

HERMAN MELVILLE:

BETWEEN CHARLEMAGNE AND THE ANTEMOSAIC COSMIC MAN

RACE, CLASS AND THE CRISIS OF BOURGEOIS
IDEOLOGY IN AN AMERICAN RENAISSANCE WRITER

Loren Goldner

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"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 covertly, and by snatches."

Herman Melville
"Hawthorne and his Mosses"

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By Loren Goldner
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lgoldner @ alum.mit.edu
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**Cover: William Blake, "Europe Supported by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

P. 5 Introduction: From Warrior-Monk to French Luxury Goods:
Sacred, Pseudo-Sacred and the Adamic Imagination in Melville

PART ONE: "A GEORGE WASHINGTON CANNIBALISTICALLY
DEVELOPED": THE EVOLVING TOTALITY OF COSMOBIOLOGY AND
CLASS, 1845-1851

p. 28 Preface

p. 34 Ch. I. "Damned in Paradise": Calvinism, Liberalism and
Transcendentalism as Three Modes of Estrangement from the Antemosaic Cosmic
Man

p. 51 Ch. II. Social Foundations of the Transcendentalist "Unhappy
Consciousness": Moby-Dick As A Prophecy of the Self-Destruction of
Bourgeois Civilization

p. 60 Ch. III. Melville's Cosmic Imagination: The Myth of the Cosmic King in
Moby-Dick

p. 80 Ch. IV. Moby-Dick As the American 18th Brumaire: The Perspective of
CLR James

p. 10 Ch. V. 1848 in the U.S.: American Specificity of the Myth

p. 118 Ch. VI. Melville and the Myth

p. 127 Ch. VII. Melville's Critique of Orientalism and Primitivism: Melville and
Marx

p. 137 Ch. VIII. Melville and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics: Henry Adams As An "Anti-Melville"

p. 151 Ch. X. Retrospective: Melville Before Moby-Dick: The Elements of Synthesis

PART II: THE MERCURIAL ARC OF NEGATION WITHOUT COLLECTIVITY, 1851-1856: From Pierre to The Confidence Man

p. 176 Preface

p. 179 Ch. XI. From the Cosmic King to the Isolated Man of Negation

p. 216 Ch. XII. From Charlemagne to French Luxury Consumer Goods: The Sacred and the Pseudo-Sacred In Melville

p. 237 Ch. XIII. Melville's Critique of Transcendentalism and the Aestheticized Self: After Moby-Dick

p. 254 Ch. XIV. Theatre, Painting and Blankness in Melville After Moby Dick: Non-Communication in a Class Society

p. 275 Ch. XV. Race in Melville's Post-Moby Dick Writings

p. 293 Ch. XVI. Melville and Class After Pierre

p. 302 Ch. XVII: A Blackface Minstrel Show and the Fragments of Charlemagne: The Confidence Man

PART III: THE HESITANT TRANSITION BEYOND NEGATION, 1856-1891

p. 327 Preface

p. 332 Melville in the Desert: Clarel

p. 359 The Ambiguous Return of the Antemosaic Cosmic Man: Billy Budd

p. 384 Conclusion

p. 390 Bibliography

Introduction: From Warrior-Monk to French Luxury Goods: Sacred, Pseudo-Sacred and the Adamic Imagination in Melville

At the end of Herman Melville's masterpiece Moby Dick, Ishmael descends into the vortex of the *Pequod's* downward plunge and re-emerges, saved, on the coffin of his friend, the Polynesian harpooner, Queequeg. The scene is Melville's "little yes", an affirmation of hope through a "higher primitive", after the "big no" of Ahab's demonic self-destructive quest, the crackup of a whole civilization built on the isolated bourgeois ego.

The evolution of Melville's own work has a vorticist quality to it. His vision of class and a "higher primitive" goes down, in fact, with the *Pequod*. The explosive years (1846-1851) of his six novels of the sea are followed by a descent, from Pierre to The Confidence Man, into satirical destruction of the novel form and above all of the classical novel's mainstay, the character. This is all over when Melville is 38 years old, when he leaves, almost a broken man and a largely forgotten author, for Egypt, which had provided so much symbolism in his work. There ensue 35 desolate years, during which Melville, marginal and isolated, takes a job as a New York customs official, and turns largely to poetry, culminating in Clarel, the portrait of the late 19th-century cultural desert, set in the actual desert of Palestine, which he had visited on the same 1857 journey.

Then, in his final (posthumously published) work Billy Budd, the "mariners, castaways and renegades" return, in a greatly transformed context, opposing another authoritarian captain, around another Adamic figure.

This study arises from the following tension: in Europe, after 1848, bourgeois consciousness in revolt sought a new universal in the working class and instead found itself in the orbit of the state civil service; in America, bourgeois consciousness in revolt found a new universal in what Melville called "antemosaic" primordial reality, Queequeg, embodied concretely in the multiracial working class, the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation", in radical antithesis to the state.

Herman Melville (1818-1891) worked his way to this synthesis in the feverish production of six novels of the sea, culminating in Moby Dick, in the 1846-1851 period. As the whaling ship *Pequod* (named for the Massachusetts tribe annihilated by the Puritans in 1636) was destroyed by Moby Dick, the Indian harpooner Tashtego was nailing a red flag to the mast, catching as well the wing of a sky-hawk with its "imperial beak", as the waves covered them over. In this succinct image Melville, connects the red man with the red flag, pulling down the imperial eagle, more in what Marx (in the Manifesto) called the "mutual destruction of the contending classes" than the triumph of proletarian revolution. While Melville retained a lifelong ambivalence about the prospects for successful collective rebellion, he always underscored, when dealing with it, that in America such a rebellion passed necessarily through the "primordial", red and black "mariners, renegades and castaways" caught up in the "white and turbid wake" of the Ahabs.

This Melville, soaring to the height of his powers in the first phase of his creative life, and sinking with the *Pequod*, is the subject of Part One of this study, and has elsewhere been treated, in different ways, by Baird, James, Franklin and Karcher. But another Melville, superimposed upon (and retroactively illuminating) the first, emerges in the works written after Moby Dick, over the forty subsequent years of Melville's life. In Moby Dick, Melville places the "antemosiac" cosmic men, Queequeg- Tashtego- Daggoo, at the head of the working class, and, in Billy Budd such a figure re-emerges in the opening pages as the "Handsome Sailor", "a common sailor so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterate blood of Ham", who anticipates (and shadows) the Adam-Christ figure of Billy himself. Melville is Miltonian, and Blakean; his Adamic figures pass through battle with the world of radical evil, and do not, like the wide-eyed Transcendentalists Melville portrays so scathingly, inhabit a benevolent nature, a "prejudice of the more temperate climes" as Melville put it. But when Melville treats race and class, his framework is not merely modern capitalist society, bourgeoisie vs. proletariat. Melville's cosmic men come out of a Biblical eschatology and revolt against the cosmic kings of the same eschatology, above all Charlemagne, the figure in whom the Greco-Roman warrior ideal, from Homer to Caesar, and the Judeo-Christian messiah, from Moses to Jesus, converge to produce the specifically Western version of cosmic kingship, the Holy Roman Empire. From this convergence Melville highlights the warrior-monk, the Templar Knight, who recurs repeatedly in his writings, just as Charlemagne recurs repeatedly. This Melvillian medievalism, which culminates in Clarel (1876), illuminates retroactively elements of the sea novels which, taken in isolation, overshadow it with more generally studied matters.

Charlemagne is for Melville the unitary sacred; Charles V, and even more so Napoleon and Nelson, from the revolutionary era of Melville's grandfathers, are the unitary pseudo-sacred. The warrior-monk, the Templar, is the individual knight of the unitary sacred quest, but as Melville says in his diptych short story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"

"the iron heel is changed to a boot of patent leather; the long two-handed sword to a one-handed quill...the knight combatant of the Saracen, breasting spear-points at Acre, now fights lawpoints in Westminster Hall. The helmet is a wig. Struck by Time's enchanter's wand, the Templar is today a Lawyer."

This devolution and dispersion of the unitary sacred into the banality of the modern--what I call the pseudo-sacred¹-- is a motif through all of Melville's work. For Melville was neither of the medieval period of his aristocratic Scottish ancestors² nor of the era of the French and American Revolutions of his

¹-A full definition of the sacred and pseudo-sacred is offered at the beginning of Ch. XII.

²-Melville's father Allan "traced his father's ancestry back beyond Sir John Melvill, knighted by Scotland's King James VI, to Sir Richard de Melvill, knighted in 1208." Allan Melvill's mother was also apparently descended

grandfathers. Nor was he nostalgic for those times. Melville's works refer repeatedly to a genealogy of warriors from Charlemagne to Napoleon and Nelson, but Melville's own era, highlighted for him by his personal abrupt downward social mobility, is the era in which the individual reaching back only two generations to the American Revolution (as Melville does most conspicuously in Pierre and Israel Potter) for a sense of historical continuity is dashed instead against the blankness of capitalist wage-labor: the blankness of Bartleby's office wall, the blankness of the Berkshire mill girls in "The Tartarus of Maids", or even the blankness which "zones" the San Dominick in "Benito Cereno". And beyond them, and intimately tied to them, are the slavery question and the "metaphysics of Indian hating" of Colonel John Moredock in The Confidence Man, the "backwoodsman" who "would seem to America what Alexander was to Asia".³

Melville was a grand bourgeois, with aristocratic overtones (most immediately, his mother's upstate New York Dutch patroon background) whose life trajectory abruptly turned downward with the bankruptcy, madness and death of his father in 1831, when Melville was thirteen years old. The impoverishment of the family obliged Melville to go to work in his late teens, first as a clerk in an uncle's New York bank, then as a small-town schoolteacher, and finally as a seaman. He thus experienced, particularly after the crash of 1837, more immediately than any other writer of the "American Renaissance", the shattering of the old individual personae in the new, increasingly capitalist conditions. Melville's early work up to Moby Dick (1851), however harshly it condemned the Transcendentalist mainstream of that Renaissance, was nonetheless still within a "romantic monumentalist" mode and within the problematic of the figure with a quest, ultimately, the problematic of an Ishmael. Pierre (1852) turns that tradition upside down and inside out, carrying it to almost sarcastic self-destruction. "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) no longer has a quest. He is at the dead end of non-communication, in the Dead Letter Office of the New York literary world of Young America, upon which Melville turned his back (in Pierre) after that world had rejected Moby Dick.

But something far more epochal is at work in this turn than the biographical or a literary settling of accounts, for in what I call (in Part II) the "mercurial arc of negation without collectivity" (i.e. without the working class) of Melville's 1851-1856 writings (from Pierre to The Confidence Man), Melville is taking the first steps into modernism, in parallel with developments in Europe (e.g. Flaubert). These steps are the response to the same post-1848 demise of the last of the romantic lyricism left from the 1789-1848 period between the French and American Revolutions, on one hand, and the crises of 1848 which ended an era on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, this had been the revolutionary eruption of the Parisian proletariat, followed by workers' rebellion elsewhere, which ended the political unity of the "Third Estate"; in America, it was the shattering of the Jacksonian Democrats by the fallout from the inter-related questions of expansion

from the King of Norway. Cf. M. Rogin, Subversive Genealogies, New York 1983, p. 32.

and slavery, brought to a head by the Mexican-American War of 1846. It was this shattering of the politics of the era of liberal bourgeois individualism which ruined the social foundations of romantic lyricism, and created "the first vague sense of feeling an unknown living obstacle in the dark", as Henry Adams called it in his autobiography⁴.

Melville, in such circumstances, is a writer of dispossession. But his dispossession is not merely personal nor social nor artistic: it is epochal. He articulates it succinctly in one passage of Moby Dick:

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

Melville, all his life, was one of these "young exiled royalties". The preceding is one of many passages in which Melville revisits the death agony of his bankrupt, raving father, the source of the "broken throne", "captive king" mocked by the gods, the "proud, sad king", a "family likeness". And from the exaggerated cosmic kings and their symbols (the Egyptian pyramids, Charlemagne), as well as from their pitiful devolution in the modern world (the overtones of Charles V in the frail character of Benito Cereno, the absent Charlemagne, the "man in the purple robe", who never appears in The Confidence Man), Melville attempts to work his way through his crippled father imago to the "state secret". His dispossession moves from family to class to politics to the cosmic and back again.

Across the Atlantic, in 1848, the Protestant pastor father of the four-year old Friedrich Nietzsche died (from an accident) in the midst of the revolution, and by the 1880's, in the last feverish period prior to his insanity, Nietzsche was trying to dynamite the foundations of all possible "fathers": God, Man, science, historicism, society and socialism, in short, of every universal central to Western culture, in the name of an "active nihilism" in which the aesthetic lawgiver, the Superman, imposes his own order(s) on meaningless chaos in the name of no

⁴-Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, Boston 1918 (1961 reprint), p. 49. (Adams however dated this shift from 1851, when deals with Tammany Hall machinery began to sully patrician politics in Massachusetts.)

higher "ethic" than his own self-overcoming. Nietzsche was the radical expression of the fact that, after 1848, the isolated individual in bourgeois society could seemingly no longer be "mediated", as Hegel or Marx would have it, in any "higher" universal, as each in turn unmasked itself as "nothing", that is as passive nihilism.

Melville, Nietzsche's senior by a quarter century (and the exact contemporary of Marx), never went so far⁵. If, as one recent study has claimed, by the 1880's the aging Melville was sympathetically studying Schopenhauer⁶, whom Nietzsche identified as his mentor in the final phase of his own earlier "passive nihilism", Melville never asserted, as Nietzsche did, that the "forms" imposed on "wild nature", were imposed on nothing. When, in Melville's last work Billy Budd, Captain Vere, standing over the body of Claggart, whom Billy has just struck dead, runs his hand over his face and "the father in him...was replaced by the military disciplinarian" the "forms" of the military disciplinarian are imposed on "natural" feelings, not on a void. While Melville, in various writings (Pierre, "Benito Cereno", "Bartleby", "The Tartarus of Maids", The Confidence Man) had articulated different kinds of blankness and void, he always remained within a classic "nineteenth-century" problematic of "appearance and reality" rather than a Nietzschean and post-Nietzschean questioning of the very meaning of the term "appearance", if indeed all "reality" has fallen away. Melville is decidedly not grist for the contemporary post-modernist/nihilist mill.

The death of Nietzsche's Protestant pastor father (in the year of the continental revolution, no less) when Nietzsche was only four, and the excessive burden of internalized guilt from that inadvertent Oedipal victory, gave Nietzsche an extra edge in the dissection of everything that made up the super-ego, the conscience, the Kantian categorical imperative, Apollonian form, pallid Straussian theology, and morality, which were the mainstays of 19th century bourgeois

⁵-To say that Nietzsche went "farther" than Melville in denying that there was no "external" basis for "truth" (the latter quotation marks being Nietzsche's, not my own) is by no means tantamount to saying that Nietzsche was "more right" than Melville. Little attention has been paid to the parallel between Nietzsche's post- 1870 demolition of any "objective" basis for truth and the exactly contemporary subjectification of economics by the new neo-classical school. As Rosalind Williams writes "The Austrians believed that economics could be an exact science, untainted by moralism and historical relativism, and so they tried to discover objective laws which would describe and predict the subjective decisions of the consumer." (emphasis added, from R.H. Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France, Berkeley 1982, pp. 220-221.) Out of these "subjective decisions of the consumer" came a whole epoch of ideology, culminating in the Keynesian era.

⁶- W. Dillingham, Melville and His Circle: The Last Years. Athens (Ga.), 1996. Ch. 2.

culture⁷. The 1831 death of Melville's father, the importer of French luxury goods and clothing for the "coxcombs" (dandies) of 1820's Manhattan, when Melville was thirteen, also gave the author of Moby Dick a certain edge in understanding the shift of the 1848-1850 conjuncture that was no less epochal. This aspect of Melville's life and writing has not received the attention it deserves, and the implications go far beyond Melville and literature.

The 1848-1850 conjuncture and its aftermath in the North Atlantic world witnessed the birth of communism (Marx⁸), of modern art (Courbet, Flaubert), the end of classical political economy, and the full formulation of the entropy law, (Clausius) or 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (the latter being one culmination of classical physics). Their simultaneity was not accidental, and Melville's work echoes each of them. What they all have in common is the death of "Napoleon", of the illusion of the autonomous, conscious, liberal-romantic-heroic individual "self", an illusion which Melville encountered most immediately in his contemporaries, the American Transcendentalists⁹, and in their English mentor Carlyle.

What does this have to do with the death of a Manhattan importer of French luxury goods in 1831?

If we consider, as we find it throughout Melville's work, the devolution of the cosmic unitary sacred (from ancient Egypt to Charlemagne), into the unitary pseudo-sacred from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to Napoleon, Washington and Nelson, we see here a "gallery" of warriors who could, in very different societies, well into the 19th century, seemingly serve as individual ego ideals for action. Stendhal's hero in The Red and the Black, Julien Sorel, always carries a pocket cameo of Napoleon which is, for him, such an individual ego ideal, while at the same time nourishing fears that "this fatal memory will forever prevent us from being happy". But, as Melville points out in the "standing mast-heads" passage of Moby Dick, which is at the center of the following analysis, by 1850, the statues of "neither Washington, nor Napoleon, nor Nelson, will answer a single hail from

⁷-Freud said somewhere that he could not bring himself to read Nietzsche for fear of learning that Nietzsche had pre-empted him in all his discoveries. K. Lowith, From Hegel to Nietzsche (New York, 1964), although from a conservative viewpoint, lays out the stakes well enough.

⁸-This is of course an indelicate formulation; communism appeared in the Parisian working class and elsewhere. Marx and Engels merely saw themselves as the theoretical expression of the "real movement" and always opposed the idea that communism sprung full-blown from the "head of some world reformer".

⁹-Such a formulation is not to be confused with any post-modern affirmation of the "death of the subject"; what happened in 1848-1850 (and in reality, in the preceding decade, by figures as diverse as Marx, Melville and Cieszkowski) was that the "subject" was discovered to be collective and constituted around practice.

below, however madly invoked". This mid-19th century world is instead ruled by "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", that is, by transparent banality.

1848, in Europe, had been the year of the eruption of "les classes laborieuses et dangereuses"; in America, the beginning of the end of interclassist Jeffersonian-Jacksonian populist hegemony, over the slavery issue. In that same year, Melville himself had co-signed a manifesto denouncing the Astor Place riots in New York City, a plebeian outburst occasioned by the arrogance of an English theatre group on tour but more than a symbolic turning point in the constitution of "highbrow, lowbrow"¹⁰ in American culture. It was in turn only symptomatic of the larger crisis of the Jacksonian coalition which had ruled the country for 20 years, by then (in its Northern working-class dimensions) more associated with the machine politics of the Van Burens than with the war heroism that had given Jackson a national profile.

One figure, one of the "young exiled royalties" of the 1789-1848 period, was the dandy. The dandy arose, in the decades between the revolutionary tremors, in the shadow of Napoleon, Nelson and Washington. As the epic "poetry" of the era of the bourgeois revolutions turned to tepid prose, to the rule of "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", the dandy was one possible stance on the impossibility of heroic action, its reduction to appearance and elite consumption. The dandy was the "dust" of the exploded unitary sacred (the latter most immediately symbolized by French revolutionary regicide), a "resurrection within", as a "unique" "aristocratic" attitude (among non-aristocrats), of the shattered myth of the deposed or eroding monarchs. As the spread of capitalist methods painted their "grey on grey" on all aspects of life, (le mal du siècle, l'ennui, as Baudelaire later called it) invading as well the world of literature and consciousness (as depicted in Melville's scathing portrait of the New York "Young America" literary scene in Pierre) (cf. below), one possible middle-class response was this disdainful assertion of "uniqueness", expressed in snobbish comportment and above all in clothing; it was a further phase in the devolution from "being to having to appearing", in Rousseau's formulation. Neither Melville nor any of his major characters were dandies, but dandies are persistent minor characters in his work, from Lt. Selvagee and the poet Lemsford in White-Jacket to Harry Bolton in Redburn to Pierre's cousin Glen in Pierre to several figures¹¹ in Clarel. Similarly, collections of French luxury goods, mute presence of the father in the world of the "young exiled royalties", are scattered through Melville's books. Such dandies and "coxcombs" were the customers of Allan Melville's¹² luxury import business, one of the tangible links between the young Herman Melville's "life world" and his books.

10-L. Levine, Highbrow Lowbrow. The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America. Harvard UP, 1988, pp. 63-69.

11-Glaucon, the Cypriote and the French Jew from Lyon.

12-Melville's mother added an "e" to the family name following her husband's death.

The issue here, however, is neither biographical "detail" nor, particularly, psychobiography.

The 1846-1851 period in which Melville was working up to Moby Dick was not just any historical conjuncture. These years, and particularly the years of European revolution and counter-revolution (with an American counterpart in the irremediable crisis occasioned by the awareness of the inevitability of civil war over slavery), saw the four above-mentioned interrelated "paradigm changes", which amounted to one epochal shift in the history of bourgeois civilization. These were, once again, the appearance of communism, made self-conscious in the Manifesto of Marx and Engels (1848); the end of classical political economy, which had culminated in Ricardo (1772-1823) but remained dominant through the mid-century Ricardian socialists; the appearance, in the arts, of modernism (of which the later Melville is a pioneer) and the elaboration of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, the entropy law, most generally associated with the German Clausius in 1850. Small wonder that a dying sperm whale in Moby Dick "over and over slowly revolved like a waning world". However much or little the "young exiled royalty" Melville was aware of these contemporary developments (and his books from Mardi onward shows he was well aware of communism), his work amounts to a vast documentation of this epochal shift, in which "French luxury goods" played a central role¹³.

Much has been written about the eruption of the Parisian proletariat into world history in the spring of 1848. This sundering of the European "Third Estate" in the European capital of revolutions has also been linked many times to the demise of romanticism and the beginning of modernism. Similarly, the first global appearance of a movement that announced itself as the gravedigger of bourgeois society has more than once been linked to the end of classical political economy, based on a labor theory of value, and the ideological attempt, beginning in earnest after 1870, to refound a "neo-classical economics" centered on consumption rather than on production, conceptually burying the centrality of labor in the creation of wealth. All this notwithstanding, far less attention has been paid, until quite recently, to the subterranean links between this overall conjuncture and the formulation of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. Yet Melville's work provides a virtual "laboratory" for the associative interaction of all of them.

At the center of this problematic is "whiteness". One movement in Melville is that from "whiteness" in the early work (the whiteness of the jacket in White Jacket, the whiteness of the whale in Moby Dick) to the blankness of the later period, the blankness of Bartleby, of "Benito Cereno", of "The Tartarus of Maids", the desert of Clarel and hints of blankness in Billy Budd. The blankness in the later Melville is the blankness of the isolated creative bourgeois individual in the new

13-"And in creating this new style of mass consumption the French were nearly as preeminent in the nineteenth century as they had been in developing the courtly model in earlier times. France pioneered in retailing and advertising, the twin pillars of modern consumer life. Its capital city became a sort of pilot plant of mass consumption." (in R.H. Williams, op. cit. p. 11.)

historical period of increasingly conscious collectivity: one symptom of a "waning world".

The subterranean link between communism, modernism, the shift toward neo-classical economics and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics is the beginning of the "dissolution of the object" in the "dream worlds" of the new mass consumption. This shift is operative across the entire spectrum of culture and science under consideration, but is perhaps most easily grasped in the end of classical political economy, Ricardo.

David Ricardo (1772-1823) was for Marx, the most advanced bourgeois viewpoint, just as Hegel had been in philosophy. Ricardo culminated the development of classical political economy as it had developed after Adam Smith and above all a bourgeois "labor theory of value", which identified the origin of value in the "labor time necessary for the production", of the labor time incorporated in the individual commodity. Marx (affirmatively) called Ricardo the bourgeois theoretician of "production for production's sake", and counterposed to Ricardo's labor theory of value a radically different one, based on his discovery of labor power, the cost of whose "reproduction" was the sole "general commodity" which determined the "total price" of all commodities. With Marx, in a conceptual break with all "economics" (he called his own project the critique of political economy), the "secret" of bourgeois capitalist society became the distinction between "labor" (as grasped by Ricardo) and "labor power", first formulated by Marx, a relationship that relates itself to itself, ein sich-selbst verhaltendes Verhaeltnis¹⁴. In this break, the Ricardian "object" (the individual commodity as embodied labor time) is dissolved into the self-reflexive relationship of a whole class of producers to itself. The object is dissolved into a "process", within capitalism, of labor power in contradiction with itself, in which the (apparent) "object" becomes a mere externality or "predicate", in Hegel's sense. It is a social relationship of production, mediated by an object.

Melville, as shall be seen in Part One, counterposes the "whiteness of the whale", Ahab's "white and turbid wake", to sensuousness and color, most immediately the sensuousness of the three harpooners of color, Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo. The "whiteness of the whale" is, among other things, abstraction, just as exchange value and value for Marx are abstractions from the sensuousness concrete reality ("use value") of particular commodities. (It is interesting that "whiteness" for Melville becomes "blankness" when collective action recedes as a reality in his work.)

Marx's transformation of the "thing", the object, into a relationship in the critique of political economy is paradigmatic for all the above-mentioned ideological expressions of the 1848-1850 tremor in the North Atlantic world. And

¹⁴-"Einerseits verwandeln sie Kapital aus einem Verhaeltnis in ein Ding...Die Oekonomen fassen das Kapital nicht als Verhaeltnis auf." ("On one hand they (the economists-L.G.) transform capital from a relationship into a thing...The economists do not interpret capital as a relationship." (my translation). K. Marx, Theorien über den Mehrwert, Pt. 3, in K. Marx/F. Engels, Werke, vol. 26.3, Berlin 1972, pp. 268-269.

Melville's shift from whiteness to blankness is part of that shift, like a shift from the Keplerian night as "plenum" to the Pascalian night as vacuum.

The appearance, in 1848, of communism as a possibility (which seemed palpable in the growing numbers and social power of "les classes laborieuses et dangereuses") put bourgeois ideology on the defensive for the first time. Whereas, in its battle against pre-capitalism, classical political economy had "eternalized" capitalist social relations for all of history, finding homo economicus everywhere, suddenly a force had appeared that asserted those relations to be merely transitional to another, higher form of society; bourgeois ideology saw critical weapons it had crafted passing into the hands of forces battling for some kind of society beyond capitalism. Without wanting to enter into contemporary debates about the "death of the subject"¹⁵, it is clear that the avant-garde current of modernist culture after 1850, was engaged in exactly the project of "emptying out" the old aesthetic forms in a kind of echo of Marx's discovery, "behind" political economy's "object" the commodity, of the relationship of labor power to itself. The avant-garde was exploring the relationship of artistic creation to itself in a new period in which art's claim to be a universal language had been lost¹⁶. The result, from 1850 to 1930, was a dissolution of the "object" of artistic representation similar to Marx's dissolution of the Ricardian commodity.

Melville, in Pierre, captures this new climate in his portrait of the Young America literary scene in New York at mid-century, in a passage sounding (with modifications for technical change) eerily contemporary:

"(Pierre) considered with what infinite readiness now, the most faithful portrait of any one could be taken by the Daguerrotype, whereas in former times a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats of the earth. How natural then the inference, that instead of, as in old times, immortalizing a genius, a portrait now only dayalized a dunce. Besides, when every body has his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having yours published at all. For if you are published along with Tom, Dick and Harry, and wear a coat of their cut, how then are you distinct from Tom, Dick and Harry?"¹⁷

¹⁵-Faced with the social realities of a class of collective subjects, figures such as Nietzsche and Heidegger began an attack on the very notion of "subjectivity"; later this "anti-humanist" impulse was taken up by certain currents of latter-day Marxists such as Althusser. But this debate would lead very far afield.

¹⁶-Many of Melville's characters after Moby Dick explicitly reject alienated communication, to the dismay of fulsome bourgeois figures: Pierre, with his refusal to "appear" along with every "Tom, Dick and Harry" in the literary carnival of Young America; Bartleby's refusal to "be reasonable"; the impoverished mountain girl Marianna in "The Piazza", or the sullen working-class characters in "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!", "Rich Man, Poor Man", or "A Tartarus of Maids".

¹⁷-Pierre, (New York, 1964), p. 291.

Capitalist commodity exchange, by 1850, was increasingly dominating production and was moving into the "subjective" realities of literary culture, i.e. the sphere of consumption (in the broadest sense) as well. In earlier periods, when "a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats", the "grandeur" of Charlemagne or Charles V, or still later Napoleon, Nelson or Washington, expressed what society could not do; the lordly status of the few, overlaid with a divine or semi-divine aura, was contrived to "compensate" for the seemingly inevitable and eternal poverty of the many. But the appearance of communism in 1848, in the world ruled by "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", was an expression, (still within the limited world of North Atlantic capitalist development) of what society could do; it anticipated a society no longer dominated by commodity exchange and thereby capable of overcoming the enforced distinctions between work and leisure. The gesture of negation of those who prepared and carried out the bourgeois revolution, the French libertines, the Encyclopedists, the Jacobins (with their attempt to found a religion of Reason) seemed to have universality because it compensated for social powers that were not yet in place; the lyrical gesture of negation, into the 1840's, of French romantic Bohemia and American Transcendentalism cracked up on the new "ugly revolution" of industry, the proletariat, the struggle to abolish slavery, expansionism, depression and the new world market, all ultimately expressing forces (and potentials) which went beyond any individual cultural revolt. After 1850, individual bourgeois negation, the "arc of negation without collectivity", was beneath the potential of society, and devolved into blankness, just as Pierre refused a consumable appearance alongside every "Tom, Dick and Harry". The "deflation" of the sacred into the pseudo-sacred, from Charlemagne to Charles V to Napoleon to the Parisian boulevard dandy or Broadway "coxcomb" was an expression of the growing collective power of society and announced the future in which the progress of society would no longer be at the expense of the individual, but would rather be the foundation of "an individuality as all-sided in its production as in its consumption" as Marx put it in the Grundrisse. In the decade 1840-1850, the North Atlantic world began to become aware that it could henceforth only produce "pharaohs with feet of clay", "sawdust Caesars", because the potential existed for re-absorbing social powers into individual powers¹⁸, and the cohesion of society could no longer be cemented by "great men" furnishing an image of life that could not be lived by all. On the contrary, the deflated "great men" after the mid-19th

¹⁸-1850 also marked a turning point in the evolution of the novel. The "classical" novel of the previous 100 years had largely drawn its energy from the antagonism of the individual and society. This was the era of Fielding, Richardson, Balzac, Stendhal, Dickens, as characterized and held up as a standard by figures such as Lukacs; Melville's work up to Moby Dick, based on individual figures embarked on a "quest", is part of the same period. Pierre (1852) is already a satire, almost a parody of this histrionic tension, and characters such as Bartleby or Benito Cereno or Israel Potter, to say nothing of the deflated figures of The Confidence Man, no longer display it at all.

century, from Louis Napoleon and Bismarck, by way of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini to the pure media creations of today's spin doctors, are symptoms, of an often deadly opera buffa (or "Walpurgisnacht") reflecting the failure of society to break through to another kind of life. As Marx put it in The Eighteenth Brumaire, contrasting the bourgeois rhetoric of 1789 with that of 1848: "There, the phrase exceeded the content; here, the content exceeds the phrase."

Modernism, neo-classical economics and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics are three interrelated responses, within bourgeois ideology, to this new historical situation in which "the content exceeds the phrase". Through his family, and most directly through his father's life and death, Melville inherited the movement from cosmic king to bourgeois revolutionary hero to the dandy's deflated attempt to live a heroic appearance through elite, "unique" consumption, and went beyond all of them into blankness.

The arc of self-deflating vestigial power of elites curves downward as the arc of the unrealized power of society as a whole curves upward.

The breakthrough of the 1840's was a breakthrough of praxis, articulated in Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" and, a few years earlier, by the far-less known Pole Cieszkowski¹⁹. Henceforth, outside of social practice, all questions become "scholastic"; praxis became the new reality against which all previous standards had to be judged, and largely superceded. Marx captured the impact of this shift on previous cultural forms in the Grundrisse (1857):

"What chance has Vulcan against Roberts & Co., Jupiter against the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Crédit Mobilier? All mythology overcomes and dominates the forces of nature in the imagination and by the imagination; it therefore vanishes with the advent of real mastery over them."²⁰

Julien Sorel, caressing his cameo of Napoleon, the dandy or coxcomb, and the New England Transcendentalist (Emerson, Thoreau) had in common the hopeless attempt to make different individual viewpoints, ultimately rooted in the earlier bourgeois revolutionary era, viable in an era converging toward 1848, when those viewpoints would shatter against collective practice and social realities far superior to them, and ultimately against the self-conscious articulation of the "relationship that relates itself to itself" labor power, and its adequate social expression, communism. They had in common different "contemplative" relationships²¹ to reality in an historical period, as indicated earlier, when such contemplative links to society as a whole could still seem (however illusorily) to complete powers that society did not yet have. They were stances of "negation" of existing conditions by the isolated bourgeois individual in a period when such negation still seemed connected to an (ultimately illusory) social totality, whether

¹⁹-Cieszkowski's (1814-1894) contribution to the philosophy of practice is briefly summarized in K. Loewith op. cit. , pp. 142-143.

²⁰-Grundrisse, (London, 1973), p. 110.

²¹-In the case of the dandy and boulevardier, it was an much a question of being contemplated through the prism of fashion.

Europe's Third Estate or America's Jeffersonian-Jacksonian "yeoman democracy". They existed prior to "the movement which is the answer to the riddle of history, and which knows itself to be that answer", as Marx put it.

After 1850, the modernist artist, the neo-classical economist and the physicist expounding the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics each in turn embodied stances of contemplative negation, confronting the dissolution of the object, after the appearance of self-conscious labor power in relation to itself, and ideologically combating the challenge posed by that emergence; after the eruption of a challenge saying in effect what society could do. Articulating viewpoints beneath the potential of collective practice, they constituted "the arc of negation without collectivity", not even an illusory one. They became articulations, like Melville's dying sperm whale, of a "world on the wane", but insisting that the demise of their world was the demise of the world. Their ideological thrust was to bury awareness of a higher organization of society that undermined their premises. These contemplative viewpoints, most explicit in neo-classical economics, were the appropriate ideology for the phase of capitalism in which large-scale luxury and pseudo-luxury consumption, pioneered in France, obscured the earlier Ricardian "production for production's sake" phase of capitalism.

Again, the uncanny epochal significance of Melville's father, the importer of French luxury goods.

By the early 21st century, we are more than sated with assertions that reality is a "construction". Marx's critique of religion as the alienated inversion of man's hopes for a better life into an other-worldly framework, Freud's idea of withdrawing the power of the ego's "projections" from cathected objects, or Nietzsche's idea of everything as a manifestation of the constituting aesthetic "will-to-power" have all but passed into popular culture. While both Marx and Freud remain firmly within a classical problematic of "appearance" and "reality", they, like Nietzsche (who claimed to overthrow such a problematic) are heirs to German idealist philosophy which, from Kant onward, developed around evolving formulations on the role of subjectivity in the "constitution" of the objective world. (Melville, as the following will show, was certainly familiar with at least Kantian philosophy through the American Transcendentalists, and often refers explicitly to German philosophy in his work.²²). But contemporary familiarity with popularized (and bowdlerized) ideas about "constitution" and "construction", not to mention the highly problematic character of their use after more than two decades of "post-modernism", should not obscure how radical they once were when the naive "objective" character of reality was accepted almost universally as all but self-evident. When Marx wrote, in the 1845 "Theses on Feuerbach" that

²²-In his 1849 trip to Europe, a year before writing Moby Dick, Melville spent many hours in conversation with a German philosopher on board, who further familiarized him with "Kant, Swedenborg and Schlegel". (Robertson-Lorant, p. 218)

"The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the object or perception, but not as sensuous human activity, praxis, not subjectively"²³ he consigned the theses (which imply, among other things, a critique of the entire Enlightenment) to "the gnawing critique of the mice" where they remained, in effect, for over a century, so much were they at odds with received ideas about "science".

Yet it was exactly the case that all previous materialism, by which Marx meant both the materialists of antiquity and of the Enlightenment, conceived of sensuousness "only in the form of the object", that is from a contemplative viewpoint. As a result, Marx continued, "in opposition to materialism the active side was developed by idealism", whose incorporation distinguished Marx from "all previous materialism".

It was this dissolution of the object into the relationship, as shown previously with regard to Ricardo, which characterizes the overall break, within North Atlantic culture, of the 1840's, and which defines the context for Melville's work.

More than 150 years after 1848, it is obvious that communism was only a tendency in the mid-19th century North Atlantic world. Among both advocates and opponents, its presence and medium-term prospects were exaggerated²⁴. Melville's works are filled with references to red flags in Paris, but, like almost all other contemporaries he obviously knew nothing of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" or his specific dissolution of Ricardian political economy, which was only worked out over the 15 years subsequent to 1848, not to mention the intricate use of Hegel (of whom there is next to no mention anywhere in Melville's work²⁵) in that dissolution. It is not clear what, if anything, he knew of the work of Fourier, Kelvin, Rumford or Clausius (none of whom are ever mentioned in his extensive scientific references in either White-Jacket and Moby Dick) in 19th century thermodynamics, although (as shall be shown in Part One) Moby Dick (as in the above quote about "a world on the wane") Moby Dick is full of entropic metaphors²⁶.

²³In L. Easton/ K. Guddat, eds. Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, New York, 1967, p. 400.

²⁴-For the opponents, one need only recall the opening passage of the Manifesto: "All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German police spies." (Marx/Engels, The Communist Manifesto, New York 1967, p. 78.)

²⁵-In Melville's late epic poem Clarel (1876), the German Jewish geologist Margoth is described as a "a Jew...an Israelite, say, Hegelized" (II.xix. 53-57)

²⁶-See Ch. X, "Green Skulls: Ahab's Entropism and Ishmael's Cyclicism" pp. 191-214 in R. Zoellner, The Salt-Sea Mastodon: A Reading of Moby

What Melville did know in his bones, from his years in working-class life, was the social superannuation of the middle-class Transcendentalist culture, leavened by Kantian philosophy, with which he was surrounded in the literary Young America movement, animated by his friend Duyckinck:

"...there were on Sundays on board this particular frigate of ours, and a clergyman also. He was a slender, middle-aged man, of an amiable deportment and irreproachable conversation; but I must say, that his sermons were but ill-calculated to benefit the crew. He had drank at the mystic fountain of Plato; his head had been turned by the Germans;

and this I will say, that White-Jacket himself saw him with Coleridge's Biographia Literaria in his hand.

Fancy, now, this transcendental divine standing behind a guncarriage on the main-deck, and addressing five hundred salt-sea sinners on the psycho- logical phenomenon of the soul, and the ontological necessity of every sailor's saving it at all hazards. He enlarged upon the follies of the ancient philosophers; learnedly alluded to the Phaedon of Plato; exposed the follies of Simplicius' Commentary on Aristotle's "De Coelo", by arraying against that clever pagan author the admired track of Tertullian - De Praescriptionibus Haereticorum - and concluded by a Sanskrit invocation..."²⁷

Right up to his satire of Emerson and Thoreau in The Confidence Man, (the book marking his virtual abandonment of fiction for poetry over the last 35 years of his life) Melville repeatedly lacerated the "beautiful souls" (schöne Seelen,

Dick. Berkeley, 1973. The full treatment of Melville's relationship to entropy is taken up in Ch. VIII.

²⁷-White-Jacket, p.

in Hegel's language) of middle-class sentimentality for their aloofness from, and irrelevance to harsh social reality and the "bloody maw" of nature. His critique, as will be shown in Part One, strongly echoed Marx's critique of the German Young Hegelians worked out between 1840 and 1848, the years of Melville's sea adventures and his apprenticeship as a writer.

The following study divides Melville's work into three basic phases. The first, treated in Part One, shows Melville's evolution to his first, and most resounding synthesis, Moby Dick. In the evolution of the 1845-1851 period (the five pre-Moby Dick works being treated in a concluding chapter) the early Melville, drawing on his years as a seaman in the South Pacific, enunciates the closest vision he will ever have of a society beyond capitalism, based on a vorticalist "return on a higher level" of elements of the primitive. This phase culminates in Ishmael's emergence from the maelstrom, following Moby Dick's sinking of the Pequod, on Queequeg's coffin. The vision of Moby Dick might be more accurately characterized as "the mutual destruction of the contending classes"²⁸ than any real affirmation of another, higher society.

Part Two, "The Mercurial Arc of Negation Without Collectivity", treats the 1851-1856 period of Melville's writing, in which both the "higher primitive" and the working class recede from his work. It is here that the contrast between the memories of cosmic kingship (ancient Egypt, Charlemagne) or its devolution into the unitary pseudo-sacred (Charles V, Napoleon, Nelson) is examined from the era ruled by the "Louis Phillippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil" and the concrete social mediation of the latter, luxury consumption. Thus Pierre travels from youthful bourgeois upstate New York idyll, to his "Memnon Stone" experience of the impossibility of poetry, to the Enceladus vision in the "utter night-desolation of the obscurest warehousing lanes" of Manhattan, to suicide in the Tombs. Thus the Spenserian idyll of Melville's narrator in "The Piazza" on "Charlemagne", Mt. Greylock in the Berkshires, is shattered by the encounter with the desolate, impoverished mountain girl, Marianna. Thus the majestic Charles V, 16th century world emperor, becomes the crumpled pathetic figure of Benito Cereno. Thus the frivolity of the latter-day London Templars is dashed against the blankness of the Berkshire mill girls. Thus, finally, Charlemagne, the world emperor, the "man in the purple robe", is announced by Black Guinea, the black minstrel figure at the beginning of The Confidence Man, and appears only in crumpled form as the cosmopolitan, Mississippi riverboat confidence man.

This devolution of the grandeur of "Charlemagne" into the tinsel of the modern, into the "dust of the sacred" of French luxury consumer goods, by mid-19th century capitalist realities, from the "City of Dis" (London, transposed from Dante), slavery, factory work and the "metaphysics of Indian hating" is the fundamental Melvillian moment. The "young exiled royalty" revisits again and again the image of his dying, bankrupt insane father, the failed importer of French luxury goods. He creates, in his initial period, first a series of authoritarian sea

²⁸-The phrase is from Marx/Engels, The Communist Manifesto, articulated as the dead-end alternative to the positive supercession of one mode of production by another.

captains, leading up to the "pharaoh", the "khan of the plank", Ahab, always presented against the world historical backdrop of the unitary sacred (Egypt, Charlemagne) and the unitary pseudo-sacred (Charles V, Napoleon), to counterbalance that crumpled figure. Revolt and the primitive fail Melville, and recede, but the devolution of the cosmic king continues to its last sarcastic convulsions in The Confidence Man.

Part Three, "The Hesitant Transition Beyond Negation", is the shortest of three parts and treats the long 1856-1891 period of Melville's obscurity and overall commitment to poetry. The warrior-monk moves in a sense to center stage with the epic (18,000 line) poem Clarel (1876) shot through with a kind of medievalism that only seems extreme if one overlooks the presence of the Templars and "Charlemagne" in the earlier work. Clarel, the Protestant divinity student looking for faith in Palestine, is still a figure of the quest, and is no less one of disillusionment than earlier protagonists, but this "ship of fools" is no longer a sea voyage or a Mississippi riverboat but rather a group of pilgrims in the desert of the Holy Land. Revolution, in a book written in the aftermath of the Paris Commune (1871) is only mentioned to be scathingly denounced by fearful or disillusioned figures. Clarel is ultimately a tour d'horizon of the spiritual desert of the West in the "age of positivism", and still shows (like the earlier works) a lively awareness of contemporary developments in philosophy, theology, and science. One gets the sense that Melville was able to write Clarel because the epic poem format had freed him from the novelistic problem of character.

In Billy Budd, the novel left unfinished at the time of Melville's death in 1891, there is no more negation. There is, as indicated at the outset, the vortical "return" in Melville's oeuvre of the "mariners, castaways and renegades", and the Adamic figure of Billy echoing the cosmic man, Queequeg. But in Billy Budd there is no Ishmael: the man with the quest has disappeared. Billy Budd echoes Moby Dick in many ways, and differs from it in many ways. Melville again portrays, in the "ragged edges" at the end of the book, something (though less dramatic) of the "mutual destruction of the contending classes". Billy dies; Vere dies; the "spot where Nelson fell" is echoed by the spar from which Billy hung, which for decades thereafter entered into seamen's lore. "Charlemagne" is still present in the "King's yarn" and the "King's rope". The negation of the middle-class intellectual, by disappearing altogether, gives way not to the triumph of unilateral Adamic affirmation, but in the final form of Melville's Miltonian universe, the angel pitted against radical evil.

**PART I: "A GEORGE WASHINGTON CANNIBALISTICALLY DEVELOPED":
THE EVOLVING TOTALITY OF COSMOBIOLOGY AND CLASS, 1845-1851**

Toward the Synthesis of Moby-Dick

Preface

In 1841, a 21-year old scion of a ruined upstate New York family of revolutionary pedigree goes to sea, the sole employment available to him at the depths of the economic depression remembered in American history as "the hungry Forties". In 1844, after years on various merchant ships and whalers, and seriously ill, he jumps ship in the Marquesas, where he spends several weeks in the care, possibly the captivity, of a tribe of Marquesan cannibals. His health restored, he abandons a somewhat idyllic existence (one possibly endangered by the cannibals in question) and boards a U.S. navy warship returning to America. Out of these experiences, he fashions two books, Typee and Omoo, which make his reputation as a writer of adventure stories and as the "literary discoverer" of the South Seas. In 1851, following two further minor novels based on life at sea, and the transitional book Mardi, he publishes a much more ponderous and metaphysical work, Moby Dick. Herman Melville's reputation is ruined with a public interested only in more adventure stories and ill-equipped to fathom the vast mytho-historical backdrop to this "whaling story". The failure of his next novel, Pierre, in 1852, seals his literary fate for his own lifetime. Melville sinks into obscurity, and remains obscure for the remaining four decades of his life. He continues to write novels, short stories and poetry, but never again attains the cosmic sweep of Moby Dick and never again attracts serious public attention. Compelled as he is to live out his working life as a customs official in New York, Melville's death in 1891 similarly attracts little attention. The man who put American literature onto the level of world literature is remembered in the manuals for decades thereafter as a "minor New York writer". Only in the 1920's does literary criticism unearth Moby Dick and place Melville in a perspective that does justice to his stature²⁹.

Such, in capsule form, is the life story and subsequent fate of one of the great figures of 19th century American and world fiction.

At first glance, it might seem arbitrary to draw any specific parallels between Melville and his virtual contemporary in Europe, Karl Marx. Melville was not a "political" writer in the strict sense of the term. It is true that many of Melville's writings, from the early novels of the sea White Jacket, Redburn and Moby Dick to his last, unfinished novel Billy Budd are preoccupied with problems of authority and revolt, but the revolt is as often as not centered on protagonists having more in common with 20th-century themes of "existential" revolt than with proletarian insurrection, even though the latter is almost always present. A closer

²⁹ -Spark, Clare. *Hunting Captain Ahab: psychological warfare and the Melville revival*. Kent State UP, 2001.

look at Moby Dick, in particular, nonetheless reveals an uncanny subterranean parallel between that novel and a book published by Marx in the following year, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Indeed, a less casual reading of Melville's book shows the American author to be not only quite familiar with the entire Napoleonic legend which is the subject of some of Marx's more memorable passages; it shows Melville to have filled his "whaling story" with extensive references to French revolutionary history generally. In fact, as this study will attempt to show, Melville weaves the question of charismatic authority so totally into his story of the destruction of the Pequod that it would not be an exaggeration to characterize Moby Dick as, among other things, a treatise on the origins and decline of the Napoleonic myth, one with specific references to both the immediately contemporary period of American politics-- that of the aftermath of the Mexican- American War and the sectional crisis it spawned-- and to American and world history generally.

As in Russia (the other ascendant world power identified in the 1840's by Alexis de Tocqueville along with America as one of the two future arbiters of the fate of Europe) the enduring expression of 19th-century social-political tensions in the U.S. occurred not in explicitly "political" works but in a mid-century literature which, like Russia's, was just coming to maturity as a world literature. It is true that the far more explosive position of the "marginal men" who wrote and commented on Russia's novels and poetry, the revolutionary intelligentsia, makes this far more obvious for Russia than for America. One of the secondary offshoots of this study will be an attempt to explain the historical significance of the far less prominent position in American society of the "marginal men" such as Melville or the New England Transcendentalists, relative to larger social movements, and above all the importance of the failure of these "Ishmaels" to achieve anything like the relationship to the American working class that their counterparts achieved in Russia. But here, we get ahead of ourselves.

The purpose of this study is to distill from Melville's writings, but chiefly from Moby Dick, a social-political "theory" as it related to American (and world) history in the 1840's. It will attempt to show that Moby Dick contains not merely a commentary on the immediate events of the 1840's, but also a more sweeping, near-prophetic view of America in world history generally. Having presented Melville's outlook and related it to the immediate context from which it sprang, it will look at how certain themes he identified played themselves out after the appearance of Moby Dick. The picture that emerges, it will be mooted, justifies a characterization of the pre-1852, "early" Melville as little less than an "American Marx" in "literary" form, with indeed more insight into America specifically than even Marx, to say nothing of several generations of Marx's epigones. For Melville achieved what few subsequent Marxists achieved, namely the ability to see American history without the distorting lenses of European history. He was thus able to show, in his analysis of the relationship between the intelligentsia, the working class, charismatic authority and the state, the great opportunity of the American social experience. But this requires understanding that opportunity, as few American radicals of the 20th century have, as something other than a pale shadow of the European experience. In Europe, intellectuals and working classes

so often appeared to move in directions outlined by Marx, but the long-term result of their efforts, for reasons foreseen by Melville, seem to have led to the same stasis and impotence in the face of the decline of bourgeois civilization that besets America.

The argument proceeds as follows. It has often been said that one fundamental difference between European and American social experience flows from the absence of any pre-capitalist historical point of reference in the U.S., and that as a consequence a relatively pure "Lockean" polity began with a "clean slate", so to speak. The result, according to analysts such as Louis Hartz, has been the marginality of either conservative or radical/socialist critics of American society³⁰. Both have lacked a pre-capitalist frame of reference from which to step outside the "dominant paradigm", either in the name of some lost unitary feudal idyll or of some post-capitalist future (or both) revealing the present social relations, in Marx's characterization, as transitional, not inscribed in the "nature of things". There is undoubtedly much truth in this analysis. But it misses something fundamental about America's "mytho-historical" self- understanding, namely a pre-capitalist frame of reference, not feudal certainly, but in the imagery of Old Testament prophecy, in the fundamental myth of the New Covenant in the wilderness, in the relationship between "Israel" and "Egypt" and "Babylon", in the perception of the peoples encountered in the New World as Adamic man in Paradise. The founders of America in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries did indeed "take their poetry from the past", in Marx's phrase, except that it was not the historically recognizable past of the decomposed Holy Roman Empire or of Greco-Roman antiquity, but rather a primordial myth drawn from the imagery of the Old Testament. This myth did not of course grow out of an attempt to recapitulate the real social relations of the ancient Near East (any more than European use of ancient or feudal historical imagery really involved a programmatic attempt to restore those relations), but rather from a deep identification between early American experience and that of the Jews "going out of Egypt". Central to this mytho-historical understanding, furthermore, was a "post-Mosaic" sensibility of man "after the fall" , making it possible to endow the peoples of color, initially Indian, then African, and finally Polynesian with which Protestant Americans came into contact in the "wilderness" with (largely subconscious) qualities of the Adamic myth. Bent under their severe Calvinist heritage, conceiving of the world and the self as fallen, early white Americans indeed were "damned in Paradise", and they attributed, largely to condemn them, "Adamic" qualities to these peoples, with consequences we shall see.

Europe, by contrast, was cut off by its historical experience from direct contact with "primitive" peoples within its own borders, although it certainly created, in every major country, its own Adamic projections into the New World and its peoples. But Europe labored under its own myths, first the myth of the "cosmic king" of the feudal and later absolutist state, culminating in the "Sun

³⁰ - The idea of the Lockean "clean slate" is well refuted in the book of Daniel Lazare, *The Frozen Republic*. New York, 1996. from another viewpoint than that argued here.

King" Louis XIV, and then the pseudo- mythical restoration of the shattered cosmic king, victim of regicide: the Napoleonic myth. In Europe, the centralist state haunted the "poetry of the past" of the conservative right, but also, through the phenomenon of Bonapartism with its ambiguous legacy, an important part of the left, far more indeed than Marxists at the time or later cared to concede, particularly when, in the 20th century, Bonapartism fused with the myth of the "Third Rome" and appeared, to many American and Western European "Ishmaels" to preside over the first "socialist" state in history. It was the great prophetic insight of Melville to have seen that the "Ishmaels" of the world, for all their seeming aloofness from it, had one fatal flaw deriving directly from their outlook, namely a subterranean identification with powerful "men of action", and hence a susceptibility to be enlisted in the warped projects of such men. But it was an even greater insight of Melville to have understood that the "Queequegs" of the world would see things differently, because their social relations freed them from entombment within the isolated bourgeois ego in its Calvinist (Ahab), liberal (Starbuck), and Transcendentalist (Ishmael) varieties.

After analyzing the Calvinist, liberal and Transcendentalist versions of American individualism, both historically and in Melville's portrayal of them, I will then trace in more detail the parallels and differences between Melville and Marx, with reference to the crises of 1848 in the U.S. and Europe; with respect to their views of nature and social relations mediated by nature; through their strikingly similar analyses of the frayed Napoleonic myth of the mid-19th century, and finally through their theories of history. Melville's view of history encompasses primitive society, Oriental despotism, Greco- Roman antiquity, feudalism and capitalism just as surely as that of Marx does, and like Marx, Melville does not understand these societies in a linear-progressive fashion (as did bourgeois-liberal views of progress) but rather in a "helical-vorticist" fashion, wherein elements of earlier mytho-historical modes "return" in higher modes. Melville's portrayal of Ishmael in the final scene of Moby Dick, swept into the vortex of the maelstrom and then carried back to the surface with Queequeg's coffin, is a condensed symbolic expression of the "supercession" of the wreckage of the world of the bourgeois ego by a fusion on a higher level with elements of the primordial past, much as Engels in the final passage of The Origins of the Family described communism. But Melville is no "primitive"; he has a critique of both primitivism and Orientalism, and indeed understood, through his critique of the Transcendentalists, both primitivism and Orientalism as aspects of the "Ishmael" consciousness. As a counter-point to the early Melville, indeed as a veritable "anti-Melville", I will analyze one real 19th century Ishmael, Henry Adams, with respect to Melville's critique of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (which Adams made the basis of his theory of history), as to Adams' strikingly parallel (if differently assessed) portrait of 19th century American history, and even his 1891 book on Tahiti, showing that he analyzed, from the viewpoint of the "unhappy consciousness" which Melville overcame, virtually every major theme touched upon by Melville. Finally, using themes developed by the Caribbean Marxist CLR James, author of an unusual and little-known study of Melville, I will attempt to outline a "program" for American

Marxism understood not from the vantage point of the "Ishmaels" but of the "Queequegs".

Ch. I. "Damned in Paradise": Calvinism, Liberalism and Transcendentalism as Three Modes of Estrangement from the Antemosaic Cosmic Man

In the beginning was the Creative Word, a word which, in the ancient traditions, was also sung, as with the *vak*³¹ of the Vedic hymns or the Sumerian cosmology. The Creative Word told the story of the Primordial or Cosmic Man, the Adam Kadmon of the Jewish Kabbala³², the Iranian Gayomart³³, the Purusha of

³¹-Cf. A. Padoux, Vac. The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras. SUNY Press, 1990. p. 22, on the tradition of the primordial giant as sung in the Rg Veda hymn to the Purusha (10.90).

³²-On Adam Kadmon, cf. G. Scholem, Kabbalah. New York, 1978. pp. 136-144; Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit, Frankfurt 1977, pp. 227-229; Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik, Frankfurt 1973, pp. 150-154.

³³-S. Hartman, Gayomart. Etude sur le syncretisme dans l'Ancien Iran. Uppsala 1953. H. Corbin, in Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, Princeton (Bollingen), 1977, pp. 46-50, writes: "Gayomart, the primordial Man, was created in Eran-Vej...When Ahriman succeeded in getting Death to penetrate him, Gayomart fell on his left side, and, since his body was composed of pure "metal"...seven metals emerged from his body...The anthropogony that forms a bridge between the cosmic significance of primordial man and speculations concerning the microcosm brings out very clearly the correspondance of the metals with the parts of the human body...What is grasped in this vision is once again the Event of pre-Adamic humanity...". Cf. also M. Molé, Culte, mythe et Cosmologie dans l'Iran Ancien(Paris 1963).

A whole body of literature debates the identification of the Gayomart with the Christian "Son of Man". Cf. C. Craeling, Anthropos and Son of Man. A Study in the Religious Syncretism of the Hellenistic Orient (1927) pp. 85-86; A. Christensen, Le Premier Homme et le Premier Roi dans l'Histoire legendaire des Iraniens, (1918); A.J. Carnoy, Iran's Primeval Heroes and the Myth of the First Man (1925); R. Reitzenstein, Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium (1921) R. Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (1938 English trans.) affirms a link. H. Güntert, Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland. Bedeutungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur indo-iranischen Religionsgeschichte und Altertumskunde (1923), like many others sources, links the Gayomart to the Indian Purusha (p. 320). A more contemporary study, critical of the idea of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism during the Babylonian exile, is E. Yamauchi, Persia and the Bible (1990). A summary of the whole scholarly debate, skeptical of the connection, is C. Colpe, Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythos (1961). Colpe's skepticism is stated on pp. 64-65. Another writer, however, makes a direct connection between the Gayomart, his Primordial Steer and the later Zoroastrian saviour, the Sayosyant (in D.

the Rg Veda³⁴, the cosmic king of Egypt.³⁵ The cosmic king or Primordial Man, moreover, often seemed to have a black face, and thus Egypt became known to the

Hellholm, ed. Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Middle East, Tübingen, 1989, p. 62 and ff.) An attempt to connect the primordial man and apocalyptic prophecy, as in the Book of Enoch, is on p. 73. For material on the relationship between Enoch and the Son of Man, cf. N. Cohn, Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: the Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith, New Haven 1993, Chs. 9-10. H. Kvanig, however, in Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and the Son of Man (1988) agrees with Colpe, p. 525.

M. Settegast attempts to see the Gayomart and his primordial bull in even earlier traditions, in Plato Prehistorian: 10,000 to 5,000 B.C. Myth, Religion, Archaeology. Hudson, 1986, pp. 109-110. The motif of a giant accompanied by a bull passes directly into American mythology as Paul Bunyan. Cf. however, D. Hoffmann, Paul Bunyan. Last of the Frontier Demigods, 2nd ed. Lincoln 1980, pp. 15-16 for skepticism about the value of such connections.

³⁴-H. Tull, The Vedic Origins of Karma. Cosmos as Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual, p. 49. Also M. Falk, Il mito psicologico nell'India antica. Milan, 1986. Ch. 2. Also pp. 477-484 for a critical discussion of possible links between different Indo-European traditions of the cosmic giant, in particular the Iranian Gayomart, and the Scandinavian Ymir, and the Indian myth. Finally, Hoàng-Son Hoàng-Sy-Quy, "Le mythe indien de l'homme cosmique dans son contexte culturel et dans son évolution", in Revue de l'Histoire des religions, April-June 1969, pp. 133-154. Paul Mus draws the connection between cosmic law and kingship in his analysis of the influence of Vedic traditions on Buddhism: "En personne ou par personne interposée, le roi devient le brahmane. S'égalant ainsi à l'ordre secret de l'univers, il devient un roi universel; non pas, comme nous le montrerons... un roi de l'univers, mais un roi qui, sur un territoire plus ou moins vaste, fait regner un ordre conforme à l'ordre universel, le royaume s'identifiant du même coup à une maquette magique de l'univers, et la magie royale ayant pour but de réaliser la concordance sympathique du macrocosme et du microcosme politique." Barabudur, Vol. 1. New York, 1978, p. 86.

³⁵- Carrouges, Michel. La mystique du surhomme. Paris, 1948. p. 276. On Egypt, the major source is R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz, Le temple de l'homme. 3 vols. Paris, 1957. "C'est par référence au système de l'intelligibilité anthropo-cosmique que l'on peut comprendre le sens de la connaissance historique et géographie des anciens", writes G. Gusdorf, Les sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale. Paris 1966, vol. 2, p. 79.

"L'astrobiologie...d'ou procede l'alchimie, definit un anthropo-cosmomorphisme qui autorise une insertion cohérente de l'homme dans le monde au sein duquel il est appelé à vivre" (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. 3, p. 53)

The concept of world giant is extended into modern literature by Joyce:

"Finn seems to be Joyce's equivalent of the giant man out of whose body the

Arabs as "al-Khem", black earth, the possible source of the word "alchemy"³⁶, black being the "nigrido" of the alchemical process.³⁷ The Creative Word had simultaneously created the cosmos and the state;³⁸ the pharaoh, for example, was a living deity on earth, who upon death returned to the sun-deity of which he was the instantiation, and re-emerged into morning every day to assure the order of the cosmos.³⁹

The cosmology of the Creative Word was imparted to the West most directly through Hebrew Genesis, but modern research uncovered a millennial evolution of antecedent cosmologies of the word in Egypt and the ancient Near East.⁴⁰ In Genesis, Moses asks Yahwe "What is your name?" and Yahwe replies: "I am that I am."⁴¹ But long before even Moses, in the Sumerian King List of 3000 BC, the exegesis of the unspeakable name of the deity⁴² in the cosmology of the Creative Word fused royalty, divinity and cosmos into the single act that created both the world and the state.⁴³ Even the conservative thinker Eric Voegelin, late in

world is made...in this sense Finn belongs to the family of the Indian Purusha, the Norse Ymir, and Kabbalistic Adam Kadmon...and Blake's Albion. (D.P. Verene, ed. Vico and Joyce, 1987, p. 9) Material on the Ymir is in H. Chadwick/N. Chadwick, The Growth of Literature (3 vols.), Cambridge UP, vol. 1, pp. 320-321.

³⁶-The etymological origins of the word "alchemy" in the Arabic word "al-kimiya" is given in René Alleau, "Alchimie", in the Encyclopaedia Universalis, Paris 1992, vol. 1, pp. 709-710. Alleau discusses possible pre-Arabic sources of the word, including the Egyptian word "kam-it" or "kem-it", meaning black. Plutarch gave this as the traditional name of Egypt (Alleau, *ibid.*), evoking "black earth" as well as the "blackness" characteristic of the decomposition of certain metals.

³⁷- Jung, C.G. Alchemical Studies. Princeton, 1967, pp. 68, 79n.

³⁸- Eliade, M. Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses. Vol. 1. Paris 1976. p. 103.

³⁹- Cf. above all Frankfort, H. Kingship and the Gods. 1948.

⁴⁰- Enel. Les origines de la genèse et l'enseignement des temples de l'ancienne Egypte. Paris, 1963. K. Luekert, Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire (1991) claims to show a continuity between ancient Egyptian theology and the Enneads of Plotinus.

⁴¹- Hegel's later formulation on the question of "naming" would be predication or determination (Bestimmung), and he would define the World Spirit as the relationship "that relates itself to itself" (sich selbst verhaltender Geist).

⁴²-On the divine name in the Zohar, cf. S.G. Wald, The Doctrine of the Divine Name. An Introduction to Classical Kabbalistic Theology, Atlanta, 1988, p. 84.

⁴³-Eliade, *op. cit.* Ch. 4 on the Sumerian King List, cf. also Herbert

his life, was compelled to admit a continuity between the shamanic uses of the Sumerian King List and the modern Gnosis of a Hegel.⁴⁴ The "Verbe au Ciel" is the primordial unity cosmology whose history can be traced to the origins of the state in the Fertile Crescent in the period 6000-3000 BC. Thus, much later, when Herman Melville wrote his "counter-Bible" Moby-Dick, the twin temptations of primitivism and Orientalism, the constant shadows of "cultural failure" in the West, which he posed and rejected, were already present in the origins of the ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian states from which the Western tradition emerged⁴⁵.

In Genesis, Yahwe asks the Primordial Man to name the animals⁴⁶: later, in the flood, it is the procession of animals which board the ark with Noah. In these

Butterfield, The Origins of History, New York 1981, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁴- "...I discovered the unilinear construction of history, from a divine-cosmic origin of order to the author's present, to be a symbolic form developed by the end of the third millennium B.C. in the empires of the Ancient Near East...impertinent distortions and falsifications of history which today are called interpretations, were for instance in Hegel's Philosophy of History the same as the Sumerian King List. What exactly was modern about modernity, if the great struggle among historiogenetic constructions, among Enlightened Progressivism, Comtism, Hegelianism, Marxism, had to be understood as a dogmatomachy among imperialist speculators in the best cosmological style?" (E. Voegelin, Order and History. Vol. 4: The Ecumenic Age (Baton Rouge, 1974), pp. 7-8. Voegelin was constantly attempting to show the modern theoretical tradition of Hegel and Marx as a "gnosticism" rooted in the Gnostic philosophical legacy of late antiquity. In another passage, he writes: "Das Marxsche Bekenntnis wiederholt die Umdeutung des Prometheus-Symbols, die sich in einer Alchemistschrift des 3.J.h. findet" (Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis, 1959, p. 49) See also the link drawn between Hegel and sorcery (note 258 below). W. Burkert, on the other hand, sees Pythagoras and Plato themselves as heirs of shamanism: cf. Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism. Harvard UP, 1972, pp. 162-165. Kolakowski also sees Hegel as the often unacknowledged bridge between mysticism and a theory of history: "La phénoménologie de Hegel tend à imposer aux historiens; c'est la une perspective à la séduction de laquelle il est facile de céder, car elle explique beaucoup, mais elle déforme beaucoup, également, en nous contraignant à organiser l'ancienne mystique dans les catégories de l'histoire, qui lui sont étrangères". (L. Kolakowski, Chrétiens sans église. La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siècle (Paris 1969), p. 589)

⁴⁵"Am Anfang der europäisch-exaktwissenschaftlichen Denkens steht also die Harmonik" (H. Kayser, Akroasis, 1964, p. 12)

⁴⁶-Friedrich Weinreb, Der göttliche Bauplan der Welt, Zurich 1966, p. 82. A general philosophical and theological perspective on Adam is provided in P. Ricoeur, Philosophie de la Volonté. (Paris 1960), vol. 2: Finitude et culpabilité: La Symbolique du Mal, Ch. III "Le Mythe 'Adamique' et la

stories is contained the idea: the word descended in flesh, man as the ascent of the totality of species⁴⁷. When man names the procession of animals, he partakes of the cosmic act of creation and participates in the exegesis of the unspeakable name of God Yahwe⁴⁸ which the cosmos is. He thereby knows the "vak", the Word or vibration that brought man into existence to "know itself".⁴⁹ This cosmology, as the Dogon elder Ogotemmel told French ethnographer Marcel Griaule, is a cosmology of song and dance, a festive procession, "the world order in color and movement".⁵⁰

Thus the modern reader of Moby Dick, wondering about the purpose of Melville's lengthy discussions of cetology, paleontology⁵¹, mythologies of the

vision 'Eschatologique' de l'Histoire". "Les symboles dominants de l'eschatologie, ce sont les symboles du 'Fils de l'Homme' et du 'second Adam'" (p. 244). "Boehme's Christ, the second Adam, was like Adam before the fall" , in M.L. Bailey, Milton and Jakob Boehme, 1914, p. 162. "Das Alphabet der Natursprache ist die gesammte Creation", as Boehme put it (quoted in J. Canteins, La voie des lettres. Tradition cachée en Israel et en Islam. (Paris 1981), p. 91. "Cette langue 'naturelle' est transcendée chez Boehme dans ce qu'il appelle Natursprache...Boehme identifie la Natursprache a la Langue primordiale...(ibid. p. 88) V. Sachs locates Melville directly in this tradition: "Melville...repeats the paradigmatical art of Thot, who created letters, numbers and geometrical forms to serve as a remedy against the loss of the world. Through the mirror game, the apparent writing disintegrates and new figures emerge, creating hieroglyphs, the sacred signs that reveal the Invisible to the initiate" (The Game of Creation, Paris, 1982, p. 37)

47-"Le néo-platonisme, avec la procession des hypostases, et le chemin inverse de remontée vers l'absolu, permettait d'inscrire la totalité du réel dans le double mouvement de la descendance et de l'ascendance dont l'Un éternel fournit le couronnement suprême". (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. XIII, p. 46)

48-On different theories of the name of God, cf. G. Scholem, "Der Name Gottes und die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala", in Judaica 3, 2nd ed. Frankfurt, 1977, pp. 7-70.

49-Such an interpretation of Genesis as a "theophany" is presented in J.S. Erigena's 9th century work De divisione naturae. Cf. M.A. Sells, Mystical Languages of Unsayng. Chicago, 1994. pp. 43-45. M.H. Abrams, in Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York 1973, pp. 154ff) locates Erigena in a neo-Platonic tradition of "divided and reunited man", related to Kabbala, Hermeticism, Gnosticism and other traditions, and leading to modern romanticism and revolution.

50- Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmel, Oxford 1965, p. 189.

51-The 20th century reader can only grasp with difficulty the role of geology, paleontology and biology in 18th and 19th century thought and culture. The Darwin controversy after 1859 is only one of many debates

whale, and references to Cuvier, Linnaeus, Agassiz and Leuwenhoek, might locate them in this "antemosaic"⁵² tradition of "cosmic procession" at the head of which stands man, the latter being, as Melville implies, incomplete, like the Cologne Cathedral of the Holy Roman princes.

Egypt, Africa, Yawhe, Moses: we are in the world of the Old Testament, the world, for example, of the "Song of Songs", of the relationship between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the presence of Africa in the background of Pharaonic Egypt⁵³, a presence later transposed, in the 14th century, to the legend

where scientific findings called into question the truth of the Bible, and were heatedly disputed as a result. For one excellent study of this relationship between natural science and culture, cf. Paolo Rossi. The Dark Abyss of Time. The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico. Chicago 1987 (Italian original 1979), particularly Ch. 36 "The Death of Adam", pp. 267-270.

⁵²-Herman Melville, Moby Dick, New York, 1956, p. 351.

⁵³-C.G. Seligman, Egypt and Negro Africa: a Study in Divine Kingship, London 1934. The relationship between African and Egyptian culture in antiquity was perhaps argued most forcefully in Chaikh Anta Siop, Nations negres et culture. 2 vols. Paris 1979 (3rd Ed.; first published 1954). An excellent critique of Diop's overall world view is by M. Diouf and M. Mbodj "The Shadow of Cheikh Anta Diop", in V.Y. Mudimbe, ed. The Surreptitious Speech (Chicago 1992), pp. 118-135. Another assertion of the strong version of the black Egypt thesis is F. Iniesta, Antiguo Egipto: La nacion negra (1989). D.B. Redford sees "a broad and unmistakably African *soubassement*" in the divine monarchy of the First Dynasty (Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times, Princeton, 1992, p. 24) The theme of Africa and Egypt came to the center of controversy in the U.S. with the publication of Martin Bernal's Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Western Civilization, 2 of 4 projected vols. , New Brunswick, 1987 and 1991. One of the more striking attempts to show an ancient Egyptian influence on the Dogon, today inhabitants of the Sahel, is J.N. Lambert, "Hermopolis, Memphis, Latopolis et les Dogon", in Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, CCV-2, 1988, pp. 133-149. Budge, (in Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection, New York 1973, vol. 1, p. 349) for his part, writes "(Egyptian religion) is an African product, and can only be rightly appreciated and understood when considered in connection with what we know of modern African religion." For a polemical reply to Bernal, cf. V. Lambropoulos, The Rise of Eurocentrism, Princeton, 1993, pp. 91-94. For Egyptian influence on ancient Greece as reported by the Greeks themselves, cf. C. Froidefond, Le mirage égyptien dans la littérature grecque d'Homère à Aristote (Paris 1971). Aeschylus already refers to Egypt as "black earth" (p. 79). E. Iversen (The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition, 2nd ed. Princeton, 1993) pp. 38-39 confirms Froidefond's view. S. Amin, in Eurocentrism (New York, 1989), pp. 18-20, also sees Egypt's "moral universalism" influencing the Greeks. A

of the Ethiopian king Prester John on the Catalan Map of 1375, on the eve of the era of the Western voyages of discovery.⁵⁴ But the world of Adam Kadmon,⁵⁵ of

version of the "black Egypt" thesis is also presented in I. Reed, Mumbo Jumbo (New York, 1972).

⁵⁴-On the Prester John legend, cf. Ronald Sanders, Lost Tribes and Promised Lands: the Origins of American Racism. Boston, 1978, ch. 3; J.E. Harris, Pillars In Ethiopian History (1974) pp. 92-93, 120-121. Also A. Faivre, Accès de l'esoterisme occidental (Paris 1986), p. 135: "...l'Ethiopie passe pour le pays où il réside, on voit en lui un gardien du Graal venu d'Asie, un roi caché, l'empereur du dernier jour." Speaking of an early English ethnographic report, H.C. Porter writes that "this extraordinary pot-pourri borrows much from Pliny's description of Africa and the 'Ethiopians'" (The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian, 1500-1660 (1979), p. 39. J.B. Friedman sees a more ambiguous status in Ethiopia in the medieval West: "Historically attitudes toward Ethiopia had been ambivalent...Color polarities were easily interchanged with moral polarities, and the blackness of immorality contrasted with the whiteness of salvation." (in The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought, Harvard UP, 1981, pp. 64-65). Black imagery reached deep into Western culture prior to the 17th century and the emergence of racism; cf. E. Begg, The Cult of the Black Virgin, London 1985, again documents a link to Egypt (p. 43): "The most direct influence on the cult and image of the Black Virgin derives without doubt from three goddesses of the ancient Near East, Isis, Cybele and Diana of the Ephesians...their influence came from the all-pervading universalism of the later Roman Empire..." Far more comprehensive is P. Kaplan, The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art, Ann Arbor 1985. This black presence in medieval Europe is further connected to cosmic kingship: "for the primary motive (for black figures) we must look instead at the unusual interest taken in black Africans by members of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. " (p. 10) "Among the Moslems who remained in Sicily after its return to Christian rule in the eleventh century were many blacks, and this was where the Staufens first encountered them...The proclivity for blacks at Frederick's court was not merely a capricious idiosyncrasy, but a means of suggesting the Hohenstaufens' claim to a universal imperial sovereignty..." (Kaplan, op. cit. p. 10). The definitive study for the history prior to the 17th century is L. Bugner, ed. The Image of the Black in Western Art. Harvard UP. Vol. 1 (1976) From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire documents an important black presence in ancient Egypt but does not substantiate the stronger "black Egypt" claim (cf. pp. 33-88). A general overview of the black presence in the ancient world from Egypt to late antiquity, cf. F. Snowden, Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks, Harvard UP 1983. "...the Ethiopian imagery dramatically emphasized the ecumenical character of Christianity..." (p. 107) In an earlier work, Snowden writes: "social intercourse did not give rise among the Greeks and Romans to the color prejudice of certain later western societies.

the Primordial Man, of Queequeg⁵⁶, as Melville calls him, is "antemosaic": there is already, at the origins of the three Abrahamic faiths Judaism, Christianity, Islam, a fall, a "de-cosmization"⁵⁷, present if not in Genesis then in the sclerotic legal formalism of Talmud and Torah that came to be the mainstream of Judaism, and which marked the mainstream of the two later breakaway monotheisms. The departure from Egypt is the metaphor for exile: it is the exile from the decadence of the pharaohs, but it is also a metaphor for the exile from the unitary cosmology taught to Moses in the sanctuaries of Memphis.⁵⁸ The "antemosaic" world is the

The Greeks and Romans developed no doctrines of white superiority unsupported by facts or theoretical justifications for a color bar." (Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience, Harvard UP 1970, pp. 182-183)

⁵⁵-On Adam Kadmon, the First Man of Jewish mysticism, in addition to G. Scholem (footnote 2) op. cit. cf. F. Warrain, La théodicée de la Kabbale (Paris, 1949), pp. 74-75.

⁵⁶The only other writer known to this study who identifies Queequeg as the "cosmic man" is E. Zolla, in I Letterati e lo sciamano, Milan 1969, p. 173.

⁵⁷-The Great Mother suppressed in this de-cosmization is analyzed in P. Solié, La Femme Essentielle. Mythanalyse de la Grande Mère et de ses Fils-Amants. Paris 1980. Also E. Neumann, Die grosse Mutter, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1974. On a Jewish myth of an evil woman associated with blackness, cf. J. Bril. Lilith, ou la Mère obscure (Paris 1981) "The rise of kingship in Israel not only marked the end of the Tribal League and the era of charismatic "Judges"--it also marked the end of numerous pagan elements in Israel's worship, at least from an official point of view." (D. Christenson. Transformation of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy. Missoula, 1975, p. 39.) For Voegelin the movement from the cosmic states of the ancient Near East to the emergence of Israel is the movement from cosmology to history. In his formulation "...in the spiritual sense, Israel had reached the promised land when it had wandered from the cosmological Sheol to the mamlakah, the royal domain, the Kingdom of God." (op. cit. vol. 1, p. 114) However, in vol. 4 of the same study, he concedes a historical sense already present in the cosmic states. cf. footnote 13 above. N. Sarna writes: "In Israel, each rite was severed from its magical and mythical roots....The entire complex was divested of the former meanings and completely reinterpreted...it was historicized and transformed into a revolutionary new creation in commemoration and celebration of God's mighty deeds in liberating his people from Egyptian tyranny." (in Exploring Exodus. The Heritage of Biblical Israel. New York, 1986, p. 89.) J. Taubes put it succinctly: "In der Prophetie Israels meldet sich ein neues Prinzip an: der Geist der Apokalyptik", in Abendländische Eschatologie, Munich 1991, p. 21.

⁵⁸-Enel, op. cit.; also Johannes Lehmann, Moses- Der Mann aus Ägypten. Hamburg, 1983, pp. 41ff. An opposing interpretation is R. Draï, La sortie

world before the interdiction on image-making; it is a "mythopoeic" world prior to the emergence of logos from mythos.⁵⁹ And insofar as it is a separation from a "mythopoeic" world, it is also separation from the myth of the Cosmic King. If Henri Frankfort is right that the Mosaic Yahwe was a transitional god who retained a mythopoeic character by his personal, vengeful relationship to the chosen people⁶⁰, the process of "de-cosmization" is completed with the autonomization of the logos in early Greek philosophy in the 6th century BC⁶¹. This transition is later codified in the Hellenized New Testament of the apostle Paul. The Western logos, derived through Yahwe from the ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian cosmologies of the Creative Word, appears for the first time as the absolute, as non-determination, the separation from any mythopoeic image⁶²: later, Ahab, the

d'Egypte. L'invention de la liberté. Paris, 1986. Ricoeur (op. cit. pp. 190-191) sees this exit from myth as tied to eschatology: "le drame, en se démythologisant, s'historise, et en s'historisant provoque une sorte de report 'eschatologique' a son dénouement". Ainsi le drame de la création éclaterait non seulement vers l'Homme primordial, vers la contingence historique, mais vers la figure beaucoup plus récente du 'Fils de l'Homme' dont Daniel et Hénoc attendent la venue "du haut des cieux"; du Roi messianique, intérieur a l'histoire, au Fils de l'Homme, transcendent, céleste, la filiation serait continue"... "Homme des derniers temps et Homme primitif correspondent à la limite: n'est pas parce qu'ils procèdent l'un et l'autre de la figure du Roi, établie depuis toujours et instaurée pour toujours?

M. Walzer's Exodus and Revolution (New York, 1985) offers an analysis of the exodus metaphor and its connection to the revolutionary tradition; cf. pp. 36-40 for the ambiguities of the meaning of Egypt in the exodus story.

⁵⁹-On this transition, cf. Henri Frankfort et al. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, Chicago, 1977, Ch. XII. P.D. Hanson also writes "The move toward a more mythopoeic view which is discernible in early apocalyptic is thus not an unexpected adventure into uncharted territory; it is a return to some of Israel's most ancient roots." (The Dawn of Apocalyptic. Philadelphia, 1979, p. 17)

⁶⁰-Ibid.

⁶¹-Ibid. On the question of cosmology and its fate in the Greek-Jewish synthesis, cf. H.C. Stafford, Culture and Cosmology: Essays on the Birth of a World View (1981). "Besides their roles as lords of their manors and leaders in their local communities, most major gods held office and had roles to play on the national, or cosmic, scene" T. Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion, New Haven 1976, p. 84. "To establish a government is an essay in world creation. When man creates the cosmos of political order, he analogically repeats the divine creation of the cosmos." E. Voegelin, Order and History. Vol. 1: Israel and Revelation. Baton Rouge, 1956. p. 16.

⁶²-Another perspective that emphasizes the anti-mythic character of the Hebrew rejection of myth is H. Schneidau, Sacred Discontent. The Bible and

mutilated man of resentment, will pursue the white symbol of this decosmized and demythified abstraction to the ends of the earth and to the destruction of himself, his crew, and above all the "men of color", the Primordial Men Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, who come from that "antemosaic" world from which Ahab is exiled.

Three millennia after Moses, the Protestants who arrived on the shores of New England brought with them the whole Old Testament imagery of the exile from Pharaonic Egypt and the New Covenant in the wilderness.⁶³ They found themselves in the presence of both a wilderness and of primitives who to them were nothing if not a living memory of man in the Adamic state⁶⁴. They had just

Western Tradition. Berkeley, 1976. "It would appear that the word that might best describe the thrust of Biblical thought is demythologizing." (p. 12) (our emphasis)

⁶³-Among the abundant works on this theme, cf. Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role, Chicago 1968; A. Zakai, Exile and Kingdom. History and apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America (1992); also P. Zamora, ed. The Apocalyptic Vision in America, Bowling Green, 1982, Chs. 1,3. On the way in which Puritan identification with ancient Israel entered the literary tradition, cf. M.I. Lowance, Jr. The Languages of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists. Harvard UP 1980. Cf. for example Lowance's treatment of Samuel Mather (Ch. 4) "The Puritan Jeremiad set out the sacred history of the New World", writes S. Bercovich; "the eighteenth-century jeremiad established the typology of America's mission". (The American Jeremiad, Madison 1978, p. 93) R. Bellah, in The Broken Covenant (1975), writes (p. 37) that Indian extermination "is the primal crime upon which American society is based.

Still other peoples living outside the European dream- Africans, with their own immense cosmological symbolism- were forced to become actors in the European dream under the most tragic circumstances possible.

Thus as the very beginning of American society there was a double crime, the incalculable consequences of which still stalk the land. We must ask what in the dream of white America kept so many for so long...from seeing any crime at all. For that we need to consider the ambiguities of choseness."

C.G. Jung, for one, in his 1927 essay "Mind and Earth", argued that "the American presents a strange picture, a European with Negro behaviour and an Indian soul". Quoted in K. Kerrane/ R. Grossinger, eds. Baseball Diamonds: Tales, Traces, Visions and Voodoo from a Native American Rite (1980), p. 16. Carl Van Vechten was another 1920's figure who saw Indians and blacks as central to American cultural identity (cf. M. Fabre, La rive noire (Paris 1985), p. 56.

⁶⁴-On the wilderness theme, Frederick Turner, Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness, New York 1980; also Peter N.

separated themselves, in the previous century, from the "image-making" of the Catholic Church, sacred dimension of that Holy Roman Empire to which Melville makes such constant allusion in Moby Dick. They were a second exile; they founded America with an often conscious and explicit reference to the Jewish exile; they and their immediate ancestors had just carried out a revolution centered on the desire to return to the directness and fundamentals of primitive Christianity, prior to Paul, the Patristic period, and the Popes. If the Catholic Church had been the "body of Christ", then the "body politic" founded by Calvinists in Geneva, Holland, Scotland and England, and later by dissident Protestants in North America⁶⁵, was a New Covenant broken out of the imagistic Marial Church⁶⁶. In

Carroll, Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629-1700, Columbia 1969. The definitive survey of all the ideologies borrowed from Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian sources to explain the nature of the inhabitants of the New World is G. Gliozzi, Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologie coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500-1700). Florence 1976. Gerbi also points out that "...Humboldt was to note that all the writers of the sixteenth century...had a tendency 'to rediscover amongst newly discovered peoples everything that the Greeks tell us about the earliest epoch of the world and of the customs of the barbarian Scythians and Africans". (Nature in the New World, Pittsburgh 1985, p. 265) Another work making the link between the imperial ideal of antiquity and the prism through which early modern Europe encountered other peoples is D. Quint, Epic and Empire. Princeton, 1993. Ch. 3 deals with Camoes.

⁶⁵-On the emergence of Calvinist political discourse out of the body imagery of 16th and 17th century political thought, and the attack thereupon aimed at the "organic" metaphor associated with Catholicism, cf. M. Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints, New York, 1970, pp. 171-177; also the remarks of Norman O. Brown on the "body politic" in Love's Body, New York, 1966, pp. 16-21. For a radically opposed view, cf. S. Trigano, La demeure oubliée. Genèse religieuse du politique. Paris 1984. p. 216: "La démocratie occidentale moderne se construit littéralement sur les ruines de l'Etat hébreu et l'exaltation lyrique de ce dernier ouvre sur sa chute la plus absolue". According to Taubes "Die letzten Wellen des Täuferturns schlagen an die Küste Englands und strömen in den calvinischen Protestantismus ein. Das Puritanertum ist schon bei Cromwell und viel stärker noch in den amerikanischen Kolonialstaaten täuferisch durchsetzt." (op. cit. p 119)

⁶⁶- "it seems to me a fact of the highest importance that, in the transition from the semi-anarchist feudal states and city-federations to the uniform bureaucratic modern sovereign State, the Church was an example of the only sovereign institution which governed through a vast body of officials, supported by unconditional obedience, and using a formal written law...it might even be said that the modern conception of the state...found its first method of orientation in the corpus mysticum of the Church..." (E. Troelsch, Social Teachings of the Christian Churches 2 vols. (1911; 1931 ed.), in vol.

the course of the 17th century, in the slave trade, the "Anglo-American" North American oikoumene would populate the New World with African slaves, and the Prester John of the 14th century would be transformed into the more familiar images of modern racism⁶⁷, thus joining the "Daggoos" to the "Tashtegos" already present in the New World. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, these Anglo-American Protestants would begin to arrive in Polynesia, whereby the world of "Queequeg" was similarly overrun by, first, missionaries and, shortly thereafter, gunboats, so that Melville, during his stay in the Marquesas in 1844, was arguably one of the last Westerners to have contact with a relatively intact Polynesian culture on the eve of its definitive demise⁶⁸.

In Europe, in 1840, when men dreamed of unity before the fall, they remembered first of all history⁶⁹, as embodied in the unity of the Holy Roman Empire and its "cosmic kings" Charlemagne⁷⁰ and Frederick Barbarossa⁷¹, a unity

1, p. 325.

⁶⁷-R. Sanders, op. cit. Ch. 10.

⁶⁸-On the utopian dimensions acquired by Polynesia during the Enlightenment, cf. E. Vibart, Tahiti. Naissance d'un paradis au siècle des Lumières. Paris, 1987. Melville's Polynesian adventures indeed form the virtual epilogue to A. Moorehead, The Fatal Impact: The Invasion of the South Pacific, 1767-1840 (London 1966), pp. 240-241. Melville in the South Seas is also discussed in P. Snow/S. Waive, The People from the Horizon. Oxford, 1979. pp. 201-203.

⁶⁹-Cf. Cesar Grana, Modernity and its Discontents, New York, 1967.

⁷⁰-On the archetypal status of Charlemagne, cf. D. Boutet, Charlemagne et Arthur, ou le roi imaginaire. Paris 1992. "Heritage de l'antiquité", writes R. Folz, "l'idée impériale a été l'un des thèmes dominants du devenir humain". L'idée d'Empire en Occident du Ve au XIVe siècle, Paris 1958, p. 5. This imperial vision was later central to Dante, as his description of the struggle for universal empire in De Monarchia (1904 ed. p. 110) attests. Cf. also A. De Angelis, Il Concetto d'Imperium e la Comunità supranazionale in Dante. 1965. Dante's major ancient source of the imperial dream is explored in P. Hardie, Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium (1986) On the general evolution of the myth of Rome during the medieval period, cf. E.D. Theseider, L'Idée Impériale di Roma nella Tradizione del Medioevo, Milan 1942. The pharaonic echoes are already clear with Augustus: "In the standardized visual language of Roman Imperial art, the emperor and the state stood at the center...Since the compact, pyramidal structure of Roman society was entirely oriented toward its apex, the image of the emperor easily became the model for every individual." (P. Zanker, The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus, Ann Arbor 1990, pp. 335-336.)

⁷¹-On the theme of "cosmic kingship", the tradition of the Caesars and of the Oriental overtones of kingship in the Holy Roman Empire, cf. Ernst Kantorowicz, Frederick the Second, New York, 1931; also Norman Cohn,

shattered forever by the French Revolution and reconstituted in frayed form in the "pharaoh with the feet of clay", Napoleon and his successors. In America, the world from Nantucket to Charleston confronted the Protestant imagination with a memory, not of kings and popes, but of the world of the Old Testament, rematerialized before the newly (and twice) "de-cosmized" Ahabs of Nantucket, the Ahab who says:

"...I leave a white and turbid wake, pale waters, paler cheeks, where'er I sail. The envious billows sidelong swell to overwhelm my track; let them, but first I pass.

Yonder, by the ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm waves blush like wine. The gold brow plumbs the blue. The diver sun...goes down; my soul mounts up! Is this, then, the crown too heavy that I wear? this Iron Crown of Lombardy...Dry heat upon my brow? Oh! time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and malignantly! damned in the midst of paradise!...⁷²

This American Protestant, above all New England Puritan consciousness, having recreated the Mosaic world of exile for itself, surrounded by shadows of Primordial Men, indeed lacked the "low enjoying power", was indeed "damned in the midst of paradise" as it left the "white and turbid wake" wherever it went, prepared as it was to bring the entire world to ruin⁷³ in an attempt to avenge the

The Pursuit of the Millennium, New York 1981, Ch. 6, discusses Frederick II as a "Carolus redivivus", a resurrected Charlemagne. R. Folz writes that "Les royaumes francs sont ainsi le support de l'empire romain, dont la survie est la condition même du salut du monde." (op. cit. p. 57) "The Emperor Henry III, from whom Dante expected the regeneration of Italy and the whole Christian world, is likened to the rising sun..." M.A. Orr, Dante and the Early Astronomers (1913), p. 172. A study of Kantorowicz himself is A. Boureau, Histoires d'un historien. Kantorowicz (Paris, 1990). Despite its Jungian perspective, J.W. Perry's Lord of the Four Quarters: The Mythology of Kingship (New York, 1991) parallels some of the perspective argued here. Perry calls the early phase of cosmic kingship "the archaic era of incarnated myth" (p. 25).

⁷²-Herman Melville. Moby Dick, Berkeley, 1979, p. 171. All subsequent quotes from this edition. Note reference to the "Iron Crown of Lombardy", with regard to the Holy Roman Empire.

⁷³-This "American Gothic" quality, of which Ahab is a prototype, grows out of the theological legacy of the Puritans: "But the slaughter of the Indians, who would not yield their lands to the carriers of utopia, and the abominations of the slave trade, in which the black man, rum and money were inextricably entwined in a knot of guilt, provided new evidence that evil did not remain with the world that had been left behind". (L. Fiedler,

fundamental, original crime of de-cosmization, exile from antemosaic paradise, and the vestiges of Primordial Man, Indians, Africans and Polynesians, which it enlisted in the venture were always there to remind it of the Adamic world from which it was excluded⁷⁴.

Love and Death in the American Novel, New York 1960, p. 143) American Gothic sensibility is traced out in D. Punter, The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day (1980). For a discussion of the "Gothic" debate over radical evil among the German romantics, influenced by Boehme, cf. C. Schulte. Radikal böse. Die Karriere des Bösen von Kant bis Nietzsche. Munich, 2nd ed. 1991. On the theological, psychoanalytic and philosophical career of "evil" in the Western tradition, cf. E. Drewermann. Strukturen des Bösen. 3 vols. Paderborn, 1988.

⁷⁴-One writer who saw American culture dominated by the ghost of the Indian was William Carlos Williams: "No, we are not Indians but are men of their world....It is we who run to the shore naked, we who cried "Heavenly Man"! These are the inhabitants of our souls...Fierce and implacable we kill them but their souls dominate us..." (In the American Grain, 1925, pp. 39-40) Williams was also one of the first to identify Thomas Morton, 17th century author of the New English Canaan and a hedonist who defied the Puritans, as the founder of the Adamic, anti-Puritan counter-tradition (op. cit. p. 78 and ff) Fiedler sees a similar strain in the 19th century: "With Natty, (Cooper) showed an immunity to Calvinism and its vestigial influences...between them, they represent the beginning of an anti-Puritan strain in our literature that sustains the credo of original innocence" (op. cit. p. 184). One classic statement of this strain is R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam (New York, 1955). Writing of the late 19th century, but in a way relevant to the tension between Melville and the Transcendentalists, Henry Nash Smith wrote: "...Indeed, since the (Adamic) myth affirmed the impossibility of disaster or suffering within the garden, it was unable to deal with any of the dark or tragic outcomes of human experience" (Virgin Land, New York 1950, p. 188) David W. Noble writes that "the American Adam was the theological creation of the English thinkers of 1600 who supposed that it was possible to flee from the sinfulness of old England to the innocence of New England." (The Eternal Adam and the New World Garden. The Central Myth in the American Novel Since 1820, 1965, p. 25). The American folklorist Constance Rourke agreed: "For Rourke, Hakluyt provided proof that America was born in a mythic vision" (J.S. Rubin, Constance Rourke and American Culture (1980), p. 104. R. Bellah, in op. cit. (1975), p. 5, puts it somewhat differently: "The origin myth of America in this broader perspective is origin itself". It is important not to overlook the Radical Reformation element from the continent as well: "By 1683, the Dutch Mennonites had established in North America their first communistic colony, and the seed fell on such fertile soil that by 1825 130 more such colonies had sprung up" (G. Arciniegas, America in Europe: A History of the New World in Reverse. (1986), p. 71. G.H. Williams also shows the

These forces and themes were hardly literary exercises restricted to Calvinist sermons and removed from the sphere of politics⁷⁵. For the Puritans, the

doctrine of the Second Adam in the work of Schwenkfeld (1489-1561), whose followers were among the Radical Reformation settlers of Pennsylvania (The Radical Reformation, 1962, pp. 109-110). Williams also shows the theological dimension of the perception of wilderness in Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought (1962) Cf. also R.T. Hughes/C.L. Allen, Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America 1630-1875 (1988) On the Radical Reformation as the recurrence of a vision of the primitive church, cf. G.W. Trompf, The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 303-312. "Now it was, of course, precisely over questions of the historical boundaries of primitive Christianity that essential differences between the Reformers and more "left-wing" theological figures became exposed..." (p. 303) J. Taubes argues that the Pietists, some of whom immigrated to Pennsylvania, were direct heirs of Kabbala: "Der Adam Kadmon der Kabbala, welcher als kosmischer gesetzhafter Urmensch bei Jakob Boehme wieder aufsteht, wird in der pietistisch-aufklärerischen Mystik verweltlicht..." op. cit. p. 122. On the influence of Boehme and the Second Adam doctrine on millenarian radicalism in mid-17th century England, cf. M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York, 1973), pp. 51-53.

Perhaps the most radical of all writers in the 17th century on the significance of the New World was Isaac La Peyrère, whose thesis that the American Indians were "pre-Adamites" not mentioned in the Bible obligated him to recant or face execution in the France of Louis XIV. Cf. R. Popkin, Isaac la Peyrère (1596-1676), 1987.

⁷⁵-One work which shows the impact of Old Testament imagery on the politics of three settler states is D.H. Akenson, God's Peoples. Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel and Ulster. Ithaca, 1992. Puritan theological treatises interpreting victory in the 1676 King Philip's War are edited in R. Slotkin/ J. Folsom, So Dreadful a Judgement: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1675-1677, Middletown, 1978. A history of American expansionism from "the Bay Colony to Indochina", which borrows its title from a chapter of Melville's The Confidence Man, is R. Drinnon, Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building (Minneapolis, 1980).

Melville makes the connection between whaling and Puritan Indian extermination explicit. Famous whales like Moby-Dick have been "chased and killed by valiant whaling captains, who heaved up their anchors with that express object as much in view, as in setting out through the Narangansett Woods, Captain Church of old had it in his mind to capture that notorious murderous savage Annawon, the headmost warrior of the Indian King Philip." (MD, p. 207) Melville refers here to King Philip's War of 1676, in which the Puritans killed 30,000 Indians throughout New

communities they created in New England were the New Covenant in the wilderness; in 1773, the participants in the Boston Tea Party disguised themselves as Indians⁷⁶; the Lockean liberal tradition which influenced the U.S. constitution

England; they had previously massacred, in 1636, the Pequots, from which tribe Melville took the name of the *Pequod*.

