor; anywhere, the wise lord it over fools; everywhere, suffering is found [9].

In Clarel, Melville gives a panoramic view of history, much like the sombre view of Carlyle. Vaunted progress is merely capitalistic exploitation. Brazen materialism is everywhere Science only gives more effective instruments to materialism.

> The abbot and the palmer rest:
> The legends follow them and die -
> Those legends which, be it confessed,
> Did nearer bring them to the sky -
> Did nearer woo it to their hope
> Of all that seers and saints avow -
> Than Galileo's microscope
> Can bid it unto prosing Science now [10].

In 1840, six years after the publication of Sartor Resartus, Carlyle gathered together a series of lectures which he had been giving in England and published them under the title, Heroes and Hero Worship. He extols the individual hero,

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9 Mardi, p.668.

10 Clarel, p.428.

The doctrine of the hero, the romantic doctrine, was common in the nineteenth century, but Carlyle was the first to insist upon it as a political concept. Melville's use of the individual protagonist with all the proportions of a hero is fairly obvious. Ahab is a hero who leads his motley crew in a desperate attempt to overpower their common foe, the White Whale. Pierre is a hero who stands against the social canons of respectibility for a cause that he believes in his own heart to be just. Billy Budd is a hero who achieves an ultimate defeat over evil, even though he must pay with his own life.

Even without Carlyle, it seems likely that Melville would have fashioned these same characters along much the same lines. In Carlyle, it can be said, he found confirmation for his ideas, rather than inspiration. But in Carlyle, he found a spur and a model for his vigorous style. Carlylese is a term for the vigorous, impassioned style that compensates in emphasis and force for what it lacks in grace and delicacy. The lines of Moby Dick, of Pierre, even of Billy Budd written near the end of his life, are exemplary of the same type of prose style that distinguished Carlyle.

Richard Chase makes an illuminating remark about Melville in his study of the man and his work:

> There is much that is solitary in Melville's thought. And yet his later works place him squarely in the tradition of Victorian thought. Clarel is the work of a man well versed in the controversies of his day and shows Melville to have been a student of the political revolutions of the nineteenth century, of the scientific discoveries of the time, and of the 'higher criticism' of myth and religion. Clarel will very much remind us of the work of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough (Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna', which Melville read in 1871, especially comes to mind)[11]

Empedocles on Etna was published in 1853, after Melville's Moby Dick and Pierre had already reached the public. However, the spirit of Arnold--everything to be endured, nothing to be done--is the very attitude that marks Clarel published in 1876, and especially Billy Budd written in 1891, as Melville's own "testament of acceptance The Victorian age thought it saw a conflict between faith and reason. Such figures as Arnold, Carlyle, Browning, and Tennyson thought that faith was the nobler and the richer course to follow, but they were confused and saddened by the apparent conflicts that science and reason were proposing. Faith can achieve more desirable results, but it was felt that man could not live by faith alone. Especially in Pierre, Melville envisions the same conflict in terms of two norms of conduct; the one noble and desirable, dictated by the heart or faith, the other, reasonable and pedestrian, dictated by the head or reason. There is a conflict between them.

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11 Richard Chase, op.cit., p.242.

In Billy Budd, the conflict is still there, but there is a wistful sadness in the conclusion that compromise is the only solution.

Melville's identification with Arnold takes on added significance when we remember that Arnold's poems represent most of the conflicts of the age. The accent on the mind of man was leading to the extension of reason into the various levels of human activity: democracy in politics, science in education, criticism in religion, realism in literature. Arnold tried to make an honest choice between the two termini, the traditional and the new. Without the certainty of religious truth, that is, without the guidance and protection of an infallible Church, he was caught between the conflicts and without a light to guide him concluded that serenity is impossible in modern life with "its sick hurry, its divided aims". In his copy of Arnold's essay on Heine, Melville marked a passage that concludes the critic's study of the German poet:

> That is what I say; there is so much power, so many seem able to run well, so many give promise of running well; - so few reach the goal, so few are chosen. Many are called, but few are chosen [12].

This same longing for fulfilment, experienced by Arnold, had a counterpart in Melville himself. The conflicts remained; they felt helpless in the face of what they thought were insoluble antinomies. Withdrawal was a silent protest.

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12 Quoted in Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.255.

In a copy of Arnold's poems, Melville was to write next to the lines, "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse", "Silent, - the best are silent now" [13].

If Melville was influenced by the spirit of his age, in some respects he was also objective enough to withdraw from it and use his own yardstick to measure it. Paradoxically, he was annoyed that the Victorian Age should surrender in the face of these apparent conflicts.

> Pierre, at the end of his tragedy, drained dry of his emotional and spiritual life, calls himself neuter, Melville's criticism of the nineteenth century was just that; it was neuter. Neither in its beliefs nor in its unbeliefs did it show any visceral strength of human nature [14].

Ironically, this neutrality is the very refuge that Melville was to embrace as the struggle to resolve the antitheses grew weaker within him. After Pierre there is a decided tendency to let well enough alone and to seek an obscurity of acceptance and compromise.

Melville was acquainted with another Victorian, Thomas DeQuincey. It was the Confessions of an English Opium Eater that exerted the most influence upon him. In his Journal for the trip to England in 1849, Melville specifically remarked that he had just finished the "Opium Eater" and considered it " a most wondrous book", a

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13 Quoted in Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.273.

14 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.215.

"marvelous book" [15]. DeQuincey's influence on Melville was on the level of prose style. Inverted clauses, vocative passages, and enormous sentences fill his style. DeQuincey is a direct descendent of Thomas Browne. Melville also read Browne and from the both of them gained a more expert use of the "impassioned" prose that he wrote. The style is ornate, rhythmical, and emotional. On the other hand, there is little in the thought of either man that from all appearances influenced Melville.

If there was any one influence from England that moved Melville to the depths, it was the Bard of Avon himself. Shakespeare's influence upon Melville was in all phases of the writer's craft and thought. Melville became acquainted with Shakespeare in late 1848 or early 1849. In a letter to Evert Duyckinck, written about that time, Melville exclaims:

> Dolt and ass that I am I have lived more than 29 years, & until a few days ago never made close acquaintance with the divine William. Ah, he's full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired. I fancy that this mount (?) Shakespeare in heaven ranks with Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael. And if another Messiah ever comes, twill be in Shakespeare's person [16].

Charles Olson is more specific in dating this discovery in February of 1849 and claims that Melville bought a seven volume set of Shakespeare in Boston at that time.

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15 Eleanor Metcalf, op.cit., p.81.

16 Quoted in Willard Thorp, ed., Herman Melville: Representative Selections, New York, American Book Company, 1938, p.370.

Olson quotes a letter from Melville to Duyckinck in which Melville describes this set of Shakespeare:

> It is an edition in glorious neat type, every letter whereof is a soldier, & the top of every 't' like a musket barrel.
> I am mad to think how minute a cause has prevented me hitherto from reading Shakespeare. But until now any copy that has come-atable to me happened to be a vile small print unendurable to my eyes which are tender as young sperms.
> But chancing to fall in with this glorious edition, I now exult over it, page after page [17].

It is significant to note that the books of Melville which possess the most thought-content and which reflect a truly thinking mind were written after his reading of Shakespeare. Mardi, an acknowledged philosophical treatise, was published in 1849; Moby Dick, whose symbolism is deep and elusive, was printed in 1851, and Pierre, a melange of theories and searchings, came to the public in 1852.

In the summer of 1850, while intent on the creation of Moby Dick, Melville wrote an essay for the Literary World concerning Hawthorne's Mosses. In this essay Melville had this to say about Shakespeare:

> ...those deep faraway things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality; - these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare [18].

As an indication of what Shakespeare did for Melville and as a hint of what would be the dominant theme in Moby Dick,

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17 Quoted in Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947, p.39.

18 Quoted in William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.85.

which was being written at this same time, Melville remarks about Shakespeare in the same essay on the Mosses:

> For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth - even though it be only covertly and by snatches [19].

An examination of the actual set of Shakespeare owned by Melville reveals that on the fly-leaf of the last volume Melville made notes that involve the characters of Moby Dick, such characters as Ahab, Pip, Bulkington, Ishmael, and are a key to Melville's intent in regard to these characters[20]. Especially in regard to any reference in Shakespeare concerning truth-seekers, Melville was quick to put a check or make a note. In Antony and Cleopatra, Melville put a check beside Enobartus' blunt answer to Antony's correction of his speech: "That truth should be silent, I had almost forgot". In Lear, Melville underscored the Fool's answer to Lear's angry threat of the whip: "Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out, when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink" [21].

Hamlet and King Lear were the tragedies of Shakespeare that seemed to affect Melville the most. It is worthy to note that Melville's tragedies--Moby Dick and Pierre--were

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19 Quoted in Charles Olson, op.cit., p.42.

20 Ibid,, p.39.

21 Ibid., p.42.

written in 1851 and 1852, shortly after his reading of the volume that contained King Lear, Hamlet, and Othello. Since a first-hand examination of Melville's copy of Shakespeare is not possible, we must again rely on Charles Olson for the significant fact that in the fly-leaf of the aforementioned volume, Melville in his own hand penned these lines:

> Ego non baptizo te in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti -- sed in nomine Diaboli -- madness is undefinable - It & right reason extreme of one, - not the (black art) Goetic but Theurgic magic -- seeks converse with the Intelligence, Power, the Angel [22].

The close relationship of these lines of Melville with what he wrote in Moby Dick is most interesting. As Ahab bathes the harpoon in blood, Melville writes in Moby Dick:

> "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" deliriously howled Ahab, as the malignant iron scorchingly devoured the baptismal blood [23].

Indeed Shakespeare was of tremendous import in the development and maturity of Melville's mind and art. Of course, Melville was in a receptive mood; otherwise, the "deep faraway things" in Shakespeare would not have affected him as they did. Sedgwick sums up the causal relationship between these two men:

> The influence of Shakespeare on Melville was fundamentally a profound and pervasive act of fertilization. There are many indications of this...That is, there are numerous, diverse parallels in language, in emotional effect, in situation and tragic action, between Moby Dick on the one hand, and, on the other, King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and Timon [24].

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22 Cf. Charles Olson, op.cit., p.52.

23 Moby Dick, p.1052.

24 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.85.

The vital difference lay on two levels: First, Shakespeare had the rare and lofty genius to persevere and produce much more, and most on a high literary plane, whereas Melville soon ran dry and after Moby Dick nothing of comparable quality was to issue from his pen. Second, Shakespeare was satisfied to leave ultimate truth and a final answer to the problems and conflicts of life to the philosophers and theologians, whereas Melville sought to smash his way to a comprehension of all things in this world and the next. His end was frustration, or rather, compromise. Shakespeare scaled the heights by "random probings and inferences".

Shakespeare's influence on Melville is justifiably studied in relation to the other factors that were instrumental in shaping Melville's mind in the nineteenth century. For one thing, Shakespeare is of universal appeal and to restrict him to the Renaissance is to deny his sustained influence in all periods. In fact, there are facets in Shakespeare that sparkle according to the century in which he is read. What Melville found in Shakespeare that weighed very heavily with him at the moment was the element of doubt in Hamlet. The doubt of Hamlet and the conscious scepticism of the nineteenth century were cousins-germane. Hence, the immediate identification of what Melville found in Shakespeare and what he experienced as a very alert citizen in the world of the nineteenth century. His work reflected it.

The result is obvious in such a work as Pierre. Like Hamlet, Pierre is destroyed in what seems to him a righteous cause. Like Hamlet, Pierre is troubled by doubts and scruples that his course of action is really wrong after all.

I n f l u e n c e f r o m A m e r i c a.-- Melville is American to the core. Although he absorbed much of the philosophic thought of France, Germany, and England, it was all grist for his mill and what came forth was a new, vital kind of Americanism, symptomatic of the great burgeoning forth of the 1840's and 1850's. Melville is most typically American in a sense once described by Emerson:

> Not out of those on whom systems of education have exhausted their culture, comes the helpful giant to destroy the old or to build the new, but out of unhandselled savage nature [25].

Melville was to fulfill a role that Emerson had defined, but the author of The American Scholar was never to realize the fact.

Melville himself voiced confidence in the vast potential of America and in his essay on Hawthorne boasted with something of romantic extravagance:

> Believe me, my friends, that men not very much inferior to Shakespeare are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio. And the day will come when you shall say, who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern? [26].

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25 Quoted from "The American Scholar" in F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, New York, Oxford University Press, 1941, p.372.

26 Quoted in F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.372.

The inspiration and verve that moved Melville to create his novels came from a basic "savagery" that he felt was a closer approximation to reality than so-called civilization. In Moby Dick Ishmael remarked: "...long exile from Christendom and civilization eventually restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, i.e., what is called savagery. I myself an a savage." [27] Melville toyed with the theory that a return to the primitive would bring to light the true pattern of things and supply answers for problems that seemed created or at least accentuated by man's traditions and culture. In Typee Melville extolls the virtues of the Polynesian native and credits the White Man in general and Christian missionaries in particular with the vices and sorrows that found their way into the primitive community.

The plots and characters of Moby Dick and Pierre, even of Mardi and Billy Budd were drawn from civilized life. But Melville himself cut through the traditional beliefs and attitudes of his age in an attempt to find a solution for the problems that trapped his characters. In fine, he did not formally subscribe, in his mature years, to any of the traditional dogma of his Presbyterian and Calvinistic background but, like primitive man, sallied forth under his own power and conjured up his own principles to solve what appeared to him to be the conflicts of life.

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27 Moby Dick, p.924.

Still he could not escape his heritage. His troubled mind was really the result of a background and tradition that he could not disown. Melville's father was a fusion of Scots Presbyterianism and Boston Unitarianism. On his mother's side, the Gansevoort clan were staunch Calvinists. Both Gansevoort and Melville family records reflect an inclination among his forebears to preaching and general piety in the family. There are no records of Melville's own church affiliation but the evidence of his novels indicates that he listened to many sermons in his day. Ishmael's remarks and Father Mapples's sermon in Moby Dick are the product of a man who had heard many lectures from a Protestant pulpit. Melville's brief schooling was in the "god-fearing" academy of Dr. Beck in Albany, New York. Here a course in Historia Sacra was part of the regular classical curriculum in the first year. In Albany Melville lived from the time he was eleven until seventeen, a year before his first voyage. The city itself was a stronghold of Puritan piety and economy. In 1847 he married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of a good Unitarian family and in his years of great fruition, 1845-1855, he was a close friend of the Episcopal Duyckincks. Hence, Melville's life was influenced by all the major trends of Protestantism in the United States of the middle of the century [28]

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28 Cf. Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible, Durham, Duke University Press, 1949, p.5.

If any result of this mixed association of religious systems can be discerned in Melville's work, it is a general rejection of any individual one and a failure to distinguish between any of them. In fact, the antinomies that were to ensue in his own vision of things can in large measure be blamed on this motley background of diverse religious sects. In 1854 Emerson said that the age was Swedenborg's; that is, the age had embraced the subjective philosophy that the soul makes its own world. Such indeed was the attitude of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. It was the spirit of Transcendentalism. But Melville went off on another tangent: his soul wrestled with the objective world and tried to squeeze an answer out of reality, like Jacob wrestling with the angel for a blessing. Thus Melville stood apart from his confreres in the matter of how they reacted to the hybrid religious culture of their day: his confreres reached a Nirvana of subjectivism; Melville, albeit influenced by his heritage, reacted by striking out to solve the problems it glossed over or actually created.

The fundamental trait of Calvinism was the awareness of the infinite majesty and omnipotence of God. But Calvin accentuated the awareness of God in a wholly one-sided way. God operates all in everything; hence, He also impels and moves to sin. God thus becomes responsible for sin and evil.

Since God wills to manifest His majesty as well as His mercy to the world, He was forced to call into existence the sinners together with the elect and these sinners are absolutely destined for eternal damnation.

On the basis of its fundamental ideas, Calvinism laid the foundation of modern industrialism and capitalism. It wished not only to bind the individual to God, but to transform the world, to bend all and everything under the will of God. For Calvin, labor and profit become a service of God to such an extent that man is no longer master of labor, but labor dominates man. In the case of the Calvinist, everything is based on God, upon trust in God, upon election by God, upon the person's thoroughness in his vocation and his business. For that reason he takes a positive attitude to all technical, economic, social, and political questions. Thus Calvinism has become the religion of all practically inclined Anglo-Saxon peoples and has therefore been an operative factor in modern culture and economics, in state and society.

In England the somber spirit of the Calvinists gave birth to the Puritans, who in turn affiliated with the Scotch Presbyterians. The friends of the somber Calvinist doctrines in England, for whom the Anglican Church had remained too Catholic in its institutions and usages, strove

as Puritans toward a Church purified of all Catholic elements, a purely Biblical church. The pressure of political and economic controls soon drove the Puritans from England and they came to America to establish in New England a religious dynasty that flourished under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards and the Mathers, but which by the middle of the nineteenth century was soft and flabby because of the material prosperity that had become its hall-mark and because of the problems it posed by its own teachings.

Melville's famous passage in Typee where he excoriates the Christian missionaries and the culture of the West for bringing grief to replace the pristine joy of the natives is an indication of the conflict that was born in his own mind. Obviously, Melville thought, there must be some discrepancy. Perhaps pure nature and not the Christian dogma (as taught by his Puritan forebears) is the key to serenity. If both are from God--this religion and pure nature itself--then there is a basic conflict at the very heart of things.

Again, if primitive nature as reflected in the happy existence of the Polynesians is as it seems, how reconcile the doctrine of original sin? But even here in Typee there is a foreboding that things are really not as they seem. His forebodings are justified when he sees the native hunters return from an escapade with a bag of human remains.

Then his fear lest he should be powerless to escape intensifies. Even here, then, an inherited evil is at work.

The Puritan concept of original sin explains this inherited evil. In place of the original holiness there came through sin a positive, evilly operating power. Because of it, a man may be not only as cold and unresponsive as a piece of wood or a stone toward that which pertains to God and the good, but even positively rebels against the word, the will and the grace of God. This concupiscence not only brings forth the personal sins of man as its fruit, but it may also be the cause of everything that man may do that is evil and in its inmost essence sinful. Thus the characters like Jackson in Redburn and Claggart in Billy Budd. They are intrinsically evil. The real conflict for Melville came when he tried to fit in responsibility for action with this doctrine of fated evil because of original sin. Thus the torn mind and soul of Ahab and Pierre, whether they were free or fated, whether they were intrinsically evil or merely subject to the temptation to evil and hence free agents in their own destruction. If they are not free, then they have no responsibility, then they become robots and not the flesh and blood of vital personalities. Thus the questions that troubled Melville were fundamental questions to Puritan theology: what constituted original sin, to what extent could

man's will be free? Melville did not confine himself to moral and psychological observation, but entered the realm of metaphysics. He dwelt on the conflict between appearance and reality and, unchecked and unguided by any fixed system of theology, eventually found himself caught in a vortex of seeking the ultimate truth even while recognizing that it was as unfathomable as the sea.

Melville was to inherit another strange twist in the Christian theology of his contemporaries. Matthiessen remarks:

> By Melville's time, and especially in protestant, democratic America, the emphasis was no longer on God become Man, on the unique birth and Divinity of the Christ...but on the rebel killed by an unworthy society, on man become the Messiah, become God. [29].

This attitude led logically to the concept that there was hardly anything more important than the individual; that he need not look further than himself for completion and fulfillment; that humanitarianism, and not humility before God, was the rock basis for brotherhood. These notions are operative in such characters as Ahab and Pierre. That Melville was strongly influenced by the theology of his age is balanced by the conclusion that he was also very conscious of its limitations because both Ahab and Pierre are tragic figures and their end is personal ruin. Melville was uncertain

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29 F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.446.

Until Billy Budd portrayed a character of compromise and acceptance, there is little or nothing in Melville to indicate anything but bewilderment and uncertainty about the basic issue of the individual and his relation to sin, free will, and God. Once Pierre abandons convention, there is no dogma to support him. His end is confusion, mental and moral. In Melville himself there is a strong echo of the same collapse: delving beneath the externals and the conventionalities he was to sink into a limitless sea of speculation. In fact the severe, bleak, and uninspired Calvinism and Presbyterianism of his heritage was to make him question even the goodness of the Biblical God.

What Melville tragically lacked was the vision of traditional and Catholic theology that gave man a position in harmony with nature and with God. In him there is a potential for evil or for good. He is not sufficient unto himself, but possesses a higher aim that carries him outside of himself and eventually to self-fulfillment. Stone summarizes the contrast:

> In traditional Christian thinking, man's temporal condition is short of the potential fullness of his being, but in no sense is there a fundamental opposition of what he is to what he may be (hence the resurrection of the body), and one state is the reasonable preliminary of the other. For the Puritan heretic and his Romantic heir, the traditional order, so to speak, reversed: the Calvinist saint is saved before he is born and the Romantic hero, good by nature, is a far better man than circumstances can ever allow him to be. The ideal, obviously, never can be fully realized, and the real, -- the whole material and spiritual complex of man's earthly existence--is natively imperfect and evil to the degree of imperfection [30].

Melville knew Emerson's position in regard to the basic issues of life in which he was embroiled. Although he had not actually read through Emerson at that time, much of Emerson's philosophy is scattered through Mardi [31]. Babbalanja, the philosopher, gave utterance on one occasion or another to all of the following thoughts: that poet and philosopher are one; that the past and the present are an organic whole; that everyman can enjoy inspiration if he needs his instinct; that no finished work is more than a "scrawled copy of something".

Of course Emerson must be seen in the light of Transcendentalism. This system is the fruit of romanticism in philosophy. Between 1830 and 1835 a nucleous of Transcendental thinkers was formed by Ralph Emerson, Henry Hegge, Bronson Alcott and others. Their bond was a loose one.

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30 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.4.

31 Cf. F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., pp.384-385.

There was no formal creed to bind them together. Rather, it was an attitude or viewpoint that made one. Deepest in the transcendentalist mind was the romantic trust in human nature, together with an absolute trust upon their own independent thought. If the rigid Calvinism had given way to the watery Unitarianism in religion, objective truth was also sacrificed to individual opinion in the realm of philosophy.

Transcendentalism had a certain relationship to Kant's theories as outlined in his Critique of Pure Reason. Kant tried to show that human reason could deal reliably only with phenomena, and that in the realm of absolute verity human reason is powerless. It can neither prove nor disprove. Nevertheless, our human nature demands that we live by certain ultrarational ideas--ideas such as God, Freedom, and Immortality. To this realm, where reason is powerless, human nature has an approach through faith. To explore this world beyond phenomena, the human being relied on intuition or what Coleridge called "reason" as opposed to the pedestrian "understanding" that saw only the differences and not the reality underlying all phenomena. Melville's objective to pierce the pasteboard masks and strike at reality is closely related to this theory of the Transcendentalists. Also Melville's great respect for the talented individual has a counterpart

in the doctrine held by Emerson and the other Transcendentalists that there is a divine sufficiency in the individual. The Transcendentalists were also important in the growth of Melville's mind in the sense that they developed a keen and searching criticism of American institutions and ways of life when the contemporary spirit was one of materialism and expansion.