⁷⁶-N.O. Brown, op. cit., p. 30: "The comic wearing of the Indian mask, in the Boston Tea Party, or Tammany's Wigwam, is the lighter side of a game, a ritual, the darker side of which is fraternal genocide. Indians are our Indian brothers; one of the ten lost tribes of Israel; the lost sheep we came to find, now unappeased ghosts in the unconscious of the white man." (M. Taussig, in a different (Venezuelan) context, shows how such an "imaginary" could arise from the colonizing experience: "Far from being trivial daydreams indulged in after work was over, these stories and the imagination they sustained were a potent political force...What is crucial to understand is the way these stories functioned to create through magical realism a culture of terror that dominated both whites and Indians." in Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing, Chicago 1987, p. 121.) In the Middle Ages, "a text from the Books of Esdras" was invoked to argue that the proportion of land to sea in the world was 6:1 (Esdras Book IV) "According to this hypothesis, upheld by Roger Bacon (1214-1294) and transmitted to Columbus by way of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1420), the Orbis Terrarum continued to be conceived as an island, but one on which...there could be inhabitants who were antipodal with regard to each other. Since this region could also be reached without crossing the Ocean, its inhabitants could be descended from Adam and were not beyond the bounds of redemption". (E. O'Gorman, The Invention of America (1961), p. 56.) The same author writes that Las Casas believed Columbus to have been inspired by Plato's account of Atlantis" (La idea del descubrimiento de America, 1951, p. 141) A full study of Columbus' medieval sources is V. Flint, The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus (1992). For a study of how the "lost tribes" myth influenced Mesoamerican archaeology in the 19th century cf. R. Wauchope, Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents (1962). Wauchope (p. 53) recounts one of the most arresting episodes in this story, the publication in 1650, in Amsterdam, the pamphlet Hope of Israel, by Menasseh ben Israel, (incidentally one of Spinoza's teachers). The pamphlet, which created a sensation, recounts the discovery, in Ecuador, of one of the lost tribes. It was recently reissued (in Spanish) as Esperanza de Israel (Madrid 1987). Another account, connecting the search for the lost tribes with the origins of racism, is R. Sanders, Lost Tribes and Promised Lands (New York 1978). S. Trigano, op. cit. pp. 346-347, emphasizes the link between the Lost Tribes and the emergence of the secular idea of the Natural Man in the 17th century: "Derrière l'Indien est caché le juif". Much material on the Lost Tribes thesis as applied to the New World is to be found in C. Roth, A Life of Menasseh Ben Israel (1934). This interest spilled over into the German immigrants to Pennsylvania (J.F. Sachse, The German Pietists

was a tradition conceived within the shadow of regicide (that of Charles I in 1649)⁷⁷ and two revolutions against the Stuarts; the separated powers created in the constitution were the "fragmented body of the king", the dispersed "Tudor polity" as one writer called it⁷⁸. If it was indeed Old Testament imagery and not the historical past of the Holy Roman Emperors and absolutist kings that dominated the American imagination of the past, there was nonetheless encoded in the founding documents of the American polity a "missing king", a powerful executive (by contrast with the British parliamentary system) whose centrality to the cohesion of the whole would emerge above all in times of crisis, the homunculus Napoleons from George Washington through Andrew Jackson to later figures associated with military prowess such as Theodore Roosevelt⁷⁹.

What was the source of this American Protestant second exile from the "Egypt" of Europe's kings and popes⁸⁰? What, indeed, was the source of the first

of Provincial Pennsylvania, 1694-1708, p. 83.) On Menasseh's contacts with John Dury, Thomas Thorgood and John Eliot, all believers in the Lost Tribes thesis in New England, cf. p. 181. Most of the viewpoints in the Lost Tribes debates are presented in F. Manuel, The Broken Staff. Judaism Through Christian Eyes. Harvard UP, 1992, pp. 169-170. In another vein, "The idea of a passage to India, with its associated images of fabulous wealth, of ivory and apes and peacocks, led a vigorous existence on the level of imagination entirely apart from its practicability." (in H. Nash, Virgin Land, 1950, p. 22).

⁷⁷-On the link between Locke and regicide, cf. N.O. Brown, op. cit. pp. 3-7.

⁷⁸-S. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies.

⁷⁹-Melville, in a passage to which we shall return, put the question of "homunculus Napoleons" as follows: "Of modern standers of mast-heads we have but a lifeless set; mere stone, iron and bronze men... George Washington, too, stands aloft on his towering main-mast in Baltimore...But neither great Washington, nor Napoleon, nor Nelson, will answer a single hail from below, however madly invoked..." (MD, p. 132) For a study of the development of imperial ideology in the U.S., with analogies to Roman history, cf. A. de Riencourt, The Coming Caesars, 1957. "...the democratic leaders assume gradually the trappings of Caesarism. Sooner or later, the political coloring of the East begins to come off on the West. The transition from Sulla to Caesar and from Caesar to the absolutism of Vespasian was partly the result of the growing orientalizing of Rome and the decline in prestige of elective institutions" (p. 264)

⁸⁰"Le plus souvent, l'Atlantique est comparée à la mer Rouge, l'émigration des sectes anglaises est identifiée à la fuite des Hébreux.." in E. Marienstras, Les mythes fondateurs de la nation américaine (Paris 1976), p. 76.

"...L'analogie avec les Hébreux fournit donc aux créateurs de la nouvelle nation le moyen de retrouver un temps mythique, celui dans lequel l'histoire humaine reste encore à construire". (p. 78) "la traversée de l'Atlantique, comme l'a été celle de la mer Rouge pour les Hébreux, est ressentie comme un saut hors de l'histoire. Le temps passé est aboli. L'histoire des hommes peut

exile, the post- Mosaic evolution from mythopoesis to disincarnate logos? From the Bible to Max Weber, the answer has always been: work, if not the cause, then as the symptom of exile. Sohn-Rethel⁸¹ in particular has shown that the break between Heraclitus⁸² and Parmenides, which Frankfurt showed to be the final break with the Asia Minor cosmologies of fire and light, was closely linked to the 6th century BC Greek commercial revolutions and the triumph of a commodity economy of unprecedented scope, if not exactly capitalism. It was Parmenides who made Being, in contrast to Heraclitean temporality, the absolute, non-determinate, supratemporal and supraspatial realm above all "second qualities", such as color, shape, etc. Exchange, and the contingencies it imposed on "secondary qualities" of specific material goods⁸³ in Greek antiquity as in 17th century Europe, was the social force that spread its abstraction over sensuous reality, the social basis for "de-cosmization" and the separation of logos from mythos. And exchange was in turn the expression of commensurate quantities of labor. Moby Dick, as non-determinate abstraction, is therefore not merely a philosophical or religious metaphor, but equally the embodiment of "white" abstraction imposed on social life by exchange-value, a world subjugated to the categories of work.

recommencer. Au-delà de l'élément liquide, ce sera le recommencement absolu, le retour au Paradis perdu, l'Age d'Or, la Nouvelle Jérusalem."(pp. 345-346).

⁸¹-Alfred Sohn-Rethel. Warenform und Denkform. Frankfurt, 1978. Sohn-Rethel's view are taken up and developed further in R.W. Müller, Geld und Geist. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Identitätsbewusstsein und Rationalität seit der Antike. Frankfurt (2nd ed.) 1981.

⁸²-H. Frankfurt. Intellectual Adventure, Ch. 12, esp. pp. 374-385. Also H. Padrutt, Une sie bewegt sich doch nicht. Parmenides im epochalen Winter, Zurich, 1991, p. 80: "Wer in der Weltgeschichte vor allem einen Übergang von einem ursprünglichen Matriarchat zur Männerherrschaft sieht, müsste Parmenides eigentlich als Schlüsselfigur sehen...". Catherine Collobert also sees a fundamental break in Parmenides in that "Parménide rompt avec le questionnement de l'origine et réalise ainsi le geste inaugural de la métaphysique. Cette rupture avec le chant de l'origine porte en elle une fracture essentielle, celle du temps. Cette fracture est à la fois une rupture et une continuité: rupture dans le questionnement et continuité dans l'expression poétique." cf. l'Etre de Parménide ou Le Refus du Temps, Paris 1992, p. 27.

⁸³-"The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But as soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head...The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in use-value." K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, New York, 1967, p. 71.

In addition to the declining legacy of New England Calvinism and the shadow of regicide in the Lockean tradition of American liberalism that issued periodically in George Washingtons and Andrew Jacksons, there was a third manifestation of the frayed pseudo-sacred in America in 1840: New England Transcendentalism. As indicated a moment ago, the discontented young men of 1840 in Europe, the Theophile Gauthiers or Gerard de Nervals, looked back to historical imagery mostly derived from medievalism; in the U.S., where there was no such historical imagery, young discontents looked to Europe, but above all to Indians, to nature, and to the Orient⁸⁴. Precisely because no legend of cosmic kingship, no Charlemagne or Barbarossa⁸⁵ asleep until the coming of the Third Reich, presented itself to American consciousness, the very primordial imagery of Biblical origin⁸⁶ mentioned earlier, resurfaced in its components parts in a certain

⁸⁴-Two surveys of the influence of Asian philosophy and literature on 19th-century American culture are D. Riepe, The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought, Springfield, 1970 ; C.T. Jackson, The Oriental Religions and American Thought. Nineteenth-Century Explorations. Westport, 1981; J.D. Yohannan, Persian Poetry in England and America (1977)

⁸⁵-D.M. Friz. Wo Barbarossa schläft--der Kyffhäuser. Der Traum vom deutschen Reich, Weinheim 1991, p. 13: "Der Mythos des Kaisers Barbarossa im Kyffhäuser verkörpert deutsche Geschichte von Anbeginn bis heute". This book traces the legend from the 12th century to German reunification and beyond. For a general discussion of the myth of the Empire in early modern Germany. cf. F. Borchardt, German Antiquity In Renaissance Myth, Baltimore 1971, pp. 38-44.

⁸⁶-Cf. T.D. Bozeman, To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension of Puritanism. Chapel Hill, 1988. p. 14: "...Puritan spokesmen joined a fealty to the supreme book to an assertively primitivist orientation. " By "primitivist" here is meant adhesion to the "first times" of Christianity, not an idealization of primitive peoples. But this focus on origins could go in many directions, as shall be seen. See also David W. Noble, Historians Against History. The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830 (1965), p. 5: "History, for the Puritans, was the sinful record of the institutional structure of the Roman Church and its traditionas. When one rejected the authority of the Church, one rejected the authority of the past." The Protestant view of the primitive church prior to Catholicism laid the foundation for modern millenarianism and social utopia. According to Troelsch, "this ideal of the Primitive State gives birth to theories of Natural Law, of Communism, and of Socialism, in a religious guise..." E. Troelsch, op. cit. vol. 1 p. 162. Troelsch also shows the centrality of this view in the original rebellion against Catholicism, from the high Middle Ages to the Reformation: "(the French and Italian critics from the 11th century onward)...hate a Church which treats the inferior clergy like serfs, which exploits the manorial rights through its titles...a

nature mysticism, a certain fascination with Indians that verged on primitivism, and above all in a wave of Orientalism derived from the new translations of Persian and even moreso Indian texts made available by the newly-founded fields of linguistics and comparative mythology. Emerson was undoubtedly the pioneer of this consciousness, but Thoreau and slightly later Whitman followed in a similar vein.⁸⁷

This consciousness was the consciousness of Ishmael. In 1840, in Europe and the United States, a romantic "unhappy consciousness" (to use Hegel's term) constituted, within the individual egos of young Germans after the fashion of Madame de Stael, young Parisian dandies and boulevardiers, and young New Englanders tired of both Calvinism and the traditions of the revolutionary era, the last recourse of the mythical world⁸⁸ shattered by the Reformation and the modern revolutions, above all the French. A figure like Stendhal's Julien Sorel could fondle

Church which is in every respect the opposite of the poverty of the apostles..." (vol. 1, p. 349)

⁸⁷-On Emerson's Orientalism, cf. Fredrick Ives Carpenter, Emerson and Asia (1930); also the treatment of Whitman in Sacvan Bercovitch, Puritan Origins of the American Self (Yale 1975); Hawthorne is explored in L. Luedtke, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Romance of the Orient (Bloomington 1989). To a lesser extent, the romantic generation, led by Washington Irving, also attempted to enlist medieval and Renaissance Spain as an American past. Cf. H.M. Jones, O Strange New World. American Culture: the Formative Years, New York 1967, pp. 95-97.

⁸⁸ The metaphysical dimension of the "unhappy consciousness" will be discussed in subsequent sections. Clearly a full elaboration of its origins are beyond this study. The fundamental idea, however, is that as "myths" of individual action in the world lost their hold in the 19th century, an aestheticized inwardness constituted a "resurrection within" of the myth. For the Calvinist, the deepest self-scrutiny and above all the scrutiny of the community determined whether or not he belonged to the elect of "visible saints"; for the revolutionary generation steeped in Enlightenment traditions and oriented to cosmopolitan ideals, Jeffersonian democracy similarly held out the perspective of action. But the end of the revolutionary era on both sides of the Atlantic in 1815 closed such possibilities. Cut off from action in the practical world or not even considering such action desirable, bourgeois individualism as shaped by Kantian aesthetics or by Coleridge (Kant's publicist in the Anglo-American world) retreated to an other-worldliness no longer specifically religious but mythic and aesthetic. Georg Lukacs in Die Zerstörung der Vernunft (vol. 1) treats Fichte and Schelling in this light; Albert Camus in l'Homme révolté (Paris 1951) traces this aestheticico-mythical self from the French Revolution to the aestheticized violence of the 1890's. J. Zammito The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgement, Chicago, 1992, shows Kant's turn to aesthetics as a polemic against the Sturm und Drang movement as represented by Hamann and Herder. (p. 46).

his cameo of Napoleon and dream of heroic action⁸⁹, but neither Washington nor Jackson could fill the same role for the Harvard or Yale student with his head full of Kant and Coleridge. The United States, as we said, drew its historical imagery not from the Holy Roman Empire and its pseudo-mythical successors, but directly from the Old Testament and its Adamic visions of paradise and paradise lost.

Ch. II. Social Foundations of the Transcendentalist "Unhappy Consciousness": Moby-Dick As A Prophecy of the Self-Destruction of Bourgeois Civilization

...there were on Sundays on board this particular frigate of ours, and a clergyman also. He was a slender, middle-aged man, of an amiable deportment and irreproachable conversation; but I must say, that his sermons were but ill-calculated to benefit the crew. He had drank at the mystic fountain of Plato; his head had been turned by the Germans; and this I will say, that White-Jacket himself saw him with Coleridge's Biographia Literaria in his hand.

Fancy, now, this transcendental divine standing behind a guncarriage on the main-deck, and addressing five hundred salt-sea sinners on the psycho-logical phenomenon of the soul, and the ontological necessity of every sailor's saving it at all hazards. He enlarged upon the follies of the ancient philosophers; learnedly alluded to the Phaedon of Plato; exposed the follies of Simplicius' Commentary on Aristotle's "De Coelo", by arraying against that clever pagan author the admired track of Tertullian -De Praescriptionibus Haeticorum- and concluded by a Sanskrit invocation..."

Herman Melville
White-Jacket

If the young Karl Marx arrived at his own perspective in the course of the 1840's in a polemical dialogue with the remnants of the German idealist (and above all Hegelian) thought still dominant in the German universities, Herman Melville, only one year Marx's junior, was arriving at his perspective, albeit in literary form, in a polemical dialogue with a diluted variant of those ideas, New England Transcendentalism. Once this parallel is understood, their common arrival at the symbol of the Vendôme Column (Melville in Moby-Dick (1851), Marx in The Eighteenth Brumaire (1852)) as the representation of frayed pseudo-mythical

89-"Ah! s'écria-t-il, que Napoleon était bien l'homme envoyé de Dieu pour les jeunes français! qui le remplacera? que feront sans lui les malheureux, même plus riches que moi, qui ont juste les quelques écus qu'il faut pour se procurer une bonne éducation...Quoiqu'on fasse, s'ajouta-t-il avec un profond soupir, *ce souvenir fatal nous empêchera à jamais d'être heureux!*" Stendhal, Le rouge et le noir, 1957, p. 93 (our emphasis)

power in the world after the French Revolution and revolutionary regicide, is less surprising, if still remarkable.

There is a very developed view of history, society and politics in Moby Dick, one that has heretofore attracted attention but which has never, as yet, been elaborated in its entirety.

Moby Dick is about the self- destruction of the bourgeois ego. This term is chosen reluctantly, because the English language provides no better equivalent of what in French might be called the "moi absolu" or the "absolu littéraire", or what could be extracted from German Idealist philosophy (above all the work of Fichte and Schelling) as "das absolute Ich".⁹⁰ As a critique of the limits of the bourgeois ego, a novel composed against the backdrop of the 1840's in America is necessarily a critique of Transcendentalism. The term "bourgeois ego" unfortunately does not capture fully the thrust of Melville's diagnosis, insofar as it limits Melville's vision to modern capitalist society. Melville is writing about that society, undoubtedly. But he is also writing about the West and the West's relationship with non-Western peoples in an historical sweep which encompasses and transcends the latter, bourgeois phase of Western history. The Biblical figure of Ahab, and the constant invocation of the Old Testament, in the context of a world-historical "comparative mythology"⁹¹, makes this obvious. Melville clearly sees the figure of Ahab as the culmination of a tradition whose origins well antedate modern capitalist society, even though much of our discussion linking Moby Dick to the American social scene of the mid-19th century will focus on two sources of Ahab's character that are modern and bourgeois: 17th century Puritanism and Calvinism, and 17th and 18th century liberalism, as it shaped the American experience.

Not accidentally the more expressive French and particularly German terms better capture the overtones of what is meant by the "bourgeois ego", because New England Transcendentalism derived directly from several decades of German philosophical and aesthetic influence in the United States⁹², above all through the

⁹⁰-For the link between German idealism and the aestheticization of an emergent "moi absolu", cf. P. Lacoue-Labarthe/J-L Nancy L'absolu littéraire: Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand (Paris 1978) and Bernhard Lypp Ästhetischer Absolutismus und politische Vernunft (Frankfurt 1972). Georg Lukacs' Zerstörung der Vernunft, vol. 1, (Darmstadt 1962), while tendentious, also emphasizes the autonomization of the aesthetic in post-Kantian idealist thought. A fundamental study of Napoleon's impact of the evolution of the "moi absolu" as defined here is J. Schmidt, Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 2 vols. 1988, vol. 1, p. 450 and vol. 2 pp. 63-82; for his influence on Fichte vol. 2 pp. 381-390, on Schelling *ibid.* pp. 390-403.

⁹¹-For a discussion of Melville's extensive knowledge of the results of late 18th and early 19th century comparative mythology, cf. H. Bruce Franklin, In the Wake of the Gods (Stanford, 1963).

⁹²-Stanley M. Vogel, German Literary Influences on the American Transcendentalists, New Haven 1955.

work of Kant and Coleridge, who was deeply influenced by Kant's aesthetics. Van Wyck Brooks captures the mood of the late 1830's in which young minds were, in Melville's phrase from White-Jacket, "turned by the Germans":

"In short, the more sensitive minds of the younger generation, the imaginative, the impressionable, the perceptive, those who characterize a generation--for the practical people never change, except in the cut of their clothes-- were thoroughly disaffected. The shape of the outward world had ceased to please them. The Fourth of July orations had ceased to convince them that "freedom" had any connection with religious feeling. The aristocrats of trade were essentially vulgar, the "rational" Unitarians were materialistic. The young people were radicals and mystics."⁹³

Nor can there be any doubt that it is such people that Melville has in mind in his own parallel evolution to Marx's critique of the Young Hegelians. The three major characters of Melville's early sea-faring novels, Redburn, White Jacket and Ishmael, can all be described to one extent or another as "transcendental divines", to use Melville's phrase from the passage in White-Jacket quoted earlier. Moby Dick, in particular, is filled with references to the contemporary philosophical ferment.

"...but lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie is this absent-minded youth, by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature... But while this sleep, this dream is on ye, move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all, and your identity comes back in horror. Over Cartesian vortices you hover. And perhaps, at mid-day, in the fairest weather, with one half-throttled shriek you drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise for ever. Heed it well, ye Pantheists!"⁹⁴

Ahab is of course no pantheist. But he too is a metaphysician, and his metaphysics, while difficult to pinpoint to any particular philosophical doctrine, have some very "Kantian" overtones, with the visible world relegated to the phenomenal appearance, behind which there is an unknowing "thing-in-itself"; there is a "Fichtean" dimension of action, perhaps almost Nietzschean in its sense that there is nothing behind the phenomena; finally, there are certain brooding Calvinist dimensions, which are ultimately overshadowed by a very modern-

⁹³-Van Wyck Brooks. The Flowering of New England. Boston 1981. p. 180. An overall survey of this historical moment is J. Myerson, ed. The Transcendentalists: A Review of Research and Criticism, New York, 1984.

⁹⁴-MD, p. 163.

sounding doctrine of action for action's sake. Ahab, who (as noted previously) leaves a "white and turbid wake" of abstraction wherever he sails, has this to say about what drives him:

"...All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event-- in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its feature from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. *That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate*; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me."⁹⁵ (our emphasis)

Ahab's battle is the battle of the man of resentment who has been cut off from the "low enjoying power" of the sensuous world, for whom the white pall of abstraction has cast all "visible objects" into "pasteboard masks", leaving him entombed in his bourgeois ego, "damned in the midst of Paradise".

That Melville's own position is beyond either the dreamy Transcendentalist or the more severe Calvinist viewpoints is indicated by several passages. At one point in the narrative, the Pequod has a whale's head hanging from each side, following a hunt:

"...As before, the Pequod steeply leaned over towards the sperm whale'shead, now, by the counterpoise of both heads, she regained her even keel...So, when on one side you hoist Locke's head, you go over that way; but now, on the other side, hoist in Kant's and you come back again; but in very poor plight. Thus, some minds keep for ever trimming boat. Oh, ye foolish! throw away all these thunder-heads overboard, and then you will float right and light."⁹⁶

But Melville's own position is not an "agnostic" one, as the above passage taken in isolation might imply. What lurks behind the "pasteboard masks", the "white and turbid wake" to which Ahab's grim Calvinist ego condemns him, and to which "pantheism" is only a pseudo-alternative, is sensuousness, represented above all by the three harpooners Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, in whose activity, as shall be seen, is taken up as lived reality the "cosmic" quality which the Transcendentalist seeks in dreamy nature mysticism. Melville's answer to both Ahab and Ishmael is portrayed in the famous scene of the Heidelberg Tun. Tashtego, Queequeg and Daggoo are extracting sperm from the head of a sperm

⁹⁵-ibid. p. 171.

⁹⁶-ibid., p. 337.

whale suspended on the side of the ship when Tashtego falls into the head, which in turn falls into the water under his weight. Only when Queequeg dives into the water and cuts open the head is Tashtego saved from drowning. Here, in one poignant sequence, Melville shows the three noble non-Western harpooners as it were emerging from the head of abstraction, the real concrete supersession of all other viewpoints present in different characters in Moby Dick. Melville leaves no doubt about his meaning when he writes:

"...Now, had Tashtego perished in that head, it had been a very precious perishing; smothered in the very whitest and daintiest of fragrant spermaceti; coffined, hearsed and tombed in the secret inner chamber and sanctum sanctorum of the whale. Only one sweeter end can be recalled--the delicious death of an Ohio honey-hunter, who seeking honey in the crotch of a hollow tree, found such exceeding store of it, that leaning too far over, it sucked him in, so that he died embalmed. How many, think ye, have likewise fallen into Plato's honey head, and sweetly perished there?"⁹⁷

Kantian and post-Kantian idealist thought originated in Germany as the ideology of the humanist civil service of Prussia and smaller principalities influenced by enlightened absolutism. ⁹⁸ Fritz Ringer captures the remoteness from possibilities of action that characterized the milieu:

"...The non-noble bureaucrat in Prussia represented an extreme which was equalled nowhere else in Europe. The German Protestant pastor, too, was unique in some ways. But the most unusual man on the European social scene during the eighteenth century was the German scholar, the man of pure learning. He had less connection than his English or even his French counterpart with an emerging entrepreneurial class; he also lacked the French intellectual's contact with the cosmopolitan world of aristocratic or magisterial salons. Separated at once from the class of petty burgher artisans and from a relatively uncivilized feudal caste, he developed an intense faith in the spiritually ennobling power of the word and an equally strong sense of its impotence in the practical sphere of technique and organization."⁹⁹

This ideology thrived in the period of top-down bureaucratic reform in Prussia in 1807-1813 described by Rosenberg and others¹⁰⁰; the spread of

⁹⁷-ibid. p. 354.

⁹⁸-Hans Rosenberg, Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660-1815.

Boston, 1958. pp. 204-205.

⁹⁹-Fritz Ringer, Decline of the German Mandarins, Cambridge 1969, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰-Rosenberg, *ibid*.

comparable state bureaucratic modes of social organization to countries such as Russia just as promptly spawned the spread of German philosophy.¹⁰¹ But when these ideas reached the United States, they took hold in a social milieu characterized precisely by the absence of an Enlightened civil service and the state-sponsored intelligentsia it engendered. In the United States, in contrast to pre-revolutionary France, Prussia or Russia, civil society hardly required a mercantilist state to come into existence; quite to the contrary, in the U.S., civil society had to battle well into the nineteenth century to create a viable state¹⁰². The "marginal men" spawned on the European continent after 1815, the Julien Sorels, the Hölderlins, the Herzens and Bakunins¹⁰³ indeed had their counterparts in the U.S., as Van Wyck Brooks' characterization indicates. But, as indicated earlier, remoteness from action did not, in contrast to the European experience, produce "Napoleonic" longings in the New England generation of the 1840's, but rather a combination of nature mysticism, primitivism and Orientalism as it first surfaced in the work of Emerson and slightly later of Thoreau. Just as the Puritans escaped from Popery, organic polity and the imagistic church of Mary, so this later generation reproduced the "escape from history" in their largely apolitical rejection of American society. They reproduced the "moi absolu" as it developed through the French, German and Russian "cycles"¹⁰⁴, but in contrast to the long metamorphosis described by Camus¹⁰⁵, the "moi absolu" had no reforming or revolutionary statist vocation in the U.S.

New England, like its romantic counterpart in the German Vormärz, announced a break in culture, one which in both countries was crystallized in the year 1848, the year of the European revolutions and the year in which the foundations of the American political parties were shaken by the sectional crisis, following the 1846 defeat of Mexico¹⁰⁶. In Europe, the break was clear: the "ugly revolution" of the Parisian proletariat, to use Marx's term, forever buried the lyricism of pre-1848 liberal romanticism¹⁰⁷, and replaced the rhetorical unity of

101-Martin Malia, Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism. New York, 1965, Ch. V.

102-Werner Sombart put this pithily in Why Is There No Socialism in America?: "In Europe, the state created civil society; in America, civil society created the state".

103-ibid.

104-The term is from Alain Besancon's Les origines intellectuelles du leninisme, Paris 1977, Chs. 2-3.

105-Camus, op. cit.

106-Cf. above all Michael Rogin, Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville, New York 1983, Ch. 4: "Moby Dick and the American 1848".

107-T.J. Clark's two companion volumes, The Image of the People and The Absolute Bourgeois (New York, 1973) Roland Barthes' Degré zero de

the Third Estate, in the minds of continental liberals, with the grim specter of the "classes laborieuses et dangéreuses", and of communism. In the United States, the crisis of 1848 did not announce the inexorable division of society into warring classes (an event which awaited 1877 and the end of post bellum Reconstruction) but it did, as Michael Rogin has argued in his book on Melville¹⁰⁸, constitute an irreparable break in the ideology associated with the American Revolution¹⁰⁹. The battle over the expansion of slavery into the newly-conquered territories opening up in the American West destroyed the last vestiges of continuity with the political traditions and national unity derived from the revolutionary era, a continuity personified for Melville in his upstate New York family.

We stated that New England Transcendentalism announced a break in culture. It was not the break. Melville was.

The term "ugly revolution", coined by Marx, refers to the eruption of the Parisian working class, with its own demands within the bourgeois liberal Third Estate, which had theretofore (as in the July Revolution of 1830) subordinated the workers to at least an appearance of unity. In 1848, in Europe, romantic lyricism ran up against the "ugly" reality of the new industrial class and that class's apparent ingratitude toward liberal artists of the phrase. That confrontation announced a new "collective" quality to social confrontation and politics in the rise of socialism as a threat to liberalism. Just as social realities and relations had earlier expressed themselves in the lyricism of the English romantics, or as in the work of Lamennais, Lamartine or Louis Blanc in France, so too did the "ugly revolution" quickly recast the aesthetic landscape¹¹⁰. The "absolu littéraire", the "moi absolu"

l'écriture (Paris 1948), Ch. 1, and Walter Benjamin's Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus (Frankfurt 1955) all show the "ugly revolution" of June 1848 as the turning point which shattered romantic lyricism in continental European culture.

¹⁰⁸-Rogin, op. cit. "Just as Bonaparte's coup destroyed French liberty in order to preserve the social order, so the Fugitive Slave Law betrayed the principles of the Declaration of Independence to avert a civil conflagration. In the wake of the Mexican War, slavery had threatened to destroy the Union. This is the moment I label the American 1848." (p. 103)

¹⁰⁹-Cf. also Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The Age of Jackson (New York 1945) for an argument that the breakup of Jacksonian democracy, which Schlesinger locates in the Jeffersonian tradition of the revolution, was underscored by the disarray of the Democrats in the 1848 over the sectionalist issue (pp. 460-468) L. Levine, in Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Harvard UP, 1988) sees the Astor Place riots in New York in May 1849 as signaling a turning point in class polarization in American politics and culture, marking the end of any pretense of egalitarianism (pp. 63-69).

¹¹⁰-Cf. Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York, 1977), Ch. 10, for an analysis of these figures in the French 1848. Sennett writes: "Marx made an appalling error in dismissing the poetry and fine phrases of this

of earlier romanticism was at an impasse. As with bourgeois society and culture generally, it was confronted with realities external to its phrases: the yet inchoate movement of the proletarian masses was the first, most striking threat. But beyond that, in the course of the 1840's, two additional features were inseparably added to that perception: one was the new industrial society that technological innovation had created, the society that engendered the proletariat. The second was the entry of the non-West into consciousness as an immediate presence in contemporary history. The Opium Wars in China, the imminence of the opening of Japan, French and American colonization of Polynesia, in addition to the 1849 gold rushes in California and Australia all combined to create the truly world market for capital that Marx described in the Communist Manifesto and the sense, in the cosmopolitan ports of the U.S. northeast seaboard, that the straits of Molucca were closer by than "Salem or Portsmouth"¹¹¹. Nothing in a consciousness nourished on Keats, Lamartine or Heine was prepared to deal with this reality. The 1848 revolutions in Europe and, more diffusely, the crisis of 1848 in the United States crystallized this awareness. The aesthetic response in Europe was an immediate retreat to formalism: Flaubert's Madame Bovary (1851) could be seen as a manifesto of a new sensibility that would never attempt to encompass the sensuous totality of society as a Balzac had done, but would on the contrary increasingly turn inward on itself and make the problem of artistic creation, instead of society, the subject of the art work itself¹¹². Rogin has seen the work of Melville after the publication of Moby Dick as a parallel to this retreat from sensuous totality and society in European culture after 1848¹¹³.

One could do worse than characterize Moby Dick as one of the foremost depictions of the shattering of the Western bourgeois ego, and the location of the emerging alternative to the bourgeois ego inseparably bound up with the collective association of men in the extraction of wealth from nature, and led by figures from the non-Western world who represented positively what figures such as Flaubert only expressed negatively: that the supercession of the shattered aestheticized bourgeois ego would not be a new "aesthetic", but a new kind of activity.

revolutionary movement as irrelevant to the 'real struggle', because it was poetry and fine phrases that defeated the class struggle" (p. 230). Nevertheless, Sennett's analysis of the increasing role of "virtuosity" and "narcissism" in such performances confirms the analysis that with 1848 the artists of the phrase from the liberal ranks had lost touch with the real movement and had to turn lyricism against that movement.

¹¹¹-Brooks, op. cit. p. 49.

¹¹²-Barthes, op. cit.

¹¹³-Rogin, op. cit. p. 151. "Melville's Declaration of Independence, however, went down with the Pequod. Ahab's exploded dream of masterlessness left behind it no alternative to the "slavish shore" ...to Shaw's imprisoning judgement in Sims. The omnipotence of slavery drove Melville back from political emancipation to a place inside the institutions of domesticity, work and exchange in civil society."

Ch. III. Melville's Cosmic Imagination. The Myth of the Cosmic King in Moby Dick.

Without too much reservation, the sensibility of Moby Dick can be characterized as a "cosmic imagination". Before attempting a definition of this term, let us permit Melville to present this sensibility at its most condensed:

"...By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm Whale in particular, I was much struck with a plate representing the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the upper Mississippi. Like those mystic rocks, too, the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable. This allusion to the Indian rocks reminds me of another thing. Besides all the other phenomena which the exterior of the Sperm Whale represents, he not seldom displays the back, and more especially his flanks, effaced in great part of the regular linear appearance, by reason of numerous rude scratches, altogether of an irregular random aspect. I should say that those New England rocks on the seacoast, which Agassiz imagines to bear the marks of violent scraping contact with vast floating icebergs--I should say, that those rocks must not a little resemble the sperm whale in this particular..."¹¹⁴

"...What would become a Greenland whale, say, in those shuddering, icy seas of the North, if unsupplied with his cosy surtout? True, other fish are found exceedingly brisk in those Hyperborean waters, be it observed, are your cold-blooded, lungless fish, whose very bellies are refrigerators... But more surprising to know, as has been proved by experiment, that the blood of a polar whale is warmer than that of a Borneo negro in summer...Oh, man! admire and model thyself after the whale! Do thou, too, live in this world without being of it. Be cool at the equator; keep thy blood fluid at the Pole. Like the great dome of St. Peter's, and like the great whale, retain, O man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own.

But how easy and how hopeless to teach these fine things! Of erections, how few are domed like St. Peter's! Of creatures, how few as vast as the whale!"¹¹⁵

"...Ere entering upon the subject of Fossil Whales, I present my credentials as a geologist, by stating that in my miscellaneous time I have been a stone-mason, and also a digger of ditches...Likewise...I desire to remind the reader, that while in the earlier geological strata there are found the fossils of monsters now almost completely extinct; the subsequent relics discovered in what are called the Tertiary formations seem the connecting, or at any rate intercepted links, between the

¹¹⁴-MD, p. 315.

¹¹⁵-ibid. pp. 316-317.

antichronical creatures, and those whose remote posterity are said to have entered the Ark; all the Fossil Whales hitherto discovered belong to the Tertiary period, which is the last preceding the superficial formations. And though, none of them precisely answer to any known species of the present time, they are yet insufficiently akin to them in general respects, to justify their taking rank as Cetacean fossils.

Detached broken fossils of pre-adamite whales, fragments of their bones and skeletons, have within thirty years past, at various intervals, been found at the base of the Alps, in Lombardy, in France, in England, in Scotland, and in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Among the more curious of such remains is *part of a skull, which in the year 1779 was disinterred in the Rue Dauphine in Paris, a short street opening almost directly upon the palace of the Tuileries; and bones disinterred in excavating the great docks of Antwerp, in Napoleon's time.* Cuvier pronounced these fragments to have belonged to some utterly unknown Leviathanic species."¹¹⁶ (our emphasis)

" When I stand among these mighty Leviathanic skeletons, skulls, tusks, jaws, ribs and vertebrae, all characterized by partial resemblances to the existing breed of sea-monsters; but at the same time bearing on the other hand similar affinities to the annihilated antichronical Leviathans, their incalculable seniors; I am, by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time itself can be said to have begun; for time began with man. Here Saturn's grey chaos rolls over me, and I obtain dim, shuddering glimpses into those Polar eternities; when wedged bastions of ice pressed hard upon what are now the Tropics; and in all the 25,000 miles of this world's circumference, not an inhabitable hand's breadth of land was visible. Then the whole world was the whale's; and, king of creation, he left his wake along the present lines of the Andes and the Himmalehs. Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? Ahab's harpoon had shed older blood than Pharoah's. Methusaleh seems a schoolboy. I look round to shake hands with Shem. I am horror-struck at this antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all human ages are over.

But not alone has this Leviathan left his pre-Adamite traces in the stereotype plates of nature, and in limestone and marl bequeathed his ancient bust; but upon Egyptian tablets, whose antiquity seems to claim for them an almost fossiliferous character, we find the unmistakable print of his fin. In an apartment of the great temple of Denderah, some fifty years ago, there was discovered upon the granite ceiling a sculptured and painted planisphere, abounding in centaurs, griffins and dolphins, similar to the grotesque figures on the celestial globe of the moderns. Gliding among them, old Leviathan swam as of yore; was there swimming in that planisphere, centuries before Solomon was cradled."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶-ibid. p. 466.

¹¹⁷-MD, p. 467.

What is condensed in these passages is virtually every theme of *Moby Dick*: a view of cosmic evolution; "mystic hieroglyphs"; Indians; 19th century geological and biological theory; the antipodes of Arctic waters; the tropics; and finally, "St. Peter's", the crowning place of the Holy Roman Emperor. In the second passage, there is found once again geology, paleontology, whale fossils and biology (Cuvier) brought directly into relationship with mythic power by references to the Tuileries and Napoleon. In the final passage Melville juxtaposes whale fossils with Egyptian and Biblical references.

The "cosmic imagination" in Melville, then, is this eruption of "mystic" and "mythical" imagery within the primordial world of cosmic evolution; it is Melville's answer to the "white and turbid wake" cast by Ahab and Ahab's civilization over the sensuous world, and it is social and political by the link between these mystic and mythical symbols and the myth of the cosmic king, which will be elaborated momentarily.

The less than casual reader of *Moby Dick* cannot fail to notice Melville's constant undercurrent of references to mystical and esoteric phenomena, as in the mention above of "mystic hieroglyphics". When Queequeg signs onto the Pequod, his mark is the Maltese cross of the Knights Templar¹¹⁸. On occasions the whale's brow is likened to "cabbalistic hieroglyphs"¹¹⁹. The movement's of the whale's tail are said to be "akin to Free-mason signs and symbols"¹²⁰. The gold doubloon Ahab nailed to the mast as a reward for the first sighting of *Moby Dick* is filled with the astrological symbolism of the Zodiac¹²¹. "Human or animal," writes

¹¹⁸-MD, p. 94. Templar imagery crops up throughout Melville's work, as in the short story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855), to be found in W. Berthoff, ed. Great Short Works of Herman Melville, pp. 202-222. In the novel Israel Potter, (1854). Melville's protagonist finds himself in London, and trapped in a cell "dating far beyond the era of Elizabeth, having once formed portion of a religious retreat belonging to the Templars." (in H. Hayford et al. eds. The Writings of Herman Melville, Vol. VIII, p. 70.) The Knights Templar were a medieval religious order of warrior monks, founded in 1119 and bloodily suppressed in 1307. Cf. P. Partner, The Knights Templar and their Myth (1984).

¹¹⁹-MD, pp. 315, 349, 358.

¹²⁰-MD, p. 388.

¹²¹-MD, pp. 443. Maxime Moore, in That Lonely Game: Melville, Mardi and the Almanac (University of Missouri Press, 1975) argues in Ch. 3 that Melville's 1849 novel Mardi is based on astronomy and astrological symbolism. Viola Sachs also emphasizes the role of the esoteric in Melville (op. cit. 1982). On the American presence of such traditions, cf. H. Leventhal, In the Shadow of the Enlightenment: Occultism and Renaissance Studies in Eighteenth Century America, 1976.

Melville, "the mystical brow is as that great golden seal affixed by the German emperors to their decrees"¹²². Then, immediately thereafter, he states:

"...Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable. If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can."¹²³

Champollion was the decipherer, in 1822, of the Rosetta Stone brought back to France from Napoleon's 1799 Egyptian expedition; Sir William Jones was the English scholar who in 1780 demonstrated that Sanskrit was an Indo-European language. But Melville's references to these figures point as much to the limits of their decipherings as to their accomplishments. It will be seen in a moment what Melville means by deciphering the "Egypt of every man's and every being's face". For now, the issue is Melville's deliberate and pointed inclusion in his book of references to Kabbala, the Knights Templar, Freemasonry¹²⁴ and astrology. Many works have been written on the obvious Old Testament symbolism and references that infuse the book¹²⁵; these references will not be followed out here, nor will it be asked if there is a "hidden text" in Moby Dick. There is more than enough on the surface to get at what Melville is talking about.

A good starting point is "that great golden seal affixed by the German emperors to their decrees". As with mystical and esoteric symbols, the references in Moby Dick to the Holy Roman Emperors is persistent and unmistakably intentional¹²⁶. The pulpit in New Bedford where Ishmael hears a sermon is an

¹²²-MD, p. 356.

¹²³-MD, p. 358.

¹²⁴-For an overview of the role of Freemasonry and other secret societies in Europe during the Enlightenment, cf. H. Reinalter, ed. Freimaurer und Geheimbünde, Frankfurt, 1986. Also R. Koselleck Kritik und Krise, Frankfurt 1989 (6th ed.) pp. 109-115, and J.S. Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry, Woodstock, 1993. Curl writes (p. 8) "Many personalities of the European Enlightenment were Freemasons, and some of the most familiar and celebrated of works created in the eighteenth century were steeped in Masonic allusion, including, of course, Die Zauberflöte." R.A. Lebrun, in Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant (1988) p. 144 also shows this post-revolutionary theoretician of reaction to have been shaped decisively by the pre-1789 esoteric doctrines of the secret societies.

¹²⁵-Cf. V. Sachs, La contre-bible de Melville: Moby-Dick déchiffré. Paris 1975.

¹²⁶For a discussion of prophetic images of Frederick Barbarossa and other messianic emperors in Renaissance alchemy, cf. B. Obrist, Les Débuts de

"Ehrenbreitstein", the 11th century castle across the Rhine from Coblenz later taken over by the princes of Trier and blown up by the French during the famous battle of 1801¹²⁷. The masts of the Pequod "stood stiffly up like the three old kings of Cologne"¹²⁸. Ahab's table, where he and the three mates eat in solemn silence each night, is "like the Coronation banquets at Frankfurt, where the German Emperor profoundly dines with the seven Imperial Electors...".¹²⁹ In Ahab's soliloquy, "this Iron Crown of Lombardy", as was mentioned earlier, is the "crown too heavy" that he wears.¹³⁰ Finally, Melville takes pains, at the end of the chapter "Cetology", to say:

l'Imagerie Alchimique (XIVe-XVe Siècles), Paris, 1982, pp. 164-177. "Le fait que...l'aigle doré soit qualifié comme l'aigle du vrai empire, celui du futur empereur Frédéric, nous reconduit dans le domaine de la prophétie." (p. 171) How tied up this symbolism was with empire, prophecy and science is shown by D. Kirby: "The Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe interpreted the eruption of a new star in Cassiopeia in 1572 as marking the end of the Roman world monarchy and the beginning of a new era. Several leading intellectual figures in Sweden...drew inspiration from the mystical prophecies of Paracelsus, whose vision of a golden lion arising in the north and defeating the imperial eagle was to enjoy enormous vogue in the early 17th century". (in Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period, 1990, p. 96) R. Patai similarly shows the parallel between "the sacred marriage of God the King and his spouse the Matronit" and the "conjunctio, the alchemical marriage, or "chemical wedding" of sun and moon (and we must not forget that sun and moon in alchemy stand for gold and silver)". The Jewish Alchemists, Princeton 1994, p. 159) Pope Gregory VII, launching the investiture struggle against the empire in 1073, reminded Europe of the intimate relationship between "the Pope-Sun and the Emperor-Moon". On the relation between imperial power and the Zodiac, cf. R. Gleadow, The Origin of the Zodiac. New York, 1968. p. 64: "...to popularize astrology no one contributed more than the Emperor Augustus himself." Political uses of the Zodiac are also discussed in E. Voegelin, op. cit. vol. 1, pp. 31-32. Perhaps the culmination of the relationship between empire and esotericism was the court of the Habsburg emperor Rudolf II (1575-1612) as detailed in R.J.W. Evans. Rudolf II and his World (Oxford 1973); further material is in Evans, The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700 (Oxford 1979) Ch. 10, and in A.M. Ripellino, Praga magica, Turin 1991, pp. 85-96. Another excellent discussion of the relationship between alchemical symbolism and imperial rule is P.H. Smith, The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire, Princeton 1994, Ch. 4.

¹²⁷-MD p. 42.

¹²⁸-MD, p. 71.

¹²⁹-MD, p. 153..

¹³⁰-MD, p. 171. That Ahab is a king figure is already directly implied by Chs. 26-27 introducing the three mates and three harpooners, both entitled

"...But I now leave my cetological system standing thus unfinished, even as the great cathedral of Cologne was left, with the crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small erections may be finished by their first architects; great ones, true ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity..."¹³¹

In this passage, one notes the parallel between Melville's use of the Cathedral of Cologne as a symbol of the "uncompleteness" of evolution in this passage with the earlier use of the Dome of St. Peter's in a similar evolutionary context. Why do these symbols of the convergence of sacred and secular power, as represented by the Holy Roman Empire, recur in these discussions of cetology?

Before attempting to answer that question, it is useful to look at a few more passages in which similar imagery crops up. When he first introduces the Pequod in New Bedford harbor, this is Melville's full description:

"...(the Pequod's) old hull's complexion was darkened like a French grenadier's, who has fought in Egypt and Siberia...Her masts stood stiffly like the three old kings of Cologne. Her ancient decks were worn and wrinkled, like the pilgrim-worshipped flagstone in Canterbury where Beckett bled...She was appareled like any barbarian Ethiopian emperor...A cannibal of a craft...The helmsman who steered by that tiller felt like the Tartar, when he holds back his fiery steed by clutching its jaw."¹³²

A little later, Ahab is introduced as follows:

"...In old Norse times, the thrones of the sea-loving Danish kings were fabricated, saith tradition, of the tusks of the narwhale. How could one look at Ahab then, seated on that tripod of bones, without bethinking him of the royalty which it symbolized? For a Khan of the plank, and a king of the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans was Ahab."¹³³

What Melville is weaving into his treatises on cosmic evolution¹³⁴, with which we began, and these multiple references to the Holy Roman Emperors and to

"Knights and Squires". After a long passage on Emperors and Kings, Ishmael makes clear that Ahab is one of the kings of "no robed investiture" mentioned earlier: "...in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whalehunter like (Ahab); and, therefore, all outward majestic trappings and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air!" (pp. 150-151).

¹³¹-MD, p. 148.

¹³²MD, p. 71.

¹³³-MD, p. 130.

¹³⁴- Repeated links made between whales, empire, and kingship. In an early

kingship generally, is a socio-political treatise on the tradition of cosmic kingship in Western history¹³⁵. It is this convergence, in Melville's underscoring of the "incompleteness" of evolution (the uncompleted Cathedral of Cologne) that the

chapter on the history of whaling, Melville says: "Whaling is imperial! By old English statutory law, the whale is declared 'a royal fish'." (p. 115). "In one of the might triumphs given to a Roman general upon his entering the world's capital, the bones of a whale...were the most conspicuous object in the cymballed procession." (ibid.) "...a king's head is solemnly oiled at his coronation, even as a head of salad...Think of that, ye loyal Britons! we whalers supply your kings and queens with coronation stuff!" (p. 116) Whales are "Grand Turks" and "Ottomans" (p. 404). When Ishmael eats a particularly delicate part of a whale, "It tasted something as I should conceive a royal cutlet from the thigh of Louis le Gros might have tasted..." (p. 428) Ishmael's "late royal friend King Tranquo", in Polynesia, showed him a temple made from a whale skeleton (pp. 458-459). With such allusions, the description of the "beheading" of a Sperm Whale, in Chapter 70, entitled "The Sphynx", takes on directly political overtones, although it is an apparently technical description.

A few pages later, Melville writes of Right Whales: "Then, again, if you fix your eye upon this strange, crested, comb-like incrustation on the top of the mass--this green, barnacled thing, which the Greenlanders call the "crown"...you will take great interest in thinking how this mighty monster is actually a diademed king of the sea, whose green crown has been put together for him in this marvellous manner." (p. 343)

¹³⁵-Frances Yates is one who has grasped the relationship between the Holy Roman Empire and the esoteric. "There is a sense...in which the cosmic setting of the monarchical-imperial Idea, the presentation of the One Monarch and the expression, in the world of human society, and the unified governance of the world of physical nature, was not merely a reaction into medievalism. It was consonant with contemporary philosophical attitudes, particularly those of an esoteric type, an expression of the macrocosm-microcosm analogy which had such an intensive revival in the Renaissance Hermetic tradition. Elizabethan imperialism was developed, not by some survivor from the Middle Ages, but by John Dee, Hermetic Magus and scientist...the mystique of the French monarchy was developed by Guillaume Postel, the Cabalist... It is important for the history of thought not to neglect the monarchical Idea as a factor in the Renaissance magico-scientific outlook. (Yates, op. cit. 1975, pp. 124-125) The classic study of Charles V in K. Brandt, The Emperor Charles V (1939). A similar perspective to that of Yates is present in S. Collins, From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State (Oxford UP, 1989). A parallel transition is traced for France in P. Riley, The General Will Before Rousseau. The Transformation of the Divine into the Civic (1986). Charles V was, significantly, the last emperor crowned by the Pope (cf. P.E. Schramm, Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik, vol. 1, 1954, p. 44.)

lengthy treatises on every aspect of whales and whaling that fill the pages of Moby Dick emerge as central to the socio-political dimension of the book. Through the use of "cabbalistic hieroglyphs", the Knights Templar, "Freemason signs" and astrology, Melville is referring to the "esoteric" science of the Renaissance¹³⁶ that was displaced by the "white and turbid wake" of "Newton's sleep" (as Blake called it); by his association of such symbols of "cosmic kingship" in its Egyptian, ancient Near Eastern, Greco-Roman or medieval forms, and the continuities and discontinuities of symbols of pseudo-sacred mythical power (Napoleon), Melville is linking the demise of that apprehension of nature to the demise of the cosmic state in the modern bourgeois era; in showing, as shall be seen in the following chapter, the modern working class, led by "Queequeg"¹³⁷, as the heir to the realization of the totality of cosmic evolution and the symbolism of cosmic kingship, Melville is rejecting any restorationist nostalgia and is posing a return on a higher level (symbolized by the final scene of Ishmael's rescue by Queequeg's coffin) of a "cosmic" sensibility, realized not in asocial, dreamy Transcendentalist fashion but as a new form of activity superceding the domination of nature by categories of work, of which the beauty and grace of Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo as they ply their difficult trade, constitutes the germ. Marx saw the modern proletariat as the heir to German classical philosophy¹³⁸; Melville went farther, and saw the modern proletariat as the heir to the totality of configurations of mastery, in a new form inseparably individual and collective, of all of human history. In the counterposition of Ishmael and Queequeg, Melville, almost alone in the 19th century, saw in the pseudo-sacred of the individual aestheticized bourgeois

¹³⁶-On this tradition, cf. Francis Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (Boulder 1978), and The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age (New York 1979); also Allan Debus, The English Paracelsians (New York 1965) and Alexandre Koyre La philosophie de Jacob Boehme (Paris 1929).

¹³⁷-The counterposition of Queequeg and Ahab is apparent in two unrelated but telling scenes. After his first night sharing a bed with Queequeg, Ishmael remembers a childhood experience of awakening in the dead of night with the sensation that "a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine" (p. 28). This is the first indication of the "marriage" with the "antemosaic cosmic man" which Melville sees as a possible supercession of the existing world. Late in the book, when Ahab takes the cabin boy Pip to live in his cabin, he says "I feel prouder leading thee by thy black hand, than though I grasped an emperor's!" (p. 526). Thus the two major white protagonists of the book are humanized by a fusion with non-white characters. When the embodiment of cosmic kingship, Ahab, (though of "no robed investiture"), speaks as he does, an inversion occurs, underscoring the Ahab-Pip relationship as modeled on Lear's relationship to the fool.

¹³⁸-A third figure, in addition to Marx and Melville, who made his way in the 1840's to a philosophy of praxis was the Polish philosopher Cieszkowski. Cf. A. Liebich, Ideology and Utopia: the Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski (1979).

ego, last remnant of the myth of cosmic kingship removed from a collective social praxis, both how near and how far modern bourgeois society was from the realization of the totality of past evolution and history in a new kind of activity.

What, then, is cosmic kingship?¹³⁹ When modern political theory looks back to antiquity for the continuities of Western political thought, it is above all to Greek theoreticians of the polis, and to Greco-Roman antecedents of concepts of citizenship comfortable to modern partisans of democracy. Yet if one considers the role of Bonapartist dictatorship in modern Western history, from the original Bonaparte onward, it is clear that there is another tradition of political power in the West, one less enshrined in theory, but possibly as if not more influential in practice than democracy (and it exists in close relationship to the perceived weaknesses of democracy). That is the tradition of Plato's kosmokrator,¹⁴⁰ the

¹³⁹-Cosmic kingship in Western history is associated with "universal " empire, as represented by ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East, by Alexander the Great and the Caesars, and finally by the Holy Roman Empire. Melville calls whaling "imperial" (MD, p. 115). the Nantucket skipper exacts as much homage "as if he wore the imperial purple"; (p. 150); a whale's spine is like "Pompey's pillar" (p. 464). When Ishmael, as Melville's narrator, describes the immensity of the subject of the whale, he says that "my thoughts of this Leviathan...include...all the revolving panoramas of empire on earth" (p. 466); in one of Ahab's last soliloquies, he asks what "cruel, remorseless emperor commands me" (p. 546).

¹⁴⁰J. Hani. La royauté sacrée. Du pharaon au roi très chrétien. Paris 1984, p. 59: "Le roi apparaît ici dans le rôle d'un Cosmocrator, d'un Maître du monde"..." What is under discussion here, from Egypt to Davidic Israel to Alexander to Caesar to Constantine to Charlemagne to the Hohenstaufen, is the Western tradition of sacred universal empire, which is extended in pseudo-sacred form by the Habsburgs and the Bourbons. The tradition is laid out in A. Dempf, Sacrum Imperium, Darmstadt 1954. A parallel history is recounted in P. Coulmas, Weltbürger. Geschichte einer Menschheitssehnsucht. Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1990, Parts I-II. The Roman moment of this tradition is discussed in J. Pollini, "Divine Imitation and Assimilation" in K. Raaflaub et al eds. Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate (Berkeley 1990), pp. 335-364. On the impact of empire on Roman classical literature, cf. C.G. Starr, Civilization and the Caesars: The Intellectual Revolution in the Roman Empire. Ithaca, 1954, Ch. X. On the Iranian backdrop to concepts of world empire, cf. G. Fowden, Empire to Commonwealth (Princeton 1993), Ch. 1. "The sort of cultural universalism that made Christianity so useful an ally for the Empire of East Rome had not been wholly a Christian invention" (p. 36). A very good discussion, unusual in contemporary literature, is J. Armstrong, Nations Before Nationalism (Chapel Hill, 1982), Ch. 5. Armstrong's concept of "mythomoteur" overlaps with the concepts of cosmic kingship used in this study. Another discussion is in R. Koebner, Empire, New York

cosmic king (or philosopher-king, as the term is usually translated) who emerges in the Republic, and the Timaeus. The real source of the cosmic king is the Egyptian pharaohs, a tradition in which, prior to notions like the "divine right of kings", the pharaoh was considered simply as a living deity¹⁴¹. The Egyptian tradition is the ultimate source of the unity of sacred and secular power for the West. Melville, as shall be seen momentarily, is perfectly aware of this, as the earlier reference to Champollion might already indicate. Whenever citizen polities and republics break down, it has been the tradition of cosmic kingship, or later, of secular myths modeled on cosmic kingship¹⁴², that have replaced them. The early courts of the Jews transposed the myth to that of the messianic king, but were still organized on the Oriental model¹⁴³. Alexander the Great is probably the first "Orientalized" man of power directly in the Greco-Roman side of the Western tradition¹⁴⁴,

1961, Chs. 1-2. As late as the 16th century the word "monarchy" was generally understood to mean "world monarchy", that is empire. How it began to lose that connotation is described in Koeber, pp. 55-56. On the formation of the Christian imperial tradition in late antiquity. cf. T. Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, Harvard UP, 1981. On empire in the formation of the political thought of Augustine, cf. R.A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine (Cambridge UP, 1970), Ch. 2. "The establishment of the Christian Empire and the repression of paganism have entered the sacred history." (p. 31)

141-Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature (Chicago 1948).

142-One does not have to accept the fundamentally Weberian perspective of J-P Sironneau, Sécularisation et religions politiques, The Hague 1982, to appreciate its attempt to use the concept of the "sacred" to analyze Nazism and Stalinism. Another study of the constitution of an authoritarian pseudo-religion is L.J. Rather, The Dream of Self-Destruction: Wagner's Ring and the Modern World (Baton Rouge, 1979). Even more provocative are the works of N. Berdiaev on the Russian revolutionary tradition, which draw a historical continuity from 14th century Orthodox monasticism to the revolutionary intelligentsia of the 1860's and beyond. Cf. Les sources et le sens du communisme russe (Paris 1951), Die russische Idee, Sankt Augustin 1983, and others.

143-J. Coppens. Le messianisme royal. Paris 1968. Also A. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1967. N. Gottwald, in The Hebrew Bible. A Socio-Literary Introduction (1985), writes (p. 294) that with the death of Solomon "the monarchy was fatally ruptured". A humanization of kingship is perceived in the transition from the ancient Near East to Israel in S.N. Eisenstadt, ed. The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations (1986), p. 156. Much material on Israelite kingship and prophecy is in F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Harvard UP 1973, Chs. 5 and 9.

144-Alexander was a major mythic figure in the mythology of the medieval West; cf. P. Noble et al eds. The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance

following the decomposition of Greek democracy in the 4th century BC. As noted in the first chapter, the component parts of the Western tradition of cosmic tradition are present in the oldest myths¹⁴⁵, but a distinctly Western civil society as arose in Greece in the 6th century BC had to emerge from Asiatic forms before "Orientalism" could appear as a retrogressive mode; prior to that, there were simply Oriental or Asiatic forms of power. Jesus in turn appears numerous times in the Bible as Christ the King¹⁴⁶. Ernst Kantorowicz is one historian who has studied the tradition of cosmic kingship from antiquity into medieval times, and his works are veritable source material for the mythical and historical allusions in Moby Dick¹⁴⁷. In the late second century AD, when the republican traditions and the classical Greco-Roman culture which rested on them had definitively died in the late Roman Empire, Roman culture underwent a rapid and irreversible "Orientalization" which announced the triumph of cosmic kingship, and of its symbols and myths, in the heart of the empire¹⁴⁸. Not only was classical Roman

Epic (Millwood, 1982); G. Cary, The Medieval Alexander, (New York, 1987) ; I. Michael, The Treatment of Classical Material in the Libro de Alexandre (Manchester, 1970). This tradition linked Alexander to the Orient: "In medieval romances of Alexander the Great, Alexander nearly gets (to paradise). Medieval world maps put paradise about as far east as India" (in G. Ashe. The Dawn Behind the Dawn. A Search for the Earthly Paradise. New York, 1992, p. 143.

145- Coppens, op. cit. pp. 1-4.

146-J. Hani, op. cit. 1984, p. 133, 139.

147-E. Kantorowicz, Frederick the Second (New York 1931); Oriens augusti: lever du roi (Dumbarton Oaks 1961); The King's Two Bodies (Princeton 1957).

148-In Oriens augusti, Kantorowicz emphasizes the Syrian myth of "sol invictus" taken over by the late emperors. "Sol invictus", the unconquered sun, was in fact the name given himself by the 3rd century AD emperor , often mentioned in Melville's works (cf. Mardi, pp. 957-958; Pierre, p. 300) Cf. also "The Cults of Isis among the Greeks and in the Roman Empire" in Y. Bonnefoy, Mythologies, Chicago 1991, vol. 121-128. "Le christianisme fit sien, en particulier, le messianisme virgilien et augustéen orienté vers la restauration de l'âge d'or." (Hani, op. cit. 1984, p. 163). Cf. also F. Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism. New York, 1956. On Roman absorption of the regions of Oriental kingship, before the Orientalization of Roman kingship and culture itself, cf. R.D. Sullivan, Near Eastern Royalty and Rome. Toronto, 1990. On the introduction of imperial sun symbolism in Rome in the 3rd century AD, cf. S. Bertelli, Il Corpo del Re: Sacralità del potere nell'Europa medievale e moderna. Florence, 1990, p. 20. In the earlier hegemony of Alexander's empire in Egypt, writes Fowden, "When the two alien cultural traditions of Egypt and Greece began to mix, it was on terms that bore little relation to political realities. In the centres of power, Hellenism was triumphant, but in cultural terms Egyptianism, instead of

culture overwhelmed by a wave of "Orientalism" comparable to that which appeared at later "interregna" in Western history, such as the Renaissance, or the 19th and 20th centuries¹⁴⁹; the trappings of Oriental power replaced the old classical pagan myths at the highest levels of the Roman state¹⁵⁰. A new phase of

being submerged by Hellenism, exercised so strong a gravitational and assimilative pull on it that the product of their interaction was a least as much Egyptian as Greek. Nowhere was this truer than in matters of religion." (G. Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind (Princeton 1986) p. 14. On the Franciscans and their link to the ideology of world empire and the Hohenstaufens, cf. E. Benz, Ecclesia spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der Franziskanischen Reformation (Stuttgart, 1934), p. 253.

¹⁴⁹-On the Oriental-Egyptian overtones of the Renaissance, cf. Francis Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (Chicago, 1964), Ch. 1. On Egyptian ideologies from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, cf. Bonnefoy, op. cit., pp. 131-142. Another major survey, from antiquity to Napoleon, is D. Syndram, "Das Erbe der Pharaonen zur Ikonographie Ägyptens in Europa", in G. Srevernich/ H. Budde, Berlin und der Orient 800-1900, Berlin 1989, pp. 18-55. The most comprehensive work on Egyptian motifs in Western culture in the modern period is J-H Humbert et al. Egyptomania: l'Égypte dans l'art occidental. Paris 1994. An Egyptian revival was underway in America during Melville's lifetime, as documented in R. Carrott. The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments and Meaning 1808-1858. (1978). Also J.S. Curl. The Egyptian Revival: an introductory study of a recurring theme of taste. Boston, 1982. (The New York jail The Tombs, in which Melville's character Bartelby the Scrivener is imprisoned, was an Egyptian revival building.) For the Egyptian symbolism in 19th century American literature itself, cf. J. Irwin, American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance. New Haven 1980. For an overview of modernity, cf. R. Schwab, La renaissance orientale (Paris 1951).

A prominent modern example of immersion in Egyptian motifs is Thomas Mann's multi-volume Joseph und seine Brüder (1955). One of Mann's major sources was Alfred Jeremias' Handbuch der altorientalischen Geisteskultur (2nd ed. 1929). Mann's Oriental studies are documented in C. Pretzleff Zahlensymbolik bei Thomas Mann (1972); W. Berger, Die Mythologische Motive in Thomas Manns Roman 'Joseph und seine Brüder' (1971) Berger also sees the primordial man motif in ancient Near Eastern sources (p. 246)

¹⁵⁰R.E. Witt, Isis in the Graeco-Roman World. Ithaca, 1971. On the reception of ancient Egypt by the neo-Platonists (and on the impact of Egypt generally) cf. E. Iversen, op. cit., 1993), p. 45 and ff. On the long neglect of Egypt by Western scholarship, Iversen writes in his new 1993 preface (p. 7): "During their many years of absolute hegemony, classical philologists were

the relationship between sacred and secular power was achieved in 312 AD with Constantine's conversion to Christianity, founding the tradition of "Caesaro-Papism" that would last until the end of the empire. With the collapse of Rome and of classical antiquity, the sacred- secular myth of cosmic kingship was renewed once again with the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome in 800 AD¹⁵¹. And Melville, with his constant references to the Holy Roman Emperors cited above, does not fail to incorporate this phase into his story, most directly in the character of Fedallah, the Oriental shadow of Ahab's "kingship". From Egypt to the late Roman Empire, to the Holy Roman Empire, the Western tradition shows a

prone to consider Greek culture an autochthonous, almost spontaneous phenomenon. Any talk of an Egyptian--or for that matter any other-- influence on Greece was consequently considered not merely heretical, but almost sacrilegious, a vain infringement on the pristine purity of Greek thought.

Strange to say, this general approach was to a great extent typical also of generations of predominantly positivist Egyptologists, in awe of the omnipotent classicists, who more or less openly despised Egyptian civilization as barbarous and inferior."

Another major case of conversion on Osirianism is Plutarch, as described in J. Hani, La Religion Egyptienne dans la Pensée de Plutarque, Paris 1971, 2 vols.

"For the educated Roman of the late Empire," writes James Curl, "the Holy City was Memphis or Alexandria, and the pyramids, the Sphinx, and Serapion were as potent ideas as the Temple, the Holy Sepulchre and Jerusalem to medieval Europeans". (op. cit. 1982, p. 12)

¹⁵¹-Cf. Franz Kampers, Vom Werdegang der abendländischen Kaisermystik (Leipzig 1924), particularly the chapter "Die Fahrt des Erretterkaisers in den Osten", pp. 121-128. On the late Roman empire, H.P. l'Orange, Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World (Oslo 1953), esp. chs. 16-17. L'Orange states that it is "from the orientalized world of gods of the third century A.D. that the gesture has been transferred to the emperor". Engnell emphasizes that, already in the ancient Near East, that the king's chief task "is not to be executive king...but low-key sky god" (Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East, 1967, p. 15) Also M. Bloch, Les rois thaumaturges, Paris 1983, p. 69. Also M. McCormick, Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium, and the early medieval West (Cambridge UP, 1986), p. 364: "...the Frankish kings tacitly surrounded themselves with a distinctly Byzantine luxury...". Byzantine influences on the Carolingian court are also enumerated on pp. 364-365. "The silk tents, carpets, and exotic spices, which reached Aachen from both the Arab and Christian rulers of Spain, proclaimed Charles' exalted status in far distant places and consolidated his prestige in the West" (in J. Herrin, The Formation of Christendom, Princeton 1987, p. 448)

continuity of "Oriental" power constituting, like Fedallah, a "shadow" to the more mainstream and commonly acknowledged forms of power¹⁵².

With the costly victory of the Popes over the Hohenstaufen¹⁵³, the chaos of the 14th century and the interregnum of the Renaissance and the Reformation¹⁵⁴, the tradition of cosmic kingship in the West was severely shaken.

¹⁵²-One of the archetypal references for the Western view of Oriental power is documented in T. Lentz/ G. Lowry Timur and the Princely Vision, Los Angeles, 1989. G. Baudot, in his study of Franciscan utopia in Mexico, shows another element of Western Orientalism, connected to empire, in tracing earlier Franciscan efforts at uniting Christendom, including the 14th century mission to the Mongols attempting to interest them in a common alliance against the Muslim. Cf. Utopie et histoire au Mexique, (Toulouse 1977), pp. 74-75.

¹⁵³-This victory was the final outcome which began with the Investiture Struggle (1073-1122), and which marked the beginning of secularization in the medieval West. Cf. H. Berman, Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition (Harvard UP, 1983), pp. 87-88: "What was involved ultimately was... 'the development of the two spheres of the sacred and the profane'". The Hohenstaufen emperors are the paramount example of the intertwining of universal empire and visions of the First Man. Cf. Hani, op. cit. 1984, p. 196: "Le 'mythe' de Frederic II était dominé par deux figures: celle de l'empereur Auguste...et celle d'Adam, qui avait été véritablement un cosmocrator. Cette référence à Adam traduisit le désir de retrouver le 'Paradis perdu' par l'Empire chrétien universel." Similarly, Ricoeur (op. cit. p. 247) connects Adam to sacred kingship: "'la royauté fondée 'en ce temps-là' devient peu à peu 'le royaume à venir'... Cette figure, la plus éloignée de celle du Roi terrestre, nous ramène, au terme de ce chapitre, à la figure du début: a l'Homme, a l'Anthropos, le Fils de l'Homme, c'est l'Homme; mais ce n'est plus le Premier Homme, mais un Homme qui vient" (p. 250)

¹⁵⁴-This study takes the concept of interregnum from J.A. Duvignaud, Sociologie des Ombres Collectives, Paris, 1965. Interregnum, in our sense, is that extending between the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire and the consolidation of absolutism in the 16th and 17th centuries. Although focused on a study of theatre in a social context, Duvignaud's gives a portrait of the simultaneity of new theatrical forms in 16th and 17th century Spain, England and France (i.e. the countries of the new national monarchies) which has far greater application (pp. 149, 159-160). Each of countries attempted to take over the universal imperial ideology of the Holy Roman Empire, Spain having the greatest initial success, followed in the 17th century by France.

A sense of interregnum and the expansion of esotericism in England (where, of course, absolutism was ultimately defeated) is conveyed in K. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, New York, 1971, p. 227.

S. Mennell captures another fundamental aspect of this period: "The

But it was able to reconstitute itself one last time, in the absolutist states of the 16th and 17th centuries, of which the Spanish world empire of Charles V¹⁵⁵ and then

noble courts of a past age may at first glance seem of little significance in understanding the modern world. Yet they are; for they were at the center of what Elias considers one of the most decisive transitions within every major civilizing process, the transformation of warriors into courtiers." (in Norbert Elias. Civilization and the Human Self-Image, 1989, pp. 79-80) Elias puts it thus: "Francis I was still a knightly king, le roi chevalier. He was fond of tournaments and hunting...After attaining power he embodied the transition between the late chivalrous type of king and the court aristocratic type that rose to find its first perfect representative in Louis XIV, who no longer, like Henry IV, rode into battle at the head of his nobles" (N. Elias, The Court Society, 1983 English trans. pp. 148-149) Similar perspectives are in R. Strong, Art and Power (1973; 1984), e.g. on the fundamental Burgundian court from which Charles V came (pp. 15, 18) This Burgundian influence is the focus of C. Hofmann, Das spanische Hofzeremoniell von 1500-1700 (1985).

155-"In the middle of the 16th century, the Holy Roman Empire, which had seemed to be developing more and more rapidly into a local German concern, suddenly takes on once more something of the old significance...These revivals, not excluding that of Charlemagne, were never politically real nor politically lasting; it was their phantoms which extended and exercised an almost undying influence." in F. Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (1975), pp. 1-2. Gusdorf puts it similarly: "Le Charlemagne mystique est objectivement faux, mais historiquement réel...La mythohistoire médiévale n'est pas seulement un fantôme retrospectif." (op. cit. vol. II, p. 273) The universal imperial dream of Charles V is discussed in J.A. Maravall, Carlos V y el Pensamiento Político del Renacimiento (1960). The impact of the Spanish world empire on the 16th century is documented in A. Pagden, Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination (1990), as it e.g. inspired Campanella's vision of a "theocratic monarchy" (p. 50), again centered on the sun symbolism of the Città del Sole. Massive documentation of the Habsburg imperial myth of Charles V and his successors is to be found in M. Tanner, The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Habsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor. New Haven, 1993. Cf. also F. Bouza Alvarez, "La Majestad de Felipe II: Construcción del mito real", in J. Martínez Millán, ed. La corte de Felipe II. Madrid, 1994. pp. 37-72.

For further material on the Spanish context, cf. F.A. DeArmas, The Return of Astraea: An Astral-Imperial Myth in Calderon (U. of Kentucky, 1986) and D. Fox, Kings in Calderon (1986). The appropriation of the Book of Daniel is the subject of Menéndez Pidal, El imperio hispanico y los Cinco Reinos (Madrid 1950). Another fundamental study of the link between aesthetics and Spanish absolutism is M. Blanco, Les Rhétoriques de la Pointe. Balthasar Gracian et le Conceptisme en Europe (Geneva, 1992). On a

the aspirations to French world empire of Louis XIV¹⁵⁶ were the prototypes. The stage was set for the French Revolution, and revolutionary regicide, which constitutes not merely the shattering of the divine right of kings¹⁵⁷, itself decadent well before 1789, but more seriously, the entire continuity of the tradition from Egypt onward. The sacred-secular link was broken. Henceforth, power could no

relationship between Staatsräson and a "mysticism of power", cf. p. 561. On the appearance of literature in the modern sense in the early 17th century, cf. p. 604.

¹⁵⁶-Hani, op. cit. 1984, p. 216: "On trouve en France une dernière et splendide illustration de ce symbolisme dans la conception et la réalisation du Palais de Versailles, le palais du 'Roi soleil'. Again, the Oriental shadow: "Beginning sporadically in the Middle Kingdom, but much more frequently in the new kingdom, the idiom of the new phenomenon of empire borrowed the sun disk as a royalist and universalist symbol." (D. Redford. Akhenaten. The Heretic King. Princeton, 1984, p. 170.)

The rise of Spain and then France as world empires, and their rivalry (with England) in the New World is recounted in P. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of Great Powers, New York 1987. Chs. 2-3. The doctrine of the "mystic body" in the state of Louis XIV, and the anointment of the king, is discussed in R. E. Mousnier, The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy (1974; 1979 English trans.) pp. 649-654. On the connection between the solar myth, Charles V and the royal mythology of Louis XIV cf. *ibid.* pp. 671-674.

On the constitution of the myth in the epoch of Louis XIV, cf. P. Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV, New Haven 1992; J.P. Néraudeau, L'Olympe du Roi-soleil: Mythologie et ideologie royale au Grand Siècle, Paris 1986; L. Marin, Le portrait du roi, Paris 1981; for an overview of sacred kingship in France from the Renaissance to the Revolution, cf. A. Boureau, Le simple corps du roi: l'impossible sacralité des souverains français XVe-XVIIIe Siècle, Paris 1988. On the extension of the pseudo-sacred culture of Louis XIV in the New World colonies, cf. R. Macdonald et al eds. The Sun King: Louis XIV and the New World, New Orleans 1984.

Further material for France in this respect is in J-M Apostolides, Le prince sacrifié: Theatre et politique au temps de Louis XIV (Paris 1985) and M. Prigent Le héros et l'Etat dans la tragédie de Pierre Corneille (Paris 1986) "...even Pascal, who was relatively untouched by l'honnêteté and libertinage, can be interpreted as transferring the great heroic ideals of Corneille to the realm of faith instead of duels". (N. Keohane, Philosophy and the State in France, 1980, p. 286)

¹⁵⁷-"The doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings arose out of the medieval controversies concerning the respecting powers of Popes and Emperors" (Yates, op. cit., 1975, p. 39.)

longer be cosmic, grounded in "nature"; it could only be mythic. The era of Napoleons had begun¹⁵⁸.

If the reader thinks such considerations are far from the concerns of Melville and Moby Dick, study of the following passage is in order:

"...Now, as the business of standing mast-heads (keeping watch- LG) ashore or afloat, is a very ancient and interesting one, let us in some measure expatiate more. I take it, that the earliest standers of mast-heads were the old Egyptians because, in all my researches, I find none prior to them. For through their progenitors the builders of Babel, must doubtless, by their tower, have intended to rear the loftiest mast-head in all Asia, or Africa either; yet... as that great stone mast of theirs may be said to have gone by the board, in the dread gale of God's wrath; therefore, we cannot give these Babel builders priority over the Egyptians. And that the Egyptians were a nation of mast-head standers, is an assertion based upon the general belief among archaeologists, that the first pyramids were founded for astronomical purposes... In Saint Stylites, the famous Christian hermit of old times, who built him a lofty stone pillar in the desert and spent the whole latter portion of his life on its summit... in him we have a remarkable instance of a dauntless stander-of-mast-heads...(and who)...literally died at his post. Of modern standers-of-mast-heads we have but a lifeless set; mere stone, iron and bronze men; who, though well capable of facing out a stiff gale, are still entirely incompetent in the business of singing out upon discovering any strange sight. There is Napoleon, who upon the top of the column of Vendome, stands with arms folded, some one hundred and fifty feet in the air; careless, now, who rules the decks below; whether Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil. Great Washington, too, stands high aloft on his towering main-mast in Baltimore... Admiral Nelson, also...stands his mast-head in Trafalgar Square...But neither Washiton, nor Napoleon, nor Nelson, will answer answer single hail from below, however madly invoked..."¹⁵⁹

In this passage one thus comes closer to the socio-political meaning of Moby Dick, as well as to Melville's mention, in the midst of a treatise on whale fossils, of the discovery of a whale skull under the Tuileries, in the passage quoted earlier¹⁶⁰. Not only was Melville perfectly aware of the tradition of cosmic kingship, but he was also aware that the French Revolution marked a turning point in history in which the sacred dimension grounded in a cosmic order was shattered

¹⁵⁸-A. Boime, Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815, Chicago , 1990, Ch. 2 "The Iconography of Napoleon", offers an overview of the constitution of the Napoleonic phase of what this study calls the "pseudo-sacred". Cf. for example pp. 39-41 on Napoleon as depicted by David. " (Napoleon's)special talent for self-advertisement forged David's portrayal into Napoleon's ideal self-image."

¹⁵⁹-MD, p. 157-158.

¹⁶⁰-on p. 25 above.

forever, and that in the post- revolutionary period, the mythic¹⁶¹ or pseudo-mythic power that reconstituted itself on the ruins of the cosmic myth was a homunculus, a pharaoh with feet of clay.

It is essential to underline the "Oriental" dimension of cosmic kingship, for it is central to Melville's critique of the Orientalism of the Transcendentalists. In the tradition outlined here, a link to the East plays a constant, recurring role in the constitution of this kind of power. Egypt was the prototype, and as indicated earlier, required no "Oriental revival". But thereafter, it is uncanny how the theme of *ex oriente lux* recurs again and again in this tradition. Plato, in his relationship to Pythagoreanism¹⁶² and to Egypt¹⁶³, already introduced this basic idea of kingship in the *Republic*. Alexander marched to the banks of the Indus and married the daughter of Darius; the Macedonian court was completely Orientalized¹⁶⁴ before his death in 313 BC. The late Roman emperors, as indicated, were overwhelmed by Orientalism. The Holy Roman Emperors not only took up this continuity, but in the period of the Crusades, along with other European monarchs, renew the Oriental myth¹⁶⁵. Frederick II the Hohenstaufen, the *stupor mundi* of the thirteenth century, not only "Orientalized" his Sicilian court but was accused of secret conversion to Islam by the Pope. Louis IX, Saint-Louis, died on a crusade in Tunisia¹⁶⁶; the Oriental figure of Saladin came to symbolize the mirror image of his friend and rival Frederick II. Even Napoleon made his "journey to the East" on his Egyptian campaign, paraded his troops in front of the pyramids and later helped to lay the foundation for 19th century Oriental studies in France. Clearly we are dealing with a very profound myth of the state in the Western tradition, and just as clearly was Melville aware of the centrality of those "earliest standers of mastheads", the Egyptians. Starbuck, Ahab's first mate, is a "revivified Egyptian"¹⁶⁷. When Stubb has a premonitory dream about Ahab, the captain

161-On the constitution of the myth of Napoleon in France, cf. Jean Tulard, *Napoleon: The Myth of the Saviour*. London, 1984. Ch. 10.

162-Ernest McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato*, York Beach, 1984.

163-F.M. Cornford, trans. *Plato's Cosmology*. Indianapolis, 1975. p. 17 (footnote 1): "...it is not unlikely that Plato himself had visited Egypt."

164-"Déjà, dans l'oeuvre de Platon, s'annonce la recurrence du mythe et, une fois passée le moment d'Aristote, s'imposeront à nouveau les speculations cosmomorphiques et anthroposophiques dont Alexandrie sera le foyer". (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. IX, pp. 196-197)

165-Cf. Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem (The Journey of Louis VII to the East)*; edited by V.G. Berry, New York, 1948.

166-G. Sivéry, *Saint Louis et son siècle*, Paris 1983, Ch. IX; Jean Richard, *Saint Louis*, Paris 1983, Part IV/

167-MD, p. 117.

appears to him as a pyramid¹⁶⁸. Just prior to the reference to Champollion cited earlier, Melville writes:

"...But now? Genius in the Sperm Whale? Has the Sperm Whale ever written a book, spoken a speech? No, his greatest genius is declared in his doing nothing particular to prove it. It is moreover declared in his pyramidal silence. And this reminds me that had the great Sperm Whale been known to the young Orient World, he would have been deified by their child-magian thoughts. They deified the crocodile of the Nile, because the crocodile is tongueless; and the Sperm Whale has no tongue, or at least is so exceedingly small, as to be incapable of protrusion. If hereafter any highly-cultured, poetical nation shall lure back to their birth-right the merry May-Day gods of old; and lovingly enthrone them again in the now egotistical sky; in the now unhaunted hill; then, be sure, exalted to Jove's high seat, the great Sperm Whale shall lord it."¹⁶⁹

Thereupon follows, as indicated earlier, Melville's challenge to decipher the "Egypt of every man's and every being's face", as Champollion deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphics and as Sir William Jones¹⁷⁰ discovered the Indo-European character of Sanskrit.

When Melville refers in the just-quoted passage to the "now-egotistical sky" and the "now unhaunted hill", he refers to the same frayed quality of the modern mythical- religious apprehension of reality which emerged in the "mastheads" passage. But in the Champollion/ Sir William Jones passage, Melville is already pointing toward the supersession of the contemporary Napoleonic pseudo-myth: the "Egypt of every man's and every being's face", the modern working class. For Melville, as shall be shown, the modern labor process in its collective and de-mythified character does not stand over and against the "merry May-day gods of old" as a "disenchanted world" of Weberian resignation, as the "white and turbid wake" of Ahab¹⁷¹. It is, on the contrary, the actual and potential

¹⁶⁸-MD, pp. 114-115. (Melville later visited the pyramids, during a trip to the Middle East in 1856-57, and found them "vast, undefiled, incomprehensible, and awful" (in D.M. Finkelstein, Melville's Orienda, 1961, p. 74). After visiting them, he wrote "I shudder at the idea of the ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah. Terrible mixture of cunning and awful." (quoted in J. Leyda, ed. The Melville Log, 1951, vol. 2, p. 542.)

¹⁶⁹-MD, pp. 356-358.

¹⁷⁰-G. Cannon, Oriental Jones, London 1964.

¹⁷¹-Another major Western figure, definitely the exponent of a disabused post-Enlightenment world outlook, who could not resist the fascination of ancient Egypt was Sigmund Freud. This is shown in L. Gamwell and R. Wells, eds. Sigmund Freud and Art: His Personal Collection of Antiquities. New York 1989., which shows his personal art collection to be focused on Egypt. Similar themes emerge in Moses and Monotheism, with the assertion

source of a new, directly lived "cosmic imagination" that exceeds in its power anything known in the past. This is a "reading" of Melville which must be pulled carefully out of Moby-Dick, and one which is still ahead of the argument. What is being proposed for the moment is merely that the two strands of Melville's "cosmic imagination", his discussion of cosmic evolution as yet uncompleted "like the Cathedral of Cologne" and his discussion of the frayed condition of cosmic kingship (the kingship associated with the cathedral) and its modern successor, the Napoleonic myth, converge in one idea: that the modern collective appropriation of nature represented by the modern labor process is potentially the location for both the realization of natural evolution-- the completion of the cathedral dome, so to speak--and the lost power of the deflated gods and kings. For Melville, the sapping of the basis of the cosmic state represented by Pharoanic Egypt and its successors, are two sides of one single process: that in which the "metaphor" of work, understood as alienated labor, has taken over the "now egotistical skies" and the collective association of men in society.

It is necessary to locate the cosmic imagination expressed in the passages which opened this section in a larger mid-19th century context. The references to Agassiz and Cuvier, as with those to figures such as Linnaeus, Leuwenhoek and Lavater which recur throughout Moby-Dick do not merely show Melville, from his cetological researches for Moby Dick, to be conversant with the entire range of pre-Darwinian and evolutionary thought¹⁷². They demonstrate Melville's affinity for aspects of the critique of the then- dominant Anglo-French paradigm of science,

that Moses was an Egyptian. "After his conquest of Rome, " writes Carl Schorske in a review of the Gamwell/Wells book, "the pursuit of these related opposites led Freud to new cultural sites, to digs in strata lying deeper both in history and in his psyche than Greece, and Rome, namely to Israel and Egypt." "Freud's Egyptian Dig", in New York Review of Books, May 27, 1993.

¹⁷²-On the literature which would have been available to Melville, cf. B. Glass et al. Forerunners of Darwin, 1745-1859. Baltimore, 1968; on Agassiz, E. Lurie, Louis Agassiz, Chicago 1960; on Cuvier and paleontology, cf. M. Rudwick, The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Paleontology, Chicago, 1985, Ch. 3; also on Cuvier and the pre-Darwinian debates in France, P. Corsi, The Age of Lamarck, Berkeley 1988; one work connecting this evolution of biology to the question of race is J. Greene, The Death of Adam, Ames 1959, pp. 191-192 and elsewhere. The natural history of the New World was also bound up with ideological debates about its significance, as shown in the two books of A. Gerbi, Nature in the New World (Pittsburgh, 1985; Italian original 1975) and The Dispute of the New World (Pittsburgh 1973; Italian original 1955). In the latter work, writes Gerbi (p. 247) "The exaltation of nature unadorned (in Paine's Rights of Man-LG) formed part of the attack on the banner-decked ramparts of the past. Thus America as a political concept came into being as antihistory, as the power of nature...reaching out toward the future and already proud of its titanic primitivism",

based on the model of Galilean-Newtonian physics¹⁷³, which developed in Germany through figures such as Goethe, Schelling and von Humboldt.¹⁷⁴ Whether or not he read these specific authors, it is clear that he was familiar with the tradition when he has Ishmael say, in a discussion of whale physiology,

"It is a German conceit, that the verterbrae are absolutely undeveloped skulls. But the curious external resemblance, I take it the Germans were not the first to perceive."¹⁷⁵

Melville, through Ismael, is poking fun at the teleological extremes of Schelling's Naturphilosophie which ultimately discredited it. But no reader of Moby Dick, and no reader of Goethe's writings on botany, paleontology and geology, or of

173-"La science modern prend naissance avec Galilée, dont la pensée est libérée de tout hylozoisme". (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. II p. 453)

174-For further discussion of this "biological" critique of physics, cf. Ch. 9 below. Goethe complete scientific writings are available in R. Steiner, ed. J.W. Goethe: Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften, 5 vols. Dornach, 1982. On Goethe's involvement with Hermeticism, cf. R.C. Zimmermann Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe, 2 vols., Munich, 1970 and 1979; on his morphologism, F. Hiebel, Goethe: Die Erhöhung des Menschen. Perspektiven einer Morphologischen Lebensschau, Stuttgart 1991. On his critique of Newton's theory of color, cf. A. Schöne, Goethes Farbentheologie, Munich 1987 and D. Sepper, Goethe contra Newton, Cambridge UP 1988. On his general outlook, O. Kratz, Goethe und die Naturwissenschaften, Munich, 1992; R. Ziegler, Goethes Ideen zur Mathematik, Dornach, 1993; for Naturphilosophie's positive contribution to 19th century science, cf. L. Pearce Williams, The Origins of Field Theory, New York 1966, esp. Ch. II. "Naturphilosophie and the Discovery of Electromagnetism", pp. 32-63. On the enigmatic figure of Oetinger and the interaction between esotericism, Naturphilosophie and physics in the 18th century, cf. E. Benz, Theologie der Elektrizität, Mainz, 1970.

175-MD, p. 359. On Schelling and Naturphilosophie, W. Coleman, Biology in the Nineteenth Century: Problems of Form, Function and Transformation. Cambridge UP, 1977, pp. 48-49. R.F. Brown, The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815, Lewisburg 1977, sees the 17th century mystic as a major source of Schelling. Scholem sees a Kabbalistic influence, in Judaica 4, Frankfurt 1984, p. 19. For a sketch of the collapse of the Naturphilosophie tradition, cf. S.J. Gould, Ontogeny and Phylogeny, Harvard/Belknap 1977, Ch. 3. "La Naturphilosophie procede à partir du désaveu de l'acosmisme intellectualiste qui, pour faire place nette à son axiomatisation, dénature la nature et deshumanise l'homme". (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. 12, p. 32). "La Naturphilosophie se propose d'être...non pas l'équation du monde, mais le chant du monde" (p. 37)

Alexander von Humboldt's multi-volumed Cosmos (1828-1858)¹⁷⁶ can doubt that these authors stand squarely in a tradition of a "hylozoic" conception of nature closer to Leibniz than to Newton.¹⁷⁷ Further, in these cases, but particularly in

¹⁷⁶-On Alexander von Humboldt, cf. Douglas Botting, Humboldt and the Cosmos, London 1973; also C. Minguet, Alexandre de Humboldt. Historien et géographe de l'Amérique Espagnole (1799-1804). Paris, 1969; also P. James, All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas, Indianapolis 1972, pp. 147-164. On the relationship between Goethe and Humboldt, cf. A. Meyer-Abich, Die Vollendung der Morphologie Goethes durch Alexander von Humboldt, Göttingen, 1970. For Humboldt's influence on Jefferson, cf. D. Jackson, Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains, Urbana, 1981, p. 113. W. Goetzmann even identifies a "romantic" influence in the U.S. army officer corps in the early 19th century, in part inspired by Humboldt: Army Exploration in the American West 1803-1863, Lincoln 1959, pp. 16-18. For further Humboldtian influences in the U.S. into the 1850's, cf. Goetzmann, New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery. New York, 1987, pp. 156-158. A German disciple of Humboldt also wrote one of the best early travel accounts of the U.S. Cf. Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Württemberg, Travels in North America, 1822-1824. Norman, 1973 (English original, 1835). The Humboldtian tradition was the highest product of the attempts at maintaining a tension between art and science in the early 19th century, and Melville wrote Moby Dick in the last decade prior to its demise at the hands of Darwinism: "Die Zukunft gehörte damit eindeutig dem Darwinismus, wodurch Humboldts "Kosmos" in jenen Teilen, in denen sich das Werk mit Fragen des Fortschritts beschäftigt, unabwendbar das antiquierte Gepräge einer biologisch untermauerten Entwicklungstheorie im Sinne Herders erhielt" (from Cedric Hentschel, "Zur Synthese von Literatur und Naturwissenschaft bei Alexander von Humboldt", in H. Pfeiffer, ed. Alexander von Humboldt: Werk und Weltgeltung, Munich 1969, p. 55) . S.F. Cannon, in her Science in Culture: The Early Victorian Period, 1978, pp. 76-77, writes that "Alexander von Humboldt, then, from about 1800 to about 1840 successfully directed the attention of many European scientists, especially the younger ones, to a complex of interests for which there has never been a completely satisfactory phrase...Hence I call it "Humboldtian science". W. LePenies also documents the decline of 18th century conceptions of natural history in Das Ende der Naturgeschichte, Frankfurt 1976. On pp. 134-135 he situates Humboldt in the decline of the relationship between literary and scientific writing, a relationship taken for granted in the 18th century. Humboldt also figures significantly in A. Gerbi, op. cit. (1973).

¹⁷⁷-For a discussion of Leibniz's critique of Newton, cf. Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature, New York 1980, pp. 281-287. Although written from an Aristotelean viewpoint, J. Marecko's formulation on the "de-cosmization" carried out by Newtonian physics is not far from the viewpoint of this study:

Melville's, the immediacy of the mystic and mythical qualities in the very midst of the geological, paleontological and evolutionary presentations of nature leave no doubt that he saw the "mythopoeic" faculty as a central part of nature itself, part of the uncompleted "Cathedral of Cologne" ready for further development. His conception both converges upon and radically departs from Emerson's 1835 essay "On Nature", a classic statement of the Transcendentalist view. There, too, myth is evoked¹⁷⁸ in the heart of a biological-evolutionary view. But what radically distinguishes Melville from Emerson¹⁷⁹, as from other Transcendentalists¹⁸⁰ such

"S'il n'y a cosmos qu'a partir du moment où l'espace contient les lieux privilégiés qui produisent du mouvement ou du repos, le principe d'inertie apparaît comme le fondement de l'acosmisme" (in "Les Conséquences Philosophiques de la Formulation du Principe d'Inertie. Espace euclidien et espace absolu", unpublished ms. p. 12)

¹⁷⁸-"How does Nature deify us with a few and cheap elements! Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos, and unimaginable realms of faerie; broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams." From C. Bode, ed. The Portable Emerson, New York 1985, pp. 14-15. According to R. Rusk, "Natural history was indeed, as (Emerson's) brother Charles said, 'the study now'. Everybody was 'making catalogues of birds, reading memoirs of Cuvier, hearing lectures about Crustacea, volcanoes, entymology and the like" (The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1949, p. 201). Ca. 1833, according to Mathiessen, Emerson was "hovering over the cabinets of Natural History in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris", thinking about becoming a naturalist. In the same garden in the same summer, Balzac conceived of La Comédie Humaine "in a comparison between Humanity and Amoebity" (American Renaissance, 1941, p. 15).

Again, for Egyptian symbolism in Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Poe and Hawthorne (as well as Melville). cf. J. Irwin, op. cit. "That Europe and America, during the period 1800-1850, were swept by a wave of interest in the antiquities of Egypt is nowadays one of the less well remembered facets of nineteenth century history". (p. 3)

¹⁷⁹-"Both Carlyle and Emerson thus record without obvious irony the anecdote of Napoleon in Egypt, that perpetual touchstone of the god-kings, listening to an evening of argument against the existence of God only to silence everyone by pointing at the sky and saying in effect, "But gentlemen, if there is no God, then who made the stars?" (cited in L. Braudy, The Frenzy of Renown, Oxford 1986, p. 449.)

¹⁸⁰-(Hawthorne, Melville and Poe), in their own day and later, were unable to command the public that their work deserved. The implications of what they wrote were not of a kind which the United States in the nineteenth century wanted very much to hear about. Emerson was found a more congenial spokesman. At least his thought lent itself to attractively resonant

as Thoreau, is precisely his underscoring of collective human labor as the extension of that cosmic-evolutionary process, and the individuality achieved by real human beings through that process, an idea as foreign to the Transcendentalists as it was to the Young Hegelians attacked by Marx.

This cosmic-evolutionary aspect of Melville's thought will be further elaborated in a later chapter; it is now necessary to proceed with a presentation of his socio-political analysis of the modern world, for which his dissection of the tradition of "cosmic kingship" in relationship to nature has prepared the terrain.

emphases on self-reliance, human goodness and human power, a beneficent tendency in the whole cosmos." (P.F. Quinn, The French Face of Edgar Poe, Carbondale, 1954. p. 255)

Ch. IV. Moby-Dick As The American 18th Brumaire: the Perspective of CLR James

In the previous section, Melville reported the discovery of a whale skull under the Palace of the Tuileries in 1779, and other bones discovered in "excavating the great docks of Antwerp, in Napoleon's time". These obvious rapprochements of cetology, paleontology and the symbols of frayed mythical and pseudo-mythical power must now be examined more closely.

As with the recurring references to the German emperors, the references to Napoleon and the French Revolution in Moby Dick are too frequent not to be intimately linked to the central themes of the book. Melville, as noted, described the complexion of the hull of the Pequod as "like a French grenadier's, who has alike fought in Egypt and Siberia..."¹⁸¹. The Pequod's crew is "an Anacharsis Cloots deputation from all the isles of the sea"¹⁸². In a cetological discourse on killer whales, Melville remarks in an aside: "For we are all killers, on land and sea, Bonapartes and sharks included"¹⁸³. The whale "once swam over the site of the Tuileries, and Windsor Castle and the Kremlin"¹⁸⁴. In the chapter entitled "The Town-Ho's Story", the rebellious crew of the Town-Ho is referred to as "those sea-Parisians entrenched...behind a barricade"¹⁸⁵. But Melville's deepest thoughts on the significance of Napoleon and other 19th century embodiments of the pseudo-mythic are expressed in the "mast-heads" passage quoted previously. Nor does he limit himself to French history for his examples. In a passage whose analysis follows momentarily, Melville invokes "thou great democratic God!...Thou didst pick up Andrew Jackson from a war-horse, who didst thunder him higher than a

¹⁸¹-MD, p. 71.

¹⁸²-MD, p. 123.

¹⁸³-MD, p. 123.

¹⁸⁴-MD, p. 472.

¹⁸⁵-MD, p. 257. As with the passage cited earlier describing the discovery of a whale skeleton under the Rue Dauphine, next to the Tuileries, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Melville is alluding to the French Revolution even in the most apolitical references to France. Discussing paintings and engravings of whales and whaling scenes, Melville writes: "The French are lads for painting action...where will you find such a gallery of living and breathing commotion on canvas, as in that triumphal hall at Versailles, where the beholder fights his way, pell-mell, through the consecutive great battles of France; where every sword seems a flash of the Northern Lights, and the successive kings and Emperors dash by...?...The natural aptitude of the French for seizing the picturesqueness of things seems to be peculiarly evinced in what paintings and engravings they have of their whaling scenes. (pp. 274-275)."

throne!"¹⁸⁶. George Washington, it will be recalled, was among the "standers of mast-heads", "who will not answer a single hail from below..." On occasion, Melville inverts the relationship, calling Hercules "that antique Crockett and Kit Carson"¹⁸⁷.

How can one fail, through the entire historical gallery invoked above and in the preceding chapter, to note the uncanny parallel between Melville's analysis of the cosmic king and its modern reconstitution in pseudo-mythic power, and the concluding passages of Marx's 18th Brumaire¹⁸⁸?:

"...When Guizot utilized this Granier at the time of his ministry in an obscure provincial paper against the dynastic opposition, he used to boast of him with the phrase 'c'est le roi des drôles' - 'he is the king of the buffoons'. It would be a mistake to call to mind the Regency of Louis XV in connection with the court and the clan of Louis Bonaparte. For 'France has often experienced a government of mistresses, but never before a government of kept men'.

Driven on by the contradictory demands of his situation, Bonaparte, like a conjurer, has to keep the eyes of the public fixed on himself, as Napoleon's substitute, by means of constant surprises, that is to say by performing a coup d'etat in miniature every day. He thereby brings the whole bourgeois economy into confusion, violates everything that seemed inviolable to the revolution of 1848, makes some tolerant of revolution and others desirous of revolution, creates anarchy itself in the name of order, and at the same time strips the halo from the state machine, profaning it and making it both disgusting and ridiculous. He repeats the cult of the Holy Tunic at Trier in the form of the Napoleonic imperial mantle in Paris. But when the emperor's mantle finally falls on the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte, the bronze statue of Napoleon will come crashing down from the top of the Vendome Column.¹⁸⁹

The remarkable parallels between the import of this passage from Marx and Melville's "mast-heads" passage are striking, and equally striking is the use by both authors of the Vendôme Column as a central symbol. But there is more. The 18th Brumaire, published one year after *Moby Dick*, abounds in the same stream of examples of frayed pseudo-mythic power throughout, constantly emphasizing the hollow quality of modern ideology dressed in traditional garb:

¹⁸⁶-MD, p. 119. "Jackson's hero in European politics was Napoleon, who had risen from obscurity to govern an empire" (M. Rogin, Fathers and Children. Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian (New York, 1975), p. 73.

¹⁸⁷-MD, p. 373.

¹⁸⁸-Cf. Rogin, op. cit, Ch. 4, for a detailed discussion of Moby Dick and the "American 1848".

¹⁸⁹-Karl Marx, Surveys from Exile. Baltimore 1973, pp. 248-249.

"...The material and economic conditions of the ancient and modern class struggles are so utterly distinct from each other that their political products also can have no more in common than the Archbishop of Canterbury has with the High Priest Samuel."¹⁹⁰

Nowhere, however, are the "Melvillian" themes so apparent are so condensed as in the famous opening passages of The Eighteenth Brumaire:

"Hegel remarks somewhere that all the great events and characters of world history occur, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Caussadiere in place of Danton, Louis Blanc in place of Robespierre, the Montagne of 1848-51 in place of the Montagne of 1793-5, the Nephew in place of the Uncle. And we can perceive the same caricature in the circumstances surrounding the second edition of the eighteenth Brumaire!

Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living. And, just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation, in the creation of something which does not yet exist, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them... Luther put on the mask of the apostle Paul; the Revolution of 1789- 1814 draped itself alternately at the Roman republic and the Roman empire; and the revolution of 1848 knew no better than to parody at some points 1789 and at others the revolutionary traditions of 1793-5...

If we reflect on this process of world-historical necromancy, we see at once a salient distinction. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just and Napoleon, the heroes of the old French Revolution, accomplished the task of their epoch, which was the emancipation and establishment of modern bourgeois society, in Roman costume and with Roman slogans. The first revolutionaries smashed the feudal basis to pieces and struck off the feudal heads which had grown on it. Then came Napoleon. Within France he created the conditions which first made possible the development of free competition...Once the new social formation had been established, the antediluvian colossi disappeared along with the resurrected institutions of Rome-- imitations of Brutus, Gracchus, Publicola, the tribunes, the senators, and Caesar himself. Bourgeois society in its sober reality had created its true interpreters and spokesmen in such people as Say, Cousin, Royer-Collard, Benjamin Constant and Guizot. The real leaders of the bourgeois army sat behind office desks while the fathead Louis XVIII served as the bourgeoisie's political head...

In these revolutions, then, the resurrection of the dead served to exalt the new struggles, rather than to parody the old, to exaggerate the given task in the imagination, rather than to flee from solving it in reality, and to recover the spirit of the revolution, rather than to set its ghost walking again.

¹⁹⁰-ibid. p. 145.

For it was only the ghost of the old revolution which walked in the years from 1848 to 1851, from Marrast, the republican en gants jaunes, who disguised himself as old Bailly, right down to the adventurer who is now hiding his commonplace and repugnant countenance beneath the death mask of Napoleon."191

Thus for Marx, as for Melville, mid-19th century bourgeois politicians were only, and necessarily only "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", because new tasks and new social forces had come onto the scene. Who were these new forces?

The Holy Tunic of Trier¹⁹² to which Marx refers in the first passage above is a useful point through which to return to Melville's answer to that question: as shall be seen in a moment, it goes to the heart of some of the most revealing symbolism of Moby Dick. In 1910, the German scholar Robert Eisler published the ponderous two-volume study Weltmantel und Himmelzelt¹⁹³ (roughly, "world mantle and cosmic vault"), which traces the lineage of the myth of the cosmic king from the ancient Near East to the Holy Roman Emperors studied by Kantorowicz. The "world mantle" and the "cosmic vault" studied by Eisler was, once again, a symbol of the cosmic quality of kingship in the tradition inherited by the West: the "king's mantle" ultimately being derived from the "cosmic vault" itself, just as the Egyptian pharaoh was an incarnate deity. In Moby Dick, Melville wrote:

"Men may seem as detestable as joint-stock companies and nations...but man, in the ideal, is so noble and so sparkling, that over any ignominious blemish in him all his fellows should run to throw their costliest robes...this august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shall see it shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! His omnipresence, our divine equality!

If then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark; weave around them tragic graces...if I shall touch that workman's arm with some ethereal light;...then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind!...Thou who, in all Thy might, earthly marchings, ever

191-*ibid.* pp. 146-148

192-Believed to have been the tunic of Christ. As Hani (op. cit. 1984) writes: "Ce symbolisme est en rapport direct...avec la fonction royale; le manteau est la voûte céleste...(p. 237)

193-Robert Eisler, Weltmantel und Himmelzelt, Leipzig 1910, 2 vols. Also relevant here is the literature on cosmic kingship cited above (p. 25n). Cf. L'Orange, op. cit., pp. 139ff. on the "cosmocrator's sign" for a discussion of the proliferation of Oriental kingship symbols in the West.

cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons, bear me out in it, O God!"¹⁹⁴

Not only does Melville, like Marx, have a critique of "joint stock companies" (the term most often invoked to refer to capitalism), but he, like Marx, sees the modern working class as the heir of all human achievement in history, indeed, (if the earlier analysis is correct) of all evolution, taking up the nobility once invested in cosmic kingship, and still present in caricature in the "Louis Philippes, Louis Blancs and Louis Devils", but essentially "one royal mantle of humanity"¹⁹⁵.

Before proceeding further with Melville's analysis of modern capitalism and the working class, it is imperative to refer to the work of CLR James¹⁹⁶, whose book Mariners, Renegades and Castaways (1953) and whose autobiography Beyond a Boundary (1961) have underscored many of the themes developed here. This is necessary, in order to dispel any impression that this is the first attempt to see these affinities between Melville and Marx, and at the same time to highlight

¹⁹⁴-MD, p. 119. Our emphasis.

¹⁹⁵-Melville reiterates this theme in great detail in Ch. 82 (MD pp. 283-285) "The Honor and Glory of Whaling": "Perseus, St. George, Hercules, Jonah, and Vishnoo! there's a member-call for you! What club but the whaleman's can head off like that!" Once again, it is mythical images of human mastery from every stage of history which are the inheritance of the "meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways...".

¹⁹⁶-CLR James is a Melvillian figure in his own right. Born in Trinidad at the beginning of the century, James grew up at the meeting point of the small Caribbean middle class and the working masses. He thus had access to a classical English education as made available to the colonial elites, where he immersed himself in the English novels of the 19th century, above all Thackeray. At the same time, literally outside his window was the whole world of cricket as played by the working masses of the British Caribbean. James became both a cricket player and a sports writer, and at the same time emerged as an important intellectual in the nascent anti-colonial movement in the Caribbean. In the early 1930's James moved his activities to England, where he became involved with the Independent Labour Party and the Depression politics of the British working class. In 1938, he moved to the U.S., where he became a Trotskyist, ultimately forming his own faction in the Socialist Workers' Party, the "Johnson-Forrest" tendency. In the early 1950's, he broke with Trotskyism over, among other things, the then-dominant Marxist approach (hardly limited to Trotskyism) to the black question in the U.S., drifting toward Pan-Africanism. His historical account of the Toussaint l'Ouverture rebellion in Haiti, The Black Jacobins, was an inspiration to African and Caribbean militants in the anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles that followed World War II. A study of James is P. Buhle, CLR James: the Artist as Revolutionary, New York 1988.

those aspects of the analysis at hand which are less developed by James (and in different way, by Rogin).

James' book on Melville appeared at the height of the McCarthy period, and in his treatment of Moby Dick the presence of the international phenomenon of Stalinism is constantly before the reader. Thus his attempt to depict Ahab as a forerunner of the "managerial revolution" described by James Burnham in the 1940 book of the same title which, while having its merits, strikes the contemporary reader as somewhat overblown (though by no means false) must be seen against the immediate context in which the book was written. But James does present an analysis of Melville which has remained unduly ignored.

James, as indicated, sees Ahab as the prototype of the modern manager. He cites as evidence the confrontation between Ahab and his first mate Starbuck, when Ahab refuses to stop the voyages for repairs and Starbuck asks what the owners in Nantucket would say. Ahab replies:

"...Let the owners stand on Nantucket Beach and outyell the typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners..."¹⁹⁷

James also cites the scene in which Ahab stomps on the ship's quadrant as evidence of a will to power which brooks no limitations from mere scientific measurement:

"...'Science! I curse thee, thou vain toy! he yells, and stamps upon the instrument...Aye, thus I trample upon thee, thou paltry thing that feebly pointest on high; this I split and destroy thee!'...It is on the same evening that the storm breaks, the fires burn on the masts, and Ahab defies the fires of industry. Thus, within one day, Industry and Science, the twin gods of the nineteenth century, have been deposed."¹⁹⁸

It is in James' analysis of the personalities of Ahab and Ishmael in particular that their connection to the general problems of Transcendentalism, already touched upon, becomes clearer. Of Ahab, James writes, after describing the funereal atmosphere that reigns at his officers' table:

"...The meals are the symbol of Ahab's isolation from the men with whom he works, an isolation forced upon him by his position of command. Nobody stayed in that cabin one minute longer than they had to."¹⁹⁹

In a rare frank discussion with Starbuck, as James points out, Ahab describes his situation as the "Guinea-coast slavery of solitary command"²⁰⁰. He

¹⁹⁷CLR James, Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In. Detroit, 1978. p. 2.

¹⁹⁸-ibid. pp. 54-55

¹⁹⁹-ibid. p. 3.

²⁰⁰-ibid. p. 4.

then enters into the nub of his analysis of Ahab as the prototype of a rebellion against capitalist rationality by men of his class:

"...For generations people believed that the men opposed to rights of ownership, production for the market, domination of money, etc. were socialists, communists, radical of some sort united by the fact that they all thought in terms of the reorganization of society by the workers, the great majority of the oppressed, the exploited, the disinherited. Some there were, of course, who believed that the experiment, if made, was bound to result in tyranny. Nobody, not a single soul, thought that in the managers, the superintendents, the executives, the administrators would arise such loathing and bitterness against the society of free enterprise, the market and democracy, that they would try to reorganize it to suit themselves and, if need be, destroy civilization in the process. There are a number of writers, chiefly German, who have shown that they more or less understood the type.²⁰¹

What is of interest in James' analysis is not specifically whether or not he is right in seeing Ahab as the forerunner of the "managerial revolution", still less the aptness of such a term. The power of James' analysis of Ahab is its convergence with the portrait of the bourgeois ego or "moi absolu" as developed in Section II with regard to the tradition of German idealist philosophy, to which James himself refers²⁰². For "managerial revolution" or not, James has hit upon a thread of the present analysis of the fraying of mythic power, as has been documented throughout *Moby Dick*, namely that in its final phase of secularization, the "bourgeois ego" or "moi absolu" ultimately derived from the tradition of cosmic kingship becomes a naked, secular will to power at the head of a bureaucratic state,

²⁰¹-ibid. p. 6.

²⁰²-In this writer's estimation, Fichte is the paradigmatic figure for the modern synthesis of the "Verherrlichung des Ichs" (apotheosis of the self) in the philosophical-aesthetic mode discussed in section II. His "subjective idealism", as Hegel calls it in his *History of Philosophy*, goes beyond the Naturphilosophie of Schelling ('objective idealism") by making willful action of the individual subject the means of achieving the unity of subject and object. This, combined with Fichte's idea of the "geschlossener Handelstaat" (the closed mercantile state) developed in his 1813 "Speeches to the German Nation" make him a prototype of the synthesis of aestheticized subjectivity and a national autarchy regime associated with fascism. One study that attempts to see the Fichtean, Kantian and Hegelian origins of the contemporary German welfare state, centered on the person of Lorenz von Stein, is S. Koslowski, *Die Geburt des Sozialstaats aus dem Geist des deutschen Idealismus. Person und Gemeinschaft bei Lorenz von Stein*, Weinheim 1989. A veritable catalogue of the "aestheticized civil servant" under consideration here is J. Chytry, *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Social Thought*. Berkeley, 1989.

in the name of values that go well beyond those of liberal capitalism, but which are hardly those of socialism. Thus we can concur with James that Ahab is a prototype for the late 19th or 20th century Bonapartist, fascist or Stalinist dictator.

But James' analysis hardly stops there. Ahab has accomplices: little Ahabs. James locates these accomplices in the mates and in the character of Ishmael.

For James, Ishmael is the prototype of the modern alienated intellectual. But, in his own mind, Ishmael is not fully a member of the crew; like the "transcendental divine" described in White Jacket, Ishmael shares with Ahab the "absolute I". As with the mates, that is the "hook" through which Ahab enlists Ishmael in his own will to power, because Ahab understands that men like Ishmael, Starbuck, Flask and Stubb, while appalled by his own tyrannical power and impotent to oppose it, identify with him as a man of action. In short, Ishmael is the prototype of the intellectual sycophant of Stalinist and fascist regimes of the interwar period, the social milieu from which James most directly drew his analysis.

"(Ishmael) is a member of a distinguished American family, is well educated and has been a teacher. But he cannot endure the social class in which he was born and reared, so he lives as a worker, digging ditches, or what else comes to hand. He is subject to fits of periodical depression...and whenever he feels a fit coming on, he goes to sea. Today they do not go to sea-- they join the working class movement or the revolutionary movement instead.

Who does not recognize Ishmael? He wants to be a plain ordinary seaman. He feels himself one of the people. But it isn't that he likes workers. It is that he hates authority and responsibility of any kind. He does not want to be a Commodore but he does not want to be a cook either...

What is wrong with this young man? He is as isolated and bitter as Ahab and as helpless. He cannot stand the narrow, cramped, limited experience which civilization offers him. He hates the greed, the lies, the hypocrisy. Thus shut out from the world outside, he cannot get out of himself. The only truly civilized person he can find in New Bedford and Nantucket is a cannibal savage, the harpooner Queequeg, and the story of their relations is, like all great literature, not only literature but history."²⁰³

James continues:

"Ishmaels, we say, live in every city block. And they are dangerous, especially when they actually leave their own environment and work among workers or live among them. For when Ahab, the totalitarian, bribed the men with money and grog and whipped them up to follow him on his monomaniac quest, Ishmael, the man of good family and education, hammered and shouted with the rest. His submission to totalitarian madness was complete.

²⁰³-ibid. pp. 40-41.

Most of the men on the ship at some time or other showed antagonism to Ahab. Ishmael never did--not once. And the analysis of why this type of young man behaves as he does is one of Melville's greatest triumphs.

As usual with Melville's people in *Moby Dick*, Ishmael at first sight is merely one of those dreamy young men of education and intellect who cannot live in the world. Ishmael's favorite place on board ship is up on the mast-head where he is supposed to be taking his turn at looking for whales. He never sees one, for he is up there dreaming his life away and imagining that his soul is once more at one with the waters that stretch around him to the horizon on every side. But soon it becomes apparent that that Ishmael is no mere dreamer. He is a completely modern young intellectual who has broken with society and wavers constantly between totalitarianism and the crew."²⁰⁴

James, having shown the subordination of the "transcendental divine", Ishmael, to the "Calvinist" (returning to the type introduced in Section I), then turns to Ahab's power over the pragmatic "liberal" social type, Starbuck:

"...His is the story of the liberals and democrats who during the last quarter of a century have led the capitaluation to totalitarianism in country after country. On the night of the great storm, Starbuck, forgetting himself, shouts to Ahab before all the men, to turn back. He points to Ahab's harpoon which has caught fire from the magnetic flame on the mast. The voyage, he says, is doomed to disaster. For a moment, it seemed that Starbuck was saying what the men were thinking. They raise a half-mutinous cry and rush to the sails. One word from Starbuck and Ahab would be over the side. But Ahab seized his harpoon and swearing to transfix with it any man who moves, tells them that he will blow out the flame and blows it out with one breath. His fearlessness, his skillful pretense of being able to command the mysterious magnetic flame, terrify the men. It is characteristic of Starbuck that, having missed his chance when he has the men behind him, he seeks out Ahab that night, alone, to plead with him. Ahab dismisses him contemptuously. No need to emphasize that in reality, Starbuck hates the men and looks upon them as uncouth, barbarous sub-human beings."²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴-*ibid.* pp. 43-44. In his later book *American Civilization*, (Cambridge, 1993) p. 67, James wrote: "Herman Melville is the exact opposite of Whitman, at least in his greatest book, *Moby Dick*....Melville's greatness and superiority to Whitman is due to the fact that, stirred by the critical period, he did the very things that Whitman did not do. He described with absolute precision various individuals in their social setting, the work that they did, their relations with other men. This led him to see that individualism in certain sections of America had become one of the most dangerous vices of the age and would destroy society".

²⁰⁵-*ibid.* pp. 57-58.

Melville, as interpreted by James, is showing in this dynamic a whole perspective on modern history. What, in Moby Dick, escapes the "absolute I" and the little Ahabs, the mates and Ishmael? Clearly it is the crew, and most importantly, the three harpooners, the Tahitian Queequeg, the African Daggoo and the American Indian Tashtego. They maintain among themselves a totally different set of social relations. They are not victims of the "moi absolu" and its gravity:

"In strange contrast to the hardly tolerable constraint and nameless invisible domineerings of the captain's table, was the entire care-free license and ease, the almost frantic democracy of those inferior fellows the harpooners. While their masters, the mates, seemed afraid of the sound of the hinges of their own jaws, the harpooners chewed their food with such a relish that there was a report to it. They dined like lords; they filled their bellies like Indian ships all day loading with spices. Such portentous appetites had Queequeg and Tashtego, that to fill out the vacancies made by the previous repast, often the pale Dough-Boy was fain to bring on a great baron of salt-junk, seemingly quarried out of the solid ox. And if he were not lively about it, if he did not go with a nimble hop skip-and-jump, then Tashtego had an ungentlemanly way of accelerating him by darting a fork at his back, harpoonwise. And once Daggoo, seized with a certain humor, assisted Dough-Boy's memory by snatching him up bodily, and thrusting his head into a great wooden trencher, while Tashtego, knife in hand, began laying out the circle preliminary to scalping him."²⁰⁶

Once again, Melville contrasts this Rabelaisian scene to Ahab's cabin:

"...in the cabin was no companionship; socially, Ahab was inaccessible. Though nominally included in the census of Christendom, he was still alien to it. He lived in the world, as the last of the Grisly Bears lived in settled Missouri."²⁰⁷

James, following Melville, uses the scene at which Ishmael finds himself at the helm of the Pequod in the "Try-Works" chapter, to highlight the difference between Ishmael and the crew:

"...That night, Ishmael is at the helm and he looks down at the men working below. The hatch, removed from the top of the works, now afforded a wide hearth in front of them. Standing on this were the Tartarean shapes of the pagan harpooners, already the whale-ships stokers...(opposite the mouth of the works)...lounged the watch, when not otherwise employed, looking into the red heat of the fire...Their tawny features...their matted beards, and the contrasting barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were strangely revealed in the capricious barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were strangely revealed in the capricious emblazonings of the works.

²⁰⁶-MD, pp. 154-155.

²⁰⁷-MD, p. 156.

That at first sight is the modern world--the world we live in, the world of the Ruhr, of Pittsburgh, of the Black Country in England. In its symbolism of men turned into devils, of an industrial civilization on fire and plunging blindly into darkness, it is the world of massed bombers, of cities in flames, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world in which we live, the world of Ahab, which he hates and which he will organize or destroy."²⁰⁸

Immediately thereupon follows the clinching moment of James' analysis:

"...But when you look again, you see that the crew is indestructible. There they are laughing at the terrible things that have happened to them. The three harpooners are doing their work. True to himself, Ishmael can see the ship only as an expression of Ahab's madness..."²⁰⁹

Lost in this contemplation of the "dark, satanic mill", to use Blake's phrase, Ishmael nearly capsizes the Pequod:

"That," writes James, "is the end of Ishmael. Henceforth he will seek refuge from the world in books, particularly in Ecclesiastes, where it says that "All is vanity. ALL" in large print. He takes refuges in his philosophical abstractions- he will soar like an eagle in the mountains and even if he has to swoop, his lowest flight will be higher than that of ordinary men.

How wrong he is is proved but one brief chapter afterwards. The boiling is over and the hatches are replaced and sealed. What follows now is the summation of a whole way of life, the climax of all that Melville has been saying about the meanest mariners, the renegades and castaways.

In the sperm fishery, this is perhaps one of the most remarkable incidents in all the business of whaling. One day the planks stream with freshets of blood and oil; on the sacred quarter-deck masses of the whale's head are profanely piled, great rusty casks are piled about...

'But a day or two after, look about you, and prick your ears in the self-same ship; and were it not for the tell-tale boats and try-works, you would all but swear you trod some silent merchant vessel, with a most scrupulously neat commander... The great catch is scrubbed...and when by the combined and simultaneous industry last concluded, then the crew themselves proceed to their own ablutions...and finally issue to the immaculate deck, fresh and all aglow, as bridegroom new-leaped from out the daintiest Holland.

'Now, with elated step, they pace the planks in twos and threes, and humorously discourse of parlors, sofas, carpets and fine cambrics; propose to mat the deck; think of having hangings to the stop; object not to taking tea by moonlight on the piazza of the forecastle. To hint to such masked mariners of oil,

²⁰⁸-James, op. cit. pp. 49-50.

²⁰⁹-ibid.

and bone, and blubber, were little short of audacity. They know not the thing you distantly allude to. Away and bring us napkins!"²¹⁰

But, concludes Melville,

"many is the time the poor fellows, just buttoning the neck of their clean frocks, and startled by the cry of 'There she blows!' and away they fly to fight another whale, and go through the whole weary thing again."²¹¹

And from this scene James in turn summarizes his own analysis:

"Thus, around the try-works, there comes to a head the hopeless madness, the rush to destruction of Ahab, and the revulsion from the world of Ishmael. Ahab sat in his cabin marking his charts, Ishmael, thinking of books and dreaming of how he would soar above it all like an eagle, will become in his imagination as destructive as his monomaniac leader. But the Anarcharsis Cloots deputation, the meanest mariners, renegades and castaways, remain sane and human, in their ever-present sense of community, their scrupulous cleanliness, their grace and wit and humor, and their good-humored contempt of those for whom life consists of nothing else but fine cambrics and tea on the piazza."²¹²

There, in the most compact expression, we have the central social and political theme of *Moby-Dick*, the encounter between three different manifestations of the ultimately asocial ego of bourgeois society, in Ahab, Starbuck and Ishmael, shown in their interdependency, counterposed to the real individualism of the collective social relations, in work and in play, of the crew. Melville had arrived at the same insight, in the same decade, as Marx (and had done so in confrontation with two variants of the same body of thought), namely that real individuality was finally realized through collective association in praxis. It was only the ultimately destructive shadow of individuality, the bourgeois or absolute I, that was shattered by the social relations of modern industrial capitalism. Just on the eve of the era in which the relationship between the "Ishmaels" and the "Queequegs" of the world, the intelligentsia and the working class, was about to become of central significance in the rise of the modern socialist movement, Melville had already foreseen the different social characters that would emerge in that actual historical drama, as well as some of the results.

James, in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, presents a very cohesive interpretation of *Moby Dick* parallel to that developed in this essay. But his book does not develop, except in passing, the theme of the tradition of cosmic kingship and its dissolution as we have described it and documented it in Melville. James' analysis converges with our own in seeing Melville posing the modern work force

210-*ibid.* pp. 49-50.

211-*ibid.* pp. p. 52.

212-*ibid.* p. 53/

as the immediate heir of past evolution and history, in the richness of myth and art. But his full contribution does not stop there.²¹³ James' analysis of working-class culture and its potential goes even farther in developing sides of Marx's thought which were virtually unknown at the time James wrote his book on Melville and which, even today, remain at the margins of dominant interpretations of Marx. These ideas concern the supercession of the antinomy between work and leisure. They are developed primarily in James' autobiography Beyond a Boundary (1963) and they are, as shall be seen in a moment, directly related to the assessment of Melville developed here.

The point here is not to summarize Beyond a Boundary. What is immediately relevant for our analysis of Melville is James' assessment of the social role of sports, as revealed first through his own childhood and subsequent involvement with cricket, as observer, sportswriter and player, and its link to his estrangement from the mainstream Marxism he encountered in England and later in the U.S. James, as he himself relates, developed his imagination on a steady stream of English novels, above all in the work of Thackeray²¹⁴ which he read in his middle-class home, and through the constant games of cricket played outside his window. What fascinated James in cricket²¹⁵ was above all the "social aesthetic", to use a certain language, whereby men from the neighborhood described by his aunts as "ne'er-do-wells" were transformed into aristocrats of self-mastery and brilliance at bat in cricket matches. James found the "social aesthetic" of cricket, at once collective and highly individualized by the tensions of men at bat²¹⁶, on a continuum with the social procession which passed through the greatest literature, and began to crystallize it into a remarkable and original view of culture generally. It is in the chapter "What Do Men Live By?" of his autobiography that he articulates these ideas most succinctly:

"...Fiction-writing drained out of me and was replaced by politics. I became a Marxist, a Trotskyist. I published large books and small articles on these and kindred subjects. I wrote and spoke. Like many others, I expected war, and during

213-For an overall assessment of the significance of James, cf. the special issue of Urgent Tasks: Journal of the Revolutionary Left, No. 12, Summer 1981. "CLR James: His Life and Work".

214-"Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me". CLR James, Beyond a Boundary, London 1963, p. 47.

215-Cf. C.L.R. James, Cricket, London 1986, for a selection of his writings on this subject. Unfortunately these articles do not (except perhaps to the cricket connoisseur) present all the dimensions of analysis to be found in Beyond a Boundary.

216-"The batsman facing the ball does not merely represent his side. For that moment, to all intents and purposes, he is his side. The fundamental relation of the One and the Many, Individual and Social, Individual and Universal, leader and followers, representative and ranks, the part and the whole, is structurally imposed on the players of cricket." *ibid.* p. 193.

or after the war social revolution. In 1938 a lecture tour took me to the United States and I stayed there fifteen years. The war came. It did not bring soviets and proletarian power. Instead the bureaucratic-totalitarian monster grew and spread. As early as 1941 I had begun to question the premises of Trotskyism. It took nearly a decade of incessant labour and collaboration to break with it and reorganize my Marxist ideas to cope with the postwar world. That was a matter of doctrine, of history, of economics and politics. These pursuits I shared with collaborators, rivals, enemies and our public. We covered the ground thoroughly.

In my private mind, however, I was increasingly aware of large areas of human existence that my history and my politics did not seem to cover. What did men live by? What did they want? What did history show that they wanted? What exactly was art and what exactly culture? I believed that, more or less, I knew. Years afterwards I was to see my preoccupations formulated clearly if crudely in the pages of *Old Solemnity* itself, the Times Literary Supplement. I was to read: '...For example, in an age of market research and public opinion polls what exactly do men--and women--want from work, money, life? Has any British political party ever conducted a sample enquiry, as a good manufacturer must do to design and sell his wares? Again, if by materialism is meant a dominant individual and social urge for material good things, it has never in history precluded deep spirituality, better arts and the fuller realization of human personality. A strong case could be made for the exact opposite'.

Better arts? What is better art? Better than what? To be investigated presumably by sample polls, organized by a political party, with spirituality taken in passing. I was travelling in a different direction.

A glance at the world showed that when common people were not at work, one thing they wanted was organized sports and games. They wanted them greedily, passionately."²¹⁷

What is most striking in James' analysis of sports is the link, or least the synchronicity, he establishes between sports and popular democracy, first in ancient Greece and then, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when mass spectator sports and the emergence of the working-class movement moved to center stage simultaneously:

"...Organized games had been part and parcel of the civilization of ancient Greece. With the decline of that civilization they disappeared from Europe for some 1,500 years... More curious still to the enquiring eye, after this long absence they seemed all to have returned within about a decade of each other, in frantic haste... Golf was known to be ancient. The first annual tournament of the Open Championship was held only in 1860. The Football Association was founded only in 1863. It was in 1866 that the first athletic championship was held in England...In the United States the first all-professional baseball team was organized in 1869..."²¹⁸

²¹⁷-ibid. pp. 149-150.

²¹⁸-ibid. pp. 150-151.

But, continues James,

"...in that very decade this same public was occupied with other organizations of a very different type, Disraeli's Reform Bill, introducing popular democracy in England, was passed in 1865. In the same year the slave states were defeated in the American Civil War, to be followed immediately by the first modern organization of American labour. In 1864 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels founded the First Communist International.²¹⁹

But James' Trotskyist comrades would have none of it.

"...The conjunction hit me as it would have hit few of the students of society and culture in the international organization to which I belonged. Trotsky had said that the workers were deflected from politics by sports. With my past I could simply not accept that."²²⁰

What James did in Beyond a Boundary, in the most unpretentious fashion developed out of his experience with world literature, politics and cricket, was to cut through decades of the Marxist discussion of culture, most of which revolved around a debate between figures such as Lukacs who saw the works of high bourgeois culture, up to the watershed of 1848, as bourgeois society's legacy to the working class, or currents such as the Frankfurt School, which saw that legacy more in the modernist revolt against classical bourgeois culture, but which had in common with Lukacs a belief, implicit or explicit, that socialism would involve the "raising" of the working masses to some cultural level set down by the bourgeois intelligentsia or the radical avant-garde²²¹ What distinguished James' approach from that of all previous Marxists, who tended to view popular culture with a thinly-veiled Puritanical contempt, was his affirmation that phenomena such as sports were no mere useless diversion from "politics", but on the contrary contained a vision of a new, higher rationality for the organization of society that superseded the capitalist antagonism between work and leisure. James may not have known it at the time, but he had reproduced Marx's own fundamental idea of the same supercession:

"...Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness (Naturbedürftigkeit) and thus creates the

²¹⁹-ibid. pp. 151

²²⁰-ibid. p. 151

²²¹-A third strand in this debate, which has happily been laid to rest in recent decades, was that of "socialist realism", which generally shared Lukacs' view of classical bourgeois culture, but which in contrast to him saw the hackneyed productions of Stalinist "agit-prop" creations of the 1920's and 1930's as the "proletarian culture" of the future.

material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore no longer appears as labor, but as the full development of activity itself..."²²²

But the question is clearly not one of a juxtaposition of texts to determine whether or not James' view is closer to the "real" Marx than those of other writers. What is at stake is a much vaster issue. In considering James' view of sports, and popular culture generally, as the germ of a rationality beyond work for a higher organization of social life, one is immediately reminded of the scene of the first lowering of the boats in Moby Dick. The second mate Flask is too short to see the situation clearly and tries to elevate himself:

"...Upon this, Daggoo, with either hand upon the gunwhale to steady his way, swiftly stood aft, and then erecting himself volunteered his lofty shoulders for a pedestal. Good a mast-head as any, sir. Will you mount?..."

Whereupon planting his feet firmly against two opposite planks of the boat, the gigantic negro, stooping a little, presented his flat palm to Flask's foot, and then putting Flask's hand on his hearse-plumed head...with one dexterous fling landed the little man high and dry on his shoulders...the sight of little Flask mounted upon gigantic Daggoo was yet more curious; for sustaining himself with a cool, indifferent, easy, unthought of barbaric majesty, the noble negro to every roll of the sea harmoniously rolled his fine form. On his broad back, flaxen-haired Flask seemed a snow flake. The bearer looked nobler than the rider."²²³

The "barbarous majesty" of Daggoo in this scene, as with that of Queequeg or Tashtego in others, makes it clear that Melville sees in their "work" the kind of grace of total activity which James later saw in the transformed "ne'er do wells" on the cricket field.

Sylvia Winter, in an essay entitled "In Quest of Matthew Bondsman: Some Cultural Notes on the Jamesian Journey"²²⁴ (Mathew Bondsman being the "ne'er-do-well" who was transformed into a figure of self-mastery at bat in cricket) has attempted to generalize James' views on culture in a way that gets at their general import (if James' own import is not clear enough). Winter sees the real contribution of James as the development of an "imaginaire social" previously lacking in the Marxism tradition²²⁵

²²²-K. Marx, Grundrisse, New York, 1973, p. 325.

²²³-MD, p. 226.

²²⁴-In Urgent Tasks special issue cited above.

²²⁵-ibid. p. 61. Winter draws on such "post-Marxist" writers as Baudrillard and Castoriadis, as well as the Russian critic Bakhtin, author of Rabelais and his World (MIT 1968). Baudrillard and Castoriadis have also criticized Marx for generalizing the categories of work into an aesthetics (cf. ibid. p. 67n). A full polemic with the theories of these two dubious theoreticians cannot be our object here.

"...With the governing categories of the bourgeois polis reversed socially, aesthetically, the West Indian cricketers kept the theoreticians of this technical rationality in the rightful place--as the mere secondary means to a Jamesian defined and popular end, the realization of the genus homo of the freeplay of faculties."

One can certainly concur with Winter that the ideology of Marxism developed out of Marx's work is blind to the question of the "imaginaire social" as developed (to use her term) by James, and that figures such as Lukacs, Mehring, to say nothing of lesser figures, could find substantial support for their defense of classicist aesthetics in the writings of Marx²²⁶. This is a complex issue far beyond

²²⁶-Consider, for example, the famous passage on the Greeks in the Grundrisse, (pp. 110-111), which moreover could serve as a further elaboration of Melville's "Louis Philippe Louis Blanc Louis Devil" passage quoted earlier: "It is well known that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art but also its foundation. Is the view of nature and of social relations on which the Greek imagination and hence Greek (mythology) is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs? What chance has Vulcan against Roberts & Co., Jupiter against the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Crédit Mobilier? All mythology overcomes and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in the imagination and by the imagination; it therefore vanishes with the advent of real mastery over them. What becomes of Fama alongside Printing House Square? Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, i.e. nature and social forms already reworked in an unconsciously artistic way by the popular imagination. This is its material. Not any mythology whatever, i.e. not an arbitrarily chosen unconsciously artistic reworking of nature (here meaning everything objective, hence including society). Egyptian mythology could never have been the foundation or the womb of Greek art. But, in any case, a mythology. Hence, in no way a social development which excludes all mythological, all mythologizing relations to nature: which therefore demands of the artist an imagination not dependent on mythology.

But from another side: is Achilles possible wit powder and lead? Or the Iliad with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?

But the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model.

A man cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does he not find joy in the child's naiveté, and must he himself not strive to reproduce its truth at a higher stage? (our emphasis: LG). Does not the true nature of each epoch come alive in its children? Why should not the

the present essay. Nor is it a question of disputing Winter's assessment of the "real Marx" by confronting quote with quote. In this writer's opinion, the passages previously cited from Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire should establish beyond any doubt that, in his sensitivity to the uses of historical imagery in ideology and his ability to use it to his own effect, Marx had an awareness of the "imaginaire social" to the highest degree. Let us quote one additional passage to establish the meaning of this term:

"...Wonderful, indeed, was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! No longer any trace of the meretricious Paris of the Second Empire! No longer was Paris the rendez-vous of British landlords, Irish absentees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serfowners, and Wallachian boyards. No more corpses at the morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies...'We', said a member of the Commune, 'no longer hear of assassination, theft and personal assault; it seems indeed as if the police had dragged along with it to Versailles all its Conservativefriends.' The cocottes had refound the scent of their protectors--the absconding men of family, religion and, above all, of property. In their stead, the real women of Paris showed again at the surface--heroic, noble, and devoted, like the women of antiquity. Working, thinking, fighting bleeding Paris--almost forgetful, in its incubation of a new society, of the cannibals at its gates--radiant in the enthusiasm of its historical initiative!

Opposed to this new world at Paris, behold the old world at Versailles--that assembly of all the ghouls of all defunct regimes, Legitimists and Orleanists, eager to feed upon the carcass of the nation--with a tail of antediluvian republicans,

historical childhood of humanity, its most beautiful unfolding, as a stage never to return, exercise an eternal charm? There are unruly children and precocious children. The charm of their art for us is not in contradiction to the undeveloped stage of society on which it grew. (It) is its result, rather, and is inextricably bound upm rather, with the fact that the unripe social conditions under which it arose, and could alone arise, can never return."

The reader will note in passing the non-linear view of development in the underlined formulation of Marx, the psychological equivalent of "the revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes" by which Engels, approvingly quoting Morgan, describes communism in The Origins of the Family .(New York, 1972, p. 166). One writer who connects Engels' conception to America and to a helical-vortacist temporality is E. Zolla, in his remarkable The Writer and the Shaman: A Morphology of the American Indian (New York, 1969; Italian original also 1969): "Engels is one of the most sentimental celebrators of the noble savage. Only by carrying the progress-regress dialectic to the extreme of its ultimate reversal could man hope to combine the advantages of a superabundance of all goods and of free primitive existence" (p. 165). This non-linear, "helical-vortacist" view of history, whereby humanity strives to reproduce at a higher stage elements which are lost in earlier ones, is elaborated below (pp. 82-85).

sanctioning, by their presence in the Assembly, the slaveholder's rebellion, relying for the maintenance of their parliamentary republic upon the vanity of the senile mountebank at its head, and caricaturing 1789 by holding their ghastly meetings in the Jeu de Paume".²²⁷

In this passage, worthy of Balzac ²²⁸(the political view notwithstanding), Marx shows the "imaginaire social" to be the capacity to sensuously mediate general historical truths through appropriate concrete materializations of those truths in a fashion, which, in a few deft phrases, captures their essence.

It is, however, certainly true that the "scientific" Marx, which emerged through a long historical process of appropriation which can hardly be described here, was the Marx of a (poorly understood) Capital, and in reality, since very few Marxists ever mastered that work, of a more general "economic interpretation of history". While the "texts" show beyond any doubt that the perspective of the overcoming of work through an all-sided activity (as in the passage from the Grundrisse cited above), or the famous "Trinity" passage at the end of Vol. III of Capital) was at the center of Marx's problematic from beginning to end, a century of "Marxism"²²⁹ transformed the impact of his work into a critique of "bourgeois economics" (as if, for Marx, there were any other kind) in which the "imaginaire social" that shines through in the Eighteenth Brumaire, The Civil Wars in France or the historical passages in Vol. I of Capital fell away completely, culminating perhaps in the sclerotic "scientific" Marx portrayed by an Althusser²³⁰. The impact of Marx was further complicated by the debate on culture carried on by several generations of intellectuals in terms foreign to, and in this writer's opinion, beneath the level of Marx's project of the "full development of activity itself". There can be no question that through the classical humanist tradition as defended by Lukacs, and one arguably traceable to Marx's scattered writings on art and literature, a separate aesthetic external to the project of all-sided activity was at the center of the Marxian discussion until quite recently. Only the definitive demise of high bourgeois culture and of the modernist coda, and consequently of the desire of pro-working class artists and intellectuals--the Ishmaels--to see their creations as somehow directly revolutionary, has made possible an approach to culture like that of James and more in keeping with some of Marx's less developed or implicit views. This shift can be defined succinctly as the transformation of the question of culture from an aesthetic to an anthropological viewpoint.

²²⁷-K. Marx, The Civil War in France, New York, 1962, p. 68.

²²⁸-On Marx's immersion in literature throughout his life cf. S.S. Praver, Karl Marx and World Literature, Oxford 1976.

²²⁹-For an extended discussion of the sources of this ideology in Marx's work, cf. Joao Bernardo Marx critico de Marx: Epistemologia, classes sociais e tecnologia em O Capital (3 vols.), Porto 1977.

²³⁰-Cf L. Althusser, Lire le capital, 2 vols. Paris 1968.

And this anthropological viewpoint leads directly back to the decomposition of the Napoleonic myth, as analyzed by Marx and Melville in strikingly similar terms. For if it is correct that the Napoleonic myth is a secular reproduction of the earlier myth of "cosmic kingship", the "Pharoah with the feet of clay" in a "de-cosmized" society, then by implication the aesthetic consciousness of the literary "moi absolu" of 19th century romanticism, of the Ishmaels or the Parisian dandy²³¹, is also such a reproduction. In what sense? Readers of Stendhal's The Red and the Black will recall the scenes, referred to earlier, in which Julien Sorel fondles the cameo of Napoleon he always carries with him, and judges his actions in terms of this ultimate ideal (and image) of unitary action. They will also recall Stendhal's repeated references to the great, and lost, traditions of aristocratic action which dominate the self-conception of Mathilde de la Mole. It would again lead far afield to multiply examples from 19th-century literature, but the point is this: what danced in the fantasy life of the Parisian romantic just before or often 1848, or in a different way (as has been argued) for the New England Transcendentalist, was a "memory" of a life intensely and collectively lived, perhaps best captured for Western traditions by the pageantry of the Renaissance urban festival²³². What had happened to those traditions? As with the myth of the cosmic king, the unitary social "play" of Renaissance pageantry had been subjugated to the new rationality of work which took hold of Western capitalist societies in the course of the 16th and above all 17th centuries (a rationality of which the Calvinists who settled in New England constituted the nec plus ultra). In "politics" as in "aesthetics", what had previously been lived had retreated into a pale mythical flicker, in homunculus Napoleons in politics and in a separated and increasingly "inward" romantic unhappy consciousness, two phenomena which, if the previous analysis is correct, are hardly unrelated. Over and against these two phenomena of the retreat of "cosmic kingship" from political power, i.e. the transformation of the aura of power into the pseudo-mythic, and the simultaneous

231-"The dandy, as Brummell made him, stands on an isolated pedestal of self." in E. Moers, The Dandy, Lincoln 1960, p. 17. Discussing Brummell and the mood that produced the dandy phenomenon, one writer says that "Taken together with the solemn devotion to fashion, with all the whimsicalities and eccentricities we shall shortly come to...it suggests a whole class of men, like the Russian aristocrats later, cut off from the main stream of life, existing for pleasure and sooner or later finding themselves in a desert." (J.B. Priestley, The Prince of Pleasure And His Regency, 1811-1820, London 1969, p. 43.) An excellent discussion of the relationship between dandyism and elite consumption is in R. Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France, Berkeley, 1982, Ch. 4.

232-On the popular festival as a source for Rabelais, cf. Michael Bakhtin, op. cit. Cf. Also Paul Lafargue's classic Droit a la Paresse (Right to be Lazy) for the opening passage and subsequent remarks about European festivals. It might also be noted that Lafargue, like James, came from the West Indies.

retreat of the "cosmic" (Rabelaisian) dimension from the social realm generally, there arose the "ugly revolution": the uprising of the working class against the order that excluded it. For well over a century after 1848, the "moi absolu" of the Napoleonic variety, in the forms of fascist, Stalinist and Third World Bonapartist states, continued to intrude upon Western political reality and heavily influenced the working-class movement itself through the common identification of the latter two types of regimes as "socialism". Simultaneously, most of the aesthetically-inclined intelligentsia developed the "moi absolu" through artistic forms external to the general social activity of the proletariat. Thus the "imaginaire social" developed in bits and pieces by Marx, as well as the "all-sided development of activity" at the center of his perspective receded before the ideologization of his work by "national development" regimes closer to the Prussian prototype than to socialism, and by intellectuals glorifying such regimes, much in the "Ahab-Ishmael" vein.

Why, after the shattering of the "moi absolu" in both Europe and the United States in 1848, did the "modernist" avant-garde appear, for the subsequent four decades, only in France? The response to this question must be two-fold: first, because France was the country par excellence of the Napoleonic myth, and second, and related, a peculiarity of capitalist development in France after 1850. France was always a distant second to England in the development of modern industrial capitalism, but under Louis Napoleon's Second Empire (1852-1870) it began to close that gap. In particular, Paris in the Second Empire was at the vanguard of one development of the emergent political economy, that of mass consumer goods and of new methods of marketing them to an expanding middle class, namely the department stores such as the Samaritaine and the Bon Marché which appeared there in the 1850's²³³. In no other city of the world--certainly not in the "Manhattoes" described by Ishmael in the opening passage of *Moby Dick*--did the aesthetic consciousness of the "moi absolu" confront this new capitalist consumption so directly as in the Paris governed by none other than the pseudo-myth in power, Louis Napoleon. It is precisely in this environment, as many writers, led by the Frankfurt School critic Walter Benjamin²³⁴, have pointed out, that the "modernist" aesthetic consciousness evolved in a critique of the new consumerist "imaginaire social" coming into existence. But less noticed by most of this criticism is the bridge between the "aesthetic" and "anthropological" dimension of culture that was being thrown down in such a development. The missing link in the equation that leads to an "anthropological" appreciation of culture²³⁵ from the

²³³-Cf. R. Williams, op. cit. Williams is sensitive to the relationship between the new consumption and literary developments, as in her discussion of Huysmans, pp. 126ff.

²³⁴-W. Benjamin, op. cit. Also Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit*, Frankfurt 1976 reprint.

²³⁵-Benjamin definitely has the Marxian notion of fetichism before him but never completely leaves the aesthetic sphere for the anthropological one put forward here. His uncompleted but stimulating study of 19th century Paris is *Das Passagen-Werk*, 2 vols. Frankfurt a.M. 1982. An attempt to see a

works of Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud or Verlaine is that of the fetichism of commodities as materialized by the new consumerism²³⁶. When the aestheticized "moi absolu" of mid-century romanticism confronted the fetishism embodied in the new consumer commodities, culture implicitly or explicitly crossed the threshold from the separate aesthetic sphere of the "arts" to the general social sphere of the "totality of social life", and therefore to the general "imaginaire social" in retreat since the end of the Renaissance.

But this consciousness was separated from everything that "1848" had introduced to modern consciousness: the proletariat, the new industrial technology, and the non-Western world. As the last mirage of "cosmic kingship", it was no closer to the "re-cosmization" of social life than Ishmael was to Queequeg. As expressed in the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, formulated in 1850, to which its detachment from nature explicitly led (cf. Section VI) it could not be farther from a "cosmic imagination". As a view that implicitly accepted the new, consumer-based "neo-classical" economics then coming into existence in response to both the rise of the working-class movement and to the new consumerism, it certainly never left the terrain of bourgeois ideology²³⁷. This aestheticized "moi absolu" was at

Kabbalistic inspiration in Benjamin is W. Menninghaus, Walter Benjamins Sprachmagie, Frankfurt a.M. 1980; a skeptical critique of this assessment is B. Menke, Sprachfiguren. Name-Allegorie-Bild nach Walter Benjamin, Munich 1991. A "quasi-magical cognitive attitude toward historical matter remained basic to Benjamin's understanding of materialism." writes S. Buck-Morss in her Dialectic of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project, MIT, 1989, p. 13. "...Benjamin", writes S. Handelman, "followed a long tradition when he interpreted Adam's name giving as some primal prelapsarian language where name was the magical link between word and thing." (Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem and Levinas. Bloomington, 1991. p. 71)

The vast anthropological knowledge contained in Moby Dick already partially takes it beyond the sphere of literature.

²³⁶-T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers, New York 1984, p. 59: "In general, it is true that Haussmann's Paris was not a neutral form in which capitalism incidentally happened: it was a form of capital itself, and one of the most effective". J. Seigel, in Bohemian Paris (New York, 1986) sees the post-1850 avant-garde as a phenomenon within bourgeois culture, despite its "bourgeois anti-bourgeois" character: "Both neoconservatives and critical Marxists share a notion of modernist art as fundamentally out of tune with the society around it...Then as now (Bohemians) refused to recognize how much the forms of culture they rejected perform vitally necessary tasks of resolution and reconciliation for a society whose sponsorship of self-development for the sake of economic individualism creates constant moral dilemmas for its members". (pp. 391-392)

²³⁷-On the link between neo-classical economics and luxury consumer

antipodes from the unitary "re-cosmization" of society, nature and "aesthetics" symbolized by "Queequeg". Its fragmented quality made it incapable of fully grasping-- indeed, it ultimately reproduced -- the consequences of the subjugation of reality by the categories of work and subsequent separations derived therefrom. But above all, in France, the enmeshing of this consciousness with the Napoleonic myth, even if to reject it, never broke out of the legacy of the "Holy Roman Empire" interposed as a "memory screen" for bourgeois or "bourgeois anti-bourgeois" consciousness in Europe. It could never arrive at the "antemosaic" grasp of the cosmos expressed by Melville²³⁸. To the extent that it tried to reject the Napoleonic myth, it could only be in the Orientalism of Baudelaire or Flaubert, or the primitivism of Loti or later Gauguin, two options which, as shall be shown in a moment, Melville had already rejected in Moby-Dick.

production, cf. N. Bukharin Theory of the Leisure Class, New York, 1927. On a view both linking neo-classical economics and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, and defending both, cf. N. Georgescu-Roegen, The Entropy Law and the Economic Process, Harvard 1971.

238-"The European moderns are all trying to be extreme. The great Americans I mention just were it." D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature, New York, 1951, p. 8.

Ch. V. 1848 in the U.S.: American Specificity of the Myth

"I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it.

II. A Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who cannot catch it.

...

What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish, in which Columbus struck the Spanish standard by way of waiving it for his royal master and mistress? What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose Fish."

Herman Melville

Moby Dick

The unity of bourgeois consciousness was shattered in Europe in 1848 when it became clear that class war was inevitable. The unity of bourgeois consciousness was shattered in the U.S. in 1848 when it became clear that a confrontation over the issue of slavery was inevitable. 1848 in Europe shattered the Third Estate; 1848 in the U.S. shattered Jeffersonian-Jacksonian democracy. When one has understood the difference between the two, one understands the difference between a polity which took its historical imagery from the myth of the Holy Roman Empire and one taking that imagery from the Old Testament.

In order to get at this American specificity, however, it is first of all necessary to locate the socio-economic and political conjuncture of the American 1848 within the international conjuncture. Only then can one understand the fate of the Napoleonic myth in the U.S.

The most important context for politics as the North Atlantic political economy approached mid-century was the imminence of a great expansion of the world market, as the latter was hailed in the 1848 Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels. Industrial capitalism in the 1840's existed essentially in England, the northeastern U.S., and in the continental zone demarcated by Belgium, northern France and scattered developments in western Germany (which, it must be remembered, did not yet even exist as a political entity). A Kondratieff approach to the international business cycle would describe the period from 1820 to 1848 as a "low tonic" period²³⁹, with "international" (i.e. Anglo- American and French) commercial crises interrupting expansion in the contractions of 1819, 1827 and, worst of, all, 1837. The immediate and imposing result of the first phase of the Jacksonian era (1828-1836) was the deep, persistent depression beginning in 1837 following the demise of the Second Bank of the United States, and which lasted into 1843. In Europe, a new downturn began in 1846-47, along with the Irish potato famine, and created an ominous backdrop to the imminent 1848 revolutions,

²³⁹-Hans Rosenberg, Grosse Depression und Bismarckzeit, Berlin 1967, Ch. 1, has a discussion of a Kondratieff periodization of the 19th century.

as reflected in Tocqueville's famous 1848 speech predicting the uprising that occurred a month later.

Some of the international signs of the expansion of the formal world market into actual economic penetration of new zones²⁴⁰, of which American expansion into the West and Southwest was a part, to be greatly accelerated after the discovery of gold in California in 1849. On the level of communications and transportation, the introduction of the telegraph and the railroad boom of the 1840's were another dimension of this acceleration.

The revolutions and counter-revolutions in Europe in 1848-50 occurred on the eve of the long "high tonic" boom which historian Eric Hobsbawm has called simply the "age of capital" which lasted, despite sharp contractions in 1857-58 and 1866, and the world cotton crisis provoked by the U.S. Civil War, until the world depression of 1873. In the course of that boom, the foundations were laid for the "consolidation of the internal market" of ascendant powers outside the "Anglo-French zone"²⁴¹, expressed most clearly in the unification of Italy (1860), the American Civil War (1860-65), the Russian emancipation of the serfs (1861), the Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868) and the unification of Germany (1862-66-70). Thus both the U.S. territorial expansion of the 1840's, brought to a head by the 1846 defeat of Mexico, and the domestic crisis of the 1850's leading to civil war, can be fruitfully located in a general expansion of the capitalist world market and of internal reorganization of major powers, or future major powers, to meet the challenge of English industrial supremacy. Indeed, from 1850 to 1873, England fell from unchallenged hegemony to primus inter pares status among industrial powers.

Thus the cumulative crises which came to a head in Europe in 1848, and which first acquired their ominous contours in the U.S. in the same year, were crises linked to the bursting of the constraints for an imminent extensive and intensive expansion of world capital accumulation. And primary among these constraints were various pre-capitalist social relations in agriculture.

What immediately strikes the observer as the specificity of the U.S. in this process, in contrast to continental Europe, is the absence of a bureaucratic state as a permanent fomenting force in this expansion. It is certainly true that, in the 1860-65 Civil War and subsequent postwar reconstruction, Northern capitalism triumphed over the Southern slave economy through the agency of the state²⁴²,

240-Cf. p. 22.

241-By "Anglo-French" zone is meant the emergence of actual capitalism from the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) through the 1789-1815 struggle for world supremacy between England and France, countries in relation to which the U.S. was still a "periphery" well into the 19th century.

242-On the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction periods on the development of the American state, cf. R.F. Bense, Yankee Leviathan. The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877. Cambridge UP, 1990. For a very good presentation of the strong statist tradition in U.S. economic theory, the Carey school, cf. Michael Hudson, Economics and Technology in 19th Century American Thought: The Neglected American

just as it is true, against any "laissez-faire" interpretation of 19th-century American economic history, that the state was always central for economic development through tariff policy, the two Banks of the United States, Indian removal, land acquisition for infrastructure (e.g. canals) and railroads, and through land policy in the new territories. But, outside the special case of the South, the tasks of U.S. "modernization" did not include the top-down bursting of the fetters of pre-capitalist social relations on economic development or in the constitution of the bare rudiments of a "civil society" as occurred in Prussia or in Russia²⁴³. This singularity of U.S. social development permitted the United States, alone of the ascendant powers that underwent internal reorganization in the 1860's²⁴⁴, to pass into the phase of mature capital accumulation with the "Tudor polity" still intact. This singularity is the "material basis" of the extreme fragility of the "Napoleonic myth" in American, in contrast to European history. It is, therefore, when combined with the "poetry of the past" taken from the Old Testament, the basis for the direct recourse to nature mysticism, primitivism and Orientalism, in contrast to historical nostalgia, that characterized the American "Vormärz" of the 1840-48 period, the backdrop against which Melville wrote *Moby Dick*.

There was of course a "statist" development in early (and subsequent) American history, originating with Alexander Hamilton's 1790 Report on Manufacturers,²⁴⁵ extending through the national banks of the 1816-1836 period and revitalized to some extent by the Whigs in the 1840's²⁴⁶. But this current had been driven from power in 1828 by the Jacksonian extension of Jeffersonian

Economists, New York 1975.

²⁴³In Werner Sombart's famous formulation in Why Is There No Socialism in America? (New York, 1976).

"In Europe the state created civil society; in America civil society created the state".

²⁴⁴-On a comparison of the U.S. and Russia in the 1860's, cf. P. Kolchin, Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom, Harvard UP 1987.

²⁴⁵-Paul Studenski and Herman E. Kross, Financial History of the United States, New York, 1952, Ch. 5, contains a good account of Hamilton's role in the Federalist period. See also J.C. Miller, Alexander Hamilton and the Growth of the New Nation, New York, 1959. Ch. 21 for a sketch of the opposition between Hamilton and Jefferson over the question of the state. Hamilton's struggle for a national bank is described in B. Hammond, Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War, Princeton 1957, Ch. 2. F.W. Taussig, The Tariff History of the United States, New York, 1964, Ch. 2, documents the impulse from the so-called Harrisburg convention of 1827 pushing for strong protection for U.S. industry.

²⁴⁶-Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. The Age of Jackson, New York, 1945. Ch. XXII.

Federalism²⁴⁷, and the politics of the 1830's were dominated by a showdown over the Second Bank of the U.S.

The recovery from the 1837-43 depression and the 1846 defeat of Mexico shifted the focus of U.S. domestic politics from the economic battles of the 1830's to the sectionalist question which dominated the next three decades, and thereby broke apart the Jacksonian alliance of Northern urban laborers, Southern slaveocracy and Western "yeomanry"²⁴⁸. It was this incipient realignment that enabled Republicans to take substantial parts of Northern labor away from the Democrats in the 1850's²⁴⁹ and to eclipse the Whigs as the party of capitalist development after the Van Buren presidency. The success of the Republicans in realigning Northern labor with Western "free soilers" in the crisis of the 1850's ended the Jeffersonian- Jacksonian tradition's viability as a contending force for national power until it resurfaced in the late 19th-century agrarian crisis as Populism, to again be defeated by a Republican appeal to Northern labor, in the 1890's.

From the "Melvillian" viewpoint established thus far, what is central to the argument is three-fold. First, the anomaly of American politics in the 1828-1860 period relative to Europe. A fundamental "democratization" of politics occurred in the U.S. in the 1820's "anti-Masonic" and other movements that culminated in Jackson's triumph in 1828²⁵⁰. This was merely the first phase of a general level of political mobilization that continued through the Civil War and beyond, unlike anything known in Europe at the time. Not only did the U.S. attain universal (white) male suffrage long before any European country, but the first working-

²⁴⁷-R. Remini, Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party. New York, 1959, p. 196: "Van Buren's part in this 'revolution' of 1828 is of paramount importance. His remodeling of Jefferson's party constituted a major step in transferring the government from the control of the 'few' to the 'many'". But Remini sees the primacy of Jackson: "the evolution of the Democratic Party began as a faction of men devoted to Jackson personally". (in R.V. Remini, Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom 1822-1832. Vol. II. 1981. p. 108. Remini also confirms the centrality of the slaveholder link in the Jacksonian coalition: "The forging of the link between Calhoun and Jackson was the first important action that eventually produced the Democratic party" (ibid. p. 113)

²⁴⁸-"The Mexican War shattered the Jackson-Van Buren alliance between Northern Democrats, Southern planters, and Western farmers. It split Jacksonian Democracy into four parts--into Free Soilers, secessionists, Young America expansionists, and conservative, proslavery Unionists." (Rogin, op. cit. p. 130).

²⁴⁹-E. Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War, Oxford 1976, Ch. 1.

²⁵⁰-Schlesinger, op. cit. pp. 30-33. R.P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s, Oxford UP, 1983, Ch. IX.

class political party was founded in the U.S. in the 1830's. Thus, in contrast to Europe, the enlistment of broad masses of people in political life did not assume the form of independent working-class political action, and did not have to invoke "socialism" to gain access to political institutions. The most "Bonapartist" figure in 19th century American politics, Jackson, came to power at the head of an anti-centralist movement. This democratization through mass mobilization, when taken over by the Republican Party in the 1850's, still could speak to a "yeoman" consciousness in broad layers of the American population with its "free land, free labor" ideology based on the palpable reality of the easy availability of land²⁵¹. This second mass mobilization of Northern urban labor for the final triumph of capitalism was, once again, not linked to a battle for political power in the name of socialism, but to a political party of Northern industrial capital with a plausible "yeoman farmer" critique of industrial wage-labor²⁵². The U.S. by the 1850's had attained a level of mass participation in politics²⁵³ which Europe achieved only in the 1890's, and in some countries only through the 1914-1945 crisis and its aftermath.

The significance of these realities, if this analysis is correct, is the implication that the U.S. Civil War was not, as Barrington Moore has called it²⁵⁴, the "last capitalist revolution", but merely the last capitalist revolution that openly spoke the language of capitalism. What the mass democratic mobilizations in the U.S. and in Europe have in common, despite their temporal discontinuity, is a social content involving the destruction of pre-capitalist social relations, above all in agriculture²⁵⁵: the U.S. Civil War, and the more protracted European crisis of

²⁵¹-Foner, op. cit. *ibid.*

²⁵²-On Carey's influence on 1850's Republicanism, and his belief in the possibility of a high-wage, industrial and decentralized small-town economy, cf. Foner, pp. 36ff.

²⁵³-"American mass mobilization parties are the oldest such phenomena in the modern world. After an impressive trial run which extended from the 1790's to about 1820, they emerged as full-grown, recognizably modern structures by 1840--at least thirty years before the development of the first stable mass parties in Britain. During the enormously creative period extending roughly from the establishment of state nominating conventions in the 1820's to the creation of the Democratic National Committee in 1848, the party system took on a recognizably modern shape." in W.D. Burnham, The Current Crisis in American Politics, Oxford 1982, p. 92.

²⁵⁴-Barrington Moore, Social Foundations of Democracy and Dictatorship, New York, 1966, Ch. 3.

²⁵⁵-Cf. L. Goldner, "Amadeo Bordiga, the Agrarian Question and the International Revolutionary Movement" in Critique #23, (1991) pp. 73-100, for an analysis of Social Democracy and Stalinism as movements fulfilling above all the tasks of abolishing pre-capitalist agriculture.

1914-1945²⁵⁶. In the European case, the mobilization of labor, under the rubric of "socialism", for this completion of the bourgeois revolution acquired a very statist and very Bonapartist face. In France, the repressive Second Empire regime, which had come to power on the defeat of the working class, nonetheless found an important echo of working-class support based on the Napoleonic legend²⁵⁷. In Germany, the Lassalle- Bismarck collaboration of the early 1860's was at the origins of the Social Democratic welfare state²⁵⁸. This statism achieved in Russian Stalinism possibly the nec plus ultra of the continental "geschlossener Handelstaat" cited earlier²⁵⁹, now speaking a "Marxist" language. This is the meaning of the

²⁵⁶-For a treatment of 1914-1945 as one protracted European "Thirty Years War" involving the uprooting of pre-capitalist elements, cf. Arno Mayer, The Persistence of the Old Regime, New York, 1981.

²⁵⁷-D. Kulstein, Napoleon III and the Working Class, California State Colleges, 1969. pp. 18-20 on labor support for Louis Napoleon before 1848, based on the legend of his uncle; also p. 88: "Although many of Napoleon III's contemporaries regarded him as a radical and even as a socialist, the Emperor's "socialism" did not seem to frighten most industrialists." This "socialism" was undoubtedly mainly of the Saint-Simonian variety. As G. Iggers points out "We need not be surprised at the readiness with which Saint-Simonians greeted Louis Bonaparte's accession to dictatorial power." (in F. Perroux et al eds. Saint-Simonisme et pari pour l'industrie XIXe-XXe siècles, p. 691, published in Cahiers de l'I.S.E.A. Tome IV No 4 April 1970) Napoleon III's nephew in turn "gave himself out to be the liberal, dissenting or even semisocialistic wing of the regime, and associated with some Saint-Simonian elements." (cf. H. Draper, The Marx-Engels Cyclopedica, New York 1986, vol. III, p. 26). An excellent discussion of the relationship between Napoleon III and "socialism" is in H. Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. 1, New York 1977, pp. 439-463. "Bonaparte's economic brain trust was composed of disciples of Saint-Simon, who had been considered raving radicals in the 1830's and were now ravenous financiers and industrial expansionists..." (p. 440)

²⁵⁸W.H. Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism, New York 1973; H.P. Bleuel, Ferdinand Lassalle, Frankfurt 1982, pp. 346-348. Lothar Gall, in Bismarck: der weisse Revolutionär, Frankfurt, 1980, p. 277 sees these conversations more of symbolic value and felt Bismarck saw in Lassalle a potentially useful ally against the liberals; Lassalle's Bonapartism and "social Caesarism" is perhaps best captured in H. Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, vol. 3, 1986, pp. 255-258. Engels, wrote in the mid-1870's: "In all these writings, I never call myself a social democrat, but a communist. For Marx, as for myself, it is absolutely impossible to use such an elastic expression to designate our own ideas." (quoted in Marx-Engels, La Social Démocratie allemande, Paris 1975, Introduction.)

²⁵⁹-p. 20ff above. The most thorough exposition of the interaction between Marxian socialism and national development mercantilism is R.

Bonapartist myth, as it has been analyzed through Moby Dick, in relation to the respective trajectories of the "marginal men" of the 1840's.

As argued earlier, the aestheticized bourgeois ego, the "moi absolu" of French and above all German romanticism, never acquired a statist vocation in the U.S., and it can now be further asserted, for the reasons stated above, that it had no role to play in the emancipation of civil society from pre-capitalist constraints. In Europe, on the other hand, through the dandy Lassalle or the Jacobin strain in Russian Populism²⁶⁰, the "moi absolu" had a heady statist future.

As the final piece in the "Melvillian" prophecy of American working-class history, it is necessary to note the subterranean relationship between the situation of white and black labor, with a mutation in conditions of one being simultaneous with a mutation in the conditions of the other. In 1846-48, the battle of the free vs. slave character of the newly-opened Western territories began the process that pulled parts of the Northern working class from the Democratic to the Republican party. In the Civil War, the Northern working class was mobilized by the Republican party in no small part by the "free soil" ideology, wherein white and black labor could at some level envision some form of land ownership after emancipation. In the postwar period, the first major "class against class" confrontation in U.S. history occurred in 1877, the year of the end of Reconstruction in the South. Finally, for good measure, it might be noted that the

Szporluk. Communism and Nationalism. Karl Marx vs. Friedrich List. Oxford 1988. List actually visited the U.S. in the late 1820's and was influenced by the Harrisburg convention discussed above (Szporluk, p. 110-111). "List believed in a supraclass national authority, but he never defined its precise nature... Even if List's nationalism did not provide any explicit recommendations for giving power to the intelligentsia, his concept of a developed industrial society...did favor certain segments of society and thus implicitly assigned them a major role." (p. 143) "In this sense, German social democracy indeed formed a state within a state, a nation within a nation, but its alternative state and nation were nevertheless a German state and nation...Marx (in the 'Critique of the Gotha Program'-LG) accused Lassalle of conceiving "the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint". (pp. 182-183).

Even more arresting are the formulations of M. Agursky, in The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the U.S.S.R. (Boulder 1987), echoing some of the viewpoints of Berdiaev cited earlier but also focusing on the impact of Lassalle: "The real founder of German political socialism was neither Marx nor Engels, but Ferdinand Lassalle" (p. 31) "...There is also interesting evidence of Lassalle's impact on the Stalinists" (p. 32) "What was missed by both Pokrovsky and Venturi was Tkatchev's debt to Lassalle" (p. 33); Agursky also cites the impact of Arndt and Jahn on Dostoevsky's pan-Slavism (p. 49)

²⁶⁰-D. Hardy, Petr Tkachev: The Critic as Jacobin, Seattle 1977. For a presentation of how far Marx was from this "barracks communism" cf. T. Shanin, ed. Late Marx and the Russian Road, New York 1983.

second major "class against class" crisis in the U.S., in 1893-94, occurred just as black labor's migration to the industrial north was beginning, in part precisely for use against the combative white, Northern European, American-born workers whom Northern capitalists wanted to recycle out of industry with cheap black and immigrant labor.

Thus, to take up again the themes developed earlier, it might be concluded that the failure to date of "socialism" in the United States, at some abstract but still significant level, reduces itself to the failure of the Napoleonic myth to implant itself in the working class,²⁶¹ and hence the failure of "Ahabs" and "Ishmaels" to make the inroads there that they have made in European socialism. But if this

²⁶¹-I. Murat, Napoleon and the American Dream, Baton Rouge 1981, is an important study of the experience of some French Bonapartist exiles who emigrated to the U.S. after 1815, which underscores the contrast between a Napoleonic and an Adamic mythology. "America had no historical references, while Napoleon, everywhere he went, attached his actions to a historical reference point. At the start of the Egyptian campaign, he called up the glory of Alexander the Great; apropos a canal between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, he recalled that the Pharaoh Sesostris had had the same idea. For the brief moment when he dreamed of going to America, he thought, instead of forests and prairies to be explored, of botanical and astronomical studies....Napoleon's Rome was that of Augustus. because the Napoleonic Empire was nostalgic for Augustus' Imperium, the period that Jefferson considered decadent, as a peace of slaves. The American Rome is that of the simple Roman beginnings; it calls up the picture of Cincinnatus, the soldier-farmer, to whom Washington was so often compared...Napoleon, a pessimist or realist, thought that progress had to be organized and imposed by legislative structures. Original Sin caused man to be driven out of Paradise, but America exorcised the ancestral curse. As the seat of paradise regained, America gave birth to a civilization based on the possibility of happiness. This prospect was brought back to France by French officers who fought in the American Revolution." (pp. 213-215) R. Bellah (op. cit. p. 22) writes: "But the only major non-Biblical symbols that we find in the words and acts of the founding fathers is not English but Roman". An overall survey of classical imagery in American culture is M. Reinhold, Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States (Detroit, 1984). Reinhold points out (p. 97) that, parallel to the early Roman republic, Sparta was more admired in the early U.S. than Athens, for its simplicity. Further Greco-Roman classical motifs are documented in R.B. Davis, Intellectual Life in the Old South, 1978, vol. 1.

As the exception that proves the rule, (on the absence of a Napoleonic legend) one might cite Louisiana, and the type of Bonapartist politics associated with figures such as Huey Long, as one place where the Napoleonic myth, (strengthened by pervasive French and Spanish influences in the region history prior to and long after 1803) , did implant itself in a section of the American working class.

analysis is correct, that "socialism" was not socialism, but rather a recapitulation of a basic democratic mobilization that had triumphed in the U.S. decades before in the same task: eliminating pre-capitalist obstacles to capitalist development. The lack of the Holy Roman Empire as a "memory screen" for American literature expressed the lack of a feudal past to combat, and hence the absence of the basis for the constitution of a statist Napoleonic myth or reality in politics²⁶². Conversely, the same social situation that drove literature toward nature mysticism, primitivism and Orientalism propelled white labor to adopt a "yeoman" ideology of individualistic mobility and for most of its history to renounce the realization of the radical implications of its subterranean link to the "Queequegs", the black proletariat. Such a perspective, today as in 1851, remains the "uncompleted Cologne cathedral" of American history.

²⁶²-Another critical work on French influences in America after independence is R.G. Kennedy, Orders from France: The Americans and the French in a Revolutionary World, 1780-1820. "From 1790 to 1830, and beyond, the backwoods of America were full of imposters and mountebanks--and highly competent, well-trained French civil engineers. (p. 96) "But however impractical Hamilton seemed to Talleyrand, he was the one American...who "divined Europe...I consider Napoleon, Pitt and Hamilton as the three greatest men of our age, and if I had to choose among the three, I would unhesitatingly give first place to Hamilton". (p. 108) Kennedy's work is also unusual for emphasizing the impact of the Haitian revolution on the U.S. (pp. 125-127). Citing almost total neglect in historiography, Kennedy writes "A balance is required. Too much counterweight is now a risk to be preferred to too little, too long delayed. Henry Adams was right a century ago: "The prejudice of race alone (has) blinded the American people to the debt they owed to the desperate courage of five hundred thousand Haytian negroes who would not be enslaved." The impact of these developments on North American slaves is the subject of J.S. Scott, The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution. PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1986. (The classic history of the Haitian Revolution is, again, C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins, New York, 1963.) Finally, Kennedy writes, "Mr. Jefferson's house was pervaded by nostalgia for France...(Jefferson's visitors) found an old man whose table talk was all of Paris in the 1780's...Henry Adams was probably right: Jefferson "seemed during his entire life to breathe with perfect satisfaction nowhere except in the liberal, literary and scientific air of Paris in 1789." (pp. 454-455)

Ch. VI. Melville and the Myth

"There was no Ossian, so one had to be invented. This invented Ossian was cut to measure out of the poetic presuppositions of an unpoetic age and affected everyone who desired to experience poetry. In Western European literary, political and social history this desire was epoch-making, since from it developed not only a Romantic literature but also an ideal of the classless national state, an organic conception of culture, and hence a foundation for the radical movements of the 19th century.

R.T. Clark

Herder: His Life and Thought²⁶³

That Melville, at the time he wrote Moby Dick, was intimately familiar with a vast range of world mythology is no mystery; the most casual reading of the book suffices to demonstrate it. Clearly Melville's stay in the Marquesas in 1844-45 was decisive in the awakening of this lifelong interest; an ethnologist specialized in Polynesian mythology who met Melville by chance late in the author's life was astounded by his knowledge of the subject. H. Bruce Franklin has also established Melville's immersion in virtually all material available on the subject of comparative mythology by mid-century after his return from the Marquesas²⁶⁴.

It is necessary, however, to situate the appearance of a figure like Melville in a broader historical movement of sensibilities and ideas. To do so, it is necessary to sketch the history of what in the title of this section will be called not "myth" but the myth²⁶⁵.

Since the 1930's, figures such as Georges Dumézil have uncovered a remarkable coherence of myth within the Indo-European cultural sphere, and in world mythology generally. Dumézil's work on Indo-Iranian, Greek, Roman and Scandinavian mythology²⁶⁶ have amply confirmed the quip that "the first half of

²⁶³-Gusdorf notes the "anthropocosmorphism" in Herder's work. (op. cit. vol. VII, p. 207)

²⁶⁴-H. Bruce Franklin, The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology. Stanford, 1963.

²⁶⁵-"la mythistoire et la mytho-géographie justifient la perception même des événements dont l'historien rend compte" (Gusdorf, op. cit. pp. 279-280)

²⁶⁶-Georges Dumézil, Les dieux souverains des Indo-Europeens. Paris, 1977. For an overall study of Dumézil, cf. C. Scott Littleton, The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil, Berkeley 1982. Scandinavian old salts run through Melville's work, from Jarl in Mardi to the Old Dansker in Billy Budd. A close relation is the Old Manxman in Moby Dick. Ishmael calls whaling "a

the nineteenth century discovered that all of modern English and French literature derived from German and Scandinavian folk-tales. The second half of the nineteenth century discovered that all German and Scandinavian folk tales were derived from Indian mythology."²⁶⁷ Another major figure of 19-century comparative mythology, when asked what the greatest achievement of his field had been, wrote simply: "Shiva= Jahwe= Jupiter= Jove"²⁶⁸. The French writer Edouard Schuré, writing in 1918, described this 19th century evolution as follows:

"...A hundred years ago, the West had already begun to see two colossi rising up behind the Acropolis and Mount Sinai, and they have only loomed larger since. The first was the Hindu pagoda, which seemed to emerge slowly from an inextricable virgin forest of poetry...Then came the Egyptian pyramids, and right next to them, the immemorial Sphinx...Anyone who today reflects on the origins of science, religion or art no longer stops with Athens or Jerusalem, but takes the road to India or Egypt..."²⁶⁹

That Melville was moving along similar lines of inquiry is quite evident from his references to Sir William Jones and Champollion in the passage previously cited about "the decipherment of the face of everyman". The discovery of the Indo-European character of Sanskrit in 1780 and further work on Sanskrit by the Schlegels and later Herder from 1780 onward onward was not only a tremendous breakthrough for Western thought and the founding chapter of modern linguistics²⁷⁰; it was a central aspect of European and particularly German romanticism, later rebounding onto the Orientalism of the American Transcendentalists²⁷¹. But this study has referred to these developments as constitutive of "the" myth. What is meant by such an "essentialist" formulation is that the rise of comparative mythology and related fields such as linguistics²⁷² were not merely intellectual exercises but stages in the decomposition of the unitary myth of Christianity and aspects of a general cultural effort to "reconstitute

wild Scandinavian vocation" (MD, p. 124)

²⁶⁷-This remark was attributed to the philologist Max Müller.

²⁶⁸-Quoted in Raymond Schwab, La renaissance orientale, Paris 1951.

²⁶⁹-E. Schuré, Sanctuaires d'Orient, Paris 1918.

²⁷⁰-Schwab, op. cit. Ch 1.

²⁷¹-D. Riepe op. cit. and C.T. Jackson op. cit.

²⁷²Cf. H. Pedersen, The Discovery of Language: Linguistic Science in the 19th Century, Harvard UP, 1962, p. 21: "The knowledge of Sanskrit was found to have revolutionary consequences. The mere fact that scholars were unexpectedly confronted with a third classical language in addition to Greek and Latin was sufficient to shake their reliance on the easy-going ways of thinking that had satisfied previous centuries."

the myth"²⁷³, just as Napoleon represented a last Ersatz recomposition of mythic unity before being shattered into the fragments of late 19th-century Bonapartist

²⁷³- "La recherche romantique de Dieu, le religion romantique se resoud en la quête du langage perdu... Dire l'indicible serait la tâche de...Schelling, de Ritter, de Baader, de Novalis et Nerval, de Fabre d'Olivet et de Saint-Martin, de Victor Hugo." (Gusdorf, op. cit. vol. 10, 1983, p. 425). On the messianic vocation of linguistics in the 19th century, cf. M. Olender, Les langues du Paradis: Aryens et Sémites: un couple providentiel. Paris 1989. Perhaps the paramount figure of this messianism was Fabre d'Olivet, whose Langue Hébraïque Restituée (Geneva, 1975; original 1815-1816) was an underground classic in Parisian Bohemia until the end of the 19th century. This tradition is traced in J-P Laurant, L'Esoterisme Chrétien an France au XIXe Siècle, Paris, 1992. The history of its appearance in counterpoint to the First Empire is described in G. Leventine, The Dawn of Bohemianism: The Barbu Rebellion and Primitivism in Neoclassical France. University Park, 1978. A complete study of Fabre d'Olivet is L. Cellier, Fabre d'Olivet: Contribution a l'Etude des Aspects Religieux du Romantisme, Paris 1953. Cf. in particular Part II, "Le Mage et l'Empéreur", which locates Fabre d'Olivet in the orbit of the culture of the Napoleonic period. J. Godwin's L'esotérisme musical en France 1750-1950, Ch. III, (Paris 1991) locates Fabre d'Olivet in a tradition reaching into the 20th century, including both Fourier, the precursor of Marx, and Wronski, the inspiration for Balzac's La recherche de l'absolu. "This vision of a 'total science' which would explain everything in the universe was to haunt Fourier for the rest of his life" writes J. Beecher, in Charles Fourier: the Visionary and his World (Harvard UP, 1986), p. 55. Another major overview of these currents during the epoch of "Enlightenment", prior to the Revolution and Napoleon, with material on Boehme, Eckartshausen, Fabre d'Olivet, Restif de la Bretonne and the Rosicrucians is A. Viatte, Les sources occultes du romantisme, 2 vols. Paris 1947. An overview of the modern debate over the search for a universal language is R. Fraser, The Language of Adam, New York 1977. Another view of the failure of the attempt to derive all languages from Hebrew is in D. Droixhe, La Linguistique et l'appel de l'histoire (1600-1800), Geneva, 1978, pp. 45-48. For the definitive intellectual history of the debates over the loss of unitary language at Babel and afterwards, cf. A. Borst, Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker, 6 vols. Stuttgart 1957-1963. For an African view of language, one not unrelated to the question of de-cosmization, cf. J. Poirier/F. Raveau, L'Autre et l'Ailleurs. Hommage a Roger Bastide (1976), p. 98: "Pour l'Afrique noire, la parole ne signifie pas, ne circonscrit pas les objets: ce sont les objets, les choses, qui sont paroles". (our emphasis) The classic, and unselfconsciously romantic, statement of this as the core of African culture, is J. Jahn, Muntu: the New African Culture (New York, 1958). On one of the originators of linguistic messianism in a national framework, cf. G. Baudler, 'Im Worte Sehen'. Das Sprachdenken Johann Georg Hamanns. 1970. For Hamann,

buffoons such as his nephew. Both before and after the French Revolution, the ability of Western societies to "see" other societies and cultures was determined more by their own internal dynamics than by the raw material thrown up by the expanding circles of contact after the mid-15th century. It was successive transformations of the socio-epistemological "lenses" of the West that mark the successive phases of Western appropriation of the non-Western world. But a brief perusal of the history of this process makes it plain that, particularly after the mid-18th century, Westerners were seeking through knowledge of non-Western societies to fill the void left by the dessiccation of the Christian myth. As shall be seen in a moment, the "myth of the cosmic king" is the myth, and different cultural responses to its demise reveal its ongoing power in the aspects of non-Western cultures that were most sought out. Melville's own work constitutes a qualitative development in this process, even if its actual influence was quite modest.

For the Western society poised on the threshold of its rapid rise to world hegemony in the mid-15th century, at the time of the first voyages of discovery, the world essentially consisted of the three "Abrahamic" faiths Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The vast majority of Europeans who arrived in Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas and later in Oceania between 1460 and 1650, like the vast majority of those who reflected upon this development, saw the peoples encountered in these new worlds in terms of the same dichotomy that had animated the Crusades in the

writes F.C. Beiser, "the creation is the secret language of God, the symbols by which he communicates his essence to man. All nature and history therefore consist in hieroglyphs, divine cyphers, secret symbols and puzzles. Everything that happens is an enigmatic commentary on the divine word...In Hamann's metaphorical terms: 'God is a writer, and his creation is his language'" (The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte (Harvard UP, 1987), p. 20. As Hamann also put it "Nature and history are the two great commentaries on the divine word" (op. cit, p. 21).

Levitine (op. cit. p. 97) describes the mood ca. 1800 in which these interests took hold: "Here the aesthetic understanding of primitivism was especially confused by speculations--mixing pseudo-science and illuminism--about what was referred to as the Primitive World.

The concept was based on the belief in the existence of an incredibly ancient and superior Atlantean-like human race, which thrived before the time of the great flood. According to this myth, the humanity of this antediluvian Golden Age, the age that preceded the Egyptian and all other known cultures, was the perfect humanity...

The idea of the Primitive World stimulated a search for the surviving monuments of the great Primitive civilization...The possibility of direct offsprings was not discarded, and the extent of the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for such science-fiction speculations is best illustrated by an expedition of the French royal navy in 1771, which was sent to the austral regions with the mission to rediscover the lost continent of the primitive Atlantis."

high Middle Ages: Christian and heathen²⁷⁴. Naturally the steady stream of travel accounts, early ethnographies, missionary reports of other religions and myths, as well as the new vistas of flora and fauna²⁷⁵ opened up by this period constantly reverberated on schisms and debates already underway within the "Christian" paradigm. But it was the rare remarkable figure such as Las Casas who, in the 16th century, already asserted the fundamental humanity of the newly-encountered peoples, particularly those found in the so-called "state of nature".

Since the 13th century, Europe had received fantastic reports from the silk route trade of the civilization of Asia, and it had earlier acquired a knowledge of Islam through the Crusades, as well as through the steadily-increasing flow of manuscripts coming from Islamic Spain after the 11th century. Reports such as Marco Polo's description of the splendor of China were received with a mixture of awe and disbelief, but blended into a kind of fantastic realm of exoticism in which the fundamental notion of "civilization" was never called into question; Christian missionaries entered into a dialogue with the dignitaries of Chinese culture from the 13th century onward. But little or nothing in Western experience in the declining Middle Ages or early Renaissance prepared it for the encounter with the so-called primitive, "antemosaic" peoples of Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas or Oceania. It was simultaneously an encounter with the Adamic myth in vivo, and a repellent spectacle of the most craven backwardness, obvious confirmation of what the absence of Christianity signified in moral depravity²⁷⁶.

274-"In (Columbus's) famous "Letter to the Savages", he contends that the Orinoco river, whose mouth he found, was actually the Gihon, one of the four rivers which the Bible tells us flow out of Eden..." (in L. Fielder, The Return of the Vanishing American. New York, 1967, p. 37.)

275-Alfonso Arinos de Mello Franco, O Indio Brasileiro e a Revolucao Francesa: As Origens Brasileiras da Theoria da Bondade Natural. Rio de Janeiro, 1937. Ch. 1.

276-ibid. The cosmic dimension of Oriental societies was noted above by L'Orange and Engnell. The French ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt (in Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe dans le Monde Mélanésien, Paris 1947, pp. 133-134) sees this element in primitive societies as follows: "Le totemisme nous donne d'apercevoir, a travers le mythe, l'identité sous un aspect concret. ..Ce que l'on pourrait résumer: avant l'anthropomorphie, la cosmomorphie." (our emphasis)

Even the previously unknown great urban centers of Mexico and Peru did not fundamentally shake European ideas of civilization and savagery. Bernal Diaz still invoked the memory of Amadis of Gaul upon seeing the splendour of Tenochtitlan for the first time. "We remained astonished and said that it resembled the things of enchantment which they relate in the book of Amadis" (quoted in James B. Scott, The Spanish Origin of International Law (1934), p. 25. But the confrontation with the primitive Indians of Brazil and North America, on the other hand, led Westerners "to two conflicting attitudes toward them--either that their

As early as the mid-16th century²⁷⁷, the elements were present for two later Western responses to the encounter with the non-Western world, that of Orientalism and that of primitivism. Both, taken by themselves, appear as manifestations of what James Baird (writing of primitivism) has called "cultural failure"²⁷⁸. Both grew out of "archetypal" aspects of Western culture itself, namely the myth of the cosmic king or Primordial Man, the anthropocosmos, a myth containing within itself both the "Oriental" discussion discussed above and the Adamic myth. Both Orientalism and primitivism clearly had a major impact on Melville. But obviously they are not timeless categories; they advance and recede within broader movements of society and culture. In the section on the cosmic king, it was mentioned that, around 180 AD, Roman society was overwhelmed by a wave of "Egypto-Orientalism" that reached the highest levels of the society and essentially marked the end of the Greco-Roman classical ideal. Again in the era of the Renaissance, when the medieval Christian myth had seriously decomposed, a

prelapsarian state of innocence was such that they had no need for kings, priests or laws; as, as most settlers held, that they were merely brutes, like the beasts of the jungle". (H. Honour, The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time (1975), p. 56. "One great Dominican (Las Casas-LG) with even more exalted ideas came to believe that the Church was finished in Europe, that the Indians were the elect of God, and that their new world Church would last for a thousand years". L. Hanke, Aristotle and the American Indians (1959), pp. 20-21.

²⁷⁷- "In 1550 a troop of Brazilian natives were brought to France and performed at Rouen before Catherine de Medici and her court ladies" (L. Hanke op. cit. , p. 51. Cf. also O.P. Dickason, The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas, 1985, pp. 212-213; 225) Montaigne, in his 1580 essay "Les Cannibales", "provided an American location for the good savage of classical literature (he had been a Scythian in Cicero's letters and a German in Tacitus)..." Honour, op. cit. pp. 65-66. As John Drinnon writes, "From mythological times into modern, the European imagination has been captured by the prospect of discovering somewhere a pure, living example of 'natural man'" (in White Savage: The Case of John Dunn Hunter (1972), p. 3. Primitivism in Tudor England is discussed in A. and V.M. Vaughan, Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History (1991), p. 71: "The most 'literary' appropriation of the wild-man myth appears in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queen. Given the wild man's symbolic association with emblems of regal authority, it is not surprising that the poet included two 'savage men' in his allegorical epic, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth." The European version of cosmic kingship, on the other hand, was introduced to the New World. Weckman finds in contemporary Brazil the "dances of Moors and Christians" still based on the Cycle of Charlemagne, featuring Roland, Richard of Normandy and others. (in L. Weckmann, La herencia medieval del Bresil, Mexico, 1993, p. 225.

²⁷⁸-James Baird, Ishmael, Baltimore 1956, Ch. 1.

second "Egyptian" wave captured the imagination of the West, in figures such as Pico della Mirandola and Marcilio Ficino of the Florentine Academy, to say nothing of the "Egyptian" Giordano Bruno²⁷⁹. But with the consolidation of the absolutist state in the mid-17th century, this wave of neo-Platonic, Hermetic and Kabbalistic "Orientalism" began to be marginalized by the ideology of the new science, (as expressed in the shift from Newton to Newtonianism as propagandized by Voltaire) or at the very least transformed into the ideologies of the secret societies²⁸⁰. This new consolidation of a unitary view which caused the "Oriental" shadow of Western culture to recede²⁸¹, the successor to Greco-Roman classicism and medieval Christianity, was the semi-secular humanism of the late Baroque and Enlightenment period, inseparable from the late 16th and 17th century revolution in astronomy and physics²⁸².

²⁷⁹-F. Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, Chicago 1964, Ch. 1.

²⁸⁰-Cf. M. Bernal, op. cit. vol. 1, Ch. III "The Triumph of Egypt in the 17th and 18th Centuries", particularly the sections on Rosicrucianism (pp. 165-169) and Freemasonry (pp. 173-177). Also A. Faivre Eckhartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne, Paris 1969, on the Egyptian symbolism of the Bavarian Illuminati. (On the role of the secret societies in the preparation of the French Revolution, cf. J.H. Billington, Fire in the Minds of Men (New York, 1980, Ch. 4) ; P. Hazard, in La crise de la conscience européenne 1680-1715, Paris 1961, p. 13, points out the simultaneity of the appearance of Orientalist and primitivist themes on the eve of the Enlightenment: "A côté du Bon Sauvage, le Sage Égyptien revendique sa place: mais il n'est pas encore tout à fait formé, il va se formant...pierres d'Hérodote et de Strabon...les chronologistes qui tendent à déposséder l'Hébreu de sa gloire sacrée pour la conférer à l'Égyptien; récits des voyageurs. Ces derniers rappelaient que sur l'antique terre d'Égypte étaient nées la musique et la géométrie..." Further material on the fascination exercised by China on the early modern period is in Étienne, L'Europe chinoise, vol. 1, 1988. Leibniz was still dreaming the Oriental dream of empire, not merely in his interest in Chinese ideograms (cf. D. Mungello, Leibniz and Confucianism: the Search for Accord (Honolulu, 1977); he actually attempted to convince Louis XIV to shore up the Holy Roman Empire against the Ottomans by occupying Egypt (K. Huber, Leibniz, Munich 1989, p. 48)

²⁸¹-Cf. Paolo Rossi, Bacone, 1970, for an analysis of the immersion of even such a thinker in the Hermetic currents of the Renaissance. M.L. Fagioli Cipriani traces the Oriental presence through the Middle Ages to Columbus: "tutti i dotti teologi sono concordi nell'affermare che il Paradiso terrestre è in Oriente" (in Cristoforo Colombo. Il medioevo alla prova (1985), p. 180.

²⁸²-E.A. Burt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science, New York 1952, pp. 55ff. shows how the revival of Platonism and Pythagoreanism underwrote the mathematical foundations of the new science. Also G. Simon Kepler astronome astrologue (Paris 1979), p. 134 for

Because the focus here is on the relationship of cosmos and mythos, mention must be made of the impact of the Copernican and Newtonian revolutions on the "de-cosmization" of the West²⁸³. It is more readily conceded today than it was 75 years ago that the scientific revolution associated with Kepler and Newton grew directly out of the neo-Platonic and Hermetic currents of the Renaissance²⁸⁴. Newton to the end of his life practiced alchemy with the greatest passion (indeed, he wrote much more about alchemy than about physics) and saw his work in physics as a small part in a much larger project to confirm the truth of the Old Testament²⁸⁵. Yet already in the polemic between Newton and Leibniz²⁸⁶ it is evident that the fundamental mechanism of Newton's physics, whatever the intentions of Newton himself, pointed to a result totally foreign to the neo-Platonic "cosmobiological" view of Ficino, Kepler, Bruno or Paracelsus. With Newton and Descartes, the universe was distanced into a mechanical representation totally separated from imagination; life, in a way unthinkable to a Kepler, became contingent in the universe²⁸⁷. With the popularization of the atomistic-mechanistic sub-stratum of Newton, as with the general world view of Bacon, Locke, and Hobbes²⁸⁸, the Western view of nature had been radically "de-cosmized". In a

the continuity between the esoteric young Kepler and the mature astronomer.

²⁸³-Hans Blumenberg, Die Genesis der koperkanischen Welt, Frankfurt 1971, Part One.

²⁸⁴-Burt, op. cit., Yates, op. cit.

²⁸⁵-Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, Foundations of Newton's Alchemy, Cambridge 1974, and The Janus Faces of Genius: The Role of Alchemy in Newton's Thought, Cambridge UP 1991; also Frank Manuel, A Portrait of Isaac Newton, New York 1979, Ch. 8; also A. Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination, Princeton 1986, pp. 89-97. Newton's deep involvement in debates over Biblical chronology is documented in F. Manuel, Isaac Newton Historian, Harvard UP 1963, especially Ch. X.

²⁸⁶-C. Merchant, op. cit. pp. 281-288.

²⁸⁷-ibid.

²⁸⁸-Patrick Tort, Physique de l'Etat: Examen du corps politique de Hobbes, Paris 1978, for a discussion of the relations between Hobbes and the new science. Also Y.C. Zarka, La Décision Métaphysique de Hobbes: Conditions de la Politique, Paris, 1987, pp. 11-12: "L'essentiel est le projet de la fondation d'une science politique, que Hobbes s'attribue en propre, et par lequel il situe lui-même son oeuvre aux côtés de l'oeuvre accomplie par Copernic en astronomie, Galilée en physique, Harvey en médecine, Kepler, Gassendi et Mersenne en philosophie naturelle, n'est rendu possible que sous la condition d'une métaphysique hors de laquelle il demeure fondamentalement incompris." (our emphasis). A. Rogow, in Thomas Hobbes: Radical in the Service of Reaction, New York 1986, p. 103: writes: (Hobbes') first effort towards the establishment of politics as a science may have coincided with his "discovery" of Euclid... In 1630 or soon thereafter,

universe of uniform space and time, in a heliocentric solar system and an astronomy that revealed the enormous distances of the planets and stars and thus the insignificance of the earth, life had been marginalized far more radically than at any time during the repression of the "Egypto- Oriental" underside of Western culture during the periods of Greco-Roman classical and medieval Christian dominance, and the new secular humanist scientific ideology was underwritten by remarkable successes in explanation which the earlier "paradigms" never achieved. Further, as this ideology was appropriated by the Enlightened- absolutist state²⁸⁹,

Hobbes became fascinated by the idea that laws or principles of motion, in the body and in the universe alike, lay at the heart of all physical and mental activity." M. Reik, The Golden Lands of Thomas Hobbes, (Detroit 1977), p. 54, concurs: "If geometry seems remote from Hobbes' work on Thucydides and his involvement in rhetoric and history, yet it is close to his concern with method, and it was to provide him with a model for the art of reasoning proper to the creation of any science, political or other." Cf. also M.M. Goldsmith, Hobbes' Science of Politics, New York 1966. For its part, P. Redondi, Galileo Eretico (Turin 1983), shows Galileo to be directly inspired by the atomism of antiquity (pp. 72-73). The direct link between Newton and politics is made by M. Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720 (Ithaca, 1976): "The rejection of the magical tradition and its subsequent transformation by philosophers like Boyle and Newton into what we call modern science occurred in a political context that repudiated and feared the politics and therefore the science of the radicals" (p. 28); "the people's great prophet of democracy was Boehme", writes M.L. Bailey, in Milton and Jakob Boehme (1914), p. 138. the same link is made even more sharply by D. Kubrin, "Newton's Inside Out! Magic, Class Struggle, and the Rise of Mechanism in the West", in ...ed. Science, Societies and the Enlightenment, 19??, pp. 96-121. A study of the social foundations of Newton's atomism is G. Freudenthal, Atom und Individuum im Zeitalter Newtons, Frankfurt 1982. On possible influences of Jewish mysticism in Newton, cf. B. Copenhaver "Jewish Theologies of Space in the Scientific Revolution" Annals of Science, 37 (1980), pp. 489-548. C. Webster, in The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform (1975) p. 402, also agrees that "the works of Bacon, Comenius, van Helmont, Boehme and the Paracelsians were found to accord with the religious, philosophical and social objectives of the reformers." H. Schwartz, The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England, Berkeley, 1980, Ch. II presents the overall climate of "enthusiasm" against which Newtonian ideas had to advance. V. Foley shows the influence on atomism on Adam Smith in Chapter III "A Hidden Cosmology" of his book The Social Physics of Adam Smith (West Lafayette, 1976), p. 44.

²⁸⁹-Leonard Krieger, Kings and Philosophers, 1689-1789, New York 1970. S. Toulmin, in Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity (1990) sees Descartes' search for an absolute foundation of knowledge as an erroneous impulse spawned by the insecurity of the 17th century, which nonetheless

the new rationalization (or what today would be called "modernization") of nature was extended to all domains of social life. Without by any means accepting the overall framework which a writer like Foucault has brought to bear on these processes for the so-called "age classique"²⁹⁰, one can agree with him that the ideology of Man, the underlying "episteme" of secular Baroque-Enlightenment humanism, was a creation of the absolutist state, an Ersatz mythical substitute for Christianity. As it developed in the court culture of Versailles in the era of the "Sun King" Louis XIV, it was the last possible coherence of the Western myth of the cosmic king, a defensive last-ditch reconstitution of the myth, but one already rent with irreversible fissures²⁹¹. It was within this post-1650, semi-secularized and recomposed ideology that an "unhappy consciousness" could first appear, and begin to seek, outside the Western paradigm, in Oriental and primitive motifs, a substitute for "something missing" within the dominant culture of the West.

The appearance of such an "unhappy consciousness" within a culture is of course nothing peculiar to the modern West. Boas showed in his major studies of antiquity and the Middle Ages how a "primitivism" has appeared in many different cultures in periods of dessiccation and decline²⁹², a kind of "nostalgie de la boue". And it has already been argued that the actual sources of Western culture in Egypt and the ancient Near East created a substratum of "Orientalism" that recurs in periods of Western cultural breakdown. But if anything sets off the modern Western "unhappy consciousness" from that of earlier periods, it must be the radical discontinuity with the earlier unitary myth represented by the scientific revolution of the 17th century, and the establishment, simultaneously, of a Western

passed into the heritage of modernity even with the stabilization of the 18th century. D.R. Lachterman (in The Ethics of Geometry: A Genealogy of Modernity (New York 1989) also sees the 17th century as the origin of a "constructivist" approach to geometry which constitutes a radical break with previous views, which considered geometry a "given" external to human constitution. Lachterman concurs with the perspective presented in this study of the radicalization of the subject, cut off from sensuous praxis in nature, through the 19th century: "What unifies the extensions of Kant's program undertaken by the Nietzscheans is the elimination of nature as residually other to the mind". (p. 23)

²⁹⁰-M. Foucault, Histoire de la folie a l'age classique, Paris 1964; for a discussion of the ideology of Man, cf. Foucault's Les Mots et les Choses, Paris 1966, final chapter.

²⁹¹-For a presentation of the instability of late 17th century ideology and the rise of the libertine currents, favored by the new science, cf. Tilo Schabert, ed. Aufbruch zur Moderne: Politisches Denken im Frankreich des 17. Jahrhunderts. Munich 1974, p. 26ff.

²⁹²-George Boas, Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity; Baltimore 1935; Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages, Baltimore 1948.

world hegemony that for more than three centuries created the virtually unshakeable impression that Western and world history were one and the same.