Melville departs most emphatically from the Transcendentalists in the matter of evil in the universe. As with the other members of the group, one of the principal traits of Emerson's thought was an unfailing optimism. The very doctrine of self-reliance and the high possibilities of man naturally leads to optimism. Such roseate visions deceived Emerson and his group into blinking away the importance, if not the very existence, of evil itself.

Melville, of course, is extremely conscious of evil and the harm it works. In Moby Dick, the chapter, "Midnight, Forecastle" pictures the whole earth as an arena in which men are sharks displaying savagery under the eye of a spectator God. In Mardi this consciousness of evil leads to a pessimistic view of universal facts of sin and suffering and then to a consideration of the Creator's ambiguities in His creation.

When Melville first heard Emerson, he blurted out that such thinkers were "all cracked right across the brow"[32]. Melville's scorn for transcendental thought became specific and pointed with venom in Pierre. The hero follows out many of the prescriptions of Emerson's group but soon fails in mental and physical health. Melville then snorts, "Civilization, philosophy, Ideal Virtue! behold your victim".

Melville also reacted against the ascetic strain in Emerson's thought, especially as portrayed in his essay, "The Poet". In his copy of Emerson's essays, Melville noted the passage where Emerson deplores the fact that many poets had turned from the proper inspiration of woods and waters and sun-bathed air to "Devil's wine" and thus had deteriorated. Melville exclaimed in the margin:

> No, no, no, -- Titian -- did he deteriorate? -- Byron did he? -- Mr. E. is horribly narrow here. He has his Dardanelles for every Marmora.--But he keeps nobly on for all that [33].

Melville's dissatisfaction with Emerson and the Transcendentalists arose largely from their ignoring the whole problem of evil. As has been seen, there was a certain community of interests and viewpoints between him and the group. But he felt their world was far from his own.

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32 F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.471.

33 Quoted in F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.472.

In fact, Melville began to feel as an alien in his own land, as Arvin has so aptly described the situation:

> Essentially he felt himself, and no doubt increasingly, a spiritual alien in the midst not only of the Duyckincks and the Willises but of the Emersons and the Thoreaus, their superiors, the best minds. Where among them all was there any recognition of the fact of tragedy, any awareness of that dark half of the globe that more and more seemed to Melville an immitigable reality, not to be conjured away by transcendental spells [34].

But there was another American figure to draw and attract him with a force equal to that of Shakespeare's upon his soul. Since they were to be friends in the flesh, perhaps the influence was even greater. The man was Nathaniel Hawthorne. We are indebted to Howard P. Vincent for the accumulation of facts that trace the inception and progress of this friendship [35].

On August 5, 1850, Melville and Hawthorne met for the first time. From this meeting there grew a correspondence which has been preserved by the Harvard Library. Here also are books which Hawthorne loaned Melville. The letters from Hawthorne were probably destroyed; at the very least, they are nowhere to be found today. Harrison Hayford lists at least nine personal meetings between the two men [36].

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34 Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.137.

35 Howard P. Vincent, op.cit., pp. 38-39.

36 Harrison Hayford, Melville and Hawthorne, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University.

Much of their conversation, oral and epistolary, was about moral and metaphysical matters. In Chapter Five we shall study the profound influence this relationship had on the actual writing of Moby Dick.

For the Literary World in 1850 Melville wrote an essay on Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse. The literary and personal esteem that Melville felt for Hawthorne came to the fore in this piece. "Now", Melville said in this essay, "it is that blackness in Hawthorne...that so fixes and fascinates me." Thus the exact point of contact between these two men is immediately touched; their mutual interest in the problem of evil. Moby Dick and Pierre were to follow as testaments of evil, written and codified under the spell of Hawthorne and, not to be forgotten, Shakespeare. Melville wrote in the same essay about the Mosses:

> Already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and further shoots his strong New England roots in the hot soil of my Southern soul [37].

If Melville's own family heritage of Puritanism and Presbyterianism did not have enough influence of its own, then Hawthorne was a channel for an even more impressive amount. The Puritan past weighed heavily upon Hawthorne.

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37 Quoted in Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.137.

Born and raised in Salem he breathed the very air of Puritan theology. Puritan history and Puritan character were in his very bones. All about him was a country-side where men had listened to weekly sermons about sin and damnation, made holy war against the savages and searched their consciences for half-hidden evil. In spite of his heritage, and in spite of the essential influence it had on his thought and works, Hawthorne was an individualist and stood aloof from his Pilgrim forefathers. "Most dismal wretches", he called them. But their preoccupation with evil found a new telling in the tales of Hawthorne: "Young Goodman Brown", "The Hollow of the Three Hills", "The Gentle Boy", are only a few of the short tales that deal with evil and suffering. The Scarlet Letter, one of the great tragic romances of the world, shows four people, all tragically great of soul, entangled in the mazes of broken law.

There is a significant difference between Melville and Hawthorne in their approach to the problem of evil. Hawthorne depicted the good and evil in a man's heart. Melville launched further into the deep. He is not so concerned with individual sin as with titanic uncontrollable forces which seem to make a pygmy out of the individual human being. Thus Ahab looms more as a man carried on the crest of a cosmic wave. Evil assumes the proportions of a global force.

The very symbol of the whale, which Melville expands upon and quite obviously stresses in the chapter "Measurement of the Whale's Skeleton" and in the chapters that emphasize the vastness of the whaleing industry, indicates that the forces which sweep Ahab to his destruction are tremendous and certainly beyond the confines of a single man's heart. Melville thus enlarged the vision of evil from the moral to the metaphysical. And it is on a metaphysical level that Moby Dick is best understood.

The conflict that Melville envisioned between good and evil nettled and disturbed him. Hawthorne saw the same conflict, at least on a moral and psychological level, but left it at that. Melville rankled under the apparent inexplicability of this dichotomy and, unchecked by formal education or any coherent system of theology or philosophy and swept along by first one notion, then another, uncovered one layer after another of conflicts until he was completely confused, as Pierre will testify.

If there was any one reaction on Melville's part to the thought and atmosphere of the nineteenth century, it was one of criticism and exception. In the vortex of Kant, Rousseau, and Goethe from Europe, of Carlyle, Arnold, and DeQuincey, and especially Shakespeare from England, in the

atmosphere of his own religious background, of Emerson and of Hawthorne, Melville still stood apart as an individual. Whatever the thought, whatever the force of another's influence, Melville was an eclectic. Above all, of his own age he was critical:

> ...his criticism of the nineteenth century may be restated thus: in its materialism it denied the good; in its idealism it denied the evil. In either case it denied the reality of life, and, denying this reality, humanity withered on all sides like an uprooted forest. The nineteenth century was a waste land, as sterile as the sands and rocky mountains of Palestine [38].

The conflicts, the dichotomy, engendered by this philosophy, Melville saw on many levels. The first level for our consideration is his vision of conflict within society itself.

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38 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.216.

CHAPTER III

CONFLICT WITHIN SOCIETY

When Melville examined the world about him, he found conflicts arising from the fact that imperfection and evil seemed to be at the very core of creation. This imperfection led to conflicts that were the very source of tragedy. Melville's views are best seen in the passages that treat of the contrast between rich and poor, between war and peace in a supposedly Christian society. Again, he sees a conflict and dichotomy within democratic society and between the relative merits of primitivism and progress, between savagery and civilization. Omoo, White Jacket, and Redburn contain little more than a catalog of these antinomies. But Mardi, Moby Dick and Pierre are an attempt to analyze and solve the cleavages. Eventually Melville came to feel that the wise man, the man of stature over and above the commonality of men, will try to work out for himself a philosophy of life, but he will do so alone. Genius, alone and misunderstood, takes on tragic significance and in predicating a fault in these heroes that leads to their destruction, Melville was approximating Shakespeare's concept of tragedy. Isolation, Melville felt, is the condition on which a man thinks, for society rejects the thinker and

offers little but contradictions and contrasts.

It is because the world is shot through with evil that these conflicts arise within society. Imperfection cuts through the strata of society and causes contrasts and incongruities. This basic imperfection is what Melville had in mind when he wrote in Mardi:

> And though all evils be assuaged; all evils can not be done away. For evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place, breaks forth in another [1].

These are the words of the fiery youth in Vivenza. After his impassioned speech in which this passage occurs, Babbalanja, whom most Melville scholars admit is the most likely mouthpiece for Melville's opinions in the entire book, is accused of having authored the scroll from which the fiery youth had read. Nor does Babbalanja deny the accusation, although he tries to throw suspicion on King Media. In humorous fashion, Melville remarks: "Indeed, the settlement of this question must be left to the commentators on Mardi, some four or five hundred centuries hence." [2] Not long afterwards, Babbalanja cautions King Media, "My lord, still must we shun the unmitigated evil; and only view the good, or evil so mixed therewith, the mixture's both". [3]

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1 Mardi, p.668.

2 Ibid, p.669.

3 Ibid, p.718.

In Moby Dick Melville puts into the mouth of Queequeg these words after Queequeg had seen a good deal of society, "It's a wicked world in all meridiens; I'll die a pagan". [4] Again in Moby Dick, Melville puts this thought in the mind of Ahab as he takes stock of his hold over the crew of the Pequod:

> Nor was Ahab unmindful of another thing. In times of strong emotion mankind disdains all base considerations; but such times are evanescent. The permanent constitutional condition of the manufactured man, thought Ahab, is sordidness [5].

Thus in discussing the contrasts and conflicts which Melville saw between rich and poor, between a world that professes a religion of peace and practices murder and bloodshed, we will keep in mind that these conflicts arise from the existance of all-pervading imperfection and sordidness which "checked in one place, breaks forth in another".

The cleavage between rich and poor is seen in Mardi and Redburn, both published in 1849, and is still in Melville's mind as he wrote Moby Dick in 1851, Pierre in 1852, and Israel Potter in 1855. In Mardi, symbol for the world as a whole, the advantages of money give a cheap superiority to the rich man, while the poor is considered his inferior.

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4 Moby Dick, p.793.

5 Ibid., p.887.

> There is much bowing and cringing among you yourselves, sovereign kings! Poverty is abashed before riches, all Mardi over; any where, it is hard to be a debtor; any where, the wise will lord it over fools; every where, suffering is found [6].

Earlier in Mardi, Melville pictures King Media acting in a haughty and arrogant fashion with "lean-visaged, poverty-stricken, and hence suspicious looking varlets". [7] If Melville is hard on civil authority in its attitude toward the poor and under-privileged, he is much more severe with ecclesiastical. In Maramma, considered to be the Catholic Church by most commentators, the guide Pani asks for recompense after the tour. From the bottom of his heart he blesses the "hale matron, in handsome apparel" who is lavish in her donation. But his attitude toward the others is stern:

> "We are not rich, like unto Fauna," said the rest.
> Now the next pilgrim was a very old and miserable man; stone-blind, covered with rags; and supporting his steps with a staff.
> "My recompense", said Pani.
> "Alas! I have naught to give. Behold my poverty".
> "I can not see," replied Pani; but feeling of his garments, he said; "Thou wouldst deceive me; hast thou not this robe, and this staff?"
> "Oh! Merciful Pani, take not my all!" wailed the pilgrim. But his worthless gaberdine was thrust into the dwelling of the guide [8].

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6 Mardi, p.668.

7 Ibid., p.478.

8 Ibid., p.555.

In Dominora, a symbol of Great Britain, Melville pictures crowds of men with hands tied behind their backs, crying out, "Bread, Bread!" Little attention is paid them; no sympathy is theirs in a hard, cruel world [9]. A final reference to the inequality established by money and the lack of it is portrayed in Mardi when the Reception Day at Pimminee is sketched in terms of a cutting and ironical attack on the sham of riches. Melville describes the scene:

> It was an imposing array of sounds; a circulation of ciphers; a marshaling of tappas; a getting together of grimaces and furbelows; a masquerade of vapidities [10].

In Redburn Melville reflects the miseries of the poor in the ill fortune that dogs Redburn's steps. The lad is an outcast among the rich on the river-boat and his lack of money causes an embarrasing situation in the cabin. The cold air forced the poorly clad boy into the cabin of the boat where admittance was to be had only by paying a sum of money over and above that of the regular fare. When a clerk demanded money, Redburn had to resort to a threat before he was allowed to stay in the warm room [11].

But it is especially in Liverpool, the center of commerce and trade, that Redburn is brought into painful

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9 Ibid., p.639.

10 Ibid., p.600.

11 Redburn, p.1475.

contact with the sad plight of the poor. A woman, two girls, and a baby are left starving in an alley near the cotton warehouses. The policemen, whom Redburn accosts to do something about the tragic situation, protest that is is none of their business. Even when Redburn goes to the captain of the police to report that all four have died in spite of attempts to help them, he is told that such matters are the business of the city police and not of the Dock Police. Redburn remarks:

> I could do no more that morning, being obliged to repair to the ship; but at twelve o'clock, when I went to dinner, I hurried into Launcelott's-Hey, where I found that the vault was empty. In place of the women and children, a heap of quick-lime was glistening.
>
> I could not learn who had taken them away, or whither they had gone; but my prayer was answered -- they were dead, departed, and at peace [12].

Not even the miserable old women whom Redburn approaches for help are willing to give a crust of bread or volunteer information for help. The striving for material gain has blinded men to the fact that they are bound to each other at least by the ties of human nature. The evil of selfishness causes a conflict between man and man. Indeed, "evil is the chronic malady of the universe". Evil is found among those who should feel commiseration; and even more so among the socially superior who are not so likely to feel and appreciate cold and hunger.

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12 Ibid., p.1581.

When Redburn goes to the Lyceum and sees the "pleasant gentlemen sitting at the open windows", he obeys an "uncontrollable impulse" and saunters in. But he does not get far before a "terribly cross man" wheels him toward the door and, looking at him as though he were a strange dog, pushes him outside. This scene is in direct contrast with the cordial reception he receives from the rustics in the pages that follow [13].

His study of society is advanced on the voyage home by the sharp boundary line between the few cabin passengers and the mass of emigrants. The quitting of land was as tragic as it had been on the way out. To match the drunken suicide of the trip from America was the discovery that one of the newly impressed men, brought on board by a crimp, was not drunk, but already dead [14]. This first event of the voyage home set the mood for the rest of the journey. Squalor results from the steerage passengers crammed into inadequate quarters. A malignant fever then killed off many of them. Now Redburn learns that grief is no mere sentiment among the poor and desolate. It is a "gnawing reality that eats into their vital beings."

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13 Ibid., pp.1595 ff.

14 Ibid., p.1618.

Redburn reflects the contrast, or conflict, between England's commercial and imperial might and the "want and woe that staggered arm in arm along these miserable streets". Redburn is the awakening of Melville's sense of tragedy. The tragedies of Mardi are on a theoretical level. The tragedies of Redburn cut deep into human nature and are the product of Melville's early visit to Liverpool in 1837 when he was a mere lad.

In Moby Dick Melville has little occasion to examine further this theme of the rich and established versus the poor and desolate. However, he develops the notion of "Fast-Fish" and "Loose-Fish" in chapter eighty-nine [15]. Briefly, the fish or whale is technically fast when it is connected with an occupied ship or boat. Under any other circumstances it is a "loose-fish" and hence may be taken by the first who lays hands thereon. The important point that Melville makes is that it matters little how the fish was made "fast" and or how it is obtained when it is "loose". Melville philosophizes:

> What to the rapacious landlord is the widow's last mite but a Fast-Fish?...What is the ruinous discount which Mordecai, the broker, gets from poor Woebegone, the bankrupt on a loan to keep Woebegone's family from starvation; what is that ruinous discount but a Fast-Fish?...And concerning all these, is not possession the whole of the law? [16]

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15 Moby Dick, p.997.

16 Ibid., p.998.

Pierre has a few passages that keep alive Melville's interest, or reflect that interest, in the pitiable lot of the poor and their abandonment and exploitation by the rich. He notes that, if in poverty, innocence freezes like milk in December. Toward the end of the novel there is a reflection that to the wealthy more shall be given; poor shall have that taken away which they have [17].

During the years 1853-1855 Melville wrote a series of sketches that he never bothered to collect. In many there is an emphasis on the various aspects of poverty. Among these were "The Two Temples" in which a cordial crowd in the gallery of a London theatre is contrasted with the frigid atmosphere of a fashionable New York church, where even the Madonna and child in a painting impressed Melville as being unwelcome strangers [18]. In "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" and again in "The Tartarus of Maids", he went further into his detailed accounts of American poverty. The whole bitter sequence of The Confidence Man is built around people who are made fools or knaves by money. Of sixteen shorter pieces written before 1856, poverty is an important theme in seven.

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17 Pierre, p.305.

18 Cf. F. O. Matthiessen, op,cit., p.398.

In Israel Potter, written in 1855, Melville portrays the sad plight of a beggar in London, the capital of a rich Empire. Melville concludes, "In Poverty,'facilis descensus Averni'". [19] Melville's chief concern was really with human suffering wherever he found it. The bitter struggle engendered among men on the economic level was, in Melville's thinking, another manifestation of the evil and imperfection that caused so many conflicts and dichotomies in the social structure. Especially in regard to the economic misery that has been studied in Melville's novels, Newton Arvin has made an accurate appraisal of Melville:

> Melville was all along, among other things, a writer of the critical protestant order to which Carlyle, Thoreau, and Tolstoy belonged...Melville had conceived an attitude toward the civilization of his age that mingled in quite special and personal fusion the ingredients of skepticism, human contempt, and the anger of an outraged sense of right [20].

If the imperfection of created things is seen in the way money turns men's heads, much more so is it evident in the conflicts that tear the social fabric apart in one generation after another. Melville sees war standing in stark contrast to the principles of Christianity and the canons of civilization. Men believe one thing, but do the opposite.

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19 Israel Potter, p.1458.

20 Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.96.

In Omoo, published in 1846 and the very first of his writings, Melville bemoans the flogging of sailors aboard a man-of-war and makes this observation:

> War being the greatest of evils, all its accessories necessarily partake of the same character; and this is about all that can be said in defense of flogging [21].

Mardi gives evidence of disgust with war and its results. In Diranda, the rulers who had divided the island between themselves took great delight in sponsoring war-like games which were so fatal in their results that "notwithstanding the multiplicity of nuptials taking place in the isle, its population remained in equilibrium". [22] Especially significant and most ironical is the fact that the two kings have planned the mutual execution of their own men and the populace itself is unaware of the conniving.

In another place the fiery youth in Vizenza exclaims to the crowd:

> Mardi's peaces are but truces. Long absent, at last the red comets have returned. And return they must, though their periods be ages. And should Mardi endure till mountain melt into mountain, and all the isle form one table-land; yet, would it but expand the old battle plain [23].

It is in relation to this thought that the fiery youth had

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21 Omoo, p.251.

22 Mardi, p.618.

23 Ibid., p.668.

expressed the opinion that "evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place, breaks forth in another". Thus the fiery youth expresses a mild form of determinism: evil is a chronic malady; wars will ensue regardless of man or society. The idea that evil is inescapable is at the very root of Melville's thinking in regard to social questions, as well as all others. Whether the conflict be within society, within man, or between man and God, it has a necessity that seems irrefutable.

The fiery youth in Vivenza goes on to plead for a calm and sane approach to social difficulties but he is hooted down by the crowd and his ideas called a relic of times past. The reader will note that it is an individual, all alone, upholding reason and humaneness in contrast to the mob shouting in disorder and urging a course of violence. This isolation is typical of Melville's heroes who attempt to find an answer to the problems of man and of the universe. This point shall be studied in greater detail at the close of this chapter.

<u>White Jacket</u> is shot through with references to the bestiality of war. This is to be expected because it recounts Melville's experience aboard a man-of-war on his return from the Pacific in 1844. The experience moved him.

The burden of Melville's argument is that war is directly contrary to the principles of Christianity and the canons of civilization that people profess in theory.

The obvious cleavage between theory and practice has always been a point of observation among critics and interpreters of Christian civilization. If the problem is puzzling, its solution is even more so. In fact, it escaped Melville completely that if Christians are divided in theory, how can they ever be united in practice. Or rather, if the Protestant concept of individual interpretation of the Scriptures and the almost unqualified sovereignity of the individual conscience is the measure of Christianity and its principles, who shall determine whether the war he abhors is, after all, contrary to what he presumes to be the Christian ethic?

In White Jacket Melville uses the intensity and frequency of wars to make the following observation:

> But it needs not to dilate upon the pure, bubbling milk of human kindness, and Christian charity, and forgiveness of injuries which pervade this charming document, Articles of War, so thoroughly imbued, as a Christian code, with the benignant spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. But as it is very nearly alike in the foremost states of Christendom, and as it is nationally set forth by those states, it indirectly becomes an index to the true condition of the present civilization of the world [24].

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24 White Jacket, p.1283.

Thus with irony and sarcasm Melville castigates the world for its practice of war -- something which he believes is essentially opposed to the philosophy of Christ. The Articles of War become an indication of what men really are. Thus evil, the chronic malady of the universe, manifests itself in the code of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, that is practiced by "civilized countries". Evil has so infected the civilized world that actually civilization is at war with Christianity itself. White Jacket keeps coming back to this theme. It is an introduction to the cosmic proportions of the conflict that was to take shape in Moby Dick and Pierre. Today, Melville remarks, the world is in need of a re-conversion:

> Are there no Moravians in the moon, that not a missionary has yet visited this poor pagan planet of ours to civilize civilization and christianize Christendom? [25].

Moravians from the moon can at least persuade Christians to practice what they hold in theory. The wars that men wage are the result of a failure to practice Christianity as they should. Paradoxically the practice of waging war stifles any attempt to teach a religion of peace.

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25 White Jacket, p.1268.

> How can it be expected that the religion of peace should flourish in an oaken castle of war? How can it be expected that the clergyman, whose pulpit is a forty-pounder, should convert sinners to a faith that enjoins them to turn the right cheek when the left is smitten? [26].

Melville followed out a logical conclusion from his own premises. Organized Christianity is, he feels, a failure and in the same chapter of White Jacket he remarks that our own "hearts are the best prayer rooms and the chaplains who can most help us are ourselves".

Melville wrote little in Moby Dick about the incongruities of war in a Christian world. There was little frame of reference for the kind of thinking he had done in White Jacket. But there is an allusion to war as a "shocking sharkish business", [27] A few years later in Israel Potter Melville writes:

> The loss of life in the two ships was about equal; one half of the total number of those engaged being either killed or wounded.
>
> In view of this battle, one may ask--What separates the enlightened man from the savage? Is civilization a thing distinct, or is it an advanced stage of barbarism? [28]

Implied throughout all of Melville's comments on the incongruity of war is the view that man finds it impossible to live up to the high moral code of Christianity.

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26 Ibid., p.1202.

27 Moby Dick, p.936.

28 Israel Potter, p.1438.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Pierre hinges on the notion that there is a basic dichotomy between man's laws and God's wishes. The Man of Sorrows brought a moral code that is workable only in heaven. The imperfection of human nature excludes the possibility of keeping it. Hence, we may argue that in a period of two years Melville had turned over in his mind this conflict which had been merely observed in White Jacket, and had worked out a philosophy that tried to explain the incongruity of Christian people deporting themselves in quite an unChristian-like manner.

In 1866 Melville responded to the national crisis with Battle Pieces. Here there are poems that actually glorify the soldier and his exploits, others that reflect the old horror he had for war. In the "March into Virginia", wars are considered "boyish". "In the Turret" expresses a patriot's love for the North and its cause. So also in "The Battle of the Mississippi" and "Gettysburg". But "Armies of the Wilderness" is a restatement of what he had written in White Jacket:

> Dust to dust, and blood for blood --
> Passion and pangs! Has Time
> Gone back? or is this the age
> Of the world's great prime?
>
> Turned adrift into war
> Man runs wild on the plain,
> Like the jennets let loose
> On the Pampas -- zebras again. [29]

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29 Battle Pieces, pp.64-65.

Laid aboard a vessel of war and occuring at a period of political unrest and tension, the plot of Billy Budd lends itself admirably to reflection on the subject. In spite of a growth and change within himself toward the basic problem of evil, Melville has little more to say in Billy Budd about war and its incongruity in a Christian society. In the Preface he remarks how the revolutionary spirit had been carried out in the blood of the French Revolution but in turn it initiated that prolonged agony of war whose final throe was Waterloo [30]. In another place he returns to the theme of incongruity of Christianity and war. Here Melville personifies Christianity in the person of the naval chaplain, and observes that Christianity has been prostituted in serving the god of war:

> Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War - Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as a musket would be on the altar of Christmas. Why then is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon; because, too, he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but force [31].

Later in Billy Budd, Melville again noted the fact that religion was "*subserving the discipline and purpose of* war" [32].

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30 Billy Budd, p.131.

31 Ibid., p.262.

32 Ibid., p.273.

Besides noticing the wide chasm between what Christian men hald in theory about money and war and what the same men did in practice, Melville motices an even wider gulf between the apparent value of a political set-up and what actually goes on in any form of government. Whether the hegemony is democratic or aristocratic, Melville sees a cleavage between the real and the ideal. The imperfection of created things corrodes even man's attempts to govern himelf. In Mardi, which Watters calls Melville's"sociology of evil", there is a mine of material illustrative of our point. When Melville describes King Media on his throne, it is in a spirit of respect and almost of enthusiasm. But he does not take the position too seriously.

> Now, for all the rant of your democrats, a fine king on a throne is a very fine sight to behold. He looks very much like a god...a king on his throne! After all, but a gentleman seated [33].

King Media predicts that kings will never die, and even Vivenza (United States) may some day be ruled again by kings. In fact, Media sees in Vivenza no reason to support a republican form of government:

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33 Mardi, p.477.

> Ay, truth it is, that in Vivenza they have prospered. But thence it comes not, that all men may be as they. Are all men of one heart and brain; one bone and sinew? Are all nations sprung of Dominora's loins? Or, has Vivenza yet proved her creed? Yoomy! the years that prove a man, prove not a nation. But two kings' reigns have passed since Vivenza was a monarch's. Her climacteric is not come; hers is not yet a nation's manhood even; though now in childhood she anticipates her youth, even lusts for empire like any czar [34].

On the other hand, kings are to take care! Their dignity is not in their royal robes. Actually, all men have monarchs and sages for kinsmen.

> "...nay, angels and archangels for cousins; since in antediluvian days, the sons of God did verily wed with our mothers... Thus all generations are blended; and heaven and earth of one kin...one and all, brothers in essence [35].

And still, civilization has not always fostered this equality. The fiery youth in Vivenza passionately declaims:

> Civilization has not ever been the brother of equality. Freedom was born among the wild eyries in the mountains; and barbarous tribes have sheltered under her wings, when the enlightened people of the plain have nestled under different pinions [36].

Turning to Moby Dick, we find that Melville's view is in much the same focus as in Mardi; i.e., much depends on the relative position of man to man. Starbuck remarks that Ahab is a democrat when it comes to those over him, but to those beneath he shows a spirit of uncomprising

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34 Ibid., p.676.

35 Ibid., p.385.

36 Ibid., p.667.

rule [37]. In Pierre there is something of a resigned attitude toward the existence of lordships even within a democracy.

> But whatever one may think of the existence of such mighty lordships in the heart of a republic, and however we may wonder at their thus surviving, like Indian mounds, the Revolutionary flood, yet survive and exist they do, and are now owned by their present proprietors, by as good nominal title as any peasant owns his father's old hat, or any duke his great-uncle's old coronet [38].

In the same spirit of resignation, Pierre watched the funeral of his neighbor whose aristocratic features and temperament always set him apart from the rest of men. The thought strikes him that Death is the only real Democrat and that other democracies are unreal and impermanent. In life some heads are crowned with gold, and some bound round with thorns, "yet chisel them how they will, headstones are all alike". [39]

Billy Budd exhibits an even more decided animus against popular democracy. Captain Vere is a man of most mature intellect and is faced with the problem of explaining to his three officers how Billy Budd is really the pawn of fate but must be judged as a free agent because of the exigencies of the times. Melville takes a slap at democracy when he says of Vere's reluctance to talk the matter through with his men, who are intellectually immature:

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37 Moby Dick, p.860.

38 Pierre, p.11.

39 Ibid., p.326.

> Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies; under which head is to be classed most legislatures in a Democracy [40].

This reflection of Melville's is an indication of how he deplored many of the forms American culture was taking. Melville had a kindly regard for the common man, but the individual common man of exceptional talent and mental maturity. It was the form of American democratic culture in the entirety that he deplored.

> Melville deplored many of the forms American culture was taking in his time: the decay of the spirit of freedom and humanitarianism; the whole enormous shell game of American commerce and American infantile uplift progressivism and cash-value philanthropy which concerned him in his later works [41].

But even in the earlier works there is an indication of his true position. In Moby Dick there is the famous passage that speaks of the "democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God". [42] But the examples which Melville puts forth are those of exceptional and unusual personalitities and not the common clay of human nature. He mentions Bunyan, Cervantes, and Andrew Jackson. Melville was careful to point out that even in his earthly paradise of primitive Christianity, Serenia, the inhabitants did not

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40 Billy Budd, p.70.

41 Richard Chase, op.cit., p.65.

42 Moby Dick, p.828.

"by annulling reason's laws, seek to breed equality, by breeding anarchy". [43] Melville continually insists on the importance of breeding or blood. Two of his heroes who are common people, Jack Chase and Billy Budd, are considered likely to be bastards of gentlemen!

Melville is certainly for democracy as a recognition of man's equality before God and the charity this demands. But in a democracy where infallibly the majority rule he did not believe. Charles Olson has been fortunate enough to examine Melville's personal copy of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. In the passage where Casca deplores the fickleness and lightheadedness of the Roman mob, Melville wrote in the margin, TAMMANY HALL, with heavy strokes [44]. Melville saw tyranny in an ever-broadening democracy and an ever-growing realm of religious influence. In fact, he feared a relapse into "civic barbarism" and thus stood apart from the American scene, out of harmony with such idealists as Walt Whitman.

Melville, of course, was aware of the great potential of democracy. The quotation from his works evidence a sincere respect for the theory of the republic. But in contemplating the actual, Melville saw the great gap between the

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43 Mardi, p.727.

44 Charles Olson, op.cit., p.70.

profession of democracy and its actual practice. He saw the cleavage in the great wrong of slavery, in the tendency to sacrifice everything to the grasping individual will, in the very difficulty of establishing humane contacts in the busy whirl of an expanding democracy. Matthiessen remarks:

> When writing Israel Potter, he observed in Paul Jones a fascinating but terrible symbol for the American character: "Intrepid, unprincipled, reckless, predatory, with boundless ambition, civilized in externals but a savage at heart, America is, or may yet be, the Paul Jones of nations" 45.

With Melville the whole dichotomy of the theory and practice of democracy had its confirmation in his Calvinist background. He had failed to find in nature or in society the capability of human perfection which is at the root of democracy. Experience and reflection had confirmed the "dark view" of man that was the Calvinist tradition. Newton Arvin comes closest to summarizing Melville's position:

> They [experience and reflection] had not, however, confirmed the metaphysical absolutes of Calvinism, or indeed absolutes of any sort; and the philosophical plot of Mardi is furnished by the interaction--which, to tell the truth, is too largely a vacillation--between the longing for certainty, a longing at least as intense as that for Yillah, and the painfully recurring suspicion that, on all the great questions, "final, last thoughts you mortals have none; nor can have". 46

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45 F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.444.

46 Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.98.

This view is even more clearly demonstrated in the long poem Clarel, published some twenty years of more after Mardi, Moby Dick, and Pierre. Here there is another indictment of materialistic democracy. Ungar is vitriolic in denouncing the results of the French Revolution and then proceeds to a castigation of America. Suppose, Ungar argues, that it is founded on the assumption that men are good when left to their natural inclinations; and suppose that the New World is a stage for the acting out of this theory:

> ... Know,
> Whatever happen in the end
> Be sure 'twill yield to one and all
> New confirmetion of the fall
> Of Adam [47].

Thus in the people as a whole Melville sees the imperfection that causes strife and conflict. In Moby Dick Melville observed:

> Seat thyself sultanically among the moons of Saturn, and take high abstracted man alone; and he seems a wonder, a grandeur, and a woe. But from the same point, take mankind in mass, and ...they seem a mob of unnecessary duplicates [48].

In short, Melville sees imperfection and evil both in the aristocracy of kings and in the democracy of the common people. However, he seems to favor the former because of his bias toward the "superior"individual. The mob is inferior.

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47 Clarel, Quoted p.210 in Sedgwick, op.cit.

48 Moby Dick, p.1038.

And throughout it all runs the thread of cynicism with the ideal. Entwined with the entire problem of democracy and monarchy, mob and individual, is the over-all disappointment of seeing a cleavage between the real and the ideal.

In Pierre, the protagonist, along with Isable, reach out to a glorious ideal, but the realities of life soon bring an awakening. In Pierre, the illusion is centered on the psychological level, whereas in the problems of conflict in society which we have studied so far the illusion of an ideal and the actual reality of things is on the sociological. However, the same corrosion is at work on both levels: the cleavage of the real and the ideal.

Pierre's first great awakening to the reality of things comes with the conviction that Isabel is his illegitimate half-sister. The ideal image of his father is shattered. And Melville uses this experience to say that now in Pierre's life all his other associations must be viewed in the light of the great reality: all objects and persons are concealingly deceptive. Even his mother loses her role as a counsellor and friend. This experience was a "wonderful thing" because at last Pierre knew the truth: his mother too was only an illusion of goodness.

> In the joyous young times, ere his great grief came upon him, all the objects which surround him were concealingly deceptive. Not only was the long-cherished image of his father now transfigured before him from a great foliaged tree into a blasted trunk, but every other image in his mind attested the universality of the electrical light which had darted into his soul. Not even his lovely, immaculate mother, remained entirely untouched, unaltered by the shock [49].

But confusion worse confounded, as Pierre faces the end of his troubled life and has himself inextricably involved in a tangle of perplexities, reality makes him now doubt and wonder whether Isabel is his half-sister after all! Pierre had based his notion that Isabel was his half-sister on the portrait of his father. Now, a portrait from Europe, the image of a man whom he never knew or met, makes Pierre wonder if Isabel could not be his daughter, as well as his father's!

> How did he know that Isabel was his sister? Setting aside Aunt Dorothea's nebulous legend, to which, in some shadowy points, here and there Isabel's still more nebulous story seemed to fit,--though but uncertainly enough--and both of which thus blurredly conjoining narrations, regarded in the unscrupulous light of real naked reason, were anything but legitimately conclusive....[50]

Thus "real naked" reason snaps back on Pierre and he is left completely confused and befuddled.

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49 Pierre, p.104.

50 Ibid., p.415.

A sense of the lurking treacheries in both nature and man, a tragic awareness of the cleavage between the ideal and the real is at the heart of The Confidence Man. The country merchant sits over a glass of wine and in a mood of quiet cynicism speaks to the man in the tasseled traveling cap who has just told the story of a broken marriage:

> "Ah", he cried, pushing his glass from him, "Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or confidence percolate down through all the stormy 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!" [51]

It is significant to note that the scene of The Confidence Man is aboard a boat sailing down the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans, right through the heart of the great new democracy of America! And the entire theme of the book is one of cynical delusion; the reality of things blasts and destroys starry-eyed idealism!

If the civilized forms of political life--aristocracy and monarchy and democracy--were far from the ideal in their actual operation, perhaps there is virtue and serenity in pagan primitivism. Melville makes the remark in Typee that it is easier to raise a family among these primitive people than it is to light a fire. The very opposite is true in civilization

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51 Quoted in Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.249.

The elemental things of life seem thwarted by civilization while the non-essentials prosper.

> What a striking evidence does this operation furnish of the wide difference between the extreme of savage life and civilized life. A gentleman of Typee can bring up a numerous family of children and give them all a highly respectable cannibal education, with infinite less toil and anxiety than he expends in the simple process of striking a light; whilst a poor European artisan, who through the instrumentality of a lucifer performs the same operation in one second, is put to his wits' end to provide for his starving offspring that food which the children of a Polynesian father, without troubling their parent, pluck from the branches of every tree around them [52].

What Melville sees as a contrast on an economic level, becomes a fundamental cleavage in reference to Christianity. For the next few pages in Typee he excoriates the Christian messengers as harbingers of dissension and trouble. The missionaries, says Melville, will admit failure and concede that their work has bred only disease, starvation, and death among the natives. In fine, Christian civilization has brought a blight, not a blessing to the Polynesian people. For every blessing she imparts, there are a hundred evils in reserve--heart burnings, jealousies, social rivalries, family dissensions, and "the thousand self-inflicted discomforts of refined life". [53] Reality outweighs the ideal.

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52 Typee, p.83.

53 Ibid., p.91.

Melville feels that instead of sending missionaries to the Marquesan Islands, we had better welcome four or five missonaries from the island.

> The term "Savage" is, I conceive, often misapplied, and indeed when I consider the vice, orueltie s, and enormities of every kind that spring up in the tainted atmosphere of a feverish civilization, I am inclined to think that so far as the relative wickedness of the parties is concerned, four, or five Marquesan Islanders sent to the United States as Missionaries might be quite as useful as an equal number of Americans dispatched to the Islands in a similar capacity [54].

Moby Dick shows evidence of a similar respect for the untainted native. Queeque is a pagan savage and yet Ishmael admits that the fellow shows far greater decency and consideration for another man than the civilized Ishmael.

> ...but, the truth is, these savages have an innate sense of delicacy, say what you will; it is marvelous how essentially polite they are [55].

Later on, Ishmael again compliments Queequeg for his superior character:

> I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits [56].

Again, Ishmael describes how Queequeg was a native of Rokovoko and was truly the descendent of kings. Ishmael is a royal so

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54 Ibid., p.92.

55 Moby Dick, p.775.

56 Ibid., p.789.

Ishmael presses him for an answer as to whether he ever hoped to return and claim his rightful throne.

> He answered no, not yet; and added that he was fearful Christianity, or rather Christians, had unfitted him for ascending the pure and undefiled throne of thirty pagan kings before him [57].

But Melville is not completely biased in favor of the savages. Stone feels that with Melville the source of his predilection was his Calvinistic background.

> The notion of the noble savage, it can be argued, is a dialectical development from the Calvinist hopelessness about man's condition, a radical pessimism that despairs of what man can do and wishes to strip him of almost all that he has done [58].

But still, Melville sees a defect even in the noble savage. In Moby Dick Ishmael watches Queequeg's unusual religious observances and remarks how he would not try to dissuade the savage from following them.

> All our arguing with him would not avail; let him be, I say: and Heaven have mercy on us all--Presbyterians and Pagans alike -- for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending [59].

Most significant is the fact that the immediate instruments of Ahab's fiendish and irrational pursuit of the White Whate are fine cannibals who were kept in the hold of the ship until the proper hour. Their purpose is an unholy one.

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57 Ibid., p.793.

58 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.52.

59 Moby Dick, p.808.

In fine, Melville was aware that the primitive life was not an unmixed blessing. Here too the power of evil, "the chronic malady of the universe", was at work and would leave its mark. Melville did not stay with the natives of the Marquesan Islands but took great pains to escape. Nor did he ever go back, or even escape. Nor did he ever go back, or even express the desire to do so. His philosophizing about the primitive Eden was done in the cushioned chairs of New York. He is aware that even the savages do horrible things. The very word "Typee" means "lover of human flesh". The natives wage war with one another constantly [60]. One of the last chapters in Typee describes his finding of the three human skulls preserved in mysterious packages [61]. Again, just before he makes his escape from the island, he uncovers the pot and sees the bones of a human being with some of the flesh still clinging to them [62]. Thus Melville experienced a certain delight in the company of the natives and felt attracted by many of their customs and by the congenial atmosphere of the place. But even here he sees the manifestation of the imperfection and evil that marks human beings in society, whether it is

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60 Typee, p.25.

61 Ibid., p.160.

62 Ibid., p.164.

primitive or civilized. Thus, once again, Melville's basic principle comes to the fore:

> And though all evils be assuaged; all evils cannot be done away. For evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place breaks forth in another [63].

Melville's attitude toward the savages is capable of several interpretations. Obviously, he sees conflict and antithesis even among the primitive. But there are sufficient passages to indicate a decided affection for these primitive people. Ben Drew Kimpel sees a significance in Melville's attitude:

> His attitude is like that which a man-of-the-world might take towards a group of happy children, slightly envious of their innocence and gaiety, but even more condescending. The important thing about Melville's attitude is not his primitivism, but the broad-mindedness which let him recognize the merits of a primitive people, and the critical insight into the evils of civilization which made him glorify them as a contrast [64].

On the other hand, there is actual rejection on the part of Melville. In Typee and Omoo Melville admitted that the savage's existence was a non-intellectual one. With Melville such a defect was an indictment. Depth and maturity of mind was his objective and his ideal.

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63 Mardi, p.668.

64 Ben Drew Kimpel, "Herman Melville's Thought after 1851", unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1942, p.48.

Hence Sedgwick is able to see an even more significant factor in Melville's eventual rejection of primitivism:

> The labored antithesis, then, which Melville drew between savage life and civilization goes deeper than differences of place and lies between youth and maturity, between the carefree vagabondage of mostly sensuous being and the rigors of intellectual and spiritual self-consciousness [65].

This viewpoint meshes with what is actually found in Melville's writings. Melville preferred to come back to civilization rather than stay and loll in the sensual delights of savage society. Melville had chosen Fayaway as a particularly close companion because of her "intellectual qualities"[66]. Again, after comparing the European and the Polynesian, Melville concludes that the Polynesian "enjoyed an infinitely happier, though certainly a less intellectual existence, than the self-complacent European" [67]. Melville was looking at them as children. There was no intellectual stature that he could admire. In his mind their physical superiority was not sufficient to offset the advantages of an intellectual life. Their happiness was enviable, but it was the happiness of unthinking children.

Melville was always interested in the man who could think. In a letter to Evert Duyckinck, dated March 3,

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65 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.29

66 Typee, p.80.

67 Ibid., p.91.

1849, Melville wrote: "I love all men who dive. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a whale to go downstairs five miles or more...." [68] In Mardi, written about this time, Melville puts into the mind of Taji:

> But this new world here sought, is stranger far than his, who stretched his vans from Palos. It is the world of mind; wherein the wanderer may gaze round, with more of wonder than Balboa's band roving through the golden Aztec glades.
> ...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 bounless deeps, than float on vulgar shoals; and give me, ye gods, an utter wreck, if wreck I do [69].

But the thinking hero is a lonely figure in the world. It is his response to an unthinking society that is absorbed in making money, fighting wars, and keeping senseless conventions. Melville's thinkers are solitary, isolated figures because he considers society hostile to any depth of thought. The artificial canons of society reject the man who would pierce the superficial and search for ultimate truth. Thus society itself, infected by the force of evil, "the chronic malady of the universe", sets itself in conflict against the man who would think.

The theme of isolation is seen early in Melville's works. In Typee, the protagonist makes a friend only of

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68 Quoted in Willard Thorp, ed., Representative Selections, New York, American Book Co., 1938, p.370.

69 Mardi, p.683.

Toby, one of the few sailors aboard ship who evidence any intellectual stature. On the island, Fayaway consumes most of Melville's time; as was pointed out earlier, the relationship is supposedly "intellectual". In Omoo the hero restricts himself to the company of Doctor Long Ghost, a rather eccentric but well-read fellow. In White Jacket the narrator definitely avoids the crew and keeps to a small select circle of men, each one of whom is "intellectually superior" [70]. White Jacket is subject to the taunts and jeers of his mates, principally on account of his conspicuous jacket. Regarding it as a symbol of misfortune, they blame him for the accident on the voyage. Nathalia Wright sees a unifying principle for all of Melville's heroes in the common type of Ishmael, a wanderer:

> With the exception of three characters, Ahab, Benito Cereno, and Billy Budd, Melville's heroes are all essentially one person and have one prototype. He is Ishmael, the wanderer and outcast. The character of the wanderer is prefigured in the narrator of Typee and Omoo, the title of the latter signifying in the Marquesan dialect a rover, or one moving from one island to another. Taji in Mardi is another rover, a symbol of the mind's pursuit of truth [71].

White Jacket may also be included in this type for he is a wanderer aboard the Neversink, symbol of the United States,

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70 White Jacket, p.1139.

71 Nathalia Wright, op.cit., p.47.

the American man-of-war on which Melville served for some time while on his way home from the South Pacific. It is significant to note that the white jacket, worn by the hero, is the occasion of his ostracism by the crew and at the same time is the cause of a misfortune for its owner. On one occasion it blows over his head during a storm, and causes him to fall into the sea, in which he is nearly drowned. Thus, the first inkling that a man's superior and unusual talents or qualifications may actually bring him to grief!

The theme of individual superiority is emphasized in White Jacket in the person of Jack Chase whom Melville considers "better than a hundred common mortals". In fact, Jack Chase is better than a whole phalanx, an entire army [72]. The great, towering figure of Jack Chase was to remain a symbol of individual excellence in Melville's mind, for as late as 1891, a few months before his death, he was to dedicate Billy Budd to "that great heart".