With the "de-cosmization" of the West in the mid-17th century²⁹³, the appearance of the "unhappy consciousness" was not long in coming. If its first articulate expression was Pascal²⁹⁴, a series of figures of the European Frühromantik and Rousseau²⁹⁵ open this space far wider²⁹⁶. With Rousseau's critique of the artifices of civilization, and the chinoiserie of the late 18th century, both primitivism and Orientalism had moved into the vacuum opened up by the 17th century. But neither Rousseau nor the French admirers of the emperors of Persia or China²⁹⁷ made any fundamental departure from the more broadly held and suprahistorical view of "Man". The decisive threshold was crossed only when the Enlightenment view of Man was dissolved by the great revalorization of myth, folk culture and history associated with Vico and above all the German Sturm und Drang after 1760²⁹⁸.

²⁹³-Cf. the discussion of "la nature horloge" and "Un Dieu Horloger?" in J. Ehrard, L'idée de Nature en France à l'Aube des Lumières. Paris 1970, pp. 46-55. Also R. Lenoble, Histoire de l'idée de nature, Paris 1969, Ch IV and V.

²⁹⁴-Lucien Goldmann, Le dieu caché, Paris 1959. Chs. 2-4. Eric Voegelin writes: "When the gods are expelled from the cosmos, the world they have left becomes boring. In the seventeenth century, this *ennui* explored by Pascal was still the mood of a man who had lost his faith and must protect himself from the blackness of anxiety by divertissements; after the French Revolution, the ennui was recognized by Hegel as the syndrome of an age in history. It had taken a century and a half for the lostness in a world without God to develop from a personal malaise to a social disease." (from E. Voegelin, "On Hegel- A Study in Sorcery", published in Studium Generale 24 (1971), p. 335). For the classic study of the 17th century libertine movement which resulted from this "expulsion from the cosmos" (if not necessarily for the reasons cited by Voegelin), cf. R. Pintard, Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle (1943)

²⁹⁵-"On peut dater des Confessions la consécration européenne de la littérature du moi." (Gusdorf., op. cit. vol. VII, p. 354.

²⁹⁶-Rousseau, in the terminology of this study, (borrowed of course from Hegel) is an "unhappy consciousness" in the sense that his revalorization of nature is one that essentially accepts the dichotomies introduced between imagination and nature by the 17th century; he no longer understands imagination, as figures such as Bruno and Paracelsus did, as *natura naturans*, the "divine in man" (or what Paracelsus called astrum in homine), that is, as a higher phase of nature itself. Contrast this with Melville's ideas as presented in Section III, or with Marx and Melville in the following section.

²⁹⁷-Bernal, op. cit. vol. 1, pp 172-173.

²⁹⁸-Cf. the final chapter of Frank Manuel, The Eighteenth Century

With the appearance of Sturm und Drang, this study arrives at the threshold of the very German Idealist philosophy, culminating in the work of Schelling, Fichte and Hegel, which was at the source of Transcendentalism, through German philosophical and literary influences in the U.S. after 1815. But if the preceding analysis is correct, this German development from 1760 to 1830-32 (the years of the symbolic deaths, in quick succession, of Goethe, Beethoven and Hegel), and indeed on to Marx has a "universal" quality about it. For Germany was the first "underdeveloped" country, relative to the more advanced civil societies of England and France, and the first country which essentially "caught up" with, and then surpassed, England and France through a state-sponsored "revolution from above"²⁹⁹. Further, in carrying out that revolution, Prussia and the German states forged the first "national" ideology as a response to, and a critique of, the allegedly abstract cosmopolitanism of the French Enlightenment³⁰⁰, exemplified above all in a figure like Herder. In throwing over the thin cosmopolitan rationality of the French Enlightenment and asserting the primacy of a national identity created through history, in which myth, folklore and the primitive were central moments, German culture produced a legacy that again and again was taken over by developing nations seeking a state-sponsored national self-assertion³⁰¹.

Confronts the Gods, Cambridge 1959 and his section on Herder (Ch. 6) in The Changing of the Gods (Hanover 1983); also Isaiah Berlin, Vico & Herder, New York 1976, and R.T. Clark, Herder: His Life and Thought, UCLA 1955. Even more radical is G. Flaherty, Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century, Princeton, 1992, with chapters (6,8) on Herder and Goethe in their relation to shamanism. For a portrait of the narrow late Enlightenment materialism against which Sturm und Drang was revolting, cf. S. Moravia, Il Pensiero degli Idéologues. Scienza e filosofia in Francia (1780-1815), Florence 1974. A study of the role played by linguistics in the reaction against absolutist rationalism, and the debates on Hebrew, the Scythians, the Celts and others is D. Droixhe, La Linguistique et l'appel de l'histoire (1600-1800): Rationalisme et révolutions, Geneva 1978. Cf. pp. 143-156 for a discussion of "Celtomanie". Schelling's original treatment of myth is presented in E.A. Beach, The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology. Albany, 1994. F. Jesi's Mito (Milan, 1980) covers the evolution of the 19th century debate and has material on the crucial figure of Creuzer (pp. 47-52). An important contribution to the contemporary revalorization of myth is in G. Rose, The Broken Middle, London 1992, in her chapter "Myth Out of the Hands of the Fascists", pp. 115-131.

²⁹⁹-Cf. above p. 19.

³⁰⁰-Giuseppe Cocchiara, Storia del folklore in Europa, Turin 1952, pp. 224-244. Material on the Celtic revival already underway in the 17th-18th centuries is in E. Gugenberger/ R. Schweidlenka, Mutter Erde Magie und Politik, Vienna 1987, pp. 63-64.

³⁰¹-Consider the following remarks by Leopold Senghor, theoretician of the

What was significant above all in German cultural development from 1760 to 1830 (to say nothing of the appearance in 1840-1848 of Marxism) was this interaction with France and French culture. Modern German thought arose as a critique of the French Enlightenment; after 1789-1793, it was an ongoing autopsy of the French Revolution³⁰².

As Marx put it:

"Even the negation of our political present is already a dusty fact in the historical lumber room of modern nations. If I negate powdered wigs, I am still left with unpowdered wigs. If I negate German conditions of 1843, I am hardly, according to French chronology, in the year 1789...We have in point of fact shared in the

"Negritude" movement among Francophone black colonial peoples and head of state of Senegal from independence until his retirement. "Leo Frobenius was the one, above all others, who shed light for us on concepts such as emotion, art, myth, Eurafica...we had to wait for Leo Frobenius before the affinities between the "Ethiopian", that is the Negro African, and the German soul could be made manifest and before stubborn preconceptions of the 17th and 18th centuries could be removed...'The West created English realism and French rationalism. The East created German mysticism...the agreement with the corresponding civilizations in Africa is complete.'... L. Senghor, Preface to E. Haberland, ed. Leo Frobenius: Eine Anthologie, Wiesbaden 1973, pp. VII-XI. "die Emotion (ist) negerhaft wie die die Vernunft griechisch ist", wrote Senghor in another context (quoted in B. Tibi. Internationale Politik und Entwicklungsländer-Forschung. Materialien zu einer ideologiekritischen Entwicklungssoziologie. Frankfurt, 1979, p. 38. cf. Tibi op. cit. pp. 32-51 for a critique of Senghor, Frobenius and the Negritude movement. Another striking case is that of Iqbal, the Pakinistani nationalist of the interwar period Like many anti-colonial nationalists inspired by German romanticism, he admired Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini simultaneously as enemies of Anglo-French imperialism. Cf. Masud-ul-Hasan, Life of Iqbal (1979) vol. 1, pp. 288, 327. Iqbal studied in Germany from 1905 to 1908 and became enamored with Nietzsche and Bergson. "The first critics of Iqbal", writes A. Schimmel, "accused him of having laid the Nietzschean superman as ideal before the Muslim. As a matter of fact certain similarities between the Perfect Man and the Nietzschean Superman can be admitted" (in Gabriel's Wing, 1962, pp. 118-119). Even more striking is B. Tibi's study of the German romantic influences on inter-war Arab nationalism: Ein Nationalismus der Dritten Welt am arabischen Beispiel (Frankfurt 1971). In the same vein, F. Ajami finds a "Germanic" nationalism in the entourage of King Faisal after World War I (The Vanished Imam, 1986, pp. 39-40)

³⁰²-"Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction", in Easton and Guddat, eds. Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, New York 1967, p. 251.

restorations of the modern nations without sharing in their revolutions...Led by our shepherds, we found ourselves in the company of freedom only once, on *the day of its burial*."³⁰³

From the recoil of Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin at the Jacobin Terror, to the mystique of Napoleon, to the period of glaciation that set in with the Restoration in 1815, Germany, to once again quote Marx, "carried out in thought what other peoples carried out in practice". In the terms developed earlier in this study, German thought was founded on a dialogue with the shattered myth of the cosmic king (regicide) and the reconstitution of the pseudo-sacred myth (Napoleon). As elaborated above, the aestheticized bourgeois ego or "moi absolu", the "Werther" unhappy consciousness that made Napoleon cry and provoked suicides all over Europe and that was generalized internationally by romanticism in the 1815-1840 period, was the last flicker of the myth³⁰⁴, the myth of the cosmic king, and not accidentally was linked almost everywhere to a cult of Napoleon.

Thus when the historical conjuncture of the 1840's drove Melville to his critique of the "transcendental divines", as it drove Marx to a critique of Hegel and the Young Hegelians, it is not altogether surprising that their respective solutions to the end of the "moi absolu", the Napoleonic myth of romanticism, spilled into the realm of collective praxis ³⁰⁵and culminated, for Melville, in "Queequeg", for

³⁰³ibid.

³⁰⁴-Although it does not make use of the categories of sacred and pseudo-sacred, the discussion of fame in L. Braudy's The Frenzy of Renown. Fame and Its History (Oxford UP, 1986) presents important parallels to this study. After dealing with figures such as Alexander and Caesar, or later Napoleon, Braudy increasingly turns to the aesthetic realm to find the continuation of their quest, thereby underscoring the link between world empire and modern aesthetics argued for here. "The distant monarchs had been replaced by men in whom their audiences saw a simultaneous reflection and enhancement of themselves." (p. 401) He refers to "the revolution in self-awareness marked by the career of Brummell, with its intriguing analogues in those of Byron, Napoleon and others" (p. 405). "In the cult of Byron we see the early-nineteenth century fascination with a kind of visual glamor that takes its material from surfaces only to hint at what lies behind and beyond them" (p. 406). Boutet (op. cit. p. 342) equally understands the transposition from sacred royalty to aesthetics: "Dans le roman, la reconstruction par l'imaginaire des relations entre le roi et sa collectivité est bien la construction d'un mythe..."

A curious attempt, quite oblivious to the myth of cosmic kingship, to show Marx himself as a mythic thinker are the two books of L.P. Wessell, Karl Marx, Romantic Irony and the Proletariat. The Mythopoetic Origins of Marxism (Baton Rouge, 1979) and Prometheus Bound: The Mythic Structure of Karl Marx's Scientific Thinking (Baton Rouge, 1984).

³⁰⁵- August Cieszkowski, the Polish messianist and philosopher, is a third

Marx "primitive communism", "returned on a higher level". Although each used different language to express it, both of them located the supercession of the "cosmic king" and his secular residues in an all-sided critique, both of them located the supercession of the "cosmic king" and his secular residues in an all-sided activity in which antinomies of work and leisure, aesthetics and utility would be superceded in a new, higher unity that echoed the unity of primitive cultures. And the rediscovery of the "primitive" by Herder and Vico, at the origins of the tradition Melville and Marx both annexed and went beyond³⁰⁶, was an indispensable moment in the critique and practical supercession of "the" myth.

figure who, in the 1840's, arrives at an idea of praxis. Cf. A. Liebich, Ideology and Utopia: the Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski (1979).

³⁰⁶-For an excellent statement of Marx's relation to the primitive, cf. Franlin Rosemont, "Karl Marx and the Iroquois", reprinted in Red Balloon, New York, n.d. pp. 91-101. Rosemont's article takes off from L. Krader, ed. The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx: Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine and Lubbock, Assen, 1972. It was no accident that the historical outlook which historicized, i.e. saw the transitional and not eternal character of commodity production (capitalism) was also the outlook which overcame "primitivism" of the romantic variety. Another contemporary view, however, finds in shamanism and related phenomenon the source of a critique of Marx. H.P. Duerr polemicizes against exactly the view of myth in Marx's Grundrisse passage on the Greeks. In such a view, Duerr argues "liegt die Wurzel aller 'Projektionstheorien', wie sie eines Tages von Feuerbach und Marx, von Psychoanalytikern und positivistischen Ideologiekritikern entwickelt werden sollten. Das 'Draussen' rutscht nach Innen...und wird als 'projeziert' wieder der Subjektivität einverleibt" (Traumzeit. Über die Grenze zwischen Wildnis und Zivilisation. Frankfurt a.M. 1978, p. 61.)

Ch. VII: Melville's Critique of Orientalism and Primitivism: Melville and Marx

"Savage though he was... his countenance had something in it which was by no means disagreeable... You cannot hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tattoos, I thought I saw the traces of a simple, honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes, fiery blank and bold, there seemed tokens of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils... He looked like a man who had never cringed and who had never had a creditor... certain it was his head was phrenologically an excellent one. It may seem ridiculous, but it reminded me of George Washington's head... Queequeg was George Washington cannibalistically developed."

Moby Dick

"...seated like Ontario Indians on the gunwhales of the boats, we swiftly but silently paddled along..."

Moby Dick

In the Old Testament, in the ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian origins of the West, and in the myth of the cosmic or primordial man found in the great world religions, Adamic man or Adam Kadmon (the First Man of Jewish mysticism)³⁰⁷ there are already contained, in germ, the two major manifestations of "cultural failure", Orientalism and primitivism, that periodically erupt in crises in the West, as they erupted in late antiquity, in the Renaissance, or as they have recurred periodically in cycles of cultural crisis since the late 18th century. This study has argued that the "Old Testament" imagery that characterized the American imagination, in contrast with the "Holy Roman Empire" imagery that dominated European memory, pushed New England in the direction of nature mysticism and

³⁰⁷-On Adam Kadmon, cf. Norbert Engels, Urmenschenmythos und Reichsgedanke, dissertation, Münster 1977, pp. 98-132. Speaking of the Adam cult in the early modern (Renaissance and Reformation) period, Fraenger, in his study of Bosch, sees it as the specific characteristic of the period (Hieronymus Bosch, 1975, p. 16). Later, he sees the "just man" "als jener mythenhafte 'Urmensch' zu verstehen, der 'Menschensohn'...mit dem sich--nach Luk. 21,27, Dan. 7,13 und den Bilderreden Henorchs 48--eine geheimnisvolle Messianität verknüpft" (p. 29). K. Burdach, in Reformation. Renaissance. Humanismus. (1926, 1963 ed.) pp. 158-159 sees the "primordial man", Adam, as the precursor of the Renaissance ideal of humanity. Cf. also G. Trompf, op. cit. 1979, pp. 303ff. As Burdach indicates, some theological currents see the primordial man/anthropocosmos passing into Christianity as the "Son of Man". Yates put it (with respect to the Hohenstaufen) "A way of expressing the religious side of the imperial mission, as understood in Frederick's circle, was through a form of Adam mysticism". F. Yates, op. cit. 1975, p. 8)

Orientalism, and to a lesser extent primitivism³⁰⁸, whereas European romanticism drew its imagination from symbols associated with feudalism. (Goethe, in his poem "Amerika, Du hast es besser", considered this absence of an historical landscape of decomposed castles to be a positive virtue of America.) Both the European and American romanticism of the 1840's appear as a last phase of an "unhappy consciousness" in its lyrical state, and its exclusion from the collective world of work as the key to its search, in a mystified view of nature and in temporal or geographical exoticism, for an escape from the barrenness of the isolated ego. The following section will attempt to show that Melville's Moby Dick is a polemic with this sensibility.

Anyone familiar with Moby Dick will immediately recognize the foremost dramatization of the theme of "Orientalism" in the figure of Fedallah, the "Parsee" and "fire worshipper" who heads the shadowy special crew that Ahab slipped aboard the Pequod to man his own whaleboat, and who is portrayed as Ahab's shadow.

"...But one cannot sustain an indifferent air concerning Fedallah. He was such a creature as civilized, domestic people in the temperate zone only see in their dreams, and that but dimly; but the like of whom now and then glide among the unchanging Asiatic communities, especially the Oriental isles to the east of the continent--those insulated, immemorial, unalterable countries, which even in these modern days still preserve much of the ghostly aboriginalness of the earth's primal generations, when the memory of the first man was a distinct recollection, and all men his descendents..."³⁰⁹

But no description of Fedallah captures Melville's conception of him as the nocturnal shadow of Ahab's mad quest like the following:

"...on such a silent night a silvery jet was seen far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow. Lit up by the moon, it looked celestial; seemed some plumed and glittering god uprising from the sea. Fedallah first descried this jet. For of these moonlight nights, it was his wont to mount the main mast-head, and stand a lookout there, with the same precision as if it had been by day. And yet, though herds of whales were seen by night, not one whaleman in a hundred would venture a lowering for them. You may think with what emotion, then, the seamen beheld this old Oriental perched aloft at such unusual hours; his turban and the moon,

³⁰⁸-James Baird, Ishmael (Baltimore 1956) for an excellent overall discussion of primitivism and Orientalism in 19th century failure. European romanticism was just as Orientalist as American romanticism. "Creuzer's use of Hindu myth as a reference for Western models was symptomatic of a general interest in Indic studies that was shared by Chateaubriand, Constant, Hugo, Vigny, Lamartine and Baudelaire, as well as by Nadier, Ballanche, Nerval, Michelet and Quinet." (R. Griffin, The Rape of the Lock. Flaubert's Magic Realism. Lexington (Ky.), p. 54.

³⁰⁹-MD, p. 236.

companions in one sky. But when, after spending his uniform interval there for several successive nights without uttering a single sound; when, after all this silence, his unearthly voice was heard announcing that silvery, moon-lit jet, every reclining mariner started to his feet as if some winged spirit had lighted in the rigging, and hailed the mortal crew. "There she blows!"³¹⁰

And finally:

"Meanwhile, Fedallah was calmly eyeing the right whale's head, and ever and anon glancing from the deep wrinkles there to the lines in his own hand. And Ahab chanced so to stand, that the Parsees occupied his shadow; while, if the Parsee's shadow was there at all it seemed only to blend with, and lengthen Ahab's."³¹¹

The above passages show once again the themes developed earlier: if the "modern standers of mast-heads" are nothing but "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", Fedallah is counterposed as the Oriental night shadow of such barrenness of the pseudo-mythical; after developing the theme of the "deciphering of everyman's face", Melville shows Fedallah applying palmistry to the face of the whale. At every turn, he is the re-mythification of a demythified world, the "mauvais côté" or bad underside of the more "mainstream" and Western madness of Ahab. He is the Oriental shadow of the cosmic king described earlier. It is Fedallah who tells Ahab of the improbable circumstances in which Ahab will perish, circumstances which materialize in the final destruction of the Pequod; it is Fedallah who appears, roped to the side of Moby Dick, in the final fight with the whale. He is the personification of the "dark Hindoo side" of nature as Ahab sees it³¹², the same Ahab who is elsewhere described as sequestered in his cabin in "Grand Lama"-like exclusiveness. Melville did not answer the Orientalism of Emerson and Thoreau with philosophical arguments, but with passages like this:

"...But did you deeply scan him in his more secret confidential hours; when he thought no glance but one was on him, then you would have seen that even as Ahab's eyes awed the crew's, the inscrutable Parsee's glance awed his; or somehow, at least, in some wild way, at times affected it."³¹³

One is reminded of Nietzsche's prediction in The Will to Power that a "new Buddhism" would be the final stage of nihilism in the West. Conscious or not of the myth of the cosmic king (and there seems every reason to believe he was conscious of it) Melville created in the character of Fedallah a polemic with

³¹⁰-MD, p. *ibid.*

³¹¹-MD, p. 337.

³¹²-MD, p. 378. Finkelstein points out that Melville, like Emerson, was an admirer of the Persian poet Saadi, but that Melville "marked what Emerson passed over, the defeat of beauty by ugliness". (Finkelstein, *op. cit.* p. 96) Her book documents Melville's extensive knowledge of Oriental cultures.

³¹³-MD, p. 502.

Transcendentalist Orientalism without peer. Just as in the late Roman Empire with the appearance of "sol invictus" symbolism, the final degenerate stage of Ahab's Calvinism would call forth its Oriental shadow as a pseudo-alternative, but one stilled totally trapped in the "moi absolu".

Fedallah and his special crew first appear in Ishmael's glimpse of shadowy figures boarding the Pequod in the fog on the morning of its departure, whom he initially mistakes for a mirage. They appear on deck for the first time only for the first lowering of the whaleboats. But they are far from the sole "Oriental" presence in Moby Dick. Melville's use of world mythology invariably includes extensive commentary on Egyptian, ancient Near Eastern and Indian mythologies of the whale. References to cosmic kingship as previously defined are present in abundance. In the chapter on the sperm whale's tale, the following passage appears:

"...Out of the bottomless profundities the gigantic tail seems spasmodically snatching at the highest heaven. So in dreams, have I seen majestic Satan thrusting forth his tormented colossal claw from the flame Baltic of Hell. But in gazing at such scenes, it is all in what mood you are in; if in the Dantean, the devils will occur to you; if in that of Isaiah, the archangels. Standing at the mast-head of my ship during a sunrise that crimsoned sky and sea, I once saw a large herd of whales in the east...such a grand embodiment of adoration of the gods was never beheld, even in Persia, the home of the fire worshippers. As Ptolemy Philopater testified of the African elephant, I then testified of the whale, pronouncing him the most devout of all beings. For according to King Juba, the military elephants of antiquity hailed the morning with their trunks uplifted in the profoundest silence."³¹⁴

Whales are likened to "King Porus' elephants in the Indian battle with Alexander",³¹⁵ or, on another occasion:

"...What then shall I liken the Sperm Whale to for fragrance, considering his magnitude? Must it not be to that famous elephant, with jewelled tusks, and redolent with myrrh, which was led out of an Indian town to do honor to Alexander the Great?"³¹⁶

From the earliest introduction of Ahab as a "Khan of the plank", to these uses of Oriental majesty and images of power, Melville is constantly keeping the theme of cosmic kingship, and its Oriental sources, before the reader.

Quite in contrast to the uses of Oriental imagery in Moby Dick stand Melville's uses of the primitive³¹⁷. One searches in vain for a "positive"

³¹⁴-MD, pp. 538.

³¹⁵-MD, p. 394.

³¹⁶-MD, p. 421.

³¹⁷"In frequency and importance the references to Egyptian history and mythology are only secondary to the allusions to Polynesia in Melville's works." (Finkelstein, op. cit. p. 121)

invocation of an Oriental image, whether Egyptian, Ottoman, Persian, Hindoo (sic), or Malaysian; such cultures are invoked only to refer to power. The difference between Melville's attitudes toward Orientalism and his attitude toward primitivism are as different as the characters of Fedallah on one hand and Tashtego, Queequeg and Daggoo on the other.

It was already mentioned earlier³¹⁸ that Melville's use of the harpooners is hardly that of the "noble savage" ideal; Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo are repeatedly portrayed at work in the most advanced technical operations of whaling. CLR James captures this in one passage:

"...So far it might seem that Melville is merely repeating the old pattern of noble savage vs. corrupt civilization. But he is not doing that. Queequeg is no ideal figure. Queequeg's ignorance often makes his behaviour entirely ridiculous. His religious practices, if sincere, are absurd. In his own country he has eaten human flesh. But the thing that matters is that as soon as they get off the land and onto the boat from New Bedford to Nantucket, Queequeg shows himself what he will later turn out to be, not only brave and ready to risk his life, but a master of his seaman's craft. To his splendid physique, unconquered spirit and spontaneous generosity, this child of nature has added mastery to oen of the most important and authorititative positions in a great modern industry.³¹⁹

Every stage of human history is vividly present in Moby Dick. The Pequod and its project, on one level, are a microcosm of what Melville refers to throughout as "joint stock company" capitalism³²⁰; in the personality of Ahab, one has a latter-day version of the Calvinist consciousness of the 17th-century revolutions which created the modern polities of England, Scotland, Geneva, Holland and New England which one associates with the cutting edge of capitalism in that period.

Feudalism is present in the use of imagery from medieval kingship, above all from the German kings and princes of the Holy Roman Empire. "Versailles", the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation" and Napoleon constantly refer the reader to the absolutist state, the French Revolution, and Thermidor. Antiquity is present in the abundant use of Greco-Roman mythology and history; "Asiatic despotism"³²¹, as has been seen, is equally present. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, what Marx called "primitive communism" is present in the harpooners Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, and in some use of American Indian and Polynesian mythology and

318-cf. above p. 50.

319-James, op. cit. p. 43.

320-MD, p. 118.

321-Marx's views on the Asiatic mode of production are presented in L. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production: Sources, Development and Critique in the Writings of Karl Marx (Assen 1975). Another discussion, useful, but colored by the author's polemical agenda at the height of the Cold War, is K. Wittvogel, Oriental Despotism,

symbols. Nowhere are all these historical phases so present as in the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale"³²² .

It is now necessary to confront Melville's theory of history with that of Marx. His theory, despite appearances, is no more linear than Marx's. As shall be seen in the following section on the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the recurrent reference to "vortices" and "spirals" in *Moby Dick* shows Melville, like Marx, to have a "vorticist- helical" conception of historical time³²³, in which elements from the beginning "return" at the end, just as we saw the "primitives" plying the most advanced technical trade. Melville's rejection of Orientalism and primitivism is not from the viewpoint of some Weberian "iron cage", facing the disenchantment of the world with a sober stoicism that considers the power of myth lost to a "disenchanted" modern man. That is indeed the "modern" outlook, of the Calvinist Ahab "damned in paradise", of the sober and pragmatist Starbuck, of the dreamer Ishmael. In Melville's view it is the Ishmaels who seek in Orientalism and in primitivism a hopeless escape from the barrenness of life in modern capitalism, as described in the opening passages of *Moby Dick* in Ishmael's description of the "city of the Manhattoes":

"...Circumnambulate the city on a dreamy Sabbath afternoon...What do you see? Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of men fixed in ocean reveries...But these are all landsmen; of week days pent up in lathe and plaster--tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks..."³²⁴

To the Ahab, Starbuck and Ishmael variants on the bourgeois ego, as we have seen, Melville counterposes the crew, and above all the harpooners, as the "return" of the

³²²-MD, pp. 189-198. "...even the barbaric, grand old kings of Pegu placing the title "Lord of the White Elephants" above all their other magniloquent ascriptions of domination the Hanoverian flag bearing the one figure of the snow-white charger; and the great Austrian empire, Caesarian, heir to overlording Rome, having for the imperial color the same imperial hue...among the Red Men of America the giving of the white belt of wampum was the deepest pledge of honor...by the Persian fire-worshippers, the white forked flame being held the holiest on the altar, and in the Greek mythologies, Great Jove himself being made incarnate in a snow-white bull..."

³²³-Another theory of history with certain parallels to Melville and Marx is to be found in J. Gebser, *Ursprung und Gegenwart*, Munich 1986 (2nd ed.). Gebser's view of history is focused on consciousness and not on relations of production, but he sees in 20th century modernism, e.g. in painting, the return in new form of elements suppressed by classical bourgeois culture from the Renaissance onward. See vol. 1, pp. 60-69. The centrality of the "vorticist-helical" logarithmic spiral, present throughout nature, is also emphasized by Bachelard. Cf. P. Quilliet, *Bachelard*, (Paris 1964), pp. 75-76.

³²⁴-MD, p. 3.

nobility of aspects of primitive society portrayed in Typee and Omoo within modern social and technological relationships. The nobility of the harpooners at work, a nobility that makes their "work" a unitary activity, is what Melville counterposes to the bourgeois ego, and to the degenerate "Orientalist" shadow of the bourgeois ego. Melville, as was discussed earlier (Ch. V) clearly sees the "crew", the working class, not merely as the heir apparent to the totality of the organization of work brought into existence by modern capitalism, but as destined to transform work into another kind of activity by the realization, in associated labor, of the totality of both human history and of cosmic evolution. Melville's view of history, like Marx's, is helical. Their parallels might be sketched as follows:

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Marx's view of history in particular has often been treated as a "stage" theory of history with a linear conception of progress. Such an understanding of Marx simply confuses his view of history with 18th and 19th century liberal views. It not only ignores Marx and Engels' abiding interest in the "helical" view of figures such as Morgan or their uses of Bachofen, but also Marx's 1878-1881 correspondance with the Russian Populists in which he seriously contemplated a possible "leap" of Russia to communism without the necessity of a capitalist "stage"³²⁵, or statements like the following:

"...It is the same with "Progress". In spite of pretensions of "Progress", there are continual retrogressions and circular motions. Not suspecting that the category of "Progress" is completely empty and abstract, Absolute Criticism is rather so profound as to recognize "Progress" as absolute..."³²⁶

Melville similarly saw his idea of the "savage" present at multiple levels of history:

"...Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, i.e. what is called savagery. Your true whale-hunter is as much a savage as an Iroquois. I myself am a savage, owning no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him...

As with the Hawaiian savage, so with the white sailor-savage. With the same marvelous patience, and with the same single shark's tooth, of his one poor jack-knife, he will carve you a bit of bone sculpture, not quite as workmanlike, but as close-packed in its mazinness of design, as the Greek savage, Achilles' shield; and full of barbaric spirit and suggestiveness, as the prints of that fine old Dutch savage, Albert Dürer."³²⁷

As in his earlier praise for the "so emblazoned a fraternity" of the "mariners, renegades and castaways", Melville is presenting the "savages" returned on a higher level in modern social and technological relations as heirs to all of history and, indeed (as argued in Chapters III and IV) to cosmic evolution. Melville rejects a false counterposition between the "enchanted" world of the cosmic myth, prior to the 19th century consolidation of Calvinism, Lockeanism and capitalism, and the "unhappy consciousness" in its different forms. He is trying to show that "just on the other side" of the unhappy consciousness, in the ribaldry and nobility

³²⁵- "If Russia continues on the road on which it embarked in 1861, it will lose the greatest chance which history has ever offered a people, and instead will have to pass through all the fateful vicissitudes of the capitalist regime." Letter to Vera Zasluch, in M. Rubel, ed. Marx-Engels: die russische Kommune (Munich 1972). p. 51.

³²⁶-Easton and Guddat, eds. op. cit. p. 380 (from The Holy Family)

³²⁷-MD, p. 277.

of the "meanest mariners, renegades and castaways", is a "realized" cosmic quality. To see this more clearly, it is necessary to look at Melville's critique of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics.

Ch. VIII. Melville and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics: Henry Adams As An "Anti-Melville"

Another important event in Western cultural development occurred in this remarkable 1840-1850 conjuncture under discussion: the formulation of the entropy law, or the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. This section will attempt to show that Melville had a critique of entropy; that entropy was the antithesis of the cosmic imagination; and that he saw it as the projection into nature of the "unhappy consciousness" of the bourgeois ego. Melville's work shows no explicit awareness of the formulation of the 2nd Law; he is, rather, combating the "entropic metaphors" secreted by a certain culture in decline.

Almost immediately after its formulation in 1850, the entropy law was seized upon by broader currents of ideology, and particularly continental Kulturpessimismus, as the scientific confirmation of its view of a "world on the wane"³²⁸, as indeed the pre-1850 world of bourgeois romantic lyricism was on the wane. The perfect counterpoint to Melville is one American unhappy consciousness, Henry Adams, who joined his Kulturpessimismus to a theory of history based on the entropy law, and who also saw "1851" as the year in which he vaguely recognized something amiss in his Boston Brahmin world.

Literary critic Robert Zoellner has seen in various images of self-consumption and misanthropy, centered of course in the figure of Ahab, the fundamental entropic metaphors of Moby Dick³²⁹. Without disagreeing, I would prefer to focus on the overall metaphor of the Pequod's journey to self-destruction as Melville's portrayal of the self-destruction of the bourgeois ego and the civilization producing that ego. But it is first necessary to see how the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, that states that all closed systems necessarily dissipate to an equilibrium state of equally distributed and dispersed energy, or, at the cosmic level, to "heat death", is related to the bourgeois ego.

The bourgeois ego, as we have been using the term, is first of all itself a "closed system" in its vain illusion of atomistic autonomy. The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics can be seen as the final phase of a two-hundred year evolution in physics. Leibniz already saw it as implicit in Newton's *vis inertiae*; he realized that the concept of inertia was the logical outcome of a universe set in motion by a creative act of God, but in which God did not constantly intervene. To Newton's

³²⁸-Cf. the study of Stephen Brush, The Temperature of History: Phases of Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century, New York 1978; for Nietzsche's use of the 2nd Law, pp. 72-74; for its impact on Adams and Spengler, pp. 121-127. Nietzsche's involvement with 19th century physics, and the influence of the energeticist Robert Mayer on his theory of the eternal return is discussed in A. Mittasch, Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph, Stuttgart 1952, pp. 114-126.

³²⁹-Ch. X "Ahab's Entropism and Ishmael's Cyclicism" in Zoellner, The Salt-Sea Mastodon, Berkeley 1973.

vis inertiae, Leibniz counterposed the vis vitae, a fundamentally "hylozoic" conception that saw the universe as above all alive, and with life as the creative intervening force that overcame inertia. Newton's physics carried the day in the late 17th century, as part of the "white turbid wake" discussed earlier, and Leibniz's critique faded into obscurity.

The actual science of thermodynamics emerged from physics only in the early 19th century, not insignificantly from studies of closed energy systems such as steam engines. It was indeed Carnot's study La puissance motrice du feu (1824) which laid the foundations for the First Law of Thermodynamics, that held that the total energy of a given system was always constant. But Carnot's law constituted an important break with the physics of the 17th and 18th centuries, which had, after Newton, conceived of the universe on the model of a clock, initially "wound up" by the creator and thereafter functioning on its own. Thus LaPlace had been able to tell Napoleon that his "system of the world" could dispense with the hypothesis of God; it was external to the system. But the 17th and 18th century conception of the clock mechanism had an important corollary for the physical notion of time: if the clock could be "rewound" periodically, time and hence physical phenomena were reversible. Carnot's steam engine maintained energy at a constant level, but it was obviously passed from one form to another in expenditure; hence time, with Clausius, became irreversible.³³⁰

The full implications of the mechanism of Newton's universe, already seen by Leibniz, were reached only in the course of the 1840's, more or less simultaneously in the work of Kelvin, Thompson and Clausius. But it was the Prussian Clausius, in the counter-revolutionary mood of Germany just after the crushing of the revolution of 1848-1849, who in 1850 formulated the Second Law in full. Clausius summarized the thermodynamic research on steam engines and gases in the law that held that not only was the energy of closed systems constant over time, but tended to the lowest level of energy organization.³³¹ After Clausius, time for physics was not merely linear, as it had been for Newton, irreversible, as it had been for Carnot, but dissipative.

³³⁰-A brief sketch of the "cosmic" implications of the directions of "time's arrow" as they arose from Carnot's First Law appears in G.J. Whitrow, The Natural Philosophy of Time, New York 1961, pp. 5-6. Also "The Destruction of the Clock Universe", in Enrico Bellone, A World on Paper: Studies in the Second Scientific Revolution, English trans. MIT 1980, pp. 45-49.

³³¹-Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, The Entropy Law and the Economic Process, Harvard 1971, pp. 129-130; Whitrow, op. cit. pp. 276-277. On the simultaneity of the formulation of the 2nd Law, cf. H.I. Sharlin, Lord Kelvin, p. 114. An "anti-entropic" view is articulated by S. Fox: "The classic question as Pasteur phrased it, "Can matter organize itself?"...Today we have evidence that permits us to say: 'Yes, matter organizes itself'. Molecular Evolution and the Origins of Life, New York (1977), p. 5.

The real significance of the social context of the appearance of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics cannot of course be dealt with here. But two aspects of it should be highlighted: the "contemplative" assumption of non-intervention in the cosmos, already criticized by Leibniz; the analogy between the "closed system" of thermodynamics and the "closed" bourgeois ego; and finally, most importantly, the metaphor of work which thermodynamics brought directly into physics. Not only was thermodynamics as a science developed out of experimentation with the new industrial technology of the early 19th century; it made the fundamental units of energy output comprehensible in terms of the work performed by machines. Hence, for modern society, the concept of energy would be linked not merely to linear, irreversible and dissipative time, but to a "strong metaphor" of work.

Here, again, the totality of Melville's vision of the fate of bourgeois society becomes visible³³². The threshold between the "antemosaic" world of Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, and the sober, not to say dour vision of the Calvinists "damned in the midst of paradise", "lacking the low enjoying power", was precisely the subjugation of the universe to the metaphor and categories of work. And for Melville, as it was argued earlier, this critique of work was not made from the vantage point of "leisure" (its bourgeois antipode) but from a kind of unitary activity that takes up within itself the totality of past evolution and history.

That Melville had a critique of a linear conception of time was mentioned in the previous section. In the final scene, when Ishmael is pulled into the (vortex) maelstrom and then cast out again, the reader is offered a final hint by Melville that the destruction of the Pequod is not to be understood as the end of the world, but the end of a world. This "helical" conception of history is underscored, as indicated earlier, by the fact that Ishmael is saved by Queequeg's coffin, as if to say that the death of the bourgeois ego projected itself into nature and created the atomistic-mechanistic world of Newton, which ultimately led to the "heat death" pessimism of Clausius, so this new society founded on a unitary activity fusing the "primitive" with modern social organization and technology will recapture the cosmic imagination suppressed by the rise of capitalism, and the "old Dutch savage" Dürer will reappear in "new savages" with the same cosmic grasp of nature.

A decisive stage, as indicated earlier³³³, in the "de-cosmization" of the West was the final detachment of logos from mythos effected by Greek philosophy in the 6th century BC, a development further linked to a fairly mature commodity economy in that period. While any detailed discussion of the relationship between Greek philosophy and modern physics is obviously beyond this study, it should be noted in passing that the final stage of this autonomization of the logos can be

³³²-Melville makes entropy, and its extension to a social theory, palpable in the death of a whale: "...he helplessly rolled away from the wreck he had made; lay panting on his side, impotently flapped with his stumped fin, then over and over slowly revolved like a waning world...and died." (MD, p. 368).

³³³-Cf. above pp. 77.

situated in the transition from Heraclitus to Parmenides, which consisted in the suppression of time, in early Western thought, as a fundamental constituent of Being³³⁴. The conception of the infinite that emerged from Parmenides' (and his student Zeno's) elevation of Being above all spatiality and temporality was that of the infinite divisibility of space and time of Zeno's paradoxes. It was this infinity which Hegel called "bad infinity", and which was the basis of the emergence of linear time in modern physics, incorporated into Newton's infinitesimal and, through Carnot's definition of energy as a form of motion, into thermodynamics. It is not unfair to say that a Western "sense of reality" developed in the 6th century BC, long before the appearance of experimental science in its modern sense, and intimately linked to the appearance of a commodity economy, later became a "material force" in the further development of science and technology. Thus in linking up with the "antemosaic", prior to the detachment of mythos from logos, Melville, consciously or not, was delving into the deepest origins of the subordination of reality to the "white turbid wake" of abstraction, commoditization, and the categories of work.

From the mid-19th century onward, once again, a certain Kulturpessimismus seized upon the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics as the scientific basis of its sense of decline, most prominently in the work of Nietzsche, Henry Adams, Brooks Adams, and Oswald Spengler. But if the overall analysis presented here is correct, this elitist Kulturkritik was the expression of the "moi absolu" in recoil from the demise of bourgeois-patrician dominance before the rise of industry, factory towns, rebellious workers and, later in the century, a new mass politics. It was the "Ishmael" consciousness of the "try-works" chapter discussed above³³⁵ in a mature industrial capitalism, mistaking the decline of its world for the decline of the world.

Nothing confirms this analysis for the American context more than the trajectory of a late 19th-century figure such as Henry Adams. Indeed, in a fashion which should no longer be surprising, Adams cites "1851" as a decisive turning point in his evolution. His autobiography The Education of Henry Adams is a veritable anti-Melville.

Adams was born into the Boston Adams family that produced the Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams. His autobiography tells the story of the impossibility of living in the world of the second half of the nineteenth century with that socio-cultural inheritance. For Adams, again, "the first vague sense of feeling an unknown living obstacle in the dark came in 1851"³³⁶. The Jacksonian era had already separated Adams and the U.S. from the kind of

334-On the relationship between Parmenides and the emergence of the Western conception of the continuum, and its relationship to modern science, cf. Carl B. Boyer, The History of the Calculus, New York 1949, pp. 23 and ff.

335-Cf. above p. 45.

336-Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, Boston 1918, (1961 reprint) p. 49.

patrician politics with which his family was associated, a separation best embodied in the rise of the Northern urban political machines. But Adams' definitive sense of the uselessness of his own heritage came as a journalist in Washington during the Grant administration. That experience determined Adams to abandon any involvement with contemporary politics or social reform, or journalism aimed at social reform.

"...Grant's administration outraged every rule of ordinary decency, but scores of promising men, whom the country could not well spare, were ruined in saying so. The world cared little for decency... The system of 1789 had broken down, and with it the eighteenth-century fabric of a priori, or moral, principles." 337.

But Adams, in 1893, arrived at an even more decisive insight into the overall forces that had destroyed his world. In that year, he first visited the Chicago World's Fair, where he first saw the new electromagnetic dynamo; he then went to Washington, where he attended the Congressional special session on the repeal of the Silver Act. Here is the patrician bourgeois' summation of the results of that year, the pit of the worst depression of the 1873-1896 "long deflation", as well as of the Carnegie Steel strike, the biggest labor insurgency since 1877. "The banks alone, and the dealers in exchange," Adams wrote, "had insisted on repeal. In his view the country had crossed a point of no return.

"...He (Adams) had stood up for his eighteenth century, his Constitution of 1789, his George Washington, his Harvard College, his Quincy, and his Plymouth Pilgrims, as long as anyone would stand up with him. He had said it was hopeless twenty years before, but he had kept on, in the same old attitude, by habit and taste, until he found himself altogether alone. He had hugged his antiquated dislike of bankers and capitalistic society until he became little better than a crank... The matter was settled at last by the people. For a hundred years, between 1793 and 1893, the American people had hesitated, vacillated, swayed forward and back, between two forces, one simply industrial, the other capitalistic, centralizing, and mechanical. In 1893, the issue came on the single gold standard, and the majority at last declared itself, once and for all, in favor of the capitalistic system with all its necessary machinery. All one's friends, all one's best citizens, reformers, churches, colleagues, educated classes, had joined the banks to force submission to capitalism... Such great revolutions commonly leave some bitterness behind, but nothing in politics ever surprised Henry Adams more than the ease with which he and his silver friends slipped across the chasm, and alighted on the single gold standard and the capitalistic system with its methods..." 338

But Adams is no mere Brahmin lamenting the bygone days when New England gentlemen ruled the United States. Like Melville, he had a veritable cosmic and historical theory showing that demise to be quite in the order of things.

337-*ibid.* pp. 280-281.

338-*ibid.* pp. 343-345.

What had closed forever the world of "his eighteenth century, his Constitution of 1789" and so forth was the unleashing not merely of capitalism, but of the vast mechanical and then electromagnetic energies of modern technology.

Adams does not exactly reproduce the Transcendentalist consciousness of the 1840's; his nostalgia is not that of the dispossessed liberal arts student, as his scathing remarks on the intellectual worth of his Harvard education makes clear. When Adams was at Harvard in the years 1856-1860, Transcendentalist influence was still strong, and with it the "German influence". Adams' description of this atmosphere is pertinent here:

"...The literary world then agreed that truth survived in Germany alone, and Carlyle, Mathew Arnold, Renan, Emerson, with scores of popular followers, taught the German faith. The literary world had revolted against the yoke of the coming capitalism--its money lenders, its bank directors, and its railway magnates...The middle class had the power, and held its coal and iron well in hand, but the satirists and idealists seized the press, and as they were agreed that the Second Empire was a disgrace and a danger to England, they turned to Germany because at that moment Germany was neither economical nor military, and a hundred years behind Western Europe in the simplicity of scholarship. Goethe was raised to the rank of Shakespeare--Kant ranked as a law-giver above Plato. All serious scholars were obliged to become German, because German thought was revolutionizing criticism."³³⁹

But Adams never quite embraced what he called the "Concord Church" which was the center of this sensibility in 1856:

"...He never reached Concord, and to Concord Church he, like the rest of mankind who accepted a material universe, remained always an insect, or something much lower--a man. It was surely no fault of his that the universe seemed to him real; perhaps,--as Mr. Emerson justly said--it was so; in spite of the long-continued effort of a lifetime, he perpetually fell back into the heresy that if anything universal was unreal, it was himself and not the appearances; it was the poet and not the banker; it was his own thought, not the thing that moved it. He did not lack the wish to be transcendental. Concord seemed to him, at one time, more real than Quincy; yet in truth Russell Lowell was as little transcendental as Beacon Street."³⁴⁰

Thus Adams, far from retreating to his study, set out to embrace his times, as a diplomat in London during the Civil War, as a journalist in Washington during the Grant administration. His experience with the corruption of machine politics under Grant was such (as indicated above) that he abandoned any hope of influencing the contemporary world and set out to understand it, whatever the

³³⁹-ibid. pp. 343-345.

³⁴⁰-ibid. p. 63.

conclusions. He studied the new evolutionary theory even though he believed that "evolution from Washington to Grant upset Darwin".³⁴¹ He studied Lyell's geological theories. He felt, had he been up to it, that "he would have been a Marxist"³⁴². But unlike Melville, Adams never "went to sea", so to speak, never immersed himself in the real collective experience of working- class life, and consequently his autobiography, while clearly professing his desire to understand his time, is nothing if not a sober account of the dispossession of the bourgeois ego by modern capitalism, industry and science. This attitude comes through clearly in his description of his return to the U.S. in 1868, after seven years' diplomatic service in London:

"...Had they been Tyrian traders of the year BC 1000, landing from a galley fresh from Gibraltar, they could hardly have been stranger on the shore of a world, so changed from what it had been ten years' before...One could divine pretty much where the force lay, since the last ten years had given to the great mechanical energies--coal, iron, steam--a distinct superiority in power over the old industrial elements--agriculture, handiwork, and learning...he had become an estray; a flotsam or jetsam of wreckage; a belated reveller, or a gypsy scholar like Mathew Arnold's. His world was dead. Not a Polish Jew fresh from Warsaw or Cracow--not a furtive Jacob or Isaac still reeking of the ghetto, snarling a weird Yiddish to the officers of the customs--but had a keener instinct, an intenser energy, and a freer hand than he--American of Americans, with heaven knew how many Puritans and Patriots behind him.."³⁴³

This fourth-generation member of the Adams family knew quite well the new balance of social forces in this world, as he began his journalistic career:

"...little as he might be fitted for the work that was before him, he had only to look at his father and Motley to see figures less fitted for it than he. All were equally survivors from the forties--bric a brac from the time of Louis Philippe; stylists; doctrinaires; ornaments that had been more or less suited to the colonial architecture, but which never had much value in Desbrosses Street or Fifth Avenue. They could hardly have earned five dollars a day in any modern industry. The men who commanded high pay were not as a rule ornamental. Even Commodore Vanderbilt and Jay Gould lacked social charm."³⁴⁴

Adams' sense of dispossession, once again, does not limit itself to a cultural and social theory; he finds a confirmation of these trends in 19th- century science:

³⁴¹-ibid. p. 266.

³⁴²-ibid. p. 225.

³⁴³-ibid. p. 238.

³⁴⁴-ibid. p. 238.

"Politics, diplomacy, law, art and history had opened no outlet to future energy or effort, but a man must do something...At that moment Darwin was convulsing society. He was a Darwinist before the letter...The atomic theory; the correlation and conservation of energy; the mechanical theory of the universe; the kinetic theory of gases, and Darwin's Law of Natural Selection, were examples of what a young man had to take on trust."³⁴⁵

In conversation with the geologist Sir Charles Lyell, who was writing evolutionary works on geology "to support Darwin by wrecking the garden of Eden"³⁴⁶, Adams reports the following:

"...Adams gave up the attempt to begin at the beginning, and tried starting at the end-- himself...he asked Sir Charles to introduce him to the first vertebrate. Infinitely in his bewilderment, Sir Charles informed him that the first vertebrate was a very respectable fish among the earliest of all fossils, which had lived, and whose bones were reposing, under Adams' own favorite abbey on Wenlock Edge."³⁴⁷

This fish was the "cousin of the Sturgeon, Pteraspis".

There is in these passages from Adams a striking parallel to Melville's mention of the whale bones discovered just under the Tuileries³⁴⁸. Yet even more striking is the passage that follows. Melville is talking about the "antemosaic" reality of cosmic evolution, the "unfinished Cathedral of Cologne", as a totality of which the modern working class, and above all the Queequegs, are the heirs, the returned "cosmic man" which will appropriate that nature and history by superceding the world of world into a new kind of activity. Adams, on the contrary, finds in the metaphor of Pteraspis a refutation of both evolution and of any idea of progress:

"...he yearned for nothing so keenly as to feel at home in a thirteenth-century Abbey, unless it were to haunt a fifteenth-century Prior's house, and both these were his joys at Wenlock... The peculiar flavor of the scenery has something to do with the absence of evolution; it was better marked in Egypt; it was felt whenever time sequences became interchangeable. One's instinct abhors time. As one lay on the slope of the Edge, nothing suggested sequence... The Roman Road was twin to the railroad; Uriconium was well worth Shrewsbury...One might mix up the terms of time as one liked... but the greatest triumph of all was to look south along the Edge to the abode of one's earliest ancestor and nearest relative, the genoid fish, whose name, according to Professor Huxley, was Pterapsis... Life began and ended

³⁴⁵-ibid. p. 224.

³⁴⁶-ibid. p. 225.

³⁴⁷-ibid. p. 228.

³⁴⁸-cf. above p. 24.

there. Behind that horizon lay only the Cambrian, without vertebrates or any other organism except a few shell-fish...³⁴⁹

This evolutionary-historical sequence, for Adams, is no story of realization, but, on the contrary, one of meaningless change:

"...To an American in search of a father, it matter nothing whether the father breathed through lungs, or walked on fins, or on feet. Evolution of mind was altogether another matter, but whether one traced descent from the shark or the wolk was immaterial even in morals... Adams had doubts of his own on the facts of moral evolution...(Pteraspis) began in the Ludlow shale, as complete as Adams himself-- in some respects moreso-- at the top of the column of organic evolution; and geology offered no sort of proof that he had ever been anything else. Ponder over it as he might, Adams could see nothing in the theory of Sir Charles but pure inference...He could detect no more evolution in life since the Pteraspis than he could detect it in architecture since the Abbey. Coal-power alone asserted evolution--of power--and only by violence could be forced to assert selection of type...behind the lesson of the day, he was conscious that, in geology as in theology, he could prove only that evolution did not evolve...(he felt that)...the idea of Form, Law, Order or Sequence had no more value for him than the idea of none; that what he valued most was Motion, and that what attracted his mind was Change."³⁵⁰

Adams did not step back before the full implications of his train of thought:

"...(he) had no need to learn from Hamlet the fatal effect of the pale cast of thought on enterprises great or small...To him, the current of his time was to be his current, lead where it might. He put psychology under lock and key...One had no time to paint and putty the surface of Law, even though it were cracked and rotten...He, at least, took his education as a Darwinian in good faith. The Church was gone, and Duty was dim, but Will should take its place, founded deeply in interest and law..."³⁵¹

Adams is one of the consummate 19th-century figures of the bourgeois ego in decline. His is the consciousness of the American world prior to 1840 transposed to the world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He was, as James said of Ahab, capable of criticizing everything about his world, but was incapable of calling into question one thing: his relations with his fellow men, that is to transcend the merely individual viewpoint from which the vast complexities of modern society did indeed appear as dissipative. Adams remained ignorant of the realities of the working class, but as he said:

³⁴⁹-ibid. pp. 229-231.

³⁵⁰-ibid.

³⁵¹-ibid. p. 232.

"...by rights, he should have been a Marxist, but some narrow trait of the New England nature seemed to blight socialism, and he tried in vain to make himself a convert."³⁵²

He remained even more foreign to the realities of "Queequeg". In his veritable recapitulation, in the negative mode, of the Melvillian trajectory, he even published a book Tahiti (Paris 1901). As Stephen Brush puts it:

"...In 1890 Adams went to the South Seas and observed the contrast between the healthy nudity of Samoa and the Westernized degeneracy of Tahiti. Together with his brother Charles, Adams studied signs of decay in his own father. He read Nordau's Degeneration, and Clarence King suggested that they "go and pose for Nordau together--he seems to have had no degenerates or hysterics of our type--fellows who know all about it but manage to get a world of fun and some pleasure from it" ...³⁵³

He never called into question the ideology of work at the foundations of the modern conception of energy, and remained foreign to the reality of "Queequeg", the "return on a higher level" of the "savage" unitary activity that supercedes the work/leisure antinomy. He thus articulated the most complete synthesis of Kulturpessimismus and thermodynamics of the late nineteenth century.³⁵⁴ Like Ishmael in the "Try-works" scene, he never got close enough to see that the crew was laughing.

Ch. IX. Queequeg and the Return of the Antemosaic Cosmic Man: the Shattering of Puritan/Liberal/Romantic Consciousness"

Not that the Red Indian will ever possess the broad lands of America. At least I presume not. But his ghost will."

D.H. Lawrence
Studies in Classic American Literature

Part One of this study has presented the following analysis of Moby Dick. When the situation of the American Transcendentalists is compared to that of European romanticism, above all the romanticism issuing from the works of Kant and Coleridge, the distinction that emerges is the absence of a feudal-historical past

³⁵²-ibid. p. 225.

³⁵³-Brush, op. cit. p. 122.

³⁵⁴-ibid. p. 121.

as a source of material for Americans. Lacking such a past, indeed studiously oblivious to history, figures such as Emerson, Thoreau and later Whitman turned to a complex of nature mysticism, primitivism and Orientalism instead. Investigating further the source of this distinction between Europe and the U.S., we found that the primitivism and Orientalism which cropped up in the first generation of American literature was quite in continuity with founding Puritanism's re-creation of the "Mosaic" sense of reality upon its arrival in the New World: the New Covenant in the wilderness, with the Indians and blacks (and ultimately Polynesians) encountered in that new world as the shadows of Adamic man. European romanticism, working off the "myth of the cosmic king" mediated by the feudal experience of the Holy Roman Empire, had no such direct apprehension of the "primitive"; indeed, from Chateaubriand and Goethe onward, it looked to America for precisely that.

A further decisive difference between Europe and the U.S. emerged in the relationship of the intelligentsia to the state: because the Enlightened absolutist states that consolidated themselves in the wake of the Reformation wars, in contrast to the Calvinist republics, had to foment civil society and capitalism, the intelligentsia that emerged in those societies was much more of a "civil service" intelligentsia than was necessary or possible in the United States. Thus the "aesthetics" of this social stratum, particularly after the reforming civil service had completed its role, was the aesthetics of "marginal men" (something they had in common with their American Transcendentalist counterparts) but it was an aesthetics, like Julien Sorel's cameo of Napoleon, which was never very far from the state.

The crises of 1848 in both Europe and the U.S. shattered this consciousness or forced it into pessimistic retreat from the world: the "ugly revolution" in Paris, and the sectionalist crises in the U.S. both forced the "unhappy consciousness" to mutate from its apparent lyrical to its actual pessimist mode.

But the results of 1848 were very different for Europe and the U.S., because of the question of the state. What emerged out of the 1848 crisis in Europe was Marxian socialism and the artistic avant-garde, while neither socialism nor the avant-garde had any real impact in American life until the 1890-1920 period. But concealed in the rise of "socialism" in the European working classes was in fact a "dual revolution", a completion of the bourgeois revolution that was simply not necessary in the U.S. Thus the actual "socialism" which emerged on the continent was in reality a concealed extension of the mercantilist development regimes of the 17th and 18th centuries, far from Marx's actual project, and it entered into crisis once the actual transition to capitalism was complete.

The radical intelligentsia in the U.S., it has been argued, has almost always compared American to European experience unfavorably, because of the twin absence of a socialist working-class tradition and consequently of a place for a cultural avant-garde in the working-class movement (to the extent that the European movements, in the 1920's in particular, afforded the avant-garde such a place). But such a view of American politics badly underestimates both the reality of the European experience, and even moreso the American experience. For lurking just behind such a view is a blindness to both the realities of statism in the

European "socialist" experience, and to what extent the revolutionary political and artistic intelligentsias were state-spawned social strata whose ultimate destiny was the state. One hardly wishes to minimize the legacy of backwardness and lack of the most minimal traditions of class consciousness which the absence of a socialist tradition has bequeathed to American workers. But with the hindsight that almost 150 years of statist "dual revolution" (completion of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution by working-class parties) in Europe, whether of the Social Democratic or Stalinist variety, one can begin to appreciate both CLR James' point that the history of the twentieth century has confirmed how prophetic Melville was, and one can also understand that little is to be regretted by the "failure" of the working class to respond to the "Ahab" or "Ishmael" variants of the unhappy consciousness. The working class, by its position in the technological extraction of wealth from nature, and by its association, has a "different agenda", a different problematic that laughs at the unhappy consciousness, even when, as with fascism or Stalinism, the unhappy consciousness momentarily, with its "Fedallahs" and "special bodies of armed men", deals the working class a serious setback.

Melville has, if this analysis is correct, provided a remarkable typology of the variants of the bourgeois ego, and of the consequences of the ultimate logic of the bourgeois ego. But unlike many "Ishmaels", particularly those "Ishmaels" like Henry Adams who came after the watershed of 1848-1850, and who confronted the full force of the mobilization of reality by the categories of work, the working class, led by the Queequegs, Tashtegos and Daggos, sees things differently. Against a Weberian view of an "iron cage" that sees the somber mobilization of the Pequod for the insane pursuit of the total abstraction of a world dominated by work, the working class, in a more "Jamesian" optic, poses its unbreakable spirit of light-hearted contempt for such projects. Against the "entropic" destruction implicit in such a project, it is, for Melville, the heir to the vast cosmic evolution of nature and of the totality of the poetry of myth, not in "consciousness" but in its unitary activity, the nobility of harpooners in the midst of the most modern social relations and technology. The isolated bourgeois ego trapped in the world defined by work is trapped in the Mosaic world of white abstraction symbolized by Moby Dick; the working class, and particularly the Queequegs, by their inactivity superceding the categories of work/leisure, inherit a "cosmic imagination" as realized in the total exercise of their faculties, one which must ultimately redeem both nature and "work" as activity.

Thus the American socialist intelligentsia which has, understandably, compared its own situation with its European political and cultural counterparts and found that situation wanting, has to date misunderstood the possibilities inherent in the specificities of American historical experience. The "Mosaic" consciousness of the bourgeois ego in the United States, in contrast to Europe, had no intermediary "feudal" imagery interposed between it and the "antemosaic" realities of the "Queequegs" and the cosmic apprehension of nature available to the Queequegs. And because of the weakness of the statist traditions in the U.S., the "Queequegs" have not been enlisted in "socialist" projects alien to their own tasks. That this has left them susceptible, on occasion, to enlistment in even more retrograde ideologies may in fact be the case, but when a socialist movement

finally worthy of the potentials of the "antemosaic" realities of American history finally comes into existence, it may finally show that the Adamic myth present in the founding of America was not so much an escape from history (the latter understood in the European sense) as an anticipation of a completion of the history contained in the prophecies of cosmic man in the ancient Near East, the archetypes of modern primitivism and Orientalism, in the beginning.

Ch. X: Retrospective: Melville Before Moby-Dick: The Elements of Synthesis

In Moby Dick, Melville had achieved the synthesis toward which he was working in Typee, Omoo, Mardi, Redburn and White-Jacket. He had merged the encounter with the primitive of the two early books which had made his reputation, the cosmic-symbolic-allegorical dimension attempted for the first time in Mardi, and the realist confrontation with class, hierarchy and authority which emerged in the latter two works. He never achieved this synthesis again, although (as shall be seen) he approaches the same elements, in greatly transposed terms, in Billy Budd. Melville continued to write for forty years after Moby Dick, mainly wrestling with the same themes, except that the realist treatment of collective rebellion had receded from the forefront, as it did from Western literature generally in the 1850-1890 period. As the *Pequod* sank, the Indian Tashtego was nailing a red flag to the mast, pulling a skyhawk and its "imperial beak" down with the ship. Red flags would continue to appear on the horizons of Melville's work (particularly in Clarel and in Billy Budd) but after Moby Dick the middle-class "Transcendental divines", the men of the quest who succeeded Redburn or Ishmael, were no longer confronted directly with the "ugly revolution" of proletarian life. The problem of middle-class malcontents, from Pierre to Clarel, henceforth operated according to a logic of its own, separated from any hint of a "social solution". The artistic elaboration of this "new logic", comparable to developments across the Atlantic, makes Melville, with elements of Pierre, "Bartleby the Scrivener", The Confidence Man and Billy Budd, a co-founder of modernism.

The preceding analysis of Moby Dick attempted to show that America differed from Europe as an "Adamic", antemosaic universal of the anthropocosmos differed from the Napoleonic universal of statism. The events of 1848 in America showed that the continuity with the American Revolution had been broken by a crisis over slavery and expansionism; in France, and throughout Europe, the continuity with the French Revolution and its "universal" impact on Europe was broken by the red, "ugly revolution" of 1848, the (seeming) spectre of communism. The latter counterposition does not mean that America was not a class society as Europe so obviously was; it merely means that the specificity of the American working class was inseparable from a race question with no counterpart in Europe and from an imperial expansion whose terms had been set down in the Puritan extermination of the Indians of New England in the 17th century, and which in the 1846 defeat of Mexico had opened the way to the consolidation of the continent to the Pacific. This Puritan legacy was the "Old Testament" historical memory screen

that substituted for feudalism as America's pre-capitalist past. Moby Dick became the archetypal novel of 19th-century American literature by articulating the American universal against Calvinism as the "antemosaic cosmic man", right in the midst of the crisis of continuity, symbolized by the Compromise of 1850, with the world of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and the "founders", but after that articulation, the waters closed around Melville too.

Melville the man and the author of Moby Dick, was a prophet of the "antemosaic" who, in his lifetime, was honored neither in his own country, nor in any other. The early popularity achieved by the two South Seas books was called into question by the reception of the first "metaphysical" novel, Mardi, and somewhat redeemed by Melville's return to more realist novels of sea adventure, however laced with bitter social commentary. Moby Dick delivered the coup de grace to this recovery of an audience. Meanwhile, Melville had married and started a family. The combination of his personal circumstances, his failure as a popular author capable of supporting a family from his writing, and the broader social crisis closed off for a lifetime the creative sources from which Moby Dick had emerged. To understand these sources, a closer thematic look at the pre-Moby Dick books is required.

a. Typee and Omoo: The Primitive; The Critique of Western Civilization and of Christianity

The most important elements of Typee and Omoo, in setting the groundwork for Moby Dick, are Melville's first forays into the primitive and into the critique of the impact of the West and of Christianity in the South Seas.

In one scene in Typee, which certainly attracted the attention of American readers in 1846, naked Tahitian women swim out, board the ship in Nukuheva harbor, and dance for the crew, as

"the wild grace and spirit of their style excel everything I have ever seen"...(with)..."an abandoned voluptuosness in their character which I dare not attempt to describe.

Our ship was now wholly given up to every species of riot and debauchery."³⁵⁵

But Melville is not narrating this scene merely to indulge in erotic exoticism. He is using this encounter to show the devastating impact of Western intrusion on the islanders:

"...Alas for the poor savages when exposed to the influence of these polluting examples! Unsophisticated and confiding, they are easily led into every vice, and humanity weeps over the ruin thus remorsefully inflicted on them by their European civilizers. Thrice happy are they who, inhabiting some yet undiscovered island in

³⁵⁵-ibid. p. 25.

the midst of the ocean, have never been brought into contaminating contact with the white man"³⁵⁶.

With this setting, Melville, in a time-honored trope of Western writing on non-Western cultures since the 16th century, uses Tahitian women as foils, in this case for a general critique of the forms in which Western culture imprisons women:

"People may say what they will about the taste evinced by our fashionable ladies in dress. Their jewels, their feathers, their silks, and their furbelows would have sunk into utter significance beside the exquisite simplicity of attire adopted by the nymphs of the vale on this festive occasion. I should like to have seen a gallery of coronation beauties, at Westminster Abbey, confronted for a moment by this band of Island girls; their stiffness, formality and affectation contrasted with the artless vivacity and unconcealed natural graces of these savage maidens. It would be the Venus de' Medici placed beside a milliner's doll."³⁵⁷

Melville also comments on the system of polygamy, with "a plurality of husbands, instead of wives" which is found in Polynesia:

"Imagine a revolution brought about in a Turkish seraglio, and the harem rendered the abode of bearded men; or conceive some beautiful woman in our own country running distracted at the sight of her numerous lovers murdering one another before her eyes...Heaven defend us from such a state of things! We are scarcely amiable and forbearing enough to submit to it."³⁵⁸

If Melville's frank discussion of South Sea sexuality could both anger and titillate an Anglo-American audience, his comments on the impact of Christian missionaries had no such ambiguities. He cites the "diseased, starving and dying" natives of Hawaii:

"The missionaries may seek to disguise the matter as they will, but the facts are incontrovertible; and the devoutest Christian who visits that group with an unbiased mind, must go away mournfully asking--"Are these, alas! the fruits of twenty-five years of enlightening?"³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶-ibid.

³⁵⁷-ibid. p. 191.

³⁵⁸-ibid. p. 225.

³⁵⁹-ibid. p. 149.

Melville is in fact inclined to think that four or five Marquesan missionaries to the U.S. might be more useful than Americans in the Marquesas.³⁶⁰ For "the penalty of the Fall presses very lightly upon the valley of Typee"³⁶¹:

"Ill fated people! I shudder when I think of the change a few years will produce in their paradisiacal abode; and probably when the most destructive vices, and the worst attendances of civilization, shall have driven all peace and happiness from the valley, the magnanimous French will proclaim to the world that the Marquesas Islands have been converted to Christianity!"³⁶²

The impact of the missionaries and their works again come in for another hostile portrayal in Omoo:

"Doubtless, in thus denationalizing the Tahitians...the missionaries were prompted by a sincere desire for good; but the effect has been lamentable. Supplied with no amusements, in place of those forbidden, the Tahitians, who require more recreation than other people, have sunk into a listlessness, or indulge in sensualities, a hundred times more pernicious, than all the games ever celebrated in the Temple of Tane."³⁶³

Melville is unsparing in his portrayal of "contaminating contact with the white man". It is, as was seen earlier in Moby Dick, not merely the critique of religion or imperialism, but the critique of civilization itself which animated him, a critique which also raises the issue of class:

"What striking evidence...of the wide difference between the extreme of savage 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 infinitely 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

³⁶⁰-ibid. p. 151.

³⁶¹-ibid. p. 230. This outrage perpetrated upon the South Sea islanders by missionaries will stay with Melville, in his ongoing, problematic relationship to religion and its organized forms. Thirty years later, in the epic poem Clarel (1876), Melville has Vine, one of his characters, say "Tahiti should have been the place of Christ in advent." (Clarel, New York, 1960, p. 467)

³⁶²-ibid.

³⁶³-ibid. p. 509.

offspring that food which the children of a Polynesian father, without troubling their parent, pluck from the branches of every tree around them."³⁶⁴

Melville admits that Polynesian cannibalism is a "rather bad trait"³⁶⁵, but says it occurs primarily as "revenge upon their enemies"; and

"I ask whether the mere eating of human flesh so very far exceeds in barbarity that only a few years since was practiced in enlightened England: - a convicted traitor...had his head lopped off with a huge axe, his bowels dragged out and thrown into a fire; while his body, carved into four quarters, was with his head exposed upon pikes, and permitted to rot and fester among the public haunts of men!

The fiend-like skill we display in the invention of all manner of death-dealing engines, the vindictiveness with which we carry on our wars, and the misery and desolation that follow in their train, are enough of themselves to distinguish the white civilized man as the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth."³⁶⁶

Melville contrasts the situation in the West with "the perpetual hilarity reigning through the whole extent of the vale", where there seemed to be "no cares, griefs, troubles or vexations"³⁶⁷:

"There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes...no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers...no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord...no poor relations, everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber...no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars, no debtors prisons; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in one word--no Money! That 'root of all evil' was not to be found in the valley."³⁶⁸

Melville spares little in his polemics on the theme of "civilization and savagery":

364-*ibid.*

365-p. 150

366-*ibid.*

367-p. 151.

368-*ibid.*

"When I remembered that these islanders derived no advantages from dress, but appeared in all the naked simplicity of nature, I could not avoid comparing them with the fine gentleman and dandies who promenade such unexceptionable figures in our frequented thoroughfares. Stripped of the cunning artifices of the tailor, and standing forth in the garb of Eden--what a sorry set of round-shouldered, spindle-shanked, crane-necked varlets would civilized men appear! Stuffed calves, padded breasts, and scientifically cut pantaloons would avail them nothing, and the effect would be truly deplorable".³⁶⁹

Nevertheless, as indicated, Melville uses this framework in Omoo to continue his expose of the themes first introduced in Typee. After detailing the destruction of the former South Sea cultures, the vast depopulation between Cook's voyages in the 1770's and the 1840's, Melville sums up:

"...who can remain blind to the fact, that, so far as mere temporal felicity is concerned, the Tahitians are far worse off now, than formerly; and although their circumstances, upon the whole, are bettered by the presence of the missionaries, the benefits conferred by the latter become utterly insignificant, when confronted by the vast preponderance of evil brought about by other means.

Their prospects are hopeless...Years ago brought to a stand, where all that is corrupt in barbarism and civilization unite, to the exclusion of the virtues of either state; like other uncivilized beings, brought into contact with the Europeans, they must here remain stationary until utterly extinct."³⁷⁰

Such direct commentary and "anthropology" had disappeared from Moby Dick. It was replaced by Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo, on one hand, and by a far broader concept of the "antemosaic". The vehicle for the realization of the virtues of Polynesia as Melville had experienced them and written about them became the "Anarcharsis Cloots deputation", centered on the *Pequod*'s harpooners. The Anacharsis Cloots deputation first appears in Melville's work in Mardi, along with other new themes that find their summum in Moby Dick.

b. Mardi : Emergence of the Cosmic- Allegorical- Symbolic

After the publication of Omoo in 1847, Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court³⁷¹, and moved

³⁶⁹-p. 214.

³⁷⁰-ibid. p. 519.

³⁷¹-Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw was a nationally-known figure who made a notorious ruling in the famous Sims case of 1851, upholding the Fugitive Slave Law and returning Thomas Sims, a fugitive from a Georgia plantation, to his owner. He also upheld the right of individual Boston schools to practice segregation. (cf. Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. pp. 282-283) The Sims

with her to Manhattan. The celebrity from his first two books opened up the New York literary world to him, and he was able to avail himself of the 16,000 book library of his friend Evert Duyckinck, editor of the prestigious magazine the Literary World, for a kind of intellectual stimulation he had never previously known. At the same time, a persistent undercurrent of skepticism about the authenticity of the adventures recounted in Typee and Omoo, particularly in English reviews, stung Melville; these elitist critics could not believe that such books were written by "an American sailor".

Thus, while wanting to continue to exploit the South Sea material, Melville decided to move from more or less straightforward adventure to a much higher symbolic and allegorical level, "to see whether", as he said in the preface, "the fiction might not, possibly, be received for a verity: in some degree the reverse of my previous experience"³⁷². The result was Mardi (1849), Melville's sprawling, aesthetically-flawed, half-baked rehearsal for Moby Dick³⁷³, introducing for the first time the organizing theme of the quest present in so many subsequent works. Mardi introduces many of the motifs which matured two years later in Moby Dick: cosmic kingship, Orientalism, esotericism, and myth³⁷⁴. It also introduces direct commentary on American and European politics in the conjuncture of 1848. However, even the author of one of the most interesting studies of Mardi admits that "though a trump,...(it)... is undeniably a bore to the casual reader"³⁷⁵

Mardi is, like Moby Dick, Pierre, or later Clarel, the story of a quest. The overall Spenserian inspiration of the book makes the characters more or less allegorical. They include a South Seas sailor, who later names himself "Taji"; Jarl, a Scandinavian seaman; Media, king of the mythic South Seas land of Mardi; Mohi, the chronicler; Babbalanja, the philosopher, and Yoomy, the poet. The bulk of Mardi is their search for the beautiful maiden Yillah, with whom Taji enjoyed an idyll in a "tropical bower" and who then disappears. The search, which makes up the bulk of the book, allows Melville to move into the "fictional" dimension he promised to his English editor and to attempt thinly-veiled commentary on contemporary society and politics.

case is also discussed in Rogin, op. cit. pp. 141-146. Shaw had once been engaged to one of Melville's aunts, who died before the wedding, and Shaw remained a close friend of Melville's father.

³⁷²-Mardi, Library of America, 1982, p. 661.

³⁷³-For a survey of contemporary critical responses to Mardi in England and the U.S, in 1849, cf. L. Robertson-Lorant, op. cit. pp. 192-193.

³⁷⁴A comprehensive interpretation of Mardi and its characters in terms of myth, and 18th and 19th century theories of comparative mythology, is H. Bruce Franklin, op. cit. Ch. 2.

³⁷⁵-M. Moore, That Lonely Game. Melville, Mardi and the Almanac. University of Missouri Press, 1975, p. 242.

The Norse seaman, Jarl, is the first of Melville's "Anacharsis Cloots delegation", one of the universal class, the "castaways, mariners and renegades" which later people the *Pequod*'s crew and other books of Melville:

"Now, in old Jarl's lingo there is never an idiom. Your aboriginal tar is too much of a cosmopolitan for that. Long companionship with seamen of all tribes: Manilla-men, Anglo-Saxons, Cholos, Lascars, and Danes, wear away in good time all mother-tongue stammerings. You sink your clan; down goes your nation; you speak a world's language, jovially jabbering in the Lingua-Franca of the forecastle."³⁷⁶

And where, in this revolutionary year, the Anacharis Cloots delegation is present, kingship cannot be far away:

"A king on his throne! Ah, believe me, ye Gracchi, ye Acephali, ye Levellers, it is something worth seeing, be sure; whether beheld at Babylon the Tremendous, when Nebuchadnezzar was crowned; at old Scone in the days of Macbeth; at Rheims, among Oriflammes, at the coronation of Louis le Grand..."³⁷⁷

And where, in Melville in 1848, kingship is invoked, the pseudo-sacred, tied to democracy, is sure to follow:

"Man lording it over man, man kneeling to man, is a spectacle that Gabriel might well travel hitherward to behold, for never did he behold it in heaven. But Darius giving laws to the Medes and the Persians, or the conqueror of Bactria with king-cattle yoked to his car, was not one whit more sublime, than Beau Brummel magnificently ringing for his valet."³⁷⁸

All of these strands, of the erosion of feudal authority in the democratic era come together in one of a number of the narrator Taji's meditations on history:

"Ah! but these warriors, like anvils, will stand a deal of hard hammering. Especially in the old knight-errant times. For at the battle of Brevieux in Flanders,

³⁷⁶-ibid. p. 673.

³⁷⁷-ibid. p. 844.

³⁷⁸-ibid. p. 845. On Brummel, once again, cf. E. Moers, op. cit. Ch. 1, and J.B. Priestley, op. cit. Given Melville's interest in fashion, to be developed below, Moers' remarks (p. 21) are particularly interesting: "The ideal of the dandy is cut in cloth. The dandy's independence is expressed in his rejection of any visible distinction but elegance; his self-worship in self-adornment; his superiority to useful work in his tireless application to costume. His independence, assurance, originality, self-control and refinement should all be visible in the cut of his clothes."

my glorious old gossiping ancestor, Froissart, informs me, that ten good knights, being suddenly unhorsed, fell stiff and powerless to the plain, fatally encumbered by their armor. Whereupon, the rascally burglarious peasants, their foes, fell to picking their visors; as burglars, locks; or oystermen, oysters; to get at their lives. But all to no purpose. And at last they were fain to ask aid of a blacksmith; and not till then, were the inmates of the armor dispatched. Now it was deemed very hard, that the mysterious state-prisoner of France should be riveted in an iron mask; but these knight-errants did voluntarily prison themselves in their own iron Bastiles; and thus helpless were murdered therein. Days of chivalry those, when gallant chevaliers died chivalric deaths!

And this was the epic age, over whose departure my late eloquent and prophetic friend and correspondent, Edmund Burke, so movingly mourned. Yes, they were glorious times. But no sensible man, given to quiet domestic delights, would exchange his warm fireside and muffins, for a heroix bivouac, in a wild beechen wood, of a raw gusty morning in Normandy; every knight blowing his steel-gloved fingers, and vainly striving to cook his cold coffee in his helmet."³⁷⁹

In Mardi, for the first time in Melville's work, a mythical nature also appears, anticipating the "cosmic evolutionary" dimension of Moby Dick. The astrological and astronomical references are pervasive and, according to one interpretation, structure the entire work on the Zodiac³⁸⁰. Also present is biology, which Melville does not hesitate to mix with meditation on chivalric myth such as the one just cited. In an early chapter devoted to the Indian Sword fish, (capable of penetrating ship hulls) after a brief natural history account, Melville immediately introduces mythic human history:

"...among the erudite naturalists he goeth by the outlandish appellation of 'Xiphius Platypterus.'

But I waive for my hero all these cognomens, and substitute a much better one of my own: namely, the Chevalier³⁸¹...A true gentleman of Black Prince Edward's bright day, when all gentlemen were known by their swords; whereas, in

³⁷⁹-ibid. pp. 738-739.

³⁸⁰-M. Moore, op. cit. p. 10: "Astrological and astronomical lore...are yoked together to perform as a dynamic unit; Pythagorean number symbolism is wedded to Euclidean geometry to "square the circle" of planetary orbits...the Arthurian quest for the Grail and the ancient folk custom of shipboard initiation are linked to the ten Avatars of Vishnu through the device of a game of cards...The weakness of Mardi,--as well as its fascination--lies in its plethora of obscure and esoteric references and in the metaphysical synthesis of diverse and obscure elements."

³⁸¹-Among myriad references to knights in Melville's writings, the reader will recall the reference to the "chevalier" (the swindler, the pick-pocket) in the opening paragraphs of The Confidence Man (1857).

times present, the Sword fish excepted, they are mostly known by their high polished boots and rattans³⁸²."

Similarly, as indicated earlier, astronomy and astrology are everywhere, linked to a formulation of cosmic kingship. Taji and his companions are in Juam, ruled by King Donjalolo. Different parts of Donjalolo's residence are associated with different houses of the Zodiac, House of the Morning and House of the Afternoon. Donjalolo is moved about his grounds every day, "thereby anticipating the revolution of the sun"³⁸³:

"reclining by night, like Pharaoh on the top of his patrimonial pile, the inmate looks heavenward, and heavenward only; gazing at the torch-light processions in the skies, when, in state, the suns march to be crowned.

And here, in this impenetrable retreat, centrally slumbered the universe-rounded, zodiac-belted, horizon-zoned, sea-girt, reef-sashed, mountain-locked, arbor-nested, royalty-girded, arm-clasped, self-hugged, indivisible Donjalolo, absolute monarch of Juam:- the husk-inhusked meat in the nut; the innermost spark in a ruby; the juice-nested seed in a golden-rinded orange; the red royal stone in an effeminate peach; the insphered sphere of spheres."³⁸⁴

With such formulations, even in a Polynesian context, the Orient also emerges. A shark is "the great Tamerlane"³⁸⁵; sitting down to a feast of biscuits on the Parki the companions

"laid close siege thereto, likethe Grand Turk and his Vizier Mustapha sitting down before Vienna"³⁸⁶;

The sun

³⁸²-Note once again, as in the Beau Brummel passage cited above, the transition from the medieval warrior class to contemporary fashion. In another passage, Melville describes "the dandy Blue Shark, a long taper and mighty genteel looking fellow, with a slender waist, like a Bond-street beau..." (Mardi, p. 700.) In other passages, royalty and landscape are mixed, as in the dinner of the 25 kings: "Where, flanked by lofty crowned-heads, white-tiaraed, and radiant with royalty, he sat; like snow-turbaned Mont Blanc...to right and left, looming the gilded summits of the Simplon, the Gothard, the Jungfrau, the Great St. Bernard, and the Grand Glockner." (p. 916)

³⁸³-*ibid.* p. 897.

³⁸⁴-*ibid.* p. 901.

³⁸⁵-*ibid.* p. 714.

³⁸⁶-*ibid.* p. 724.

"seemed toiling among bleak Scythian steeps in the hazy background Above the storm-cloud flitted ominous patches of scud, rapidly advancing and receding: Attila's skirmishers, thrown forward in the van of his Huns".³⁸⁷

The old priest escorting Yillah to be sacrificed was

"like a scroll of old parchment, covered all over with hieroglyphical devices, harder to interpret, I'll warrant, than any old Sanskrit manuscript."³⁸⁸

A sunrise is

"...a bright mustering...among the myriad white Tartar tents in the Orient;"

sunbeams

"thwart the sky, like lines of spears defiling upon some upland plain...And see! amid the blaze of banners, and the pawings of ten thousand golden hoofs, day's mounted Sultan, Xerxe-like, moves on: the Dawn his standard, East and West his cymbals."³⁸⁹

But Mardi does more, in Melville's evolution, than introduce many of the motifs of Moby Dick at cosmic, mythic or allegorical level; it also introduces, as indicated earlier, the immediately contemporary political scene of the world conjuncture of 1848, a level of commentary absent from the previous South Sea adventures. After much wandering in the Mardian archipelago in truly mythical islands and kingdoms, Taji and his companions approach a barely-veiled Europe,

"Porpheero, a neighboring island, very large and famous, whose numerous broad valleys were divided among many rival kings"³⁹⁰;

in which European countries appear under transparent names (France=Franko, etc.).

Melville engages in an extended discussion of contemporary world politics. There are references to Chartism³⁹¹, the sectionalist crisis over slavery in the U.S.,

³⁸⁷-ibid. p. 777.

³⁸⁸-ibid. p. 791. This passage anticipates some of the Sir William Jones references in Moby Dick.

³⁸⁹-ibid. p. 1139.

³⁹⁰-ibid. p. 1123. The political commentary in Mardi on 1848 is pp. 1121-1212. It is possible that the events interrupted the writing of Mardi, which would partially explain their somewhat artificial relationship to the rest of the book.

the 1848 uprisings on the European continent, the annexation of Texas, Latin American revolutions, the California Gold Rush, and Western imperialism in Asia. As Taji and his companions encounter these different developments, they discuss whether or not democracy is compatible with slavery³⁹², and whether or not the young American republic will escape the cycles of revolt and tyranny that have characterized the Old World.

The extended debate about contemporary politics in Mardi is unique in Melville's work. While "red revolution" is a constant reference point even in such late books as Clarel and Billy Budd, it is usually present as a spectre in the background of some latent revolt. The special weight it is given in Mardi is an indication of the impact of that year in Melville's evolution.

Such is the view of history in the conjuncture of 1848 in Melville's Mardi. But Melville's first engagement with history and politics went beyond a commentary on current events, however important. A cosmic dimension enters. It seems at times to resemble a Transcendentalist supermind. It is in the narrative voice of Taji (and, it must be quickly pointed out, by no means necessarily Melville's):

"...Do you believe you lived three thousand years ago? That you were at the taking of Tyre, were overwhelmed in Gomorrah? No. But for me, I was at the subsiding of the Deluge, and helped swab the ground, and build the first house. With the Israelites, I fainted in the wilderness; was in court, when Solomon outdid all the judges before him. I, it was, who suppressed the lost work of Manetho, on the Egyptian theology, as containing mysteries not to be revealed to posterity, and things at war with the canonical scriptures; I, who originated the conspiracy against that purple murderer, Domitian; I, who in the senate moved, that great and good

391-"Since we are born, we will live!" so we read on a crimson banner, flouting the crimson clouds, in the van of a riotous red-bonneted mob...Waving their banners, and flourishing aloft clubs, hammers and sickles, with fierce yells the crowd ran on toward the palace of Bello."

392- "Lo! what inscription is that?" cried Media, "there, chiseled over the arch?"

Studying those immense hieroglyphics awhile, antiquarian Mohi still eyeing them, said slowly:--

"In-this-re-publi-can land-all-men-are-born-free-and-equal"

"False!" said Media.

"And how long stay they so?" said Babbalanja.

"But look lower, old man," cried Media, "methinks there's a small hieroglyphic or two hidden away in yonder angle.--Interpret them, old man".

"After much screwing off his eyes, for those characters were very minute, Champollion Mohi thus spoke-- "Except-the-tribe-of-Hamo."

"That nullifies the other," cried Media. "Ah, ye republicans!"

"It seems to have been added for a postscript," rejoined Braid-Beard, screwing his eyes again."³⁹²

Aurelian be emperor. I instigated the abdication of Diocletian, and Charles the Fifth; I touched Isabella's heart, that she hearkened to Columbus. I am he, that from the king's minions hid the Charter in the old oak at Hartford; I harbored Goffe and Whalley; I am the leader of the Mohawk masks, who in the Old Commonwealth's harbor, overboard threw the East India Company's Souchong; I am the Veiled Persian Prophet; I, the man in the iron mask; I, Junius."³⁹³

This passage, with its suprahistorical sweep, foreshadows a similar sweep in some passages of Moby Dick³⁹⁴. But whereas, in the latter work, Ishmael uses a millennial view of history and evolution to explain the primordial quality which leaves him "horror struck at this antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale", Taji is focused "merely" on world history and a very specific, "masked" or hidden presence in it³⁹⁵.

A second statement of suprahistorical or cosmic consciousness occurs in the chapter "Dreams"³⁹⁶, just after Taji has learned of Jarl's death at the hands of pursuing avengers³⁹⁷.

³⁹³-ibid. pp. 957-958.

³⁹⁴-MD, p. 351. The Moby Dick passage situates this suprahistorical consciousness in an even broader context of cosmic evolution.

³⁹⁵-Manetho, very late in Egyptian history, wrote a comprehensive history of all the dynasties, which was lost; in addition to the Roman emperors mentioned, Charles the Fifth was Holy Roman Emperor at the height of the Spanish world empire who abdicated in 1554 to withdraw to a monastic existence at Yuste (and a figure who, for this reason, fascinated Melville)³⁹⁵; the charter of the Connecticut colony was hidden in 1687 during a confrontation over local autonomy with the royal Governor of New England, Sir Edmund Andros; Goffe and Whalley were regicide judges at the 1649 trial of Charles I, who were hidden in Connecticut after the restoration of Charles II in 1660. The man in the iron mask was a prisoner of Louis XIV, imprisoned for 40 years during Louis' reign and presented, in a 19th-century novel by Alexandre Dumas, as his double or brother and possible heir to the throne. Most interesting is perhaps the reference to "Junius", which was the pen name of an anonymous pamphleteer, whose identity was never discovered, whose writings appeared in the British press in the late 1760's, excoriating the cabinet of George III. The identification with an anonymous hidden hand in history is combined with at least eight instances of toppling or crippling of royal power.

³⁹⁶-Mardi, pp. 1021-1023.

³⁹⁷-These armed islanders, from the crew of the boat from which Yillah was rescued, are present throughout, though never described in any detail, even in the final scene when Taji leaves his companions behind to continue the search, "three fixed specters....three arrows poisoning" (p. 1316), and are a striking foreshadowing of Ahab's special phalanx of harpooners in Moby

"...Dreams! dreams! passing and repassing, like Oriental empires in history; and scepters wave thick, as Bruce's pikes at Brannockburn³⁹⁸; and crowns are plenty as marigolds in June. And far in the background, hazy and blue, their steeps let down from the sky, loom Andes on Andes, rooted on Alps; and all around me, long rushing oceans, roll Amazons and Oronocos; waves, mounted Parthians...And like a frigate, I am full with a thousand souls...Shoals, like nebelous vapors, shoring the white reef of the Milky Way, against which the wrecked worlds are dashed; strowing all the strand, with their Himmaleh keels and ribs...Like a grand, ground swell, Homer's old organ rolls its vast volumes under the light frothy wave-crests of Anacreon and Hafiz...In me, many worthies recline, and converse. I list to Paul who argues the doubts of Montaigne; Julian the Apostate cross questions Augustine...I walk a world that is mine; and enter many nations, as Mungo Park rested in African cots³⁹⁹; I am served like Bajazet⁴⁰⁰: Bacchus my brother, Virgil my minstrel, Philip Sidney⁴⁰¹ my page...Fire flames on my tongue, and though of old the Bactrian prophets were stoned, yet the stoners in oblivion sleep. But whoso stones me, shall be as Erostratus⁴⁰², who put torch to the temple; though Gengis Khan with Cambyses combine to obliterate him, his name shall be extant in the mouth of the last man that lives. And if so be, down unto death, whence I came, will I go, like Xenophon retreating on Greece, all Persia brandishing her spears in his rear."⁴⁰³

Mardi is a failure because its allegorical character proves an unsuccessful, schematic vehicle for the themes which Melville tries to treat. Nevertheless, it is important as a transitional book in which for the first time Melville rises above the immediate autobiography and "travel account" of Typee and Omoo, both in the commentary on 1848 in Europe and in the U.S. and in the "higher" world-historical consciousness in several of Taji's meditations. Before these different political, world-historical and cosmic levels bore fruit, Melville turned to the one element still missing from his writing: social class.

Dick.

³⁹⁸-The famous defeat of the English by Robert Bruce, King of Scots, in June 1314.

³⁹⁹-Mungo Park explored the Upper Gambia and the Upper Volta in the mid-1790's and in 1799 published Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa.

⁴⁰⁰-The Ottoman sultan from 1389 to 1402.

⁴⁰¹-Elizabethan courtier and poet.

⁴⁰²-Erostratus burned the temple at Ephesus in the 4th century BC.

⁴⁰³-ibid. pp. 1021-1023. According to Robertson-Lorant (op. cit. p. 187), Mardi influenced Walt Whitman, and one can see from this passage that it was Whitman more than Melville who took this sensibility to heart.

c. Redburn and Melville's Discovery of Class

Redburn (1849) was Melville's "least favorite novel", ostensibly written merely to make money. In it, Melville returns to the more straightforward, semi-autobiographical sailor's narrative of Typee and Omoo, but this time turning away from the South Seas and using material from his first sea voyage to Liverpool in 1839. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it decidedly belongs to Melville's lesser fiction, Redburn provides remarkable material, deepens themes already present in his earlier work, and introduces themes that had earlier been absent or only latently present. For the purposes of outlining the elements of Melville's evolution up to Moby Dick, however, the following will single out only the encounter with mid-19th century proletarian reality by a downwardly-mobile individual.

Redburn tells the tale of Wellingborough Redburn, son of a deceased "importer in Broad-street", "a gentleman of one of the first families of America", who, like Melville, had to ship out as a seaman because his family had come on hard times. It is, for now, only Redburn's encounter with the Liverpool slums that concerns us.

The first sight of Liverpool is a shock:

"...I beheld lofty ranges of dingy warehouses, which seemed very deficient in the elements of the marvelous; and bore a most unexpected resemblance to the warehouses along South-street in New York...plain, matter-of-fact warehouses...

To be sure, I did not expect that every house in Liverpool must be a Leaning Tower of Pisa, or a Strasbourg Cathedral; but yet, these edifices I must confess, were a sad and bitter disappointment to me."⁴⁰⁴

Melville is getting closer to the daily reality of working-class life. In no book prior to Redburn had he written, in so many words:

" There are classes of men in the world, who bear the same relation to society at large, that the wheels do to a coach... Now, sailors form one of these wheels; they go and come around the globe; they are the true importers, and exporters of spices and silks; of fruits and wines and marbles; they carry missionaries, ambassadors, opera singers, armies, merchants, tourists and scholars to their destination; they are a bridge of boats across the Atlantic; they are the primum mobile of all commerce; and, in short, were they to emigrate in a body to man the navies of the moon, almost everything would stop here on earth except its revolution on its axis, and the orators in the American Congress."⁴⁰⁵

404-*ibid.* p. 121.

405-*ibid.* p. 133.

In such a passage, Melville is already beyond any Transcendentalist hues that may have made their way into works like Mardi. But Redburn's experience of dispossession, faced with the proletarian realities of his shipmates and of Liverpool harbor, is nothing compared to what awaits him when he attempts to explore the city. He finds a church, used in 1588 for a reception of the Earl of Derby, and during the English civil wars as a military prison and stable "for the steed of some noble cavalry officer"; its basement is now used as a morgue for unidentified bodies found drowned under the Liverpool docks. In a side street called "Launcelott's-Hey", in a cellar beneath a crumbling warehouse, he finds a shriveled woman and her two starving children; he goes for help, but no one, including a policeman, shows the slightest interest; desperate, Redburn feels "an almost irresistible impulse to do them the last mercy", but holds back

"...For I well knew that the law, which would let them perish of themselves without giving them one cup of water, would spend a thousand pounds, if necessary, in convicting him who should so much as offer to relieve them from their miserable existence."⁴⁰⁶

Melville's passages on the Liverpool waterfront slums are worthy of his contemporaries Dickens or Engels. Redburn is besieged and followed by beggars, crying "for Heaven's sake, and for God's sake, and for Christ's sake, beseeching of you but one ha'penny".

"...The pestilent lanes and allies which...go by the name of Rotten-row, Gibraltar-place, and Booble-alley, are putrid with vice and crime; to which, perhaps, the round globe does not furnish a parallel. The sooty and begrimed bricks of the very houses have a reeking, Sodomlike, and murderous look."⁴⁰⁷

Redburn describes the ease with which the English army and navy recruit in these areas, with idyllic advertising of travel and pay, whereupon the recruit in reality "encounters the keen saber of the Sikh" or "stands a shivering sentry on the bleak ramparts of Quebec". He notes with surprise the absence of blacks who, in the U.S., "almost always form a considerable portion of the destitute", but also notes the seeming absence of color prejudice in England.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶-ibid. p. 177.

⁴⁰⁷-ibid. p. 184.

⁴⁰⁸ibis. p. 194. "Speaking of negroes, recalls the looks of interest with which negro-sailors are regarded when they walk the Liverpool streets. In Liverpool indeed the negro steps with a prouder pace, and lifts his head like a man; for here, no such exaggerated feeling exists in respect to him, as in America. Three or four times, I encountered our black steward, dressed very handsomely, and walking arm in arm with a good-looking English woman.

The final element of the early Melville's evolution was to turn his attention from class ashore to the detailed investigation of hierarchy on a ship. Although there had been rumblings of mutiny, and an actual mutiny, in Typee and Omoo, and authoritarian captains in Mardi and in Redburn, Melville in White Jacket turns to the detailed anatomy of shipboard hierarchy, and its pseudo-sacred aura, as his main theme.

d. White-Jacket: The Pseudo-Sacred as the "Bunting" of Hierarchy

When Melville left Polynesia in 1844, he signed onto a U.S. navy frigate for the homebound voyage. White-Jacket (1850), Melville's last book prior to Moby Dick, recounted that experience. White-Jacket constituted Melville's first work in which concrete exploration of authority, discipline and revolt in the specific work situation of ordinary seamen was the focus and not (as in some of the earlier works) a side feature of a different theme. It appeared in the midst of a national controversy over the harsh discipline in the U.S. armed forces, particularly the navy, and its graphic portrayal of the realities of flogging in the navy prompted one Rear Admiral to say it belonged "on the desk of every member of Congress". Some historians credit the book with inspiring Congressional action to outlaw flogging; others are more circumspect.⁴⁰⁹

White-Jacket also took Melville beyond semi-autobiography into the politics of his own family⁴¹⁰. In 1842, Melville's cousin, Guert Gansevoort, had been an officer on the navy ship U.S.S. *Somers* when an alleged mutiny was discovered, leading to an unusual court martial at sea and the execution of the three main conspirators. Gansevoort was one of the officers on the court martial and had recommended the death penalty⁴¹¹; the incident became a national episode because one of the three men executed was the son of John Spencer, President Tyler's Secretary of War. The *Somers* incident influenced the writing of White-Jacket, and decades later of Billy Budd, the novel Melville was writing at the time of his death in 1891.

In New York, such a couple would have been mobbed in three minutes; and the steward would have been lucky to escape with whole limbs. Owing to the friendly reception extended to them, and the unwonted immunities they enjoy in Liverpool, the black cooks and stewards of American ships are very much attached to the place and like to make voyages to it." (pp. 194-195)

⁴⁰⁹-The reception of White Jacket, and the controversy over flogging, is discussed in Robertson-Lorant, op. cit. pp. 234-236.

⁴¹⁰-A discussion of the Somers episode, the meaning of White-Jacket, and the family politics of Melville and the Gansevoorts (the family of Melville's mother) is in Rogin, op. cit. pp. 79-101, and elsewhere.

⁴¹¹-Melville directly excoriates the navy court martial in Ch. 72 of White Jacket: "Here, then, is a Council of Ten and a Star Chamber indeed!" All quotes from White-Jacket, New York, 1979.

White-Jacket can be read as a portrayal of the social relations of modern labor in the microcosm of a warship, the *Neversink*, but so much of Melville's reportage focuses on the specific conditions and abuses of the U.S. navy that it is problematic to see White-Jacket as presenting a metaphor for society as a whole⁴¹², as Moby Dick does. White-Jacket lacks the quest element present in Mardi, Redburn, Moby Dick or, later, Pierre. Nevertheless, many of the "Melvillian" themes which have been analyzed previously receive further development.

White-Jacket is the book closest to Zola-like social reportage in Melville's oeuvre. At the same time, the pseudo-sacred, and its feudal sources, is strongly present. For the Fourth of July, the captain permits the crew to perform theatricals in the spirit of the holiday; the placard announcing them

"... was as if a Drury-Lane bill had been posted upon the London Monument..."⁴¹³

In a much more light-hearted anticipation of the deadly masquerade in Benito Cereno, the entire ship is transformed into a theatre. When Jack Chase pantomimes

"...that heart-thrilling scene...where Percy Royal-Mast rescues fifteen oppressed sailors from the watch-house, in the teeth of a posse of constables"⁴¹⁴

the crew goes wild and "all discipline seemed gone forever"; and only a black squall and a call of all hands to quarters puts an end to it. White-Jacket opines that "it is good, now and then, to shake off the iron yoke around our necks", and that the officers will relax a bit, but

"...Next morning the same old scene was enacted at the gang-way... the row of uncompromising-looking officers there assembled with the captain, to witness punishment--the same officers who had been so cheerily disposed over night..."⁴¹⁵

Melville thus uses impromptu theatre to underscore the more permanent theatre of hierarchy and subordination, reinforced with uniforms, ranks, ceremony⁴¹⁶ and

⁴¹²-Nevertheless, despite the focus on the navy, and the vast detail devoted to an "anthropology" of naval life at sea, in terms of rank, function, and tasks, there is a social microcosm present: "Wrecked on a desert shore, a man-of-war's crew could quickly found an Alexandria by themselves, and fill it up with the things which go to make up a capital." *ibid.* p. 75.

⁴¹³*ibid.* pp. 92-93.

⁴¹⁴*ibid.* p. 95.

⁴¹⁵*ibid.* p. 96. This scene, again, in emphasizing how role predominates over sentiment, anticipates the scene of Billy Budd's execution.

⁴¹⁶- "This naval etiquette is very much like the etiquette at the Grand Porte

violence. But behind this all-too real theatre, Melville finds the broader social reality; on the *Neversink* itself, the officers were quartered in a world apart:

"But the habitations of the living commodore and captain... were themselves almost as sealed volumes, and I passed them in hopeless wonderment, like a peasant before a prince's palace."⁴¹⁷

And these peasants are subject to quasi-feudal punishment: flogging.

"As a sailor, he shares in none of our civil immunities...For him our Revolution was in vain; to him our Declaration of Independence in a lie...Or will you say that a navy officer is a man, but that an American-born citizen, whose grandsire may have ennobled him by pouring out his blood at Bunker Hill...(in the navy)...thereby loses his manhood at the very time he most asserts it?"⁴¹⁸

The medieval overtones are recalled again as *White-Jacket*, in a port of call at Rio de Janeiro, compares the combativeness of the *Neversink's* crew with that of a nearby English crew:

"...in a sea tussle, these lantern-jawed varlets would have approved themselves as

of Constantinople, where, after washing the Sublime Sultan's feet, the Grand Vizier avenges himself on an Emir, who does the same office for him." (p. 164); "The general usages of the American Navy are founded upon the usages that prevailed in the Navy of monarchical England more than a century ago...And while both England and America have become greatly liberalized in the interval; while shore pomp in high places has come to be regarded by the more intelligent masses of men as belonging to the absurd, ridiculous and mock-heroic; while that most truly august of all the majesties of earth, the President of the United States, may be seen entering his residence with his umbrella under his arm, and no brass band or military guard at his heels...while this is the case, there still lingers in American men-of-war all the stilted etiquette and childish parade of the old-fashioned Spanish court of Madrid." (p. 167)

⁴¹⁷-*ibid.* p. 129. Later, Melville writes: "That the king, in the eye of the law, can do no wrong, is the well-known fiction of despotic states; but it has remained for the navies of Constitutional Monarchies and Republics to magnify this fiction, by indirectly extending it to all the quarter-deck subordinates..." (p. 221) and this is the reality underwritten by flogging. When the dapper Jack Chase persuades the Commodore to give the crew a day's liberty ashore in Rio (Ch. 54: "The People" are given "Liberty"), Chase cries out "I'm your tribune; I'm your Rienzi" (p. 229). Cola di Rienzi was a 14th century Roman insurrectionist who briefly overthrew the Roman nobility and established a short-lived republic.

⁴¹⁸-*ibid.* p. 145.-147. Chs. 33-36 begin the in-depth exposé of flogging.

slender Damascus blades, nimble and flexible; whereas these Britons would have been, perhaps, as sturdy broadswords. Yet every one remembers that story of Saladin and Richard trying their respective blades; how gallant Richard clove an anvil in twain, or something quite as ponderous, and Saladin elegantly severed a cushion; so that the two monarchs were even--each excelling in his own way-- though, unfortunately for my simile, in a patriotic point of view, Richard whipped Saladin's armies in the end."⁴¹⁹

The Commodore of the squadron, who presides over the fleet in Rio de Janeiro harbor, is "emperor of the whole oaken archipelago; yea, magisterial and magnificent as the Sultan of the Isles of Sooloo"⁴²⁰. To pass the time in port, the Commodore puts his ships through exercises

⁴¹⁹ibid. p. 164. Melville's notion of the medieval origins of the power relations he is analyzing also comes to the fore in the following passage: "The Lord Nelsons of the sea, though but Barons in the state, yet often-times prove more potent than their royal masters; and, at such scenes as Trafalgar--dethroning this emperor and that--enact on the ocean the proud part of mighty Richard Nevil, the king-making Earl of the land. And as Richard Nevil entrenched himself in his moated old man-of-war castle of Warwick, which, underground, was traversed with vaults, hewn out of the solid rock, and intricate as the wards of the old keys of Calais surrendered to Edward III; even so do these King-Commodores house themselves in their water-rimmed, cannon-sentried frigates, oaken dug, deck under deck, as cell under cell. As the old Middle-Age warders of Warwick, every night at curfew, patrolled the battlements, and dove down into the vaults to see that all lights were extinguished, even so do the master-at-arms and ship's corporals of a frigate perambulate all the decks of a man-of-war, blowing out all the tapers but those burning in the legalized battle-lanterns. Yea, in these things, so potent is the authority of these sea-wardens, that, although the almost the lowest subalterns in the ship, yet should they find the Senior Lieutenant himself sitting up late in his state-room...they would infallibly blow out the light under his very nose; nor durst that Grand-Vizier resent the indignity." (p. 290)

⁴²⁰-Later in the narrative, Melville analyzes the ceremony of remoteness by which the Commodore reinforces his power: "It may be thought that but little is seen of the Commodore in these chapters, and that, since he so seldom appears on the stage, he can not be so august a personage, after all.. But the mightiest potentates keep the most behind the veil. You might tarry in Constantinople a month, and never catch a glimpse of the Sultan. The Grand Lama of Thibet, according to some accounts, is never beheld by the people." (p. 291) This is a direct antecedent to his depiction of Ahab's "Guinea coast of solitary command" in Moby Dick.

"...even as so potent an emperor and Caesar to boot as the great Don of Germany, Charles the Fifth, was used to divert himself in his dotage by watching the springs and cogs of a long row of clocks";⁴²¹

commands are communicated by flag signals, and he he is

"far more regal than any descendant of Charlemagne, more haughty than any Mogul of the East, and almost mysterious and voiceless in his authority as the Great Spirit of the Five Nations"; "as for old Charles the Fifth, again, the gay-pranked, colored suits of cards were invented, to while away his dotage, even so, doubtless, must these pretty little signals of blue and red spotted bunting have been devised to cheer the old age of all Commodores."⁴²²

But behind all this pseudo-sacred fanfare of bunting is always the division of class between officers and men, repeatedly referred to as "the People". Rumors of a war with England sweep the fleet, received with great trepidation by the men, who know the carnage implied, and with enthusiasm by the officers, showing "the incurable antagonism in which they dwell", for

"...how were these officers to gain glory? How but by a distinguished slaughtering of their fellow-men. How were they to be promoted? How but over the buried heads of killed comrades and mess mates...It is known what joy the news of Bonaparte's sudden return from Elba created among crowds of British naval officers, who had previously been expecting to be sent ashore on half-pay"⁴²³.

But no passage in White-Jacket allows Melville to pull together all these strands like the ceremonial visit of Brazilian Emperor Don Pedro II to the Neversink⁴²⁴. The Emperor "came in a splendid barge, rowed by thirty African

⁴²¹ibid. p. 198.

⁴²²ibid.

⁴²³-ibid. pp. 212-213.

⁴²⁴-Melville's preoccupation with military pomp goes back to his earliest writings.

In 1847, he wrote a series of satirical sketches for the magazine Yankee Doodle which, when seen in a larger context, are remarkably pregnant with a central theme of his later work. These little-discussed youthful juvenalia, written immediately after the Mexican-American War, already show Melville's preoccupations with the pseudo-sacred as deflated symbols of military heroism.

The sketches are presented as "authentic anecdotes" about General Zachary Taylor, the Whig candidate for president in 1848, ostensibly to counter the current climate in which "unprincipled paragraphists daily perpetrate the most absurd stories wherewith to titillate public curiosity concerning him". The "fabular anecdotes" which Taylor "had seen in the

slaves", reclining "under a canopy of silk" of the national colors of Brazil; he was received by the Commodore "arrayed in his most resplendent coat and finest French epaulets". The Emperor's entourage of "Portuguese Barons, Marquises, Viscounts and Counts" flashed like "cones of crystallized salt". Next to these "lamp-lustres of Barons of Brazil" the Americans "looked like gilded tenpenny nails in their girdles". The Emperor

"wore a green dress-coat, with one regal morning star at the breast, and white pantaloons. In his chapeau was a single, bright, golden-hued feather of the Imperial Toucan fowl, a magnificent, omnivorous, broad-billed bandit bird of prey, native of Brazil. Its perch is on the loftiest trees, whence it looks down upon all humbler fowls, and, hawk-like, flies at their throats. The Toucan once formed part of the savage regalia of the Indian caciques of the country, and, upon the establishment of the empire, was symbolically retained by the Portuguese sovereigns."⁴²⁵

Here, in one image, Melville integrates the imperial pseudo-sacred, kingship, nature and the primitive.

An old marquis stands next to the emperor in the hot sun with his hat doffed, while the emperor wears his. But a "young New England tar" standing next to White Jacket points out that if

"yonder Emperor and I were to strip and jump overboard for a bath, it would be hard telling which was of the blood royal when we should once be in the water"⁴²⁶

papers had greatly scandalized him". Taylor gave "our esteemed correspondent" a written certificate that his writings are the "only true source" about his private life. "The correspondent" has had the certificate placed "in a brass frame cast from a captured Mexican forty-two brass shot".

"The correspondent" recounts the true stories. A Mexican shell with burning fuse falls at the feet of Taylor's horse, and he dismounts to pick it up before his "aghast officers", offering to light their cigars. Taylor, with "Cincinnatus-like simplicity", washes and mends his own clothes. A "mischevous young drummer boy" puts a tack on his saddle and he rides all day without noticing it. An ad is inserted for an exhibition of Taylor's pants at P.T. Barnum's American Museum. "The correspondent" goes on at absurd length about Taylor's appearance, also noting that he is "far from imitating a Brummellian precision and starchedness of cravat" and that the carelessness with which he wears his neck-handkerchief "in no respect approaches the studied artlessness of the Byronic bow". P.T. Barnum wrote asking for his "private tobacco box, sending a tortoise-shell one as a substitute."

⁴²⁵-ibid. p. 239.

⁴²⁶-ibid.

A scuffle breaks out in the rigging as the sailors take turns puncturing the pretenses of the Emperor:

"...Don Pedro, eh? What's that, after all, but plain Peter--reckoned a shabby name in my country. Damn me, White-Jacket, I wouldn't call my dog Peter!...Ay, you timber-head, you, I'm Don Pedro II, and by good rights you ought to be a main-top-man here, with your fist in a tar-bucket!"⁴²⁷

Jack Chase intercedes to tell the sailors to stop disputing among themselves who among them is the usurped emperor:

"...for, look you, we all wear crowns, from our cradles to our graves, and though in double-darbies in the brig, the Commodore himself can't unking us"⁴²⁸

In his exposé of flogging, Melville asks how the armed forces of a republic came "to be ruled by such a Turkish code". They do not originate with "that arch democrat Thomas Jefferson", but come from Britain, and not merely from Britain, but from the Britain of the restoration of the Stuarts. Thus, after so many allusions to emperors, kings, and the medieval origins of pseudo-sacred ceremony, Melville brings his analysis of military hierarchy back to concrete history. The articles originated

"...when the Puritan Republic had yielded to a monarchy restored; when a hangman Judge Jeffreys sentenced a world champion like Algernon Sidney to the block; when one of a race--by some deemed accursed by God--even a Stuart, was on the throne; and a Stuart, also, was at the head of the Navy, as Lord High Admiral. One, the son of a King beheaded for encroachments on the rights of his people, and the other, his own brother, afterward a king, James II., who was hurled from the throne for his tyranny. This is the origin of the Articles of War; and it carries an unmistakable clew to their despotism."⁴²⁹

Melville also points out that it was in "democratic Cromwell's time" that British fleets first "struck terror" into the hearts of "France, Spain, Portugal and Holland, and the corsairs of Algiers and the Levant".

As a final insult, as the Neversink is approaching home port, Captain Claret orders that all crew members have their hair cut and their beards trimmed, "Such a Bartholemew's Day and Sicilian Vespers of assassinated beards!". After months at sea,

"...What with long whiskers and venerable beards, then, of every variety of cut--Charles the Fifth's and Aurelian's--and endless goatees and imperials; and what

⁴²⁷-ibid. p. 240.

⁴²⁸-ibid. p. 241.

⁴²⁹-ibid. pp. 303-304.

with abounding locks, our crew seemed a company of Merovingians or Long-haired kings, mixed with savage Lombards or Longobardi, so called from their lengthy beards."⁴³⁰

Feudal and medieval imagery runs through Melville's work to the end. In "Benito Cereno", the slave ship is presented as a floating monastery and Benito Cereno himself is portrayed as a ghost of Charles the Fifth. In Clarel, it dominates the book. It might be argued that in White-Jacket it plays a more figurative role, merely emphasizing the arbitrary nature of the ship's hierarchical discipline. But in the course of Melville's work, over time, it becomes clear that it serves an indispensable function. In order to understand the pseudo-sacred, in short, it is necessary to understand the sacred.

⁴³⁰-ibid. p. 363.

PART II: THE MERCURIAL ARC OF NEGATION WITHOUT COLLECTIVITY, 1851-1856: From Pierre to The Confidence Man

Preface

Part II of this study analyzes the elements of Melville's partial synthesis of supercession, Moby-Dick, as they unravel in the 1851-1856 period from Pierre to The Confidence Man.

The basic argument flows from the concepts developed in Moby-Dick. Most are retained, with the singular exception of collective rebellion as the hint of an alternative, linked to the "antemosaic cosmic man", Queequeg et al. In this context, the middle-class rovers and rebels of Melville's first six books, Tommo, Taji, Redburn, White-Jacket and Ishmael, who always exist in some meaningful relationship to mutiny, are transformed into isolated "angels of negation" such as Pierre and Bartleby, until all fades into masquerade in The Confidence Man.

I call "negation" the stance of the isolated individual in bourgeois society, as it is elaborated in political thought from Hobbes to Hegel. As discussed in the section on Moby-Dick⁴³¹, negation emerges from the suppression of the "cosmobiology" of the high medieval and early modern thinkers such as Lull, Paracelsus and Kepler by the 17th century "English moment" that is, by the first phase of the Enlightenment. What separates these earlier thinkers from Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Newton, Boyle, Hooke, Petty, and Mun (as later from Smith and Hume) is the loss of a "hylozoic" totality in which life and imagination did not appear separated from the physical world, but rather as integral to it. This was the cosmobiological world which Melville brought to life, in the world of work, in Moby Dick, in contrast to Transcendentalist nature mysticism. In the new natural world of atomism, most clearly represented by Newton's law of universal gravitation, the living totality of a Paracelsus or a Kepler (however flawed) was distanced into a representation of a dead, uniform space and time in which life, and imagination, can only appear as contingent. As Hegel himself said: "In the transition from Boehme to Bacon, there is a great step forward in precision, and a great step backward in sensuousness." The cosmobiology of Moby-Dick overthrows, among other things, the deflated, de-cosmized universe of Bacon and Newton.

The result of the 17th century atomist deflation of the living totality of the Renaissance and Radical Reformation was the creation of the separate domains of culture and nature, what the Germans would later call Geist and Natur. It extended into the natural world the separation already made in society between the atomized

⁴³¹-cf. pp. 103ff above.

individual and any collective identity, by also separating the individual from nature. The antagonism between this individual and society is the problematic of bourgeois culture from the mid-17th century to the French Revolution and its ideological aftermath, German Idealism⁴³². How, beginning with the assumption of society as an atomized mass, could the individual be "reconciled" with the universal?

German social thought from Kant to Hegel modified this problematic. For Kant, the possibility of perceiving the empirical world of space and time had as its presupposition (Vorraussetzung) certain a priori categories of the mind. Hegel radicalized this approach by arguing that in empirical sense certainty itself, (essential, the world of data in the philosophy of John Locke) universal concepts were already there, immanently, and had to be there for the world to exist. The movement from Kant to Hegel is thus the movement from a "transcendental" to an "immanent" understanding of the assumptions for any knowledge of the empirical world. In the full systematization of a theory of world history departing from this shift, Hegel still accepted the de-cosmized natural world of Galileo and Newton as a separate reality. Nature for Hegel was "boring", the realm of repetition, in which the self-movement of the Absolute Spirit had no place. It is in this sense that it is correct to say that Hegel was the culmination of bourgeois philosophy, because the full self-development of the absolute took place exclusively in the realm of culture, cut off from nature by the 17th century scientific revolution. The dialectic of Hegel, the "algebra of revolution", is still a dialectic of negation, although already a philosophy of society and human realization. The summum of history for Hegel was the "labor" of the Prussian monarch, who "labored universally", and of the Prussian civil service, which reconciled the individual and the state in bourgeois society. As it was argued earlier, negation, whether in its Transcendentalist or its Hegelian form, is the world outlook par excellence of the state civil servant.

Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845) conceptually end the era of negation by arguing that all previous materialisms, whether those of the ancients, of the Enlightenment or of Marx's immediate predecessor Feuerbach, do not understand the object as "sensuous human activity", as practice, as subjectivity. They do not understand activity as objective. With these formulations of Marx "universal labor" passes from the "negation" sphere of the state civil servant to the human labor process in nature, indivisibly individual and collective. While Herman Melville was undoubtedly unaware of them when he wrote Moby Dick⁴³³, his "phenomenology" of the collective labor process, in its natural and social dimensions, is counterposed to the individual viewpoints of Ahab or Ishmael, and is part of the uncanny parallel between his outlook and Marx's.

⁴³²-Melville was aware of this current through the impact of Kant on American Transcendentalism, although there is no evidence that he ever read the philosopher who culminates the tradition of negation, Hegel.

⁴³³-Indeed, very few people were aware of them until their popularization after World War II.

Negation, then, means not merely the individual in the Hobbesian war of all against all but also the rebellion of the middle-class individual shaped by the earlier separation of the world into nature and culture, the state civil servant, the atomized individual of culture. But coming out of the failures of 1848 on both sides of the Atlantic were individuals of negation who could no longer connect that negation with any social vision, and such individuals gave birth to modernism. Herman Melville was one of them. The "mercurial arc of negation" referred to in the title of this section is the problematic of the rebellious man of culture cut off from any social base.

Ch. XI: From the Cosmic King to the Isolated Man of Negation

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

Moby-Dick

Melville is a writer of dispossession. The theme of the pseudo-sacred, the downward movement from the Holy Roman Empire and the medieval warrior class, to Napoleon and the revolutionary era, to the era of mass consumption of pseudo-aristocratic luxury goods was stamped directly onto his own life in the starkest way. Melville's grandfathers on both sides had been heroes of the American Revolution; he was descended, on his father's side, from Scottish nobility; on his mother's side, from established upstate Dutch patroons. His father, the Boston merchant Allan Melville, had spent time in Paris, and became a New York importer of French luxury items and fashion, even as he disapproved of the dandyish "coxcomb" clientele he had to accommodate. His business collapsed and, a broken man, he "died raving" in a coma in 1832, when Melville was 13.

Melville's dispossession is thus first of all dispossession from the men of action of the American Revolution, i.e. his immediate ancestors, and the possibility of action within his own present, in terms of the kind of liberal individualism that was the legacy of the heroic bourgeois tradition⁴³⁴. Already in Omoo his narrator

⁴³⁴-Melville's grandfather, Thomas Melville, was a veteran of the revolution who, by the time of his death in 1832, became a local character in Boston,

is singled out, among the crew, as a man of education and therefore a potential source of trouble, set apart by his social origins from the working-class sea-salts; the symbolic-allegorical level of Mardi, while greatly expanding the theme of cosmic kingship, myth and revolution, and actually dealing with explosive social situations in Europe and the U.S., shields Melville from a stark confrontation with the fact that for his time, unlike that of his grandfathers, real action is collective and class-based: the "ugly revolution". In Redburn, and then in White-Jacket, and finally Moby Dick, Melville tackles this problem head-on; then, with Pierre, retreats from it (with the exceptions of "Benito Cereno" and the posthumous Billy Budd) definitively.

But Melville's dispossession is also from his own father, from the impact of the latter's death, in insanity and personal impotence, before his own eyes, just as Melville entered adolescence. While it is far from the intention of this study to venture into any extended psychoanalytic probing of the sources of Melville's work, it is noteworthy that many of Melville's books contain lavish descriptions of luxury goods, often French, and that the problem of kings and warriors, themselves often French, equally exercised Melville until the end of his life. Also striking is the fact that many of Melville's narrators and protagonists are men of whom it can be said that they have internalized weak father imagos and who find themselves dealing with, or discussing, overwhelming men of action.

Dispossession from the father, with direct allusions to the death of Allan Melville, is a direct theme in Redburn, Pierre, "Jimmy Rose" and The Confidence Man.

Redburn tells the tale of Wellingborough Redburn, son of a deceased "importer in Broad-street", "a gentleman of one of the first families of America", who had himself sailed to Europe "on important business" and who regaled his sons with sea stories. In the well-appointed middle-class home in which Redburn grew up,

"...we had several oil-paintings and rare old engravings of my father's, which he himself had bought in Paris"⁴³⁵

There were also "French portfolios of colored prints", "pictures of Versailles", old books printed in London, Paris and Leipzig⁴³⁶, and a glass ship mantlepiece, of

where he was the last person to wear the clothes of the revolutionary era.

⁴³⁵-H. Melville, Redburn: His First Voyage. New York, 1957, p. 4.

⁴³⁶-*ibid.* p. 5. Six years later, in "Jimmy Rose", a similar story recalling the fate of Allan Melville, the bankrupt Jimmy Rose's house is described as follows:

"The cellars were full of great grim, arched bins of blackened brick, looking like the ancient tombs of Templars...Dim with longevity, the very covering of the walls still preserved the patterns of the times of Louis XIV...We knew such paper could only have come from Paris--genuine Versailles paper--the sort of paper that might have hung in Marie Antoinette's boudoir...in an

French manufacture, La Reine⁴³⁷. But "hard times" forced Redburn to ship out of New York as a common seaman:

"how many times my own father had said he had crossed the ocean; and I never dreamed of such a thing as doubting him, for I always thought of him a marvelous being, infinitely purer and greater than I was, who could not possibly do wrong, or say an untruth. Yet now, how could I credit it, that he, my own father, whom I so well remembered, had ever sailed out of these Narrows, and sailed right through the sky and water line, and gone to England, and France, Liverpool and Marseilles. It was too wonderful to believe."⁴³⁸

Redburn reveals how directly autobiographical a creation of Melville he is:

"But I must not think of those delightful days, before my father became a bankrupt, and died..."⁴³⁹

Redburn's American Revolutionary ancestors are far in the past as the ship passes the coast of Wales:

"...And did a real queen with a diadem reign over that very land I was looking at?...And then I thought of an ancestor of mine, who had fought against the ancestor of this queen at Bunker Hill."⁴⁴⁰

Whether Redburn's account corresponds with any exactness to Melville's real experiences⁴⁴¹, it is as powerful and concise a presentation of dispossession from an historical and family legacy, in the new industrial and proletarian reality, as anything in his work, and thus bears close scrutiny. Redburn uses the guide book of his father's 1808 visit, filled with the genteel references of a travelling merchant gentleman:

overarboled garden cage, sat a grand series of gorgeous illustrations of the natural history of the most imposing Parisian-looking birds; parrots, macaws, and peacocks, but mostly peacocks. Real Prince Esterhazies of birds; all rubies, diamonds, and Orders of the Golden Fleece." (Library of America, 1984, p. 1281.)

⁴³⁷-This was the name of the French warship in which Melville was briefly imprisoned for his role in the mutiny described in Omoo.

⁴³⁸-*ibid.* pp. 32-33.

⁴³⁹-*ibid.* p. 34.

⁴⁴⁰-*ibid.* p. 119.

⁴⁴¹-In any case, both Melville's father and Melville himself did make trips to Liverpool.

"...and the very thought of your father's having been here before you, but carries with it the reflection that, he then knew you not, nor cared for you one whit"; "...So vivid was the impression of his having been here...that I felt like running on, and overtaking him around the Town Hall..."⁴⁴²

But the book's gentility is of little use to a newly-proletarianized son, as Redburn understands, more than literally:

"...no more fit to guide me about the town, than the map of Pompeii...this precious book was next to useless. Yes, the thing that had guided the father, could not guide the son...nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books. Old ones tell us the ways our fathers went...to how few is the old guide book now a clue!"⁴⁴³

The whole experience leaves Redburn feeling

"... somewhat akin to the Eastern traveler standing on the brink of the Dead Sea".⁴⁴⁴

Pierre presents a second Melvillian protagonist dispossessed of a heritage rooted in the American revolutionary era. The upstate New York family mansion where Pierre grows up was near the site of a battle with Indians in which Pierre's paternal great-grandfather had been killed. During the revolution, his grandfather had defended a nearby fort against "Indians, Tories and Regulars". The "ciphers of three Indian kings" were on the Glendinning's deed to their land, as "the aboriginal and only conveyancers of those noble woods and plains"⁴⁴⁵. Like Redburn in search of his father's Liverpool, Pierre associates this heritage with monuments; he

"fondly hoped to have a monopoly of glory in capping the fame-column, whose tall shaft had been erected by his noble sires"

though, Melville's narrator points out

"how unadmonished was our Pierre by that foreboding and prophetic lesson taught, not less by Palmyra's quarries, than by Palmyra's ruins".⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴²-ibid. p. 148.

⁴⁴³-ibid. pp. 150-151.

⁴⁴⁴-ibid. p. 152; an interesting anticipation of Melville's actual trip to the Middle East in 1856-57, when he did visit the Dead Sea, part of the material providing the basis of the epic poem Clarel (1876); cf. below.

⁴⁴⁵-ibid. p. 26. Melville, as in Moby Dick, is saying here, against the pretensions of his own background and social milieu, that American aboriginals are the sole real aristocracy.

⁴⁴⁶-ibid. p. 28.

From these memories, Pierre forges an aristocratic identity. In America, the "sacred Past hath no fixed statues", and thus America substitutes for artifice "the divine virtue of a natural law". Since Melville's novel ultimately ridicules these pretensions (and thereby the pretensions of his own family), he underscores their pseudo-sacred character:

"...the magnificence of names must not mislead us as to the humility of things...if Richmond, and St. Albans, and Grafton, and Portland, and Buccleuch, be names almost as old as England herself, the present Dukes of those names stop in their own genuine pedigrees at Charles II...In England the Peerage is kept alive by incessant restorations and creations...Beyond Charles II. very few indeed...are the present titled English families which can trace anything like a direct unvitiated blood-descent from the thief knights of the Norman."⁴⁴⁷

Pierre's own internal father imago is another matter. Holding up the youthful, debonair portrait of his father with its "strange relativeness, reciprocalness, and transmittedness...(with)...the living daughter's face" Pierre resolves to break with the pseudo-sacred objects, (with Egyptian overtones), connected to his father's memory:

"...Hitherto I have hoarded up mementoes and monuments of the past; been a worshiper of all heirlooms; a fond filer away of letters, locks of hair, bits of ribbon, flowers...but it is forever over now! If any memory shall henceforth be dear, I will not mummy it in a visible memorial for every passing beggar's dust to gather on. Love's museum is vain and foolish as the Catacombs, where grinning apes and abject lizards are embalmed..."⁴⁴⁸

Pierre's father had died when Pierre was twelve. Like Melville's father, and like Redburn's, Pierre's father had died raving⁴⁴⁹, in this case calling "My daughter! My daughter!", to the incomprehension of the gathered family. Hidden in his closet, Pierre kept a portrait of his father as a young man "unentangled...gaily ranging up and down in the world", in contrast to the portrait of a "middle-aged, married man", possessing "all the nameless and slightly portly tranquilities" in the salon. The portrait was associated, in family legend, with the time of Pierre's father's alleged dalliance with a beautiful aristocratic refugee from the French Revolution.

In Pierre's young manhood,

⁴⁴⁷ibid. pp. 30-31.

⁴⁴⁸-ibid. pp. 230-231.

⁴⁴⁹-In the case of Pierre's father, at least, there was no bankruptcy.

"sometimes in the mystical, outer quietude of the long country nights; either when the hushed mansion was banked round by the thick-fallen December snows, or banked round by the immovable white August moonlight"⁴⁵⁰

Learning from Isabel of his idealized father's apparent incest, Pierre burns the portrait:

"Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past; and since the Future is one blank to all; therefore, twice-disinherited Pierre stands untrammelled his ever-present self!--free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end!"⁴⁵¹

But such destruction of the past is not so easily achieved, and much later, when Pierre is living the impoverished existence of a Bohemian writer in New York, he uses the "rusty old bedstead" of his grandfather:

"...On that very camp-bedstead...the glorious old mild-eyed and warrior-hearted General had slept, and but waked to buckle his knight-making sword by his side, for it was noble knighthood to be slain by grand Pierre..."⁴⁵²

But Pierre, too, is a "warrior", "Woe and Scorn and Want" his foes.

"...But ah, Pierre, Pierre, when thou goest to that bed, how humbling the thought, that thy most extended length measures not the proud six feet four of thy grand John of Gaunt sire!"⁴⁵³

The estrangement from the world of the father cripples the formation of an autonomous self. The cosmic king slips into the crippled father imago, as an exaggerated and unrealizable counter-ideal to personal impotence. In *Moby Dick*, Ahab is repeatedly associated with Egyptian references. As Pierre sinks farther and farther⁴⁵⁴, Melville again invokes ancient Egypt:

"...Ten million things were as yet uncovered to Pierre. The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king. Yet now, foresooth,

⁴⁵⁰-ibid. p. 110.

⁴⁵¹-ibid. p. 232.

⁴⁵²ibid. pp. 306-307.

⁴⁵³-ibid. p. 307.

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"...Deep, deep, and still deep and deeper we must go, if we would find out the heart of a man; descending into which is 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."

because Pierre began to see through the first superficiality of the world, he fondly weens he has come to the unlayered surface. But, far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. To its axis, the world being nothing but superinduced superficialities. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid--and no body is there!--appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man!⁴⁵⁵

This passage certainly goes beyond the kind of pronouncements usually expressed in the 19th century sentimental novel, of which Pierre is in part a parody. It is articulated by the narrator, and was perhaps Melville's view by 1851. It looks ahead to "Bartleby" and The Confidence Man. It looks back to Ahab, who at least thought that "pasteboard masks" might conceal "that inscrutable thing I chiefly hate". Melville's use of Egyptian imagery at times hearkens back, even if negatively, to cosmic kingship, or to living poetry, as in the Memnon Stone passage of Pierre, as if to say that in order to be dispossessed, one must have once possessed something, but here, it is the void. It is the void of a man who has been dispossessed of the world of his father, which is to say the love of his father, through which a self is constituted.

The man with the weak or absent father cannot break with the fantasy of omnipotence associated with his mother. A break with that free-floating, untested omnipotence through some specific but vulnerable action, which would make him a mature adult (Hamlet's "setting the world aright"), is blocked by the belief, which everything in his experience has taught him, that to be an adult, (i.e. a person free from ungrounded fantasies of omnipotence whose inseparable underside is worldly impotence, a person free of the malady of all the Bohemians surrounding Pierre), is to become impotent, like his father. In the assessment of such an individual, the world seems to offer three possibilities: the apparently omnipotent Charlemagne; the dying, raving, bankrupt, discredited businessman; or finally the Transcendentalist, pantheist writer, omnipotent in fantasy, seemingly understanding the laws by which he is drowning, but unable to swim⁴⁵⁶, i.e. a merely contemplative self. This latter self exists between the false poles of defiant anger and melancholy, projected into the "cosmic king" and the fallen father, respectively. It is the unhappy consciousness, i.e. it is Pierre. The fourth alternative, potent individual action in the world, does not exist for him; it is blurred over by the impotent father imago. It is the "hidden fourth" underneath the inverted triangle of cosmic king, impotent father and contemplative self. For this

⁴⁵⁵-ibid. p. 323.

⁴⁵⁶-Marx speaks (in The Holy Family) of the well-known case of the German philosopher who imagined that if he fell into the water he would not drown because he did not "accept the law of gravity".

consciousness, "appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of man"⁴⁵⁷, as Melville said in the "mummy/self" passage; it is as lost as Belzoni abandoned by his guides in the Great Pyramid⁴⁵⁸. Everything in Melville's past told him that meaningful action was the American Revolutionary tradition, which for historical reasons was practically dead to him, and, in his early work up to Moby-Dick, the possible mutinous action of the "castaways, mariners and renegades" which, by the time of Pierre, had ceased to exercise his imagination. It is curious, and significant, that in all of Melville's works up to Moby-Dick, where there are portrayals of potent men of action, there are no real women, and where, as in Pierre, there are real women, there are no potent men, except in the "family romance" and historical memory. Melville was never able to put these two things together, either in his life or in his novels, but his (semi)-victory was in creating the characters and the narrators through which he was able to distance himself from Ishmael and Pierre even as he said: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!". The act of being able to write the books was Melville's triumph over his (for him) insoluble practical situation.

Melville's problematic was to find a self which would cohere, in his own contemporary terms, with the traditions of his family. He had, after his father's death, personally, and after 1848, politically, been attempting to solve that problem in a social and political context where his major relationship to the family past was that of discontinuity. The problematic, for him, was located in a devolution of power, the desiccation of kingship and military prowess as he traced it from Charlemagne and the Knights Templar to Charles V to Napoleon to the heroes of the American Revolution portrayed in Pierre or Israel Potter, to the Transcendentalist moi absolu; what we have called "the pseudo-sacred".

Melville inherited a very specific place in history from his family. The intrusion of the "ugly revolution", in the form of the new industrialism and the new proletarians or sub-proletarians who are portrayed in his crews, in the Liverpool scenes of Redburn, in the street scenes of Pierre's arrival in New York, or the London scenes of Israel Potter, or finally in short stories such as "Rich Man's Crumbs" and "The Tartarus of Maids", is what stands between Melville and the eighteenth century revolutions. The era of revolutions and the Napoleonic wars is the setting for Israel Potter, "Benito Cereno", "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" and Billy Budd, and it is strongly present, as indicated, in the background

⁴⁵⁷-ibid. p. 323; cf. analysis above.

⁴⁵⁸-Melville several times invoked the name of Belzoni, the 19th century Italian explorer who was abandoned in the catacombs of the Great Pyramid by his Arab guides, to convey a sense of terror and total disorientation. : cf. Typee, p. 75; Mardi, p. 1039; "I and my Chimney" in The Piazza Tales, p. 1311. Recall also Melville's reaction to actually seeing the pyramids in 1857: "I shudder at the idea of the ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah. Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful."

of Redburn, Pierre, and "Jimmy Rose". The red flag of contemporary European revolution, from 1848 to the Paris Commune, is present in Mardi, Moby Dick, and Clarel.

Nevertheless, Melville shared this separation with everyone of his class. What made him virtually unique among the American Renaissance writers of the 1850's was extreme downward social mobility⁴⁵⁹. Thus Melville was personally situated to see, more clearly than anyone, the devolutionary historical movement from the Knights Templar to Versailles to Napoleon to the "coxcomb" luxury fashion of his own time. (The role of consumer commodities in his writing will be analyzed momentarily.) This was, for him, the devolved "mummy" he was trying to unwrap, in order to find a self. The character of Benito Cereno was also a stand-in for Melville's father, a weak, debilitated man who still embodied a faded tradition of heroism, drawn heavily from the life of Charles V, (a figure who also fascinated Melville because of his monastic withdrawal from cosmic kingship in 1554). Death had deprived Melville of any possibility of ever forming a positive self in relationship to his own father, and over time he developed a family romance in which he attempted to re-write his father's fate in order to exist positively himself. That family romance centered on figures such as Charlemagne, as he called the Mt. Greylock he saw from his Pittsfield, Massachusetts home, and which he used, as has been shown, in Pierre, Israel Potter, and "The Piazza", and who re-emerges as Charlemont in The Confidence Man. It also centered on monuments, buildings, and mountains to which Melville transposed the paternal "Charlemagne" imago, as in the case of Mt. Greylock. Melville's fascination with captivity and entombment in some of these buildings, like Pierre in prison, Israel Potter in the Templar chambers, or like Bartleby in the law office, in "Petra", or finally the New York Tombs, like, as Melville said on several occasions, Belzoni abandoned by his Arab guides in the Great Pyramid, was the desire for autonomous rebirth into a positive self of his own.

In addition to Redburn and Pierre, the decline and fall of Allan Melville are recounted on three other occasions in Melville's work. In the short story "Jimmy Rose", the bankrupt businessman, unlike Melville's father, (and Redburn's, and Pierre's), does not die insane, and reappears many years later to live off the charity of his well-to-do friends. In the story of Charlemont in The Confidence Man, Melville gives his father-imago an even gentler fate. The choice of the name "Charlemont" ("mont" is the French word for mountain) hearkens back both to Charlemagne, and to Mt. Greylock, which, as indicated earlier, he called "Charlemagne" in various writings. Charlemont was a "young merchant of French

459-"...There was a weight of wealth and aristocracy behind Melville much greater than even that behind Hawthorne, and he had suffered a much sharper personal experience of family decline. His mother's forebears had been good brewers in Albany from the era of Harmen Van Gansevoort, who had come to this country sometime before 1660, and whose descendants had given the name to Gansevoort Street in New York, at the foot of which, ironically, was the wharf where Melville worked for the government." in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, London 1972, p. 374.

descent" living in St. Louis. At the age of 29, a sudden personality change came over him, and shortly thereafter he was declared a bankrupt. He disappeared, and reappeared nine years later, having regained a fortune.⁴⁶⁰

But actual stories based on Allan Melville's bankruptcy and delirious death are only the beginning of his transposed presence in Melville's writings. Luxury commodities are everywhere. Already in Typee, he writes:

"...(Kolory)...often carried about with him what seemed to me the half of a broken war-club. It was swathed around with ragged bits of white tappa, and the upper part, which was intended to represent a human head, was embellished with a strip of scarlet cloth of European manufacture. It required little observation to discover that this strange object was revered as a god."⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰-For the complex context of the Charlemont story, cf. the analysis of The Confidence Man in Ch. XVIII. In The Confidence Man, both the story of Charlemont and the story of China Aster, are related to the bankruptcy of Melville's father. As Rogin, in one of the most trenchant analyses of The Confidence Man, put it:

"The ur-story underneath The Confidence Man is the bankruptcy, madness and death of Allan Melville. He is the missing person behind the novel's confidence games...The Confidence-Man offers neither the actual history of Allan Melville, nor a novelistic account of his life, but alludes to his fate in fragments. Allan Melville's life makes the fictional fragments of The Confidence Man whole". (Rogin, op. cit. p. 249)

⁴⁶¹-Typee, p. 206. Later in the same book, Melville directly links the destruction of the Polynesians to the class of luxury consumption, and to charities, in a way that anticipates the "Seminole Widow and Orphan Fund" of The Confidence Man: "How little do some of these poor islanders comprehend when they look around them, that no inconsiderable part of their disasters originate in certain tea-party excitements, under the influence of which benevolent-looking gentlemen in white cravats solicit alms, and old ladies in spectacles, and young ladies in sober russet low gowns, contribute sixpences towards the creation of a fund, the object of which is to ameliorate the spiritual condition of the Polynesians, but whose end has almost invariably been to accomplish their temporal destruction!" (p. 230) Further inventories of commodities, in comparably fetishistic contexts, are mentioned in Typee and Omoo on pp. 40, 230, 437, 479, 492, 496, 507, 611 and 639-640. The fetishistic elements is also present in Mardi (pp. 734-735) "Samoa and Annatoo trying on coats and pantaloons, shirts and drawers, and admiring themselves in the little mirror panned in the bulkhead...Among other things, came to light brass jewelry, Rag fair gewgaws and baubles a plenty...Annatoo, bedecking herself like a tragedy queen: one blaze of brass.:"

Since Melville, a few lines earlier, had called Kolory "a sort of Knight Templar", it is clear that the derivation of the pseudo-sacred from the warrior class was on his mind from the his earliest work.

The French luxury commodities of Redburn's youthful memories have already been mentioned. They turn up in White-Jacket as well, again with military associations:

"...This gentleman was called the Commodore's secretary. He was a remarkably urbane and polished man; with a very graceful exterior, and looked much like an Ambassador Extraordinary from Versailles...His cot-boy used to entertain the sailors with all manner of stories about the silver-keyed flutes and flageolets, fine oil paintings, morocco bound volumes, Chinese chess-men, gold shirt-buttons, enameled pencil cases, extraordinary fine French boots...embroidered vests, incense-burning sealing-wax, alabaster statuettes of Venus and Adonis, tortoise shell-shell snuff boxes, inlaid toilet-cases, ivory-handled hair brushes and mother-of-pearl combs, and a hundred other luxurious appendages scattered about this magnificent secretary's state-room."⁴⁶²

Cologne water is a particularly common expression of luxury consumer goods in Melville's writings. In the scene in Moby Dick when Stubb finds the ambergris in the stench of the rotting whale carcass, Melville hits upon it as an example of the inseparable nature of the putrid and perfume:

"...Now that the incorruption of this most fragrant ambergris should be found in the heart of such decay; is this nothing?...And likewise call to mind that saying of Paracelsus about what it is that maketh the best musk. Also forget not the strange fact that of all things of ill-savor, Cologne water, in its rudimental manufacturing stages, is the worst."⁴⁶³

Finally, in Israel Potter, when Israel is staying with Benjamin Franklin in the Latin Quarter, he sees reflected in his mirror

"two bouquets of flowers inserted in pretty vases of porcelain; second, one cake of white soap; third, one cake of rose-colored soap...fourth, one wax candle; fifth, one china tinder box; sixth, one bottle of Eau de Cologne; seventh, one paper of loaf sugar...eighth, one silver teaspoon; ninth, one class tumbler; tenth, one glass decanter of cool pure water; eleventh, one sealed bottle containing a richly hued liquid, and marked 'Otard'."⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶²-White-Jacket, p. 21. See also p. 47 and p. 56.

⁴⁶³-Moby Dick, Berkeley 1979, p. 419. Other references to Cologne water are on pp. 381, 415, and 425.

⁴⁶⁴-Israel Potter, Library of America edition, 1984, p. 481.

Already the fact that Israel sees these commodities reflected in a mirror conjures up Marx's theory of the inverted world, in which "commodities appear to buy human beings", but that, in this particular context, seems far from Melville's immediate intent. In none of the examples cited above do these listings have any close relationship to the "plot" or even, in most cases, to the characters associated with them, except to situate them socially. In the early South Sea works, of course, it is an easy step from the fetishism of the Polynesians to the fetishism of commodities generally; but in the later books, such an association is no longer operative. Melville is not quite yet a modernist writer in which the self-movement of consumer goods begin to replace human agency altogether, and yet, as indicated earlier, his very special life circumstances made him unusually sensitive to this reality long before such dehumanization had taken over the novel generally. The ultimate commodified human being is the dandy; the dandy responds to the generalization of commodified appearance by making his own aristocratic appearance "unique", and is thereby dominated by consumption as much as the most middle-brow consumer. The more commodities invade daily life, the more they seem to take on an agency of their own, as subjectivity is emptied out. As he discovers the depth of this emptying out in *Bartleby*, the narrator of that story remembers

"the bright silks and sparkling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi of Broadway, and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist"⁴⁶⁵

and it is the "bright silks" in "gala trim" which seem to have appropriated the life force of the pallid copyist, entombed in the dreariness of the "Petra" of Wall Street on a Sunday. The life that Melville could not live, under the weight of his fallen father imago, was transformed into the mute assemblies of French luxury goods that are scattered through his writings.

Melville turned to cosmic kingship to fill that father imago with an alternative to the grey reality of *Bartleby*⁴⁶⁶ and the reality of men "tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks" of the opening scene of *Moby Dick*. While cosmic kingship led him to ancient Egypt, the empire of Alexander, the crusader king St-Louis, the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V and Versailles, its icon par excellence for Melville was Charlemagne. Charlemagne represents for Melville the unitary sacred prior to the pseudo-sacred already present in Charles V and Versailles, not to mention Napoleon and "Louis Blanc or Louis Devil"⁴⁶⁷.

⁴⁶⁵- "Bartleby the Scrivener", *ibid.* p. 652.

⁴⁶⁶-Already, in early adolescence, Melville's father's death had forced him to leave school and use a family connection to obtain a clerical job in a bank.

⁴⁶⁷- "Or do the minster-lamps that burn before the tomb of Charlemagne, show more of pomp, than all the stars, that blaze above the shipwrecked mariner?" (*Mardi* p. 855); "But far more regal than any descendant of Charlemagne, more haughty than any Mogul of the East...the Commodore

Charlemagne, in addition to specific citations amid other invocations of cosmic kingship, is transmuted in Melville's work into mountains⁴⁶⁸, and through mountains into the pyramids, ruins, monuments and buildings which are a stand-in for the cosmic king and through him, for Melville's father. Already in Moby Dick, Ahab, a king of "no robed investiture", had said, in the doubloon scene,

"There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all grand and lofty things; look here--three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab..."⁴⁶⁹

The first explicit connection between Charlemagne, mountains and monuments is made in the dedication of Pierre, published in 1852. Melville had left New York to live with his family in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in the Berkshires, within sight of Mt. Greylock, the most dramatic peak in the area. Pierre is dedicated to

"Greylock's Most Excellent Majesty...Majesty is all around us here in Berkshire, sitting as in a grand Congress of Vienna of majestical hilltops...I do not know how his Imperial Purple Majesty...will receive the dedication of my own poor solitary ray."⁴⁷⁰

A similar reference occurs in the 1853 story "The Piazza"⁴⁷¹. The narrator adds a piazza to his house facing Mt. Greylock:

deigns not to verbalize his commands; they are imparted by signal." (White-Jacket, p. 198); in Clarel, the modern Papacy has been "despoiled of Charlemagne's great fee" (p. 229); on p. 439, the unitary sacred is described, with reference to both St-Louis and Charlemagne, as follows: in the Middle Ages, "Men owned true masters; kings owned God--Their master; Louis plied the rod Upon himself. In high estate, not puffed up like a democrat in office, how now with Charlemagne?..." The words are spoken by Ungar, hardly to be confused with Melville, yet it is an concise an articulation of Melville's vision of the unitary sacred as can be found in numerous references.

Interestingly, the mutineer Steelkilt from the "The Town-Ho's Story", the story within a story in Moby Dick, is also described as having "a brain, and a heart, and a soul in him, gentlemen, which had made Steelkilt Charlemagne, had he been born son to Charlemagne's father." (MD, p. 252)⁴⁶⁸-Both the Memnon Stone scene and the Enceladus vision in Pierre are part of this mountain motif, and will be analyzed separately.

⁴⁶⁹-MD, p. 441.

⁴⁷⁰-Pierre, p. 3.

⁴⁷¹-This story was published as a magazine short story and was included in the collection The Piazza Tales (1856).

"nothing less than Mt. Greylock, with all his hills about him, like Charlemagne among his peers...During the first year of my residence, the more leisurely to witness the coronation of Charlemagne (weather permitting, they crown him every sunrise and sunset) I chose me, on the hill-side bank near by, a royal lounge of turf..."⁴⁷²

Debating which side of his house would best accommodate his piazza, the narrator chooses the north side because of Mt. Greylock:

"So Charlemagne, he carried it. It was not long after 1848; and somehow, about that time, all round the world, these kings, they had the casting vote, and they voted for themselves."⁴⁷³

Since these associations between Mt. Greylock and Charlemagne occur in highly ironic contexts, in which these lofty sentiments are undermined, one should not go too far with them. Melville is hardly an advocate of cosmic kingship; nevertheless, he is grappling with the problem, and particularly after 1851, he is not counterposing to cosmic kingship the antemosaic cosmic man, the anthropocosmos, as he does in Moby Dick and will again, less emphatically, in Billy Budd. Nevertheless, the theme of mountains, monuments, ruins and buildings is so pervasive in his work that their meaning lies beneath any irony. Even in ridiculing cosmic kingship and all subsequent pseudo-sacred derivatives of it, Melville's association reveals an unresolved preoccupation. In later works such as Clarel, in fact, buildings and mountains are replaced by stones; the search for the strong father imago has been dissipated into fragments.

The same logic extends to monuments. Israel Potter (1854) is dedicated to "His Highness the Bunker-Hill Monument". The novel ends with Israel, an old man and former Bunker Hill veteran, being nearly run over on a 50th anniversary celebration of American independence in Boston by "a patriotic triumphal car in the procession, flying a brodered banner, inscribed with gilt letters:-- BUNKER HILL. 1775. GLORY TO THE HEROES THAT FOUGHT."⁴⁷⁴ Here, not only has the

⁴⁷²-ibid. Library of America edition, pp. 621-622.

⁴⁷³-ibid. p. 623. In the short story "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!", like "The Piazza" an attack on Transcendentalism, Melville's narrator describes the rooster as a "cock, more like the Emperor Charlemagne in his robes at Aix la Chapelle, than a cock."

⁴⁷⁴-Israel Potter, Library of America 1984, p. 613. Israel Potter is another novel of dispossession, but it is different from Redburn and Pierre in that it does not look back to the revolutionary era from the perspective of a disinherited grandson. Israel Potter is based on the life story of a real Israel Potter, who after fighting in both the American army and navy during the revolutionary war was, as "Israel in Egypt", stranded in England for "forty years of exile". Israel Potter is another of Melville's protagonists of downward social mobility, having an idyllic childhood and adolescent in the

revolution been transformed into tinsel, but the tinsel has become life-threatening to the aging revolutionaries.

In the pattern of the "mast heads" passage of *Moby Dick*, Melville uses mountains, ancient ruins of unknown origin, monuments to Lord Nelson, pyramids, the Memnon stone and the Mount of the Titans (in *Pierre*), and Petra extensively. It would be foolish to reduce them to a single meaning. Often, their association with cosmic kingship, such as Mt. Greylock and Charlemagne, makes them signify the oppressive weight of the distorted paternal imago, the desire for the love of the father, to make possible freedom as an independent acting self. Sometimes, in a related way, as with Belzoni lost in the pyramids, with the Templar retreat in *Israel Potter*, or with Bartleby in the "Petra" of Wall Street on a Sunday afternoon or later dead in prison, they signify entombment, the desire for rebirth. Pierre and his women commit suicide in the New York Tombs, a Manhattan prison in the Egyptian revival style of the early 19th century. Bartleby is also taken away by the police to the Tombs. The narrator finds Bartleby lying in the yard.

"The yard was entirely quiet. It was not accessible to the common prisoners. The surrounding walls, of amazing thickness, kept off all sounds behind them. The Egyptian character of the masonry weighed upon me with its gloom. But a soft imprisoned turf grew under foot. The heart of the eternal pyramids, it seemed, wherein, by some strange magic, through the clefts, grass-seed, dropped by birds, had sprung."⁴⁷⁵

Bartleby was dead:

"Eh!--He's asleep, ain't he?"
"With kings and counsellors,"

murmured I.

The last reference is to the Biblical Book of Job. Melville had written in a letter to Hawthorne two years earlier:

"...My development has been all within a few years past. I am like one of those seeds taken out of the Egyptian Pyramids, which, after being three thousand years a

Berkshires before being swept up in the revolution. When he returns to America after forty years in the slums of London, no one in his village remembers him or his family, and his veteran's pension is denied on a technicality. The novel gives Melville an opportunity to present not particularly flattering portraits of Benjamin Franklin, John Paul Jones and Ethan Allen, all of whom Israel meets in his adventures. It is hardly one of Melville's major works, but it shows, like *Redburn* and *Pierre*, Melville's constant preoccupation with showing the abyss that separates the present from the world of 1776.

⁴⁷⁵-ibid. p. 671.

seed and nothing but a seed, being planted in English soil, it developed itself, green to greenness, and then fell to mould."⁴⁷⁶

Pierre and Bartleby both die in the Tombs. Melville was, historically, at the end of the trajectory of negation. What does this mean? As it was argued in the section on Moby Dick, the Parisian dandy of 1840 or his American Transcendentalist counterpart retained, of cosmic kingship and its devolution through Napoleon, only the aestheticized moi absolu⁴⁷⁷. Melville was neither a dandy nor a Transcendentalist, but after Moby Dick, he did not know what else to be. Like the Transcendentalists, he was cut off by history from the action of the cosmic king or his secular extensions (Napoleon, Washington, Nelson), and, like them, he was cut off from the emerging "ugly revolution" by a transposition of terms by which he remained trapped in the problems of the bourgeois ego and bourgeois social identity. Buried in a deluge of mass luxury consumer goods and department stores, the aesthete of 1840 had been reduced to a flicker of the cosmic king. That aestheticized consciousness, looking at the hall of memories of the fathers as Hegel's Absolute Spirit looked back at all its Gestalts, or as Pierre looked

⁴⁷⁶-M. Davis et al. eds. The Letters of Herman Melville. New Haven, 1960, p. 130. Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, June 1?, 1851.

⁴⁷⁷-The dandy, as indicated, is a rather constant minor figure in Melville's work. Redburn's friend Harry Bolton is the first instance of a serious portrait of a dandy. Pierre's cousin Glen is a second. In Clarel, Glaucon, the Cypriote, the French Jew from Lyon (the latter being a salesman of luxury items), and the purveyor from Lesbos all have dandy-like qualities. The early portrait of his father which Pierre burns has rakish overtones. These are all figures of the pseudo-sacred: aristocracy transformed into hedonistic consumption. The dandy is one non-solution to the problem posed by Melville's father. But Melville uses dandies as a foil for his larger target of the Transcendentalist, who maintains the ego at a less dissolute level but who remains as foreign as the dandy to the "ugly revolution".

At the end of the Confidence Man's encounter with Thoreau ("Egbert"), debating the practical implications of the philosophy of Emerson ("Mark Winsome"), the Confidence Man says:

"Enough. I have had my fill of the philosophy of Mark Winsome as put into action. And moonshiny as it in theory may be, yet a very practical philosophy it turns out in effect...Why wrinkle the brow, and waste the oil both of life and the lamp, only to turn out a head kept cool by the under ice of the heart? What your illustrious magian has taught you, any poor, old, broken-down, heart-shrunken dandy might have lisped." (The Confidence Man, p. 192)

This "poor, old, broken-down, heart-shrunken dandy" is another manifestation of the last phase of the pseudo-sacred, the atomized individuality which is concealed beneath the Transcendentalist aestheticized moi absolu.

back to his ancestors, was entombed in the petrification of a commoditized world in which positive action seemed impossible, as indeed it was impossible in individual form. This consciousness, this "Belzoni abandoned by his Arab guides in the Great Pyramid", out of entombment, demanded rebirth. Behind the "Egypt" which was the source of the cosmic king, rebirth meant rebirth as the anthropocosmos, as Queequeg. This would be, at last, an identity beyond negation. But the historical conditions for such a supercession, after the flareups of 1848, were nowhere in sight. Incapable of any longer being bourgeois and equally incapable of connecting to mass action in the working class, as the early Melville attempted to do at least literarily, the aestheticized individual consciousness of negation flipped over, after 1850, from romanticism into modernism, beginning the century in which art became a problem for itself. The conditions were posed for the "activity as all-sided in its production as in its consumption", as Marx put it in the Grundrisse, the supercession of work and leisure in a new kind of activity, but only abstractly. Modernism, and its blankness, arose in this impossibility. This blankness was the refuge of the bourgeois individual in the new epoch in which, as Marx said of the 1848 revolutions, "the content exceeds the phrase". Melville, in Pierre, in "Bartleby", and in The Confidence Man, (and in a different way in "Benito Cereno") was a pioneer of this blankness. In the period between 1851 and 1857, while Marx was moving from The Eighteenth Brumaire to the Grundrisse, Melville, in the "evacuation" of his writing that becomes visible after Pierre, was, like a dying meteor in empty space, just before its extinction, following out the trajectory of negation loosened from its bourgeois class origins, testing the limits of art, and certainly of the novel, itself⁴⁷⁸.

Several scenes in Pierre illustrate how Melville handled the counterposition of the aesthete and ancient Egypt, once "Queequeg", and social class, had been removed as possible supercession. The "mummy/self" passage quoted earlier already gives a sense of the stakes involved.

In the crisis precipitated by Isabel's appearance in his life, confronting him with the possibility that his idealized dead father may have had an illegitimate daughter, Pierre seeks meditative refuge at a barn-size rock deep in the woods, which he himself had discovered in his youth. Pierre called it, "fancifully", the Memnon Stone⁴⁷⁹.

⁴⁷⁸ In this conjuncture, both Melville and Flaubert left for Egypt and the pyramids. Flaubert went in 1849, and Melville planned to go in the same year; his plans fell through, and he did not get to Egypt until 1857. Two major founders of modernism thus felt this simultaneous "Orientalist" impulse, just after the year of revolutions. An interesting comparison of Melville's and Flaubert's reactions to the Middle East is in V-L Beaulieu, op. cit. vol. 3 pp. 137-158.

⁴⁷⁹ Memnon was a legendary hero of the Greeks, the son of Tithonos and Eos (the Dawn). The Greeks saw him embodied in one of the two colossi of the great funerary temple of Amenophis III, in western Thebes, that is in Egypt. In 27 AD, an earthquake collapsed the colossus in such a way that

Leaving the stone behind, he meditates further on the "subtler meanings" of the Memnon Stone.

"...For Memnon was that dewy, royal boy, son of Aurora, and born king of Egypt...who fought hand to hand with his overmatch, and met his boyish and most dolorous death beneath the walls of Troy. His wailing subjects built a monument in Egypt to commemorate his untimely fate. Touched by the breath of the bereaved Aurora, every sunrise that statue gave forth a mournful broken sound...

Herein lies an unsummed world of grief. For in this plaintive fable we find embodied the Hamletism of the antique world; the Hamletism of three thousand years ago. 'The flower of virtue cropped by a too rare mischance.' And the English tragedy is but Egyptian Memnon, Montaignized and modernized; for being but a mortal man Shakespeare had his fathers too.

Now as the Memnon Statue survives down to this present day, so does that nobly-striving but ever-shipwrecked character in some royal youths (for both Memnon and Hamlet were the sons of kings) of which that statue is the melancholy type. But Memnon's sculptured woes did once melodiously resound; now all is mute. Fit emblem that of old, poetry was a consecration and an obsequy to all hapless modes of human life; but in a bantering, barren, and prosaic, heartless age, Aurora's music-moan is lost among our drifting sands, which whelm alike the monument and the dirge."⁴⁸⁰

What Melville has done here is reproduce exactly the meaning of the "standing of mast-heads" passage in Moby Dick⁴⁸¹, transposed from the realm of politics to the realm of poetry. In Moby-Dick, it was Napoleon atop the Vendome Tower, Washington "on his towering main-mast in Baltimore", and Nelson in Trafalgar Square who symbolized pseudo-sacred power, all refusing to "answer a single hail from below, however madly invoked", in contrast to the monuments of the Egyptians or Saint Stylites atop his pillar; in Pierre, "Memnon's sculptured

every morning, at dawn, the shattered stone, warmed by the morning sun, vibrated and produced the "song of Memnon", giving rise to the legend that the body of Memnon was resurrected each morning at the appearance of his mother the Dawn. The colossus became a tourist attraction in the ancient world, but the "song of Memnon" ended when it was restored under Septimus Severus. (Encyclopedia Universalis, 1990, Thesaurus-Index, vol. 3, p. 2242) The Memnon Stone of Pierre thus joins the antediluvian ruins in Typee, various massive constructions in Liverpool in Redburn, the incompleated pyramid and St. Peter's Dome of Moby Dick, the (Egyptian revival style) New York Tombs of "Bartleby", the Templar retreat in Israel Potter, and many other massive rocks, ruins and edificies to be analyzed in the subsequent section on Melville's imaginaire.

⁴⁸⁰-ibid. p. 164.

⁴⁸¹-MD, p. 132. This passage, and the analysis thereof, is on pp. 45-46 above.

woes did once melodiously resound; now all is mute" and the consecration that was poetry is lost in "a bantering, barren and prosaic age". Further, when he refers to "that nobly striving but ever-shipwrecked character in some royal youths", who is he talking about if not himself? He was not precisely the son of a "king", but in his steep downward social mobility his dispossession from the Scottish nobility of his father's family⁴⁸² and the Dutch patroons of his mother's family could not have looked that different.

Melville, however, is neither Pierre nor the narrator of Pierre; Melville's relationship to Pierre (as earlier to Ishmael) is that of Flaubert's relationship to Madame Bovary: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi!", not as an identification, but as a distance-taking from a mindset he knows all too well, a distance-taking achieved by the very act of objectification and externalization in a character. Pierre will rush to self-destruction just as Ahab did, except that this time, once again, no Queequeg's coffin will emerge from the maelstrom. Melville, in Pierre and its ambiguities, is a pioneer of modernism most immediately in the detachment from both the romantic hero, and from the self-destructiveness he identifies in romanticism and its most concrete American expression, Transcendentalism. But he portrays the dilemma of the dispossessed bourgeois ego, cut off from its own heroic individual ideals and also cut off from the kind of rebellious collective action which are a constant theme of his books prior to Pierre, not with any ultimate sense of tragedy, but with an underlying studied detachment and surgical diagnosis, achieving at least the dignity of his viewpoint that there is no exit, as there was in fact no exit for Melville in the America of 1851. Melville does believe that he inhabits a "bantering, barren, prosaic and heartless age", but unlike Pierre, and from having undoubtedly felt the strong temptation to be a Pierre, he knows that Pierre's stance points straight to self-destruction in the abyss⁴⁸³.

⁴⁸²-In 1818 Allan Melvill had travelled to Scotland to look into the estate of his great-grandfather, the Earl of Melville. He discovered that the estate was "heavily entailed" and that his share of it was worthless. (Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 9)

⁴⁸³-The forces that "Montaignized" Memnon into Hamlet have a distinctly rationalist and Enlightenment hue:
"...Of old Greek times, before man's brain went into doting bondage, and bleached and beaten in Baconian fulling-mills, his four limbs lost their barbaric tan and beauty; when the round world was fresh, and rosy, and spicy, as a new-plucked apple--all's wilted now!--in those bold times, the great dead were not, turkey-like, dished in trenchers, and set down all garnished in the ground, to glut the damned Cyclop like a cannibal; but nobly envious Life cheated the glutton worm, and gloriously burned the corpse; so that the spirit up-pointed, and visibly forked to heaven!" (ibid. p. 231)

Pierre's arrival in New York City from upstate shows how the class terms had been reposed for Melville after 1850. The working class of rebellious "castaways, mariners and renegades" of Melville's earlier crews, or the desperate population of the Liverpool slums, in Pierre are transformed into nothing but "les classes dangéreuses":

"...The sights and sounds which met the eye of Pierre...filled him with inexpressible horror and fury....In indescribable disorder, frantic, diseased-looking men and women of all colors, and in all imaginable flaunting, immodest, grotesque, and shattered dresses, were leaping, yelling and cursing round him. The torn Madras handkerchiefs of Negresses, and the red gowns of yellow girls, hanging in tatters from their naked bosoms, mixed with the rent dresses of deep-rouged white women, and the split coats, checkered vests, and protruding shirts of pale, or whiskered, or haggard, or mustached fellows of all nations, some of whom seemed scared from their beds, and others seemingly arrested in the midst of some crazy and wanton dance. On all sides, were heard drunken male and female voices, in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, interlarded now and then, with the foulest of all human lingo, that dialect of sin and death, known as the Cant language, or the Flash...The thieves' quarters, and all the brothels, Lock-and-Sin hospitals for incurables, and infirmaries and infernoes of hell seemed to have made one combined sortie, and poured out upon each through the vile vomitory of some unmentionable cellar."⁴⁸⁴

With modernism, in the new social climate, art becomes a problem for itself. Melville, in Pierre, was well into a trajectory that led to the self-implosion of character in The Confidence Man. Though he never questioned art itself, three further sections of Pierre illuminate the problem he confronted socially. It is here that the trajectory from cosmic kingship to the aesthetics of negation intersect the social reproduction of the pseudo-sacred.

Melville, through his friendship with Evert Duyckinck, the editor of the Democratic Review, had been associated in the late 1840's with the literary movement known as "Young America". Some of the formulations about democracy and about America as the "uncompleted cathedral" in Melville's pre-1851 writings echo the literary nationalism of Young America, which aimed at breaking away from the tutelage of European and above all English culture. But Duyckinck's tepid reception of Moby Dick, at a time when Melville was under fire from the critics, considerably cooled his relationship to Young America. Hence the portrait of the New York literary scene in Pierre, like the "nihilism" of the book generally, is part of a bitter lashing out, at the turning point of his career, against the literary establishment which was about to forget him for over seventy years. Nevertheless, this portrait is of greater significance than a mere settling of accounts. It points to the impossibility of communication in the new conditions, in which the aesthetics of negation have lost touch with any universality.

⁴⁸⁴-ibid. pp. 275-276. The "Cant language, or the Flash" refers to the slang of the criminal sub-culture.

Melville's portrait of the mid-19th century New York literary world is scathing, to the point of being caricatural and vitiated by the wounded cry audible beneath the surface. It nonetheless brings to a crescendo his whole portrait of the invasion of art by the pseudo-sacred, anticipated long before in the "Memnon Stone" scene and the "bantering, barren, and prosaic, heartless age" it invoked. A literary magazine "covered the walls of the city with (Pierre's) name". He was besieged by women and by invitations to speak. Magazines demanded an oil portrait of him, for the frontispiece of their publications, but he declined because he as yet had no beard and "no cunning compound of Rowland and Son" could give him the beard appropriate to an "illustrious author". Some solicitors were not so polite, however, and

"...did not even seem to remember that the portrait of any man generally receives, and indeed is entitled to more reverence than the original man himself".

Pierre is accosted on the street by an editor of the "Captain Kidd Monthly" demanding a Daguerreotype for the next issue. When Pierre demurs, the editor, already dragging him to the daguerreotype shop, says: "Pooh, pooh--must have it--public property--come along..." and Pierre has to threaten violence to extricate himself.

Here, in 1851, we are in the heart of the pseudo-sacred, the transformation of aristocratic aura into tinsel and advertising handbills, which would barely require amending today, in the world after the fashion of Andy Warhol:

"...For he considered with what infinite readiness now, the most faithful portrait of anyone could be taken by the Daguerreotype, whereas in former times a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats of the earth. How natural then the inference, that instead of, as in old times, immortalizing a genius, a portrait now only dayalized a dunce. Besides, when every body has his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having yours published at all. For if you are published along with Tom, Dick and Harry, and wear a coat of their cut, how then are you distinct from Tom, Dick and Harry?"⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁵-*ibid.* p. 291. Cf. R. Williams' description of a parallel phenomenon in France (although three decades later) in her analysis of Huysmans' A Rebours (*Against the Grain*) (1884). A Rebours tells the story of Des Esseintes, a dandy who withdraws from the vulgarity of mass consumption into an artificial world of decadent aestheticism in a reclusive house in a Paris suburb. "Despite his desperate attempts to exclude the values of the marketplace from Fontenay, they remain potent, acting like magnetic poles casting a field of force over his life, relentlessly pulling and distorting all his feelings and choices. The emotional energy he expends in resisting the market is testimony to its power. Des Esseintes's very attempts to resist modern consumption, heroic as they may be, are themselves shaped by

But all this attention from

"publishers, engravers, editors, critics, autograph-collectors, portrait-fanciers, biographers, and petitioning and remonstrating literary friends of all sorts" began to convince Pierre of the "utter unsatisfactoriness of all human fame" and he gleefully burned his correspondence.

Here, then, was where the bourgeois ego had come to: the expansion of consumption, and the incorporation of everything high and aristocratic into the pseudo-sacred of carnival barkers, already in 1851 compelled writers like Melville to combat them by actively seeking anonymity, in their persons and in their writing⁴⁸⁶. It is here that one sees with utmost clarity the convergence between the newly-evident class schism in society, brought to the fore by 1848, the invasion of every sphere of life, public and private, by consumption, and the combined impact of both on bourgeois high culture. This is where the cameo of Napoleon⁴⁸⁷, fondled by Stendhal's Julien Sorel, had come to a mere 20 years later. The isolated bourgeois self, cut off from the epoch of Washingtons and Jeffersons and the possibility of the kind of politics they embodied, as Pierre was cut off from his ancestors, henceforth could only negate the false community of pseudo-communication by a willed non-communication. It is here, on both sides of the Atlantic, that modernism is born in a direct collision with the new class division and mass consumption. This is the world that produced *Bartleby*⁴⁸⁸.

it...Someone like Des Esseintes can no longer admire certain paintings or melodies without feeling himself classed with boors who admire these things only to show an appearance of culture." (op. cit. pp. 136-138).

⁴⁸⁶-Melville's technique of "double writing", described in his essay "Hawthorne and his Mosses", (written while he was writing *Moby Dick*) lends itself to this kind of non-appearance: Melville uses narrators whose point of view is the one which Melville wants to attack, and which is discredited by developments in the narrative itself. An extreme case of this is "The 'Gees" (cf. below); a more typical case in "The Piazza", but the method is apparent in most of his writings.

⁴⁸⁷-Melville even echoes this concisely: "...Pierre never forebade that ardent appreciator of "The Tear", who, finding a small fragment of the original manuscript containing a dot (tear), over an i (eye), esteemed the significant event providential; and begged the distinguished favor of being permitted to have it for a brooch; and ousted a cameo-head of Homer, to replace it with the more invaluable gem. He became inconsolable, when being caught in a rain, the dot (tear) disappeared from over the i (eye); so that the strangeness and wonderfulness of the sonnet was still conspicuous; in that thought the least fragment of it could weep in a drought, yet did it become all tearless in a shower." (pp. 299-300).

⁴⁸⁸-The critique of Transcendentalism in *Pierre* will be treated in a later section.

The focus of this analysis is not, clearly, the formal literary achievements or failure of Pierre⁴⁸⁹. Even if Pierre is a failure as a novel, it provides useful material in the framework of the overall historical and cultural analysis of Melville's work developed here. Pierre is the parody of the sentimental novel, but it is also the self-conscious ironic depiction of Melville's failure in his career as a writer, with implications for the considerable work he produced in the remaining forty years of his life. It is, finally, a signal work for the analysis of the origins of cultural modernism, in its relation to consumption and communication, and, seen in tandem with Moby-Dick, for modernism's relationship, and non-relationship, to the working class. Moby-Dick asks if collective revolt provides an answer to the crack-up of bourgeois individualism, and answers in a barely-qualified negative; Pierre does not even ask the question.

Indeed, the prelude to Pierre's "Enceladus vision" shows again, as in the description of New York street life quoted earlier, that for Pierre, in contrast to Ishmael, the "lower depths" of society are nothing but a screen onto which he projects his disintegrating ego. As his rebellion unravels, only a descent, further and further into the urban depths on his evening walk, seemed to calm him. He progressed from the crowded main thoroughfares to "fancying stormy nights", feeling a joy "stemming such tempests through deserted streets"; he began to seek out "the dark, narrow side-streets" and "the more secluded and mysterious tap-rooms". This, aside from the derelict crowd described at the time of Pierre's arrival in New York, is the sole appearance of "the mariners, castaways and renegades" in Pierre. But Pierre even tires of this slumming, and "nothing but the utter night-desolation of the obscurest warehousing lanes" would do, where he awoke, "lying crosswise in the gutter", and not knowing how he came to be there. In this state of mind, he stumbles home to sleep, and has a vision, with a symbolic layering and complexity almost rivaling that of Moby-Dick, and almost as central in bringing the book together, while also returning to the mountains and monuments discussed earlier:

"It was the phantasmagoria of the Mount of the Titans, a singular height standing quite detached in a wide solitude not far from the grand range of dark blue hills encircling his ancestral manor."⁴⁹⁰

A "most moody, disappointed bard" had given the mountain its name, displacing "The Delectable Mountain" as it had earlier been named by an "admirer of Bunyan". Seen through the haze from the piazza of Pierre's old house, it was a "purple precipice"; purple again being the color mentioned in the dedication to "His Most Excellent Majesty of Greylock" and the color of imperial power generally. In Pierre's urban desolation, he relinks with the cosmic king and the cosmic mountain.

⁴⁸⁹-Rogin (op. cit. p. 179) and other critics consider the New York section of Pierre "a failure".

⁴⁹⁰-ibid. p. 383.

The pastures on the sides of the Mount of the Titans, stirring from afar, were overgrown with a tenacious "small white amaranthine flower", thus making them useless to the nearby farmers. Seen closer up, the "sweet imposing purple promise" seemed to hold, but a closer look revealed

"horrible glimpses of dark-dripping rocks, and mysterious mouths of wolfish caves"⁴⁹¹.

Approaching closer, the lower climb was far longer than it appeared from afar; Melville returns the reader once again to Egypt:

"as among the rolling sea-like sands of Egypt, disordered rows of broken Sphinxes lead to the Cheopian pyramid itself; so this long acclivity was thickly strewn with enormous rocky masses, grotesque in shape...seemed to express that slumbering intelligence visible in some recumbent beasts..."⁴⁹²

Moving higher, "as a marching soldier confounded at the sight of an impregnable redoubt, where he had fancied it a practicable vault", the climber discovers "a terrific towering palisade of dark mossy massiness", "grim scarred rocks" "with a hideous repellingness", and randomly scattered logs, occasionally hearing falling rocks which "would boomingly explode upon the silence":

"Stark desolation; ruin, merciless and ceaseless; chills and gloom--all here lived a hidden life, curtailed by that cunning purpleness, which, from the piazza of the manor house, so beautifully invested the mountain once called Delectable, but now styled Titanic"⁴⁹³

Pierre's vision of cosmic kingship--Egypt, the imperial purple--reveals upon closer inspection the blind force of natural destruction. He is far beyond the episode at the Memnon Stone, and the impossibility of poetry; he is closer to some of the scenes of *Moby-Dick*, such as the sharks' feeding frenzy, their snouts beating against the sides of the *Pequod*, with which Melville confronts superficial Transcendentalist visions of benign natural beauty. Then Pierre's vision is transmuted farther, as he describes one of the many strewn boulders:

"You paused; fixed by a form defiant, a form of awfulness. You saw Enceladus the Titan, the most potent of all the giants, writhing from out the imprisoning earth;

⁴⁹¹-ibid. p. 385. Once again, this theme of the deceptiveness of distant natural beauty, on closer inspection, is also explored in "The Piazza".

⁴⁹²-ibid.

⁴⁹³-ibid. p. 386.

turbaned⁴⁹⁴ with upborne moss he writhed; still, though armless, resisting with his whole striving trunk, the Pelion and Ossa hurled at him...still turning his unconquerable front toward that majestic mount eternally in vain assailed by him, and which, when it had stormed him off; had heaved his undoffable incubus upon him, and deridingly left him there to bay out his ineffectual howl."⁴⁹⁵

When Pierre was still a boy, a group of students had noticed this boulder, and struck by the statue-like quality of its natural shape, had dug around it:

"...With all their toil, they had not yet come to the girdle of Enceladus. But they had bared good part of his mighty chest, and exposed his mutilated shoulders, and the stumps of his once audacious arms."⁴⁹⁶

Having described yet another mountain/ ruin/ monument/ edifice, Melville turns to the now-familiar images of cosmic kingship to contrast Europe's artifice with American nature:

"...Not unworthy to be compared with that leaden Titan, wherewith the art of Marsy and the broad-flung pride of Bourbon enriched the enchanted gardens of Versailles--from from whose still twisted mouth for sixty feet the waters yet upgush, in elemental rivalry with those Etna flames, of old asserted to be the malicious breath of the downborn giant⁴⁹⁷; ...not unworthy to be compared with that bold trophy of high art, this American Enceladus, wrought by the vigorous hand of nature itself, it did go further than compare--it did surpass that fine figure molded by the inferior skill of man. Marsy gave arms to the eternally defenseless; but Nature, more truthful, performed an amputation, and left the impotent Titan without one serviceable ball-and-socket above the thigh."⁴⁹⁸

The vision overwhelmed Pierre's "four blank walls⁴⁹⁹", and suddenly was transmuted again, as the "herded Titans now sprung to their feet" and "flung themselves up the slope":

⁴⁹⁴-Note the Oriental-Ottoman reference, juxtaposed by Melville onto this myth from classical antiquity.

⁴⁹⁵-*ibid.* pp. 386-387.

⁴⁹⁶-*ibid.* p. 387.

⁴⁹⁷-In one version of the Enceladus myth of the ancient world (recounted by Virgil in the *Aeneid*, Book III, Lines 578-580), Enceladus is buried under Mt. Etna, and his rolling causes its eruptions.

⁴⁹⁸-*ibid.* pp. 387-388.

⁴⁹⁹-These "four blank walls" will become the blank wall at which Bartleby stares all day, the "blank" atmosphere in the opening scene of "Benito Cereno", and the blankness of the factory girls in "The Tartarus of Maids".

"...Foremost among them all, he saw a moss-turbaned, armless giant, who despairing of any other mode of wreaking his immitigable hate, turned his vast trunk into a battering ram, and hurled his own arched-out ribs again and yet again against the invulnerable steep.

"Enceladus! it is Enceladus!"--Pierre cried out in his sleep."⁵⁰⁰

Seeing his own face on the Titan's armless trunk, looking at him with "prophetic discomfiture and woe" Pierre started awake, and "woke from that ideal horror to all his actual grief."

What was this myth of Enceladus? In the version mentioned in Virgil's Aeneid, Enceladus is the son of Titan and Terra, who conspired against Jupiter, in punishment for which heaven and earth rained missiles down on him, and he was swallowed up under Mt. Etna, whose eruptions were his fitful cries⁵⁰¹. Whatever Melville's source, Pierre's version of the myth presented Enceladus as

"...the son of incestuous Coelus and Terra, the son of incestuous Heaven and Earth. And Titan married his mother Terra, another and accumulatively incestuous match. And thereof Enceladus was one issue. So Enceladus was both the son and grandson of an incest; and even thus, there had been born from the organic blended heavenliness and earthliness of Pierre, another mixed, uncertain, heaven-aspiring, but still not wholly earth-emancipated mood; which again, by its terrestrial taint held down to its terrestrial mother, generated there the present doubly incestuous Enceladus within him; so that the present mood of Pierre--that reckless sky-assaulting mood of his, was nevertheless on one side the grandson of the sky. For it is according to eternal fitness, that the precipitated Titan should still seek to regain his paternal birthright even by fierce escalade. Wherefore whoso storms the sky gives best proof he came from thither! But whatso crawls contented in the moat before that crystal fort, shows it was born within that slime, and there forever will abide."⁵⁰²

In punishment for his revolt, the gods had chained a ball to the feet of Enceladus to drag for eternity over the earth, but "even so that globe put forth a thousand flowers, whose fragile smiles disguised his ponderous load."

Thus Pierre pulls himself out of the gutter to have the vision which both concretizes his "doubly incestuous" relationship to his mother and to Isabel, and which points the way to an action whereby he can "regain his paternal birthright", from which his circumstances have cut him off. Even though this action will bring

⁵⁰⁰-ibid. p. 388.

⁵⁰¹-In a slightly different version, in a revolt of the Giants against the Olympian gods, Athene "threw a vast missile at Enceladus, which crushed him flat and became the island of Sicily" (R. Graves, The Greek Myths, vol. 1, London, n.d. p. 132.)

⁵⁰²-Pierre, pp. 388-389.

self-destruction, it is preferable to "forever abiding" in the slime of the "moat before that crystal fort".

Melville has moved, in the course of Pierre, from the "Purple Majesty" of Mount Greylock to the impossible poetry of the Memnon Stone to the empty sarcophagus of the self to the horrific "purple Mount of the Titans". It is difficult to imagine an image, superimposed with classical myth, which pulls together so many strands of a novel, unless that image is the white whale. Without wishing to sound excessively psychoanalytic (which is difficult because Melville himself is so uncannily psychoanalytic, right on the surface of the narrative⁵⁰³), it can be said, once again, without much ado, that Greylock, the Memnon Stone, the Great Pyramid and the Mount of the Titans are Melville's father, and through his father, his military ancestors. They are the link to cosmic myth, frayed into the pseudo-sacred in the "bantering, braying, and prosaic, heartless age". Melville, in speaking of Pierre's "paternal birthright", says as much⁵⁰⁴. Pierre, deprived of his father's love and lost in the dreamy Transcendentalist omnipotence and real-world impotence promised by his mother and to some extent by the "face" and "Nubian

⁵⁰³- Pierre is, after all, among other things a novel about an absent father and a (psychological) double-incest with mother and sister. In a section that precedes the Enceladus vision, Melville's describes Pierre's mood after learning of the death of his mother. In his grief, "...from the fair fields of his great-great-great-grandfather's manor, Summer hath flown like a swallow guest" (p. 334). He describes a "little toddler" learning to walk: "First it shrieks and implores, and will not try to stand at all, unless both father and mother uphold it"; gradually it becomes independent, and will "cross the seas, or settle in far Oregon lands". However independent it may appear and be, "it is born from the world husk, and still now outwardly clings to it;--still clamors for the support of its mother the world, and its father the Deity." It will become independent, "though not without many a bitter wail, and many a miserable fall". (p. 335). This description of an apparently independent person which "still clamors for the support" of its mother and father is a fairly concise description of neurosis. But Melville goes farther, directly anticipating the underlying "psychoanalytic" state of mind Pierre is in-- the state of the "empty sarcophagus", the non-self--at the time of the Enceladus vision: "The hour of the life of a man when first the help of humanity fails him, and he learns that in his obscurity and indigence humanity holds him a dog and no man: that hour is a hard one, but not the hardest. There is still another hour which follows, when he learns that in his infinite comparative minuteness and abjectness, the gods do likewise despise him, and own him not of their clan. Divinity and humanity then are equally willing that he should starve in the street for all that either will do for him. Now cruel father and mother have both let go of his hand, and the little soul-toddler, now you shall hear his shriek and his wail, and often his fall." *ibid.*)

⁵⁰⁴-Recall the formulation of Maurice Leenhardt used earlier: "avant l'anthropomorphie, la cosmomorphie" (*op. cit.* pp. 133-134)

eyes" of Isabel, runs up against the empty sarcophagus, the absence of active self, which leads him to the gutter. But Pierre, who knows all too well the Transcendentalist-pantheist non-alternative, is ultimately no Transcendentalist himself. He is determined to claim his place as the "grandson of the sky", that is to win his self, "even by fierce escalade", rather than spend the rest of his life in "slime". Through the Enceladus vision, Pierre becomes more of an Ahab and less of an Ishmael, determined to strike back at the force that rendered him impotent. In so doing, he by no means exempts himself from self-destruction; he seems to move from what, thirty years later, Nietzsche would call "passive nihilism", to "active nihilism". (It is not intended to suggest here that Pierre in his final phase becomes a Nietzschean "Superman": he still wants to fight with the gods, not set himself up as one.) There is still, in the class and social terms of the family world to which Melville has transposed his earlier problematic, no solution for Pierre. In the literary world, which he has already rejected, he can only aspire to distinguish himself, like Huysmans' Des Esseintes, from every "Tom, Dick and Harry" and their fifteen minutes of fame; because there is, neither in Pierre nor in the America of 1851, no future for the only kind of action Melville knows, that of the American Revolution and its heirs in his upper-class family, there is no political or social action either. After the Enceladus vision, Pierre has only one more obstacle to overcome, the world of art.

On their walk after Pierre's Enceladus vision, the ménage à trois encounters a European art exhibit. The exhibit catalogue touts the paintings as those of grand masters, but Pierre quickly realizes that they are mainly fakes, about to be auctioned in the gullible New York art market. The walls hung by so many mediocre examples of "the attempted execution by feeble hand of vigorous themes" depresses Pierre and reminds him of his own situation;

"...All the walls of the world seemed thickly hung with the empty and impotent scope of pictures, grandly outlined, but miserably filled"⁵⁰⁵

The smaller pictures of "familiar little things" are far better executed, but awake "no dormant majesties in his soul". (Pierre, close to the end, like Ahab, lacks "the low enjoying power"⁵⁰⁶).

Nonetheless, one painting, "Stranger's Head by the Unknown Hand", a "real Italian gem of art", arrests both Pierre and Isabel. Isabel is sure the portrait is "their" father:

"My God! see! see! see!..." "only my mirror has ever shown me that before! See! See!"⁵⁰⁷

Meanwhile, Lucy had stopped in front of "that sweetest, most touching, but most awful of feminine heads", the "Cenci" of Guido. She is unaware of any

⁵⁰⁵-ibid. p. 392.

⁵⁰⁶-MD, p. 132.

⁵⁰⁷-Pierre, p. 392.

possible incestuous relationship between Pierre and Isabel. Here, as with the Memnon Stone and the Mount of the Titans, Melville again weaves a multi-layered symbol pulling together many strands. The beauty of the painting lies in

"...a striking, suggested contrast, half-identical with, and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one--sometimes visible in the maidens of tropical nations" of light blue eyes and fair complexion "veiled by funereally jetty hair". (Melville again reminds us of the young poet, author of "Tropical Summer", as he reminds us of the author of Typee and Omoo.) But

"with blue eyes and fair complexion, the Cenci's hair is golden...which, nevertheless, still the more intensifies the suggested fanciful anomaly of so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being, being double-hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of which she is the object, and the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity --incest and parricide."⁵⁰⁸

Thus, as Pierre and Isabel, the dark woman, stare fascinated at a painting that may be the proof of their incest, Lucy, the blonde, unaware of that eventuality, stares fascinated at a depiction of another ambiguous, possible incest.⁵⁰⁹

Melville heightens the doubling effect of these juxtaposed encounters:

"Now, this Cenci and "the Stranger" were hung at a good elevation in one of the upper tiers; and, from the opposite walls, exactly faced each other; so that in secret they seemed pantomimically talking over and across the heads of the living spectators below."⁵¹⁰

Thus, while Lucy looks at the Cenci, Pierre and Isabel debate whether the "Stranger" could be their father⁵¹¹. It has unmistakable aspects of Isabel's own

⁵⁰⁸-ibid. p. 393.

⁵⁰⁹- The 17th century painting of the "Cenci" by Guido was based on an actual occurrence in 1598. Francesco Cenci, a tyrannical father who had sequestered his two daughters Beatrice and Lucrezia, was murdered by his son Giacomo and accomplices. All three children were tried for the murder, and found guilty, despite a last-minute plea by the defense that Francesco Cenci had attempted incest with Beatrice. All three children were executed, and the Roman popolo thereafter idealized Beatrice. Later, Shelley, Stendhal and Dumas used the Cenci theme in their works Encyclopedia Universalis, Thesaurus-Index vol. 1, p. 638. According to the Notes in the Library of America edition of Pierre (1984), p. 1452, Melville went to see Guido Reni's painting in Rome and owned an engraving of it. Hawthorne also used the Cenci theme in The Marble Faun (1862). (In another version of the Cenci story, Beatrice herself kills her father.)

⁵¹⁰-Pierre, p. 393.

⁵¹¹This "doubling of the doubling" occurs elsewhere in Pierre, but cannot

features; Pierre sees in it not the features of the youthful portrait he had burned in disgust, but nonetheless a "resurrection"⁵¹² of it in "the pervading look of it".

"...still, for all this, there was an unequivocal aspect of foreignness, of Europeanism, about both the face itself and the general painting. "⁵¹³

Pierre is skeptical; it is just a coincidence. Isabel is convinced. "...Now, Isabel knew nothing of the painting which Pierre had destroyed." She knew only the gentleman who had sporadically visited her as a child.

"...for though both were intensely excited by one object, yet their two minds and memories were thereby directed to entirely different contemplations; while still each, for the time--however unreasonably--might have vaguely supposed the other occupied by the one and same contemplation. Pierre was thinking of the chair-portrait; Isabel of the living face. Yet Isabel's fervid exclamations having reference to the living face, were now, as it were, mechanically responded to by Pierre, in syllables having reference to the chair-portrait."⁵¹⁴

The philosophical, aesthetic, mythic, psychoanalytic, and social-historical potential of this scene, and this passage, seems almost infinite. It circles back to the youthful painting of Pierre's father which he burned in disgust. It goes to the heart of a world, like the world of Young America, in which people mediate their relations with each other through images.

Melville, however, is not Proust. The reader of Remembrance of Things Past will recall many episodes in which works of art suddenly interpose themselves between two people, usually to warp or distort desire, or to obscure some blemish which the desiring party does not wish to see, in order that he/she can better remain with his/her own illusion. Melville, here, is not talking about the frustration or realization of desire; he is talking about how images from art and images from memory distort communication between two people⁵¹⁵, and this in a very specific

be taken up here; cf. the thematic analysis of Melville's imaginaire which follows.

⁵¹²-Earlier in his devolution, Pierre had still been confident that "if need should come, he would not be forced to turn resurreccionist, and dig up his grandfather's Indian chief grave for the ancestral sword and shield, ignominiously to pawn them for a living..." (p. 297)

⁵¹³-ibid.

⁵¹⁴-ibid. p. 394.

⁵¹⁵-Melville includes a long section, earlier in the narrative, about the youthful, rakish painting of Pierre's father, hidden in Pierre's closet, and the solid bourgeois portrayed in the painting favored by his mother, which hung in the drawing room. (pp. 97-111). As his disillusionment in setting in after the meeting with Isabel, Pierre imagines the youthful portrait speaking to him: "Faithful wives are ever over-fond to a certain imaginary image of their husbands; and faithful widows are ever over-reverential to a certain

social-historical situation (whether he has this in mind or not when he wrote the scene). Given the context in which Pierre and Isabel view the painting of "the Stranger", one is more immediately reminded of Marx's passage in the Eighteenth Brumaire (which formed part of the preceding analysis of Moby-Dick):

"...Bourgeois society was no longer aware that the ghosts of Rome had watched over its cradle, since it was wholly absorbed in the production of wealth and the peaceful struggle of economic competition. But unheroic as bourgeois society is, it still required heroism, self-sacrifice, terror, civil war, and battles...to bring it into the world. And its gladiators found in the stern classical traditions of the Roman republic the ideals, art-forms and self-deceptions they needed to hide from themselves the limited bourgeois content of their struggles..."⁵¹⁶

Further:

"...And, just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not yet exist...they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language."⁵¹⁷

One must of course be careful; Pierre is not considering revolutionary action, and "the Stranger", while an Italian painting, is not an example of "the stern classical traditions of the Roman republic". (The Enceladus vision, however, was right out of Virgil.) That said, Marx's notion that "past weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living" has everything to do with the personal situation of both Pierre and Isabel, because the American Revolutionary tradition of his family is exactly the "stern classical tradition of the Roman Republic" in the American context, and even Pierre's resolve after the Enceladus vision, while reconnecting him to the "paternal birthright", does so in a form "which conjures up the spirits of the past" to prepare him only for self-destructive action. Melville has already shown how Pierre's career as a writer has been dashed by the literary market-place; he is about to show how even the breakout into individual action leads Pierre only to the abyss, taking his women with him.

Pierre is the man who, lacking a father, lacks a self, and he thinks that he can only win that self by "storming the heavens" as Enceladus did. The

imagined ghost of that same imagined image." Urging Pierre to think more truthfully about his own idealized image, the voice urges him not to be "afraid of following the Indian trail from the open plain into the dark thickets" (p. 110).

⁵¹⁶-K. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in Surveys from Exile, London, 1973, p. 148.

⁵¹⁷-ibid. p. 146.

"ambiguities" of Pierre, beginning with his encounter with the "face", all flow from this absence of a self. It is not that he has actually broken free to a truly positive identity; Melville's novel is about its impossibility. But he is beyond reach of anything that would pull him back into his previously unliveable identity as his dead father's son. He is like Ishmael in Moby-Dick in that only his aestheticized bourgeois ego stands between him and real life, as represented by the harpooners in the historical labor process, except that, as indicated previously, the world of work has entirely receded from Pierre as any kind of alternative, however problematic.

From the beginning of Pierre, relations between people have been mediated through images and memories from a dead past. Pierre's mother "very frequently made remote social allusions to the epaulettes of the Major-General his grandfather"; the identity of the youthful Pierre, future master of Saddle Meadows, was a lie based on a lineage he could not live; it was this young Pierre with whom Lucy Tartan fell in love. Lucy in turn is trapped in the image of the "beautiful woman", replete with chivalric lineage:

"...A beautiful woman is born Queen of men and women both, as Mary Stuart was born Queen of Scots...A plain-faced Queen of Spain dwells not in half the glory a beautiful milliner does. Her soldiers can crack heads, but her Highness cannot crack a heart; and the beautiful milliner might string hearts for necklaces."⁵¹⁸

There is no need to comment on Pierre's relation to Isabel, initially mediated through "the face", nor on Isabel's relationship to Pierre, based on the ultimately ambiguous construction of their common father. Pierre is truly a novel in which the "past weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living". But this constant domination of real people by the floating hob-goblins of the past is not written in just any historical conjuncture.

Again, Marx:

"...If we reflect on this process of world-historical necromancy, we see at once a salient distinction. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just and Napoleon, the heroes of the old French Revolution...accomplished the task of their epoch, which was the emancipation and establishment of modern bourgeois society, in Roman costume and with Roman slogans...Once the new social formation had been established, the antediluvian colossi disappeared along with the resurrected imitations of Rome--imitations of Brutus, Gracchus, Publicola, the tribunes, the senators, and Caesar

⁵¹⁸-Pierre, p. 46. From the longer passage in which these lines appear, it is not clear that Melville has a full critique of the imprisonment of beauty in the sense under discussion, as in his statement "The Americans, and not the French, are the world's models of chivalry. Our Salique Law provides that universal homage shall be paid all beautiful women." (ibid.) The passage is cited merely for purposes of the argument at hand.

himself." 519

A similar passage could be written, for America, about the George Washingtons and Thomas Jeffersons of the American Revolution, and the following passage could be transposed to the America of the Van Burens and Tylers in which Melville came of age:

"...Bourgeois society in its sober reality had created its true interpreters and spokesmen in such people as Say, Cousin, Royer-Collard, Benjamin Constant, and Guizot."⁵²⁰

The society of the revolutionary era of the later 18th century fascinated Melville; and not merely from his family background, but also as a standard by which to take the measure of his own present. What differentiated that bourgeois revolutionary era from the society, European and American, of Melville's time, was that, (as Marx put it):

"In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead. Previously the phrase exceeded the content; here the content exceeds the phrase."⁵²¹

A society in which "the content exceeds the phrase" is a society in which the potential of the realized social and individual powers of its members outstrips any ideology or allowed practice within that society; that, in a nutshell, was Pierre's problem, and Melville's, in 1851. It was not that Melville wanted to "be" an 18th century grand-bourgeois, but he spent his lifetime trying, and failing, to find something else to be.

Melville sensed that the "necromancy" of Pierre, Isabel and Lucy existed in a society in which "the content transcends the phrase"; all differences considered, the young Pierre might well have been described as the exact contemporary of

"the adventurer who is now hiding his commonplace and repulsive countenance beneath the iron death-mask of Napoleon" (that is, as the contemporary of Louis Napoleon), as Marx put in in the Eighteenth Brumaire. Melville spent much of his literary energies exhuming and analyzing the social power of "death masks" in his time, from Ahab's "pasteboard masks" to the masquerade of the Confidence Man. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that even if Melville, after Moby Dick, ceased to replicate the trajectory of Marx which he had earlier so uncannily reproduced in literary form, his subsequent work, beginning with Pierre, shows how his honesty

⁵¹⁹-K. Marx, op. cit. p. 147.

⁵²⁰-ibid.

⁵²¹-ibid. p. 149. I take the liberty of substituting "exceed" , which has been used previously ,for "transcend" in this translation, given the somewhat metaphysical overtones of the word "transcend" (LG)

as an artist compelled him to analyze the epoch in which he lived, well aware that "the content exceeded the phrase", and that he inhabited a reality in which ghosts from the past walked and talked. But Melville was unable to articulate what that content might be, close as he had come in Moby-Dick: a new kind of activity beyond work and leisure, the project of communism.

Ch. XII: From Charlemagne to French Luxury Consumer Goods: The Sacred and the Pseudo-Sacred in Melville

Throughout this study we have used the concept of the pseudo-sacred, offering mainly contextual definitions, primarily from Melville's writings. Since the pseudo-sacred is central to the analysis, it is necessary, before proceeding, to define the term more thoroughly⁵²².

The pseudo-sacred can be defined, initially, as the restored Holy Roman Empire of Charles V, who was emperor from 1519 to 1556, and the process of the devolution from it. The concept of the pseudo-sacred necessarily implies a concept of the sacred: that is the Holy Roman Empire up to the death of Frederick II (Hohenstaufen) in 1250. From 800 to 1250, the condominium of Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy was for the West the "sacred", the theoretical unity of the domains of Caesar and Christ. The Holy Roman Emperor, as we have indicated, was in a tradition of "cosmic kingship", of world empire, that in the West passes from the Egyptian pharaohs to Alexander the Great to the Roman Caesars. These in turn are to be seen in a broader context of sun-deity emperors such as those of Japan, China or pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.

To call the condominium of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy from 800 to 1250 the "sacred" is in no way to underwrite a romantic view of a lost medieval unity: it is merely to indicate its significance, in the subsequent social and political history of the West, as the unity of imperium and sacerdotum, empire and priesthood, with "universal" claims.