Redburn also contains the thread of individual isolation and even the theme of "wanderer", as suggested of Melville's heroes by Nathalia Wright. Redburn is isolated.

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72 White Jacket, p.1117.

The evil Jackson is the most venemous in his antipathy toward Wellingborough, but Redburn finds himself an isolated figure among the rest of the crew as well.

> ...I found myself a sort of Ishmael in the ship, without a single friend or companion; and I began to fell a hatred growing up in me against the whole crew.... [73]

In the midst of his most productive period, that is, around the year 1850, Melville himself withdrew from the bustling world of New York where he had lived since his return from the South Seas and where he had married Elizabeth Shaw. In 1850 he moved himself and small family to Pittsfield, consciously isolating himself from the contemporary scene. Here he wrote Moby Dick and Pierre, two works that emphasize the isolation of the unusual individual in conflict with society. The idea is broached early in Moby Dick. Father Mapple, when climbing into his pulpit to discourse on the deep things of life, always pulled the ladder up after him. Ishmael immediately suspects a significance and remarks:

> ...there must be some sober reason for this thing; furthermore, it must symbolize something unseen. Can it be, then, that by that act of physical isolation, he signifies his spiritual withdrawal for the time, from all outward worldly ties and connexions? [74]

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73 Redburn, p.1506.

74 Moby Dick, p.783.

Indisputably Ahab is a lonely figure. An element that plays no small part in his isolation in his intellectual stature. Melville remarks that Ahab is a "great figure, that he has an extraordinary depth of soul [75]. The result is an "apartness" from the rest of his crew, from the rest of humanity.

Pierre is completely an isolated individual. His whole tragedy lies in rejecting the conventional norms and canons of society and in attempting a "solo flight" into the ambiguities of life, hoping to untangle and solve the problems that he actually creates for himself. In later works, Melville pursues much the same theme of the isolated individual in conflict with society. The Confidence Man is the sketch of a consciously superior individual who finds himself at odds with the general run of human nature. Ungar in Clarel is extremely aristocratic and there is much praise for brave, solitary spirits. The shorter tales also reflect the same attitude. In "I and My Chimney" there is a sense of isolation that has its counterpart in "Bartleby the Scrivener". In the latter, the copyist has receded more and more into himself until he did no work for his employer.

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75 Ibid., pp.846-850.

But he ate, slept in the office, and stared at the blank, brick wall. The poor fellow dies when the employer moves from the building to escape him and after Bartleby has been put in jail for loitering. Bartleby may be interpreted as a beautiful Innocence who will not write at all rather than compromise with a capitalistic society and write on demand. However, it seems more reasonable to see in Bartleby the disease of isolation and realize that Melville himself was beginning to appreciate the utter futility of the individual against the world. There is an indication of this attitude in the very themes of Pierre and Billy Budd, written approximately 40 years apart. Richard Chase notes a similarity of frustration in these two plots and makes these remarks:

> At the end of Pierre, civilization was shown to be in the hands of conventional society, military power, and Laodicean liberalism. In Billy Budd civilization is shown to be in approximately the same hands. And the hero who opposes these forces is no more capable of doing so than Pierre [76].

Melville was apparently aware of this tragic frustration even in Moby Dick. Ahab's silences take on a morbid seclusion and inspire dread among his sailors. F. O. Matthiessen makes a masterful summary of the whole sweep

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76 Richard Chase, op.cit., p.259.

of Ahab's tragedy in terms of the very forces that were at work in Melville's mid-nineteenth century.

> Without deliberately intending it, but by virtue of his intense concern with the precariously maintained values of democratic Christianity, which he saw everywhere being threatened or broken down, Melville created in Ahab's tragedy a fearful symbol of the self-enclosed individualism that, carried to its furthest extreme, brings disaster both upon itself and upon the group of which it is a part [77].

In his rejection of a dependence and inter-communication with other human beings, Ahab is markedly similar to Pierre. The fact that Ahab and Pierre meet doom in their lonely, individualistic pursuits is indication that Melville was well aware that a conflict was in force even here. He felt man needed solitude and "aloneness" to work out the complexities of life, but in following out this modus vivendi man stumbles on the fact that there is an inter-indebtedness among men that will not be denied. Thus nature itself seems to be in conspiracy against man. Richard Chase makes a happy comment upon this dilemma in terms of tragedy; in fact, this very conflict is at the base of Melville's tragic heroes:

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77 F. O. Matthiessen, op.cit., p.459.

> Here we have come close to Melville's central idea of tragedy, which, I should say, is the self-defeat of leadership...Tragedy, then, is the degeneration of the potential hero, 'mystically illumined', by his withdrawal from the world and by his spiritual ordeal, into the Sultan who leads his followers to destruction instead of leading them along the paths of civilization [78].

Thus Melville had an oppresive awareness of evil that permeated things as they were. Society is shot through with this "chronic malady of the universe". Riches make men forget the common ties of human nature and social classes wage a quiet war against each other. War is contrary to the principles of a Christian civilization and yet men and even ministers of Christianity live by it. The real and the ideal are poles apart. There is no absolute goodness in either monarchy or democracy, but in all forms of human government there is imperfection. In fact, the mob rule of democracy may be the most dangerous of all. Primitive savages are often of far nobler qualities than so-called civilized people. And still, there are areas of barbarism and inhumanity even among the pagans. Society rejects the thinker; they are in conflict. But isolation will not solve the problem because a dangerous moroseness infects the isolated individual.

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78 Richard Chase, op.cit., p.55.

But what can be said of the individual man? If society is shot through with conflicts and contrasts, what of man taken as a single unit? Is there harmony and serenity within, or is he also at the mercy of conflicting forces that rise from evil, the "chronic malady of the universe"? In the next chapter we shall examine this problem.

CHAPTER IV

CONFLICT WITHIN MAN

In the last chapter we found that Melville found in society a basic imperfection that results in conflicts of various kinds. This imperfection and the resultant dichotomies drive the superior individual to think out the meaning of life and to pursue a course of action not only free from, but often in conflict with the conventions and canons of an unthinking society. But in turning away from society man does not escape the taint of evil. The individualist finds an intolerable contradiction at the heart of things and eventually exhibits symptoms of great neuroses. In fact, most men, like Pierre, have a contradiction within themselves.

The one conflict is in the order of knowledge between what a man feels with his heart and what he thinks with his head. There is a second conflict in regard to the principle of man's actions, his will: Is man fated or free? Melville's reaction to these problems in Mardi, Moby Dick, Pierre, and Billy Budd is the result of a certain maturity that he reached after the writing of Typee and Omoo. As noted in the last chapter, Melville enjoyed a momentary intoxication with primitive life and its pleasant contrast

to the perplexing problems of a so-called civilized and Christian society. But we saw, too, that his real interest was to graple with the problems that he thought he saw about him. Arvin remarks:

> Not in avoiding the clash between consciousness and the uncounscious, between mind and emotion, between anxious doubt and confident belief, but in confronting these antinomies head-on and, hopefully, transcending them -- in that direction, as Melville intuitively saw, lay his right future as an adult person [1].

Wading through the problems of conflict within society, he eventually comes to the conflicts within man himself. To do so, he must dive deep, very deep into the human composite:

> Deep, deep, and still deep and deeper must we go, if we would find out the heart of a man; descending into which is as descending a spiral stair in a shaft, without any end, and where that endlessness is only concealed by the spiralness of the stair, and the blackness of the shaft [2].

Pierre's view of human nature is, indeed, a dark one and expresses an undeniable tie-in with the Calvinist tradition of natural depravity and black depths of human nature that was in Melville's family.

Mardi is the first articulate expression of Melville's attempt to descend this stairway and probe at the "blackness of the shaft". "To live at all is a high vocation", is often

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1 Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.88.

2 Pierre, p.340.

expressed in one form or other in Mardi but as an individual or in the aggregate man also shows no coherence or symmetry but is a man of self-contradiction and of grandeur and infamy. Babbalanja emphasizes the element of conflict and the resulting perplexity about man:

> Oh, Man, Man, Man! Thou art harder to solve than the Integral Calculus -- yet, plain as a primer; harder to find than the philosopher's stone--yet ever at hand; a more cunning compound, than an alchemist's--yet a hundred weight of flesh, to a penny weight of spirit; soul and body glued together, firm as atom to atom, seamless as vestment without joint, warp or woof--yet divided as by a river, spirit from flesh; growing both ways, like a tree, and dropping thy topmost branches to earth, like thy beard or a banian! I give thee up, oh Man! Thou art twain--yet indivisible; all things,--yet a poor unit at best. [3]

These words from Babbalanja, the philosopher in Mardi, express the element of conflict that Melville sees in human nature, "Oh man! Thou art twain!" Here Babbalanja speaks in terms of spirit and flesh, but further reading in Mardi, Moby Dick, and Pierre show an even more specific dichotomy in terms of head and heart, of free will and necessity. In this quotation a second element is one of perplexity, "... harder to solve than the Integral Calculus" and "I give thee up, oh Man!" In general this view remained Melville's until the very end. Not even in Billy Budd is there a solution for the contradictions; at most, there is only acceptance. Distressed by the conflict Melville felt to be in human nature,

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3 Mardi, p.614.

he thought it was truly inscrutable.

The burden of this chapter will be to trace Melville's views on the dichotomy in man, viz., the conflict of head versus heart as a source of knowledge and guide of action, and the conflict of free will versus fate as the determinant of man's actions. This two-fold antimony springs from an even more fundamental problem, that of evil in the individual human being.

One of the most significant passages found in Melville's work is in Mardi. Yoomy the poet and Babbalanja the philosopher are in a discussion about poets and their art when Babbalanja observes:

> The essence of all good and evil is in us, not out of us. Neither poison nor honey lodgeth in the flowers which, side by side, bees and wasps oft alight. My lord, nature is an immaculate virgin, forever standing unrobed before us. True poets but paint the charms which all behold. The vicious would be vicious without them [4].

Here the philosopher points to human nature as the source of evil. The world of nature is amoral, for flowers bear neither poison nor honey. Later in the same novel, Melville states his own position:

> Miserable, thrice miserable he, who is forever turning over and over one's character in his mind, and weighing by nice avoirdupois, the pros and the cons of his goodness and badness. For we are all good and bad [5].

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4 Ibid., p.617.

5 Ibid., p.712.

Thus at this stage Melville would discourage a probing and a weighing, at least of the individual man, and concede a mixture of good and evil in each. This position is a development over Redburn, published in 1849, where there is a virtual personification of evil in Jackson. This character, Fedellah in Moby Dick, and Claggart in Billy Budd are the three personalities in all of Melville where evil is predominant as a constitutional element in their make-up. It is interesting to note that Jackson merely gives off the "effluvium" of evil while Claggart embodies it in his very being. Fedellah is identified with Satan himself.

Redburn thus contained a character or individual with evil as a predominant characteristic. In Mardi, however, evil in relation to human nature is considered more in the abstract and it is not embodied in any one personality. Moby Dick and Pierre return to the viewpoint of evil within the individual man. Billy Budd will emphasize it. In Moby Dick Fedellah looms as an embodiment of evil. In fact, Melville speaks of him in connection with the memory of the first man as a distinct recollection among the more primitive tribes of the earth. What is significant is that in relation to Fedellah he hints of his ancestry as stemming from the "mundane amours" of the devils with the daughters of men!

Stubb feels that Fedellah is the devil incarnate. Stubb and Flask discuss the Parsee over a right whale they killed and Stubb makes this point:

> Flask, I take that Fedellah to be the devil in disguise...He's the devil, I say. The reason why you don't see his tail, is because he tucks it up out of sight; he carries it coiled away in his pocket, I guess [6].

Fedellah proves to have a commanding influence over Ahab as the man throws himself into his "Godless" search for the White Whale. Soon after Stubb and Flask engage in the conversation quoted above, Fedellah and Ahab stand near each other.

> And Ahab chanced so to stand, that the Parsee occupied his shadow: while, if the Parsee's shadow were there at all it seemed only to blend with, and lengthen Ahab's. As the crew toiled on, Laplandish speculations were bandied among them, concerning all these passing things [7].

Howard P. Vincent expresses what easily may have been the "Laplandish speculations" of the crew, particularly in view of Stubb's remarks quoted above.

> Melville has restated as in a coda his symbolism of Fedellah as the Devil and of Ahab's domination by the powers of Evil. The united shadows of Ahab and Fedellah represent the union of Ahab with the Devil [8].

It is most significant to note that Fedellah is a Parsee and so a believer in the two Principles. Zoroastrianism, the ancient and traditional religion of the Parsees, teaches

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6 Moby Dick, p.955.

7 Ibid., p.957.

8 Howard P. Vincent, op.cit., p.251.

a relentless war of Ormazd, the principle of light and goodness, against Ahriman and his evil spirits. Hence, Stubb was perhaps quite right in predicating consummate evil of Fedellah. And Melville, fascinated by the apparent dualism of good and evil, makes the happy choice of a character whose ancestral religion is based on such a dualism.

Moby Dick has two other personalities who are more in agreement with Melville's over-all theory that good and evil is in all men. Radney is "vengeful and full of social quarrel as the backwoods seaman". He is as stubborn as he is malicious [9]. And still he has his good qualities. In the same passage, Melville says, "Yet was this Nantucketer a man with some good-hearted traits..." Thus even in an individual marked by meanness and jealousy there is an element of the good.

Steelkilt is a foil for Radney. Steelkilt is described as having the brain, the heart, and the soul of Charlemagne. And yet Steelkilt is not without sin. Were it not for a sudden twist of fate, he would have carried through his plans to murder Radney out of revenge for an insult and would have led his mates in mutiny [10]. In the persons of Radney and Steelkilt we see clearly the working of Melville's theory, "Oh Man! Thou art twain!" They have both good and evil within them.

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9 Moby Dick, p.907.

10 Ibid., pp.908 and 913.

In Radney, we see the soul "so simple that it prefers evil to good". For a reason beyond Melville's ken, Radney is predisposed to evil, but has his good qualities too.

Pierre is Melville's "psychology of evil". [11] Admitting the ever-present element of evil in man, Melville writes, "Why in the noblest marble pillar that stands beneath the all-comprising vault, ever should we descry the sinister vein?" [12] He sees man a noble creation but spotted with a "sinister vein". Even in his mother's love for him Pierre senses pride:

> She loveth me; --but why?...Me she loveth with pride's love; in me she thinks she seeth her own curled and haughty beauty; before my glass she stands,--pride's priestess--and to her mirrored image, not to me, she offers up her offerings of kisses [13].

Pierre's mother herself soliloquizes:

> Sometimes I have feared that my pride would work me some woe incurable ...But who can get at one's heart to mend it? Right one's self against another that one may sometimes do; but when that other is one's own self, these ribs forbid [14].

Thus a conflict within the individual himself who sees imperfection at work within himself but feels powerless to stay it.

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11 R. E. Watters, op.cit., p.174.

12 Pierre. p.127.

13 Ibid., p.105.

14 Ibid., p.154.

Billy Budd projects the antithesis of good and evil that is in man's heart into single personalities. Billy Budd himself is a lad of noble soul and unblemished character. Claggart himself owned him to be a "sweet and pleasant young fellow". On the other hand, Claggart is the incarnation of evil. Along with Jackson in Redburn and Fedellah in Moby Dick, he is one of Melville's few characters who embody the evil that is present at least in a small way in all men. Civilization fosters the type of man Claggart is. "It holds itself in the mantle of respectability". But underneath it is a natural depravity.

> Now something such 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" [15].

There is an "elemental evil" in Claggart that puts him at odds immediately with Budd. Claggart evidences a superior capacity, a constitutional sobriety, a peculiar "ferreting genius" and a certain austere patriotism. There is nothing of the sordid or sensual. This sort of evil, of a spiritual and intellectual order, dovetails with Melville's thought in Mardi that the soul may choose evil, but the body is a frame, "whose minutest action is full of unsearchable wisdom [16].

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15 Billy Budd, p.187.

16 Mardi, p.654.

Obviously, the conflict of good and evil is externalized in the persons of Billy Budd and Claggart. But it is significant that even Billy has been touched with evil. It is not the spiritual evil, the natural depravity that dogs Claggart, but it is a physical imperfection that is the actual occasion of his downfall. His speech impediment in time of nervous stress and strain impells him to express himself with a physical blow that kills Claggart and sets in motion that machinery that brings Billy himself to the yard-arm.

Besides being "twain" in respect to good and evil in his inmost nature, man suffers another conflict that places him on the horns of a dilemma. In directing his actions, shall a man rely on the dictates of his heart or of his reason? If man were completely good, there would be no conflict. The impulses of his nature would be in harmony with the conclusions of his reason. But given the imperfection, is the heart or the head a more reliable guide in directing man to do the right thing and the good thing?

Melville's understanding of the term "heart" is a naturally good instinct that serves as a guide to truth and virtue. It is interchangeable with his use of the word "Faith". Melville wrote a letter to Hawthorne around 1850 commenting on Ethan Brand, Hawthorne's famous story. The lime-burner, Ethan Brand, is guilty of the Unpardonable Sin, intellectual pride and a heart of stone. Depressed because of unpopularity

he throws himself into the lime-furnace. When his skeleton is found, the ribs enclose a piece of marble shaped like a human heart. The story gives occasion to Melville to write to Hawthorne:

> It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the head eats out the heart... I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head [17].

Earlier in Mardi Melville had expressed a similar distrust of the head. Babbalanja, the philosopher, observes: "Let us stifle all vain speculations; we need not be told what righteousness is; we were born with the whole law in our hearts" [18]. The distrust of speculation is even more emphatically enunciated by King Media, and Babbalanja admits that "this is not the first time a philosopher has been instructed by a man":

> ...last thoughts you mortals have none; nor can have; and, at bottom, your own fleeting fancies are too often secrets to yourselves... Thus with the wisest of you all; you are ever unfixed [19].

Media claims that the philosophers can hardly solve the problems that vex their own souls; actually, final knowledge seems unattainable. Later on, Babbalanja discourses in much

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17 Julian Hawthorne, ed., Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1897, p.404.

18 Mardi, p.696.

19 Ibid., p.577.

the same vein and dismisses knowledge as inadequate: "Tell us, ye sages! something worth an archangel's learning... Fools, fools! ...we cut our eye-teeth just as late as they did, three thousand years ago" [20]. In short, Mardi offers much evidence for the conclusion that at this time Melville had a great distrust for the head. The heart is extolled as the source and guide of virtue. Even in Serenia, the island where the principles of charity and justice of the Prophet Alma (Christ) are observed, the old man remarks, "But are Truth, Justice, and Love the revelations of Alma alone? ...Oh! Alma but opens unto us our own Hearts" [21].

Babbalanja, however, stands for greater emphasis on the validity of the human mind. In conversation with the old man, quoted above, Babbalanja is anxious to know, "But pray you, old man--say on--methinks, that in your faith must be much that jars with reason" [22]. The old man answers that such is not so. Alma and right reason are the same. Else Alma, and not reason would we reject. The Master (Christ) has brought a commandment of Love and "here do all things wise, and all things good, unite. Love is all in all".

William Sedgwick sees in Mardi the odyssey of the

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20 Ibid., p.698.

21 Ibid., p.726.

22 Ibid., p.728.

human mind in quest of truth. Man is ultimately faced with the dilemma of choosing Serenia where God is all; all life is from God and love is the law of life. But will this view stand before the inquisition of the mind? Hautia is a symbol of spiritual death but of material life. Hautia is the life of pride and sensuality. It is an existence that circumvents the whole problem of head and heart and refuses to follow either, because both seem in contradiction. At least, both head and heart fail to achieve ultimate Truth. When Taji sails off into the horizon at end of Mardi, he is still on the search for the expression of his complete human nature. In terms of gaining truth, Taji wants both head and heart to grasp Truth. Melville seems to indicate that such is impossible [23].

Melville here reaches the inevitable dead-end of a mind that has no structure of revealed truth on which to lean. Earlier in Mardi, Babbalanja had rejected any dogmatic system; in fact, objective truth, he intimates, is utterly beyond comprehension and expression:

> ...wherefore, orthodoxy and heresy are one...For in things abstract, men but differ in the sounds that come from their mouths, and not in the wordless thoughts lying at the bottom of their beings [24].

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23 Cf. William Sedgwick, op.cit., pp.38-58.

24 Mardi, p.611.

In the same chapter, Babbalanja casts aspersion upon the faith of the unthinking man, "Faith is to the thoughtless, doubts to the thinker". Thus Mardi reflects this view of Melville toward head and heart: The heart will accept the program of Serenia where a surrender is made to Alma the Prophet. But the head will not reach a satisfactory fulfillment in this surrender. Doubts will arise for the thinker. Thus, Melville is caught in the contemporary conflict of faith and reason. His concept of faith, the prompting of the heart of man to accept a commandment of love and forego intellectual satisfaction, is both erroneous and immature. He could not appreciate the great vistas of Truth opened out before the mind by the use of Faith in the proper sense of belief in the revelations of God because of God revealing. Melville was not familiar with the motives of credibility that make faith and reason dovetail in approaching God, the ultimate Truth. As a result, he had to try to reconcile himself with the anxiety of an apparent conflict between head and heart.

Melville was aware that his position did not solve the antinomy. In Moby Dick he created Ahab who was to show how madness and self-destruction follows on the glorification and emphasis of the human intellect. As we shall study in the next chapter, Ahab's search can be interpreted as one in the ontological order. His object was Truth.

His frustration and ultimate defeat are sufficient indication of what Melville saw would occur to the man who relied entirely on his head to the exclusion of his heart, or more specifically, of faith. Ahab is an Ethan Brand gone to sea. But Melville has a deep-down affection and respect for this type of soul.

> ...all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?
> But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God--so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! [25]

Melville admits that it is only "glimpses" we have of the eternal truth. The spirit of this quotation is in harmony with the observation made in the very first chapter: Melville preferred the soul who could think. He never abandoned his position although he always felt that ultimate truth was really beyond man and even man himself is "harder to solve than the Integral Calculus".

Pierre carries on the idea of a conflict between head and heart. Here heart is understood more in the sense of the inner promptings of man's nature. When Pierre receives the letter from Isabel beseeching him to come to her, he is town for a moment between two forces.

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25 Moby Dick, p.823.

> One bade him finish the selfish destruction of the note; for in some dark way the reading of it would irretrievably entangle his fate. The other bade him dismiss all misgivings...because to dismiss them was the manlier part... The bad angel insinuatingly breathed -- Read it not, dearest Pierre, but destroy it and be happy. Then, at the blast of his noble heart, the bad angel shrunk up into nothingness [26].

The heart of Pierre wins out over the "bad angel" that reasons and calculates. It is a "noble" heart for it averts the destruction of the note advised by the "bad angel" within him. It is his heart in the sense of an instinct for good. The irony is seen when we recall that it is by going to Isabel in response to the note that sets off a series of events that lead to Pierre's destruction. Hence, the "noble" heart can hardly be trusted. It brings about Pierre's ruin. Near the close of this novel, Pierre admits that if he had been heartless, he would have been happy.

> Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven! Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds [27].

On the other hand, Pierre does not teach dependence on reason. The more Pierre meditates and ponders on his fate, the more mystified he becomes:

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26 Pierre, p.73.

27 Ibid., p.424.

> So that in Pierre was presented the apparent anamoly of a mind, which by becoming really profound in itself, grew skeptical of all tendered profundities; whereas, the contrary is generally supposed [28].

Hence, reason also is powerless to help Pierre. Far from giving him an insight into truth, it only makes him skeptical of "all tendered profundities". In short, Pierre shows a distrust of both mind and heart. The heart leads Pierre into a situation that brings about his ruin. The lad is helpless to fashion a philosophy to explain the "onset of Life and Passion".

In general we can conclude that Melville trusted neither the head nor the heart completely. He keeps to his respect for the individual who has the courage to search for the truth but whether it is better to use the heart or head, Melville seems unable to decide. At least this conflict continues until 1891 when he wrote Billy Budd. As we shall see in the last chapter of this study, Melville created in Captain Vere a character who is able to make the intellectual virtues harmonize with the promptings of his heart. But even then, as we shall see, it is a solution that recalls the words, "Oh Man, Man, Man, Thou art harder to solve than the Integral Calculus". Indeed there is serious conflict in Melville's writings between the relative merits of head and

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28 Ibid., p.417.

heart, whether the latter is taken as faith or as the inner promptings of a man's nature.

Along with the mixture of good and evil in human nature and the relative merits of head and heart in directing a man's actions, Melville's works reveal an anxiety about whether a man is free or fated in his actions. In Melville the topic of free will falls under the various terms of Fate, Necessity, Will, and Chance. Early in Mardi there is the moving description of a calm at sea. Melville masterfully describes the effect of a calm on the human soul and body, for in very truth it seems to affect both. One of the results is for the human mind to begin to doubt freedom of will; the immutability of the sea becomes an argument for the immutability of the will. "If (the traveler is) a reader of books, Priestley on Necessity occurs to him; and he believes in that old Sir Anthony Absolute to the very last chapter" [29]. The relevance and aptness of Melville's analogy is apparent when we remember that Priestley taught a materialism that denied the spirituality of the soul; hence, the will just does not exist in the traditional, Scholastic sense of a free, spiritual faculty. If man is wholly material, then he too can become utterly becalmed like the

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29 Mardi, p.283.

sea and there is no internal faculty of self-movement to initiate any new action.

In some later passages in Mardi, Babbalanja the philosopher voices a fine distinction between Fatalism and Necessity. After vehemently denying that he is a Necessitarian and implying that to be such would be to play the fool, Babbalanja explains:

> Confound not the distinction. Fatalism presumes express and irrevocable edicts of heaven concerning particular events. Whereas, Necessity holds that all events are naturally linked, and inevitably follow each other, without providential interposition, though by the eternal letting of Providence [30].

In other words, Necessity, according to Babbalanja means that once a certain act is committed, a certain effect will follow, the whole process of free act and necessary effect being within the "letting" of Providence, i.e., within the framework of God's plan. Babbalanja's theory of Necessity is quite similar to the traditional Scholastic concept of cause and effect. He omits one important consideration: free will may still alter the course of events. In nature, cause and effect operate with divine regularity, but in the realm of human relations cause and effect is conditioned by the exercise of free will. Babbalanja has wisdom in placing the whole

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30 Ibid., p.609.

operation of Necessity under the "letting" or Providence of God. Even in admitting a free will to determine and condition the working of this cause and effect, God still eventually shapes all actions and things for the fulfillment of His own Will.

White Jacket offers explicit proof that Melville himself believed in free will. He himself remarks:

> But all events are mixed in a fusion indistinguishable. What we call Fate is even, heartless, and impartial...We may fret, fume, and fight; but the thing called Fate everlastingly sustains an armed neutrality.
>
> Yet though all this be so, nevertheless in our own hearts, we mold the whole world's hereafter; and in our own hearts we fashion our own gods. Each mortal casts his vote for whom he would to rule the worlds: I have a voice that helps to shape eternity; and my volitions stir the orbits of the farthest suns. In two senses, we are precisely what we worship. Ourselves are Fate [31]

But the very next year, 1851, in writing Moby Dick Melville was to make many references to this force called Fate. In this one novel there are approximately twenty-eight references to a Fate that both proposes and disposes in a man's life. But there is also a working out of the complex interplay of Chance, Necessity, and Free Will in this same book.

Ishmael and Queequeg are weaving a mat. In a moment of reflection Ishmael sees an analogy between the weaving of the mat and the turn of events in a man's life.

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31 White Jacket, p.1299.

Ishmael himself is the shuttle; the fixed threads of the warp are necessity. Ishmael meditates, "...here, thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into those unalterable threads." [32] But Queequeg's sword hits the woof occasionally, sometime slantingly, sometimes crookedly, always indifferently. The difference in the blow produces a corresponding difference in the final aspect of the completed fabric.

> ...this savage's sword, thought I, which thus finally shapes and fashions both warp and woof; this easy, indifferent sword must be chance --aye, chance, free will and necessity, --no wise incompatible--all interweavingly working together. The straight warp of necessity, not to be swerved 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 line of necessity, and sideways in its motions directed by free will, though thus prescribed to by both, chance by turn rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events [33].

Thus Chance plays a very important role in the disposition of human affairs. Free will and the necessity of a cause and effect relationship also play a part, but "chance by turn rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events". Queequeg's sword, striking indifferently and producing the final results in the fabric, is the sword of chance that has the breatest part in shaping events.

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32 Moby Dick, p.888.

33 Ibid., p.888.

Thus Moby Dick swings to the side of an indifferent Chance, rather than Necessity or absolute Free Will. Thus there is a freedom of the will but a man's free actions are often conditioned by forces beyond his control. In fact, Moby Dick evidences definite over-tones of determinism. Chance and Necessity circumscribe a man's free actions. The practical application of the theory is given in Ishmael's handling of Queequeg's monkey-rope while the latter worked on the whale over the side of the ship.

> But handle Queequeg's monkey-rope heedfully as I would, sometimes he jerked it so, that I came very near sliking over board. Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I would, I only had the management of one end of it [34].

Ishmael takes the opportunity to draw a moral. "...I saw that the situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes...." Thus, in short, we can conclude that Melville wrote about a free will that was nevertheless influenced by circumstances beyond man's control. Man's actions are, on the whole, free but in their effects they are conditioned by Necessity and Chance which are beyond anyone's control.

Thus far we have confined the discussion to Melville's view of chance and free will in relation to the ordinary events

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34 Ibid., p.[illegible].

of day-to-day living. But when attention is given to actions that are evil, the elements of chance and necessity are emphasized to the virtual exclusion of freedom of the will. We can say that Melville's belief in free will fluctuates in inverse proportion to his realization of the elements of imperfection in man. In White Jacket Melville describes the hideous, crumpled horn that grew out of the forehead of Dr. Cadwallader Cuticle, M.D., surgeon of the fleet. Melville philosophizes:

> The horn seemed the mark of a curse for some mysterious sin, conceived and committed before the spirit had entered the flesh. Yet that sin seemed something imposed, and not voluntarily sought; some sin growing out of the heartless necessities of the predestination of things; some sin under which sinner sank in sinless woe [35].

"Sinless woe" expresses the thought that there is no responsibility for this evil. It enters the life of a particular man and he consequently suffers. Hence, Melville fuses, or confuses, the Calvinist concept of predestined sin in the life of a man and the traditional Christian idea that "full consent of the will" is essential for sin. Hence, the "sinner" suffers in "sinless" woe.

The idea that evil may be predestined in the life of certain individual men is emphasized in Moby Dick.

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35 White Jacket, p.1256.

When Ishmael tells Don Pedro of an early encounter with the White Whale and the ruin which it brought on the men who chased it, Ishmael remarks: "Gentlemen, a strange fatality pervades the whole career of these events, as if verily mapped out before the world itself was charted." [36] After Starbuck had accosted Ahab and accused him of "impiety and blasphemy" to hunt down the White Whale in this mad and evil chase, Ahab replies:

> This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders. Look thou, underling! that thou obeyest mine [37].

Earlier Melville had hinted that Ahab was driven by a force that was immensely larger than himself. Occasionally Ahab would break forth from his cabin with a wild, piercing cry. It was an "eternal, living principle or soul in him" that drove him on [38].

Pierre is driven on by a necessity that is beyond his own control. In fact, Pierre feels that life is made up of "inscrutable inhumanities" that are nobody's fault, but nevertheless work their evil among men.

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36 Moby Dick, p.916.

37 Ibid., p.1094.

38 Ibid., p.880.

> I can not speak coherently here; but somehow I felt that all good, harmless men and women were human beings, placed at cross-purposes, in a world of snakes and lightnings, in a world of horrible and inscrutable inhumanities [39].

It is about this time that there comes into Pierre's mind "life's subtlest problem".

> With the lightning's flash, the query is spontaneously propounded--chance, or God? ...The heart, stirred to its depths, finds correlative sympathy in the head, which likewise is profoundly moved. Before miserable men, when intellectual, all the ages of the world pass as in a manacled procession, and all their myriad links rattle in the mournful mystery [40].

Later Melville himself makes this observation as Pierre is caught in the perplexities of situation: Strike at one end a long row of billiard balls, and the furthermost ball will start forth, while all the rest stand still. Melville concludes:

> So, though long previous generations, whether of births or thoughts, Fate strikes the present man. Idly he disowns the blow's effects, because he felt no blow, and indeed, received no blow. But Pierre was not arguing Fixed Fate and Free Will, now; Fixed Fate and Free Will were arguing him, and Fixed Fate got the better in the debate [41].

Hence Melville surrenders to a Fixed Fate in Pierre's predicament. There is no longer room for argument. If a man is not convinced, it is only because the poor man is not

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39 Pierre, p.144.

40 Ibid., p.130.

41 Ibid., p.214.

conscious of the blow that has been struck.

In fine, men and women may have the best intentions. But there is a force beyond them that puts them at "cross purposes" and results in "inscrutable inhumanities". The term "inscrutable" ties in with Melville's observation in Mardi that man is "harder to solve than the Integral Calculus". Even more conclusive that free will is minimized in evil actions is given in Pierre when Melville speaks of Pierre's recognition of the evil within him:

> ...it would seem, that Pierre is quite conscious of much that is so anomalously hard and bitter in his lot, of much that is so black and terrific in his soul. Yet that knowing his condition not one whit enable him to change or better his condition. Conclusive proof that he has no power over his condition. For in tremendous extremities human souls are like drowning men; well enough they know they are in peril; well enough they know the causes of that peril; -- nevertheless, the sea is the sea, and these drowning men do drown [42].

In summing up Melville's view of Free Will, Necessity, Fatalism, and Chance, we can conclude from the foregoing evidence that here too Melville sees a conflict within man. In general man has a free will, conditioned by circumstances and chance and necessity. But in matter of evil, man is influenced by chance to the actual undoing and paralysis of free will. In short, there is a predestination to evil and man's rebellion to it will avail him nothing.

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42 Ibid., p.357.

All in all, Melville's view of the conflict within man himself is summed up in the passage from Mardi.

> Oh, Man, Man, Man! Thou art harder to solve than the Integral Calculus -- yet plain as a primer; harder to find than the philosopher's stone -- yet ever at hand... --I give thee up, oh Man! thou art twain--yet indivisible; all things -- yet a poor unit at best [43].

Basically there is imperfection in man; we are all good and bad. In trying to decide what to do in a given situation, or in trying to solve the perplexing problems of life, man find himself torn between the impulses of his heart and the dictates of his head or reason. In general Melville distrusted both because both seemed likely to lead a man to frustration or madness. On the level of human responsibility, is it possible for a man to direct his own actions? Here, too, Melville has the vision of a conflict arising from the constitution of things. In regard to indifferent actions, a man is free but circumscribed by Necessity and Chance. In the doing of evil, Fate is the dictator. Truly, man is "twain" and "hard to solve than the Integral Calculus". In view of this vision of conflict within man himself, it is understandable that Melville should mark the following passage in his copy of Arnold's essay on Heine:

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43 Mardi, p.614.

> That is what I say; there is so much power, so many seem able to run well, so many give promise of running well; -- so few reach the goal, so few are chosen. Many are called,but few are chosen [44].

The real tragedy of Melville's vision of conflict within man is the fact that he did not have the advantage of a completely Christian, or Catholic, concept of man. Centuries before Melville, Saint Paul was aware of a certain duality in the make-up of man. In the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, Saint Paul develops the theme of a conflict between the law of his mind and the law of his members, between the law of grace and the law of sin.

> Therefore, when I wish to do good I discover this law, namely, that evil is at hand for me. For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members.

Saint Paul's words can be interpreted in this sense: the heat of the battle does not lie in a direct conflict with evil, but in choosing things that in themselves are neither right or wrong. In any man's life there are numerous words, acts, thoughts, and desires which actually work to bring him under the dominion of sin. This is what Saint Paul refers to as the law of the members. If a man yields unresistingly to the control of this law, he will eventually find himself under the captivity of the Law of sin itself.

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44 Quoted in Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.255.

Melville had a glimpse of this truth when he spoke in Pierre of the long row of billiard balls and the effect on the last ball when the first is struck. But Melville speaks of Fate striking the blow, whether through long generations of births or thoughts [45]. However, he never pursued the topic further. Certainly he seems never to have given much thought to Saint Paul and the Epistle to the Romans. Nathalia Wright makes no mention of this particular passage from Saint Paul in her study of Melville's use of the Bible. In reading Melville's work there is little or no evidence of being acquainted with Epistles. In fact his acquaintance with the New Testament was anything but thorough. His Biblical roots are typically Calvinistic, i.e., in the Old Testament primarily.

A Catholic vision of Man, grounded on Saint Paul and the traditions and teaching authority of the Church, would have enabled Melville to appreciate the fact that evil can become a possessive force in the life of an individual man. But free will remains the responsible agent. No man is fated to do evil. Voluntary surrender, repeatedly done, may effect a pattern of action, or habits, that are extremely difficult to change. But man is responsible at least for the initial actions that brought about his condition.

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45 Pierre, p.214.

Cheated of this balanced view of man, Melville faced a conflict that he was never to solve adequately. He was always to be baffled by the state of "twilight" where the power of free will and the power of necessity seem almost to mesh.

CHAPTER V

CONFLICT BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

The preceding chapters have shown that the problem of good and evil that leads to a multitude of conflicts in society and within man himself runs like a thread through most of Melville's works. Again and again a character, a situation, a plot manifest the conflict that springs from a basic imperfection in all things. The desire to solve the mystery of why the dichotomy exists and to comprehend more completely its significance and meaning, is the distinguishing mark of not a few of Melville's characters. Babbalanja, the philosopher in Mardi, states his purpose and objective:

> I am intent upon the essence of things; the mystery that lieth beyond; the elements of the tear which much laughter provoketh; that which is beneath the seeming; the precious pearl within the shaggy oyster. I probe the circle's center; I seek to evolve the inscrutable [1].

Here Babbalanja takes a comprehensive view of the problem. He would explain the mystery of all things, a mystery which naturally includes the problem of evil. In short, Babbalanja wishes to find an Absolute. Later on in Mardi, Babbalanja actually predicates evil of Oro (God) and thus points toward God as the ultimate source of knowledge and the Reality that

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1 Mardi, p.568.

must be reached if the "inscrutable" is to be known:

> Hence, Oro is <u>in</u> all things, and himself <u>is</u> all things--the time-old creed. But since evil abounds, and Oro is all things, then he can not be perfectly good; wherefore, Oro's omnipresence and moral perfection seem incompatible [2].

In <u>Pierre</u> the protagonist is quite as explicit in laying the root of the problem in God Himself. Melville writes about Pierre's deepening realization of the problems of life;

> 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 [3].

Thus, human life is inscrutable. The conflicts that mark society and man himself partake of this inscrutableness and the entire complex puzzle is a reflection of the inscrutable God who made all things. If a man would explain the dichotomies and antinomies that society and human nature present to him, especially when he reflects and thinks over the swirl of life around and within him, he must approach the Creator Himself. Life's problems are inscrutable because for man the Source of Life is inscrutable and makes Its presence felt throughout creation. Later in <u>Pierre</u> the same thought strikes the baffled hero as his tragedy comes to a climax that leaves

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2 <u>Ibid</u>., p.611.

3 <u>Pierre</u>, p.166.

him even more baffled and confused: "How, that vague, fearful feeling stole into him, that, rail as all atheists will, there is a mysterious, inscrutable divineness in the world--a God...." [4] Hence, any attempt to understand the inscrutableness of the world about us and of human nature resolves itself into the attempt to understand God Himself and to share in the Divine Wisdom that is His.

In Moby Dick Melville wrote the complete story of a man, Captain Ahab, who took it upon himself to invade the province of God's Wisdom and try to unravel this universal "inscrutableness". In a very real sense it is the story of a man in conflict with God. It is extremely significant that originally Moby Dick was planned and actually half-written as merely another tale of the sea in the tradition of Redburn and White Jacket. It has been established that in May, 1850, Melville wrote to Evert Duyckinck that he was halfway through his "whaling voyage". In August, 1850, Duyckinck wrote to his brother that Melville was "mostly done". And still, Moby Dick was not finished until July, 1851 [5]. Newton Arvin, William Sedgwick, Howard P. Vincent, and Charles Olson, all competent Melville scholars, feel that

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4 Ibid., p.373.

5 Cf. Newton Arvin, op.cit., p.138.

Melville rewrote the greater part of the manuscript after the impact of two great forces in his life in the late spring and summer of 1850. The first was that of Hawthorne; the second, of Shakespeare. The latter had been in his life since February, 1849, This fact was discussed earlier in this study [6]. Charles Olson has examined the set of Shakespeare owned by Melville and has discovered the information which he mentions in the followings lines:

> The significant thing is the rough notes for the composition of Moby-Dick on the fly-leaf of the last volume. These notes involve Ahab, Pip, Bulkington, Ishmael, and are the key to Melville's intention with these characters. They thus relate not to what we know of Moby-Dick that Melville had been working on up to July but to Moby-Dick as he came to conceive it at this time [7].

Shakespeare and Hawthorne were in Melville's mind together at this period, i.e., late spring and early summer of 1850, because at this very time Melville wrote his appreciation of the Mosses. For him, both Shakespeare and Hawthorne were giants because both tried to plumb the depths to seek out Truth. In the Mosses piece Melville writes:

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6 Cf. Chapter II, pp.40-44.

7 Charles Olson, op.cit., pp.39-40.

> In Shakespeare's tomb lies infinitely more than Shakespeare ever wrote. And if I magnify Shakespeare, it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing.
>
> For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a sacred white doe in the woodlands, and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,--even though it be covertly and by snatches [8].

In the fly-leaf of the volume of Shakespeare containing the tragedies, Lear, Othello, and Hamlet, Melville wrote a significant passage:

> ...madness is undefinable -- It & right reason extremes of one, not the (black art) Goetic but Theurgic magic--seeks converse with the Intelligence, Power, the Angel [9].

Charles Olson goes on to interpret the words of "Goetic" and "Theurgic" in this manner: The Greek "goetos" means trickster, juggler, magician. "Theurgic" refers to the occult art of the Neo-Platonists in which through self-purification and sacred rites, the aid of the divine is invoked. Hence, the harmony of the whole picture: Moby Dick is the story of a man who tries to share in the mysterious Truth (Intelligence) of God and uses an occult art to try to achieve his end.

Hawthorne's contribution to Melville's life and thought was extraordinary. Along with Shakespeare, Hawthorne impressed Melville with the attempt to essay the Truth of things.

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8 Ibid., p.42.

9 Ibid., p.55.

Hawthorne emphasized the darkness of reality. "Now it is that blackness in Hawthorne...that so fixes and fascinates me... Already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germonous seeds into my soul". Thus Melville in his essay about Mosses from an Old Manse spoke. The influence of Hawthorne on Melville during the writing, or re-writing, of Moby Dick is, for all practical purposes, finally guaranteed by the very dedication of the book to Hawthorne "In Token of my Admiration for his Genius".

Granted a depth and profundity in the book, the intepretation of its symbolism is quite another matter, although the references that Melville makes to "Truth" and "Blackness" that he found in Shakespeare and Hawthorne point quite steadily to a fairly clear purpose and intention. On the other hand, Melville scholars have wrangled and argued over the meaning of the symbolism. For Melville himself admitted an "allegoricalness" in his reply to Sophia Hawthorne who had written an appreciative letter in which she suggested a possible significance in the tale. Melville responded in part:

> I had some vague idea while writing it, that the whole book was susceptible of an allegorical construction, & also that parts of it were -- but the specialty of many of the particular subordinate allegories were first revealed to me after reading Mr. Hawthorne's letter, which, without citing any particular examples, yet intimated the part-&-parcel allegoricalness of the whole [10].

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10 Quoted in Howard Vincent, op.cit., p.206.

The interpretations of this "allegoricalness" have been as varied as there are scholars of Melville's works. John Freeman offers his interpretation:

> ...Ahab and the whale, the prototypes of an eternal bloody strife between opposites. If you ask for a definition of these opposites, the answer is not very easy; they are, in one view, spirit against the flesh, eternity against time; in another view, pride against pride, madness against madness, unreason against unreason [11].

Lewis Mumford waxes more poetical and advances this interpretation:

> The White Whale stands for the brute energy of existence, blind, fatal, overpowering, while Ahab is the spirit of mankind, small and feeble, but purposive, that pits its puniness against the might, and its purpose against the blank senselessness of power [12].

Raymond Weaver is not explicit in defining the meaning of the symbolism but rests content with the general observation that the tale is an allegory of pessimism and that the entire book is built on the philosophy that "All is vanity, All" [13].

Later scholars and critics of Melville have assumed a much more definite position and have not been embarrassed to state in unequivocal terms what they think the great novel means. Richard Chase holds to a mechanistic interpretation that makes Moby Dick a "towering, mindless head" that is the

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11 John Freeman, op.cit., pp.115-116.

12 Lewis Mumford, op.cit., p.184.

13 Raymond Weaver, op.cit., pp.331-333.

reminder of a machine, a machine out of human control. Chase tips his hand and reveals his mechanistic bias in using the White Whale as a symbol of the "mechanism of the universe, innocent of all human intelligence and feeling" [14]. In the same study of Melville, Chase blandly offers two more interpretations without any attempt at reconciliation. Chase remarks with confidence:

> Yet the question of what Moby-Dick represents can be answered very simply. He represents purity, the purity of an inviolable spiritual rectitude which, since it cannot be discovered among the imperfections of life, must be sought in death [15].