Why, then, is the "pseudo-sacred" appropriate for the early modern Holy Roman Empire of Charles V? What was "pseudo" about it? The term "pseudo-sacred" refers first of all to the restorationist aspect of Habsburg world power. From the middle of the 13th to the middle of the 15th century, the Holy Roman Empire had been reduced to a husk, through the epoch of feudal breakdown crisis, plagues and depopulation, Papal schism, and major armed heresy such as the Wycliff revolt in England or the Hussite revolt in Bohemia. When the Habsburgs took over the imperial crown for good in 1440, just as the Western voyages of discovery were beginning, no one foresaw the process of conquest, diplomacy and dynastic marriage whereby, 80 years later, Charles V would fuse the Habsburg lands with the Spanish world empire, creating a world-wide territorial domain larger than Rome at its peak. The restored Holy Roman Empire seemed to contemporaries like a phantom of a superceded past.⁵²³

⁵²²-In the Introduction, I briefly define the pseudo-sacred as "the devolution and dispersion of the unitary sacred into the banality of the modern" (p. 3).

⁵²³-"The patterns of the new Europe take their shape under the shadow, or the mirage, of a recrudescence of the idea of the Empire. The revival of imperialism in Charles V was a phantom revival. That he looked so much like a Lord of the World was due to the Habsburg dynastic marriage

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V embodied the pseudo-sacred because the "universal" empire was restored at a time when the realities of medieval universalism, such as they were, had irreversibly fractured. Two years after Charles assumed the imperial crown he had to confront Martin Luther at Wurms, opening a schism in Western Christendom which he spent the rest of his life battling, in vain. The early modern nation state that had consolidated in England, France and Spain was a second discontinuity with the medieval period, as Charles was also to experience directly with the formation of an English national church after 1530 in a break with Catholicism.

But it was the nature of emerging absolutist power which most of all distinguished the epoch of Charles V⁵²⁴ from that of his medieval predecessors. The medieval emperor or king had merely been a *primus inter pares* in relationship to the warrior class, the nobility. From the 15th century onward, the process described by Elias as the "transformation of the warrior class into the courtier class" was underway. As the monarch became more socially remote from his knightly peers, his image was increasingly associated with the central court culture. And it was the courtier, the man in the shadow of the emperor, the man of arms transformed into the man of culture, who epitomized the pseudo-sacred. The process that ended ca. 1840 with the French dandy or the American Transcendentalist began with the appearance of the centralized court and the related state civil service of the national monarchies of the early modern period.

Melville in all likelihood did not have this analysis, except intuitively, but the idea of the transformation of the warrior class into the class of culture was not foreign to him. As he put it in his description of the modern Templars in "The Paradise of Bachelors":

"...the iron heel is changed to a boot of patent leather; the long two-handed sword to a one-handed quill...the knight-combatant of the Saracen, breasting spear-points at Acre, now fights law-points at Westminster Hall. The helmet is a wig. Struck by Time's enchanters wand, the Templar today is a lawyer."⁵²⁵

The reader will recall the same tendency toward the prosaic at work in the "standing of mast-heads" passage in Moby Dick or the "Memnon stone" scene in Pierre. Let us consider Melville's presentation of cosmic kingship (and kingship generally), the medieval warrior class (or knights), and the pseudo-sacred⁵²⁶.

policy...The transitory and unreal character of the empire of Charles V is the aspect of it usually stressed by modern historians." (F. Yates, Astraea. The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century. London 1975. p. 1)

⁵²⁴-Charles V is mentioned by Melville in White-Jacket, (pp. 12, 197, 363), "Benito Cereno" (cf. below) and "I and my Chimney" (p. 1310). His monastic withdrawal from power at the end of his life meshed with Melville's fascination with entombment.

⁵²⁵-"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids", pp. 1258-1259.

⁵²⁶-Although Melville obviously does not use the term, he offers in Moby

Frayed royalty, but not yet as a major theme, had already attracted Melville's attention in Polynesia:

"The truth is, that with the ascendancy of the missionaries, the regal office in Tahiti lost much of its dignity and influence...The monarch claimed to be a sort of by-blow of Tatarroa, the Saturn of the Polynesian mythology...

'I'm a greater man than King George', said the incorrigible young Otoo, to the first missionaries; 'he rides on a horse, and I on a man.' ...

But alas! how times have changed; how transient human greatness. Some years since, Pomaree Vahinee I, the grand daughter of the proud Otoo, went into the laundry business..."⁵²⁷

Similarly:

"...an old war canoe, crumbling to dust...upon the stern was something which Long Ghost maintained to be the arms of the royal House of Pomaree...The upper part...had in many places fallen off, and lay decaying upon the ground."⁵²⁸

The revolutions of 1848 in Europe, in which kings were toppled and then largely restored, interrupted the writing of Mardi, and at least partially motivated the long debates on monarchy and republicanism in that book⁵²⁹.

Melville was not, obviously, writing history, nor was he attempting to present a coherent theory of history. What then explains the persistent references in his work to Egypt, Alexander⁵³⁰, Charlemagne, St-Louis, Charles V, Versailles,

Dick a concise definition of the pseudo-sacred as used in this study: "For be a man's intellectual superiority what it will, it can never assume the practical, available supremacy over other men, without the aid of some sort of external arts and entrenchments, always, in themselves, more or less paltry or base...Such large virtue lurks in these small things when extreme political superstitions invest them, that in some royal instances even to idiot imbecility they have imparted potency." (MD, p. 150)

⁵²⁷-Omoo, pp. 635-636.

⁵²⁸-ibid. p. 544.

⁵²⁹-Mardi, pp. 1121-1212.

⁵³⁰-Alexander is mentioned in Moby Dick (pp. 34, 65, 394, 421) and Billy Budd (p. 1354);

Charlemagne is mentioned in Mardi (p. 855) White Jacket (p. 198), Moby Dick (p. 252), the dedication to Pierre, "The Piazza" (pp. 621-622), "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!" (p. 1219);

St-Louis (Louis IX) is mentioned in Clarel (cf. below) and Billy Budd (p. 1431)

Napoleon is mentioned in Mardi (p. 760), Redburn (pp. 87-88, p. 249) White-Jacket (p. 213), Moby Dick (p. 145) and Billy Budd (p. 1375);

Lord Nelson is mentioned in Redburn, Moby Dick, "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!"

Napoleon and Nelson? What explains the persistent portrayal of the monarchic and imperial principle represented by these figures shown in extreme decay, as was already the case in the Polynesian books just cited? It was argued in the previous chapter that Melville used these figures, as cosmic kings, to balance his fallen father imago, but in their decadent form they blended into that imago. In Melville's present, as indicated previously (as in the discussion of the dandy) they had decayed into nothing but luxury consumer goods with their (usually French) aristocratic aura. It is the images of this decay, beginning with Charles V, that we call the "pseudo-sacred": the deflated survival of the monarchic- aristocratic principle in the modern capitalist world, the aesthetic buffer which the bourgeois ego places between itself and the realities of that world⁵³¹. Melville gives one of his most powerful portrayals of the pseudo-sacred in "Benito Cereno" (1855), a short story dealing with a temporarily-successful slave revolt aboard a Spanish slave ship in 1799. Here is the first description of the ship:

"...But the principal relic of faded grandeur was the ample oval of the shield-like stern-piece, intricately carved with the arms of Castile and Leon, medallioned about by groups of mythological or symbolical devices"⁵³²

Captain Delano boards and explores the ship

"and he bethought him of the time, when that state-cabin and this state balcony had heard the voices of the Spanish king's officers, and the forms of the Lima viceroy's daughters had perhaps leaned where he stood...(it) seemed the charred ruin of some summer-house long running to waste...Though upon the sea, he seemed in some far inland country; prisoner in some deserted chateau, left to stare at empty grounds, and peer out at vague roads, where never wagon or wayfarer passed"⁵³³.

(p. 1219), and Billy Budd (p. 1365)
on Charles V, cf. below.

⁵³¹-See the opening pages of Ch. XII for a full definition of the pseudo-sacred.

⁵³²-'Benito Cereno' p. 676.

⁵³³-ibid. p. 705. This passage curiously echoes Isabel's story as she told it to Pierre. She had never known her mother, but had been raised in "an old, half-ruinous house in some region" possibly "not in this country, but somewhere in Europe, perhaps in France", whose image had been recalled to her by "plates of the outside of French chateaux". She was moved to a series of houses and later had been visited repeatedly by a charming gentleman, apparently her father, until he no longer came, apparently dead. Both accounts have in common the vague memories of a past of faded elegance, irrevocably cut off from the present. Cf. also the of French luxury items in Redburn's childhood memories, or the Versailles interior of the old house of Jimmy Rose.

The entire ship, in fact, seems an apparition on the void of the water:

"...but in the case of the ship there is this addition; that the living spectacle it contains, upon its sudden and complete disclosure, has, in contrast with the blank ocean which zones it, something of the effect of enchantment. The ship seems unreal, these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep, which directly must receive back what it gave."⁵³⁴ (my emphasis- LG).

Here is Melville's description of the Spanish captain, Benito Cereno, acting one of the main parts:

"...the Spanish captain, a gentlemanly, reserved-looking, and rather young man to a stranger's eye, dressed with singular richness, but bearing plain traces of recent sleepless cares and disquietudes, stood passively by, leaning against the main-mast, at one moment casting a dreary, spiritless look upon his excited people, at the next an unhappy glance toward his visitor."⁵³⁵

Benito Cereno, "like some hypochondriac abbot", then, conveys in his person the faded elegance of his ship. Melville identifies him with the original figure of the pseudo-sacred:

"His manner...was, in its degree, not unlike that which might be supposed to have been his imperial countryman's, Charles V, just previous to the anchoritish retirement of that monarch from the throne."⁵³⁶

but it was all a fraud:

"...The dress, so precise and costly, worn by him on the day whose events have been narrated, had not been willingly put on. And that silver-mounted sword, apparent symbol of despotic command, was not, indeed, a sword, but the ghost of one. The scabbard, artificially stiffened, was empty."⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴-ibid. p. 677.

⁵³⁵-ibid.

⁵³⁶-ibid. p. 681. Twenty years later, Melville uses a similar image in Clarel (1876) to convey the false bravado of religion in its losing battle with 19th century science: "The King a corpse led/ On a live horse." (III.xvi.211-212)

⁵³⁷-ibid. p. 755. Further allusions to Inquisition Spain heighten the identification with Charles V and the idea of pseudo-sacred decay. In one scene, Benito Cereno is shaved by the black servant Babo in the ship's cuddy. The cuddy was in the same disarray as the rest of the ship, with old settees that looked like "inquisitor's racks", and an arm chair which "seemed some grotesque, middle-age engine of torment". A flag locker exposed

Benito Cereno had appeared from the beginning as a punctured figure of former grandeur, another stand-in for Melville's dying, mad father:

"His mind appeared unstrung, if not still more seriously affected...he moved slowly about, at times suddenly pausing, starting, or staring, biting his lip, biting his finger nail, flushing, paling, twitching his beard, with other symptoms of an absent or moody mind."⁵³⁸

Melville reached out to figures such as Charlemagne as appropriate symbols of strong, unitary men of action (the sacred), who stood as the backdrop to crippled monarchs such as Charles V (the pseudo-sacred) "just previous to the anchoritish retirement of that monarch from the throne". But Melville did not stop there. Connected to this fascination with Charlemagne is a persistent medievalism in Melville, (which culminates in Clarel) centered around knights and above all the Knights Templar.

Let us consider several passages. After his first night sharing a bed at the Spouter Inn with the former cannibal king Queequeg, (who shortly will sign onto the Pequod with the Maltese cross of the Knights Templar as his mark), Ishmael awakens to find Queequeg's arm "thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner". The incident recalls to Ishmael a childhood experience when he had been confined to his room by his stepmother:

"At last I must have fallen into a troubled nightmare of a doze; and slowly waking from it--half steeped in dreams--I opened my eyes and the before sun-lit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock running through all my frame; nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bedside. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken. I knew not how this consciousness at last glided away from me; but waking in the morning, I shudderingly remembered it all, and for days and weeks and months afterwards I lost myself in confounding attempts to explain the mystery. Nay, to this very hour, I often puzzle myself with it."⁵³⁹

"various colored bunting, some rolled up, others half unrolled, still others tumbled". Babo uses the flag of Spain as a shaving apron for Don Benito. A barber's basin is used in this scene, which may be an allusion by Melville to Cervantes' episode in which Don Quixote mistakes a barber's basin for a knight's helmet.

⁵³⁸-ibid. p. 679.

⁵³⁹-Moby Dick (1979), p. 28.

Earlier, in Mardi, Melville had written, , in the voice of his narrator Taji:

"...My cheek blanches while I write; I start at the scratch of my pen; my own mad brood of eagles devours me: fain would I unsay this audacity; but an iron-mailed hand clenches mine in a vice, and prints down every letter in my spite. Fain would I hurl off this Dionysius that rides me; my thoughts crush me down till I groan; in far fields I hear the song of the reaper, while I slave and faint in this cell. The fever runs through me like lava; my hot brain burns like a coal; and like many a monarch, I am less to be envied than the veriest hind in the land."⁵⁴⁰ (my emphasis)

While it may seem far-fetched to associate two passages, taken out of context, what they have in common is a state of anxiety, linked to vulnerability, conjuring up a strong, anonymous hand; in the latter case, the association (iron-mailed, monarch) is medieval. (In the former case, it is linked to Ishmael's "marriage" to a Polynesian "Templar" warrior.⁵⁴¹) In Pierre, in the midst of one of his Hamlet-like soliloquies, the protagonist proclaims: "Ha! a coat of iron mail seems to grow round, and husk me now...".⁵⁴² The crippled self in Melville that seeks a father, and that counter-balances his real crippled father with such exaggerated unitary men of action drawn from the medieval period, identifies itself with the knight, a choice also entwined with his actual descent from 13th century Scottish nobility. But this identification, at the same time, condemns him to the isolation of the monarch, "less to be envied, than the veriest hind in the land". It is invulnerable medieval imagery which Pierre assigns to his father upon discovering the existence of Isabel:

"...Thou Black Knight, that with visor down, thus confrontest me, and mockest at me; lo! I strike through thy helm, and will see thy face, be it Gorgon!"⁵⁴³

Pierre's memories of his father are no less shrouded in a medieval haze; his father was "the entire one-pillared temple of his moral life" which

⁵⁴⁰-Mardi, p.

⁵⁴¹-More chivalric references in Moby Dick are "we found ourselves almost broad upon the wintry ocean, whose freezing spray cased us in ice, as in polished armor" (p. 108); each mate "was like a Gothic knight of old" (p. 121); there was a "certain generous knight-errantism" in the crew (p. 215); they are compared to "the high lifted and chivalric Crusaders of old times" (p. 216); the six oarsmen in a pursuing whaleboat are "like the six burghers of Calais before King Edward" (p. 287); the "harpooners of Nantucket should be enrolled in the most noble order of St. George" (p. 373).

⁵⁴²-Pierre, p. 65.

⁵⁴³-ibid. 91.

"as in some beautiful Gothic oratories, one central pillar, trunk-like, upholds the roof"⁵⁴⁴

Later in Pierre, through Melville's narrator, comes once again the association of invulnerability:

"...It is impossible to talk or to write without apparently throwing oneself hopelessly open: the Invulnerable Knight wears his visor down."⁵⁴⁵

The "man in the iron mask" had also appeared in Mardi, in the supra-historical meditation quoted earlier: "I, the man in the iron mask; I, Junius."⁵⁴⁶ Iron masks recur in this passage:

"Ah! but these warriors, like anvils, will stand a deal of hard hammering. Especially in the old knight-errant times. For at the battle of Brevieux in Flanders, my glorious old gossiping ancestor, Froissart, informs me, that ten good knights, being suddenly unhorsed, fell stiff and powerless to the plain, fatally encumbered by their armor. Whereupon, the rascally burglarious peasants, their foes, fell to picking their visors; as burglars, locks; or oystermen, oysters; to get at their lives. But all to no purpose. And at last they were fain to ask aid of a blacksmith; and not till then, were the inmates of the armor dispatched. Now it was deemed very hard, that the mysterious state-prisoner of France should be riveted in an iron mask; but these knight-errants did voluntarily prison themselves in their own iron Bastiles; and thus helpless were murdered therein. Days of chivalry those, when gallant chevaliers died chivalric deaths!"⁵⁴⁷

Melville relationship to knights is not that of idealization; he is well aware of their limitations:

"And this was the epic age, over whose departure my late eloquent and prophetic friend and correspondent, Edmund Burke, so movingly mourned. Yes, they were glorious times. But no sensible man, given to quiet domestic delights, would exchange his warm fireside and muffins, for a heroix bivouac, in a wild

⁵⁴⁴-ibid. p. 93.

⁵⁴⁵-ibid. p. 295.

⁵⁴⁶-Mardi, p. 495.

⁵⁴⁷-ibid. pp. 738-739. The "man in the iron mask" was a creation of Alexandre Dumas, an alleged twin brother of Louis XIV who was imprisoned and masked for anonymity.

beechen wood, of a raw gusty morning in Normandy; every knight blowing his steel-gloved fingers, and vainly striving to cook his cold coffee in his helmet."⁵⁴⁸

Discussing the Knights Templar in "The Paradise of Bachelors", Melville's narrator says:

"...I dare say those old warrior-priests were but gruff and grouty at the best; cased in Birmingham hardware, how could their crimped arms give yours or mine a hearty shake?"⁵⁴⁹

To get to the bottom of the meaning of medieval knights for Melville, it is necessary to consider its most recurrent expression, his particular preoccupation with the Knights Templar. They appear in a passing reference in Typee, and Queequeg, as indicated, uses their Maltese cross as his mark. The Templars appear again, incongruously, in Israel Potter. Contacting English sympathizers of the American Revolution in London, Israel is hidden by one of them in a secret chamber which was

"was extremely ancient, dating far beyond the era of Elizabeth, having once formed portion of a religious retreat belonging to the Templars."

"...The domestic discipline of this order was rigid and merciless in the extreme. In a side wall of their second-story chapel...they had an internal vacancy left, exactly of the shape and average size of a coffin. In this place, from time to time, inmates convicted of contumacy were confined... A small hole, the girth of one's wrist, sunk like a telescope three feet through the masonry into the cell, served at once for ventilation and to push through food to the prisoner. This hole opening into the chapel also enabled the poor solitaire, as intended, to overhear the religious services at the altar; and, without being present, take part in the same. It was deemed a good sign of the state of the sufferer's soul, if from the gloomy recesses of the wall, was heard the agonized groan of his dismal response...Sometimes weeks elapsed ere the disentanglement. The penitent being then usually found numb and congealed in all his extremities, like one newly stricken with paralysis.

This coffin cell of the Templars had been suffered to remain in the demolition of the general edifice, to make way for the erection of the new, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was enlarged somewhat, and altered, and additionally ventilated, to adapt it for a place of concealment in times of civil dissension."⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸-*ibid.* pp. 738-739. It will be recalled that Edmund Burke, as a "late eloquent and prophetic friend" is being cited by Taji, not by Melville. Burke, to put it mildly, had no concept of the pseudo-sacred in contemporary monarchy.

⁵⁴⁹-*"The Paradise of Bachelors"* p. 1259.

⁵⁵⁰-*ibid.* pp. 504-505.

This passage, with no intrinsic relationship to the rest of Israel Potter, may be of no great significance in itself, but it joins the New York Tombs, the pyramids, Petra and other sites of entombment conjuring up a desire for rebirth that are scattered through Melville's writings. The Templar association becomes significant by their further use in later texts. They are more central in the short story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids". The significance of the Templars for Melville's medievalism lay in the fact that they were both knights and monks, combining his fascination with warriors of all kinds and his fascination with withdrawal from the world and above all entombment. Monks are less present in Melville's work than knights, but they are part of his medievalist imagery. Again, this is not a question of "identification"; both Colonel John Moredock, the Indian killer of The Confidence Man, and Captain Vere, who kills Billy Budd, are specifically identified with warriors and monks.⁵⁵¹

One of the most haunting medieval monastic images in Melville's writings is in the description of the first sighting of the Spanish slave ship in the opening scene of "Benito Cereno". Its effect, in context, is to underscore the pseudo-sacred rot encountered on the *San Dominick*:

"...the ship, when made signally visible on the verge of the leaden-hued swells, with the shreds of fog here and there raggedly furring her, appeared like a white-washed monastery after a thunder-storm, seen perched upon some dun cliff among the Pyrenees. But it was no purely fanciful resemblance which now, for a moment, almost led Captain Delano to think that nothing less than a ship-load of monks was before him. Peering over the bulwarks were what really seemed, in the hazy distance, throngs of dark cowls; while, fitfully revealed through the open portholes, other dark moving figures were dimly descried, as of Black Friars pacing the cloisters."⁵⁵²

It may well be the case that Melville first encountered the Knights Templar through the impact on Cooper of Sir Walter Scott, who uses them in his novel Ivanhoe. He uses the Templars in "The Paradise of Bachelors" first of all to

⁵⁵¹-Cf. below, Chs. XVIII and XX.

⁵⁵²"Benito Cereno", pp. 674-675. The purpose of this imagery in "Benito Cereno" is to heighten the backdrop of Charles V for the character of Benito Cereno. But Charles V interested Melville in part precisely because of his "anchoritish" retirement. Monks also figure in Melville's description of the Church of the Apostles, converted to a Bohemian dwelling, in Pierre: "When the substance is gone, men cling to the shadow. Places once set apart to lofty purposes, still retain the name of that loftiness, even when converted to the meanest uses...The curious effects of this tendency are oftenest evinced in those venerable countries of the old transatlantic world; where still over the Thames one bridge yet retains the monastic title of Blackfriars; though not a single Black Friar, but many a pickpocket, has stood on that bank since a good ways beyond the days of Queen Bess..." (p. 312)

heighten his attack on the genteel foppishness of their 19th century namesake, in contrast to the proletarian hell of "The Tartarus of Maids", and also to take aim at Southern pretensions to chivalry. But their presence, here as elsewhere, is too articulated to be merely that.

Anyone seeking the origins of military prowess and military pageantry in Western history, as Melville did to deal with his "family romance", is necessarily drawn to the Middle Ages, and in medieval knighthood little surpasses the phenomena of the Templars, the warrior-monks.

It is the devolution of the Templars that interests Melville in "The Paradise of Bachelors":

"Templar? That's a romantic name. Let me see. Brian de Bois Guilbert was a Templar, I believe. Do we understand you to insinuate that those famous Templars still survive in modern London? May the ring of their armed heels be heard, and the rattle of their shields, as in mailed prayer the monk-knights knell before the consecrated Host? Surely a monk-knight were a curious sight picking his way along the Strand, his gleaming corselet and snowy surcoat spattered by an omnibus...We know indeed--sad history recounts it--that a moral blight tainted at last this sacred Brotherhood...the worm of luxury crawled beneath their guard...the sworn knights-bachelors grew to be but hypocrites and rakes."⁵⁵³

But their modernization is still a shock:

"...But for all this, quite unprepared were we to learn that Knights-Templars...were so entirely secularized as to be reduced from carving out immortal fame in glorious battling for the Holy Land, to the carving of roast-mutton at a dinner board. Like Anacreon, do these degenerate Templars now think it sweeter far to fall in banquet than in war?...Templars in modern London! Templars in their red-cross mantles smoking cigars at the Divan! Templars crowded in a railway train, stacked with steel helmet, spear and shield, the whole train looks like one elongated locomotive!"⁵⁵⁴

Here, once again, Melville is using the medieval Templars to underscore the erosion of the warrior ideal in the contemporary world, saying something about the modern Templars rather than their antecedents. Melville is showing the modern

⁵⁵³-"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids", Library of America edition, 1984. p. 1257-1258. Carolyn Karcher points out: "Brian de Bois-Guilbert, of course, was familiar to the average reader, acquainted with the Knights-Templars through Scott's *Ivanhoe*, as the ruthless monk-knight who abducted a Jewess, in defiance of both his order's sexual code and his society's ostracism of the Jews, and who then sought to save his honor by letting her be accused of witchcraft." (C. Karcher, op. cit. p. 122.)

⁵⁵⁴-ibid. p. 1258.

Templars as the pseudo-sacred, as the end of a fallen ideal, without in any way praising that ideal.

This changes, however, in Melville's treatment of the Templars in his epic poem Clarel, published in 1876.

In jumping over more than 20 years, it is necessary to be careful. (Clarel will be treated more fully later in this study.) Melville's use of the Knights Templar in all the writings cited thus far (Typee, Moby Dick, Israel Potter, "The Paradise of Bachelors") might amount to little more than a medievalist trope, and in the latter story they are ridiculed almost as much as the modern Templars. Melville was no nostalgic for the Middle Ages. But he was struggling with the meaning of warriors and action in his own time and his own immediate past, and the Western aura (the sacred) surrounding kings and warriors, like cosmic kingship itself, drew him toward the medieval period. He was, as indicated, also interested in entombment and warrior-monks such as the Templars were therefore doubly interesting to him. By the time he wrote Clarel, his medievalism had become more pronounced, his presentation of Catholicism was quite different and more favorable than his earlier treatments of Christianity, and the Templars become a real standard from which to measure the cultural desert of the late 19th century West. In Clarel the references which previously may have just been tropes, with little or no meaning, show their ultimate trajectory in Melville's thinking.

The most central image in Clarel, conveying the meaning of the Templars for the pseudo-sacred, is the tattoo of the Greek sailor Agath.

Agath appears late in the poem to accompany the pilgrims from Bethlehem on their return to Jerusalem. When he first appears, the pilgrims notice his tattoo of the Jerusalem cross. It is a Templar symbol and the transposition of the Maltese cross with which Queequeg signed onto the Pequod. Yet everything about Agath is designed to show the studied downscaling of Melville's hopes in the 25 years that separate Clarel from Moby Dick. The pilgrims assume that Agath's tattoo must be from the Holy Land, but in fact he acquired it "off Java-Head" in a calm when there was "naught to do". The same symbol, indicates Rolfe, was given to medieval pilgrims as proof they had reached the Holy Land. Templars must have used it, but

"see/ From these mailed Templars now the sign/ Losing the import and true key/
Descends to boatswains of the brine".⁵⁵⁵

The symbol of the vaunted warrior-monks of the West has devolved into a sailor's tattoo, acquired casually in a moment of boredom.

The late Melville's involvement in medievalism is startling, yet not surprising, given his earlier use of warriors and monks. But before seeing where that problematic leads, it is important to see in what Melville's interest in Catholicism, medievalism and the Knights Templar consists. This interest, once again, can be stated summarily: in order to recognize the pseudo-sacred, it is

⁵⁵⁵-ibid. pp. 411-412.

necessary to have a grasp of the sacred. The sacred is unleashed in Clarel.⁵⁵⁶ And one of its foremost representatives is to be found in the Knights Templar.

Who were the Knights Templar? On the empirical level, they were an order or warrior-monks founded in 1118 to participate in the newly-launched Crusades. (Christian armies had captured Jerusalem on the First Crusade in 1099; they held it until 1187.) The Knights Templar were initially conceived as guardians for the Crusaders' routes and maintained a series of hospices and hospitals for pilgrims and Crusaders. When the Crusades to recapture the Holy Land ended ca. 1291, the Templars became vulnerable. By the time of their suppression by Philip the Fair of France (with the complicity of the Pope) in 1307, culminating in the public execution of their leader Jacques de Molay in Paris in 1314, the Templars grew into a unique international force in medieval Europe, deeply involved in banking and the financing of states. Their suppression was justified with accusations that the Templars practiced sodomy and heresy and that they were in some cases apostates to Islam, and it had as its tangible goal the seizure of many of their vast assets. Thousands of Templars were arrested all over Europe, tortured for confessions, and executed.

Nevertheless, the empirical account of the Templars barely begins to account for their impact in Western culture. They are the warriors of the era of cosmic kingship. They combine what Stendhal would later call "the red and the black". They were, as Melville himself emphasized, a "sacerdotal chivalry" confronting the hegemony of Islam, which had its own sacerdotal chivalry (believed to have influenced the creation of the Templars), including one also present in Clarel, the Druze.

In Clarel, Melville had reached back over his own secular era, and the centuries of Enlightenment and positivism preceding it, straight to the source, to underscore the centrality of the Christian Middle Ages in the formation of the West, as he did in no other work. In the opening passage he invokes Louis IX, St-Louis, the "crusader king"⁵⁵⁷. He mentions the murderers of Thomas à Becket, who did penance by joining the Templars and fighting in the Crusades, and who are buried in Jerusalem. The crusaders Godfrey and Baldwin are the source of "dreams romance can thrill". Melville cites the crumbled cloisters of the Hospitalers, a Crusading order similar to the Templars. He mentions the barbarity of the Christian conquest of 1099⁵⁵⁸, in contrast to the relative humanity of the

⁵⁵⁶-Section III.ix "Of Monasteries" (pp. 308-310) is a world-historical overview of monasteries; a major portion of the poem takes place in the monastery of Mar Saba.

⁵⁵⁷-Rolfe later invokes St-Louis, who died on crusade in Tunisia in 1270: "King, who betwixt the cross and sword/ On ashes died in cowl and cord--/In desert died; and, if thy heart/ Betrayed thee not. from life didst part/ A martyr for thy martyred Lord;/Anointed one and undefiled--/O warrior manful, though a child/ In simple faith-- St. Louis! rise./And teach us out of holy eyes/Whence came thy trust." (pp. 181-182).

⁵⁵⁸Clarel, p. 102.

Moslems when they took Jerusalem from the Byzantines. Rolfe likens Jerusalem to Dante's hellish "City of Dis"⁵⁵⁹. An Arab bandit's rusty rifle is

"The spear of some crusader's pole/
Dropped long ago when death-lamps stole/
Over the night in Richard's host,/Then left to warp by Acre lost"

(II.xxiv.161-164)

In the modern, secular world, the Pope has been "despoiled of Charlemagne's great fee"⁵⁶⁰. Through the 18,000 lines of Clarel appear further references such as Tancred, Norman towers, Chaucer, Norse pilgrims, Roncevalles, York cathedral, and St. Francis of Assisi⁵⁶¹.

Later, in the discussion about possible Gnostic influences in the Bible and the role of Protestant sects as the cat's paw of atheism, the narrator uses a striking image directly from cosmic kingship. Asking if faith might merely "cast the skin" and continue in new forms, he says:

"...At St. Denis/ Where slept the Capets, sire and son./Eight centuries of lineal
clay./On steps that led down into vault/The prince inurned last made a halt./The
coffin left they there, 'tis said,/ Till the inheritor was dead;/ Then, not till then was
laid away. But if no more the creeds be linked,/ If the long line's at last extinct,/ If
time both creed and faith betray/ Vesture and vested--yet again/ What interregnum
or what reign ensues?"

(III.v.89-102)

The studies of Kantorowicz and Bloch on medieval cosmic kingship have already been cited in the study of Moby Dick⁵⁶². But Melville is using the striking

⁵⁵⁹-ibid. p. 118.

⁵⁶⁰-ibid. p. 229.

⁵⁶¹-St. Francis of Assisi is also brought into relationship to the warrior class. In Bethlehem, a Franciscan monk is serving as guide to the pilgrims, and approaches Ungar, who still wears his Confederate army sword, telling him that "your sword's a cross". St. Ignatius (16th century) and St. Martin (4th century) were soldiers too, before becoming holy men. "'Tis the pure disdain of life, or, holding life the real, Still subject to a brave ideal--'Tis this that makes the tent a porch whereby the warrior wins the church" (p. 453).

⁵⁶²-Cf. above footnote 119. The same phenomenon in a later period is, once again, the work of A. Boureau, Le simple corps du roi. (Paris, 1988). One description in Moby Dick is of "giant pines---serried lines of kings in Gothic genealogies" (p. 250); the Pequod's forecastle, while the crew is asleep, is like "a shrine of canonical kings and counselors" (p. 436).

metaphor of eight centuries of the "king's body" for the continuity of a kind of faith which may be extinct, with an unknown interregnum the only future.

But the medieval king was, as indicated, only the primus inter pares of the medieval warrior class, the knights⁵⁶³. These themes in Clarel converge on the previously- mentioned tattoo of the Greek pilot. The tattoo was

A thing of art, vermil and blue
A crucifixion in tattoo
With trickling blood-drops strange to see.
Above that problem of the loss,
Twin curving palm-boughs draping met
In manner of a canopy
Over an equi-limbed cross
And three tri-spiked and sister crowns:
And under these a star was set:
And all was tanned and toned in browns.

(IV.ii.50-59)⁵⁶⁴

The Ensign, as indicated earlier, was a sign of a medieval pilgrim or crusader. But as the pilot's tattoo, as Rolfe puts it:

"'tis here we note/ Downhanded in a way blind-fold,/A pious use of times remote."⁵⁶⁵

For the pilgrims, the Jerusalem cross tattoo was proof that they "had kneeled at Calvary". But as for the Templars

...those monk-soldiers helmet-crowned
Whose effigies in armed sleep, lie--
Stone, in the stony Temple round
In London; and (to verify
Them more) with carved greaves crossed, for sign

⁵⁶³- Chs. 26 and 27 of Moby Dick, in which Melville is introducing the three mates (Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask) and the three harpooners (Queequeg, Tastego and Daggoo) are entitled "Knights and Squires". "...each mate or headsman, like a Gothic knight of old, is always accompanied by his boat-steerer or harpooner..." (Moby Dick, 1979, p. 121). Ahab is the king.

⁵⁶⁴-According to Bezanson's annotations, "the palm-leaves, cross, star and crowns constitute the Jerusalem Ensign...of Crusader days...The first edition of Clarel bears a variation of this Ensign stamped in gold on both front covers." (Clarel, p. 633)

⁵⁶⁵-ibid. p. 411.

Of duty done in Palestine;
Exceeds it, pray, conjecture fair,
These may have borne this blazon rare,
And not alone on standard fine,
But pricked on chest or sinewy arm,
Pledged to defend against alarm
His tomb for whom they warred?...

(IV.ii.111-122)⁵⁶⁶

In "The Paradise of Bachelors", (as cited) more than 20 years earlier, "the iron heel is changed to a boot of patent leather", and in Clarel, the Jerusalem cross "descends to boatswains of the brine".

One final scene will complete this survey of medieval and Templar imagery. In Mar Saba, the monastery enclave where the party rests, Derwent goes for a walk and encounters the stone carving of

"A man in armor, visor down,
Enlocked complete in panoply.
Uplifting reverent a crown
In invocation.

(III.xxii.22.27)

Derwent generally occupies in Clarel the role of the superficial optimist steeped in "Niebuhrized" theology. Here he confronts the carving of a wounded warrior ("dread streaks down the thigh-piece ran") but which communicated "reverence, and naught beside":

"Yes, the art
Of cunning was, that it in part
By fair expressiveness of grace
Atoned even for the visored face."

(III.xxiii.38-41)

⁵⁶⁶-As Melville had written in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids": "The genuine Templar is long since departed. Go view the wondrous tombs in the Temple Church; see there the rigidly- haughty forms stretched out, with crossed arms upon their stilly hearts, in everlasting and undreaming rest." (Library of America edition, p. 1258) In this story, Melville's purpose was to contrast the original Templars with their foppish 19th century descendants, and to contrast the latter in turn with the mill girls from whose labor they lived. In Clarel, by contrast, the Templars serve as the most pronounced form of a medievalism by which to understand the devolution of the modern world. The class perspective has completely fallen away.

Underneath the carving is an inscribed poem explaining how, badly wounded in battle, the knight's prayer for death had been answered by "a pale hand noiseless from turf" which "re-armed" him. Asking a passing votary who this was, Derwent was told that it was a "count turned monk" who had renounced his name and all mention of his past, and had complained that the sculpture made him appear too rich⁵⁶⁷. Confronted with this example of what Christianity had once been, Derwent could only walk away saying "travel teaches much that's strange"⁵⁶⁸.

In Melville's presentation of the Moslems in Clarel, the term is used for the first time: "sacerdotal chivalry". The party meets Ottoman cavalry, and one figure is dressed in the Prophet's green:

"...Vernal he/ In sacerdotal chivalry:/That turban by its hue declares/That the great Prophet's blood he shares"⁵⁶⁹

On another occasion, Melville has Vine say:

"Some tribesmen from the south I saw
Their tents pitched in the Gothic nave,
The ruined one. Disowning law,
Not lawless lived they, no, indeed,
Their chief, why one of Sydney's clan
A slayer, but chivalric man;
And chivalry, with all that breed
Was Arabic or Saracen
In source, they tell."

(II.xxvii.82-91)

Immediately thereafter, Vine says:

But, as men stray
Further from Ararat away
Pity it were did they recede
In carriage, manners, and the rest;
But no, for ours the palm indeed
In bland amenities of the West!

(ibid. 91-96)

⁵⁶⁷-Recall the "man in the iron mask" and the "iron-mailed hand" in Mardi, as well as the Black Knight "with visor down" in Pierre.

⁵⁶⁸-In a similar scene at Mar Saba, Rolfe finds "Heroic traditional arms./Protecting tutelary charms/(Like Godfrey's sword and Baldwin's spur/In treasury of the Sepulcher./Therewith they knighthood yet confer/The monks or their superior" (p. 321)

⁵⁶⁹-ibid. pp. 183-184.

This is the end point of Templar imagery in the late Melville. In arriving at the concept of sacerdotal chivalry, Melville had followed out the "teleology" of his early problematic, to which we will return in a moment. He had found the source, for the West, of two of his oldest obsessions, warriors and monks. Further, he had located that source in battle with its Islamic counterpart, and conceded priority to the latter. The later Melville had understood that the aesthete and dandy of 1840, the aestheticized moi absolu he had fought all his life, was a devolution of the medieval warrior class. In "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" he had attacked both the real Templars and their modern counterparts from the vantage point of the blankness of modern factory work. This perspective had disappeared from Clarel, except in the menace of "red revolution" denounced by two major characters (Mortmain and Ungar) and defended by no one. Whether he had changed his attitude toward sacerdotal chivalry in the intervening 20 years, he had not changed his attitude toward the "bland amenities of the West". Clarel takes place in a desert, physical and spiritual. Melville had changed the terms of the discussion, and placed the Jerusalem cross on the covers of both volumes of the epic poem.

Melville hardly wrote Clarel as a medievalist apology. His main protagonist, Clarel, ends his pilgrimage barely less disillusioned than when he began:

"They wire the world--far under sea
They talk; but never comes to me
A message from beneath the stone."

A conversion to Catholicism would be the least one could expect if Melville had become enamored of "sacerdotal chivalry". Nevertheless, the favorable presentation of it by the author who dedicated The Confidence Man to "the victims of auto da fe", showed a real shift in Melville's thought.

But Melville, as indicated, took a long time getting to the idea of "sacerdotal chivalry" presented in Clarel. Clarel was written long after Melville had largely turned away from fiction for poetry. Sacerdotal chivalry may well have been the end point of Melville's preoccupation with warriors and with entombment, but it is now necessary to circle back to the question of knights in his earlier problematic of the 1851-1856 period, the arc from Pierre to The Confidence Man, when he was still wrestling with the "angel of negation".

In this earlier period, the "knight with the visor down" was the "armored" self which Melville could have embraced as one mediocre solution to the absent father. It was a possible solution to the anxiety of non-self expressed in the two sequences in which Ishmael felt a "supernatural hand in mine" or Taji said that "an iron-mailed fist clinches mine in a vice". But if the "knight with the visor down" is invulnerable, he is also incapable of communication, incapable of giving the "hearty shake" mentioned in "The Paradise of Bachelors". The knight is for Melville the unitary mythic self he could substitute for the absent father. But the knight is no solution; he is what he is, a self-same identical. The knight is the minor

figure of Fortinbras in Shakespeare's Hamlet, who does his knightly duty reflexively while Hamlet agonizes in the "sickly pale cast of thought".

The knight is also the man of the quest. Tommo (in Typee and Omoo), Taji, Redburn, Ishmael, Pierre and Clarel are also embarked on quests, but in a post-Hamlet mode. Melville was not nostalgic for knights; he did not immerse himself in medieval epic, but in Spenser, Shakespeare and Cervantes, who confronted the chivalric ideal of the warrior class with early modern self-consciousness. The quest is for wholeness, for reintegration of the self. But Melville's protagonists are embarked on a quest in the epoch of the "bland amenities of the West", when sacerdotal chivalry has frayed into the luxury consumer goods which Melville's father imported from France, the pseudo-sacred. To become a "knight" in the world in which Melville came of age was to embrace the aestheticized self, Julien Sorel's cameo of Napoleon, the self of the dandy. This "closed" aestheticized self, the romantic self of the first half of the 19th century, although reduced, like Melville's London Templars, to merely a "flicker" of cosmic kingship and sacerdotal chivalry, was the last concentrated self in the lineage that passed from Charlemagne to Charles V to Napoleon. The non-self invaded by French luxury goods, which was Melville's experience, was the diffuse remnant of that flicker, and smashed up against the realities of the working class and the closely related slavery question. Melville, like Pierre, could not "appear" with "Tom, Dick and Harry", and therefore responded, like Bartleby, with the masked anonymity of his "double writing" and with blankness.

Ch. XIII: Melville's Critique of Transcendentalism and the Aestheticized Self: After *Moby Dick*

Before turning to Melville's post-1851 proto-modernism, it is necessary to briefly review his settling of accounts with Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism, as the American counterpart to the aesthetic self derived from Kant and Coleridge, has been described as the "last flicker" of cosmic kingship. It is the closed bourgeois self, still professing itself as universal, at one with the "Third Estate". Melville, beginning with *Pierre*, articulates the bourgeois self which refuses to "appear" before the conquest of reality by consumption. It is no longer universal; it no longer attempts to fuse with "Queequeg"; it "evacuates" the self into blankness as its last defense.

In *Moby Dick*, Melville attacked Transcendentalism, or what this study has called the aestheticized moi absolu, from various viewpoints, but all these viewpoints converge on self-interested blindness⁵⁷⁰ to harsh social and natural realities, to what could be called "metaphysically", in a Miltonian sense, the existence of radical evil. Transcendentalism and its benevolent, pantheistic view of nature cannot deal with the feeding frenzy of sharks in the Pacific; its gentility cannot deal with the realities of working-class life and poverty; its egocentricity is in fact a modernized and aestheticized version of Calvinism's preoccupation with the salvation of the self, and the charity rooted in its self-serving illusions is patronizing.

One of Melville's most extended early commentaries on Transcendentalism, outside his direct treatment of them in his writings, was a discussion of Emerson in a letter to his friend Evert Duyckinck, editor of the Young America journal, *Democratic Review*. It is a more balanced view than can generally be extracted from his writings, and indicates an evolution in which he was defining his own position:

"...Yet I think Emerson is more than a brilliant fellow...Swear he is a humbug--then he is no common humbug...I was very agreeably disappointed in Mr. Emerson...For the sake of argument, let us call him a fool--then had I rather be a fool than a wise man.--I love all men who dive. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five miles or more...

I could readily see in Emerson, notwithstanding his merit, a gaping flaw. It was, the insinuation, that had he lived in those days when the world was made, he

⁵⁷⁰-At times it seems linked to blindness tout court, as in the tirade against the "sunken eyed young Platonist" who will "tow you ten times around the world, and never make you one pint of sperm richer...Childe Harold not unfrequently perches himself upon the mast-head of some luckless disappointed whale-ship...those young Platonists have the notion that their vision is imperfect; they are short-sighted; what use, then, to strain the visual nerve? They have left their opera glasses at home." (*MD*, pp. 162-163)

might have offered some valuable suggestions. These men are all cracked right across the brow....But enough of this Plato who talks thro' his nose."⁵⁷¹

In 1862, when he had already left his anti-Transcendentalist polemic (and fiction) behind, Melville made marginal notes in his copy of Emerson's essays. When Emerson wrote "The good, compared to the evil which each man sees, is as his own good to his own evil", Melville noted in the margin: "A Perfectly good being, therefore, would see no evil. But what did Christ see?--He saw what made him weep."⁵⁷²

Next to Emerson's statement: "The drover, the sailor buffets (the storm) all day, and his health renews itself as vigorous a pulse under the sleet, as under the sun of June" Melville wrote: "To one who has weathered Cape Horn as a common sailor what stuff all this is."⁵⁷³

Let us now consider how this polemic evolves in Melville's writings.

Although it is not a major theme of the book, already in White-Jacket Melville had introduced minor figures who were aesthetes, with Transcendentalist overtones. There was Lt. Selvagee, who

"...with all the intrepid effeminacy of your true dandy, ...still continued his Cologne water baths, and sported his lace-bordered handkerchief in the very teeth of the tempest."⁵⁷⁴;

as well as the poet Lemsford⁵⁷⁵, three or four journalists, and the philosopher Nord, who "amazed (White-Jacket) as much as Coleridge did the troopers among whom he enlisted"⁵⁷⁶. But White-Jacket, as an expose of conditions in the U.S. Navy, is not primarily about the encounter of such people with harsh reality.

⁵⁷¹-Letter to Evert Duyckinck, 3.3.1849. In the Herschel Parker edition of The Confidence Man, New York 1971. pp. 256-257.

⁵⁷²-ibid. p. 262.

⁵⁷³-ibid.

⁵⁷⁴-White-Jacket, . p. 32.

⁵⁷⁵-Lemsford conceals his chest of poetry in a little-used cannon which is later fired in returning a salute (p. 195).

⁵⁷⁶-The chaplain must also be included among the men of education on board (cf. pp. 157-156). Melville portrays him as totally complicit in the harsh functioning of naval discipline: "He was particularly hard upon the Gnostics and the Marcionites of the second century of the Christian era; but he never, in the remotest manner, attacked the every-day vices of the nineteenth century, as eminently illustrated in our man-of-war world." (pp. 157-158) White-Jacket thinks the chaplain, "who so pranced on Coleridge's 'High German horse' must have been responsible for choosing the contents of the ship's library (p. 169)

The case of Moby-Dick has been analyzed at length. But Pierre, if anything, represents an even more savage attack on Transcendentalism. Pierre himself is ultimately no Transcendentalist, and on his way down articulates a real critique of the Transcendentalists he encounters in New York. Pierre's arrival at the down-at-heels residence of the Apostles is the occasion for one of the best anti-Transcendentalist broadsides in Melville's work. Even before Pierre's arrival in New York, the stage is set for this confrontation, in the portrayal of Pierre's quest:

"...Now without doubt this Talismanic Secret has never yet been found; and in the nature of human things it seems as though it never can be. Certain philosophers have time and time again pretended to have found it; but if they do not in the end discover their own illusion, other people soon discover it for themselves...Plato, and Spinoza, and Goethe, and many more belong to this guild of self-impostors, with a preposterous rabble of Muggletonian Scots and Yankees, whose vile brogue still more bestreaks the stripedness of their Greek or German Neoplatonical originals..."⁵⁷⁷

Pierre moves himself and his party into the Church of the Apostles, an expanded annex of an 18th-century church in what had become a warehouse district. The annex had been built to "give a roost to gregarious lawyers", but too many new floors had been built, and the empty upper floors of the building filled up with

"...scores of those miscellaneous, bread-and-cheese adventurers, and ambiguously professional nondescripts in very genteel but shabby black, and unaccountable foreign-looking fellows in blue spectacles...But these poor, penniless devils still strive to make ample amends for their physical forlornness, by resoluting reveling in the region of blissful ideals.

They are mostly artists of various sorts; painters, or sculptors, or indigent students, or teachers of languages, or poets, or fugitive French politicians, of German philosophers. Their mental tendencies, however heterodox at times, are still very fine and spiritual on the whole; since the vacuity of their exchequers leads them to reject the coarse materialism of Hobbes, and incline to the airy exaltations of the Berkeleyan philosophy. Often groping in vain in their pockets, they cannot but give in to the Cartesian vortices; while the abundance of leisure in their attics (physical and figurative) unite with the leisure in their stomachs, to fit them to an eminent degree for that undivided attention indispensable to the proper digesting of the sublimated categories of Kant; especially as Kant (can't) is the one great impalpable fact in their pervadingly impalpable lives...several of them were well-known Teleological Theorists, and Social Reformers, and political propagandists of all manner of heterodoxical tenets...(they were) secretly suspected to have some mysterious ulterior object, vaguely connected with the absolute overturning of Church and State, and the hasty and premature advance of some unknown great political and religious millennium...yet, to say the truth...its occupants (were) a

⁵⁷⁷-Pierre, pp. 241-242.

company of harmless people, whose greatest reproach was efflorescent coats and crack-crowned hats all podding in the sun."⁵⁷⁸

Melville uses Pierre's encounter with the Apostles to launch another blast against the limits of the social views of the Transcendentalists, possibly with Thoreau and noble poverty foremost in mind:

"...If the grown man of taste, possess not only some eye to detect the picturesque in the natural landscape, so also, has he as keen a perception of what may not unfitly be here styled, the povertiresque in the social landscape. To such an one, not more picturesquely conspicuous is the dismantled thatch in a painted cottage of Gainsborough, than the time-tangled and want-thinned locks of a beggar, povertiresquely diversifying those snug little cabinet-pictures of the world, which, exquisitely varnished and framed, are hung up in the drawing-room minds of humane men of taste, and amiable philosophers of either the "Compensation", or "Optimist" school. They deny that any misery is in the world, except for the purpose of throwing the fine povertiresque element into its general picture. Go to! God hath deposited cash in the Bank subject to our gentlemanly order; he hath bounteously blessed the world with a summer carpet of green. Begone, Heraclitus! The lamentations of the rain are but to make us our rainbows!"⁵⁷⁹

But as he unravels, Pierre takes over the the ascetic ways of the Transcendentalist Bohemia of the Apostles: to better endure his unheated room, he starts the day with an icy bath at his opened window; he takes up eccentric ascetic diets:

"...Now it was the continual, quadrangular example of those forlorn fellows, the Apostles, who, in this period of his half-developments and transitions, had deluded Pierre into the Flesh-Brush Philosophy, and had almost tempted him into the Apple-Parings Dialectics. For all the long wards, corridors, and multitudinous chambers of the Apostles' were scattered with the stems of apples, the stones of prunes, and the shells of pea-nuts. They went about huskily muttering the Kantian categories through teeth and lips dry and dusty as any miller's, with the crumbs of Graham crackers...Continually bits of cheese were dropping from their pockets, and old shiny apple parchments were ignorantly exhibited every time they drew out a manuscript to read you...Some, further advanced, rejected mere water in the bath, as altogether too coarse an element; and so, took to the Vapor-baths...The smoke

⁵⁷⁸-ibid. p. 303-305.

⁵⁷⁹-ibid. pp. 313-314. This same critique of Melville is deepened in the later short stories "The Piazza" and "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!" (cf. below) published in 1856 as The Piazza Tales.

which issued from their heads, and overspread their pages, was prefigured in the mists that issued from under their door-sills and out of their windows."⁵⁸⁰

Yet Pierre's own manuscript shows a disarming lucidity about his condition, and a real distance from the Transcendentalist world that surrounds him:

"...Away, ye chattering apes of a sophomorean Spinoza and Plato, who once didst all but delude me that the night was day, and pain only a tickle. Explain this darkness, exorcise this devil, ye can not. Tell me not, thou inconceivable coxcomb of a Goethe, that the universe cannot spare thee and thy immortality, so long as--like a hired waiter--thou makest thyself 'generally useful'. Already the universe gets on without thee, and could spare still a million more of the same identical kidney..."⁵⁸¹

But Pierre's is the lucidity of a man in a free fall, whose knowledge of the laws of physics offer him not the slightest advantage:

"...it would seem, that Pierre is quite conscious of so much that is so anomalously hard and bitter in his lot...Yet that knowing his fatal condition does 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 the causes of that peril;--nevertheless, the sea is the sea, and these drowning men do drown."⁵⁸²

Pierre is not a Transcendentalist, but the presence of anti-Transcendentalist broadsides, and of minor Transcendentalist figures such as Plotinus Plinlimmon and Charlie Millthorpe, are in Melville's book to underscore how useless they are to Pierre's situation. Pierre's Enceladus vision is also the discovery of a landscape of desolation and horror concealed by the purple-tinted "imperial" sunset. In "The Piazza", Melville pushes this analysis farther.

"The Piazza"

Mt. Greylock in "The Piazza" (1853), like the Mount of the Titans in Pierre, is a cosmic mountain. Melville's narrator calls it "Charlemagne". The name identified the political conjuncture of this analysis of genteel nature worship:

"...So Charlemagne, he carried it. It was not long after 1848; and, somehow, about

⁵⁸⁰-ibid. pp. 339-340.

⁵⁸¹-ibid. p. 342.

⁵⁸²-ibid. p. 343.

that time, all around the world, these kings, they had the casting vote, and they voted for themselves."⁵⁸³

The "ugly revolution" is not far to seek. The narrator spends his days in awe of the beauty of the mountains and sunsets on them. But one day he notices a distant house, "for all the world like spying, on the Barbary coast, an unknown sail". In the narrator's Spenserian mode, the mountainside conjures up: "Fairies there...some haunted ring where fairies dance". Thunder storms

"wrap old Greylock, like a Sinai, till one thinks swart Moses must be climbing among scathed hemlocks there"⁵⁸⁴

A neighbor thinks the house is an old barn, but "I knew better".

"Day after day, now, full of interest in my discovery, what time I could spare from reading the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and all about Titiana, I wishfully gazed off towards the hills, but in vain. Either troops of shadows, an imperial guard, with slow pace and solemn, defiled along the steeps; or, routed by pursuing light...old wars of Lucifer and Michael; or the mountains...had an atmosphere otherwise unfavorable for fairy views."⁵⁸⁵

Finally, curiosity getting the better of him, the narrator sets out for "fairy land", by a road of which no one "could inform me; not even one Edmund Spenser, who had been there--so he wrote me...". He finally comes to "a little, low-storied, grayish cottage". "Fairy land at last, thought I; Una and her lamb dwell here." But in the house he finds a "pale cheeked girl", Marianna. She and her brother, both orphans, lived there in total impoverished isolation. Marianna points out a distant house, which the narrator recognizes as his own, as a "happy one". "You should see it in the sunset", she says. The builders of her own house "went West, and are long dead, they say...". "...Oh, if I could get to yonder house, and but look upon whoever the happy being is that lives there.", says Marianna.

Totally taken aback, Melville's narrator returns to his house and his piazza.

"But every night, when the curtain falls, truth comes in with darkness. No light shows from the mountain. To and fro I walk the piazza deck, haunted by Marianna's face, and many as real a story."⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³-ibid. p. 623.

⁵⁸⁴-ibid. p. 625.

⁵⁸⁵-ibid. p. 626.

⁵⁸⁶-ibid. p. 634. As Richard Moore puts it, "'The Piazza' is clearly calculated to disparage the mode of conflated religion and aesthetic, which, having been developed in the eighteenth century and refined by the Romantics, was revived and put to distinctly ideological use by American cultural nationalists. The pieties disparaged in the sketch are at once

While it would be stretching interpretation to see the figure of Marianna as an articulated expression of "class", her desolation was something as far from the Transcendentalist sensibility as the sharks' feeding frenzy next to the *Pequod* was from Walden Pond.

"Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs"

"The Piazza" was a critique of its narrator's Spenserian relationship to landscape and a lyrical approach to natural beauty, dashed by the encounter with the misery it concealed. Many of Melville's 1850's stories use this method of exposing a naive, befuddled or inept narrator, who is often a genteel person with cultural and humanitarian pretensions, if not exactly a Transcendentalist. In 1854-1855, Melville experimented with the diptych form, in which he used two contrasting settings or stories to make a point. In these and other short stories, he makes some of his strongest statements on race and on class, which will be considered in later sections. "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" also includes a critique of middle-class gentility similar to that of "The Piazza".

In contrast to many of Melville's short stories, in "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs", it is not primarily the narrator's viewpoint but that of his interlocutor that is undermined. In "Poor Man's Pudding", the first half of the diptych, the American narrator is remembering his conversations forty years earlier with "poet Blackmour", on a visit to England. Blackmour may be a stand-in for Thoreau, arguing that "Nature, is in all things beneficent", providing the poor husbandman with "Poor Man's Manure", "Poor Man's Eyewater", "Poor Man's Egg", and "Poor Man's Plaster", essentially various uses of snow and rainwater, and quite as good as what is available to the rich. At Blandmour's suggestion, the narrator presents himself as a tired traveler at a farmer's house to experience "Poor Man's Pudding", where he is invited to dinner. He notes the "ineffectual low fire", the dampness of the house, the carpetless floor, "nothing but the bare necessities". In the course of the meal, "poet Blackmour's" views of the sturdy poor are further undermined in conversation with the husbandman and his wife. The narrator is unable to swallow the rank pork. By the end of his stay, Melville's narrator "could stay no longer to hear of sorrows for which the sincerest sympathies could give no adequate relief", echoing the critique of the "poverty-esque" sensibility in Pierre.

Taking leave of his hosts, the narrator notices, in retrospect, the "poor house ward" odor of their home.

"This ill-ventilation in winter of the rooms of the poor--a thing, too, so stubbornly persisted in--is usually charged upon them as their disgraceful neglect of the most

religious and aesthetic." (in That Cunning Alphabet: Melville's Aesthetics of Nature, Amsterdam, 1982, p. 52)

simple means to health. But the instinct of the poor is wiser than we think. The air which ventilates, likewise cools. And to any shiverer, ill-ventilated warmth is better than well-ventilated cold. Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed."⁵⁸⁷

"Cock-a-Doodle-Do!"

"Cock-a-Doodle-Do!" is another short story that continues Melville's attack on genteel aestheticism. Like "The Piazza", it was published in 1853, and also situates itself in the aftermath of the failure of the European 1848. Like "The Piazza", it undermines the well-intentioned narrator, but it focuses more immediately on illusions of class than on an ideology of landscape. It describes to the point of caricature how ideologies of self-uplift conceal people's real relations to others, and ultimately to themselves.

"In all parts of the world many high-spirited revolts from rascally despotisms had of late been knocked on the head", it begins, referring to 1848 and the restoration thereafter. It was also a time of many railroad accidents, and the narrator's life too was full of "despotisms, casualties and knockings on the head". "All round me were tokens of a divided empire." The story opens with a generally depressed and entropic mood: "shreds of vapor listlessly wandered in the air", and Melville's narrator is in a generally foul mood. The mood is interrupted by the crowing of a cock.

Many of the metaphors used by Melville to describe the cock are part of what this study has called the "pseudo-sacred". The cock "sends up a cry like a very laureate celebrating the glorious victory of New Orleans". It is "a Shanghai of the Emperor of China's breed". The crowing is "equal to hearing the great bell of St. Paul's rung at a coronation!" Under this impact, the narrator's mood revives.

"...I returned home once more full of reinvigorated spirits, with a dauntless sort of feeling. I thought over my debts and other troubles, and over the unlucky risings of the poor oppressed peoples abroad, and over the railroad and steamboat accidents, and over even the loss of my dear friend, with a calm, good-natured rapture of defiance, which astounded myself. I felt as though I could meet Death, and invite him to dinner, and toast the Catacombs with him, in pure overflow of self-reliance and a sense of universal security."⁵⁸⁸

The narrator's mood lifts, and he sets out to find the cock. He finds an old man mending fences, engaged in a "hopeless", "laborious", "bootless" task, who responds to his question about the whereabouts of the cock with a "long,

⁵⁸⁷-ibid. p. 1235.

⁵⁸⁸-"Cock-a-Doodle-Do!", Library of America edition, p. 1210. Note the reference to Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance.

bewildered, doleful, and unutterable stare". He runs up debts, and is served a civil process by a constable:

"...while many a stingy curmudgeon rolls in idle gold, I, heart of nobleness as I am, I have civil-processes served on me!"⁵⁸⁹

The cock continues to crow, and the narrator continues to search for it. A workman comes to cut his wood in mid-winter. "From his window, where I was reading Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy" the narrator sees him eating his dinner in the cold, and invites him in. The relationship of the narrator to the workman is not unlike the relationship of Melville's narrator and Bartelby, and the sensibility is not unlike "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs". In all these cases, there is the undermining of a kind of middle-class self-satisfied philanthropy by a stark social reality.

"I often sought to gather from him who he was, what sort of life he led, where he was born, and so on. But he was mum."⁵⁹⁰

The "sullen silence" of the workman is on a continuum with Bartleby's blank cipher, but the narrator thinks:

"But better considering it, I honored him the more. I increased the respectfulness of deferentialness of my address toward him. I concluded within myself that this man had experienced hard times; that he had had many sore rubs in the world; that he was of solemn disposition; that...though a very poor man, was, nevertheless, a highly respectable one. At times I imagined he might even be an elder or a deacon of some small country church. I thought it would not be a bad plan to run this excellent man for President of the United States. He would prove a great reformer of abuses."⁵⁹¹

The narrator must go to Merrymusk's shanty to pay him some wages. He finds it near a railway

"many times a day tantalizing the wretched shanty with with sight of all the beauty, rank, fashion, health, trunks, silver and good, dry-goods and groceries, bridges and grooms, happy wives and husbands, flying by the lonely door...This was about all the shanty saw of what people call "life"."⁵⁹²

Again, this echoes the narrator of "Bartleby", contrasting his forlorn clerk with the bustle of Broadway.

⁵⁸⁹-ibid. p. 1215.

⁵⁹⁰-ibid. p. 1217.

⁵⁹¹-ibid.

⁵⁹²-ibid. p. 1219.

Merrymusk is the owner of the cock. The narrator immediately slips back into the pseudo-sacred:

"...A cock, more like a Field Marshal than a cock. A cock, more like Lord Nelson with all his glittering arms on, standing on the Vanguard's quarter-deck going into battle, than a cock. A cock, more like the Emperor Charlemagne in his robes at Aix la Chapelle, than a cock... He looked like some Oriental king in some magnificent Italian Opera."⁵⁹³

Merrymusk's wife and children are hopelessly ill, but Merrymusk himself is consoled and heartened by the crowing of the cock:

"Why call me poor? Don't the cock I own glorify this otherwise inglorious, lean, lantern-jawed land?"⁵⁹⁴

The narrator leaves, but continues to be inspired by the cock:

"...I saw another mortgage piled on my plantation; but I only bought another dozen of stout, and a dozen-dozen of Philadelphia porter. Some of my relatives died; I wore no mourning, but for three days drank stout in preference to porter, stout being of the darker color. I heard the cock crow the instant I received the unwelcome tidings."⁵⁹⁵

On a final visit to the workman Merrymusk, he finds the entire family stricken, and they die successively before him. The cock continued to crow.

"The pallor of the children was changed to radiance. Their faces shone celestially through grime and dirt. They seemed children of emperors and kings, disguised."⁵⁹⁶

Then the cock gives one last crow and dies. The narrator concludes:

"...never since then have I felt the doleful dumps, but under all circumstances crow late and early with a continual crow."⁵⁹⁷

The "crow" of "self-reliance", the world view that cannot deal with the existence in the world of a sullen reality outside itself, is identified in Melville's

⁵⁹³-ibid.

⁵⁹⁴-ibid. p. 1222.

⁵⁹⁵-ibid. p. 1224.

⁵⁹⁶-ibid. p. 1225.

⁵⁹⁷-ibid. p. 1226.

story as something tantamount to a national ideology, which even takes in the workman.

"Jimmy Rose"

Another element of middle-class ideology which drew Melville's fire was charity. He saw it as the logical conclusion of the kind of benevolence which ultimately rests on a patronizing inequality. (He had first-hand experience of it when his own bankrupt family had to be taken in by relatives after his father's death in 1832.) For Melville, charity or charitable sentiments were a cheap way to buy self-satisfaction without seriously engaging a harsh reality or questioning one's own relationship to it. The critique of charity interwoven with other strands of middle-class sentimentalism in Melville's short stories reaches its dénouement in The Confidence Man.

"Jimmy Rose" is a minor story Melville published in 1855. It continues the problematic of much of Melville's short fiction from the 1853-1856 period in using a narrator whose viewpoint is not Melville's and whose attitudes are as if not more important than the apparent subject of the story. It is a critique of a kind of sentimental fiction which, it hardly needs saying, does not use such techniques. As in "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!", "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "The Piazza", the narrator is a well-meaning person in the conventional sense, whose apparently well-meaning concern does nothing to alter the reality of a situation.

"Jimmy Rose" is narrated by an old man who had "become unexpected heir to a great old house". The house had once belonged to Jimmy Rose. Rose had been a "man of moderate fortune", one who, with a "large and princely business, something like that of the great Florentine trader, Cosmo the Magnificent", had been a "great ladies' man" and entertainer on a large scale.

But after "terrible reverses in business", "Jimmy was a ruined man." His friends deserted him, and friends who were creditors turned into enemies, many of whom had once downed "noble wine" at Jimmy's table. Twenty five years pass before the narrator sees Rose again, and he is astonished to still see "old Parisian roses" in his cheeks, when he had expected to find "a pauper beyond alms-house pauperism". He was living on a pittance and making charity rounds at tea time to old acquaintances. But

"Not much merit redounded to his entertainers because they did not thrust the starving gentleman for when he came for his poor alms of tea and toast. Some merit had been theirs had they clubbed together and provided him, at small cost enough, with a sufficient income to make him, in point of necessaries, independent of the daily dole of charity; charity not sent to him either, but charity for which he had to trudge round to their doors."⁵⁹⁸

It is Rose's resilience in these circumstances which impresses Melville's narrator, "those roses in their cheeks". He kept up "his courtly ways":

⁵⁹⁸-ibid. p. 1287.

"...For there still lingered in Jimmy's address a subdued sort of martial air; he having in his palmy days been, among other things, a general of the state militia. There seems a fatality in these militia generalships. Alas! I can recall more than two or three gentlemen who from militia generals become paupers."⁵⁹⁹

And it is here that the narrator intrudes the kind of thinking which Melville's story seeks to undermine:

"I am afraid to think why this is so. Is it that this military leaning in a man of an unmilitary heart--that is, a gentle, peaceable heart--is an indication of some weak love of vain display? But ten to one it is not so. At any rate, it is unhandsome, if not unchristian, in the happy, too much to moralize on those who are not so."⁶⁰⁰

Thus, for the narrator, people become paupers because of "gentle peaceable hearts"; then, he high-mindedly indulges in self-censuring for such misplaced moralizing.

As in Melville's other stories about hapless attitudes toward social phenomena such as poverty, he allows Jimmy Rose one opportunity to express his own thoughts about those who minister to this condition. When Jimmy Rose was in his final illness, a young woman brought him "some little delicacies, and also several books, of such a sort as are sent by serious-minded well-wishers to invalids in a serious crisis". Once she had left, Rose threw the books into the corner:

"Why will she bring me this sad old stuff? Does she take me for a pauper? Thinks she to salve a gentleman's heart with Poor Man's Plaster?"⁶⁰¹

After Rose's death, the narrator sits in the "parlor of the peacocks", left to

"meditate upon his strange example...how after that gay, dashing, nobleman's career, he could be content to crawl through life, and peep about among the marbles and mahoganies for contumelious tea and toast, where once like a very Warwick he had feasted the huzzaing world with Burgundy and venison."⁶⁰²

"Jimmy Rose" is similar to the "The Piazza", except that the narrator in this case is not "haunted by Marianna's face"; rather, he allows his self-consoling psychologizing of Rose's resilience to come between him and the full impact of Rose's tragedy.

⁵⁹⁹-ibid. p. 1288.

⁶⁰⁰-ibid. pp. 1288-1289.

⁶⁰¹-ibid. p. 1290.

⁶⁰²-ibid.

The Confidence Man

The culmination of Melville's anti-Transcendentalist polemic is in The Confidence Man (1857) in which Emerson and Thoreau actually appear as characters⁶⁰³. To understand the context of their appearance, however, some preliminary remarks are necessary.

In some sense The Confidence Man as a whole can be understood as an attack on the kind of middle-class sentimentalism of which Transcendentalism is a part. It culminates the critique developed in the 1850's short stories, in which befuddled people are trapped by their own inability to adequately come to terms with realities that clash with their most deeply held sense of themselves.

Emerson and Thoreau appear late in the narrative, just as the Confidence Man is failing in his attempt to fleece Charlie Noble, another, minor confidence man⁶⁰⁴ Emerson appears as Mark Winsome, "a kind of cross between a Yankee peddler and a Tartar priest". His opacity is already indicated by his attempt to warn Frank Goodman, the cosmopolitan and confidence man, that Charlie Noble is a confidence man, and his inability to do so in plain language. Winsome tells the cosmopolitan that he must have a "beautiful soul"⁶⁰⁵

"one full of all love and truth, for where beauty is, there those must be."⁶⁰⁶

He articulates his attitude toward evil in nature:

"...When any creature is by its make inimical to other creatures, nature in effect labels that creature, much as an apothecary does a poison. So that whoever is destroyed by a rattle-snake, or other harmful agent, it is his own fault."⁶⁰⁷

Invited to have wine by the cosmopolitan, Winsome says:

"hospitality being fabled to be of oriental origin, and forming, as it does, the subject of a pleasing Oriental romance"
he will sit down,

"but as for wine...I keep my love for it in the lasting condition of an untried

⁶⁰³-The scholarship of Egbert Oliver identifying these characters as Emerson and Thoreau is quoted in the Norton Edition of The Confidence Man, p. 161, p. 169. Also cf. bibliographical note p. 365.

⁶⁰⁴-The Confidence Man will be treated more fully in a subsequent section.

⁶⁰⁵-Perhaps Melville's referencing of Hegel's notion of the "schöne Seele", the aestheticized inwardness that suffocates in claustrophobic high sentiments.

⁶⁰⁶-The Confidence Man, p. 162.

⁶⁰⁷-ibid. p. 163.

abstraction. Briefly, I quaff immense draughts of wine from the page of Hafiz, but wine from a cup I seldom as much as sip."⁶⁰⁸

Thus the portrait of Emerson and Transcendentalist Orientalism is little changed from its treatment in Moby Dick six years earlier.

Still pressed by the cosmopolitan to explain his mistrust of Charlie Noble, Winsome says:

"I conjecture him to be what, among the ancient Egyptians, was called a ____" using some unknown word. A ____ is what Proclus, in a little note to his third book on the theology of Plato, defines as ____ ____", coming out with a sentence of Greek."⁶⁰⁹

. Admonished by the cosmopolitan not to "disturb the repose of the ancient Egyptians", Winsome/Emerson replies:

"...Pharoah's poorest brick-maker lies prouder in his rages than the Emperor of all the Russias in his hollands...for death, though in a worm, is majestic; while life, though in a king, is contemptible. So talk not against mummies. It is part of my missions to teach mankind a due reverence for mummies."⁶¹⁰

No sooner has Winsome finished this speech than he is accosted by a "crazy beggar", apparently representing Edgar Allan Poe⁶¹¹, selling a tract "quite in the transcendental vein". Though the cosmopolitan buys one, Winsome

"sat more like a cold prism than ever, while an expression of keen Yankee acuteness, now replacing his former mystical one, lent added icicles to his aspect."⁶¹²

For the Transcendentalist, reverence for mummies is more important than a living human being in need. The mystical oversoul passes smoothly over into Yankee disdain.

The cosmopolitan finally gets Winsome to say that he suspects Charlie Noble of being a "Mississippi operator". Melville gets in one last dig. The cosmopolitan asks if this is "something like what the Indians call a Great Medicine".

⁶⁰⁸-ibid. p. 164.

⁶⁰⁹-ibid. pp. 165-166.

⁶¹⁰-ibid. p. 167.

⁶¹¹-The Norton Edition (p. 167) indicates that this identification was made by Harrison Hayford.

⁶¹²-ibid.

"I perceive, sir" said the stranger..."that your notion, of what is called a Great Medicine, needs correction. The Great Medicine among the Indians is less a bolus than a man in grave esteem for his politic sagacity."⁶¹³

Thus, in this depiction of Emerson, Melville comes around full circle to the critique of Transcendentalism developed, first of all, in Moby Dick. The inability to come to terms with evil in nature, the Orientalism, the fascination with ancient Egypt and neo-Platonism and a reverence for Indians, at the expense of the harsh reality of the immediate present all combine into a scathing portrait.

Melville introduces a second satire of Thoreau, who is presented under the name of Egbert as the "practical disciple" of Mark Winsome. Winsome himself locates practicality in no uncertain terms:

"...If still in golden accents old Memnon murmurs his riddle, none the less does the balance sheet of every man's ledger unriddle the profit or loss of life...Mystery is in the morning, and mystery in the night, and the beauty of mystery is everywhere; but still the plain truth remains, that mouth and purse must be filled...Was not Seneca a usurer? Bacon a courtier? and Swedenborg, though with one eye on the invisible, did he not keep the other on the main chance?"⁶¹⁴

Thus Transcendentalist mystery seems, like Melville's original description of Winsome ("a kind of cross between a Yankee peddler and a Tartar priest"), to fit quite nicely with a fairly homespun notion of self-interest.

Egbert/Thoreau

"was, to all appearances, the last person in the world that one would take for the disciple of any transcendental philosophy...something about his sharp nose and shaved chin seemed to hint that if mysticism, as a lesson, ever came his way, he might, with the characteristic knack of a true New-Englander, turn even so profitless a thing to some profitable account."⁶¹⁵

Transcendentalism is the closed, unitary, aestheticized self which Melville rejected throughout his work. In Moby Dick, he opposed it from the viewpoint of the "anthropocosmos", the antemosaic cosmic man, returned on a higher level in a working-class context. In 1851-1856, he opposed it from a proto-modernist viewpoint: he does not confront his middle-class narrators and characters with some social alternative (primitive or working class) but just deflates their pretensions. He continued to show its incapacity to deal with "evil", with different kinds of harsh reality, but without the earlier hope of supercession.

613-*ibid.* p. 168.

614-*ibid.* p. 170.

615-*ibid.* p. 171.

Ch. XIV. Theatre, Painting and Blankness in Melville After Moby Dick: Non-Communication in a Class Society

"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 covertly, and by snatches."

Herman Melville
"Hawthorne and his Mosses"

Melville's evolution from Pierre to The Confidence Man continues the polemic against the unitary aestheticized self represented by Transcendentalism. Melville does not forget about class; he largely forgets about collective rebellion and any kind of supercession. He arrives at modernist or proto-modernist moments in "Bartleby the Scrivener" and The Confidence Man. But the critique of middle-class sentimentalism, including Transcendentalism, the dissolution of the bourgeois ego, never arrives at a fully modernist, "Nietzschean", rejection of any reality external to aestheticized creation. The blankness that stares back in "Bartleby" or "Benito Cereno" is a blankness of the loss of universality through (apparently) unbridgeable social separation; with it, Melville is also exploring the unresolved line between the "no-self" mummy formulation in Pierre, where he flirts with the idea that there are only appearances, and the kind of "theatre- reality" problematic of "Benito Cereno".

The first aesthetic manifestation of this post-1851 mood is a certain critique of representation. This presents itself first of all as an unmasking of painterly and theatrical motifs⁶¹⁶. Already in White-Jacket, theatre is used to expose the real theatre of roles of hierarchy and subordination⁶¹⁷ in the daily life of the navy. When Jack Chase recites

"...that heart-thrilling scene...where Percy Royal-Mast rescues fifteen oppressed sailors from the watch-house, in the teeth of a posse of constables"⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶-This chapter will consider such motifs in White-Jacket, "The Piazza", "The Encantadas", "Two Temples", "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "Benito Cereno". The use of theatre by Melville in fact culminates in The Confidence Man, fulfilling the idea of ship-as-theatre hinted in White Jacket and greatly extended in "Benito Cereno". However, the complexity of The Confidence Man requires treatment in a separate chapter.

⁶¹⁷-Cf. above Ch. XI, section d.

⁶¹⁸-White-Jacket, p. 95.

a riot almost erupts among the crew. Two decades after Melville wrote White-Jacket, Friedrich Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy (1871) argued that the "Apollonian" forms of representation on the stage in Greek tragedy were a necessary "redemption through illusion" from the dissolution of the "principle of individuation" in the dark, chthonic "Dionysian" chants of the chorus. This was written under the influence of Schopenhauer, whom Melville would discover much later. The real modernist critique of representation began when Nietzsche broke with Schopenhauer's idea of "redemption through illusion" to affirm the shaping of the "Dionysian" world into form by the superman, forms which were no longer "illusion" because there was no "reality" external to them: the superman's will to power shaped the only "reality" that could be known. This is not what Melville was about. For Melville, the "forms" (uniforms, ranks, medals) subverted by his "play-within-a-play" in White-Jacket covered over naked subordination enforced by flogging and the life-and-death power of the captain. Melville's critique of representation was its masking of an ugly reality that was no illusion. (The story-within-a-story of Steerkilt's mutiny told by Ishmael in Moby Dick has a similar role of illuminating the non-mutiny on the *Pequod*.)

In Pierre, the most important statements about representation were, once again, Pierre's burning of his father's portrait in rejection of a discredited ego ideal, his refusal to "appear" in the literary world of Young America, and the art gallery scene where his decision to act, following the Enceladus vision, overcomes a tendency to live through images of the past. But in Pierre, with the self/mummy passage, Melville for the first time raises the possibility that the "sarcophagus is empty": that the appearances of the pseudo-sacred do not conceal, as in White-Jacket, harsh reality (but reality nonetheless), but that they are indeed concealing the void, somewhat in the fashion of Schopenhauer or the early Nietzsche. This is the "nihilist" moment of Pierre: negation disconnected from collectivity is self-destruction.

Recall Ahab's speech to Starbuck about Moby Dick:

"All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think that there's naught beyond. But 't'is enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him."⁶¹⁹

Ahab thought there might be "naught beyond" the wall, but Ishmael did find something beyond the bourgeois ego in the fusion with Queequeg. But already in Pierre, Melville was no longer offering his character that option. For the remainder of the 1851-1856 period, up to The Confidence Man, he would be considering the

⁶¹⁹-Moby Dick, (1979), p. 168.

possibility that there was naught beyond masks and roles, until he transposed all the terms in largely going beyond fiction. But unlike later modernists, Melville never arrived at the conclusion that there were only fictions.

In "The Piazza" Melville was first of all attacking his Transcendentalist narrator. But painterly and theatrical motifs are part of the illusion he seeks to dispel. The narrator begins immediately by saying that the country around his house "was such a picture", and

"in berry time no boy climbs hill or crosses vale without coming upon easels planted in every nook, and sunburnt painters painting there. A very paradise of painters."⁶²⁰

For such a house not to have a piazza looking at Mt. Greylock

"...seemed as much of an omission as if a picture-gallery should have no bench; for what but picture-galleries are the marble halls of these same limestone hills? galleries hung...with pictures ever fading into pictures ever fresh."⁶²¹.

After the sobering encounter with Marianna on the mountain, the narrator shifts from painterly to theatrical imagery:

"...I stick to the piazza. It is my box-royal; and this amphitheatre, my theatre of San Carlo. Yes, the scenery is magical, the illusion so complete."⁶²²

Here again, Melville is not denying that there is an ugly reality hidden by the illusion; he is simply saying that his narrator prefers not to see it.

A similar trope is used in a sketch of "The Encantadas". What is striking in the narration of this poignant story is Melville's use, again, of theatrical and painterly motifs. Hunilla, a Chola from Peru, accompanies her husband and brother to a remote island to hunt turtles. One day she watches both of them drown in the surf:

"...Before Hunilla's eyes they sank. The real woe of this event passed before her sight as some sham tragedy on the stage. She was seated on a rude bower among the withered thickets...The thickets were so disposed, that in looking upon the sea at large she peered out from among the branches as from the lattice of a high balcony...the better to watch the adventure of those two hearts she loved, Hunilla had withdrawn the branches to one side, and held them so. They formed an oval frame, through which the bluey boundless sea rolled like a painted one. And there, the invisible painter painted to her view the wave-tossed and disjointed raft...and the four struggling arms...Death in a silent picture; a dream of the eye; such vanishing shapes as the mirage shows.

⁶²⁰-"The Piazza", p. 621.

⁶²¹-ibid. pp. 621-622.

⁶²²-ibid. p. 634.

So instant was the scene, so trance-like its mild pictorial effect, so distant from her blasted bower and her common sense of things, that Hunilla gazed and gazed, nor raised a finger or a wail. But as good to sit thus dumb, in stupor staring on that dumb show, for all that otherwise might be done."⁶²³

Each of the sketches of "The Encantadas" begin with an (unidentified) quote from Edmund Spenser (to whom there is also reference in "The Piazza"), and here the reference to the "rude bower" is explicit. Even taken out of context, it is clear that Melville is attempting a similar critique of theatrical and painterly settings, undone by some reality that turns them upside down. But above and beyond Spenser, it is the lyricism of contemporaries that Melville is criticizing⁶²⁴.

"The Two Temples" (1853) does not use theatrical and painterly illusion in the same fashion as "The Piazza" or "The Encantadas". It uses theatre to critique religion, and to comment on class. Melville presents this analysis by contrasting the experience of his narrator at a church in New York and a theatre in London. The narrator is turned away peremptorily from the New York church because he looks too poor. Outside is a "noble string of flashing carriages"; the lackeys have "gold hatbands, and other gorgeous trimmings". In England they might be "a company of royal dukes, right honorable barons &c", but in New York they are only lackeys. Here Melville is once again using clothing and uniforms to comment on the deflation of appearances in the modern world. The narrator finds a small door that leads to the church tower. These "new fashioned Gothic Temples" (again, the pseudo-sacred) usually have "a curious little window high over the orchestra" and

"if one could but get there, ought to command a glorious bird's eye view of the entire field of operations below"⁶²⁵

Thus to the pseudo-sacred of clothing, Melville adds the familiar themes of theatre and entombment.

"...I seemed inside some magic-lantern. On three sides, three gigantic Gothic windows of richly dyed glass, filled the otherwise meager place with all sorts of sun-rises and sun-sets, lunar and solar rainbows, and other flaming fireworks and

⁶²³- "The Encantadas" pp. 796-797. "The Encantadas" were a series of sketches originally published in 1853, and collected with five other stories in The Piazza Tales published in book form in 1856.

⁶²⁴-C. Moses, in Melville's Use of Spenser, (New York, 1989), p. 131, writes: "The epigraphs to "The Encantadas"...often show the insufficiency of Spenser's religious beliefs in countering the spiritual barrenness that the islands exemplify...Spenser's spiritual certainty simply cannot be translated to these sterile islands."

⁶²⁵- "The Two Temples", Library of America, 1984, p. 1243.

pyrotechnics. But after all, it was but a gorgeous dungeon; for I could n't look out, any more than if I had been the occupant of a basement cell in "the Tombs".⁶²⁶

The narrator climbs higher, to find that "one secret window" "where I might, at a distance, take part in the proceedings". At the top, he finds a paneless window that offers a view of the entire interior. This location, one hundred feet above the service

"enhanced the theatric wonder of the populous spectacle of this sumptuous sanctuary. Book in hand...I could not rid my soul of the intrusive thought, that, through some necromancer's glass, I looked down upon some sly enchanter's show."⁶²⁷

After participating in the service, the narrator find himself locked in the church, like Belzoni abandoned by his Arab guides in the great pyramid (as Melville would say in other contexts), like Israel Potter abandoned in the Templar rooms of the squire, like Bartleby in the Tombs or in "Petra". Returning to his window in the tower, he viewed the now-empty church:

"...all assumed a secluded and deep-wooded air. I seemed gazing from Pisgah into the forests of old Canaan. A Puseyitish painting of a Madonna and child, adorning a lower window, seemed showing to me the sole tenants of this painted wilderness-the true Hagar and her Ishmael."⁶²⁸

Like the scene viewed by Hunilla from her "bower" in "The Encantadas", reduced to a spectator at the death of her brother and husband, Melville uses this spectacle to reduce it to the fate of his penniless narrator, and identifying him with the outcast son of Abraham and Melville's own greatest outcast hero.

To get out of the locked church, the narrator is forced to ring the giant bell, and is arrested. This sequence, whose resemblance to New York's Grace Cathedral initially prevented the publication of the story, is to set the stage for a secular experience in a working-class setting.

In the second half of the diptych, the same narrator finds himself on a Saturday night, shortly thereafter, equally down on his luck in London. He was

"amid those indescribable crowds which every seventh night pour and roar through...great London, the Leviathan...Forlorn, outcast, without a friend, I staggered on through three millions of my own human kind. The fiendish gas-lights shooting their Tartarean rays across the muddy sticky streets, lit up the pitiless and pitiable scene."⁶²⁹,

⁶²⁶-ibid.

⁶²⁷-ibid. p. 1245.

⁶²⁸-ibid. p. 1247.

⁶²⁹-ibid. p. 1250.

a description echoing the London urban scenes of Redburn and Israel Potter.

Turning onto a quieter side street, the narrator finds "two tall placards announcing the appearance that night, of the stately Macready in the part of Cardinal Richelieu". Here, then, is advertising and the theatre, echoing White-Jacket. Further, Richelieu, the 17th century cardinal and virtual "prime minister" of Louis XIII, who first put Machiavellian Realpolitik on the stage of European power politics, could hardly be a better example of the pseudo-sacred. Caught up in anticipation of this spectacle, the narrator

"read, and read--for the placard, of enormous dimensions, contained minute particulars of each successive scene in the enacted play"⁶³⁰

A handbill girl passes him by because his destitute condition was obvious. But "some sort of working-man" gives him a ticket. He enters, as in his "ascent of the Gothic tower on the ocean's far other side" he climbs, and again finds himself watching a spectacle from "the topmost gallery of the temple", with "quiet, well-pleased working men, and their wives and sisters". He is so swept up that he reaches for his prayer book. A hawker gives him a free cup of coffee because he is a "Yankee".

"...But now the curtain rises, and the robed Cardinal advances. How marvelous this personal resemblance! He looks every inch to be the self-same, stately priest I saw irradiated by the glow-worm dies of the pictured windows from my high tower-pew...he too seems lit by Gothic blazonings.--Hark! The same measured, courtly, noble tone. See! the same imposing attitude. Excellent actor is this Richelieu!"⁶³¹

By the contrast of the New York and London episodes of this diptych, and the class distinctions of the two episodes, Melville is showing a more humane experience in a secular setting where the spectacle of religion his narrator saw in New York, and from which he was excluded, has been placed in a theatre and on a stage. Whereas the New York experience struck him as "some sly enchanter's show", the London setting has a "measured, courtly, noble tone", and Cardinal Richelieu is an "excellent actor". By the diptych method of inversion, the coldness of the narrator's expulsion from the bourgeois New York church contrasts with the warmth shown by working people encountered at a London theatre. But above and beyond these contrasts, what is most striking about "Two Temples" is the sense of the narrator reduced to a distant observer of elaborate spectacles, as the narrator of "The Piazza" viewed the Spenserian fairyland of Mt. Greylock and as Hunilla watched her husband and brother drown from her bower. In "Two Temples", the Schopenhauerian "redemption through illusion" denied in the church is achieved in the theatre.

⁶³⁰-ibid. p. 1251.

⁶³¹-ibid. p. 1255.

The Aesthetic of Blankness:
"Bartleby, The Scrivener. A Story of Wall Street"

"Bartleby the Scrivener" (1853) is a far more radical short story than those considered up to this point. It has in common with "The Piazza" the undermining of a self-satisfied middle-class narrator, but it does not use visual effects; it dismantles them. Part of its radicalism is the paring-down of all such effects to arrive at pure negation. It refers to painters only to place them on the other side of the divide from Bartleby's inscrutability. "Bartleby" is a still more radical Pierre, who not only refuses to appear, but who revolts by refusing even to copy, let alone write. By rejecting any charity, he prefers to die, like Pierre, in the Tombs. Bartleby is Melville after the successive debacles of Moby Dick and Pierre, trapped in the non-communication of a literary Dead Letter Office, where "on errands of life, these letters speed to death", except that his "dead letters" were the books that failed to reverse his steadily sinking literary fortunes.

Bartleby is also a critique of charity. Building up to The Confidence Man, Melville attacked charity and well-meaning charitable attitudes in "Rich Man's Crumbs", "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!" and "Jimmy Rose", as a manifestation of the impotent middle-class sentimentalism of which Transcendentalism was a part. The narrator of "Bartleby" attempts to reach him through charity, but these gestures are refused as merely reinforcing the hierarchy of non-communication which is Bartleby's real problem.

Unlike the previous stories considered in this section, "Bartleby the Scrivener" has real modernist moments. Its underlying movement is to attain to a blankness which echoes Hegel's death-in-the-concept, the ultimate trajectory of negation. Bartleby's preference not to "be a little reasonable" also echoes Dostoevsky's underground man, who will not accept a universe in which $2+2=4$, just because. Bartleby is a white collar worker, but nothing in his revolt has any collective dimension or implication. Nevertheless, Melville does not say that Bartleby's rejection of pseudo-communication in a reified world suggests that Bartleby's remoteness comes from nothing; Bartleby merely refuses to participate in a social game that is rigged against him.

Here at the outset is already a problematic of several levels. The "inscrutable" character of Bartleby evokes the "inscrutable" nature of the whale, about which Moby Dick provided lengthy chapters of every kind of description. Thus Melville is already signalling a serious "emptying out" of his subject. Furthering this logic, like Pierre, Bartleby does not "appear"; he is a white cipher, like the whiteness of the whale. The narrator of "Bartleby" does not say that "that inscrutable thing is what I chiefly hate", as Ahab said of Moby Dick, but it is that inscrutable thing, negation, which, little by little, takes over his life. In Moby Dick, Melville had already confronted abstraction, to which he counterposed "antemosaic" primordially, but by the time of "Bartleby" primordially has faded away, with the alternatives Melville still entertained in Moby Dick.

The narrator's Wall St. chambers

"at one end...looked upon the white wall of the interior of a spacious light-shaft...This view might have been rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call "life".⁶³²

Thus, as in "The Piazza", Melville introduces into a potentially banal description a whole self-conscious aesthetic dimension, referring to pictures, and representation. Precisely what "landscape painters call 'life'" is not life. This "white wall" inaugurates an aesthetic which will travel to the heart of modernist literature, from Mallarmé to Beckett.

The other window, for contrast, looks at a brick wall.

Bartleby's fellow scriveners are introduced, as if to emphasize with their ordinary foibles that they are cut from an ordinary swath of humanity. But the narrator needs more staff and,

"a motionless young man one morning, stood upon my office threshold, the door being open, for it was summer. I can see that figure now--pallidly neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby."⁶³³

Bartleby was hired, and was seated in the narrator's office,

"close up to a small-side window in that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy back-yards and bricks, but which, according to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall..."⁶³⁴

When Bartleby first refuses a tedious task of copying with his "I would prefer not to", the narrator is completely disarmed by the remoteness from which Bartleby's refusal comes, anticipating by a century some 1950's personages such as Meursault in Camus' The Stranger.

"...I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been anything ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors."⁶³⁵ (my emphasis-LG)

⁶³²-Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener. A Story of Wall Street"; Library of America edition, New York 1984, p. 636.

⁶³³-ibid. pp. 641-642.

⁶³⁴-ibid. pp. 642.

⁶³⁵-ibid. pp. 643-644.

Bartleby is a progression into blankness. He "never went to dinner...he never went any where". The narrator reconciles himself to Bartleby, because of Bartleby's

"steadiness, his freedom from all dissipation, his incessant industry (except when he chose to throw himself into a standing reverie behind his screen), his great stillness, his unalterableness of demeanour under all circumstances..."⁶³⁶.

Bartleby "was always there". When the narrator finds him living in the office it was Bartleby's "cadaverously gentlemanly nonchalance, yet withal firm and self-possessed" which "not only disarmed...but unmanned" the narrator, who "tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him".

"What miserable friendlessness and loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible! Think of it. Of a Sunday, Wall-street is as deserted as Petra; and every night of the week it is an emptiness. This building too, which of week-days hums with industry and life, at nightfall echoes with sheer vacancy, and all through Sunday is forlorn. And here Bartleby makes his home; sole spectator of a solitude which he has seen all populous--a sort of innocent and transformed Marius brooding among the ruins of Carthage!"⁶³⁷

⁶³⁶-ibid. p. 649.

⁶³⁷-ibid. p. 651. Petra (Gr. rock) is an archeological site in modern Jordan. It was built up successively by Edomites, Nabateans, then the Romans. Its particular interest is in its hidden location in a dramatic valley of cliffs and rocks, accessible only by a narrow canyon. After the end of the Roman empire, it was primarily known to and inhabited by the local Bedouin nomadic population. The Crusaders built a castle there. The first modern Westerner to visit the site was the Swiss adventurer Jean Louis Burckhardt, in 1812. He converted to Islam and disguised himself as an Arab in order to visit the site, something which may have caught Melville's attention. Burckhardt's visit to Petra is told in K. Sims, Jean Louis Burckhardt, (London 1969), pp. 138-148. Petra figures in Redburn, the short story "I and My Chimney", and Clarel. It is, along with the Pyramids, one of Melville's obsessive metaphors of entombment.

Marius was a popular Roman consul who carried out a democratizing reform of the Roman army in 107 B.C., making possible spectacular military successes against both Celtic and Germanic tribes in the north and against Carthage in North Africa. Marius is a prototypical populist military figure who anticipates the Caesars. A popular revolt in 100 BC, however, provoked his fall, and, isolated, he left for a journey to the Orient. It is perhaps this episode in Marius's career to which Melville refers. "Marius brooding among the ruins of Carthage", site of his former glory, would be an apt metaphor for Melville's own thoughts about his literary career at the time he wrote "Bartleby".

In face of a radical negation of his ultimately patronizing attempt to get Bartleby to "be reasonable" it is the narrator's charitable attitude that is being dissected. He is overcome by a feeling of "overpowering, stinging melancholy", whereas he had never previously known "aught but a not-unpleasing sadness". He thinks of Broadway, "the bright silks and sparkling faces...in gala trim, swan-like", in contrast to Bartleby. Bartleby is a non-dimensional point in space in negation of all the appearances around him. "Bartleby" is part of an evolution in Melville's writing where an "evacuation" of the text occurs, of the kind of historical allusion and reference in which Mardi or Moby Dick are so rich, and which are already spare in "Bartleby". Melville's narrator is in some ways another Transcendentalist, who finds himself (like the narrator of "The Piazza") confronted with a melancholy reality which challenges everything he is and how he sees the world, yet about which he can do nothing.

Bartleby never speaks "but to answer"; he reads nothing, "not even a newspaper"; he stared out his window at the "dead brick wall"; he visited no restaurant; he drank no beer nor coffee nor tea; he went nowhere, and said nothing about who he was or where he came from. But the narrator is unnerved by "a certain unconscious air of...pallid haughtiness", an "austere reserve" and he dared not interrupt "one of those dead-wall reveries of his".

The narrator runs up against the inequality of the situation, but still interpreted in his own terms:

"the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach."⁶³⁸

Bartleby refuses to discuss his past. "He seemed alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid-Atlantic." When the narrator tells Bartleby he must leave

" he answered not a word; like the last column of some ruined temple, he remained standing mute and solitary in the middle of the otherwise deserted room."⁶³⁹

This image of Bartleby, with the sub-text of archaeological references that run through the story, is a further evolution of the Memnon Stone in Pierre, but now without the slightest reference to poetry. There is no longer even the memory of poetry to refer to.

Bartleby radicalizes the trajectory of the earlier stories considered in this section. Instead of showing a discordant reality behind appearances, Bartleby simply refuses to reflect back any of the conventional appearances that surround him. To give in to those appearances, to "be a little reasonable", would be to

⁶³⁸- "Bartleby the Scrivener", p. 653.

⁶³⁹-ibid. p. 658.

undercut his own mute rebellion, and he, like Pierre, chooses death over an impossible "appearance".

After Bartleby's death in the Tombs, Melville's narrator hears a possible rumor of Bartleby's past in the Dead Letter Office of the Post Office, and exclaims: "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" Like Charlie Millthorpe over the dead bodies of Pierre, Isabel and Lucy, or like Captain Delano talking to Benito Cereno after quelling the rebellion, the narrator of "Bartleby the Scrivener" remains opaque to the end, not letting the lucid descent to destruction he has just witnessed fade his self-consoling charitable attitude.

Benito Cereno

In "Benito Cereno" (1855), Melville made the most radical use of theatre thus far, equalled or surpassed only by The Confidence Man. The story is so rich that it will be treated in several sections. The primary focus here is the use of theatre, which is not difficult, since virtually the entire story is, on one level, about theatre. The statement on race, told through the perceptions of Captain Delano and Benito Cereno, will be treated in the next chapter.

In "Benito Cereno" Melville returns to the setting of the revolutionary epoch of the 18th century, which already figured in Redburn and Israel Potter, and which also provides the backdrop to the posthumous Billy Budd. Unlike every work of Melville considered so far, "Benito Cereno" dispenses with a first-person narrator. The undermining of the narrator's viewpoint in "The Piazza" and "Bartleby the Scrivener" is replaced in "Benito Cereno" by the undermining of the viewpoint of Captain Amasa Delano and to a lesser extent of Benito Cereno himself.⁶⁴⁰ "Benito Cereno" portrays one of the only (momentarily) successful rebellions in Melville's work, even though the narrative begins after its success, the rebels are ultimately crushed, and their story is told only indirectly, primarily in Benito Cereno's court deposition after their defeat. "Benito Cereno" is one of Melville's most significant writings on the implications of slavery prior to the American Civil War.

"Benito Cereno" is the pseudo-sacred in its social setting, with a vengeance. It is no longer the "standing of mast-heads" in Moby Dick, the Memnon Stone in Pierre, or the blankness of "Bartleby". "Benito Cereno" returns to the revolutionary epoch from which Melville was cut off, not, as in Pierre or

⁶⁴⁰ The story is based on a true episode in the book of an actual Captain Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels (1817) Harrison Hayford's notes in the Library of America edition (1984), (used here), p. 1457, indicate that Melville changed the date of the episode from 1805 to 1799, the location, the names of the ships, and some other details. C. Karcher points out that in 1854, the same issue of Putnam's that ran the first part of Israel Potter also ran a lengthy, favorable review, "Is Man One or Many?", of a major new work of scientific racism, which Melville almost certainly saw (Shadow Over the Promised Land, Baton Rouge, 1980, p. 128).

Israel Potter, to show once again the gulf between his characters and that epoch, but to show how frayed authority had become⁶⁴¹.