Chase's third attempt becomes even more universal and all-embracing in scope. He finally concludes that for Ahab the White Whale is the mask of all "human, natural, and divine reality" [16].

M. O. Percival is more conservative in restricting his interpretation to two levels. The first is that Moby Dick is the symbol of evil "that frets and baffles men in their pursuit of good". In the same passage Percival declares that the theme of Fate is not to be ignored [17]. Percival is most discerning in seeing some analogy with the Book of Job but does not carry his investigation to the ultimate conclusions.

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14 Richard Chase, op.cit., p.53.

15 Ibid., p.62.

16 Ibid., p.99.

17 M.O.Percival, op.cit., p.2.

William Sedgwick's extremely valuable study of Melville contributes a sane and balanced view of the symbolism that is involved in Moby Dick. Sedgwick is, perhaps, too quick to read a psychological interpretation into the allegory, but he is on safe and reasonable ground in stating that "Moby Dick stands for the mystery of creation". In the same passage Sedgwick goes on to say that this mystery lies, at the same time, "ambushed in the process of his own consciousness" [18]. Sedgwick carries through on a note of subjectivism, insisting that any evil in Moby Dick must be considered as a reflection of the evil that is in the soul of the man who is in pursuit of the great white beast.

None of the commentators on Melville make a completely satisfying synthesis of all the elements of the story. Each theory leaves much to be desired, and much to be explained. John Freeman's "spirit against the flesh, eternity against time, etc.", is extremely inadequate. Neither Ahab nor the White Whale fill either category. Lewis Mumford's interpretation of the Whale's "brute energy" leaves no room for the intelligence and cunning that marked the actions of Moby Dick and proved the undoing of the scheming, purposefull Ahab.

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18 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.98.

Raymond Weaver escapes censure because he dismissed the whole problem with a literary and scholarly shrug of the shoulders and wrote the book off merely as an allegory of pessimism.

Chase's definite bias to a law-less, mechanistic universe disqualifies him from appreciating the possibility of spiritual depth and meaning in the book. Further, his offering of three interpretations without any effort to reconcile one with the other persuades the reader to dismiss his approach as inadequate.

Percival and Sedgwick can not be dismissed as inadequate. Their approach is mature and full of understanding. The only objections are those that have already been voiced: Percival does not pursue the analogy of the Book of Job far enough and Sedgwick allows himself to become somewhat mired in attempts at a psychological interpretation on the basis of subjectivism and projection of Ahab's personality into the Whale itself.

Geoffrey Stone can be numbered among the reliable and more sober interpreters of Melville's work. He is extremely cautious in defining any specific or definitive meaning to the story outside of a general statement that the book has a close connection with the Old Testament and Ahab is striking at the God of the Old Dispensation. Stone feels that Melville did not have a clear concept of what was symbolized in the book.

It was merely the telling of a good story and the religious overtones were the result of his Calvinism:

> His Protestant heritage, the persistent dualism in whose extremes of light and darkness Calvinism saw all things, gave him his conception of the human lot and within the strait limits thus set on his thoughts and feelings he dived deep, to soundings where he saw no light but whose enveloping horror he was determined to report [19].

Howard Vincent's provocative and scholarly assemblage of materials and sources add up to one of the most comprehensive studies of Moby Dick. But like Stone, Vincent is wary to assign a specific meaning to the story and contents himself with the comment that Ahab is a Faustian character who starts off in search of Truth but ironically becomes evil-intentioned and suffers a tragic delusion in pursuing the "Demon of the Absolute" [20]. Thus, Stone and Vincent, two of the most reliable and serious students of Melville, fail to offer a clear interpretation of the work. Their works have been published quite recently and indicate that the pendulum has swung back again to the attitude of the more generalized and less specific and definitive interpretation that marked such early Melville scholars as Freeman and Weaver.

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19 Geoffrey Stone, op.cit., p.185.

20 Howard Vincent, op.cit., p.252.

On the other hand, there is little good reason to be overly cautious. Since Moby Dick is an allegory, as Melville admitted to Mrs. Hawthorne, there must be some key to it. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how the Book of Job is the most likely key to the novel. Moby Dick is Melville's dramatic presentation of the very same theme that is found in the book of Job, the story of an attempt to fathom the ways of Divinity, the Source of all things.

There are really three steps in establishing the link between the Book of Job in the Old Testament and Melville's Moby Dick. The first step consists in showing how Melville was always conscious of the Bible and owed much in characterization and phrasing to the Holy Scriptures. The second step is to show how the Book of Job and Moby Dick are intimately connected in innumerable details, so that it is reasonable to claim that Melville was particularly conscious of the Book of Job while constructing this novel. The third step consists in drawing a parallel in theme between the two works. It is our thesis that on all three levels there is enough evidence to establish the Book of Job as the key to the "allegoricalness" of Moby Dick.

Nathalia Wright has made a significant contribution to Melville literature in her splendid study, Melville's Use of the Bible. Miss Wright's scholarly examination of

Melville's work reveals extremely interesting details about his debt to the Holy Scriptures. Miss Wright shows that by actual count Melville came to rely more and more on the Bible for allusions, phrases, names, and innumerable other items of the writer's craft.

> Their number [Biblical allusions] mounted as Melville's career developed. By actual count they increase from a dozen in Typee to 100 in Mardi to 250 in Moby Dick and then decrease, to rise again in Clarel to 600 and in Billy Budd to 100. A numerical estimate of them in proportion to the length of each volume is even more revealing, for thus arranged, his books stand in this order: Clarel, Moby Dick, Billy Budd....[21]

Miss Wright's discovery is most significant for our study. Moby Dick has, by actual count, more Biblical allusions than any other prose work of Melville's. Also it ranks first in prose even on the basis of proportion to number of words and length. It is surpassed only by Clarel, Melville's long, tortuous verse-piece of 1876. Hence, it must be conceded that not only was Melville always extremely conscious of Holy Scripture, but Moby Dick exhibits a special awareness of the Bible.

The fact that the Bible had an influence on Melville's mind as he conceived and gave birth to Moby Dick is made even more obvious by the consideration of such Biblical names as Ishmael, Ahab, and others. They are from the Old Testament.

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21 Nathalia Wright, op.cit., p.9.

Miss Wright's observation again serves to fortify our position:

> In fact, King Ahab's story and that of his predecessor, King Jeroboam, account for an entire group of persons in Moby-Dick: Ahab, Fedellah, Starbuck, Elijah, Gabriel, Macey, and the Jeroboam and the Rachel [22].

Even more significant for our study is the fact that the only other character of Biblical origins in Moby Dick is Bildad, part-owner of the Pequod, who is a friend of Job!

Did Melville have particular reference to the book of Job as he wrote Moby Dick? This question is the second step in our thesis that the two works are intimately connected. First of all, Melville was very familiar with the Book of Job. In his own personal Bible, forty-five markings in the Book of Job have been counted. After revealing this point, Nathalia Wright remarks that "...there is a general correspondence between the books of the Bible which Melville scored and commented upon and those which he quoted and alluded to" [23]. And in the same passage Miss Wright notes that among the most often repeated allusions which are checked in Melville's Bible are the wisdom sentiments in Job. Jehovah's discourse to Job regarding the Leviathan, which Ishmael quotes, is marked. Job's affirmation of faith is marked in Melville's

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22 Ibid., p.61.

23 Ibid., p.10.

Bible; so also is the word "merchant" in Job 41:6: "...shall they part him [leviathan] among the merchants?" Wright makes a further observation:

> Throughout the Old Testament books of his Bible he noted the paradoxical observations, especially in Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes, on the one hand that the ungodly are like the chaff and on the other that the race is not to the swift [24].

Again, Melville marked in his copy of the Book of Job the passage of chapter 28, that says, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wosdom; And to depart from evil is understanding". Melville noted also the passages that express a distrust of men, passages that refer to their deceit, flattery, and the poor comfort of friends.

Melville made another marking in his copy of the Book of Job that ties in extremely well with our thesis. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" inquired Zophar of Job. Melville bracketed both his question and his answer: "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

Melville's markings in his copy of the Book of Job are most revealing. His actual quotations of the Book of Job and other allusions in Moby Dick emphasize a relationship that is much more than mere coincidence. Thus Melville

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24 Ibid., p.97.

himself gives us innumerable hints in Moby Dick that the story of Job was in his mind as he wrote the novel. The first reference to Job is a quotation in the Epilogue:

> Leviathan maketh a path to shine after him;
> One would think the deep to be hoary.

This verse is taken from chapter 41, verse 32 of the Holy Book. It is part of the speech of God Himself telling Job of the mighty wonders of His Creation and asking him how he could attempt an explanation of the ways of God with men if he cannot even comprehend the Almighty Power of God in creating the Leviathan.

Melville spends several pages in Moby Dick advancing the "cause" of the whale as fit material for a work of literature. He makes this allusion: "Who wrote the first account of our Leviathan? Who but mighty Job!" [25] Later, Ishmael speaks of having one's hands among the unspeakable foundations of the world, its very pelvis. It is a fearful thing, he remarks and then adds, "The awful tauntings in Job might well appal me" [26]. Ishmael then quotes the book of Job:

> Will he [the leviathan] make a covenant with thee?
> Behold the hope of him is vain!

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25 Moby Dick, p.825.

26 Ibid., p.839.

In this passage Melville had emphasized the vastness of the Leviathan. In Job, God had used the whale as an example of His own inscrutableness to man. If the whale is beyond man, how much more He who made the whale!

In chapter forty-one of Moby Dick, Melville gives a detailed account of what the White Whale came to mean to Ahab. Ahab pinned all his "intellectual and spiritual exasperations" on the White Whale and then went out after him. In Melville's own words there is an immediate allusion to Job: "Here, then, was this grey-headed, ungodly old man, chasing with curses a Job's whale round the world...." [27] Thus, both stories--Job and Moby Dick--use the Leviathan as a symbol and, as we shall see, both teach the same moral: that man is not to probe the divine inscrutableness. This analogy will be confirmed by other passages in Moby Dick that will show Ahab's search was really to unravel the inscrutableness of the universe.

Another tie of relationship between the two books is in the use of the character Bildad in Moby Dick. Bildad is part-owner of the Pequod, the boat on which Ahab sails on his mad chase for the White Whale. It is significant to note that Bildad is well versed in Scripture lore [28].

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27 Ibid., p.872.

28 Ibid., pp.803 and 812.

In the Book of Job Bildad is the name of the man who comest to sympathize with Job in his afflictions and makes an effort to interpret Job's misfortunes in terms of a punishment for sin, the working out of divine retribution. Thus, another bond of relationship is established between Job and Moby Dick in the person of a character who is in each story.

There is one more actual reference in Moby Dick to the Book of Job. It occurs in the very last chapter. After recounting the tragic death of Ahab, Ishmael, the narrator of Moby Dick, quotes directly from the story of Job: "And only I have escaped alone to tell thee." [29]. This quotation is from Job, 1:15, 16, 17, 19. The words are uttered by each of the four messengers who come to tell Job that his oxen, camels, flocks, and children have been destroyed by his enemies. The Book opens with a dialogue between God and Satan wherein the latter persuades God to allow him to test Job with ill fortune to see what will be the reaction of this "perfect and upright man who fears God and shuns wickedness". The servants then bring Job the news of what has taken place, the awful results of Satan's bargaining with God, for God had permitted Satan to destroy and lay waste the riches of Job, even his children!

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29 Ibid., p.1102.

There is no analogy between Ishmael as a character and the messengers of Job. In fact, Ishmael has no real relation even to his namesake in the Old Testament, the son of Abraham by a slave girl. However, Ishmael's words are fraught with significance in view of what he has just been through. He has seen a man, Captain Ahab, attempt to pierce the "pasteboard masks", to unravel the inscrutable. The link with Job is apparent when we realize that such is the real meaning of the Book of Job and that the moral is to leave alone the "divine inscrutableness". Otherwise, ruin will engulf the rash man who essays to share in Divine Wisdom.

The accumulation of all these facts: Melville's markings of the Book of Job in his personal Bible and the actual use of quotations and allusion from Job in Moby Dick: justify us in using the Old Testament story and its moral as a key to unlock the meaning of the "allegoricalness" of Moby Dick.

The Book of Job contains the following story and moral: After the messenger announces the terrible ruin and desolation of Job's possessions and offspring, Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, ignorant of the divine plan, proceed to attempt an explanation of the evil that has befallen the "upright man". They feel there is a moral cause

It is the thesis of Job's friends that Job must have sinned grievously. His present sorrows are God's punishments for his crime. The friends urge Job to repent and throw himself on the mercy of God. Job counters with a flat denial of any guilt and insists that a man's moral character does not determine his material prosperity. Job claims that he suffers unjustly. He wants to talk his case over with God Himself:

> But I would speak to the Almighty
> And I desire to argue with God [30].

Chapters thirty-eight to forty-two, verse six, record God's reply to Job and his three friends. The Almighty takes all four to task for daring an explanation of the Divinity. God addresses Job particularly and censures him for having spoken as though man could ever know and understand the ways of God. To impress on Job the inscrutableness of the Divine Mind, God traces the wonders of the universe and insists that man is never able to fathom the Divine Wisdom. God demands a sacrifice from Job's three friends for having lied "in God's favor", i.e., claiming that Job must have offended God to deserve such a disaster. God upbraids Job for his irreverence in challenging the Greatness and Wisdom that belongs to God alone. Job retracts:

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30 Job, 13:3.

> Therefore I have declared without understanding,
> Things too wonderful for me, without knowledge.
> Therefore I retract and repent,
> In dust and ashes [31].

Most significant for our study is the fact that it was the attempt of Job and his three friends to fathom the problem of good and evil in the universe that led God to upbraid them for their audacity. With their own minds they had tried to solve the problem of evil and of suffering; Job had wanted to "speak to Almighty" and "argue with God" about the whole matter! God expressly reminds them that His Wisdom is utterly beyond them:

> Who is this that obscures counsel
> By words without knowledge? [32].

It is only when Job repents of his foolishness, viz., to fathom the Divine Mind, that God restores the goods that had been taken away at the Divine Pleasure.

Chapter thirty-eight strikes the key-note of the entire Book of Job. It is a poem of praise for the infinite Wisdom of God and of rebuke for the man who would attempt the share in that Wisdom.

> It [Wisdom] is hidden from the eyes of all the living.
> God understands its way
> And He knows its location.
> Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom...[33]

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31 Job, 42:3.

32 Job, 38:2.

33 Job, 38:21,23,28.

It is important for our study to remember that these words are uttered by the author of the Book of Job and are not put into the mouth of Job or of his three friends, all of whom have acted in a manner quite contrary to that suggested in chapter thirty-eight. The author has little but contempt for the rash efforts of Job and his three friends to solve the mystery of suffering. Although many editions of the Bible print the text as though Job himself were being quoted, most Scripture scholars support the theory that his passage is not part of the speech of Job but is the reflection and comment of the writer himself [34].

In the Book of Job, God speaks to Job of the wonders of creation. He makes special reference to the vastness of the Leviathan and its boundless power and agility in chapter forty-one. This is the very number of the chapter in Moby Dick where Melville describes the immensity and "unwonted power" of the White Whale. In Job, the author describes the tremendous strength of the Leviathan and the fear that he arouses in those who come near him.

> When one approaches him with the sword
> it does not hold;
> Nor does the spear, the javelin, or the dart [35].

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34 Edward Kissane, The Book of Job, New York, Longman. Green, 1939, p.172.

35 Job, 41:26.

This allusion to a monster of the deep that cannot be caught, a symbol of the unfathomable Wisdom of God, together with all the explicit details that have thus far been discussed, tying together the Book of Job and Moby Dick, lead us into the third step of our problem: drawing a parallel in theme between the two works.

Captain Ahab identifies himself as a man who is seeking to unravel the inscrutable. Job and his friends have attempted the same thing. When Starbuck remonstrates that his vengeance on the White Whale will bring few barrels in the Nantucket market, Ahab insists that there is more to the search than the money involved.

> All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event...there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasonable mask...To me, the white whale is that wall... I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate [36].

Thus Ahab declares explicitly that his chase is one to pierce through to the very heart of the inscrutable. It is not so much the whale that he is after; it is the reality, the inscrutable reality of which the whale is but a pasteboard mask. Ahab's aim is the Absolute. Ahab refers particularly to "inscrutable malice" because for him, as it was for Melville.

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36 Moby Dick, p.857.

the great problem of life is that of evil. When that is solved, the other perplexities will also be solved. The pieces of the puzzle will then fall into place. Thus, the influence of Hawthorne in the writing of Moby Dick becomes clear. In rewriting what he had almost finished, Melville, in the summer and fall of 1850, very likely adjusted the plot and character and dialogue of his whale story to incorporate the problem of evil and the over-all mystery of creation that was so often the topic of conversation between himself and Hawthorne.

Throughout Moby Dick, the terms "evil" and "malice" constantly recur. The whale is the symbol of the inscrutable. The most inscrutable problem of life is that of evil. Therefore evil will be predicated of the whale in a number of instances. In the Book of Job and in Moby Dick there is ample justification for an emphasis of this particular problem among all the others that may plague man. Both Job and Captain Ahab are set off on their search after experiencing a physical evil. Job began to probe the mind of God after he had suffered the loss of his children and his possessions and after he had been personally afflicted with sores and suffering. Ahab began the search for the White Whale after his leg had been bitten off in an earlier encounter. Hence in their attempts

to analyze the larger problem of the mystery of creation itself, both Job and Ahab are particularly interested with the problem that concerns them most personally, that is, evil, which aroused them to begin the search. Actually the larger purpose is the unravelling of the divine inscrutableness.

The White Whale is not all evile. The very whiteness of the whale has qualities which we ordinarily attach to God Himself. Melville devotes the lengthy chapter forty-two to an accumulation of details that link the color of white and the supernatural. Melville mentions explicitly the "supernaturalism of the hue"; that in the most august religions it has been made the symbol of the divine spotlessness and power; that in the White Stead of the Prairies it is his "spiritual whiteness chiefly, which so clothed him with divineness"; that "by its very indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe". Finally, in summing up and making, as it were, a last emphasis, Melville remarks:

> ...why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay the very veil of the Christian's Deity, and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind [37].

In his article on Hawthorne's Mosses piece, Melville had said:

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37 Moby Dick, p.877.

> For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to flee like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth -- even though it be covertly and by snatches [38].

There is great significance in Melville's use of the color white to describe the doe. Also, there is great significance in the fact that this white doe symbolizes Truth. Thus in Moby Dick the White Whale symbolizes that complex entity of Truth which Melville--and Ahab--had a passion to comprehend. Thus Truth, symbolized by the White Whale, embraces the whole mystery of good and evil, the whole bottomless pit of knowledge and wisdom. In attempting to fathom this wisdom, Ahab, like Job of old, was defying the God who is responsible for it.

That Ahab's monomania is an intellectual one is emphasized in other passages in Moby Dick. The loss of his leg was but an external manifestation of a deeper wound in Ahab's soul. Melville writes that Ahab's torn body and gashed soul bled into each other. Eventually, Ahab "at last came to identify with him [the whale], not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations" [39]. That Ahab s prime objective was the understanding

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38 Quoted in Charles Olson, op.cit., p.42.

39 Moby Dick, p.871.

of the mysteries of which natural things were but pasteboard masks is again made evident when Melville describes Ahab's reaction to the blinding storm and to the flaming lightning. Ahab cries out:

> In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here... There is some unsuffusing thing beyond thee, thou clear spirit, to whom all thy eternity is but time, all thy creativeness mechanical... Through thee, thy flaming self, my scorched eyes do dimly see it. Oh, thou foundling fire, thou hermit immemorial, thou too hast thy incommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief [40].

M. O. Percival agrees that these lines are part of an entire passage that emphasizes the metaphysical and intellectual motif of Ahab's search,

> It is in this grand and tragic speech, which must be read entirely to be appreciated, that the intellectual aspect of Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick reaches its climax. In part, it is a pursuit of the eternal mystery--as mystery as elusive as Moby Dick... and it is this that makes of Ahab a tragic figure and gives a metaphysical quality to his story [41].

Thus Ahab is moved most of all by the "incommunicable riddle". It is the "inscrutable" that annoys and spurs him on. The lightning itself is terrifying, but Ahab sees its mystery as more challenging than merely provocative of fear. Indeed, Ahab resembles Job and his friends who see in natural events an occasion to attempt a probing of the Absolute.

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40 Ibid., p.1062.

41 M. O. Percival, op.cit., p.95.

To seek a share in ultimate Wisdom and Knowledge--that is their common objective.

In this same scene where Ahab defies and challenges the lightning and the storm, the sailors stand in terror at the St. Elmo's fire that played over all the yard-arms. There is a definite hint that a voice or a cry has been heard that none can recognize. The Parsee proceeds to adore the fire, but in a spirit of defiance, the paradoxical form of submission according to his Persian mythology. The comparison to Job is striking. It is in a whirlwind and midst, a great upheaval of nature, that God speaks to Job and his friends. There is a great difference between Job and Ahab: the former submits to God in humility; the latter, submits to the pagan forces of the Parsee and drives his crew on in pursuit of the whale, even though Starbuck cries out, "God, God is against thee, old man..." [42].

Here is the basic and essential conflict in Moby Dick: Ahab versus God! This conflict is emphasized in the passages in Moby Dick that reveal the main-spring of Ahab's actions--consummate pride. Early in the voyage Starbuck remonstrates with Ahab that his seeking vengeance on a dumb brute seems blasphemous. Ahab explains, but in rising wrath, that all

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42 Moby Dick, p.1062.

things are "pasteboard masks" and that he is intent on piercing the mask that is Moby Dick. If Starbuck is disturbed, then Ahab will only emphasize his intent and purpose:

> Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me... Who's over me? Truth hath no confines. Take off thine eye! more tolerable than fiends' glarings is a doltish stare! [43]

Ahab's reference to "Truth" is another indication that his real purpose has intellectual significance. Thus, the search for the White Whale is in itself a symbol of the intellectual pursuit that is the basic theme of this novel.

Out on the sea on the day after a heavy storm of thunder and lightning, it becomes obvious that the compasses have been thrown off and that the needles point awry. Ahab first takes a reading of the heavens and by his own devices, i.e., "with the sharp of his extended hand" took a reading of the sun and issued orders for the ship to be brought about and the very opposite course followed. Then he resolves to supplant the useless needles with one of his making. With the whole crew as witnesses, Ahab finishes his task and then cries out, "Look ye, for yourselves, if Ahab be not lord of the level loadstone! The sun is East and that compass swears it!" [44] Melville then describes how each member of the crew

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43 Ibid., p.857.

44 Ibid., p.1068.

comes to look for himself and then slinks away in embarrassment. Melville remarks: "In his fiery eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal pride".

Ahab's pride is his sin and, as Melville hints, it is the fatal weakness within him. Like Shakespeare's heroes, great tragedy demands great heroes, men of superior quality and talent, but with it all a fatal defect that eventually spells their ruin. So now with Ahab! Ahab's pride recalls the pride of our First Parents. Significantly, the forbidden fruit was from the tree which was "desirable for its gift of wisdom". The promise of Satan was that upon eating its fruit Adam and Eve would "know good from evil". Thus Ahab's pride and his rebellion against the Absolute has a counterpart in the very first pages of Genesis, as well as in the story of Job and his friends.

Ahab's pride is the very sin that Father Mapple had condemned in his sermon in the little church in New Bedford. Father Mapple stressed the essential need for obedience.

> But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do--remember that--and hence, He oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade. And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists [45].

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45 Ibid., p.784.

Ahab was obeying his burning desire to pierce the pasteboard mask and to reach the Absolute. His reply to Starbuck, "I'd strike the sun if it insulted me...Who's over me?", is a strong enough indication that he would attempt to carry out his own will even though it would be contrary to God's. Ahab would much rather obey himself than God. Indeed his sin is one of consummate pride and, as we shall see, he not only does not repent, but goes further and aligns himself with the devil, the arch-enemy of God. It is pride that inspires Job and his friends to attempt an explanation of God's ways with men. Job and his friends profess to be competent to judge the events that brought misery to Job. At first they do not see that God's plans may be something beyond their ken--until God Himself speaks and chastizes them for their presumption. Job and his friends repent. Ahab does not. His pride is all-consuming.

Ahab's pride and self-dependence takes such complete possession of him that he comes to cast aside all ordinary and normal prudence, throwing himself and his crew upon his own natural resources, or on the powers to whom he sells his soul. On one occasion he stamps on the quadrant and curses, "Thou paltry thing that feebly points on high; thus I split and destroy thee" [46]. He thus scorns normal, human prudence.

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46 Ibid., p.1058.

It was the very next day that he was forced to take a reading of the sun to ascertain the position of the ship. His pride swells when both his sense of direction and his fashioning of a new needle for the compass prove absolutely correct [47].

On another occasion, Ahab refuses to allow Starbuck to take in the anchors during a storm and when the over-strained log-line is parted in the storm he calls out: "I crush the quadrant, the thunder turns the needles, and now the mad sea parts the log-line. But Ahab can mend all" [48]. Ahab's pride has enough occasion to abate and deflate, but he persists in his "heaven-insulting" mission. The first occasion is in meeting the good ship Goney (Albatross). Ahab hails it and asks whether it had seen the White Whale. When the captain attempts to answer him, the megaphone falls from his hands and the ships are carried apart by the winds, never to meet again. In itself the act is a premonition of evil, a symbol of bad luck at the wery least. Ahab emphasizes the fact that his objective is fraught with danger and trouble when he calls out:

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47 Ibid., p.1068.

48 Ibid., p.1070.

> Ahoy there! This is the Pequod, bound round the world! Tell them to address all future letters to the Pacific ocean! and this time three years, if I am not at home, tell them to address them to--[49].

The rest is left for the imagination.

On another occasion the Pequod meets the Jeroboam and the two check their course and the captains and crew members have a chat. The men from the Jeroboam tell Ahab how they had sighted the White Whale and sent a boat out to spear it. However, in the act of throwing the harpoon, the mate, Macey, was smitten and thrown bodily into the air and lost forever in the sea. Ironically enough, the Pequod carries a letter for this dead mate. The mad Gabriel, a sailor of the Jeroboam, sends the letter back to the Pequod impaled on a knife. In spite of the ill omen contained in the tragedy of Macey and his letter, Ahab persists in his objective and the Pequod sails on [50].

Two ships, Virginia and Rose-bud, are ignored by Ahab when he learns that they are not at all interested in the White Whale. The Samuel Enderby, however, is much more interesting to Ahab. The English captain has already lost an arm to Moby Dick and has decided not to offer another to the fiendish whale's jaws. Rather than become more sober and

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49 Ibid., p.902.

50 Ibid., pp.948-951.

thoughtful, Ahab suddenly exhibits a wild passion to proceed on the journey and with a yell he orders his crew to be off [51].

Of special significance is the meeting with the Rachel. It seems to be the last effort of Providence to stay Ahab and turn him from his mad course. The captain's own son is lost aboard a boat and the ship is searching the expanses of the Pacific to find him. The captain wants Ahab to help him; he offers to charter the ship and pay any price. When Ahab learns that the captain had sighted the White Whale just the day before, he curtly refuses the sorrowing captain and casts off again on the search. Ironically, it is the Rachel that picks up Ishmael after the White Whale has worked his revenge on the Pequod and Ahab [52].

Thus Ahab's pride consumes every shred of prudence and quenches even the ordinary human sympathy for the tragedy of another man. He is consumed with a desire to capture the Whale, to pierce the pasteboard mask, and in the attempt to make something of a god out of himself. He experiences a passion of self-reliance and self-dependence that knows no limits: "Ahab can mend all". He sets himself up as a law unto himself: "Who's over me?" Seeing Ahab in defiance of God,

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51 Ibid., pp.1024-1025.

52 Ibid., pp.1074-1077.

Starbuck bemoans his fate as a member of such an unholy voyage and labels the whole project as "heaven-insulting" 53. Later Starbuck emphasizes his position when he pleads, "God, God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued!" 54

The Book of Job tells us that to essay an unravelling of the divine inscrutableness is, in Melville's terms, "heaven-insulting". God chides Job and his friends for their attempt to fathom the mysteries of life. Thus God is against the man who attempts to share in the wisdom that is God's alone. Explicitly the Book of Job teaches that an attempt to unravel the inscrutable is wrong. Moby Dick teaches the same lesson. Ahab attempts to plumb the depths and meets disaster. In his blasphemy Ahab relies not only upon himself but throws his lot in with Satan himself. Ahab gives sufficient clues as to his allegiance. In a dramatic scene Ahab has the ship's blacksmith forge a special harpoon and persuading the pagans, Tashtego, Queequeg, and Dagoo, to give him some of their blood, he pours it over the white-hot iron and howls deliriously: "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli" 55.

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53 Ibid., p.860.

54 Ibid., p.1062.

55 Ibid., p.1052.

Assuredly Ahab has sealed a contract with the devil in a conspiracy against God, the source of all Wisdom. The very weapon with which he hopes to pierce the pasteboard mask is consecrated to the arch-friend, the implacable enemy of God Himself. Ahab defiantly aligns himself with Satan against God, the source of the inscrutable. In confirmation of this point there is the highly significant scene when Ahab hurls the harpoon at the White Whale: "...from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee..." [56]

Melville thus portrays Ahab violating the canons of God, actuated by the sin of searing pride, and voluntarily aligned with Satan himself. Indeed Ahab acts as an enemy of God when he attempts to fathom the inscrutable. Job and his friends also act contrary to God, but they quickly repent when God makes known to them the utter futility of their attempts. On the other hand, Ahab only uses the natural omens that attempt to turn him back from his mad search (the storm, lightning, breaking of the compass, meeting with the ships), merely as occasions to exhibit consummate pride and call out, "Who's over me?"

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56 Ibid., p.1101.

The story of the man who wants to solve God's inscrutableness comes rapidly to a close. Ahab exults in being the first to sight the White Whale: "I only,none of ye could have raised the Whale first" [57]. Thus he exhibits pride to the end. The whale boat is launched and Ahab hurls the iron at the whale. The line runs foul. Ahab stoops to clear it. He partially succeeds but the "flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat..." [58] Ahab disappears in the depths of the sea he had tried to plumb. As if to impress the reader that it is the devil's own cause that is being defeated in Ahab's destruction, Melville tells how the red flag (Ahab's insignia and also the conventional sign of the devil), is nailed to sinking spar by Tashtego. It entangles a sky-hawk in its folds. Melville writes:

> ...his imperial beak thrust upwards and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till he had dragged a living part of heaven along with her [59].

Ahab's chase to unravel the inscrutable, to pierce the pasteboard mask, is at an end. From the depths of the sea, one can hear Ahab answering his own, "Who's over me?" Indeed it is the God whose inscrutable mysteries Ahab

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57 Ibid., p.1085.

58 Ibid., p.1101.

59 Ibid., p.1102.

desired to solve. Unlike Job and his friends who were in pursuit of the same objective, Ahab does not repent and give up the "heaven-insulting" voyage. Unlike Job, who eventually recovers what had been taken away from him, Ahab not only fails to recover what he had lost (his own leg), but goes on to complete destruction.

A brief summary will help to see the striking similarity of theme between the Book of Job and Moby Dick. Both authors have the same lesson to teach: man is powerless to know the Almighty. His ways are not ours. God directs the events of our day-to-day life and even draws good out of evil. Our attitude should be one of humble submission. Job and his friends try to explain God's mind in their own terms; Ahab tries to pierce the pasteboard masks of "outward events" that he might reach the Reality behind them and thus share in God's Wisdom. Both Job and Ahab have been moved to undertake their projects after a physical evil had deprived them of some of their goods--Job, his material possessions; Ahab, his leg. But whereas Job quickly repents and acknowledges his foolishness, Ahab is carried away by his pride and enters a convenant with Satan that he might reach his end. In spite of what seemed to be portents of ill fortune (the thunder that turns the compass's needle, the pleading of a

sister whaler to return to port, and even the two-day chase of the whale before it turns and destroys Ahab), Ahab goes to his ruin, "Obeying himself rather than God", as Father Mapple had phrased it. In the end Ahab is destroyed by the very thing that he tried to solve, the Reality behind the White Whale, God Himself who alone understands the "way of wisdom". Ahab would not be taught that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

"And I only am escaped alone to tell thee", thus Melville introduces the Epilogue where we learn that Ismael escaped the destructive power of Moby Dick. Earlier in Moby Dick there is an indication of why Ishmael qualified to escape the destruction that engulfed Ahab and the crew which he bent to his will. Never did Ishmael participate by intention or actual execution in Ahab's chase. In fact, Ishmael early expresses a kind of acceptance or compromise that Melville himself was to develop full-flower in Billy Budd. Squeezing the sperm one day, Ishmael philosophizes:

> 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 to fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country....[60]

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60 Ibid., p.1010.

It must be remembered that Ishmael went to sea to meditate upon the world and its occupants. He solved his problem in a calm, sane way. He did not give in to the madness that was Ahab's in trying to solve the inscrutable. That he left for madmen such as Ahab.

A year after Moby Dick was published, another of Melville's novels about a conflict between man and God reached the public. In 1852 Pierre, or the Ambiguities was printed. Moby Dick shows the conflict between man and God in the order of metaphysics--Ahab tries to fathom the inscrutable. Pierre is the story of a conflict on the level of morals. The theme is one of conflict about what is virtuous and what is not, what the law of God dictates, what the law of man. However, whereas Ahab was a man of clear concept of what he was doing and had his will firmly fixed on his "heaven-insulting" purpose, Pierre is a man torn by doubt and indecision. Vainly he struggles to carry out a course of action which he feels is sanctioned by the great law of Charity, but is painfully aware that society rejects him for his deeds and brands him vile and infamous. Caught between what he feels to be a good deed and what society judges it to be, he is utterly perplexed. Just before his death, Pierre observes:

> It is ambiguous still. Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven. Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds [61].

But unlike Ahab, Pierre made no real attempt to pierce the pasteboard masks. He merely observed and let himself be carried along by the promptings of his heart, a misdirected heart which led him to ruin.

In Pierre Melville introduces a pamphlet written by a certain Plotinus Plinlimmon. It is an attempt to explain and resolve such a conflict as a man like Pierre would probably find himself in. The pamphlet is entitled, "Chronometricals and Horologicals". The burden of its argument is as follows:

> And thus, though the earthly wisdom of man [horologicals] be heavenly folly to God; so also, conversely, is the heavenly wisdom of God [chronometricals] an earthly folly to man [62].

Hence, there are two orders of truth, two orders of morality: the one is of man, the second of God. The pamphlet goes on to declare that the "chronometrical" soul, i.e., the man who would live his life according to heavenly standards, will find little but woe and death in this world which functions according to the "horological" standards, i.e., those of man himself. As a solution to the dilemma, the pamphlet suggests:

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61 Pierre, p.424.

62 Ibid., p.249.

> A virtuous expediency, then, seems the highest desirous or attainable earthly excellence for the mass of men, and is the only earthly excellence that their Creator intended for them [63].

The importance of this pamphlet is that it is an attempt to offer man a working plan of life. It recognizes the transcendence of God and His laws, but maintains that because of that transcendence man is not to try to live by them. Let man be content with his lot as a human and not aspire to what is heavenly. Moby Dick carried Ishmael's version of much the same truth:

> So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic.... [64]

Thus in Pierre a conflict between man and God is predicated in the moral order. In Moby Dick, the conflict is in the metaphysical order.

Pierre does not make a serious attempt to solve the conflict as did Captain Ahab. He is passive in experiencing the results of trying to follow what he presumes to be one order (chronometricals), while he is actually a human being who must rest content with the horologicals. Plinlimmon's pamphlet is an attempt to establish a working principle on which man can pin some hope for happiness, much as

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63 Ibid., p.252.

64 Moby Dick, p.1009.

Ishmael's formula of lowering, or at least shifting, the "conceit of attainable felicity".

In Billy Budd Melville expanded on the element of compromise and acceptance of the inevitable conflicts within society, within man, and between man and God. To such a compromise Moby Dick and Pierre were actually leading. The germ of the idea was expressed by Ishmael and again in the pamphlet of Plinlimmon. The intellectual who would be sensitively aware of evil and the dichotomies it causes, and the practical man who could find some form of happiness in spite of these antinomies, were to be fused in Captain Vere. It remains for our last chapter to study Billy Budd, Melville's "testament of acceptance".

CHAPTER VI

ACCEPTANCE OF CONFLICTS

The thread of conflict between good and evil runs through all of Melville's major works. Especially in Mardi, White Jacket, Moby Dick, and Pierre, we have traced the dichotomy of good and evil that in turn produces conflicts on various levels. The first level was that of society. Here there is poverty alongside of riches, war among a people who profess a religion of brotherly love, the staggering difference between the real and the ideal. In these circumstances Melville raises up the extraordinary individual who retires into himself to think things out. The basic cause of these antinomies lies in the imperfection or evil that can be found everywhere.

> And though all evils be assuaged; all evils cannot be done away. For evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place breaks forth in another [1].

Although Mardi is a crystallization of Melville's interest in social conflicts, it is apparent in all his major works. Hence we can speak of a "sociology of evil" in Melville.

But this is not the only phase of the problem of evil.

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1 Mardi, p.668.

An examination of human nature reveals evil lurking within man himself. Melville's works assume there is some basic imperfection in man, an imperfection that leads to conflict on these levels: Do the forces within man tend more readily toward good or evil? Shall a man follow his reason or the promptings of his heart? Is a man free or fated? Although these questions were raised, they were not answered with certainty or finality. At the root of these questions was the problem of evil, and that was inexplicable. When these questions are raised in Melville's works, the reader is always left to feel that, after all, the human mind is powerless to search out the true meaning of things. Actually man is happier by resigning himself to the inevitable. The great problems of life are inexplicable.

It must be kept in mind that these questions do not occur in Melville's works in the sequence in which they are treated here. Although the same problems recur in the major works, the individual novel gives emphasis to only one or several of these problems or phases thereof. The writer has attempted a synthesis and systematization by accumulating Melville's thoughts into a framework that would make for more intelligible appreciation of Melville's approach. Hence, we proceeded through three levels: The first was society. The second, man himself. The third was an

analysis of the conflict between man and God in the area of metaphysics and in the area of morality, a conflict that is born of the evil in the universe and in man.

In Moby Dick we met a man who defied God and attempted to pierce the "pasteboard masks" of external events and reach the Absolute itself for an explanation of the problems of the universe. Like Job and his friends, Ahab would share in the Divine Wisdom. In Pierre a man is caught between the kind of morality which imperfect man has set up and the kind he feels his heart, or the promptings of heaven, would have him pursue. But the presence of evil has so confused Pierre that he himself becomes suspicious of his own intentions and eventually doubts that they were really good. Thus mystery shrouds even a man's own actions.

> Deep, deep, and still deep and deeper must we go, if we would find out the heart of a man; descending into which is as descending a spiral stair in a shaft, without any end, and where that endlessness is only concealed by the spiralness of the stair, and the blackness of the shaft [2].

All these problems, involved in the one basic problem of evil, were probably in Melville's mind at one and the same time. In his works the problems are all bound together; elements of each are found in practically every novel and poem.

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2 Pierre, p.340.

However, it is true that certain phases of the problem of evil, that is, certain conflicts, are emphasized in particular books. Thus Mardi is a "sociology of evil"; Moby Dick, a "metaphysics of evil"; and Pierre, a"psychology of evil" [3]. It remains for us to examine Billy Budd, the last novel that Melville wrote, which gives Melville's concept of the best attitude a man can take toward the multitude of conflicts and problems that are engendered by evil in the universe. The attitude is one of resignation and acceptance of the fact that evil causes conflict and that evil can not be successfully thwarted nor can the very meaning of evil be understood. A man finds a relative peace by accepting conditions for what they are and hoping for an adjustment at the Last Assizes.

Until 1948 there was no definitive edition of Billy Budd. Although finished by Melville on April 19, 1891, the work never reached the public until Raymond Weaver edited the Constable edition of Melville's complete works in 1924. Since then, several editions of questionable validity have been published. In 1928 Raymond Weaver edited Shorter Novels of Herman Melville and included a slightly revised reading of Billy Budd [4]. In 1942 The Readers Club published

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3 R. E. Watters, op.cit., pp.170-182.

4 Raymond Weaver, ed., Shorter Novels of Herman Melville, [New York] , Liveright, 1928.

the story in a volume that also contained Benito Cereno and The Enchanted Isles [5]. However, none of these editions were accurate reproductions of Melville's work. Finished just before his death, the manuscript and notes had been filed away by his wife Elizabeth. Melville's crabbed hand, as well as the disordered sequence of pages and notes, demanded careful study and editing. In 1948 F. Barron Freeman published the results of his careful and painstaking examination of the original manuscript. With the aid of original, unpublished letters, journals, and notes, Freeman was able to make an exhaustive analysis of the manuscript. His results are embodied in a book that contains the definitive reading of Melville's Billy Budd [6].

Freeman discovered that there are basically two stories. The earlier is entitled, "Baby Budd, Sailor", and contains approximately 12,000 words. It is embedded in the manuscript that contains the second work, entitled Billy Budd, which has approximately 36,000 words and is more properly referred to as a novel. Freeman feels that there was one complete revision for each story, i.e., for the short story and for the novel. Melville, Freeman feels, began the short

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5 Billy Budd, Benito Cereno and The Enchanted Isles, New York, Readers Club, 1942.

6 F. Barron Freeman, ed., Melville's Billy Budd, [Cambridge], Harvard University Press, 1948.

story on November 16, 1888 and revised it around March 2, 1889. The expansion into the novel was completed on April 19, 1891 [7].

Freeman's important contribution to Melville literature makes it possible for us to note that the vital material about evil and innocence, which is contained in chapters 17 and 18 of the finished novel, were insertions made after the short story itself was finished. A similar insertion was made in describing the character of Captain Vere, matter which is contained in chapter two of the novel. Here is a situation parallel to that found in Moby Dick [8]. In each case there is the original story of rather simple, uninvolved plot written and transformed into a document that carries deeper meaning and significance.

Freeman conveys the information that the first outline of the story is a fictional, undocumented account of social injustice. The final revision of the short story shows a marked shift in emphasis to the psychological and philosophical implications. The final version of the novel exhibits the primary objective of embodying a solution to the problem of good and evil. Freeman sums up his impressions: "As fact,

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7 Ibid., p.ix.

8 Cf. Chapter V, pp.137-140.

the tale of Billy Budd is a second-rate White Jacket; as fiction, it is the culmination of the art, emotion and thought of Moby Dick [9].

The story of Billy Budd is, on the narrative level, a fusing of two historical incidents. The one is the occurence of the Spithead and Nore mutinies in the British Navy in 1797. The other is the hanging of three sailors at sea by Commander Mackenzie aboard the brig Somers. The year was 1842. The charge was incipient mutiny. Melville knew about the first case; any student of naval history would know it well. As for the second case, the matter became something of a national issue with James Fenimore Cooper rising to the defense of the seamen. But Melville had an even more intimate connection with the incident. His first cousin, Guert Gansevoort, was a lieutenant aboard the Somers and could have supplied Melville with innumberable details about the affair.

Melville began by writing a fictionalized account of the Mackenzie Case, with the Nore and Spithead mutinies for background material. He gradually saw the psychological and metaphysical implications of the material and expanded and rewrote it into a document of emotional and intellectual

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9 F. Barron Freeman, op.cit., p.29.

significance. There were two influences on Melville as he went through the creative process of writing an expanded and enlarged Billy Budd. The first was that of Schopenhauer. Freeman's examination of Melville's personal library reveals that Melville's copies of Schopenhauer were dated 1888, 1890, and 1891--the three last years of his life, the very years in which he was writing and revising Billy Budd. His markings reveal a keen interest in the philosophy of pessimism. Freeman does not think Melville succumbed to Schopenhauer's pessimism. The story of Billy Budd bears him out on the point that Melville finally felt that the power behind the universe was more than an evil fury [10].

The second significant influence on his life, now as when he wrote Moby Dick in 1850-1851, was Nathaniel Hawthorne. His deep-seated affection for the man always remained [11]. The theme of "The Birthmark", which was included in Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse, reviewed by Melville as early as 1850, parallels that of Billy Budd. The story tells of Aylmer, a scientist with a passion for perfection, who kills his beautiful wife Georgiana by removing a small birthmark from her cheek, the one flaw in her beauty.

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10 Cf. Ibid., p.24.

11 Cf. Chapter II, pp.57-60.

In his own copy of Hawthorne's work, Melville had underscored these words:

> It the birthmark was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceable on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain [12].

The parallel with Billy Budd is rather obvious: Billy's one defect, his stammer in time of emotional distress, is the occasion of his physical death but his suffering and demise only bring him greater glory in the unwritten annals of seamen. Freeman also draws a parallel between Donatello in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun and Billy Budd. Hawthorne emphasizes joy and laughter; Melville, innocence. But their approach to the situation are identical: Donatello and Billy Budd are too good for a "sadly serious" world [13].

Unconsciously perhaps, because there is no evidence at all that Melville was reading Hegel at this time, Melville used in Billy Budd Hegel's theme of triadic development. In Chapter II, pages twenty-seven and twenty-eight of this dissertation, Hegel's theory and its application to Billy Budd is examined. Budd's original innocence is the an-sich. The death blow, involving him in the retributive justice of man's

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12 F. Barron Freeman, op.cit., pp.117-118.