"Benito Cereno" has in common with "Bartleby the Scrivener" elements of an aesthetic of blankness. The blankness is used to underscore the deadly masquerade involved. But Melville is not using blankness to say that behind the appearances of theatre there is nothing; far more strikingly than even in White-Jacket, behind appearances of authority lurk the grim realities of oppression and rebellion. Blankness in "Benito Cereno" conveys the rot of authority over a world seething with revolt.

Michael Rogin is right to invoke Hegel in analyzing Benito Cereno⁶⁴². Not only is the blankness of the story, as in "Bartleby", an evocation of Hegel's death-in-the-concept; theatre is used to emphasize that everything is the opposite of what it appears to be, and that events take place in the inverted world concealing a brutal dialectic of master and slave.

The greyness of the concept is already in the beginning. Captain Amasa Delano of Duxbury, Massachusetts is at anchor, getting water at "a small, desert, uninhabited island toward the southern extremity of the long coast of Chili" when "a strange sail" appeared. Everything was "gray"; the sea looked like "waved lead that had cooled", the sky was a "grey surtout", crossed by "gray fowl" and "gray vapors". To heighten the tension and the colorlessness of the scene, the strange ship in fact "showed no colors", a troubling sign in such a remote spot, evoking piracy. Melville introduces costume; the sun,

"wimpled by the same low, creeping clouds, showed not unlike a Lima intriguante's one sinister eye peering across the Plaza from the Indian loop-hole of her dusk saya- y-manta".⁶⁴³

The medievalism of Melville's imagery in describing the Spanish slave ship has already been discussed⁶⁴⁴. Its use is to deepen the eery sense of rot; what has rotted is pseudo-sacred authority. The ship appeared "like a white-washed monastery after a thunder-storm, seen perched upon some dun cliff among the Pyrenees", seeming to Captain Delano as "nothing less than a ship-load of monks". At the bulwarks were "what really seemed, in the hazy distance, throngs of dark cowls".

⁶⁴¹-Carolyn Karcher (op. cit. p. 136) argues that the character of Benito Cereno is a transposition to a Spanish American context of the "Southern Hamlet" figure, a Northern anti-slavery vision of the decadence of the Southern slaveholder class. Given the use of Charles V, and Spanish references generally (the doubloon in *Moby Dick*, the dedication of The Confidence Man to "victims of auto da fe") throughout Melville's work, this seems at best a partial analysis.

⁶⁴²-Rogin, op. cit. p. 208.

⁶⁴³-ibid. p. 674.

⁶⁴⁴-Cf. above Ch. XIII.

But it is 1799, and the ship is a "Spanish merchantman of the first class; carrying negro slaves" ...in its time, a very fine vessel", like others encountered in those waters. It is another evocation of medieval or early modern realities in decay:

"...sometimes superceded Acapulco treasure-ships, or retired frigates of the Spanish king's navy, which, like superannuated Italian palaces, still, under a decline of masters, preserved signs of former state...Her keel seemed laid, her ribs put together, and she launched, from Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones...The ship's model and rig seemed to have undergone no material change from their original war-like and Froissart pattern"⁶⁴⁵.

"Battered and mouldy, the castellated forecastle seemed some ancient turret, long ago taken by assault, and then left to decay...". The galleries of the ship were "tenantless balconies" (which) "hung over the sea as if it were the grand Venetian canal". The passage, already cited in the earlier discussion of the pseudo-sacred, indicates the theatrical dimension which is to follow:

"...But the principal relic of faded grandeur was the ample oval of the shield-like stern-piece, intricately carved with the arms of Castile and Leon, medallioned about by groups of mythological or symbolical devices; uppermost and central of which was a dark satyr in a mask, holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure, likewise masked"⁶⁴⁶

In one image, Melville presents the key to the story: two masked figures, one subjugated by the other.

It was impossible to ascertain if the ship had a figure head, because of a canvas hung there, "perhaps decently to hide its decay". Below the canvas was scrawled, in Spanish, "Seguid vuestro jefe" (follow your leader). The ship was named the "San Dominick", evoking the Haitian Revolution in Santo Domingo underway in 1799.

The element of theatre, counterposed to blankness, is now explicit:

"...but in the case of the ship there is this addition; that the living spectacle it contains, upon its sudden and complete disclosure, has, in contrast with the blank ocean which zones it, something of the effect of enchantment. The ship seems unreal, these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep, which directly must receive back what it gave."⁶⁴⁷ (my emphasis- LG).

645-*ibid.*

646-*ibid.* p. 676.

647-*ibid.* p. 677.

This whole ship is a theatre, as the Neversink became only temporarily in White-Jacket . 648.

Benito Cereno appears for the first time:

"...the Spanish captain, a gentlemanly, reserved-looking, and rather young man to a stranger's eye, dressed with singular richness, but bearing plain traces of recent sleepless cares and disquietudes, stood passively by, leaning against the main-mast, at one moment casting a dreary, spiritless look upon his excited people, at the next an unhappy glance toward his visitor. By his side stood a black of small stature, in whose rude face, as occasionally, like a shepherd's dog, he mutely turned it up into the Spaniard's, sorrow and affection were equally blended"⁶⁴⁹

Benito Cereno, "like some hypochondriac abbot", conveys in his person the faded elegance of his ship.

One must constantly keep in mind, for purposes of analysis (as opposed to a reader's initial approach to the story), that Captain Delano is unknowingly inspecting a ship that has been taken over by a successful slave rebellion, and that Benito Cereno is acting out a forced role imposed upon him by the slaves, who are actually in charge of the ship. The power of this scenario is to show the pseudo-sacred--Benito Cereno--at the breaking point, where its power is eroded to almost nothing. The reality of Marianna in "The Piazza" or the blankness of Bartleby seem mild compared to the ferocity of the slave revolt, even one narrated after its defeat.⁶⁵⁰ Babo is the leader of the rebellion. He is the stage manager of Benito Cereno's masquerade, but to the gullible Captain Delano, Cereno is in charge:

"... to have beheld this undemonstrative invalid gliding about, apathetic and mute, no landsman could have dreamed that in him was lodged a dictatorship beyond which, while at sea, there was no earthly appeal."⁶⁵¹

Captain Delano is as lost in self-sustaining illusion as the narrators of "The Piazza" or "Bartleby".

Melville again turns to clothing to convey his characters:

⁶⁴⁸-Cf. White-Jacket, Ch. 23, "Theatricals in a Man-of-War".

⁶⁴⁹-ibid.

⁶⁵⁰-When "The Piazza", "Bartleby the Scrivener", "Benito Cereno", "The Lightning Rod Man". "The Encantadas" and "The Bell Tower" were republished in book form as The Piazza Tales in 1856, Melville had wanted to call the book Benito Cereno and Other Stories, but was convinced by his publisher to accept the less provocative title.

⁶⁵¹-ibid. p. 681.

"...The Spaniard wore a loose Chili jacket of dark velvet; white small clothes and stockings, with silver buckles at the knee and instep; a high-crowned sombrero, of fine grass; a slender sword, silver mounted, hung from a knot in his sash; the last being an almost invariable adjunct, more for utility than ornament, of a South American gentleman's dress to this hour."⁶⁵²

Babo, the man servant, by contrast, wore

"nothing but wide trowsers, apparently...made out of some old topsail...confined at the waist by a bit of unstranded rope which...made him look something like a begging friar of St. Francis."⁶⁵³

Thus Melville, in continuing his fascination with the pseudo-sacred in military uniforms, as has been followed through his writings, juxtaposes Don Benito's clothing to the medieval monastic motif which began, and ends, the story:

"there seemed something so incongruous in the Spaniard's apparel, as almost to suggest the image of an invalid courtier tottering about London streets in the time of the plague."⁶⁵⁴

Captain Delano himself has thoughts of the pseudo-sacred, which probably in this case echo Melville's own:

"...Is it...that this hapless man is one of those paper captains I've known, who by policy wink at what by power they cannot put down? I know no sadder sight than a commander who has little of command but the name."⁶⁵⁵

"...This poor fellow now, thought the pained American, is the victim of that sad superstition which associates goblins with the deserted body of man, as ghosts with an abandoned house."⁶⁵⁶

A charade is enacted for Captain Delano, wherein Atufal, a "gigantic black" regularly appears before Benito Cereno in chains to ask forgiveness for some grave offense.

Far from intuiting a slave revolt in power, Captain Delano suspects Benito Cereno of piracy. Was Benito Cereno "some low-born adventurer", masquerading as an oceanic grandee"? "Cereno" had been the surname to

⁶⁵²ibid. pp. 685-686.

⁶⁵³-ibid. p. 686.

⁶⁵⁴-ibid.

⁶⁵⁵-ibid. p. 688.

⁶⁵⁶-ibid. p. 690.

"supercargoes and sea captains trading along the Spanish Main, as belonging to one of the most enterprising and extensive mercantile families in all those provinces; several members of it having titles; a sort of Castilian Rothschild, with a noble brother, or cousin, in every great trading town of South America."⁶⁵⁷

Captain Delano's thoughts as he calms himself about a possible conspiracy by Benito Cereno are reminiscent of "Bartleby the Scrivener"'s narrator as he attempts to convince himself that he has solved the problem posed by Bartleby.

"If Don Benito's story was throughout an invention, then every soul on board, down to the youngest negress, was his carefully drilled recruit in the plot: an incredible inference. And yet, if there was ground for mistrusting his veracity, that inference was a legitimate one."⁶⁵⁸

Captain Delano moves through the crowd on deck to serve out the water which has just arrived, clearing a way through a crowd of blacks. Melville brings the masquerade right to the surface. Delano orders the blacks to stand back and

"..to enforce his words making use of a half-mirthful, half-menacing gesture. Instantly the blacks paused, just where they were, each negro and negress suspended in his or her posture, exactly as the word had found them..."⁶⁵⁹

but the crowd is calmed and a moment later the water is being hoisted, "whites and blacks singing at the tackle". The incident underscores the scripted quality of everything happening on the San Dominick.

Babo shaves Benito Cereno. Seeing Babo poised with the razor over the lathered Don Benito, Delano could not

"...resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white, a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free."⁶⁶⁰

Delano yet again reflects on the possibility of some conspiracy between Don Benito and Babo, "that master and man, for some unknown purpose, were acting out, both in word and deed...some juggling play before him".

Returning to the deck, Captain Delano is startled to encounter Atufal, the chained colossus whose physique he had admired, "like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs", "singularly attesting docility even in sullenness". The hatchet polishers were also at work, "who in patience evinced their industry":

⁶⁵⁷-ibid. p. 694.

⁶⁵⁸-ibid. p. 699.

⁶⁵⁹-ibid. p. 711.

⁶⁶⁰-ibid. pp. 717-718.

"...both spectacles showed, that lax as Don Benito's general authority might be, still, whenever he chose to exert it, no man so savage or colossal but must, more or less, bow."⁶⁶¹

With the denouement of "Benito Cereno", all the inverted appearances of Melville's story are set aright and Captain Delano suddenly discovers that the very same Don Benito he suspected of hatching a conspiratorial plot against him was the main involuntary actor in a masquerade hiding a slave rebellion. Thus not only his alternation of good-fellow feeling and condescension with suspicion is revealed to have rested on completely false premises, but they are refuted in everything that follows.

"Captain Delano, now with the scales dropped from his eyes, saw the negroes, not in misrule, not in tumult... but with the mask torn away, flourishing hatchets and knives, in ferocious piratical revolt. Like delirious black dervishes, the six Ashantees danced on the poop."⁶⁶²

All his benevolent condescension, all his musings about how "God had set the negro to some pleasant tune", are swept away in a flash. The canvas on the front of the ship, over the scrawled words "Follow Your Leader", falls away, revealing a human skeleton, that of the slaveowner Aranda, friend of Benito Cereno. (In overpowering Babo, Captain Delano holds him down with his foot, fulfilling the intimation of the stern piece mentioned earlier). Aranda had been killed and four days later his bleached skeleton

"had been substituted for the ship's proper figure-head, the image of Christopher Colon, the discoverer of the New World"⁶⁶³

The masquerade had been planned after the sighting of the American ship, and all Spaniards forced to play their roles, on pain of death for all of them.

A story like "Benito Cereno" published in the United States in 1854 could only be interpreted as a warning of the perils posed to the country by the perpetuation of slavery, and as a critique of dullards such as Captain Delano who persisted in not seeing the situation in its reality. Babo dominates the final scene:

"Some months later, dragged to the gibbet at the tail of a mule, the black met his voiceless end. The body was burned to ashes; but for many days, the head, that

⁶⁶¹-ibid. p. 726.

⁶⁶²-ibid. p. 734.

⁶⁶³-ibid. p. 744. In the deposition, Don Benito says that "so long as reason is left him, (he) can never divulge" the way in which Don Alexandro's skeleton was prepared. (p. 749)

head of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the Plaza, met, unabashed, the gaze of the whites..."⁶⁶⁴

Melville, in his sustained portrayal of an inverted world through the use of theatre, had extended the logic of the gallery scene in Pierre to encompass the most central reality of America of the mid-1850's: that the content exceeded the phrase, and that reassuring appearances and representations were a frayed costume over a reality about to explode.

⁶⁶⁴-ibid. p. 755.

XV. Race in Melville's Post-Moby Dick Writings

In Typee, based on his experience of Western imperialism in Polynesia, Melville had called the "white civilized man" the "most ferocious animal on the face of the earth"⁶⁶⁵. He first took up the question of race in American society in Mardi. There, in his counterposition of the European and American 1848, in the long debates among his semi-allegorical protagonists, it emerged that the subjugation of the "tribe of Hamo" was undermining republican institutions in the United States. Both Redburn and White-Jacket have observations on race, such as Redburn's association of the Liverpool monument to Lord Nelson with the slave trade⁶⁶⁶. But Melville's foremost statement on the question of race was in Moby Dick, when he placed the African, Indian and Polynesian harpooners at the head of the "mariners, castaways and renegades" of the *Pequod's* crew, with the implication that the "completion of the cathedral dome" would involve the return on a higher level of their "antemosaic" qualities.

As collective rebellion as any kind of option recedes for Melville, such a vision recedes as well. Melville's energies in the period after Pierre, culminating in The Confidence Man, are devoted to exposing middle-class sentimentalism, including its most explicit philosophical expression, Transcendentalism. Class and poverty were part of the realities he used in that critique. Race was another.

The juxtaposition of race and class necessarily implies an attempt to show their interrelationship. In a society in which the ruling class is composed of one race and the working class of another, "race and class" would require no explanation, because they would coincide. In the United States, as in most other multi-racial societies, "race and class" demands analysis because the two terms, in the constitution of the working class, emphatically do not coincide: the working class is multiracial, but has historically been stratified by a caste system organized along racial lines, with whites on top⁶⁶⁷.

⁶⁶⁵-Typee, p. 150.

⁶⁶⁶The statue of Nelson is held up by four sculpted, naked figures in chains, symbolizing Nelson's major victories, but Redburn "...could never look at their swarthy limbs and manacles, without being involuntarily reminded of four African slaves in the market place. (Redburn, p. 149). Carolyn Karcher (op. cit. pp. 39-55) provides numerous instances of Melville's observation on race in White-Jacket, and sees an anti-slavery polemic as a "covert message" (p. 46) of the outrage at conditions in the navy. Whatever the case, even she admits that "whichever way we view the subversive mode Melville perfected in such extended parallels between black and white character types, it does not seem to fulfill its purpose." (ibid.)

⁶⁶⁷-Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York, 1995) and Theodore Allen, The Invention of the White Race, vol. 1, New York 1994, are two recent attempts to analyze the origins and role of white supremacy in the formation of the American working class.

Melville's work as a whole, at first approach, has little to say about an analysis of these questions, are they are framed in contemporary debate. His works contain material on class, and material on race, but only in Moby Dick is there anything beyond important hints of their interrelation. Nowhere does Melville discuss directly what race implies for white workers in America. The overriding issue in Melville's era was the abolition of slavery, and the constitution of an industrial proletariat (as opposed to urban artisans or the poor) was very much a work in progress. One major reason that the "making of the American working class" as a political class differed from parallel developments in England or France was that, during three key decades (1846-1877) in the emergence of an urban industrial class of wage laborers, national politics was dominated by the slavery question and its aftermath. And what is fundamental about Melville up to Moby Dick, for any discussion of race and class in America, is his understanding of the alternative to middle-class sentimentalism, the aestheticized moi absolu, as the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation". Even when, beginning with Pierre, the theme of collective revolt receded for Melville, he continued to hammer away at the limitations of genteel aestheticism and the bourgeois ego. The "ugly revolution" for Melville in the 1850's meant the "sullen" working or poor people or revolting slaves who shook up his middle-class narrators, and Melville never fully lost sight of the fact that when he introduced the question of class, race could not be far behind. He had said it in 1851 with Queequeg, and the opening page of the posthumous Billy Budd circles back over forty years to evoke once again the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation" and the black Handsome Sailor who announces Billy Budd. In between, "Benito Cereno" and "The 'Gees" are two important investigations of the racist mind, and it is Black Guinea who anchors the masquerade of The Confidence Man. Melville's most important work after Moby Dick is an attempt to go beyond the blankness and the Dead Letter Office of Bartleby, a project in which he never fully succeeds. Melville rejected the Transcendentalist illusion for Bartleby's blankness, for non-appearance, but that blankness was itself trapped in the terms of negation.

What is important about Melville's work for an analysis of race and class in America is the "symptomology" it offers of American culture. Melville sets up the terms of the problem correctly, even he if does not solve it: by implication, a consciousness beyond Bartleby is a collective one, and by virtue of being American, it is thus a multi-racial one.

"Benito Cereno" is a complex story with many strands, some of which have been analyzed previously; the following presents only those dealing directly with race. (The complexity of Melville is such that a work dealing with a slave rebellion can in fact contain elements having little or nothing to do with race, such as the link between the character of Benito Cereno and Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor from 1520 to 1554.)

"Benito Cereno" has already been treated in the sections on the pseudo-sacred and on theatre. This section will primarily analyze the opaqueness of Captain Delano and Benito Cereno on the question of race. While this separation by theme is completely artificial, and is dictated by the broader organization of this study, the power of "Benito Cereno" hopefully pierces through the distortion.

Captain Delano is Melville's main foil in the unmasking of the opaqueness of a middle-class sentimental mind. He is cut from the same cloth as the narrators of "The Piazza" and "Bartleby the Scrivener". As the strange ship comes into view, showing no colors in a remote location, Melville introduces his main character, much as he used the blankness of Bartleby to offset his "safe", "prudent" narrator:

"...Captain Delano's surprise might have deepened into some uneasiness had he not been a person of a singularly undistrustful good nature, not liable, except on extraordinary and repeated incentives, and hardly then, to indulge in personal alarms, any way involving the imputation of malign evil in man"⁶⁶⁸

Captain Delano shrugs off fears that the *San Dominick* is a pirate ship and boards it to help pilot it to safety. He finds a "clamorous throng of whites and blacks" who tell him of a near-shipwreck off Cape Horn, and scurvy and fever, which had "swept off a great part of their number, more especially the Spaniards".

Once Captain Delano has boarded the *San Dominick*, Melville enters Captain Delano's mind, using his thoughts and observations as he used the viewpoint of the narrator in "Bartleby". He does this first of all to present Captain Delano's thoughts about blacks. Many of the passages in "Benito Cereno", casually read and mistakenly imputed to the author, might seem racist, until one realizes that Melville is using them to show a commonplace racist mind at work.

Four "elderly grizzled negroes" were "couched, sphynx-like", at different points around the ship, picking junk into oakum and accompanying this task

"...with a continuous, low, monotonous chant; droning and druling away like so many gray-headed bag-pipers playing a funeral march"⁶⁶⁹

On the quarter-deck sat six other blacks, "each with a rusty hatchet in his hand", which they were scouring, speaking to no one

"except at intervals, when, with the peculiar love in negroes of uniting industry with pastime, two and two they sideways dashed their hatchets together, like cymbals, with a barbarous din. All six, unlike the generality, had the raw aspect of unsophisticated Africans."⁶⁷⁰

Benito Cereno, the Spanish captain, seemed incapable of the slightest action without his black man-servant. This attentiveness, for Captain Delano, is

"that affectionate zeal which transmutes into something filial or fraternal acts in themselves but menial; and which has gained for the negro the repute of making the most pleasing body servant in the world; one, too, whom a master need be on

⁶⁶⁸- "Benito Cereno", Library of America edition (1984), p. 673.

⁶⁶⁹- "Benito Cereno", p. 677.

⁶⁷⁰-ibid. p. 678.

no stiffly superior terms with, but may treat with familiar trust; less a servant than a devoted companion

Marking the noisy indocility of the blacks in general, as well as what seemed the sullen inefficiency of the whites, it was not without humane satisfaction that Captain Delano witnessed the steady good conduct of Babo." . 671

The patronizing character of Captain Delano's thoughts are all the more absurd, as indicated in the previous chapter, when set against the fact that he has unknowingly boarded a ship in the hands of a slave rebellion.

Benito Cereno, in his compulsory role, plays to Captain Delano's stereotyped thoughts:

"But throughout these calamities" adds Don Benito, "I have to thank those negroes you see, who, thought to your inexperienced eyes appearing unruly, have, indeed, conducted themselves with less of restlessness than even their owner could have thought possible under such circumstances."672

The owner had assured Don Benito that "no fetters would be needed".

"As master and man stood before him, the black upholding the white, Captain Delano could not but bethink him of the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other."673

Moved by the body servant Babo's attentiveness to Don Benito, Captain Delano cannot restrain himself: "Faithful fellow!... "Don Benito, I envy you such a friend; slave I cannot call him."

Atufal, the "gigantic black", appears before Benito Cereno in chains, as part of the masquerade, to ask forgiveness:

"This is some mulish mutineer, thought Captain Delano, surveying, not without a mixture of admiration, the colossal form of the negro."674

Thus Captain Delano is not only taken in, not only arrogant in thinking Atufal "mulish" for rebelling, but also simultaneously drawn to the black's physique, a classic mixture of self-deception, condescension and sexual attraction common in racist attitudes. When it is explained to Captain Delano that this ritual has been repeated every two hours for sixty days, and that Antufal has remained "respectful" and "obedient" in every other way:

671-ibid. p. 680.

672-ibid. p. 685.

673-ibid.

674-ibid. p. 691.

"Upon my conscience, then", exclaimed Captain Delano, impulsively, "he has a royal spirit in him, this fellow"⁶⁷⁵

Captain Delano wanders on the deck, weighing his thoughts. He comes across "a slumbering negress" and her small boy, trying to nurse. The child's efforts finally awaken the mother, and

"delightedly she caught the child up, with maternal transports, covering it with kisses.

"There's naked nature, now; pure tenderness and love, thought Captain Delano, well pleased."⁶⁷⁶

As Captain Delano is congratulating himself on his magnanimity, he launches into a classic stereotyped reflection on black women:

"This incident prompted him to remark the other negresses more particularly than before. He was gratified with their manners; like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution; equally ready to die for their infants or fight for them. Unsophisticated as leopardesses; loving as doves. Ah, thought Captain Delano, these perhaps are the very women whom Mungo Park saw in Africa, and gave such a noble account of.

These natural sights somehow insensibly deepened his confidence and ease."⁶⁷⁷

Captain Delano's main preoccupation is that the Spanish slave ship is in fact a pirate ship planning to overwhelm his own. He notes new suspicious signs, and lapses back into his anxiety about a conspiracy afoot. It is his racism which prevents him from understanding the real situation. Melville again moves into the befuddled meanderings of Captain Delano. Thinking a Spanish sailor, acting strangely, was trying to warn him, Delano thinks:

"...Was it from forseeing some possible interference like this, that Don Benito had, beforehand, given such a bad character of his sailors, while praising the negroes; though, indeed, the former seemed as docile as the latter the contrary? The whites, too, by nature, were the shrewder race...But if the whites had dark secrets

⁶⁷⁵ibid. p. 692.

⁶⁷⁶-ibid. p. 704.

⁶⁷⁷-ibid. According to H. Hayford's notes to the 1984 edition, Mungo Park, mentioned earlier, did not write about African women. The name "Ledyard", who also did not write about African women, appeared in the Putnam's original story.

concerning Don Benito, could then Don Benito be any way in complicity with the blacks? But they were too stupid."⁶⁷⁸.

Captain Delano sees the boat from his own ship coming with supplies of fresh water, and slips again into innocent reverie; the boat "had often pressed the beach of Captain Delano's home", and had lain there "as a Newfoundland dog"; the sight of it

"...filled him not only with lightsome confidence, but somehow with half humorous self-reproaches at his former lack of it."⁶⁷⁹

When his boat arrives with supplies and water for the Spanish ship, Captain Delano wanted to give various food and drink

"...to the whites alone, and in chief Don Benito; but the latter objected; which disinterestedness, on his part, not a little pleased the American; and so mouthfuls all around were given alike to whites and blacks..."⁶⁸⁰

In the shaving scene, Captain Delano engages in some of his most extensive thoughts on blacks. Seeing Babo poised with the razor over the lathered Don Benito, Delano could not

"...resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white, a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free."⁶⁸¹

But while watching the slave shave the master, Captain Delano gets to the heart of his thinking about blacks, and to the culmination of Melville's portrayal of the ordinary racist mind in 1855.

"...There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets and hairdressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to castanets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvelous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its way, singularly pleasing to behold, and still moreso to be the manipulated subject of. And above all there is the great gift of good humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune.

⁶⁷⁸-ibid. pp. 706-707.

⁶⁷⁹-ibid. p. 708.

⁶⁸⁰-ibid. p. 712.

⁶⁸¹-ibid. pp. 717-718.

When to all this is added the docility arising from the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind, and that susceptibility of blind attachment sometimes inhering in indisputable inferiors, one readily perceives why those hypochondriacs, Johnson and Byron--it may be something like the hypochondriac, Benito Cereno--took to their hearts, almost to the exclusion of the entire white race, their serving men, the negroes, Barber and Fletcher. But if there be that in the negro which exempts him from the inflicted sourness of the morbid or cynical mind, how, in his most prepossessing aspects, must he appear to a benevolent one? When at ease with respect to exterior things, Captain Delano's nature was not only benign, but familiarly and humorously so. At home, he had often taken rare satisfaction in sitting in his door, watching some free man of color at his work or play. If on a voyage he chanced to have a black sailor, invariably he was on chatty, and half-gamesome terms with him. In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs.

Hitherto the circumstances in which he found the San Dominick had repressed the tendency. But in the cuddy, relieved from his former uneasiness, and, for various reasons, more sociably inclined than at any previous period of the day, and seeing the colored servant, napkin on arm, so debonair about his master, in a business so familiar as that of shaving, too, all his old weakness for negroes returned.

Among other things, he was amused with an odd instance of the African love of bright colors and fine shows, in the black's informally taking from the flag-locker a great piece of bunting of all hues, and lavishly tucking it under his master's chin for an apron."⁶⁸²

Captain Delano is, unknown to himself and to the first-time reader of these lines, on a ship in the hands of a slave rebellion, yet "all his old weakness for negroes returned" in these condescending thoughts, and it amplifies his feelings to see the Spanish flag used as a shaving apron, as an example of "the African love of bright colors". Melville has built up this series of clichés: blacks are "natural valets and hair-dressers"; they have "smooth tact" and a "great gift of humour"; they have "easy cheerfulness", "as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune". They are docile, resulting from "the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind". Like the narrator of "The Piazza" before meeting Marianna, like the narrator of "Bartleby" when he thinks he has settled the question of the scrivener in his own mind, Captain Delano alternates from minute to minute between fear for his life (from the wrong hands) and self-contented condescension toward those who, shortly after this scene, show every one of his thoughts to be an illusion rooted in his own sense of himself.

Captain Delano's severe limits are shown only moments later when he sees the steward, "a tall, rajah-looking mulatto, orientally set off with a pagoda turban formed by three or four Madras handkerchiefs wound about his head, tier on tier". For Delano, Babo's "askance look" at the steward is a "jealous watchfulness"

⁶⁸²-*ibid.* pp. 716-717.

coming from "that peculiar feeling which the full-blooded African entertains for the adulterated one". The mulatto's complexion "was hybrid, his physiognomy was European; classically so.". Delano tells Don Benito that

"...the sight refutes an ugly remark once made to me by a Barbadoes planter; that when a mulatto has a regular European face, look out for him, he is a devil. But see, your steward here has features more regular than King George's of England; and yet he nods, bows and smiles; a king, indeed--the king of kind hearts and polite fellows. What a pleasant voice he has, too!"

When Benito Cereno tells Delano that the mulatto steward is indeed a good man, Captain Delano reveals the white supremacist lurking behind his effusions:

"Ah, I thought so. For it were strange indeed, and not very creditable to us white-skins, if a little of our blood mixed with the African's, should, far from improving the latter's quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, perhaps, but not the wholesomeness."⁶⁸³

Over lunch, Captain Delano again presses his questions about the details of the San Dominick's fate. He is curious how scurvy and fever "should have committed wholesale havoc upon the whites, while destroying less than half the blacks." As previously during these questionings, Benito Cereno goes into a faint, apparently overwhelmed by the horrors alluded to. Recovering,

"He made random reference to the different constitution of races, enabling one to offer more resistance to certain maladies than another. The thought was new to his companion."⁶⁸⁴

Returning to the deck, Captain Delano is startled to encounter Atufal, the chained colossus whose physique he had admired, "like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs", "singularly attesting docility even in sullenness". The hatchet polishers were also at work, "who in patience evinced their industry":

Captain Delano sets whites and blacks to work to enter the harbour: "no brace or halyard was pulled but to the blithe songs of the inspired negroes".

"Good fellows, thought Captain Delano, a little training would make fine sailors of them. Why see, the very women pull and sing too. These must be some of those Ashantee negresses that make such capital soldiers, I've heard."⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸³-ibid. p. 722.

⁶⁸⁴-ibid. p. 723.

⁶⁸⁵-ibid.

Even with the denouement of "Benito Cereno", when Captain Delano has understood his opaqueness, he continues to see the black rebels in stereotyped terms:

"Captain Delano, now with the scales dropped from his eyes, saw the negroes, not in misrule, not in tumult... but with the mask torn away, flourishing hatchets and knives, in ferocious piratical revolt. Like delirious black dervishes, the six Ashantees danced on the poop."⁶⁸⁶

After the Americans put down the rebellion, Melville uses the documents of the tribunal as a way of overturning the earlier thoughts of Captain Delano. The deposition is primarily given by Benito Cereno. The tribunal at times doubted Benito Cereno's account, because "the deponent, disturbed in his mind by recent events, raved of some things which could never have happened", but some sailors confirmed Don Benito "in several of the strangest particulars". By using the dry formal legalisms of a court deposition, Melville is showing how such forms create a soothing, self-consoling distance between illusion and the ferocity of something like the rebellion on the *San Dominick*.

Benito Cereno tells the tribunal the story of the rebellion, which means in effect that this history is mainly recorded by one of its primary victims, but hardly the "innocent man" he claims to be in his final conversation with Captain Delano. Melville also uses the deposition to further demonstrate the obtuseness of Delano. The slaveowner, Don Alejandro Aranda, had let the blacks sleep on deck, unfettered, saying that "they were all tractable", and on the seventh night out they had suddenly taken over the ship, killing many whites. Babo, the supposed man servant of Don Benito, had been the ringleader of the revolt, and wanted the ship sailed to Senegal and freedom. The masquerade had been planned after the sighting of the American ship, and all Spaniards forced to play their roles, on pain of death for all of them. In the description of the role of specific slaves, Captain Delano's thoughts are in retrospect turned on their head. Babo, the devoted man servant, had been the ringleader. The mulatto steward, Francesco, whose appearance Delano saw as the refutation of "an ugly remark... by a Barbados planter", was in fact in favor of poisoning Captain Delano at the very meal at which he effused over his "features more regular than King George's of England". Atufal, the chained giant and former king whose physique was admired by Benito Cereno, was Babo's lieutenant.

But perhaps most striking is the role of the black women as portrayed in the deposition, remembered against Captain Delano's musings inspired by "Mungo Park". They, more than the men, had been in favor of torturing to death, and not merely killing, the Spaniards.

"...the negresses used their utmost influence to have the deponent (i.e. Benito Cereno-LG) made away with; that, in the various acts of murder, they sang songs

⁶⁸⁶-ibid. p. 734.

and danced--not gaily, but solemnly; and before the engagement with the boats, as well as during the action, they sang melancholy songs to the negroes, and that this melancholy tone was more inflaming than a different one would have been, and was so intended; all this is believed, because the negroes have said it."⁶⁸⁷

Whether this passage is a falsification by Benito Cereno or something Melville wants to convey as the true story of the revolt, its effect is to totally overturn Captain Delano's earlier happy musings over blacks singing at work.

The deposition, then, corrects aspects of the inverted world as it appeared to Captain Delano, and was interpreted through his obtuseness, an obtuseness heightened by racist attitudes which have been detailed at length. (It is nonetheless only the viewpoint of a Spanish tribunal, with no attention to the true causes of the rebellion.) But Melville adds a coda, following the deposition, about Captain Delano's conversations with Benito Cereno after the suppression of the rebellion, on the way to Lima. They have ample opportunity to discuss the details of the masquerade they had survived. Delano's remarks make it clear that he learned nothing. He says that had he been of a more suspicious nature, he probably would not have survived the day, but Don Benito cannot shake a fundamental gloom, seeing himself as "not only an innocent man, but the most pitiable of men". Captain Delano says:

"...But the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves."⁶⁸⁸

And then:

" You are saved," cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; "you are saved; what has cast such a shadow upon you?"

"The negro."

There was silence, while the moody man sat, slowly and unconsciously gathering his mantle around him, as if it were a pall.

There was no more conversation that day. ⁶⁸⁹

Once the masquerade is ended, the revolt crushed, and the mutineers tried and executed, Melville allows Babo a final defiance:

⁶⁸⁷-ibid. p. 750.

⁶⁸⁸-ibid. p. 754.

⁶⁸⁹-ibid. pp. 754-755.

"...but for many days, the head, that hive of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the Plaza, met, unabashed, the gaze of the whites; and across the plaza looked toward's St. Bartholemew's church, in whose vaults slept then, as now, the recovered bones of Aranda; and across the Rimac bridge looked towards the monastery, on Mount Agonia without; where, three months after being dismissed by the court, Benito Cereno, borne on the bier, did, indeed, follow his leader."⁶⁹⁰

By confronting the whites, Aranda and Benito Cereno with the dead "hive of subtlety", Melville was giving him the last "word", so to speak, against the distortions of the various whites' perceptions and accounts of the revolt.

In "Benito Cereno", Melville achieved the most extensive analysis of the limitations of the sentimental middle-class mind, prior to The Confidence Man. Class, poverty and race were among the realities against which self-consoling illusion did not hold. He did apply this method one more time, in the little-known story "The 'Gees".

"The 'Gees"

In the little-known short piece published in 1856 (though written in 1854) called "The 'Gees", Melville carries his use of a befuddled narrator to new lengths, and makes one of his most significant statements on racism, comparable in some ways to Captain Delano's thought process in "Benito Cereno". The "'Gees" is a racial epithet coined by seamen from "Portuguese", referring to mulattos from the Cape Verde islands, many of whom worked on American ships. In this piece, Melville adopts the viewpoint of a typical Northern believer in white supremacy to induce critical ambiguity in the reader. Melville's method is to appear to adopt viewpoints he wants to disparage by pushing them to absurd lengths that jolt the complacent reader inclined to agree with them.

The 'Gees, says Melville's stand-in, are descendants of Portuguese convicts sent to Fogo, one of the Cape Verde islands, and "an aboriginal race of negroes, ranking pretty high in incivility, but rather low in stature and morals". The more likely were shipped off as "food for powder", and those remaining, the "caput mortuum", are the 'Gees.

The narrator of "The 'Gees" points out that seaman are "bigots" in the matter of race, generally, but

"when a creature of inferior race lives among them, an inferior tar, there seems no bound to their disdain."⁶⁹¹

⁶⁹⁰-ibid. p. 755. Carolyn Karcher (op. cit. pp. 140-141) points out that Babo, "whose brain, not body, had schemed and led the revolt" (in Melville's words) turns Captain Delano's typical white stereotypes about blacks on their head.

⁶⁹¹-"The 'Gees", Library of America edition, 1984, p. 1291.

Thus the narrator signals that he too believes there is such a thing as an "inferior race". The 'Gees do not, moreover "make the best of sailors". For sailors, the word "Portuguese" itself was a "reproach", making "Gee" all the more of an epithet, and a taunt. The island of Fogo itself is mainly volcanic ash, making agriculture impossible; the 'Gees are poor.

Melville's narrator then launches into a biological characterization of the 'Gees from something like a Lamarckian viewpoint. The 'Gee is small but hardy,

"capable of enduring extreme hard work, hard fare, or hard usage, as the case may be. In fact, upon a scientific view, there would seem a natural adaptability in the 'Gee to hard times generally...His physicals and spirituals are in singular contrast. The 'Gee has a great appetite, but little imagination; a large eyeball, but little insight. Biscuit he crunches, but sentiment he eschews."⁶⁹²

The narrator continues on in this manner, appealing to the general nineteenth century belief in the biological suitability of different races to different destinies. The 'Gee's head is "round, compact, and betokening a solid understanding' (here echoing Lavaterian physiognomy):

"like the negro, the 'Gee has a peculiar savor, but a different one--a sort of wild, marine, gamy savor, as in the sea-bird called haglet. Like venison, his flesh is firm but lean."⁶⁹³

Captains trapped in "dull, rainy weather in the horse-latitudes" have long debated if the 'Gee's teeth are "for carnivorous or herbivorous purposes, or both conjoined", without coming to any conclusion. The Gee also

"has a serviceably hard heel, a kick from which is by the judicious held almost as dangerous as one from a wild zebra"⁶⁹⁴

Thus Melville's narrator, by adopting in mimicry the pseudo-scientific tone of the day, jolts the reader into an awareness that he is in fact discussing the 'Gees as if they were a species of animal.

The 'Gees have been employed on American ships over the previous forty years. They are popular with captains because

"...An unsophisticated 'Gee coming on board a foreign ship never asks for wages. He comes for biscuit. He does not know what other wages mean, unless cuffs and buffets be wages, of which sort he receives a liberal allowance..."⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹²-ibid. p. 1292.

⁶⁹³-ibid.

⁶⁹⁴-ibid. p. 1293.

⁶⁹⁵-ibid.

Some captains

"will go to the length of maintaining that 'Gee sailors are preferable, indeed every way, physically and intellectually, superior to American sailors--such captains complaining, and justly, that American sailors, if not decently treated, are apt to give serious trouble."⁶⁹⁶

Thus Melville's narrator implies agreement with the captains in their preference for the "docile services" of the 'Gees, and the 'Gees' physical and intellectual superiority to American sailors, because they are deemed less likely to rebel. Thus, caught in a complex of class and racial attitudes, the narrator can only link "physical and intellectual superiority" to docility.

'Gees are unable to man a ship by themselves, "if they chance to be all green hands, a green 'Gee being of all green things the greenest." Green 'Gees tend to fall overboard easily, so a captain obliged to have a 'Gee crew

"will ship twice as many 'Gees as he would have shipped of Americans, so as to provide for all contingencies"⁶⁹⁷ ,
with the matter-of-fact tone of the narrator implying that a higher accident rate of a group deemed inferior is perfectly normal.

The narrator drives his biological race perspective home:

"To know 'Gees--to be a sound judge of 'Gees--one must study them, just as to know and be a judge of horses one must study horses."⁶⁹⁸

A captain hiring 'Gees would be well advised to consult

"a 'Gee jockey. By a 'Gee jockey is meant a man well versed in 'Gees. Many a young captain has been thrown and badly hurt by a 'Gee of his own choosing." The narrator recommends to inexperienced captains hiring 'Gees at Fogo to

"...Get square before him, at, say three paces, so that the eye, like a shot, may rake the 'Gee fore and aft, at one glance taking in his whole make and build--how he looks about the head, whether he carry it well; his ears, are they over-lengthy?"⁶⁹⁹

'Gees, then, are to be inspected like animals, because they are essentially work animals. The narrator advises that these judgements can in no way be left to a "knowing 'Gee", who knows what defects to cover up, citing the case of a 'Gee "uncommonly well fitted out" in a "flowing pair of man-of-war's trowsers" that were in fact concealing elephantiasis, which was only discovered at sea;

⁶⁹⁶-ibid.

⁶⁹⁷-ibid. p. 1294.

⁶⁹⁸-ibid.

⁶⁹⁹-ibid.

"Useless as so much lumber, at every port prohibited from being dumped ashore, that elephantine 'Gee, ever crunching biscuit, for three weary years was trundled around the globe."⁷⁰⁰

The narrator speaks enthusiastically of the recruitment methods of one Captain Hosea Kean, of Nantucket, who forcibly detains all acquaintances of a potential 'Gee recruit, and bursts in on them at home:

"A 'Gee, noised abroad for a Hercules in strength and an Apollo Belvidere for beauty, of a sudden is discovered all in a wretched heap; forlornly adroop as upon crutches, his legs looking as if broken at the cart-wheel. Solitude is the house of candor, according to Captain Kean. In the stall, not the street, he says, resides the real nag."⁷⁰¹

Thus if animality is a sufficient standard for the likes of Captain Kean, who can argue that?

American sailors, says the narrator, are not to be trusted in their low opinion of 'Gees, because the latter undersell them. The sailors say that the monkey-jacket gets its name from having been originally worn by 'Gees, but the narrator is quick to point out, from an enlightened viewpoint lacking among sailors, that

"there is no call to which the 'Gee will with more alacrity respond than the word "Man!"⁷⁰²

Maintaining the scientific mode appropriate for animals, the narrator points out that "the intellect of the 'Gee has been little cultivated. No well attested educational experiment has been tried upon him". A "visionary Portuguese naval officer" once sent a young 'Gee to Salamanca University, and

"among the Quakers of Nantucket, there has been talk of sending five comely 'Gees, aged sixteen, to Dartmouth College; that veritable institution, it is well known, having been originally founded partly with the object of finishing off wild Indians in the classics and higher mathematics."⁷⁰³

The ambiguities of "finishing off" in the preceding passage resonate with racism.

In conclusion, Melville's narrator points out that to "see a 'Gee", it suffices to go to Nantucket and New Bedford, where "sophisticated 'Gees" live, who are

⁷⁰⁰-ibid. p. 1295.

⁷⁰¹-ibid.

⁷⁰²-ibid. p. 1296.

⁷⁰³-ibid.

"liable to be taken for naturalized citizens badly sunburnt". Because sophistication is blurring their distinctiveness

"a stranger need have a sharp eye to know a 'Gee, even if he see him"⁷⁰⁴

Thus, implies the narrator, the kind of scientific approach embodied in his article is all the more important in maintaining race awareness. The very evolution from "green" to "sophisticated" which undermines the animal analogies of the narrator are what supposedly require his more informed viewpoint⁷⁰⁵.

In the novels and short stories of Melville prior to The Confidence Man, the question of race and slavery is treated directly in Mardi, Redburn, Moby Dick, "Benito Cereno" and "The 'Gees". It is also an important presence in "The Encantadas" and "The Bell Tower". Class is present in mutinous sailors in all the novels prior to Pierre, and is the explicit focus of "Poor Man's Pudding" and "The Tartarus of Maids". But in no other work except "Benito Cereno" is the ideology of mid-nineteenth century racism examined so directly as in "The 'Gees". Once again, it is important to keep in mind that the progressive disappearance of collective rebellion as a possible alternative from Melville's works after Moby Dick in no way implies the disappearance of a preoccupation with race and social class. What in Moby Dick was a glimpse of a higher social organization led by the "mariners, renegades and castaways", above all those of color, gives way in the later work to analysis of race as one reality among many that undermines middle-class complacency. The analysis now turns to class.

⁷⁰⁴-ibid. p. 1297.

⁷⁰⁵-Carolyn Karcher, op. cit. Ch. 6, provides one of the longest and most thorough analyses of "The 'Gees" in the literature on Melville, to which the forgoing is indebted.

Ch. XVI. Melville and Class After Pierre

Melville had first explored class in Redburn. Already in Pierre, the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation" of Moby Dick was transformed in Melville's imaginaire into something of a spectre of "les classes laborieuses and dangereuses". This shift was an expression of a retreat on Melville's part, and may be explained partially by Melville's overly zealous settling of accounts with the American literary world where his success had been so ephemeral and based on the early books which, for Melville himself, were little more than adventure stories. As Melville had put it in Pierre, with evident and candid self-irony:

"...And in the inferior instances of an immediate literary success, in very young writers, it will be almost invariably observable, that for that instant success they were chiefly indebted to some rich and peculiar experience in life, embodied in a book, which because, for that cause, containing original matter, the other himself, forsooth, is to be considered original; in this way, many very original books, being the product of very unoriginal minds."⁷⁰⁶

Pierre detached the negation of middle-class rebellion from the kind of collective revolt, or mutiny, which had run through Melville's early work. But if that kind of rebellion largely disappears from his writings after Pierre, class division does not. Melville's short fiction of the 1850's, including some less-known works, contains very sharp portraits of social class, which continue the polemic against genteel aestheticism as it has been presented here, and which document the impact of the discovery of "sullen" people on middle-class consciousness, whether Transcendentalist or Melvillian. This presence of class, in Melville as in the work of other artists after 1850, is the concrete, early manifestation of the problem of art in a society in which "the content exceeds the phrase"⁷⁰⁷.

Stories such as "Cock-a-Doodle Doo!" and "The Piazza", which were analyzed as part of Melville's attack on Transcendentalism, use characters from the lower classes only to underscore the middle-class nature of the outlook under attack; neither Merrymusk nor Marianna are protagonists in their own right, but serve as foils for Melville's narrators⁷⁰⁸. In two diptychs of the 1853-1856 period,

⁷⁰⁶-ibid. p. 294.

⁷⁰⁷-"Bartleby the Scrivener", in fact, contains a very real class dimension, and is undoubtedly one of the first phenomenologies of white-collar work. Nevertheless, this study will treat "Bartleby" separately. Michael Gilmore locates "Bartleby" in a context in which "the erosion of the household system was accompanied by a more rigorous, profit-seeking ethos on the part of capital", in which "Melville's narrator retains the less aggressive outlook of the past" (American Romanticism and the Marketplace, Chicago 1985, p. 134.)

⁷⁰⁸-"Benito Cereno", which will also be analyzed separately, definitely

however, the gulf between the classes, and the urban poor and industrial working class itself, becomes the central focus.

"Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs"

The first half of this diptych, "Poor Man's Puddings", dissected the illusions about "noble poverty" of "poet Blandmour". The second half, "Rich Man's Crumbs" analyzes a converse, deferential attitude toward the upper classes. The urban poor portrayed in the story are faceless crowds, in the Napoleonic era, whose only action is to express their desperation, and in showing that desperation, Melville offers one of his most striking portraits of the social foundations of the pseudo-sacred. The story is set in London, just after Waterloo when the

"...the victorious princes were there assembled enjoying the Arabian Nights' hospitalities of a grateful and gorgeous aristocracy, and the courtliest of gentlemen and kings--George the Prince Regent"⁷⁰⁹,

celebrating the inauguration of the restored world of the Congress of Vienna and the

Triple Alliance. This is the era of the Napoleonic myth and also of the Beau Brummel dandy phenomenon discussed earlier.

Melville's narrator falls in with a uniformed man, "some sort of civic subordinate". The man tells him of the "noble charities of London", and offers to take him that day to

"to one of the most interesting of all...not only of a Lord Mayor, but, I may truly say, in this one instance, of emperors, regents and kings"⁷¹⁰

The narrator is taken by his companion to the site of the "grand Guildhall Banquet to the princes", to which the London poor were to be admitted to feast on the scraps. They arrive at the rear entrance, a spot "as grimy as a back-yard in the Five Points".

"It was packed with a mass of lean, famished, ferocious creatures, struggling and fighting for some mysterious precedence, and all holding soiled blue tickets in their hands."⁷¹¹

The narrator and his guide are swept in with the crowd:

"The beings around me roared with famine...I seemed seething in the Pit with the Lost"..."...the pestiferous mob poured in bright day between painted walls and

deals with a master-slave dialectic, in the context of an actual slave rebellion.

⁷⁰⁹-ibid. p. 1236.

⁷¹⁰-ibid.

⁷¹¹-ibid. p. 1237.

beneath a painted dome. I thought of the anarchic sack of Versailles. Where I stood--where the thronged rabble stood, less than twelve hours before sat His Imperial Majesty, Alexander of Russia; His Royal Majesty, Frederic William, King of Prussia; His Royal Highness, George, Prince Regent of England; His world-reknoned Grace, the Duke of Wellington; with a mob of magnificoes, made up of conquering field-marsals, earls, counts, and innumerable other nobles of mark."⁷¹²

The crowd throws itself upon the leftovers, as the guide enthuses over which royal figure had been eating the various dishes the previous night. The sight of such frivolous waste ultimately provokes a riotous mood in the crowd, and Melville's narrator is whisked to safety by his guide, still effusing over "the greatest of all England's charities".

"Poor Man's Pudding" demolishes the "povertyesque" sentiments of poet Blandmour's view of those below him, and "Rich Man's Crumbs" does the same for guide's view of those above him. The effect of the diptych is to underscore two self-sustaining illusions maintained by those who do not share Melville's egalitarian social views. It is one of Melville's most direct and forceful portraits of the impact of class society and the distortions it breeds throughout the social hierarchy.

"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"

"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" stands out in Melville's short fiction for the counterposition of middle-class gentility and the realities of a modern class society. It is also the only work of Melville's that deals directly with factory labor, and a factory with a feminine work force at that. The first half of the "diptych", in which the narrator spends an evening with the modern Templars in London, is a central text of the pseudo-sacred and will be treated elsewhere. It will suffice to sketch it briefly, and then turn to the second half, in which the narrator visits a Berkshires paper mill similar to those employing the Lowell mill girls of the 1830's.

In the center of London is the Temple Bar, named for the Templars. Nearby is a medieval cloister called the "Paradise of Bachelors". (Melville had visited both during his visit to London in 1849.) It is a place where one can "give the whole care-worn world the slip", in the cloisters, in the ancient library, in the chapel. The modern namesake of the Templars, however, is a club of barristers:

"...the iron heel is changed to a boot of patent leather; the long two-handed sword to a one-handed quill...the knight-combatant of the Saracen, breasting spear-points

⁷¹²-ibid.

at Acre, now fights law-points in Westminster Hall. The helmet is a wig. Struck by Time's enchanter's wand, the Templar is to-day a lawyer."⁷¹³

For the narrator, "those old warrior priests were but gruff and grouty at best". By contrast, the modern Templars' "wit and wine are both of sparkling brands", but they conjure up the Southern slaveocracy:

"Dear, delightful spot! Ah! when I bethink me of the sweet hours there passed...with a sigh, I softly sing, "Carry me back to old Virginy!"⁷¹⁴

A dinner with the Templars is followed by much sherry, port and bantering, cultivated conversation. One Templar talked of his student days at Oxford; another on "fine old Flemish architecture"; a third on Oriental manuscripts; yet another told a "strange characteristic anecdote" of the private life of the "Iron Duke" (the Duke of Wellington) "never printed, and never before announced in any public or private company".

"And so the evening slipped along, the hours told, not by a water-clock, like King Alfred's, but a wine-chronometer."⁷¹⁵

The gathered bachelors were "a band of brothers". The Templars "had no wives or children to give them an anxious thought". "Pain", "trouble" "seemed preposterous to their bachelor imaginations". In his seemingly enthusiastic treatment of them, Melville's narrator is setting the stage for the encounter with the "underside" of the bachelor's pleasant, semi-retired, sterile way of life.

Using the same narrator in an opposing setting, Melville situates the "The Tartarus⁷¹⁶ of Maids", in the New England Berkshires. After such a portrait of a self-satisfied, comfortable coterie, Melville plunges the reader into a reality that could not be more different. The shift is signaled by a "Dantean" landscape: "bleak hills", a "dusky pass", a point called "the Black Notch" in "Plutonian, shaggy-wooded mountains".

Thus, though the setting is America, the landscape is feudal, in counterpoint to the Templars' cloistered retreat in the heart of London. The paper mill itself is "a large white-washed building...like some great white sepulchre".

The setting of "The Tartarus of Maids" echoes "Bartleby" or the opening of "Benito Cereno" in the use of blankness or whiteness to convey desolation. The whiteness is so pervasive that the narrator at first cannot find the mill, but "there, like an arrested avalanche, lay the large whitewashed factory". In contrast to the Temple Bar, in Hegelian fashion, this, for the narrator, is "an inverted similitude".

⁷¹³-ibid. pp. 1258-1259.

⁷¹⁴-ibid. p. 1260

⁷¹⁵-ibid. p. 1263.

⁷¹⁶-Tartarus was the inferno or Hades of Virgil's Aeneid.

But the blankness of the landscape is only the beginning. He says something to a passing mill girl, "her thin apron over her head", and

"she turned upon me a face pale with work, and blue with cold; an eye supernatural with unrelated misery"⁷¹⁷

A second "pale, blue girl" is equally unhelpful, but he finds his way inside the mill:

"...At rows of blank-looking counters sat rows of blank-looking girls, with blank, white folders in their blank hands, all blankly folding blank paper."⁷¹⁸

Moby Dick had linked the abstraction of modern labor with the "whiteness of the whale". "Bartleby" joins the story of a white-collar worker with aesthetic blankness. But "The Tartarus of Maids" is Melville's single presentation of the nineteenth century factory world, and here again blankness is paramount. Further, Melville makes a connection between the "blankness" of wage-labor alienation and the "blankness" of writing which emerges progressively in his own work since Pierre. Here is Melville's description of the mill interior:

"Not a syllable was breathed. Nothing was heard but the slow, steady, overruling hum of the iron animals. The human voice was banished from the spot. Machinery--that vaunted slave of humanity--here stood menially served by human beings, who served mutely and cringingly as the slave serves the Sultan. The girls did not so much seem accessory wheels to the general machinery as mere cogs to the wheels."⁷¹⁹

The narrator asks for a tour of the mill. He sees heaps of rags, and thinks "there may be some old shirts, gathered from the dormitories of the Paradise of Bachelors". These heaps of rags are the mediation between one world and the other.

Everything is mechanized in this environment:

"...Yes, murmured I to myself; I see it now; turned outward; and each erected sword is so borne, edge-outward, before each girl. If my reading fails me not, just so, of old, condemned state-prisoners went from the hall of judgement to their doom: an officer before, bearing a sword, its edge turned outward, in significance

⁷¹⁷-ibid. p. 1270. This compares with Melville's narrator's reflection on the blankness of Bartleby: "Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been anything ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises." ("Bartleby the Scrivener", p. 643.)

⁷¹⁸-ibid.

⁷¹⁹-ibid. p. 1271.

of their fatal sentence. So, through consumptive pallors of this blank, raggy life, go these white girls to death."⁷²⁰

Melville's diptych is thus not merely about contemporary class relations and the blankness of alienated labor; there is a whole sexual undercurrent as well. The very separation of the "bachelors" from the "maids" is already contrived to evoke sterility.⁷²¹ The separation between the "bachelors" and the "maids" (as will be seen momentarily) assures that the only phallus in the story is the mechanized scythe of the machinery.

"Before me, rolled out like some long Eastern manuscript, lay stretched one continuous length of iron frame-work--multitudinous and mystical, with all sorts of rollers, wheels, and cylinders, in slowly measured and unceasing motion."⁷²²

The "Eastern manuscript" in this passage may be intended as a passing barb against Transcendentalism (but this is far less a concern than in *Moby Dick*); it is certainly not there to indicate the existence of some other realm of reality counterposed to the machinery (as, for example, in Balzac's *The Wild Ass's Skin*), but rather to underscore its remoteness from the reality at hand, just as the medieval Knights Templar are remote from the hubbub of mid-19th century London, just as Emerson and Thoreau are remote from this American factory reality.

The narrator continues his tour with his guide, Cupid. To test the nine-minute paper-making process, he writes "Cupid" on a scrap of paper and drops it on the initial mass of pulp. As with the "Eastern manuscript" image, the blurred name "Cupid" that comes out at the end of the infernally long and complicated mechanical process is another comment of where myth, and eros, have come to in this world. Further, in his unification of the blankness of the factory with the blankness of writing, Melville arrives at a unification of the contemporary working class condition with the dead-end of a certain kind of literature, and his own literary career:

"...It was very curious. Looking at that blank paper continually dropping, dropping, dropping, my mind ran on in wonderings of those strange uses to which those thousand sheets eventually would be put. All sorts of writings would be writ on those now vacant things-- sermons, lawyer's briefs, physicians' prescriptions, love-letters, marriage certificates, bills of divorce, registers of births, death-warrants, and so on, without end. I could not but bethink me of that celebrated comparison of John Locke, who, in demonstration of his theory that man had no innate ideas,

⁷²⁰-ibid. p. 1273.

⁷²¹-The theme of the "bachelor" is so pervasive in Melville's work, the absence of real women characters in all but a few of his writings so striking, as to open up a whole perspective that would take this analysis far afield.

⁷²²-ibid. p. 1274

compared the human mind at birth to a blank sheet of paper; something destined to be scribbled on, but what sort of characters no soul might tell."⁷²³

This is in some sense Melville approaching the end of his involvement with fiction: it remained for him only to arrive at that end with The Confidence Man, and to turn to poetry. Unlike his earlier crews, there is no revolt intimated among these "blank girls". Melville has hardly embraced a Lockean epistemology; rather, he is pointing out how Locke is the initial theoretician of the asensual blankness to which, in a century and a half, the capitalist world had come. Nothing will be written on these blank sheets except futility, mainly bureaucratic, and Melville does not even mention literature.

"...Something of awe now stole over me, as I gazed upon this inflexible iron animal. Always, more or less, machinery of this ponderous, elaborate sort strikes, in some moods, strange dread into the human heart, as some living, panting Behemoth might. But what made the thing I saw so specially terrible to me was the metallic necessity, the unbudging fatality which governed it...A fascination fastened on me. I stood spellbound and wandering in my soul. Before my eyes-- there, passing in slow procession along the wheeling cylinders, I seemed to see, glued to the pallid incipience of the pulp, the yet more pallid faces of all the pallid girls I had eyed that heavy day...their agony (was) dimly outlined on the imperfect paper, like the print of the tormented face on the handkerchief of Saint Veronica."⁷²⁴

From the devolution of the medieval Templars into the bantering, self-satisfied lawyers in contemporary London⁷²⁵, Melville has moved the reader to a Wollstonecraft-like vision of modern machinery, all the more to underscore, yet again, through the "handkerchief of Saint Veronica", the remoteness of the cultural past from these realities. Melville wrote this diptych in 1854. On the other side of the Atlantic, Karl Marx was working on the material that became the Grundrisse (1857). The core of Marx's analysis was the way in which human activity, in capitalist relations, autonomized itself from the actors and seemed to move by itself, creating a situation in which "commodities seem to buy people". Melville's vision of "the pallid faces of all the pallid girls" moving along on the paper pulp is a graphic image of the ghostly apparent self-movement of products alienated from their producers. As Marx put it:

"...Rather, it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting

⁷²³-ibid. pp. 1276-1277.

⁷²⁴-ibid. p. 1277.

⁷²⁵-Emerson had written: "The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner...is the healthy attitude of human nature." (Quoted in L. Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 342.)

through it...The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself...Labor appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system...(its) unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism."⁷²⁶

Ending his tour, Melville's narrator is disturbed to hear the factory owner describe his operatives described as "girls":

"...Why is it, Sir, that in most factories, female operatives, of whatever age, are indiscriminately called girls, never women?"⁷²⁷

The owner says it is because they are unmarried, though "it never struck me before". They are, therefore, all "maids", i.e. virgins.

The sexual dimensions of this diptych, the London "bachelors" and the Berkshire "maids", are there to reinforce the sterility of the separations described, as discovered by the narrator, himself a seed merchant. As indicated earlier, Melville's problems with women characters and his preoccupation with bachelorhood is a problem with ramifications far beyond these two stories. Nevertheless, Melville is underscoring the separation between the foppish bachelors and the blank factory workers as an additional sterility brought on by the social division of labor.

⁷²⁶-K. Marx, Grundrisse, London, 1973, p. 693.

⁷²⁷-Melville, op. cit. p. 1278.

**Ch. XVII. A Blackface Minstrel Show and the Fragments of Charlemagne:
The Confidence Man**

"All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask!...Sometimes I think there's naught beyond."

Captain Ahab, Moby Dick

"The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king...By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid--and no body is there!--appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man!"

Pierre

"... the original character, essentially such, is like a revolving Drummond light, raying away from itself all around it--everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet)..."

The Confidence Man

"Here and there, true to their place, but not to their function, swung other lamps, barren planets, which had either gone out from exhaustion, or been extinguished by such occupants of berths as the light annoyed, or who wanted to sleep, not see."

The Confidence Man

Melville completed The Confidence Man in the late summer of 1856, and in September 1856 embarked on his trip to Europe and the Middle East. Stopping in Liverpool, where Nathaniel Hawthorne was the American consul, he told Hawthorne that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated"⁷²⁸. The intensive writing of the previous decade had left him in bad health, and his family was worried about both his physical and mental condition. His father-in-law, Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice Lemuel Shaw, paid for Melville's trip abroad, in hopes that it would revive him.

In fact, with The Confidence Man, which was published the following year, Melville, over eleven years, had come to the end of the line with fiction, and the fictions of his various characters and author personae, along the lines of the analysis developed so far.

After the failure of Moby Dick, as has been indicated on several occasions, Melville had backed away from the theme of collective rebellion. His attempt to solve his problem by linking his self (at least literarily) to collective action had failed, as his literary career began to seriously fail. He took his revenge in Pierre, where the "Enceladus" revolt of the Titans throws itself futilely against the

⁷²⁸-Quoted in L. Roberston-Lorant, op. cit., p. 377.

unmovable mountain and leads to Pierre's annihilation, after a demonstration that in the New York literary carnival of the Young America movement, distinction consisted in not appearing. In Pierre Melville is still Promethean, but with "Bartleby" the revolt verges on the revolt of modernist blankness. Bartleby does not appear. Much of Melville's short fiction of the 1853-1856 period, the period between Pierre and The Confidence Man, steps back from the extreme trajectory indicated by the characters of Pierre and Bartleby, but only to refine Melville's technique of "double writing", of using narration in a voice that is not his own, to ridicule or undermine viewpoints that are not his own. "Bartleby the Scrivener" already used this technique, as did "Cock-a-Doodle-Do!", "Benito Cereno" (through the thoughts of Captain Delano), "Jimmy Rose", "The 'Gees" and "The Piazza". The Confidence Man gave Melville ample opportunity to use this technique through the narrators of the many stories that are told in the course of the book. But it would be an error to see in this technique, or in the void at the heart of The Confidence Man, a vindication of a post-modern viewpoint that sees texts and narratives as nothing but fictions around a void. Melville uses different "voices", to use contemporary jargon, but he definitely has a point of view and wants to show it by undermining these "voices", not to expose them as playful Nietzschean "interpretations" with no referent. The hard realities of American society, beginning with the situation of blacks and Indians, are "outside" the confidence games played out on a Mississippi steamer. The despair of The Confidence Man is, nonetheless, the logical conclusion of Melville's despair, beginning with Pierre, that the mummy's sarcophagus is indeed empty. Melville did not want the void; he wanted to find a positive self, as he thought he had done at the end of Moby Dick. Melville, as Hawthorne put it in recounting Melville's expectation of "annihilation",

"still...does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief...He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us."⁷²⁹

Such was Hawthorne's assessment as Melville left for the Middle East. Melville's turn toward poetry over most of the subsequent 35 years was, in fact, something of an answer, although in a very down-scaled and studied fashion, as shall be seen.

A significant part of The Confidence Man is devoted, moreover, to a portrayal of anti-black racism and to the "metaphysics of Indian hating", also picking up threads from Melville's whole oeuvre. (Melville devoted the book to "victims of auto da fé", evoking the Spanish Inquisition, but perhaps even more the self-serving illusions attacked so prominently in his work.)

⁷²⁹-ibid.

Our analysis of The Confidence Man focuses ultimately on one scene, but a scene which is the turning point of the book, and which continues and in some way culminates the analysis of cosmic kingship developed in this study. The scene is the appearance of a pseudo-sacred spinoff of Charlemagne, although he is never identified by that name, and a reader unfamiliar with cosmic kingship and Charlemagne in Melville's previous work would be unlikely to notice him as such. He appears in the same way (but even more obscurely) that a pseudo-sacred Charles V appeared in "Benito Cereno".

The Confidence Man is set on a "ship of fools", the steamer *Fidèle*, making its way from St. Louis to New Orleans. Soon after departure, Black Guinea, ostensibly a black cripple and in reality an early avatar of the Confidence Man, is working the crowd for pennies, with mixed success. When the crowd grows sullen and suspects he is a fraud, someone asks him if anyone on board will vouch for him.

Black Guinea, in reply, names his sponsors:

a "good ge'mman wid a weed, and a ge'mman in a gray coat and white tie...a ge'mman wid a big book, too; and a yarb-doctor; and a ge'mman in a yaller vest; and a ge'mman wid a brass plate; and a ge'mman in a wiolet robe; and a ge'mman as is a sodjer; and ever so many good, kind, honest ge'mmen more aboard what knows me and will speak for me, God bress 'em"⁷³⁰

For the first half of The Confidence Man, a man with a weed, a man with a grey coat and white tie, a man with a big book, a herbal doctor and a man with a brass plate appear in fairly coherent succession as further avatars of the Confidence Man; there is more than one soldier, and ultimately more than one man with a big book. No man in a violet robe appears, nor does a man in a yellow vest. Each avatar is successful in his con game, building on earlier avatars, and all of them are anticipated by Black Guinea. Although there are minor moments of cognitive dissonance (a soldier and the herbal doctor appear at the same time, raising the possibility that there is more than one Confidence Man), the reader is tempted to slip into Black Guinea's scenario, expecting a further unfolding as he enunciated it. (This of course begs the question of why, if Black Guinea himself is a Confidence Man, and it is also April Fool's Day, everything he says should be believed.⁷³¹) The Confidence Man experiences minor setbacks; a former customs official with a wooden leg vociferously doubts Black Guinea's authenticity, and the herbal doctor is punched out as a fraud by a huge "invalid Titan", and then fails with a Missouri farmer; the man with the brass plate does fleece the Missourian, but the Missourian sees through the fraud, too late. This occurs in Chapter 23 of a book with 45 chapters, hence, exactly in the middle. What Melville is preparing in this transition is not merely a disruption of the relative novelistic coherence of the first half of The Confidence Man; he is preparing to show the fragmentation of the cosmic king

⁷³⁰-Melville, op. cit. p. 10.

⁷³¹-This is pointed out by H. Bruce Franklin, among other critics.

into flickers of the pseudo-sacred, as we have shown it from Moby Dick onward, and the cosmic king in question is Charlemagne. This fragmentation signifies the fragmentation of the bourgeois ego, presented as the fragmentation of the conventional novel form. Because this is the first confidence man not announced in Black Guinea's list, and because, unlike all previous confidence men, he remains on the scene for the rest of the book, it is worthwhile to pay special attention to his costume⁷³². Upon seeing him, the Missourian exclaims: "...From the Brazils, ain't you? Toucan fowl. Fine feathers on foul meat."⁷³³

"...The stranger sported a vesture barred with various hues, that of the cochineal predominating, in style participating of a Highland plaid, Emir's robe, and French blouse; from its plaited sort of front peeped glimpses of a flowered regatta-shirt...white trowsers of ample duck flowed over maroon-colored slippers, and a jaunty smoking-cap of regal purple crowned him off at top; king of traveled good-fellows, evidently...That genial hand...was now carelessly thrust down before him, sailor-fashion, in a sort of Indian belt...the other held, by its long bright cherry-stem, a Nuremburgh pipe in blast, its great porcelain bowl painted in miniature with linked crests and arms of interlinked nations--a florid show."⁷³⁴ (emphasis added)

This description identifies the cosmopolitan with the cosmic king, above all Charlemagne, as this figure has been traced through Melville's work. This is Charlemagne, or more precisely a fragment of Charlemagne, in tatters, as a confidence man on a Mississippi river boat, announced by a con man masquerading as a black cripple. There will be others. Melville's opening description of the great river of humanity⁷³⁵ already (ironically) identified it, the cosmos of the story, as "one cosmopolitan and confident tide", and here is cosmopolitan and confidence man in one figure. But this is, as indicated a moment ago, the confidence man after the breaking of the "rational" succession of disguises, his (retrospective) unmasking by the misanthropic Missourian. Previously, he had succeeded in almost every encounter; henceforth, he will fail in every one, except in getting a free shave from the ship's barber. The Missourian's

⁷³²-Helen Trimpi has identified the cosmopolitan with the harlequin figure of commedia dell'arte, with which his disguise is certainly coherent. While underscoring the theatre-like quality of the entire book, it does not impinge on the analysis presented here. (cf. "Harlequin Confidence Man", in Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 16, 1974-75, pp. 147-193.)

⁷³³-This juxtaposition of Brazil, toucans and the regalia of kingship strangely echoes Melville's description of the emperor of Brazil in White-Jacket. As indicated earlier, the coupling of kingship with the primitive has a long tradition in Europe, and is echoed in Shakespeare's "King Lear" and in the friendship between Ahab and Pip in Moby Dick.

⁷³⁴-The Confidence Man, p. 114.

⁷³⁵-*ibid.* p. 6.

rejection of "confidence" is only a minor preparation for the key monologue in the book, Charlie Noble's account of the "metaphysics of Indian hating".

The cosmopolitan wears a "vesture barred with various hues, that of cochineal prevailing". (Cochineal is scarlet.) The style is partly that of an "Emir's robe". Thus the cosmopolitan comes as close as any character in the book to being the gentleman with a violet robe (with Orientalist overtones added) announced by Black Guinea. He further wears a "smoking cap of regal purple" and is a "king of good travelled fellows". He has a "Nuremburgh pipe" whose bowl is "painted with linked crests and arms".

What is Black Guinea's "violet robe"? It is the imperial robe of the Holy Roman Emperor. Is the cosmopolitan wearing a violet robe? No. But that, as with the "violet vest" of Charlie Noble, soon to appear, is precisely the point: in the modern world, no one wears the violet robe. It is scattered in fragments, in fashion, in a cap of regal purple and a pipe from the Imperial city of Nuremburgh. The cosmic king in the modern world is an absent figure, scattered in the river of humanity⁷³⁶, announced in a confidence man's black minstrel show.

The cosmopolitan, after failing with the misanthropic Missourian, is himself accosted by a second wearer of the imperial purple, who calls the Missourian a "queer coon" and says he is reminded of "Colonel John Moredock, of Illinois". The interloper wears

"a violet vest, sending up sunset hues to a countenance betokening a kind of bilious habit."⁷³⁷

The cosmopolitan inquires about the identity of Colonel John Moredock. The reply amounts to the most devastating presentation of radical evil encountered in the book. The Missourian had merely articulated his misanthropy in his desire to kill off young boys made superfluous by machinery, and in his exposure of the confidence man's moderate opposition to slavery; this stranger, whose name is Charlie Noble (with "Charles", "Noble" and a violet vest a second fragment of Charlemagne) will set the cosmopolitan back with the story of Colonel John

⁷³⁶Melville later, in passing, gives another example of this fragmenting of earlier unitary grandeur, associated, again, with the warrior class. Pizarro, the cosmopolitan explains, was so overwhelmed by the Inca's gold that he "went about rapping the shiny vases with his knuckles"; i.e. he lacked confidence. In the contemporary world "those needy minds, which, through their own insincerity, having no confidence in mankind, doubt lest the liberal geniality of this age be spurious. They are small Pizarros in their way...". (pp. 154-155). Although it is used as part of the cosmopolitan's con, it provides an excellent example of the pseudo-sacred: the dispersion of the fallen warrior class into fragments, in this case in attitudes.

⁷³⁷-ibid. p. 121.

Moredock, Indian hater, who spent much of his life actually killing off Indians, and of whom he is reminded by the misanthropic Missourian⁷³⁸.

"Charlie" in different forms is present for most of the second half of the book. But before pursuing further the significance of "Charlie" (who will lead, not surprisingly, to Melville's father) let us see how the stage had been set for this crucial scene.

The opening line already evokes the messianic or apocalyptic dimension of the book:

" At sunrise on a first of April, there appeared, suddenly as Manco Capac at the lake Titicaca, a man in cream-colors, at the waterside in the city of St. Louis."⁷³⁹

It is April Fool's Day. Manco Capac was a founding Inca king sent by his father, the sun, to bring civilization and order to man⁷⁴⁰. Thus the cosmic kingship which has run through Melville's work is announced in the first sentence. But its announcement on April Fool's Day also evokes the pseudo-sacred: nothing which follows is to be taken at face value.

The man boards the steamboat *Fidèle*, bound for New Orleans, where a crowd has already gathered around a placard,

"offering a reward for the capture of a mysterious impostor, supposed to have recently arrived from the East"⁷⁴¹

evoking Jesus Christ. The crowd was gathered "as if it had been a theatre-bill", including some "chevaliers" (pickpockets). Thus in a few lines Melville has evoked a cosmic king, called it into question by the invocation of April Fool's Day, merged a wanted impostor⁷⁴² with overtones of Jesus Christ as well as an ad for theatre, and invoked the devolution of the knight (chevalier) into the

⁷³⁸-The Missourian was "a sort of comprehensive Colonel Moredock, who, too much spreading his passion, shallows it" (p. 135); i.e. the Missourian hated too many things diffusely.

⁷³⁹-H. Melville, *The Confidence Man*. p. 1. All quotes from the 1971 edition edited by Herschel Parker.

⁷⁴⁰-Manco Capac is also mentioned in *Mardi*.

⁷⁴¹-H. Melville, *ibid.* p. 1.

⁷⁴²-The poster is full of further irony. The impostor is described as "quite an original genius in his vocation", anticipating the barber's statement about the confidence man (p. 204). Further, Melville writes, "wherein his originality consisted was not clearly given", echoing the statement in *Pierre* that "when every body is having his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having yours published at all" (*Pierre*, p. 291). In *Pierre*, it was the writer; now, it is the impostor.

pickpocket⁷⁴³. Some of the chevaliers/pickpockets hawk pulp accounts of the lives of famous bandits and pirates, "all exterminated at the time", but this is to underscore the fact that "where the wolves are killed off, the foxes increase".

Standing next to the poster, the man, who is a deaf-mute, holds up successive handwritten quotations from I Corinthians 13: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind"; "Charity endureth all things", and so forth. Nearby, the steamship's barber hangs up his sign: "No Trust", i.e. no credit.

The *Fidèle* is a ship of fools, and, as with some of Melville's earlier ships, the microcosm of society as a whole. Here, once again, is evoked Melville's American, and universal, cosmos, the return of Anacharsis Cloots:

"As among Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, or those oriental ones crossing the Red Sea towards Mecca in the festival month, there was no lack of variety. Natives of all sorts, and foreigners; men of business and men of pleasure; parlor men and backwoodsmen; farm-hunters and fame-hunters; heiress-hunters, gold-hunters, buffalo-hunters, bee-hunters, happiness-hunters, truth-hunters, and still keener hunters after all these hunters. Fine ladies in slippers, and moccasined squaws; Northern speculators and Eastern philosophers; English, Irish, German, Scotch, Danes; Santa Fé traders in striped blankets, and Broadway bucks in cravats of cloth of gold; fine-looking Kentucky boatmen, and Japanese-looking Mississippi cotton-planters; Quakers in full drab, and United States soldiers in full regimentals; slaves, black, mulatto, quadroon; modish young Spanish creoles, and old-fashioned French Jews; Mormons and Papists; Dives and Lazarus; jesters and mourners, teetotalers and convivialists, deacons and blacklegs; hard-shell Baptists and clayeaters; grinning negroes, and Sioux chiefs solemn as high-priests. In short, a piebald parliament, an Anacharsis Cloots congress of all kind of that multiform pilgrim species, man."⁷⁴⁴

Since this is no longer the Melville who wrote *Moby Dick*, the Anacharsis Cloots deputation not only threatens no rebellion; it is identified by Melville as entropic: the crowd dissolved into

⁷⁴³-The full text reads: "certain chevaliers, whose eyes, it was plain, were on the capitals, or, at least, earnestly seeking sight of them from behind intervening coats; but as for their fingers, they were enveloped in some myth..." The Herschel Parker edition questions whether "myth" is what Melville's handwritten ms. says; the Library of America edition (New York, 1984), uses it. If "myth" was in fact Melville's intended word, it would indicate that the medieval knight, so prominent in his work as the Templars, had ended up in modern times as the pickpocket, an interpretation in keeping with the deflated mythic atmosphere of the rest of the passage.

⁷⁴⁴-ibid. p. 6.

"various clusters or squads, which in some cases disintegrated again into quartettes, trios and couples, or even solitaires; involuntarily submitting to that natural law which ordains dissolution equally to the mass, as in time to the member."⁷⁴⁵

It is into this setting that Melville introduces Black Guinea⁷⁴⁶. Black Guinea is "a grotesque negro cripple, in tow-cloth attire and an old coal-sifter of a tambourine in his hand" whose inability to walk reduced him to "the stature of a Newfoundland dog"⁷⁴⁷. Black Guinea, as the sole black character in the book, is particularly important because different reactions to him allow Melville to analyze a spectrum of racist attitudes, and because Black Guinea enumerates a list of many future avatars of the confidence man. In Black Guinea, Melville is evoking nineteenth century black minstrelsy, and by his relationship to many other appearances of the confidence man, making a black, or a white disguised as a black, in some way the "anchor" of the entire masquerade⁷⁴⁸.

The confidence men begin, as indicated earlier, their orderly appearance as announced by Black Guinea. Melville is doing with the Confidence Man what has done in previous writings; as with Bartleby's employer, the narrator of "Cock-a-Doodle Do!", "Jimmy Rose", and "The Piazza"; he traps people in their own self-conceptions when confronted with need. In these stories, the world view of the narrators was shown to be lacking by its inability to acknowledge some ugly reality for which their high-minded sympathies are no remedy. They can only, and occasionally, offer charity, which by its nature preserves their self-contained superiority. The Confidence Man approaches the same problematic from a different angle; in this case, the willingness of people to be charitable, in terms of their own self-conceptions, is what makes them vulnerable to the confidence man. For the first half of book, people with a "Transcendentalist" world view, incapable of recognizing evil, are trapped into choosing between being fleeced or admitting that they lack "confidence", whereas those who have a sense of evil in the world

⁷⁴⁵-ibid.

⁷⁴⁶-One issue that has divided critics, which will not be discussed here, is whether the deaf-mute "man in cream colors" is the first appearance of the confidence man. Whatever the case, his display of Biblical quotations about charity prepare the way for the Confidence Man.

⁷⁴⁷-It should be recalled that Captain Delano, in tense moments in the unraveling of "Benito Cereno", calmed himself by remembering his Newfoundland dog at home. Melville is here signaling the same narrator's voice that covers racist fear and loathing with self-consoling stereotypical illusions.

⁷⁴⁸-Further, as Carolyn Karcher points out in her extensive analysis of The Confidence Man, (op. cit. Ch. 7) there is no proof in the book that the confidence man is not a black appearing in a series of white disguises (p. 220).

show themselves immune. Part of the culmination of the book is the appearance of two figures who represent Emerson and Thoreau themselves⁷⁴⁹.

One of the confidence men collects contributions for a Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum. Thus in the backdrop of Melville's satire of middle-class sentiment, the two most oppressed groups in American society, blacks and Indians, are highlighted. The confidence man is accosted by an Episcopal minister, still looking for one of Black Guinea's sponsors. Another pattern is set, in which the Confidence Man in one disguise confirms something about the Confidence Man in another disguise. Relieved, the minister gives the Confidence Man money for Black Guinea, and then contributes to the Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum. A gentleman appears with his black steward, and also gives, but points out that

"...charity was in one sense not an effort, but a luxury; against too great indulgence in which his steward, a humorist, had sometimes admonished him."⁷⁵⁰

Appearing as a salesman of stock in the Black Rapids Coal Company, the confidence man denounces the bears, "destroyers of confidence", the "spurious Jeremiahs" and "sham Heraclituses".

The character of Black Guinea, because he set the stage for many further Confidence Men, allows Melville to show a wide swath of white reactions to a black cripple, all of them racist⁷⁵¹. One potential victim of the Confidence Man articulates a typical stereotyped canard, reminiscent of some of Captain Delano's thoughts in "Benito Cereno"; he

"...ventured to surmise that, could one but get at the real state of his heart (Black Guinea) would be found about as happy as most men, if not, in fact, full as happy as the speaker himself. He added that negroes were by nature a singularly cheerful race; that even from religion they dismissed all gloom; in their hilarious rituals they danced, so to speak, and, as it were, cut pigeon-wings. It was improbable, therefore, that a negro, however reduced to his stumps by fortune, could be ever thrown off the legs of a laughing philosophy."⁷⁵²

Indians are also present. The "invalid Titan⁷⁵³ in homespun", who attacks the Confidence Man physically is leading

"a puny girl, walking in moccasins, not improbably his child, but evidently of alien maturity, perhaps Creole, perhaps Comanche."⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴⁹-This has been treated in Ch. XIV above.

⁷⁵⁰-*ibid.* p. 32.

⁷⁵¹-C. Karcher, *op. cit.* pp. 196-209. surveys these scenes.

⁷⁵²-*ibid.* p. 49.

⁷⁵³-Titans also appear in the Enceladus vision in Pierre.

⁷⁵⁴-*ibid.* pp. 72-73.

This anticipates, in a small way, the confidence man's encounter with "the metaphysics of Indian hating".

The people who resist the Confidence Man are people who recognize evil in the world, and who question his ideology of "confidence". When, in the avatar of the herbal doctor, the Confidence Man accosts the Missourian, the latter directly attacks the herbalist ideology, linked to the benevolence of nature:

"Because a thing is nat'rl, as you call it, you think it must be good. But who gave you that cough? Was it, or was it not, nature?...What's deadly-nightshade?...poets send out the sick spirit to green pastures...poets have it that for sore hearts, as for sore lungs, nature is the grand cure. But who froze to death my teamster on the prairie?"⁷⁵⁵

The herb-doctor accuses the Missourian of having no confidence in nature.

"...I have confidence in nature? I?...I once lost ten thousands dollars by nature...a plantation on this stream, swept clean away by one of those sudden shiftings of the banks..."⁷⁵⁶

After failing to spring the trap which had worked so well with others, the confidence man attempts to shift ground with the Missourian and brings up the issue of slavery:

"...So you are going to get some machine made to do your work? Philanthropic scruples, doubtless, forbid you going as far as New Orleans for slaves?

"Slaves?" morose again in a twinkling, "won't have 'em! Bad enough to see whites ducking and grinning round for a favor, without having those poor devils of niggers congeeing round for their corn. Though, to me, the niggers are the freer of the two. You are an abolitionist, ain't you?" he added, squaring himself with both hands on his rifle...

"...If by abolitionist you mean a zealot, I am none; but if you mean a man, who, being a man, feels for all men, slaves included, and by any lawful act, opposed to nobody's interest, and therefore, rousing nobody's enmity, would willingly abolish suffering (supposing it, in its degree, to exist) from among mankind, irrespective of color, then I am what you say."

"Picked and prudent sentiments. You are the moderate man, the invaluable understrapper of the wicked man. You, the moderate man, may be used for wrong, but are useless for right."⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁵-ibid. pp. 91-92.

⁷⁵⁶-ibid. p. 93.

⁷⁵⁷-ibid. p. 97.

By arguing for the ideology of confidence and the benevolence of nature that has previously served him well, the Confidence Man is trapped by the hard-boiled Missourian, who uses slaveholder arguments (i.e. the enslaved blacks are happier than the wage-labor whites) but who assents to the confidence man's characterization of his views: "though living in a slave- state, you are without slave sentiments." The Missourian, therefore, for whom abolitionism "but expresses the fellow-feeling of slave for slave", identifies himself as a conservative opponent of slavery, but is able to unmask the equivocations of the sentimental confidence man's allegedly more liberal view as susceptible to being "used for wrong, but useless for right". Once again, in this case through a hard-boiled interlocutor, Melville is showing what high- minded middle-class sentiment, linked to "confidence", charity, and benevolent nature, are worth in the real world. The herb-doctor excuses himself. The first, minor failure of the confidence man, with the "invalid Titan", was associated with Indians; his second failure will be associated with slavery, machinery, and an enemy of labor.

This emerges in the Missourian's encounter with the "man with a brass plate". The Missourian, once again, is a transitional figure, who is finally fleeced by the Confidence Man in a moment of weakness but who prepares the way for the character who really confronts him with radical evil, "the metaphysics of Indian hating".

This is, as indicated earlier, the turning point of the book. What Melville has built into The Confidence Man is a retroactive view of the evolution of his own work, and of the evolution of the bourgeois ego as we have traced it since Moby Dick. After the "epistemological break" of the Missourian's, or "Coonskin's", recognition, that he has been had, the previous, relatively straightforward line of development of the confidence man is dispersed among various characters. This is Melville's way of expressing how the pseudo-sacred disperses the previously intact bourgeois ego into fragmented manifestations such as clothing, whereby the Confidence Men are identified. The Missourian's tirade (partially quoted earlier) against labor is revealing in this regard:

"...I say, that boy or man, the human animal is, for most work-purposes, a losing animal. Can't be trusted...Hence these thousand new inventions--carding machines, horse-shoe machines, tunnel-boring machines, reaping machines, apple-paring machines, boot-blackening machines, sewing machines, shaving machines, run-of-errand machines, dumb-waiter machines, and the Lord-only-knows-what machines; all of which announce the era when that refractory animal, the working or serving man, shall be a buried by-gone, a superceded fossil."⁷⁵⁸

This passage, again, recalls Melville's description of the mill machinery in "The Tartarus of Maids". As one tirade in a rambling discussion that goes on for fifteen pages, not too much should be made of it. It is relevant in this context only insofar as it, along with the Missourian's statements about slavery, is central to the

⁷⁵⁸-ibid. pp. 100-101.

misanthropic world view of the first person to pierce the confidence man's game, even if too late. It indicates, as "The Tartarus of Maids" indicated, that Melville saw the reality of modern capitalist machinery as one fundamental part of the reality against which "Transcendentalist" confidence shattered. In the fragmentation of the confidence man himself after the encounter with the Missourian, Melville shows concretely the shattering of the bourgeois subject against the realities external to it, among which figure blacks, Indians and labor.

When Charlie Noble, the second figure wearing the imperial purple, engages the cosmopolitan, there are two Confidence Men, both pseudo-sacred derivatives of the "absent" cosmic king announced by Black Guinea. In the context, "Charlie" "Noble", wearing a violet vest, could not be a clearer reference. With one fragment of Charlemagne talking to another, Melville proceeds to engineer a conversation that attempts to undo the traumatic event of his life. But before considering that conversation, it is necessary to hear Charlie Noble's account of Colonel John Moredock.

Colonel John Moredock was a real figure, whose story was told by Judge James Hall, a publicist for the American West, and used by Melville⁷⁵⁹, with considerable amplification. The singularity of this story, in The Confidence Man, must be underscored. Many stories are told in the course of Melville's book. There is the story of Goneril, which is told by the man with the weed, as his personal tragedy, to the country merchant, but only actually recounted in the text itself by the country merchant to the man selling stock in the Black Rapids Coal Company⁷⁶⁰. Subsequently, the cosmopolitan will tell the story of Charlemont, another rendition of the life of Melville's father. Still later, another character, in a half make-believe debate about money-lending, will tell the story of China Aster to the cosmopolitan, also related to the life of Melville's father. In the case of Colonel John Moredock, it is a story which Charles Noble heard from Judge Hall and which he tells to the cosmopolitan.

Melville had previously used this technique of stories within stories, told at two and three removes from the events. It is part of his commentary on the increasing distancing from action in the modern world, seen from a bourgeois viewpoint, part of his fascination with the illusion of theatre. In Moby Dick, it will be recalled, the only important mutiny occurs not on the *Pequod* but in the story of Steelkilt, apparently blurted out in fragments by Tashtego in his sleep, but actually told by Ishmael to friends in a Lima tavern. In "Benito Cereno", the story of the slave rebellion is only told in a court deposition, after it has been put down. In The Confidence Man, the true story of Colonel John Moredock is told at third remove, in

⁷⁵⁹-Hall's text, "Indian Hating- Some of the Sources of this Animosity- Brief Account of Col. Moredock" is reprinted in the appendix to the Norton Critical Edition of The Confidence Man used here, pp. 249-254.

⁷⁶⁰-The story of Goneril, according to Herschel Parker (editor's note p. 50) is based on the true person Fanny Kemble Butler, a famous actress who was Melville's neighbor in the Berkshires.

a ship of fools setting, in which everyone who has "confidence" in the benign view of man and nature is being fleeced. In Moby Dick Melville was undermining Ishmael's Transcendentalist world view, in "Benito Cereno" he was undermining Captain Delano and Benito Cereno, respectively. In The Confidence Man, he is undermining everyone whose "confidence" keeps them in an attitude of "charity" when confronted by evil. In Melville, the telling of stories within stories that represent the "key" to the narrative evolves. The Melville who wrote Moby Dick was culminating a series of works dealing, if only ambiguously, with authority and rebellion. Even then, as indicated, the true rebellion of Steelkilt had to be told at several removes. In "Benito Cereno", Melville was in his post-Pierre period, in which he has replaced open rebellion with his method of "double writing"⁷⁶¹. Unable to relocate his identity in any new social form, his rebellion becomes that of adopting a narrator's perspective in which pernicious views are ridiculed in face of harsh realities. But in both cases, it is the same viewpoint which is being attacked: sentimental middle-class "confidence" and "charity", of which, for Melville, the Transcendentalists are merely highly refined expressions.

In The Confidence Man, it is first a frontiersman talking about slavery and machinery, and then above all the life of Colonel John Moredock, told by Charlie Noble, again at several removes, which paralyze the sham ideologies propagated by the confidence man and which lulled the people he fleeced.

In contrast to Melville's previous ships, there is little "action" on the *Fidèle*, the ship of fools. There are many conversations around the theme of "confidence", either with or provoked by the confidence man. A number of stories are told, in the course of further conversations: the story of Goneril, the story of Colonel Moredock, the story of Charlemont, the story of China Aster. The only real "man of action" in the entire book is Colonel Murdock, who echoes aspects of Captain Ahab, and secondarily some of Melville's military ancestors. Like Ahab, Moredock was a powerful figure who was maimed by "evil" and who devoted his life to eradicating it. Unlike Captain Ahab, who dominates the *Pequod*, Colonel Murdock's story floats above the ship of fools, as the kind of ugly reality external to all the conversations which take place. There is, in contrast to the *Pequod*, no

⁷⁶¹-Cf. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses", an article published in 1850 while he was writing Moby Dick, Melville, though speaking of Hawthorne, is also speaking of himself: "Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things, which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear the frantic King tears off the mask, and speaks the sane madness of vital truth...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 covertly, and by snatches." (Library of America edition, 1984, p. 1160.) Of course, as we have seen, Melville also has many characters and narrators speak untruth in order to hint at his meaning.

authority to rebel against on the *Fidèle*. It is hardly the case that Colonel John Murdock is a "hero" for Melville. But he is a reproach to the sentimental middle class morality of nearly everyone on the boat, including that peddled by the confidence man to his victims. Black Guinea and many episodes surrounding him reveal virtually all who speak to be racists of one kind or another. But while the passengers are prepared to throw pennies into Black Guinea's mouth, and to contribute to the Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum, the realities of slavery, machinery and systematic Indian killing are totally outside their purview and their moral universe. The continuity of the confidence man shatters against this reality just as, earlier in Melville's career, the different individualist and above all Transcendentalist outlooks shattered against the working-class realities of Melville's crews. With *Pierre*, Melville began a trajectory in which his rebellion became totally individual, and increasingly scaled-down, and of which this sarcastic ship of fools is the last statement. The Confidence Man shatters into several people, all wearing bits of the imperial purple, just as the cosmic king devolved into the aestheticized moi absolu, and shattered. But since *Moby Dick* is far behind, there is, in the end, no Ishmael washing up from the maelstrom, but only a child avatar of the confidence man. For the same reason, Melville places Colonel Murdock off the *Fidèle*, a tale told by yet another confidence man. Once collective rebellion receded from Melville's work, the tattered remnants of Charlemagne could no longer, as in *Moby Dick*, be superceded into the anthropocosmos, but could only be reconstituted in a sham theatre of satire and despair.

The story of Colonel John Murdock is told to the cosmopolitan, once again, by Charlie Noble, who is identified in the course of the narrative as a small-time Mississippi River confidence man himself. Judge James Hall (the real publicist from whom Melville got the basis of his story, as he wrote *Israel Potter* from the life of a real Israel Potter) had told the story so many times he knew it by heart; "you would have thought he spoke less to mere auditors than to an invisible amanuensis". Charlie Noble had heard it so many times from him that he, too, knew it by heart. Thus an account of action is even further distanced by being memorized twice.

Noble's story begins (in the chapter entitled "Containing the Metaphysics of Indian-Hating, According to the Views of One Evidently Not So Prepossessed as Rousseau in Favor of Savages") with a challenge to the kind of morality the confidence man has been exploiting: "...the philanthropist is surprised that Indian-hating has not" disappeared in "regions where it once prevailed", because he does not understand the backwoodsman. The latter is "lonely", "thoughtful", "strong and unsophisticated". "Self-reliance" is his outlook; he is, therefore, an Emersonian in the rough.

"...But not merely is the backwoodsman content to be alone, but in no few cases anxious to be so. The sight of smoke ten miles off is provocation to one more remove from man, one step deeper into nature."⁷⁶²

⁷⁶²-*The Confidence Man*, p. 125.

Though he may be considered a "barbarian", "...the backwoodsman would seem to America what Alexander was to Asia". Thus Melville not merely pairs the backwoodsman with the Transcendentalist as two forms of "self-reliance", but he also locates him in the tradition of cosmic kingship and empire that was the backdrop to Ahab in Moby Dick. The child of a backwoodsman cannot be raised to view Indians "as members of the Society of Friends". He hears of

"Indian lying, Indian theft, Indian double-dealing, Indian fraud and perfidy, Indian want of conscience, Indian blood-thirstiness, Indian diabolism"⁷⁶³

Even an Indian converted to Christianity will admit "that his race's portion by nature is total depravity". The Indian, in Judge Hall's narrative, is even himself a confidence man:

"when a tomahawking red-man advances the notion of the benignity of the red race, it is but part and parcel with that subtle strategy which he finds so useful in war, in hunting, and the general conduct of life"⁷⁶⁴

The true Indian hater is made by some "signal outrage". He is "an intenser Hannibal"; "with the solemnity of a Spaniard turned monk, he takes leave of his kin"⁷⁶⁵. He seeks to act on a "cloistered scheme" of vengeance. The career of the true Indian hater has "impenetrability", like "the fate of a lost steamer".

It is, however, possible to know something about this phenomenon because of the "diluted Indian-hater", "a monk who apostatizes to the world at times"⁷⁶⁶. Colonel John Mordock was one of the latter⁷⁶⁷. Mordock's mother had been "thrice widowed by a tomahawk". She herself was killed by Indians when he was a

⁷⁶³-ibid. p. 126.

⁷⁶⁴-ibid. p. 128.

⁷⁶⁵-ibid. p. 130. With Alexander and Hannibal, Melville is linking the American Indian hater to the imperial history of the Old World; the main "Spaniard turned monk" in Melville's universe was Charles V. (Here again is the blending of monk and warrior which interested Melville in the Templars. The combination of warrior and monk is later alluded to in the character of Captain Vere in Billy Budd.)

⁷⁶⁶-The Indian hater is a veritable Templar Knight.

⁷⁶⁷-At one point the cosmopolitan interrupts the story to refill his "calumet", i.e. his pipe. This is one of a number of small Indian "signs" that Melville scatters through the narrative; the mention, in the first sentence, of Manco Capac; herb-doctors are "Indian doctors" (p. 66), the "Creole, or even Comanche" girl following the "invalid Titan" (p. 75); the pottery, an "Indian utensil", in which cigars are offered (p. 146).

young man. He spent three years killing every Indian involved. He devoted his life to tracking and killing more. But Moredock was not "naturally ferocious";

"...Moredock was an example of something apparently self-contradicting....namely, that nearly all Indian haters have at bottom loving hearts...Moredock showed himself not without humane feelings. No cold husband or colder father, he...He could be very convivial; told a good story (though never of his more private exploits) and sung a capital song."⁷⁶⁸

Moredock refused an opportunity to be Governor of Illinois because he might have to make treaties with friendly Indian tribes. But he was a fine, upstanding citizen, capable of camaraderie.

The confidence man/cosmopolitan finds himself overwhelmed. His elaborate ideology of "charity" is called into question:

"...yet, the annals of neither Rome nor Greece can produce the equal in man-hatred of Colonel Mordock, as the judge and you have painted him. As for this Indian hating in general, I can only say of it what Dr. Johnson said of the alleged Lisbon earthquake: "Sir, I don't believe it."⁷⁶⁹

In this account, Melville has made the link between Transcendentalism and Indian-hating. At first it would seem paradoxical to associate sentimental charity that can extend "sympathy" to Black Guinea and contribute to the Seminole Widow and Orphan asylum with Indian-hating. Yet Melville is showing that they are both rooted in the same asocial ideology of "self-reliance"; one, to use the terms of the Missourian, susceptible to being used by evil, and "useless for right"; the other, radical evil itself.

The story of Colonel Moredock stands apart in The Confidence Man, and yet it is the transition of the whole book. It is a story within a story, at several removes, yet it stands as the reality against which the confidence man's game shatters. Just prior to the conclusion, Melville inserts one of three self-conscious discussions of the problems of creating characters in fiction. It is here that he uses the image of the "revolving Drummond light", a prototype of the modern

⁷⁶⁸-ibid. p. 134. Rogin points out: "Hall actually claimed to have encountered such a man in a frontier store, 'so different from the noisy mirth and thoughtless deportment of those around him, that I could not help observing him...There were indications of openness and honesty, that forebade distrust.'" (quoted in Rogin, op. cit. p. 246.) Hall's statement reinforces the point that Melville's inclusion of Moredock's story in The Confidence Man was intended to underscore the "radical evil" that the charitable confidence of the passengers of the *Fidèle* could not countenance. Moredock, the Indian-hater, was no confidence man.