13 Ibid., p.78.

laws, is the anderssein. Budd's glory in submitting without rebellion is Hegel's an-und-für-sich. However, in spite of the fact that Melville read Hegel in his earlier years, there is no proof that Hegel was especially in his mind in 1889-1891. The influence of Schopenhauer and Hawthorne is much more obvious and the evidence much more compelling.

The basic philosophy of Billy Budd--a patient resignation to imperfection and the conflicts it breeds--is foreshadowed in earlier works. In Mardi (1849), there is the hint that a man can find peace on this earth only by a spirit of resignation to the forces of evil. Or rather, that a man must overlook the imperfections and reconcile himself by a life of love. A corollary of this principle is that since imperfection is even in man himself he must not attempt a life of unattainable virtue but must be reconciled to and conscious of his capability. There is an interesting conversation between Babbalanja the philosopher and Yoomy the poet about the vain attempts of man to climb the inaccessible peak of Ofo in Maramma. Maramma is undoubtedly the Catholic Church and Ofo the life of heroic virtue. Mohi the historian sums up their conclusions:

> Ay, in vain, on all sides of the Peak, various paths are tried; in vain new ones are cut through the cliffs and brambles: - Ofo yet remains inaccessible [14].

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14 Mardi, p.552.

In other words, to practice extraordinary virtue is impossible. Babbalanja concludes that man was meant for the plain and can expect little but trouble in attempting an ascent of the peak.

The idea of rejecting a life of virtue that is too exalted for imperfect man is found again in Pierre where a comparison is drawn between the "time" of heaven and the "time" of earth. To attempt to live according to the former (chronometricals) is to flirt with destruction. Although chronometrical time is superior and indeed heavenly, man must be content with his inferior, horological time. In short, then, the best course for man to follow is to assume an attitude of resignation and thus avoid the frustration that inevitably comes from the attempt to practice too lofty a moral code. Since imperfection has vitiated the order of things, too exalted a moral code is impossible.

> 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 [15].

A similar solution is intimated in Moby Dick for the man who attempts to fathom the meaning of things. In Moby Dick Ahab went to his destruction because he persisted in his attempt to unravel the inscrutable. There is only one man who

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15 Pierre, p.252.

escapes the ruin of the ship. It is Ishmael who had no share in Ahab's attempt to pierce the "pasteboard masks". Ishmael sees a place for everything; nothing is to be resisted or challenged; even idolatry is acceptable.

> I was a good Christian...How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? But what is worship? thought I. Do you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth--pagans and all included--can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood? [16]

Later, in speaking with Bildad, a religious enthusiast, Ishmael frowns on the cherishing of "some crotchets noways touching the grand belief" and advocates a "First Congregation of this whole worshipping world" which would include pagan and Christian alike [17]. Ishmael refuses to worry about the ultimate truth, the Absolute. He is content to take things for what they are. In other words, men who strive to find happiness in knowledge must give up the chase.

> ...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 fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country....[18]

Thus Ishmael, standing for simplicity and resignation to the problems of life, is the only character in Moby Dick who

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16 Moby Dick, p.790.

17 Ibid., p.812.

18 Ibid., p.1010.

escapes. Ahab, bent on piercing the "pasteboard masks of outward events", perishes in the attempt. Sedgwick sees how in Mardi Melville noticed a dualism in human nature. In Moby Dick he wrestled with it. In Pierre he refused to accept it. The next step is Billy Budd where Melville realizes that in accepting the limitations of human nature he is not thereby losing in human strength and dignity [19].

It is in this spirit of acceptance and surrender that Billy Budd is written. Fourteen years before Billy Budd was finished, Melville had written to his brother-in-law, J. C. Hoadley,

> You are young; but I am verging on three-score, and at times a certain lassitude steals over me -- in fact, a disinclination for doing anything except the indispensable. At such moments the problem of the universe seems a humbug...Life is so short, and so ridiculous and irrational (from a certain point of view) that one knows not what to make of it....[20]

Here is the spirit of resignation that enables a man to see evil without bitterness, to take things for what they are and not destroy himself in the attempt to find the ultimate ratio of things. The message of this letter is the message of Billy Budd. This spirit is personified in Captain Vere who is the real hero of Billy Budd. Vere has learned not to struggle

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19 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.239.

20 Victor H. Paltsits, ed., Family Correspondence of Herman Melville, 1830-1904, New York, The New York Public Library, 1929.

with the problem of evil although he sees evil operative before his very eyes. He avoids trouble by following the laws of men (the horologicals). He avoids frustration by refusing to attempt an explanation of the evil that he sees in operation about him.

In brief, the story of Billy Budd is this: A young, innocent sailor, Billy Budd, has become the idol of his mates aboard the merchantman Rights-of-Man. A scarcity of sailors aboard the man-of-war Indomitable occasions the lieutenant of the ship to stop the Rights-of-Man and impress Billy into the service of the English navy. Here Billy makes friends easily. The superior qualities of Billy's manhood--especially his physical beauty--arouse the envy of Claggart, master-at-arms. After a series of incidents following on Claggart's scheme to involve Billy in a fictitious mutiny, Billy is brought before Vere, master of the ship. Claggart accuses him of attempted mutiny. Tongue-tied by the emotional shock of such a sudden and heinous accusation, Billy answers with a terrific blow to Claggart's head and the man falls dead under the impact. Captain Vere orders a drum-head court and basing its decision on the testimony of Vere, the only witness to the incident, the court finds Billy guilty and at dawn of the next day he is hanged at the yard-arm. Vere himself had urged the court to

find Billy guilty. Some time later when Vere is on his death-bed, he is heard to mutter, "Billy Budd, Billy Budd". The story ends with the ballad that grew up among the sailors of the fleet about Billy who now lies at the bottom of the sea. "I am sleepy and the oozy weeds about me twist" [21].

Around this narrative framework Melville wove a series of details that give a very significant meaning to the whole story. At the trial that condemns Budd, the soldier who is sitting on the board of judges regrets that there is none of the ship's company to shed light "upon what remains mysterious in this matter" [22]. Captain Vere, the only witness of Claggart's death, answers with a statement that crystallizes the meaning of the story.

> That is thoughtfully put... I see your drift. Ay, there is a mystery; but to use a Scriptural phrase, it is a "mystery of iniquity", a matter for only psychologic theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it? ...The prisoner's deed, with that alone we have to [23].

In short, the theme of the story is centered in the conflict between Claggart, who represents the "mystery of iniquity", and Budd, the epitome of goodness, except for one imperfection. Good and evil are at loggerheads in the persons of a common

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21 Billy Budd, p.281.

22 Ibid., p.241.

23 Loc. cit.

sailor and a master-at-arms. The conflict is worked out by an emphasis on the respective qualities of each of the two men. In character and disposition, Budd and Claggart are diametrically opposed. The historical background (the English navy around 1798) lends a dramatic sweep to the story for it is at a time when the welfare of an Empire depends on the discipline and efficiency of the navy. It also gives the occasion for the working of evil. If there were no danger of mutiny, as it had been happening at Spithead and Nore, the case might have been judged more leniently.

Captain Vere emerges as the ideal man. He is good in himself but at the same time he has developed the intellectual virtue to be able to appreciate the irresistible force of evil. He knows how to act when evil strikes. Vere sums up the message of the story when he says that evil is a mystery human beings are not able to grapple with. They must rest content with appearances (the prisoner's deed) and leave the deeper problem for those who think they can find a solution (psychologic theologians). The import of Vere's words and the meaning of the story is seen best against a background of the details that explain the characters of Budd, Claggart, and Vere.

Billy Budd is pictured as the "Handsome Sailor" whose

physique and courage are legend. The beauty is not skin-deep. "The moral nature is seldom out of keeping with the physical make" [24]. Billy Budd "showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature" and his actions bespeak a lineage "in direct contradition to his lot;"his mother must have been "eminently favored by Love and the Graces" [25]. Budd's physical and moral excellence is supreme and his "simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incompatible with that manufacturable thing known as respectability" [26]. His goodness is a natural thing, not "alloyed" by the conventions of man. Ironically, it is his "uninstructed honor" that involves Billy in the circumstances that effect his own death. If he had reported the advances made by Claggart's friends to entrap Billy in a mutiny, he would have frustrated the machinations of the master-at-arms and avoided the charge of mutiny which prompted him to strike the fatal blow.

There is another element in Billy's make-up that plays an even more significant role in his destruction: he stammers and becomes practically speechless when excited. When accused of the mutiny, Budd is so over-wrought that he cannot fashion

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24 Ibid., p.135.

25 Ibid., p.145.

26 Ibid., p.147.

words in his own defense. To express what he cannot put into words, Billy Budd resorts to a blow to Claggart's head. Melville emphasizes the fact that this defect is another manifestation of the imperfection that is in every man. It is Billy's imperfection of becoming tongue-tied in moments of great emotional stress that defeats him in the conflict with the evil Claggart. Had been Billy been able to express himself calmly, the conflict between himself and Claggart would have been resolved and the evil Claggart would have been frustrated.

An analysis of Claggart reveals a man "in whom was the mania of an evil nature":

> Now something such 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" [27].

There was an "elemental evil" in Claggart and the man was unable to suppress or control it [28]. Melville describes the "depravity according to nature" which Plato teaches and distinguishes it from the Calvanistic doctrine; the latter applies this depravity to all men, Plato to individuals. It is in the Platonic sense that Melville predicates this elemental

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27 Ibid., p.187.

28 Ibid., p.192.

evil of Claggart [29]. Whereas Billy's innocence is primitive and guileless (he cannot even read or write), Claggart's depravity is cloaked by the conventional respectability of society. Melville claims, in fact, that society is "auspicious to it" [30]. Billy's goodness has no mental excellence, but Claggart is a man highly gifted in intellectual attainments [31]. In fact, he and the intellectual Captain Vere are the only ones aboard the ship who can really appreciate the moral excellence of Budd.

Thus Billy Budd and Claggart stand diametrically opposed. The one is innocent to the point of naivete; the other, evil with a mind that is alert to plot the most effective means to achieve an evil objective. Claggart's antipathy for the young gob is inspired by the very harmlessness of the sailor.

> For what can more partake of the mysterious than antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be? if not called forth by this very harmlessness itself [32].

Indeed this is the elemental conflict of good and evil, brought about by the force of evil itself (Claggart is the active agent)

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29 Ibid., p.185.

30 Loc. cit.

31 Ibid. pp.186-187.

32 Ibid., p.183.

and brought to a tragic conclusion by the working of imperfection (Billy's speech defect).

Captain Vere, master of the Indomitable, is a man with a bias toward books "to which every serious mind of superior order ... naturally inclines; books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era...." [33] He likes writers who "in the spirit of common sense, philosophize upon realities" [34]. Vere is lauded for his moral equilibrium. Melville makes much of the fact that Vere is judicious. This quality will stand him in good stead when he is confronted by the conflict of good and evil. Melville tells us that Vere is "intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so" [35]. It is this "judiciousness" that prompts Vere to ask for the conviction and execution of Billy Budd. Vere's reading and his own character confirm each other:

> ...confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics, there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he forfelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired [36].

Vere is a composite character, the first of his kind in all of Melville's fiction. He is one with Budd in possessing

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33 Ibid., p.163.

34 Ibid., p.164.

35 Ibid., p.160.

36 Ibid., p.164.

a nature of superior moral quality, but over and above this moral goodness he has developed an intellectual and philosophical approach to the realities of life. In other words, he fuses what is good in Budd (moral nature) and what is practically valuable in Claggart (intellect). Thus he is in an excellent position to sympathize with the good and still understand in some way the conflict of good against evil. Above all, his judiciousness, his experiences with actual men and his confirmation of his experiences in books that "philosophize upon realities", enable him to face with equanimity the elemental conflict of good and evil as personified in Budd and Claggart. He differs from Captain Ahab in not attempting a solution and understanding of the problem of evil. He leaves that for "psychologic theologians". He differs from Pierre in not running a course contrary to accepted custom and convention, although his own superior character appreciates the virtue that accepted custom does not recognize. Thus, Captain Vere is a personification of acceptance and resignation.

The scene of Billy Budd is laid at a time when mutinies are spreading throughout the British Navy. The officers are especially careful to check anything which might incite a mutiny. Hence a sailor who kills an officer, however justified he may be in light of actual facts, must be punished

with death. This policy is a dictate of the naval code and the prudent move on the part of any commander. The punishment of whatever has the appearances of insubordination will discourage further revolt and unrest. The laws of men (naval code and prudence) run counter to the laws of a higher morality. What is legitimate in one is punished by the other: a cleavage between two moral codes. However guiltless a man may be according to natural laws, he will be punished if his act violates the laws and prudence of men. It is the same conflict that appeared in Pierre: the conflict between chronometricals and horologicals. It is in meeting this conflict that Vere proves his judiciousness. Vere himself admits that the case represents a "clashing of military duty with moral scruple" [37]. He meets the conflict by appealing to the "practicality" of the case.

> Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical and under martial laws practically to be dealth with [38].

Vere sums up his argument: "Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it" [39]. Indeed, it is the

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37 Ibid., p.244.

38 Loc. cit.

39 Ibid., pp.245-246.

philosophy of Plinlimmon in different terms, for this is virtuous expediency. Horological time is chosen over the chronometrical.

Melville is careful to point out that Vere, who advises the members of the drum-court to condemn Billy, is trying to explain esoteric principles to well-meaning but not intellectually mature men. These principles are axioms with himself. He speaks as one who had thought out the whole problem of good and evil in conflict and had reached a conclusion that the only "practical" and "judicious" action was surrender to the laws of men. Vere is a man of little "companionable qualities" [40]. Here again is Melville's bias in favor of the individual who thinks through the great problems of life in solitude. In Billy Budd Melville still champions the cause of the individual man of superior stature; he pays tribute to the Hebrew prophets who "shed so much light into obscure spiritual places... And who were they? Mostly recluses" [41].

Thus Vere personifies acceptance of conflicts and resignation to the working of evil. He knows and recognizes the fact that Budd has been the innocent victim of evil. He sees that God's justice demands the acquittal of Budd.

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40 Ibid., p.165.

41 Ibid., p.185.

But he knows also that the laws of war, the canon of externals, makes acquittal dangerous, and, in fact, forbidden. He resorts to a philosophy of acceptance: he allows horological standards to hold sway in spite of the fact that Budd is innocent in the light of chronometrical standards. As if to insure that the reader will see Vere acting in resignation to what he cannot safely avoid, Melville recounts the scene when Vere brings the news of conviction of Budd:

> The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to heart, even as Abraham caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest [42].

This Melville explains that Vere was acting contrary to the promptings of his heart in condemning Budd. But the head had to balance the heart and compromise with military duty as the only practical solution to the case. Sedgwick sees Vere in fine perspective:

> As an index to Melville's "acceptance", Captain Vere is still more interesting as he faces his own soul. He is obliged by the exigencies of this man-of-war world to disregard all considerations of the absolute good and the ultimate truth. But he does not therefore deny the existence of the absolute good and the ultimate truth. He is the first to recognize Billy's angelic innocence [43].

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42 Ibid., p.252.

43 Ibid., p.239.

Budd evidences a spirit of resignation. His natural innocence does not fear death and even the ship's chaplain feels that the religious consolation that he has to offer--a religion of peace which condones the canons of military practice which in turn unjustly execute Billy--is hardly fitting for such a noble nature. Billy's innocence is better than any dogma [44]. Billy is so resigned to his fate that he feels no ill-will toward Vere or the drum-head court. In fact, he calls a blessing upon the Captain as he dies.

That there will come a time when the chronometricals prevail over the horologicals in spite of the laws of men is expressed at the close of the story. Vere acknowledges that the judgment of the martial court will be over-ruled by the Creator Himself:

> ...before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea [Budd's innocence] would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act [45].

Vere argues that the members of the court can feel a certain consolation in knowing that what they do now will be rectified when "circumstances" and "judiciousness" will be countermanded.

A few days after the hanging, the Purser and the

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44 Ibid., p.262.

45 Ibid., p.247.

Surgeon are in conversation. The men had noticed that when Billy's body was caught by the rope and his neck broken, there was no muscular spasm in the body, as is usually the case in a hanged man. The Purser wants the Surgeon to explain the phenomenon but the latter only replies: "It was phenomenal, Mr. Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance, the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned" [46]. Melville leaves the reader with the impression of divine intervention. It is as though the Great Judge, in this particular case, will not permit the laws of men to effect an injustice. To thwart their operation, God Himself takes Billy's life before the rope can snap his neck. When Billy falls, he is already dead, gathered to the bosom of his Creator. Supporting this interpretation is the text that describes the background of the hanging:

> At the same moment when the death signal was given it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the East, was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God... Billy ascended; and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn [47].

Thus Billy Budd ends on a note of hope. Although evil will work its harm in this world and will be supported by horological standards, true virtue will eventually be rewarded.

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46 Ibid., p.268.

47 Ibid., p.266.

But the fact of evil remains. Indeed its horror and subtle wickedness is emphasized in Claggart. Even Billy has his imperfection that leads to his ruin. But man must learn to compromise and accept the inevitable. Like Captain Vere, a man must accede to the demands of the horological standards. Like Captain Vere, he must not attempt a solution of the problem. He may acknowledge it as a mystery, consoling himself with the thought that at the Last Assizes there will be a reckoning. Indeed here is a philosophy of acceptance and resignation. The feverish pursuit of Ahab, the irrational rebellion of Pierre are both implicitly condemned. At the very least, their utter futility is emphasized. Both men could learn a lesson from Captain Vere who, with a fine balance of head and heart, reconciled himself to the problem of evil and placed his trust in a Just Judge at the Last Assizes.

CONCLUSION

In his fine study of Melville, William Sedgwick thinks that there is a parallel between Melville's final attitude toward life and its problems and that of the great Bard of Avon whom Melville classified as "divine". Sedgwick feels that Melville's attitude was more of a recognition, a restoration, a return, rather than an acceptance and surrender. Sedgwick sees a parallel in the last few plays of Shakespeare: Marina is restored to her father in Pericles; in Cymbeline Posthumous returns to his native land. Sedgwick feels that Melville has returned to the world of Typee and Omoo, the world of innocence and loveliness and joy [1].

However, Melville's final attitude is not so simply identified. There is still a tragic conflict between good and evil in Billy Budd and its price is human blood. Melville is still very conscious of the conflicts that evil caused in White Jacket, Mardi, Moby Dick, and Pierre. It is these conflicts that we have examined throughout this study of Herman Melville. After surveying the more significant scholarship on Melville and his work, and after analyzing the historical and contemporary influences that were at work on his mind and art,

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1 William Sedgwick, op.cit., p.246.

we first studied Melville's vision of conflict on the level of society. We noted the conflicts between rich and poor, between war and the principles of Christianity, between relative merits of monarchy and democracy, and of primitivism and civilization. Finally, the man who thinks deeply withdraws from society or, as often happens, is rejected by the society that does not understand him.

Next we examined the conflicts that exist within man himself. Melville envisioned a dichotomy between the relative ability of head, or reason, and heart, faith or natural instinct, to lead a man to ultimate truth. Also, we saw Melville's vision of the conflict between free will and the necessity and chance that rules men's actions. The forces of determinism seemed strongest, in Melville's views, when a man was fated to do evil.

A third area of conflict was examined. This is the conflict between man and God as Ahab tries to solve the mysteries of creation and thus share in Divine Wisdom. Again, in attempting to follow a life of virtue, the conflict between man and God becomes apparent when Pierre finds that the moral code of heaven will not work on this earth.

The last step lay in studying Billy Budd as a document of acceptance and surrender to the force of evil and the conflicts that result within society, within man, and

between man and God. Now there is no futile struggle, no proud rebellion. Evil persists; the conflicts go on. Man will win a certain peace of mind and serenity of soul in accepting this state of affairs.

Several salient items about Melville and his intellectual and spiritual odyssey stand out at the finish of such a study as this. Melville had been frustrated in his longing for some ultimate revelation of absolute truth. His need for religious certitude was always in the balance with his habit of doubting and questioning. The real tragedy of Melville's mind was that he did not possess the vision of Faith that the Catholic Church could have offered him. The problem of evil could have been seen for its true value: merely a defect or absence of good occasioned by sin, rather than the cosmic, overwhelming force that he pictured it. A "reasoning" faith would have given Melville the chance to exercise both intellect and faith, head and heart, in the vast area of human and divine truth.

Melville tried to solve the mysteries and conflicts that he evnisioned about him solely with his own mind. He was a humanist to the extreme. Indeed there are mysteries in God and His creation: the Incarnation and Trinity are mysteries even for the man of faith. Considering the transcendent immensity

of God and the feeble, created powers of man, one logically expects to find divine truths beyond his comprehension. Faith would have enabled Melville to realize this enormous fact and would have kept him from the anxious, harried years of searching and testing that sapped so much of his intellectual and physical vigor. With Faith, Melville would have enjoyed God's view of society, of man, of the relations between man and God. As it was, he had only his own human powers of mind and heart, great as they might have been, and influenced by a cold Calvinism of fear and fate. Inevitably, he realized frustration in trying to pierce the "pasteboard masks" and eventually came to a passive acceptance and surrender.

Above all, the Catholic Faith would have brought Melville into vital union with Christ the Saviour. Melville never evidences much knowledge of Christ. His concept of God is the Jehovah of fear and dark, deep mystery. Melville's reaction was a proud impetuous searching for ultimate truth and absolute goodness. In Christ Melville would have found fulfillment and satisfaction in Truth Incarnate and Goodness Personified who could still say, "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart".

I WORKS OF HERMAN MELVILLE

"An Unpublished letter from Herman Melville to Mrs. Hawthorne in explanation of Moby Dick", American Art Association -- Anderson Galleries Catalog of Sale, nº 3911, p.9.
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Billy Budd, Benito Cereno, and The Enchanted Isles, New York, Press of the Readers Club, 1942, IV-245 pages.
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Collected Poems of Herman Melville, edited by Howard P. Vincent, Chicago, Packard and Co., 1947, XXII-502 pages.
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Herman Melville : Representative Selections, edited by Willard Thorp, New York, American Book Company, 1938, CLXI-437 pages.
A discerning and well chosen selection of important passages from Melville, this work is valuable in obtaining an over-all appreciation of the writer.

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------, edited by H. M. Tomlinson, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1929, XXVII-505 pages.
These are the only editions of Pierre outside of the Constable edition of the complete works. Because of its superior annotations and text, the edition of Henry A. Murray is used for this dissertation.

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A rather breezy but interesting account of Melville as a literary and social figure in New York of the 1850's.

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Mr. Freeman's work is one of the earlier contributions to Melville literature and is valuable for Melville's work after 1851.

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Matthiessen, F. O., American Renaissance, London, Oxford U. Press, 1941, XXIV-678 pages.
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III VARIA

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Adequate survey of the philosophers who influenced Melville before and during the composition of his works.