⁷⁶⁹-ibid. p. 136.

searchlight which P.T. Barnum used from the top of his museum. The "original character" has that effect on a work of fiction: "everything is lit by it, everything stands up to it". It seems that Melville is talking about the confidence man, and the P.T. Barnum overtones of the Drummond light reinforce that. But in fact, if there is one figure in The Confidence Man who lights up everything and everyone else, it is Colonel Moredock, just as the character of Ahab lights up all of Moby Dick. Moredock carries to its extremes in action the asocial "self-reliance" that is the foundation of middle-class sentimentalism, preached by the Confidence man in his con game, and which limits itself to "charity" and "confidence", susceptible to be used by evil, and useless for good.

Two further stories are told in The Confidence Man, following that of Colonel Moredock. Both of them, the story of Charlemont and the story of China Aster, are related to the bankruptcy of Melville's father. The story of Charlemont, the "gentleman-madman", is told by the cosmopolitan to calm Charlie Noble, who explodes when the cosmopolitan asks him for a loan.

In "Jimmy Rose", Melville's short story analyzed earlier, the bankrupt businessman, unlike Melville's father, (and Redburn's, and Pierre's), does not die insane, and reappears many years later to live off the charity of his well-to-do friends. In the story of Charlemont, Melville gives his father-imago an even gentler fate. The Holy Roman Emperor, the "man with a purple robe", has already appeared in different fragments in The Confidence Man. Charlemont was a "young merchant of French descent" living in St. Louis. At the age of 29, a sudden personality change came over him, and shortly thereafter he was declared a bankrupt. He disappeared, and reappeared nine years later, having regained a fortune. Rumor had it that he had earned this fortune in Marseilles, but years passed without an explanation. Finally pressed by an old friend, Charlemont says only that he acted pre-emptively in order not to see his friends turn away from him.

The cosmopolitan is using this story to ask Charlie Noble not to turn away from him, but it is curious and significant how Melville re-wrote yet again his father's fate.

As Rogin, in one of the most trenchant analyses of The Confidence Man, put it:

"The ur-story underneath The Confidence Man is the bankruptcy, madness and death of Allan Melville. He is the missing person behind the novel's confidence games...The Confidence-Man offers neither the actual history of Allan Melville, nor a novelistic account of his life, but alludes to his fate in fragments. Allan Melville's life makes the fictional fragments of The Confidence Man whole⁷⁷⁰

Rogin sees Melville's father in The Confidence Man, but does not see Charlemagne, either there or in any of Melville's writings. It is cosmic kingship which is the backdrop to the dead importer of French luxury goods, and which opens up a whole political side of Melville's work which Rogin, and most other writers on Melville, have missed.

⁷⁷⁰-Rogin, op. cit. p. 249.

The appearance of figures representing Emerson and Thoreau has already been discussed. That appearance is transmuted into a conscious charade which continues the presence of "Charlie", from the cosmopolitan to Charlie Noble to Charlemont. It is this final phase of a succession of "Charlies" that allows Melville to go deep into his family romance.

For Egbert/Thoreau's elaboration of the practical side of Winsome's philosophy, the cosmopolitan proposes to Egbert an imaginary dialogue between two lifelong friends, "Charlie" and "Frank", thus continuing in transposed form the long discussion between Charlie Noble and Frank Goodman, the cosmopolitan, that was interrupted by Winsome. Previously, Melville had Charlie Noble recite a memorized monologue of the monologue which Judge Hall himself knew by heart about Colonel Moredock. The conversation between Charlie and Frank is now continued as a charade. Nearly half of The Confidence Man therefore involves the cosmopolitan's failure with the misanthropic Missourian, who was described as a "sort of comprehensive Colonel Moredock", his failure with Charlie Noble, who tells the story of Colonel Moredock, the cosmopolitan's story of Charlemont, and then the dialogue with Egbert/"Charlie" whose refusal to loan money to the cosmopolitan is justified in Transcendentalist terms. The fragments of Charlemagne, as Charlie, as Charlemont, and "Charlie" are everywhere.

The gist of the conversation between Egbert/Thoreau/"Charlie" and "Frank" is "Charlie's" refusal to lend "Frank" money because he is a friend. Egbert says he will lend or give money to someone in need of charity but that such a person immediately ceases to be a friend⁷⁷¹. It is a case of using high-minded reasons to preserve the view of charity which the confidence man has been exploiting throughout the book; what is lacking in such sentimental middle-class morality is the idea of mutual aid among equals. To illustrate his point, Egbert tells the story of China Aster⁷⁷², whose ruin was precipitated by his acceptance of a loan thrust on

⁷⁷¹-Thoreau's Walden had said: "Objects of charity are not guests" (quoted in Melville op. cit. Norton Edition, p. 172n.)

⁷⁷²- Rogin links the story of China Aster to the fate of Melville's father: "(China Aster) involves his family in debt, signs a "secret bond" with a moneylender, and cannot repay his former friend. Faced with imminent bankruptcy, China Aster goes mad and dies...Like other members of his clan, Allan Melvill exploited his family connections for financial gain...Allan Melvill is like one of the characters in the first half of The Confidence Man, whose misplaced trust makes them the confidence man's victims. He is, like those characters, a failed confidence man himself. But his loans also implicate him, as China Aster is implicated, in an ongoing, fatal web of mistrust." (Rogin, op. cit. pp. 249-250). Rogin continues: "face to face with his father's history at last, Melville insulated himself from its horror. He did not tell the story whole, with living characters who were destroyed, but in pieces and at "second hand" ...The Confidence Man flees from the painful intimacy that tied Pierre to Isabel, the lawyer to Bartleby, and Benito Cereno

him by a friend. "If you turn beggar, then, for the honor of noble friendship, I turn stranger."⁷⁷³

The cosmopolitan, "leaving his companion at a loss to determine where exactly the fictitious character had been dropped, and the real one, if any resumed", denounces this heartless philosophy and walks out. But of course Melville's entire book is questioning what, if anything, exists beyond fictions.

What Melville had staged was an elaborate hall of mirrors in which one fragment of Charlemagne, the cosmopolitan, is placed in the situation of Melville's father before his insanity and death, pleading for a loan from a friend, while another fragment of Charlemagne, the Transcendentalist, denies it to him with lofty statements on the nature of friendship concealing, or rather revealing, heartlessness. Egbert/Thoreau, denying a compatibility between equality and solidarity, thus arrives at the same practical conclusions as Charlie Noble, the petty steamboat Confidence Man and teller of the tale of Captain John Moredock. Understandably the cosmopolitan tells Egbert/Thoreau that he could have learned his philosophy from "any poor, old, broken-down, heart-shrunken dandy".

Just prior to the final scene of The Confidence Man, Melville includes one of three "theoretical" chapters on fiction, in which he likens, (as indicated previously) the rare "original character" in a novel to P.T. Barnum's "Drummond light", illuminating everything. The transition is therefore all the more striking to the setting of the final scene, in the gentlemen's cabin of the *Fidèle*:

"In the middle of the gentleman's cabin burned a solar lamp, swung from the ceiling, and whose shade of ground glass was all round fancifully variegated, with the image of a horned altar, from which flames rose, alternate with the figure of a robed man⁷⁷⁴, his head encircled by a halo. The light of this lamp...on all sides went rippling off with ever-diminishing distinctness, till, like circles from a stone dropped in water, the rays died dimly away in the furthest nook of the place."⁷⁷⁵

The juxtaposition of the "Drummond light" of the original character with the rays of the lamp dying away with "ever-diminishing distinctness" could hardly be more eloquent in conveying Melville's sense of what "character" had come to by the end of The Confidence Man. In Moby Dick, the monomaniacal drive of the moi absolu personified by Ahab is counterposed by the vision of a "higher primitive"

to Babo into fragmented, fictitious bonds that are more painful yet.: (p. 253). The analysis presented here differs from Rogin's primarily in identifying many of the "pieces" with Charlemagne and in underscoring the use of Charlemagne, and cosmic kingship, throughout Melville's work, as the heart of the problematic of his father.

⁷⁷³-op. cit. p. 192.

⁷⁷⁴-The "robed man" on the lamp is another candidate for Black Guinea's gentleman with a purple robe, but is more accurately seen as one more enigmatic fragment.

⁷⁷⁵-ibid. p. 206.

following the debacle. On the Fidèle, that monomaniacal drive is present only in the thrice-removed story of Colonel Moredock, and it is counterposed by nothing but these flickers. The scene is replete with references to the Biblical Apocalypse⁷⁷⁶, but now also reduced to flickers.

Into this scene comes a final possible avatar of the confidence man,

"...a boy in the fragment of an old linen coat, bedraggled and yellow...the rags of the little fellow's red-flannel shirt, mixed with those of his yellow coat, flamed about him like the painted flames in the robes of a victim in auto-da-fe. His face, too, wore such a polish of seasoned grime, that his sloe-eyes sparkled from out it like lustrous sparks in fresh coal."⁷⁷⁷

This figure, like the cosmopolitan, does not correspond to anything in Black Guinea's list. But the "polish of seasoned grime" amounts to an identification of the boy as someone in blackface, another minstrelsy figure, bringing the book full circle. The boy is selling travelers' conveniences to an old man reading the Bible, he gives him a paper "Counterfeit Detector" to detect bad bills. The old man begins inspecting some bills, looking for a tiny goose which the printer puts on authentic bills.

"if the bill is good, it must have in one corner...the figure of a goose, very small, indeed, all but microscopic; and, for added precaution, *like the figure of Napoleon outlined by the tree*, not observable, even if magnified, unless the attention is directed to it..."⁷⁷⁸ (italics added)

This is what the pseudo-sacred, in this case Napoleon, had come to for Melville by 1856⁷⁷⁹: an analogy, mentioned in passing, for some sign that money was not counterfeit, and beyond money, the generalized counterfeit world that produced it. The Confidence Man scatters the fragments of Charlemagne among the cosmopolitan, Charlie Noble, Charlemont and the "Charlie"- "Frank" masquerade, and ends with this one, last ludicrous reference to the pseudo-sacred. Even if Melville did not intend it to be his last novel, it is easy to see, from The

⁷⁷⁶-The cosmopolitan enters this scene "as any bridegroom tripping to the bridal chamber might come", an allusion to various Biblical references to Jesus as the "bridegroom".

⁷⁷⁷-ibid. p. 210.

⁷⁷⁸-ibid. p. 214.

⁷⁷⁹-In the previous scene, as the cosmopolitan is conning a free shave from the ship's barber, there is an additional reference to cosmic kingship: "Sir", said he, taking a throne beside his customer (for in a row there were three thrones on the dais, as for the three kings of Cologne, those patron saints of the barber...." The fragments of the cosmic king were thus embodied in "thrones" in a barber shop. (p. 198).

Confidence Man, why he never published another one in his lifetime. In the final paragraph

"...the waning light expired, and with it the waning flames of the horned altar, and the waning halo round the robed man's brow"⁷⁸⁰

P.T. Barnum's "Drummond Light" was already a pseudo-sacred metaphor for a character such as an Ahab, but now, all of Melville's characters had flickered out.

⁷⁸⁰-ibid. p. 217

PART III: THE HESITANT TRANSITION BEYOND NEGATION, 1856-1891

Preface

Clarel (1876) is, on first reading, the strangest work in Melville's oeuvre. It is the belated result of Melville's trip to the Middle East in 1856-57. Clarel is an epic poem of 18,000 lines telling the story of a group of Western pilgrims in the Holy Land in the 1870's. It is centered on Clarel, an American Protestant theology student who has come to Palestine to find some reason for continuing in his slackening faith. Thus Clarel has, on closer inspection, many Melvillian elements: the quest, the middle-class intellectual, and the group journey, whether maniacal, as in the case of the *Pequod*, or the ship of fools, as in the case of The Confidence Man. A whole series of Melvillian themes and symbols are in evidence.

Nevertheless, Clarel is radically different from the rest of Melville's work. After The Confidence Man, another in the long series of commercial failures beginning with Moby Dick, Melville was a defeated writer. When he returned, somewhat reinvigorated, from his eight-month trip abroad, it was obvious that he was not going to be able to support his family from writing. His eleven-year cycle of novels and short stories (1845-1856) had brought his physical and mental health to the brink. From 1857 to 1860, Melville went on the atheneum and lyceum lecture circuit, but he was not a public speaker.

In the midst of such circumstances, Melville's writing of fiction had itself come to an end point. His statements on the fictional "character" in The Confidence Man are themselves a kind of culmination of the trajectory of the moi absolu which has been traced previously. Melville was at the end of the line of negation.

Clarel, taken by itself, is of little importance for an analysis of race and class in 19th-century America. (Nevertheless, in the extensive discussions of revolution and class war generally, class is certainly present as a theme.) Melville's abandonment of fiction might be of relevance, particularly when considered against the backdrop of the imminent Civil War. But that is a theme for a more specifically literary study. Clarel must be included in this investigation of Melville's work because it retroactively illuminates and strengthens aspects of the analysis already offered of the two major periods of Melville: up to Moby Dick (1845-1851), when he was consciously examining themes of class, race and rebellion, and of Melville from Pierre to The Confidence Man (1851-1857), when the failure of that road had relocated his rebellious negation in an increasingly pessimistic viewpoint, ending essentially in a satirical apocalypse. Clarel also marks a transition to the posthumous Billy Budd.

Melville's turn to poetry, above and beyond the very grave circumstances of his life situation, grew directly out of the failure of the problematic of character so

evident in The Confidence Man. In Battle Pieces, his poems about the Civil War, and much more so in Clarel, Melville found a medium in which he did not have to develop novelistic characters but could nonetheless have an epic narrative and above all the interplay of "ideas" which were still dramatized in novel form in his most important works.

After much effort, Melville finally obtained a position in the Customs House in New York City in 1866, where he worked until his retirement in 1885. Thus the final 35 years of his life, in his leisure time, were devoted to poetry, with the exception of the posthumous Billy Budd and some character sketches. While it is difficult to date precisely, Clarel was written in the late 1860's and early 1870's. Clarel had to be published at the expense of Melville's uncle, and many unsold copies were pulped in 1879.

A judgement on Melville's stature as a poet lies beyond the framework of this study⁷⁸¹. Whatever the case, Clarel is a remarkable document of the Western Zeitgeist in the period between the end of idealism, on both sides of the Atlantic, after 1848, and the beginning of international modernism ca. 1890. Melville's involvement with anthropology, philosophy and history always made him something of a writer of ideas, and in Clarel he offers a unique radiography of the Western intellectual and cultural world of the 1870's, published, perhaps not accidentally, in the same year when even Friedrich Nietzsche was passing through his most "positivist" period⁷⁸². It is Melville's discussion, through various characters, of 19th-century Protestant theology, the Catholic Church, scientific materialism, the tottering Ottoman empire, Darwin, geology, positivism, socialism, communism and class war, which makes Clarel a tour d'horizon worthy of illuminating to what point Melville's earlier problematic had come. The impact of these discussions and the generally unrelieved bleakness of the spiritual landscape they illuminate is all the greater because it is set against the torpid, "used up"⁷⁸³ backdrop of Palestine in the last decades of Ottoman rule.

Melville's trip, despite immediate circumstances, fulfilled an old dream. In 1849, at the height of his powers and his reputation, he had sailed to see his London editor with the manuscript of White-Jacket and with plans to continue on to the Middle East⁷⁸⁴. Financial problems ultimately limited this trip to a tour of

⁷⁸¹-Nor will any attempt be made to analyze Melville's Civil War poems Battle Pieces (1866) or other short poems of the 1856-1891 period.

⁷⁸²-It was also the year of the dissolution of the First International.

⁷⁸³-When his ship entered the Hellespont on Dec. 10, 1856, Melville noted in his journal "little difference in the aspect of the continents. Only Asia looked a sort of used up--superannuated." H. Melville, Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant, Princeton, 1955, p. 75.

⁷⁸⁴-"This afternoon Dr. Taylor and I sketched a plan for going down the Danube from Vienna to Constantinople; thence to Athens on the steamer; to Beyrouth and Jerusalem--Alexandria and the pyramids...I am full (just now) of this glorious Eastern jaunt. Think of it! Jerusalem and the pyramids-- Constantinople, the Aegean, and old Athens!" H. Melville. Journal of a Visit

the continent. Despite his critique of the Orientalism of the Transcendentalists, he was as interested in the Middle East as they were⁷⁸⁵. By 1856, however, he told Hawthorne that "he did not expect much pleasure from his rambles, for that spirit of adventure is gone out of him"⁷⁸⁶. Most of Melville's journal entries confirm that hunch. In Istanbul, he

"saw cemeteries, where they dumped garbage...Forests of cemeteries. Intricacy of the streets...after a terrible long walk, found myself back where I started. Just like getting lost in a wood. No plan to streets...Narrow. Close, shut in."⁷⁸⁷

He was taken by

"Great crowds of all nations.....You feel you are among the nations. Great curse that of Babel; not being able to talk to a fellow being..."⁷⁸⁸

On the trip from Istanbul to Alexandria, he wrote:

"...Contrast between the Greek isles and those of the Polynesian archipelago. The former have lost their virginity. The latter as fresh as at their first creation. The former look worn, and are meager, like life after enthusiasm is gone... to look upon the bleak yellow of Patmos, who would ever think that a god had been there."⁷⁸⁹

He was able to spend only one day in Cairo, and went to see the pyramids: "Never shall forget this day". This is hardly surprising, as the pyramids and Egypt figured so prominently in Melville's work, above all in Moby Dick, Pierre and "Bartleby the Scrivener".⁷⁹⁰ Cairo seemed to Melville "a grand masquerade of mortality". He remembered

to London and the Continent, 1849-1850. E.E. Metcalf ed. Cambridge, 1948. pp. 9-10. Recall as well Redburn's childhood fascination with the man who had been in Arabia.

⁷⁸⁵-The full documentation of Melville's involvement with Orientalism is, once again, the previously cited work of D.M. Finkelstein, Melville's Orienda (New Haven, 1961). As Finkelstein put it, "It is in the perception of evil and the maleficent laws of the universe that Melville found an affinity with Saadi. Also, unlike Emerson, he recognized the predominance of the practical moralist over the mystic. He checked: "Tranquillity of mind requires a fixed income." (p. 97)

⁷⁸⁶-Quoted in L. Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 378.

⁷⁸⁷-Melville, Journal..., p. 79. (12/13/1856)

⁷⁸⁸-ibid. p. 85. (12/13/1856)

⁷⁸⁹-ibid. p. 111. (12/26/1856)

⁷⁹⁰-"In frequency and importance the references to Egyptian history and mythology are only only secondary to the allusions to Polynesia in Melville's

"...Ruined mosques, domes knocked in like stoven boats. Others, upper part empty and desolate with broken rafters and dismantled windows; (rubbish) below...multitudes of blind men--worst city in the world for them. Flies on the eyes at noon. Nature feeding on man."⁷⁹¹

But it was the visit to the pyramids which most affected Melville:

"...Nothing in nature gives such an idea of vastness...Arab guides in flowing white mantles....Old man with the spirits of youth...tried the ascent, half way--failed--brought down. Tried to go into the interior--fainted--brought out--leaned against the pyramid by the entrance--pale as death. Nothing so pathetic. Too much for him; oppressed by the massiveness and mystery of the pyramids. I myself too. A feeling of awe and terror came over me...I shudder at idea of ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah. Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful. Moses learned in all the lore of the Egyptians...*No vestige of moss upon them*...Pyramids still loom before me--something vast, undefiled, incomprehensible, and awful."⁷⁹²

A further entry continues:

"...In other buildings, however vast, the eye is gradually inured to the sense of magnitude, by passing from part to part. But here there is no stay or stage. It is all or nothing. It is not the sense of height, or breadth or length or depth that is stirred, but the sense of immensity that is stirred. After seeing the pyramid, all other architecture seems but pastry...As with the ocean, you learn as much of its vastness by the first five minutes glance as you would in a month, so with the pyramid."⁷⁹³

But neither Istanbul nor Cairo and the pyramids figure directly in Clarel. These observations merely give a sense of Melville's general mood. The Holy Land, Palestine, is the setting of the book. Here are some of Melville's journal entries, such as his impressions of Judea:

"...Whitish mildew pervading whole tracts of landscape-- bleached-- leprosy--encrustation of curses--old cheese---bones of rocks--crunched, knawed and mumbled--mere refuse and rubbish of creation--like that laying outside of Jaffa gate--all Judea seems to have been accumulations of this rubbish. You see the

works".(Finkelstein, op. cit. p. 121).

⁷⁹¹-Melville, op.cit. p. 115. (1/3/1857)

⁷⁹²-ibid. pp. 117-119. (1/3/1857)

⁷⁹³-ibid. p. 123. (1/3/1857)

anatomy--compares with ordinary regions as skeleton with living and rosy man. So rubbishy, that no chiffonier could find anything all over it."⁷⁹⁴

Of the Dead Sea:

"Ride over mouldly plains to Dead Sea...foam on beach and pebbles like slaver of mad dog--smarting bitter of the water-- carried the bitter in my mouth all day-- bitterness of life--thought of all bitter things--bitter it is to be poor and bitter, to be reviled. Oh bitter are these waters of death, thought I...nought to eat but bitumen and ashes with desert of Sodom apples washed down with water of Dead Sea...for all is barren. Drank of brook, but brackish.--Ascended among the mountains again-- barren."⁷⁹⁵

In Jerusalem, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

"The main body of the church is that overhung by the lofty and ruinous dome whole fallen plastering reveals the meagre skeleton of beams and laths a sort of plague-stricken splendour reigns in the painted and mildewed walls around. In the midst of all, stands the Sepulchre; a church in a church. It is of marbles, richly sculpted in parts and bearing the faded aspect of age...the faces of the pilgrims who crowd for admittance into a space which will hold but four or five at a time...Wedged and half-dazzled, you stare for a moment on the ineloquence of the bedizened slab, and glad to come up, wipe your brow glad to escape as from the heat and jam of a show-bow. All is glitter and nothing is gold. A sickening cheat. The countenances of the poorest and most ignorant pilgrims would seem tacitly to confess it as well as your own."⁷⁹⁶

Over the next fifteen years, Melville fashioned such impressions, and a lifetime of involvement with Biblical symbolism, history, and his own literary production, into an epic poem.

Ch. XVIII. Melville in the Desert: Clarel

Clarel is difficult reading. Nevertheless, the reader attuned to Melville's themes, and interested in Melville's thoughts in his own personal and cultural desert, will find in it a rich retrospective that illuminates the earlier work, and that gives soundings of the studied disillusion of his final phase, the state of mind captured by Hawthorne in 1856 when the latter said that Melville "can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief"⁷⁹⁷. Clarel is a latter-day Chaucerian pilgrimage, and Melville, freed from the novelistic problematic of character

⁷⁹⁴-ibid. p. 137 (Jan. 1857)

⁷⁹⁵-ibid. pp. 136-137 (Jan. 1857).

⁷⁹⁶ibid. pp. 147-148 (Jan. 1857)

⁷⁹⁷-Quoted in Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 377.

development, allows various viewpoints that have already emerged in his novels to play off one another. The main figures are Clarel, the theology student; Derwent, the Anglican priest who, by his superficial optimism, is the constant foil of the more developed and pessimistic views of the other main characters; Margoth, a Jewish geologist who represents the nec plus ultra of 19th-century scientific materialism; Mortmain, a bitter Swedish ex-revolutionary, fighter in the Parisian 1848, turned reactionary; Nehemiah, an aged American millenarian living in the Holy Land, passing out futile Christian tracts to Jews and Moslems; Ungar, an ex-Confederate officer and a mercenary for the Ottomans; Vine, an artist; and Rolfe, a world traveller and intellectual. Margoth, Mortmain, Ungar, Vine and Rolfe are the figures with the most developed "stances" which Melville uses to present the clash of world views, and the latter two are the closest to Melville's own viewpoint. Derwent, although a priest and not a philosopher, is in some sense the "Emersonian" figure, blind to the challenges which the 19th century poses to his shallow meliorist faith. (It should nonetheless be remembered that Emerson was an ex-minister.) There are, moreover, many other minor characters who contribute significantly to the book.

Clarel in an important sense is a "spiritual geography". In a strange way, it echoes Mardi, transposed from Polynesia to the Middle East, just as the South Seas are replaced by the desert. It begins on the Feast of the Epiphany and follows Melville's pilgrims for weeks up to Whitsuntide, from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea to the monastery at Mar Saba, to Bethlehem, and back to Jerusalem. Clarel's search for renewed faith is complemented by his search for erotic love, in the form of the beautiful Jewess Ruth, to whom he becomes engaged in Jerusalem at the beginning and whom he finds dead, from fever and grief, at the end of the pilgrimage. As in all of Melville's principal works except Pierre, women are not to be found among the major protagonists of Clarel, but Ruth does echo Isabel as a "dark woman" tied up with a quest.

Clarel is a journey through a spiritual and a physical desert, but in Melville's narrative two historical periods, and their ruins, stand out above all others: Biblical times and the Middle Ages. It is true that these are the main periods which impose themselves in the Holy Land, but their presence underscores the significance of Melville's choice of setting. The only historical time besides his own in which Melville actually places his narratives is the era of French and American revolutions, as in Israel Potter, "Benito Cereno", "Poor Man's Pudding, Rich Man's Crumbs"⁷⁹⁸ and Billy Budd. Biblical reference is present, if not overwhelming, in Moby Dick and The Confidence Man. But given the preoccupation with medieval warriors which runs through Melville's work, and above all the Knights Templar, Palestine offered him a perfect backdrop to return to his fundamental theme of ruins. Melville was interested in classical antiquity; on the 1856-57 trip, after visiting the Middle East, he traveled in Greece and Italy, and on his lecture tours of 1857-1860 he spoke on the classical sculpture he had seen there. But the references in Melville's work from the Biblical, i.e. Judeo-Christian,

⁷⁹⁸-The short story "The Bell Tower" is of course situated in the Italian Renaissance.

side of Western origins overwhelm those from the Greco-Roman side classical side, and Clarel is filled with the ruins of the medieval warrior class.

In Melville's early works, the theme of revolt is discussed, ambivalently; it continues to flare up in "Benito Cereno" and to flicker in "Bartleby". In Clarel it is present only as the object of denunciation, after the failures of 1848 and of the Paris Commune. There is, in short, no Steekilt or Babo in Clarel; there are only figures such as Mortmain, the bitter ex-revolutionary.

This chapter, then, will attempt a "radioscopy" of the main preoccupations of Melville in the years just after the Paris Commune.

Mortmain, the Swede, was the "illicit son of noble lady" and a father who had given him nothing but "liberal lore" and "timely income". To find "the vague bond of humankind", Mortmain had gone to Paris in the 1840's when

Europe was in a decade dim
Upon the future's trembling rim
The comet hovered.

(II.iv.39-41)⁷⁹⁹

Mortmain became a plotter, conspirator, pamphleteer and prophet. The portrait of Mortmain is told in the words of Derwent, the Anglican priest, who would be inclined to embellish:

That uncreated Good
He sought, whose absence is the cause
Of creeds and Atheists, mobs and laws.

(II.iv.49-51)

But bitterly disappointed by the quality of the people he encountered in the revolutionary movement, Mortmain was "stung".

Why, if men prove such,
Dote I? love theory overmuch?
Yea, also, whither will advance
This Revolution sprung in France
So many years ago?

(II.iv.61-65)

What if the kings in Forty-Eight
Fled like the gods? even as the gods
Shall do, return they made; and sate
And fortified their strong abodes;
And to confirm them there in state
Contrived new slogans, apt to please--

⁷⁹⁹-All quotations from Clarel, New York 1960, W. Bezanson ed.

Pan and the tribal unities.
(II.iv. 99-105)

Mortmain, however, is not the sole figure in *Clarel* to raise the specter of revolution. Late in the pilgrimage, a discussion erupts between Derwent and Ungar, the deeply pessimistic Confederate veteran, Ottoman mercenary and half-Indian. It begins with a disagreement about the Protestant Reformation, which, in Ungar's view, began a process of "blind precipitation" to no visible end. Derwent takes it typically in stride as being for

...belief revised,
Men liberated--equalized
In happiness. No mystery
Just none at all; plain sailing.
(IV.xx.29-33)

This cliché of "plain sailing" means that "creeds drop the hate; events still liberalize the state."

But Ungar will have none of this unproblematic 19th-century liberal theology. He points to the process set in motion that has gone far beyond the moderate aims of early reformers; under the impact of the revolutions and agitation for reform, poverty has been stripped of its holy aura and is being treated as a social problem:

But Pauperism's unhappy sons/
In cloud so blackly ominous/
Grimy in Mammon's English pen--/
Collaterals of his overplus:/
How worse than them Immanuel fed/
On hill-top--helped and comforted./
Thou, Poverty, erst free from shame./
Even sacred through the Savior's claim/
Professed by saints, by sages prized--/
A pariah now, and bastardized!/
Reactions from the Christian plan/Bear others further. Quite they shun/
A God to name, or cite a man/
Save Greek, heroic, a Don:/
Tis Plato's aristocratic tone./
All recognition they forego/
Of Evil; supercilious skim/
With spurious wing of seraphim/
The last abyss. Freemen avow/
Belief in right divine of Might/
Yet spurn at kings.

IV.xxi.88-108) (italics added)

Ungar is driving home to Derwent the uncontainable process of reform; by de-sacralizing poverty and stripping away its Biblical aura, reformers and radicals "spurn at kings" and open the floodgates of revolution, which moves from moderation to atheistic nihilism. The just-concluded Paris Commune hovers over Ungar's Dostoevskian-like tirade:

"Mark the way/The Revolution, whose first mode./
Ere yet the maniacs overrode./
Despite the passion of the dream/
Evinced no disrespect for God; Mark

how, in our denuding day/E'en with the masses, as would seem,/It tears the fig-leaf quite away./Contrast these incidents: The mob, The Paris mob of Eighty-Nine, Haggard and bleeding, with a throb/ Burst the long Tuileries. In shrine/ Of chapel there, they saw the Cross/ And Him thereon. Ah, bleeding Man,/The people's friend, thou bled'st for us/Who here bleed, too! Ragged they ran--/They took the crucifix; in van/They put it, marched with drum and psalm/ And throned it in their Notre Dame./But yesterday--how did they then./In new uprising of the Red./The offspring of those Tuileries men?/They made a clothes-stand of the Cross/Before the church; and, on that head/ Which bowed for them, could wanton toss/ The sword-belt, while the gibing sped. Transcended rebel angels! Woe/ To us; without a God, 'tis woe!"

(IV.xxi.109-136)

Rolfe, the world traveler and intellectual, takes over as Ungar's interlocutor, and hears the end of this Spenglerian prophecy of doom, mixed with overtones of the Turner thesis that hearken back again to the "Burkean" manifesto in Mardi. Rolfe reminds Ungar that the space and resources of the New World will long defer "the class-war, rich-and-poor-man fray of history", but Ungar replies:

"But in the New World things make haste: Not only men, the *state* lives fast--/Fast breeds the pregnant eggs and shells,/The slumberous combustibles/Sure to explode. 'Twill come, 'twill come! One demagogue can trouble much:/How of a hundred thousand such?/And universal suffrage lent/To back them with brute element/Overwhelming? What shall bind these seas/ Of rival sharp communities/ Unchristianized? Yea, but 'twill come!"

(IV.xxi.110-121)

Thus the specter of red revolution⁸⁰⁰ is discussed by two of Melville's pilgrims, one bitter about the shortcomings of man's capacity for freedom, the

⁸⁰⁰-In another sequence, Clarel finds a rhyme penciled on the wall of an inn: "For me who never loved the stride/ Triumph and taunt that shame the winning side--/Toward Him over whom, in expectation's glow,/ Elate the advance of rabble-banners gleam--/Turned from a world that dare renounce Him so,/My unweaned thoughts in steadfast trade wind stream./If Atheists and Vitriolists of doom/ Faith's gathering night with rockets red illum--/So much the more in pathos I adore/ The low lamps flickering in Syria's Tomb." From the innkeeper, Clarel learns that it was written by "a fair young Englishman", who had left behind a confessional book of the Anglican Church and a book linking Strauss, Renan and the Greek god Pan with "Proudhon and the Communist". Nevertheless, the marginalia of books are filled with critical comments, leaving Clarel even more perplexed by the

other dreading the unchaining of the masses in a secularized society. As if to drive home the timeliness of this debate, in 1877, one year after the publication of Clarel, the United States experienced its first "Paris Commune" (as it was called by some contemporaries) in the insurrectionary railroad strikes. None of Melville's characters make any response to Mortmain and Ungar in defense of radical change. The red flag which Tashtego nailed to the sinking *Pequod's* mast had sunk along with Melville's vision of something beyond the bourgeois ego.

But revolution, while dramatically portrayed in these discussions, does not trouble Melville's pilgrims nearly as much as the broader questions of a world demystified by science and atheism, which for some prepares the way for revolution.

Before turning to the various theological viewpoints presented (and in particular a critique of pallid 19th century liberal Protestantism as the logical outcome of the Reformation and a cover for atheism) it is necessary to consider the extreme positivist viewpoint represented by the Jewish geologist Margoth. Margoth was

"a Jew-- German, I deem--but readvised--an Israelite, say, Hegelized--Convert to science, for but see the hammer: yes, geology." (II.xix. 53-57)

As a "Hegelized" Israelite, Margoth was a figure in the tradition of 19th century German-Jewish thinkers such as Moses Mendelsohn, who transformed Judaism into something much closer to philosophy, much as David Friedrich Strauss did for Protestantism. But Margoth goes much farther, being in fact more of a vulgar materialist, (like Turgenev's Bazarov in Fathers and Sons) or the Moleschottian materialists of the 1850's. Margoth's science has completely secularized the "sacred geography" through which the pilgrims are travelling:

"Now, now, yon height--/Come, let it not alarm: a mount/ Whereof I've taken strict account/Its first geologist, believe)/And, if my eyes do not deceive,/'Tis Jura limestone, every spur;/Yes, and through signs the rocks imprint/Which of Plutonic action hint/No track is found, I plump aver, Of Pluto's footings--Lucifer."
(II.xx.62-71)

Margoth has climbed these mountains, using footholds in the rock originally made by "eremites long centuries dead"; his Arab guide was carrying Biblical fragments to be "read before a learned board"; he himself was planning a "monograph" on the mountain's geology. As the party continues through the mountains, they pass ruins of past civilizations, and Melville, through his narrator, for a moment slips back into the "cosmic imagination" of Moby Dick, mixing geological knowledge with the fate of empires:

meaning of the poem on the wall. (I.xli.108-150).

"What breadth of doom/ As of the worlds in strata penned/So cosmic seems the wreck of Rome" (II.xx.37-39).

but this atmosphere is quickly dispelled by Margoth:

"Sirs, heed me:/This total tract,"/and Esau's hand/He waved: "the plain--the vale--
Lot's sea--/It needs we scientists remand/Back from old theologic myth/To
geologic hammers" (II.xx.45-50)

Later, the pilgrims find a long poetic inscription written in chalk on a rock, reminding that "Science lights but cannot warm", and asking "The atheist cycles--*must* they be?". After they animatedly discuss the possible authorship of the poem, Margoth lingers behind and scrawls his own inscription:

"I, Science, I whose gain's thy loss, I slanted thee, thou Slanting Cross"
(II.xxxii.102-103)

In another scene, as Rolfe and Derwent discuss evil in the world, they notice Margoth at work:

"It was the busy Jew/With chemic lamp aflame, by tent/Trying some shrewd
experiment/With minerals secured that day/Dead unctuous stones.?"Look how his
ray,"/ Said Rolfe, "too small for stars to heed./Strange lights him, reason's sorcerer/
Poor Simon Magus run to seed."

(II.xxxvii.71-79)

Margoth is only the main foil for discussions of positivistic science in Clarel. As the party approaches a church on Mt. Olivet, outside Jerusalem, Melville's narrator tells of its illustrious medieval visitors, and legends surrounding the church, and says:

"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 telescope/Can bit it unto prosing Science now."

(I.xxxvi.112-120)

In another passage, Melville's narrator asks:

"Science and Faith, can these unite?/ Or is that priestly instinct right (Right as
regards conserving still/The Church's reign) whose strenuous will/ Made Galileo
pale recite/ The Penitential Psalms in vest/ Of sackcloth; which to-day would
blight/ Those potent solvents late expressed/ In laboratories of the West?"

(III.v.64-73)

Finally, in the Epilogue, Melville brings these strands to a conclusion:

"If Luther's day expand to Darwin's year/ Shall that exclude the hope--foreclose the
fear?/...Yea, ape and angel, strife and old debate--/The harps of heaven and dreary

gongs of hell;/Science the feud can only aggravate--/No umpire she betwixt the
chimes and knell:/The running battle of the star and clod/ Shall run forever--if there
be no God."

(IV.xxxv/1-14)

But neither revolution nor science⁸⁰¹ exhaust the threat of secularism posed by many of Melville's pilgrims. Clarel presents an extensive view of rival theologies, and the threat to faith by rationalist compromise. The discussions show that Melville's reading in these areas was of the same breadth as his reading in mythology for Moby Dick. The appearance of the ultra-positivist figure of Margoth prompts a debate over secularizing trends in Judaism of real scope. The group wonders if Margoth's scientism is not a direct expression of his Jewishness, and turns to Anglican priest Derwent for clarification, but Derwent insists that only "preconceptions" lie beneath such a connection:

"For one, I deem/ Jew banker, merchant, statesman--these,/ with artist, actress
known to fame,/ All strenuous in each Gentile aim,/ Are Nature's off-hand
witnesses/ There's nothing mystic in her reign:/Your Jew's like wheat from
Pharaoh's tomb:/Sow it in England, what will come?/The weird old seed yields
market grain."⁸⁰²

(II.xxii.27-36)

Derwent argues that "Jews share the change" and involve themselves in "liberal sciences";

"From Holland, that historic home/ Of erudite Israel, many a tome/ Talmudic,
shipped is over sea/ For antiquarian rubbish."

(II.xxii.44-48)

But Rolfe, the intellectual, disagrees:

"Aaron's gemmed vest/ Will long outlive Genevan cloth--/ Nothing in time's old
camphor-chest/ So little subject to the moth.

⁸⁰¹-Significant asides on the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment rationalism turn up in different moments in Clarel. There is mention of Voltaire (p. 17), who has more followers than Christ (p. 470). The important figure of Volney, author of an important 18th century travel account, is cited. At one point in a debate with Derwent, Mortmain tells him (p. 300) that Shaftesbury had "cheerfulized Christ's moan", paving the way for Derwent's superficial modernist theology. It is Derwent who later (p. 361) quotes Bacon favorably. Rolfe says of Derwent "Who bold can harmonize for all/ Moses and Comte, Renan and Paul: 'Tis the robustious circus-man" (p. 343).

⁸⁰²-Note once again the seed imagery connected to pyramids, as at the end of "Bartleby".

(II.xxii.51-54)

"More than one bold freethinking Jew" is creating trouble for the rabbis. Rolfe mentions Uriel Acosta⁸⁰³, Heine, and the Alexandrian Jewish neo-Platonists who

"Sharing some doubts we moderns rue/
Would fain Eclectic comfort fold/
By grafting slips from Plato's palm/
On Moses' melancholy yew"
(II.xxii.79-83)

and says that "*we* seek balm by kindred graftings", as did the aforementioned Moses Mendelsohn. But all these figures do not explain the vulgar scientific materialism of Margoth, who is hardly a Spinozist:

"...He, poor sheep astray, /The Levitic cipher quite erased, /On what vile pig-weed
hath he grazed. /Not his Spinoza's starry brow / (A non-conformer, ye'll allow) / A
lion in brain, in life a lamb, / Sinless recluse of Amsterdam; / ... The erring twain,
Spinoza and poor Margoth here, / Both Jews, which in dissent do vary: / In these
what parted poles appear-- / The blind man and the visionary."
(II.xxii.112-118; 129-134)

The narrator asks if the geologist's hammer of Margoth is the "mace of Ivanhoe" and Rolfe comments that with

"Yon knightly hammer. 'Tis with that he stuns, and would exterminate your creeds
as dragons."

(II.xxiii.10-12)⁸⁰⁴

Thus, in this image of the dissolution of the medieval warrior class by the modern, and in this case by science, Melville shows a continuity with his oldest preoccupations with the pseudo-sacred.

But Melville is no more sanguine about Protestantism and Catholicism. To discuss the Reformation, he lets a French Dominican priest voice an analysis of the direct line from Luther to communism. The priest presents himself as a "Catholic Democrat", which provokes an indulgent smile from Derwent and

⁸⁰³-Uriel Acosta was a marrano and precursor of Spinoza in the Jewish community of Amsterdam. In 1656, the community pronounced anathema on him for his heretical views. A full account is G. Albiac, La sinagoga vacia. Un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo. Madrid, 1987.

⁸⁰⁴-Rolfe had earlier said: "Zion, like Rome, is Niebuhzized" (I.xxxiv.19). This reference to the liberal Protestant theology of the 19th century, as indicated, runs through Clarel as a theme.

incredulity from Rolfe. Derwent reminds the Dominican of the "rot of Rome in Luther's time, the canker spot". But the priest is a modernist:

"I'll not gainsay/ some things you put: I own the shame:/ Reform was needed, yes,
and came--/Reform within. But let that go--that era's gone: how fares it now?
Melancthon! was forecast by thee./ Who fain had tempered Luther's mind./ This
riot of reason set quite free:/Sects--sects bisected--sects disbanded/Into plain deists
underhanded?/ Against all this stands Rome's array: Rome is the Protestant today:/
The Red Republic slinging flame/ In Europe--she's your Scarlet Dame."
(II.xxv.98-112)

Rome, for the priest, is the barrier against barbarism. Anticipating objections, he insists that
"Deep below rigidities of form/The invisible nerves and tissues
change/Adaptively."

(II.xxv.137.139)

He foresees a coming chaos if Rome falls:

"If well ye wish to human kind/Be not so mad, unblest, and blind/ As...to try /to
pull down Rome./If Rome could fall/"Twould not be Rome alone, but all/ Religion.
All with Rome have tie./Even the railers which deny./All but the downright
Anarchist./Christ-hater, Red and Vitriolist./Could libertine dreams true hope
disable./Rome's tomb would prove Abaddon's⁸⁰⁵ cradle."
(II.xxv.175-184)

The priest leaves, and Margoth intervenes with a virulent polemic against Catholicism and Rome, "patcher of the rotten cloth":

"In Mexico/ Earthquakes lay flat your crucifix:/All, all's geology, I trow."

(II.xxvi.11-13)

Derwent, Rolfe and Clarel fall into discussion about the priest's Catholic modernist stance⁸⁰⁶, "this man who'd make our age to Hildebrand's⁸⁰⁷ an

⁸⁰⁵-In the apocalypse of John, a swarm of locusts had a king named Abaddon.

⁸⁰⁶-This term is used with reservation, as actual modernism did not become Church doctrine until the Papal Encyclical of 1893 "De Rerum Novarum". Nevertheless, the priest articulates a real anticipation of the latter doctrine.

⁸⁰⁷-Hildebrand was Pope (as Gregory VII) from 1073 to 1085 and launched the "investiture struggle" against Europe's kings, insisting on the church's right to appoint the top ecclesiastics of national churches.

appanage". Derwent is skeptical, saying that, in the contemporary era, it is "Much better to be a dove, and coo softly." Rome, in Rolfe's view, has the ability to

"stamp/ on the recruit that's framed aright,/the bearing of a Bayard knight/
ecclesiastic.

(II.xxvi.65-67)

again making the link between the warrior class and the sacred. But Derwent, the Anglican, warns that "Rome lacks not charm/For fervid souls", such as her "enticing arts". "Rome must still decay," he continues, despite "Her legends--some are sweet as May", which Protestants, influenced by "Luther's pride", have too long ignored. Nevertheless, "The bias of the days that be/ Away leans from Authority./And most when hierarchical". But Rolfe, the intellectual, points out (referring to 19th century developments such as the Catholic revival in England around Cardinal Newman) that

"...Rome subsists,/she lives to-day,/She re-affirms herself, her sway/Seductive
draws rich minds away"

II.xxvi.97-99)

But these are just isolated intellectuals and artists, insists Derwent:

"Such sheep and shepherds, let them go;/They are not legion: and you know/What
draws. Little imports it all/Overbalanced by that tidal fall/Of Rome in southern
Europe."

(II.xxvi.102-106)

Rolfe points to the resilience of the church after the fall of the Roman empire, when "Germany, Gaul and Britain, Spain--" were "Colonized, Latinized", but Derwent retorts:

"Centuries, centuries, long ago!/ What's that to us? I am surprised./Rome's guns are
spiked; and they'll stay so./The world is now too civilized/ for Rome. Your noble
Western soil--what! that be given up for spoil/To- to"

(II.xxvi.117-123)

Rolfe has the final word, which sounds right out of Dostoevsky's "Grand Inquisitor":

"And men/Get tired at last of being free--whether in states--in states or creeds. For
what's the sequel? Verily/Laws scribbled by law-breakers, creeds/Scrawled by the
freethinkers, and deeds/Shameful and shameless. Men get sick/Under that curse of
Frederic/ the cynical⁸⁰⁸: For punishment/ This rebel province I present/ To the

⁸⁰⁸-A reference to the 18th century Prussian enlightened despot Frederick

philosophers. But, how?/Whole nations now philosophize, and do their own undoing now.--/Who's gained by all the sacrifice/ Of Europe's revolutions? who?/The Protestant? the Liberal?/I do not think it--not at all:/Rome and the Atheist have gained/These two shall fight it out--these two;/Protestantism being retained/For base of operations sly/By Atheism."

(II.xxvi.127-147)

Even Greek Orthodoxy comes in for discussion in Melville's "comparative theology", heir to the comparative mythology of Moby Dick:

"...But Asiatic pomp adheres/ To ministry and ministers/ Of Basil's Church; that night 'twas seen/ In all that festival confers:/Plate of Byzantium, stones and spars/ Urim and Thummin, gold and green;/ Music like cymbals clashed in wars/ Of great Semiramis the queen./ And texts sonorous they intone/ From parchment, nor plebeian print;/ From old and golden parchment brown/ They voice the old Septuagint/ And Gospels, and Epistles, all/ In the same tongue employed by Paul."

(III.xviii.15-28)

In a conversation with Clarel, Rolfe presents his views of the Eastern Church. He describes the stampede of pilgrims to see Christ's tomb, echoing Melville's Journal⁸⁰⁹ description. On the Orthodox Easter, "all the friars, schismatic, with their pilgrim tribes, Levantine, Russian, heave their tides of uproar in among the shrines".

Neither "Dindymus' nor Brahma's crew/ Dream what these Christian fakirs do". But this "ancient sect, stately upholstered and bedecked" "prolongs in sacerdotal way/ The Lower Empire's bastard sway". Its ceremony and incense only conceal "orthodoxy petrified". Further, it is only the ideological extension of Russian absolutism:

"it grows but with/ Russia, and thence derives its pith./The Czar is its armed bishop"

(III.xvi.97-99)

Thus Eastern Orthodoxy is, like modernized Judaism, Protestantism and Catholicism, laid bare as compromised with the decadent present⁸¹⁰.

the Great, who had Voltaire at his court.

⁸⁰⁹-Melville, Journal..., pp. 147-148.

⁸¹⁰-Eastern Orthodoxy, with its large presence in the Holy Land, gets serious attention in Clarel. Twice scenes are interrupted by Orthodox funeral processions (p. 134-135, p. 517); the pilgrims meet a Syrian monk (p. 197); the party meets a bon vivant Cypriote singing Dionysian songs (p. 286ff); they subsequently meet another bon vivant from Lesbos (p. 326ff); the pagan elements of Orthodox ritual are compared, positively, with Polynesian culture (p. 344); a Greek abbot tells Derwent that the Roman Pope is a

One other passage on religion stands out, with no intrinsic relation to the specific theological discussions in Clarel, but more an echo of the "suprahistorical" consciousness that first surfaced in Mardi and was extended in some of the world historical sweep of Moby Dick. This is the passage on the Wandering Jew, which occurs while the pilgrims are still at the monastery of Mar Saba. Its main role in Clarel as a whole is to underscore in extreme form the wandering in the desert of the pilgrims, by one condemned to wander until the return of the messiah⁸¹¹. The wandering Jew is "cut off...made separate"; he languished three times for "sorcery" in the dungeons of the Spanish Inquisition, and was imprisoned in Venice as a "conspirator". It is hard to suppress a sense that Melville, "cut off" for twenty-five years himself, identifies with this cast-out consciousness, which pays homage to the cosmic king:

"Years, three-score years, seem much to men:
Three hundred-five-eight hundred then;
And add a thousand; these I know!
That eighth dim cycle of my woe,
The which, ahead, did so delay,
To me now seems but yesterday:
To Rome I wandered out of Spain,
And saw thy crowning, Charlemagne,
On Christmas eve. Is all but dream?"

(III.xix.118-126)

This survey of revolution, positivism and the compromises with modernity of Judaism and various strands of Christianity gives a fair initial indication of the ideological "desert", highlighted by the desert of the Wandering Jew, in which Clarel unfolds. The more or less relentless topography, echoing Melville's journal entries of twenty years before, is the "external" manifestation of this spiritual geography. Nothing could be farther from the cosmic imagination of Melville in

"Protestant, a Rationalist, a bigger Paine" (p. 368); one particularly saintly person encountered by Clarel is a Greek celibate raising doves at Mar Saba (p. 392); finally, there is the important figure Agath, the pilot, in Part Four. On various occasions, particularly through the characters of the Cypriote and the Lesbian, Orthodox figures serves to underscore the dourness of the main protagonists in their ongoing theological debates. Nevertheless, Melville is hardly singling out Orthodoxy as a potential solution for Clarel or anyone else.

⁸¹¹-The story of the Wandering Jew is the story of Cartaphilus, "a servant of Pilate, reputed to have given Jesus a blow as he was led out to execution; for this he received the sentence, "Thou shalt wander on the earth till I return." (Bezanson notes, p. 625) The full text of the Wandering Jew sequence is on pp. 349-354.

the South Seas⁸¹². The desert is, after all, the birthplace of imageless monotheism. But when one looks more closely, one sees that in fact Melville is commenting on the distance he has traveled from his earlier period, in a constant undercurrent of maritime references in dessicated desert settings, as well as reference to the "primitive". It is as if he is consciously drawing attention to the de-cosmized geographical context for the late 19th-century cultural desert he is crossing. Clarel is not Moby Dick, and does not pose the "supercession" at least implied in Moby Dick. Nevertheless, it constantly reminds the reader, to drive home the disillusioned shift, that the author also wrote Moby Dick and many other novels and short stories of the sea.

Clarel's inn in Jerusalem looks onto a pool of water, "as a three-decker's stern- lights peer/ down on the oily wake below"⁸¹³. Pilgrims on the coast are diverted by a storm to Tyre, the famous Biblical city:

"Toward Tyre they drive-- Tyre undiscerned/ A coast of wrecks which warping
bleach/On wrecks of piers where eagles screech"⁸¹⁴

Jerusalem is "where serial wrecks on wrecks confound/ Era and monument and man"⁸¹⁵. Clarel looking out over Jerusalem is "like ship-boy at mast-head alone". The pilgrims "of distance sad, penguins they seem/ Drawn up on Patagonian beach"⁸¹⁶. When Clarel asks Rolfe about the past of Nehemiah, the old American millenarian lost in his Biblical reveries, about the old man's past, Rolfe likens him in a story (which Melville had used in Moby Dick) to a New England captain who was twice sunk and had to become a night watchman, and became a strict Calvinist believing in predestination⁸¹⁷. The indifference of nature to evil is repeatedly emphasized: "and nature with her neutral mind/ a wreck"; "to nature nothing is amiss". The spears of some marauding bandits are "like dorsal fins of sharks". An Arab mounted on a camel was like "a wreck with gaunt mast"⁸¹⁸. A stray facial expression of Rolfe's is "the irrelation of a weed/ Detached from vast Sargossa's mead"⁸¹⁹.

⁸¹²-Nevertheless, in one dialogue, he does have Vine say "Tahiti should have been the place of Christ in advent." (Clarel, IV, xviii, 46-47). Melville had written in his Journal: "J.C. should have appeared in Tahiti". (quoted in Bezanson's notes. p. 639)

⁸¹³-Clarel, p. 7.

⁸¹⁴-ibid. p. 21.

⁸¹⁵-ibid. p. 32.

⁸¹⁶-ibid. p. 110.

⁸¹⁷-ibid. pp. 120-122.

⁸¹⁸-ibid. p. 182.

⁸¹⁹-ibid. pp. 196-197.

A similar description of the group of pilgrims in the monastery of Mar Saba conjurs up inverted imagery of the opening description of the slave ship in "Benito Cereno". The travel-weary pilgrims are

"As shipwrecked men adrift, whose boat/ In war-time on the houseless seas/ Draws nigh to some embattled hull/ With pinnacles and trceries--/Grim abbey on the wave afloat;/...And homely uniform of crew/ Peering from ports where cannon lean/ Or pacing in deep galleries far/Black cloisters of the god of war" (IV.vii.1-12)

And finally, when Agar, the mother of Clarel's "dark woman" Ruth, dies, she was "babbling of gulls and ocean wide".

What is striking about Melville's use of sea imagery in an epic poem entirely situated in the desert is that he no longer counterposes it in any way to the quiet desperation of the "damp grizzly November" in the soul of men "tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks" in the opening passage of Moby Dick. The sea in Clarel is mainly another site of desolation.

Almost as striking as the sea imagery are the references in Clarel to American wilderness landscapes and Indians. In Jerusalem, the votaries "creep/ like steps in Indian forests deep". As Clarel thinks about the synthesis of Greek and Hebrew in Western culture, it is called "a Pocahantas wedding/ Of contraries in old belief". When the key figure of Rolfe is introduced, he is likened to "a trapper or pioneer"; later, he sits "Indian like, in pliant way/ As if he were an Osage scout".⁸²⁰ Looking at a grim desert gorge, the narrator thinks it might once have been

"Like uplands in Vermont the green.../In time's first youth and pristine May/When here the hunter stood alone/Moccasined Nimrod, belted Boone"⁸²¹

Looking at another dessicated scene, the party remembers "the contrast of their vernal homes--/Field, orchard and the harvest cheer."⁸²² The pilgrims walk "in Indian file".

Yet unlike the primitive peoples in Typee, Omoo and Moby Dick, the Indian images in Clarel hint of no alternative reality. When given content, they mainly serve as analogies for marauding Arabs⁸²³.

⁸²⁰-ibid. p. 147.

⁸²¹-ibid. p. 280. On the other hand, Nathan, the American farmer converted to Judaism and Zionism, recalls his Puritan ancestors' attitudes, as he defends himself against Arab raids: "Himself and honest servants three/Armed husbandmen became, as erst/His sires in Pequod wilds immersed. Hittites--foes pestilent to God/His fathers old those Indians deemed: Nathan the Arabs here esteemed/The same..." (p. 65)

⁸²²-ibid. p. 291.

⁸²³-ibid. p. 236. Similarly (p. 65) the Zionist convert Nathan considers

How far Melville had evolved since the 1845-1851 period of his early sea novels is underscored in two key characters, the Greek pilot, Agath, and the Confederate veteran and half-Indian, Ungar. Their stories and their outlooks make it perfectly clear that anything associated with the primitive, as one might imagine from the Indian imagery just quoted, has receded for Melville as any kind of alternative.

Agath joins the pilgrims late in the poem. It is he who, upon sighting Jerusalem, the holy city, calls it "the wreck"⁸²⁴. He had in fact, in his seafaring days, been the sole survivor of a wreck. Later, traveling in the Holy Land, Agath had been robbed and badly beaten. He is so defeated by misfortune that he later screams in panic at the mere sight of a scorpion. Nevertheless, his story is capital for situating Clarel in Melville's work as a whole. Yet everything about Agath shows the studied downscaling of Melville's hopes in the 25 years that separate Clarel from Moby Dick. His tattoo of the Jerusalem cross is a symbol par excellence of the pseudo-sacred.⁸²⁵ (Nonetheless, the significance of that cross was such that Melville placed it on the covers of both volumes of the 1876 edition.)

Asked by the pilgrims if he has seen any land that compares with Judah, Agath tells them a story which further underscores how far the Pacific islands are from any utopia. He tells of "that isle which haunteth me", as Ishmael was haunted by the "green isle". But Agath's island is anything but paradise; it is in fact Narborough, a desolate island used by Melville in the fourth sketch of "The Encantadas". The island is "in waters where no charts avail"; it is "volcanic", and "streaked black and red"; "the beach is cinders". Walking inland in the desolate rocky landscape, the pilot found monstrous tortoises:

"White by their trunks--what hulks be these/Which, like old skulls of Anaks, are/Set round as in a Golgotha?"⁸²⁶

The tortoises reigned "a hundred years" in "hollow of white armor". Thus the island haunts the old sailor is a vision of dumb, desolate, antediluvian life, with the "white armor" of the ancient tortoise shells echoing his faded Templar tattoo. It is far from Polynesia. As if to underscore the parallel and discontinuity with Ishmael (and Melville's own youth) , Agath says:

"How like a flash that life is gone--/So brief the youth by sailors known!"⁸²⁷

A second figure who dashes any hope of a supercession by elements of the primitive is the half-Indian Ungar. His Grand Inquisitor-like tirade about the Paris

theArabs to be like the Indians.

824-*ibid.* p. 408.

825-On Agath's tattoo, cf. Ch. XIII above.

826-*ibid.* p. 416. Anaks are giants.

827-*ibid.* 414.

Commune has already been mentioned. He is called "a wandering Ishmael from the West"⁸²⁸, recalling both Moby Dick but also the original Ishmael, the Biblical cast out son of Hagar. Ungar's role in Clarel is not merely to sound the most extreme critiques of social utopia and progress in a world without God, but also to sound the death knell of the mystique of the New World, which was another element, part of the "Anacharsis Cloots delegation", of Melville's thought in the 1840's heyday of Young America. Ungar argues that in terms of failed experience of optimistic ideas of reform, America and not Europe is the Old World⁸²⁹. Listening to Ungar rail about the coming class war,

"They felt how far beyond the scope/Of elder Europe's saddest thought/ Might be the New World's sudden brought/In youth to share old age's pains--/To feel the arrest of hope's advance/And squandered last inheritance; And cry "To Terminus build fanes! Columbus ended earth's romance: No New World to mankind remains!"⁸³⁰

It is only too apparent that in a book of such desolate imagery, (even if it attempts to end in a religious affirmation), Melville gives full play to radical evil, above and beyond the landscape and events. In one philosophical discussion, evil takes the form of "hate which under life's fair hue/ Prowls like the shark in sunned Pacific blue"⁸³¹. Speaking of Mortmain, the bitter Swede turned reactionary, Rolfe says:

"most men somehow get used/To seeing evil, though not all/They see; 'tis sympathetic; But never are some disabused/Of first impressions which appal."
(II.xxxvii.56-60)

Judah's main ridge, "where Chaos holds the wilds in pawn", is a place where a battle between good and evil ended in a draw⁸³².

In one of the most crucial philosophical discussions of the book, the key protagonists discuss "Abel and Cain--/ Ormuzd locked with Ahriman"⁸³³, wondering if these forces "under other names live on". They take up the question of Gnosticism. Is it possible that the two Testaments are "transmitters of Chaldaic thought by implication"? With this is meant the watered-down, compromised

828-*ibid.* p. 441.

829-*ibid.* p. 474.

830-*ibid.* p. 484.

831-*ibid.* p. 263.

832-*ibid.* p. 278.

833-The latter two are the forces of good and evil which war in the universe, according to Zoroastrianism.

theology represented by the Anglican priest Derwent. Gnosticism may live on in "sects" (i.e. Protestant sects) in which

"there's dismissal civil, and Jesus is the indulgent God" (III.v.58-59)

and

"in her Protestant repose/Snores faith toward her mortal close?"(III.v.73-74)

These thoughts are presented in the context of a broader consideration of the impact of science which has already been treated. What Melville is driving at here is the idea that the modern Christianity (with Jesus "the indulgent God") which no longer insists on radical evil as a force to be combatted may be handing the world over to evil in the form of "dismissal civil". Although Transcendentalism, having in the interim receded in the crass materialism of the post-Civil War period, is no longer an issue in Clarel, Melville is continuing the same polemic against what is left of institutional religion in the age of Strauss⁸³⁴ and Renan⁸³⁵.

Islam as well comes in for consideration, although the Moslems who appear in Clarel are presented more as foils than as any alternative for the pilgrims. Orientalist motifs had all but disappeared from Melville's work after Moby Dick⁸³⁶. Nevertheless, like the Christian Middle Ages, the Moslems mainly illuminate the pilgrims' plight as "Calvinists without God", so to speak. They are not troubled by Voltairean afterthoughts or compromised rationalist theologies. They are presented mainly as counterparts to the throngs in Cairo's bazaar who are

"Unvexed by Europe's grieving doubt/Which asks *And can the Father be?*/These children of the climes devout/.../Happily ignorant, make glee/Like orphans in the playground walled."

(I.iii.134-140)

⁸³⁴-On Feb. 5, 1857, Melville had noted in his journal: "Heartily wish Niebuhr and Strauss to the dogs. The deuce take their penetration and acumen. They have robbed us of the bloom." (quoted in L. Roberston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 390.)

⁸³⁵-In this respect, the character of Ungar comes closest to advocating the centrality of radical evil: "While visibly the red blood shot/ Into his thin-skinned scar, and sent/As seemed, a pulse of argument/Confirming so some angry sense/Of evil and malevolence/In man toward man."(IV.xiii.225-230). Near the end of the pilgrimage, Clarel says "Ah! God, keep far from me/ Cursed Manes and the Manichee!" (IV.xxix.103-104).

⁸³⁶-A recent study, however, shows that Melville became increasingly interested in Buddhism in the last 15 years of his life, following the publication of Clarel. Cf. W.B. Dillingham, Melville and His Circle. The Last Years. Athens (Ga.) 1996, pp. 32-44.

They, like unreflective Christians, remind the pilgrims of inhabitants of Peking who did not know that the Tartars had taken the city, "so vast the town/the multitude, the maze, the din"⁸³⁷

Arabs and Turks are the main Moslems in Clarel. The constant references to the Crusades of course conjurs up the Arabs: the "Saracen shaft and Norman tower", Omar's conquest of Jerusalem, al-Hakim's destruction of a church in Hebron. But the most important "Oriental" figure in Clarel is Djalea, the Druze⁸³⁸ who commands the pilgrim escort. There is no Ahab present, and he is no Fedallah.

The Druze sect is a breakaway from orthodox Islam. The Druze have their origins in the Fatimid (Shi'ite) caliphate in Egypt in the 10th and 11th centuries, under the reign of al-Hakim. When al-Hakim, an eccentric but forceful ruler, disappeared mysteriously, in 1021, the Druze designated him as their occulted Imam who would reappear at the end of the cycle of prophecy. The Druze are a closed community which does not accept converts, and this exclusiveness, combined with an elaborate esoteric and secret doctrine, made them the object of Western Orientalist fascination in the 19th century. It is probable that the reasons for Melville's use of a Druze go no farther than this, and the fact that he himself had a Druze guide on his own trip. Nevertheless, Djalea is another foil to the earnest doubts and discussions of the pilgrims. He always maintained a "sedate" air; he was a son of the Emir who had been one of the few survivors of Mehmet Ali's massacre of the Janissaries in the Cairo citadel in 1811. During the pilgrims' long discussions, he serenely smokes his pipe, for "nor would he fall/ In waste of words, that waste of all."⁸³⁹ The Druze is presented by Clarel as an initiate into the esoteric doctrine of his sect, "not versed in potion mere, but total--Advanced in secrets sacerdotal"⁸⁴⁰. But when Clarel and Rolfe attempt to draw him out on Druze theology, on "degrees, orders, ascents of mysteries", the Druze merely puffed his pipe and said "There is no God but God". On another occasion, stretched out with the pipe, he is likened to the Cid⁸⁴¹.

A second Moslem figure who plays a similar, but distinctly lesser role, is the Arnaut, the Albanian giant who briefly joins the group as an escort. (He is drawn from real Albanian figures who were employed militarily throughout the Ottoman empire.) The Arnaut was a mercenary who had "bled for Sultan, won for Czar". The Arnaut has none of Djalea's serenity, but is portrayed as an unreflective man of action whose faith is unproblematic. When the Arnaut rides off alone, leaving the party,

837-*ibid.* p. 294.

838-The Druze is discussed in Finkelstein, *op. cit.* pp. 172-174.

839-Clarel, p. 295.

840-*ibid.* p.336.

841-*ibid.* p. 372.

"impatient stare/he random flung; then, like a breeze/Which fitful rushes through the glen/Over clansmen low--Prince Charlie's men--Shot down the ledges, while the clang/Of saber 'gainst the stirrup rang/And clinked the steel shoe on the stone."⁸⁴²

When the Arnaut fires a last shot in adieu, Clarel thinks:

"The rowel of thy spur/The robe rips of philosopher!/Naught reckest thou of wisest book:/The creeds thou starest down with a look./ And how the worse for such wild sense?/ And where is wisdom's recompense?"⁸⁴³

But all of these themes are, as it were, prelude, to the remarkable medievalism and the presence of the Knights Templar in Clarel, a presence so pervasive that it can hardly be called a leitmotiv, as it was in some of Melville's earlier works. This is all the more remarkable in that no character is directly associated with a "Templar viewpoint", and no one is presented, in contrast to Redburn or Pierre, as a disinherited descendant of military ancestors. Ungar, of course, is a Confederate veteran, and has seen war up close⁸⁴⁴, but his Dostoevskian visions of doom for "man without God" hardly qualify him as an embodiment of the pseudo-sacred (Transcendentalist, dandy or otherwise) as it has been traced through Melville's works.

The theme of the pseudo-sacred has been central to the entire analysis of Melville presented in this study. Its essential meaning is presented in the "standing of mast-heads" passage of Moby Dick, where neither Washington nor Napoleon nor Nelson will "answer a single hail from below, however madly invoked", with the Vendome tower as its concrete embodiment for Melville and for Marx. This deflation of modern charismatic figures is called the "pseudo-sacred" because, like the Western religions compromised with rationality discussed in Clarel, they must necessarily stand in contrast to the "sacred", cosmic kingship, in societies where cosmos has not yet been severed from mythos, the necessary presupposition for the "pharaoh with the feet of clay", the Napoleons and the Louis Napoleons. Melville, as was pointed out in the analyses of Redburn and Pierre, experienced the pseudo-sacred first of all in his own estrangement from the American Revolutionary tradition of his heroic grandfathers, then in his father the importer of French luxury goods, and thereafter proceeded to analyze it forwards and backwards with world-historical sweep. The archetype of the sacred, for the Melville of Moby Dick, was ancient Egypt⁸⁴⁵, and the prototype for cosmic kingship, in the more directly

⁸⁴²-ibid. p. 409.

⁸⁴³-ibid. p. 413.

⁸⁴⁴-Rolfe, however, at one point calls Ungar "Mars in funeral/Of reminiscence...'Tis an iron glove, An armed man in the Druid grove." (p. 466)

⁸⁴⁵-At one point in the pilgrim's debates, Rolfe hints at a possible link between Osiris and Christ (p. 105).

European tradition, was Charlemagne, who last appeared, in fragments, in The Confidence Man. All of these figures, it was argued, were exaggerated father imagos for Melville, against whom he hoped to form a positive self in rebellion, given the drastic failure of his real relationship to his own father. Further, it has been shown that these "fathers", the Charlemagnes, often blended into buildings, monuments and mountains, such as the pyramids in Moby Dick, the Mount of the Titans in Pierre, Petra and the New York Tombs in "Bartleby", and Mt. Greylock in Israel Potter and "The Piazza". But in Clarel, Napoleon, the paradigm of the pseudo-sacred, is absent, and Charlemagne as such has receded to a trace, whose coronation is recalled by the outcast Wandering Jew. So has the estrangement from the revolutionary era of the 18th century, as the latter had also receded. In turning away from the novel, and the problem of the character, for poetry, Melville had come to the end of Pierre's Titanism, so to speak; defeated in the public sphere of literature, he withdrew into 35 years of quiet but by no means second-rate work, including Clarel. The times had become far more extreme, as Melville portrays them through his major protagonists; Transcendentalism as an enemy was nothing compared to the spiritual desert of the 1870's, created (in Melville's terms) by science, positivism, tepid rationalist theologies and the revolutionary threat, a dissolution which Melville traced historically from Luther, Galileo, Voltaire and even further back from Alexandrian Jewish neo-Platonism. A world view that did not acknowledge radical evil was, for Melville, bankrupt; when the Transcendentalists faded away, Melville warred with the even more dangerous (to his view) palliatives that replaced them. Melville in Clarel is more detached from his protagonists than he had been in his novels; the distance from Redburn, Ishmael or Pierre to Clarel also marks the distance Melville had travelled from any earlier "Titanism". He lets important figures such as Rolfe, Vine, Ungar and Mortmain articulate parts of his own views, and at other times expresses himself through his unidentified narrator. Father associations with buildings, monuments and mountains from earlier works have been transformed in Clarel into fragments, that is into stones⁸⁴⁶. This does not mean that Melville has succeeded in the revolt

⁸⁴⁶-There are in fact important references to monuments, buildings in Clarel, but they receded by comparison with the emphasis on the barren, stony desert, as perhaps captured best by Agath's story of the "island that haunteth me". Derwent (pp. 247) does tell of Burckhardt's discovery of Petra; the narrator has an aside on Piranesi, one of Melville's favorite artists, in whose prints there "interiors measurelessly strange...Stairs upon stairs which dim ascend/In series from plunged Bastilles drear..." (pp. 260-261); perhaps most interestingly, Nathan, the American Protestant who converted to Judaism and went to the Holy Land with his family as a Zionist saw the famous Indian mounds on the prairie from his house: "Three Indian mounds/ Against the horizon's level bounds/ Dim showed across the prairie green/Like dwarfed and blunted mimic shapes/Of pyramids at distance seen/From the broad Delta's vernal capes..." (p. 58). But none of these buildings play the central role they have in Melville's earlier works, culminating in the "Wall Street Petra" of "Bartleby".

signaled in Pierre; it merely means he has transposed the terms, and that he does not negate any more. As Clarel approaches the Jerusalem leper colony, where "stone huts face the stony wall",

"That lava glen in Luna's sphere/
More lone than any earthly one--/
Whereto they Tycho's name have given/
Not more from visitant is riven/
Than this stone lane."
(I.xxv.11-15)

Many landscapes are pervaded with stones⁸⁴⁷. The aged millenarian Nehemiah's remoteness from reality is underscored in a scene where he starts clearing stones from the desert⁸⁴⁸. A ridge "by its dead Medusa stare/
Petrific o'er the valley thrown/
Congeals Arabia into stone."⁸⁴⁹

Into the void left by the crumbling of Melville's heroes of negation, collective or individual, moves the late Melville's initially startling medievalism. The pseudo-sacred for Pierre was the memory of his famous grandfather, the general; in Clarel, the pseudo-sacred is a faded tattoo of a Jerusalem cross on the arm of an old sailor who acquired it in a distracted moment in the South Seas. The partly-favorable portrait of Roman Catholicism in Clarel is not that of a potential convert ; Melville's preoccupation with radical evil left him in the orbit of Calvinism to the end. One might associate the new consideration for Catholicism (largely unmentioned in his earlier works⁸⁵⁰) with a general post-1850 mood among certain Anglophone intellectuals and artists such as the pre-Raphaelites, the Oxford movement, or Gerard Manley Hopkins, or even the softening of a Mathew Arnold toward the Church, in which the backlash⁸⁵¹ against the extreme barren cultural climate described in Clarel made the Church more respectable than it had been in the era of militant Enlightenment and the unabashed positivism and utilitarianism⁸⁵² that succeeded it. But the problem goes much deeper than that. Once Melville had settled his accounts with negation⁸⁵³, and his analysis of the

847-*ibid.* p. 170.

848-*ibid.* p. 175.

849-*ibid.* p. 280.

850-It will be recalled that The Confidence Man (1857) was dedicated to "victims of auto da fe".

851-In a discussion between Rolfe and Derwent after the encounter with the Dominican, Rolfe alludes to this phenomenon: "But Rome subsists. she lives to-day./She re-affirms herself, her sway/Seductive draws rich minds away;/Some pastures, too, yield many a rover: sheep, sheep and shepherd coming over." (p. 232)

852-In the final scene, Clarel says to himself: "They wire the world--far under sea/ They talk; but never comes to me/A message from beneath the stone." (p. 522)

853-Celio, a secondary character whose doubts seriously trouble Clarel,

pseudo- sacred, his problematic led him to a post-Enlightenment view of Western history, if indeed the protagonist of the "antemosaic cosmic man" in Moby Dick was any closer to the Enlightenment.

This medieval substratum of Clarel is no mere local color, largely extraneous to the poem. Melville is no nostalgic for the Christian Middle Ages, but their presence in his epic is to underscore the gap separating them from the world of positivism, science, pallid liberal theology, Darwin, and revolution from which he is in recoil. Following a conversation among Clarel, Vine and Rolfe, in which Rolfe had insisted that "Zion, like Rome, in Niebuhrized"⁸⁵⁴, the narrator in an aside tells a story illustrating what faith meant in medieval times. It is the story of Arculf, an 8th century French bishop who was shipwrecked in the Scottish Hebrides while returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and Adamnan, the abbot of St. Columba, who received him⁸⁵⁵. It was Christmas, and there was a great storm. As "the Pictish storm-king sang refrain", Arculf told Adamnan and the assembled company what he had seen in the Holy Land. The abbot was so enthralled that he

"fervid snatched the palmer's hand--/ clung to it like a very child/ Thrilled by some wondrous story wild/Of elf or fay, nor could command/His eyes to quit their gaze at him--/Him who had seen it."

(I.xxxvi.102-108)

This, for Melville's narrator, was what faith was all about. And this is what he contrasts to the present, in the passage quoted earlier:

"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's Galileo's telescope/ Can bit it unto prosing Science now."

(I.xxxvi.112-117)

With these scenes, we are confronted, once again, with the pseudo-sacred. But the pseudo-sacred in Clarel is notably different from its appearance in Melville's earlier works. Some of the old symbols remain: several dandies, and their "coxcombery", appear as secondary characters⁸⁵⁶. But Melville's earlier

said: "still I yearn...Some other world to find. But where? In creed? I do not find it there. That said, and is the emprise o'er? Negation, is there nothing more?" (p. 40)

⁸⁵⁴-ibid. p. 112.

⁸⁵⁵-Melville's sources for this story are given in Bezanson's explanatory notes to Clarel, pp. 582-583. The narrator's story itself is on pp. 114-117.

⁸⁵⁶-These are Glaucon, the prospective son-in-law of the Thessalonica banker; the salesman from Lesbos; and the French Jew from Lyon. These characters mainly serve as counter-point to the severity of the main protagonists and are not central to the pseudo-sacred in the poem.

emphasis on clothing, (carried to its extreme in The Confidence Man), or the foppery described in the New York literary scene, has largely abated in this much more austere setting. What remains in full are the classical Melvillian symbols of deflated grandeur. The "Garden of King Solomon" is "now a cauliflower bed". "Tourists replace the pilgrims" in Jerusalem. Cosmic kingship has been replaced by "King Common-Place". According to Margoth, the entire Holy Land "needs we scientists remand/ Back from old theologic myth/ To geologic hammers". The palm previously given to St. Teresa now goes to Leopardi⁸⁵⁷. An ass drinks from the holy water at a shrine. The Roman ritual of the Eucharist has become "theatric and a form"⁸⁵⁸. Perhaps most telling and Melvillian of all, the militant defenders of "Faith" against Science remind Rolfe of "old tactics brave--/Imposing front of false defiance:"

The King a corpse in armor led
On a live horse.

(III.xvi.211-212)

This image might have appeared in any of Melville's works, from the beginning.⁸⁵⁹ In Clarel, Melville laid to rest every shibboleth of the modern 19th century world: science, positivism, liberal theology, and revolution. The book ends with Clarel saying "They wire the world-- Far under sea/They talk; but never comes to me/A message from beneath the stone." That was in all likelihood Melville's own attitude, pretty much as Hawthorne had described him 20 years earlier. The working class had become for him nothing more than a red spectre on the horizon, in contrast to the vivid detail on class and labor with which he filled his early books of the sea. In the deepening pessimism that drew him to Schopenhauer and Buddhism, he withdrew more and more into his own thought world. The sweep of Clarel, however, is as vast as that of Moby Dick, in that Melville shows an awareness of a remarkable array of intellectual, scientific, and religious currents afoot in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In his remaining years, he was still able to produce one last statement on the problematic of his 1845-1851 period, but in a very different vein.

⁸⁵⁷-Clarel, p. 277. Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), was a deeply pessimistic Italian poet, who later influenced Nietzsche.

⁸⁵⁸-*ibid.* p. 463.

⁸⁵⁹-*Cf.* the earlier Ch. XIII on the pseudo-sacred.

Ch. XIX: The Ambiguous Return of the Antemosaic Cosmic Man: Billy Budd

"...(Queequeg) don't know what to make of the doubloon; he takes it for a button off some king's trowsers."

Moby Dick

"It is Nature. But do these buttons we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King."

Captain Vere
Billy Budd

The novella Billy Budd was left in much-revised manuscript form at the time of Melville's death in 1891, and was only published in 1924. In this work, Melville circles back to the themes of authority and collective rebellion of his first (1845-1851) period. In that period leading up to Moby Dick, as well as in the 1851-1856 period of Pierre (the "angel of negation"), and its aftermath, Melville was posing the question of revolt from the vantage point of the son vis à vis the absent father, attempting to unravel the mummy in the search for a positive self. That revolt failed. After The Confidence Man, Melville turned away from fiction toward poetry, to repose all the terms. With the exception of a few short sketches, Billy Budd was the only sustained attempt at fiction of the 1856-1891 period. But in it, negation has disappeared. In all of Melville's novels up through Moby Dick, there is ambivalent rebellion and mutiny of one kind or another, to which Melville's narrators and middle-class protagonists have to relate themselves. In the 1851-1856 period, rebellion becomes increasingly individual, with the exception of the "off stage" mutiny in "Benito Cereno", while Melville devotes his major energies to the critique of the Transcendentalist "beautiful soul" (schöne Seele), again through middle class narrators. In Clarel, Melville changes the terms to arrive at a lukewarm assertion of faith in the symbolic desert of late 19th-century culture, set in a literal desert. But negation is left, in different forms, to the unresolved quest of Clarel, the almost cameo appearance of Celio, to the repellent positivist geologist Margoth, the ex-revolutionary Mortmain, and the ex-Confederate officier Ungar, and God, not the fusion of Ishmael and Queequeg, is presented as the only hope of supercession. In Billy Budd, Melville returns one last time to the sea, and to the theme of mutiny.

During the last years of his life, when he was writing and revising Billy Budd, Melville had a slip of paper pasted to his desk which read: "Keep true to the dreams of thy youth."⁸⁶⁰ Melville does return in Billy Budd to the epoch of the

⁸⁶⁰-From Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle

French and American Revolutions, setting the story in the British navy in 1797, in the early phase of the revolutionary wars. But unlike the use of, or references to, that epoch in Redburn, Pierre, or Israel Potter, Melville in Billy Budd is no longer attempting to measure the abyss separating the mid- or late-century bourgeois rebel from the tradition of bourgeois revolutions. The only bourgeois character of any importance in Billy Budd is Captain Vere, who hangs Billy, and who is ideologically in the orbit of Edmund Burke. (Another bourgeois viewpoint is that of the obtuse narrator.) In Billy Budd, all middle-class "mediation" between the mutinous maritime proletariat and bourgeois authority disappears. Mutiny, once again, was ambiguously present in all the works of the early Melville; it is related in retrospect in "Benito Cereno", and it is in the immediate backdrop of Billy Budd, which unfolds just after the Great (also known as the Nore) Mutiny had swept the British Navy in April 1797, the latter being put down only with much difficulty, after deeply frightening the established powers. Thus, as in "Benito Cereno", the only mass rebellion in Billy Budd takes place in the past, except for a mutinous murmur by the crew following Billy's execution. It is not that Melville is preaching, or commenting on, peace between the classes; all figures of authority act to avert the seeming dire threat of rebellion as they perceive it, and after his death Billy becomes a legendary martyr and folk hero of the sailors. It is simply that no revolt, beyond a murmur, actually takes place, either by the unjustly condemned Billy Budd or by his shipmates. Middle-class revolt had moved with Melville from Ishmael and Pierre through the blankness of Bartleby to the vague Angst of Clarel; in Billy Budd it simply disappears. But it does not disappear to give way, at last, to a clear "class against class" analysis. The Melville who wrote Billy Budd does not like authority any more than the Melville of White-Jacket. If the book does not identify any real potential in the crew for a different kind of order, it is nonetheless a condemnation of the hollowness of the dominant order. In fact, all the elements of Melville's early sea novels return, including the identification of Billy with the "Anacharis Cloots delegation" and with "Queequeg".

It has been pointed out on several occasions that there is much biographical backdrop to Billy Budd⁸⁶¹. As was seen in the analysis of White-Jacket presented earlier⁸⁶², Melville's cousin Guert Gansevoort played a role in the suppression of the supposed mutinous conspiracy on the U.S.S. Somers in 1842, quite similar to that of the officers in Billy Budd. It largely ruined his life. There is much in Captain Vere's legal argumentation for the death penalty in Billy Budd that echoes the formalist legal thought of Melville's father-in-law, Massachusetts Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, who had died in 1861. But tragedy even closer to home had intervened in Melville's later years, in the probable suicide of his son Malcolm in 1867 and in the lonely death in a San Francisco hospital of his wayward son

(1954), quoted in W.D. Dillingham, op. cit. p. 54.

⁸⁶¹-Rogin, op. cit. pp. 294ff; Robertston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 585.

⁸⁶²-Cf. above Ch. XI, section d.

Stanwix, age 35, in 1886⁸⁶³. However shaky Melville's relationship to fatherhood, (given the extreme ambiguities of his experience with his own father) may have been, these events must have had some effect in pushing him beyond the role of the "fatherless son" analyzed earlier. While a purely psychoanalytic interpretation of Billy Budd is not very interesting, given the explosive social material it presents, this dimension can hardly be overlooked.

Finally, Melville's general world view had congealed, over the last 35 years of his life, into an increasingly aesthetic pessimism, withdrawn from virtually all but perfunctory social contact and his equally perfunctory marriage⁸⁶⁴. His interests turned increasingly in the direction of poets such as Leopardi, philosophers such as Schopenhauer, and to a detailed study of Buddhism⁸⁶⁵, a variation of the kind of "Orientalism" which was attacked in Moby Dick.

Yet at the same time, one finds in Billy Budd many of the elements of Melville's classic of some four decades earlier. On the first page, even before Billy Budd is introduced, Melville presents the idea of the "Handsome Sailor", a "superior figure" of his own class, already cosmic, moving in a group of sailors on the waterfront "like Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation". Queequeg himself could hardly improve upon the example given:

"In Liverpool...I saw...a common sailor so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterate blood of Ham--a symmetric figure much above the average height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest, in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Highland bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head. It was a hot noon in July; and his face, lustrous with perspiration, beamed with barbaric good humor. In jovial sallies right and left, his white teeth flashing into view, he rollicked along, the center of a company of his shipmates. These were made up of such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Cloots before the bar of the French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race. At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod of a fellow...the motley retinue showed that they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull when the faithful prostrated themselves."⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶³-The most persuasive attempt to connect Billy Budd to Melvillian "family politics" is in Rogin, op. cit. pp. 288-316.

⁸⁶⁴-Melville's wife Elizabeth seriously considered leaving him in the late 1860's, but decided to stay. Cf. Robertson-Lorant, op. cit. pp. 505-509.

⁸⁶⁵-Cf. W.D. Dillingham, op. cit. 1996. Ch. 2.

⁸⁶⁶-Billy Budd, Library of America, 1984, p. 1353.

Such a figure, more generally, was a "nautical Murat"⁸⁶⁷. He was "strength and beauty"; aloft in a storm, he was "very much in the attitude of young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus". And Billy Budd was also one of these semi-divine figures. Thus Melville again situates the reader in a web of historical references (although not so effusive as in his early work), making Billy akin both to his African counterpart and locating him in the worldwide class of "mariners, castaways and renegades", (as he put it in *Moby Dick*), the world proletariat⁸⁶⁸.

In 1797 the British Navy was desperate for hands and forcible impressment of all kinds was a major way of obtaining them, and thus Billy, on a homeward bound merchant voyage, was impressed onto the outward-bound H.M.S. *Bellipotent*. The merchantman from which Billy was impressed was named the *Rights-of-Man*, because

"...The hardheaded Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine, whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere. In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary ship-owner, Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, whose sympathies, alike with his native land and its liberal philosophers, he evinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot, and so forth."⁸⁶⁹

Billy, in leaving his merchant ship for a British warship, was leaving the world of the revolutionary Enlightenment for the world of Edmund Burke. What is at stake in this transfer of this semi-divine "Apollo with his portmanteau" is the question of kingship:

"His Majesty...will be delighted to learn that *one* shipmaster at least cheerfully surrenders to the King the flower of his flock..."⁸⁷⁰

In the opening pages, then, Melville has reintroduced many of the elements of *Moby Dick*: he has arrayed kingship against a "cosmic man", an outstanding figure (like Queequeg) of the Anacharsis Cloots deputation, in the midst of an international revolutionary crisis. Momentarily, he will show that kingship, as before, to be cosmic in origin.

⁸⁶⁷-Murat was Napoleon's greatest general.

⁸⁶⁸-There are other curious allusions to *Moby Dick* in *Billy Budd*. In explaining the concept of the "Handsome Sailor", Melville describes a similar, antecedent figure, the "Billy-be-Dam" of the Erie Canal (p. 1354). In "The Town-Ho's Story", describing the mutiny of Steelkilt, Ishmael had told his listeners of the "Canallers", "your true Ashantee". (*MD*, p. 255), essentially the same phenomenon.

⁸⁶⁹-*ibid.* p. 1358.

⁸⁷⁰-*ibid.* p. 1357.

Billy Budd is virtually a prelapsarian Adam. In addition to his Apollo-like physique and bearing, he is innocence personified. The captain of the *Rights-of-Man* bitterly regretted losing such a "peacemaker" among his crew. Billy was virtually androgynous:

"a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face all but feminine in purity of natural complexion"⁸⁷¹

"(his) position...was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court"⁸⁷²

His Adamic character is heightened by his ignorance of his origins; he is a foundling. He was unacquainted with "the wisdom of the serpent"; he was no more self-conscious "than we may reasonably impute to a dog of St. Bernard's breed". His one flaw, slipped in as the "little card" of that "arch interfeerer, the envious marplot of Eden", was a tendency to be struck speechless in moments of great stress.

Melville's narrator notes the extremely tense situation in the fleet at the time of Billy's impressment, as the Nore Mutiny of April 1797 had been to England "what a strike in the fire brigade would be to London threatened by general arson". The narrator uses Burkean tones in describing the revolt:

"the blue jackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with huzzas the British colors with the union and the cross wiped out, transmitting the flag of founded law and freedom defined, into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt"⁸⁷³

The "reasonable discontent" over "practical grievances" had been "ignited into "irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames". Historians of Britain's "grand naval story" have turned the Nore Mutiny into a passing reference, as a "well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family"⁸⁷⁴. (The evident squeamishness about

⁸⁷¹-ibid. p. 1359.

⁸⁷²ibid. p. 1360.

⁸⁷³-ibid. p. 1364.

⁸⁷⁴-The latter formulation by Melville strengthens the attempts of writers such as Rogin to see "family politics", above all the involvement of Guert Gansevoort in the *Somers* incident, as central to Billy Budd; without wanting to slight the importance of this approach, the analysis presented here looks elsewhere.

mass rebellion in this presentation is that of Melville's narrator, not of Melville, as a preparation for the defense of "glory" which is to follow.)⁸⁷⁵

The revolt of the "Red Flag" had temporarily made a mockery of "the patriotic devotion of the British tar: 'And as for my life, 'tis the King's!'⁸⁷⁶ but had been overcome and some of the same sailors went on to "win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile" and "the naval crown of crowns...at Trafalgar".

Having set this stage of class war, more evocative of the radical social dimension of 1789-1815 than anything in his work, Melville introduces the pseudo-sacred, centered on Admiral Nelson. In a "bypath", his narrator points out (looking back, it will be recalled, almost a century) how modern technology has changed naval warfare as much as the introduction of gunpowder:

"The first European firearm, a clumsy contrivance, was...scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight. But as ashore knightly valor, though shorn of its blazonry, did not cease with the knights"⁸⁷⁷

the disappearance of wooden ships has not entirely effaced:

"the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Doria, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British admirals, and the American Decatur of 1812"⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁵-In the notes to the Library of America (1984) edition of *Billy Budd*, the notes by Harrison Hayford provide an important clue (pp. 1476-1477) to Melville's own view of the historical situation of 1797 and of his narrator's outlook. Hayford reprints a passage which Melville had apparently deleted in a late revision. It includes an assessment of the 1797 context more favorable to the French Revolution than anything in the final version. Talking of the entire 1789-1815 period, it reads: "Nor during those years could the wisest have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what apparently it has turned out to be, a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans." By suppressing that passage and letting stand the earlier, more squeamish assessment of the narrator (e.g. "England's straits at the time confronted by those wars which like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the dink and dust of the fallen Bastille", pp. 1374-1375) Melville is making his narrator more unequivocally "Burkean" and more clearly undermining him.

⁸⁷⁶-*ibid.*

⁸⁷⁷-*ibid.* p. 1365.

⁸⁷⁸-*ibid.* pp. 1365-1366. All the names mentioned with the exception of Decatur were great naval commanders of the 16th and 17th century, in the wars of absolutism.

With this preface, Melville is setting the stage for an extended exploration of the pseudo-sacred. He has already introduced the by-now familiar "standard" of the knight, followed by the great naval figures of early modern absolutism, whose "valor...did not cease" completely with the coming of modern mechanized warfare, "the Monitors and yet mightier hulks of the European ironclads". It must be kept in mind that it is not Melville, but Melville's narrator, (who has already shown his befuddled optic in his discussion of the Nore mutiny) who is attempting to salvage a meaning for glory in the present⁸⁷⁹.

The narrator focuses on "one solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's *Victory*", as his appropriate symbol. It not only stands for "fame incorruptible" but as a "poetic reproach" , with its "picturesqueness"⁸⁸⁰, to modern battleships. Some people sensitive to such an approach, the narrator says, may still point out that Nelson, for glory, exposed himself unnecessarily at Trafalgar. They will argue this

"...to the extent of iconoclasm, if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the *Victory* 's quarter-deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only necessary, but not military, nay, savored of foolhardiness and vanity."⁸⁸¹

The star "designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell"⁸⁸² is one of Melville's more striking examples of the pseudo-sacred, as he is undermining the perspective of his reverent narrator, and the latter's criticism of the "Benthamites of war". The narrator is quick to point out that "glory", not personal prudence, is the first military virtue. Nelson before Trafalgar made out his will and dressed "his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds". If this, as the Benthamites say,

⁸⁷⁹-It should also be remembered that it was Nelson, along with Washington and Napoleon, who would not "answer a single hail from below" in the "standing of mast-heads" passage of *Moby Dick*, and it was the statue of Nelson, surrounded by sculptures of naked figures in chains, which prompted Redburn into a meditation on slavery. Nelson throughout Melville's work is second only to Napoleon as a figure of the pseudo-sacred. Melville's early plan for *Billy Budd* was to give Nelson greater prominence but "the more the character of Captain Vere evolved, the less he resembled Admiral Nelson and the more he resembled Edmund Burke..." (Robertson-Lorant, op. cit. p. 588)

⁸⁸⁰-Given Melville's critique of the "picturesque" in works such as "The Piazza", such language already signals his distance from his narrator.

⁸⁸¹-ibid. p. 1366.

⁸⁸²-In *Moby Dick*, Melville had already mentioned "that silver plate now inserted into the *Victory*'s plank where Nelson fell". (p. 41)

"were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian is each more heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts".⁸⁸³

Yet much of Melville's work is about exactly the "affectation and fustian" of symbols of past glory in the modern world. In this passage, equal in its import to the "mast-heads" passage of *Moby Dick* or the Memnon stone in *Pierre*, Melville is agreeing neither with the gullible narrator nor with the "Benthamites", but underscoring the absurdity of linking "poetry" to the kind of military glory with which he was trying to settle accounts all his life.

After the defeat of the Nore mutiny, Nelson was given command of a ship which had participated, not to bring about "base subjection", but in the hopes that his "heroic personality" could win them back. Nevertheless, on occasion

"the lieutenant assigned to batteries felt it incumbent on them, in some instances, to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns."⁸⁸⁴

Having portrayed this volatile context, Melville then turns to the specific character of the pseudo-sacred as it presents itself in the *Bellipotent's* Captain Vere. Vere was a "sailor of distinction" of much experience, "intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so". Given his "unobtrusiveness of manner" someone seeing Vere out of uniform

"might have taken him for the King's guest, a civilian aboard the King's ship, some highly honorable discreet envoy on his way to an important post"⁸⁸⁵

Thus "the King" is strongly present in Vere's persona, a man "who whatever his sterling qualities was without any brilliant ones", and to underscore a semi-mocking element of cosmic kingship, he is known as "Starry Vere", after an ancestor, "a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century" mentioned in a poem by the 17th century metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell. Thus Melville has not merely contrasted modern warfare with that of early modern times, explored the embodiment of the pseudo-sacred in the preserved hull of Nelson's *Victory*, but he is giving to his captain the same past as his own and *Pierre's*, that of illustrious military ancestors.

But Vere was more than just an accomplished naval officer. He leaned "toward everything intellectual", always taking a "replenished library" to sea. He had "nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle",

⁸⁸³-ibid. p. 1367.

⁸⁸⁴-ibid. 1368.

⁸⁸⁵-ibid. p. 1369.

but read

"books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era--history, biography, and unconventional writers like Montaigne who, free from cant and convention, honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities."⁸⁸⁶

And, again, the Burkean element:

"His settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them not alone because they seemed to him unsusceptible of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind."⁸⁸⁷

To his officers, Vere seemed "a dry and bookish gentleman", "lacking in the companionable quality", somewhat as Ahab had lacked "the low enjoying power". He embodied the pseudo-sacred: Vere's "queer streak of the pedantic" was "like the King's yarn in a coil of navy rope". He did not exactly suffer from Ahab's "Guinea coast of solitary command" but, lacking the "jocosely familiar",

"he would be as apt to cite some historic character or incident of antiquity as he would be to cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions, however pertinent they might be, were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to journals."⁸⁸⁸

The third major protagonist, in this microcosm of a "cosmic king" and a "cosmic man" is the embodiment of radical evil, the master-at-arms John Claggart. Claggart is also given a mytho-historical pedigree: a "notable" face,

"the features all except the chin cut as those on a Greek medallion; yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's...recalled the prints of the Reverend Titus Oates, the historic deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot."⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁶-ibid. p. 1371.

⁸⁸⁷-ibid.

⁸⁸⁸-ibid. p. 1372.

⁸⁸⁹-ibid. p. 1373. "Titus Oates (1649-1705) was the English Protestant clergyman who fabricated the details of the Popish Plot in 1678 in order to stir up animosity against Roman Catholics. Incredibly, he charged that an insurrection was being planned whereby Charles II would be assassinated and his Roman Catholic brother James, duke of York, would become king of

Claggart looked like someone of "more than average intellect", but his complexion "seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood". But the most important aspect of Claggart was his unknown past, parallel to Billy's status as a "foundling":

"Among certain grizzled sea gossips of the gun decks and forecandle went a rumor perdue that the master-at-arms was a *chevalier* who had volunteered into the King's navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's Bench".⁸⁹⁰

Thus Claggart is linked in various ways, all innuendo, to knighthood, to the "King's navy" and the "King's Bench", as Vere is linked to "King's yarn". The speculation around Claggart's past comes back again to the same theme:

"Insolvent debtors of minor grade...found in the navy a convenient and secure refuge, secure because, once enlisted aboard a King's ship, they were as much in sanctuary as the transgressor of the Middle Ages harboring himself under the shadow of the altar."⁸⁹¹

The squeamishness of Melville's "Burkean" narrator is again revealed in his review of the possible dubious ways that Claggart might have entered the navy during the international revolutionary crisis. If true,

"how significant would it be of England's straits at the time confronted by those wars which like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the din and dust of the Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it, and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us graybeards, the more thoughtful of them, the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoen's Spirit of the Cape, an eclipsing menace mysterious and prodigious. Nor America was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests, there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill who looked forward to the possibility

England, which would be turned over to the Jesuits. Afraid in the extreme of usurpation and rebellion, those from the king on down believed Oates and executed a number of people charged in the supposed scheme. Not until after the death of these innocent people was Oates seen to be a liar." (in W.B. Gillingham, *Melville's Later Novels*, Athens (Ga.) 1986, pp. 394-395. Thus Melville uses an apt historical analogy for Claggart's actual role in *Billy Budd*, further underscoring the centrality of kingship in the novella.

⁸⁹⁰-*Billy Budd*, p. 1373.

⁸⁹¹-*ibid.* p. 1374. The reverberations of such a metaphor are numerous, but two images from Melville's work that immediately come to mind are the Templar retreat in *Israel Potter* and the monastery imagery of the Spanish slave ship in "Benito Cereno".

that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this French portentous upstart from the revolutionary chaos who seemed in act of fulfilling judgement prefigured in the Apocalypse."⁸⁹²

Here, in conveying the tenor of the world epoch in which he has situated his story, filtered through the anxieties of his narrator, Melville introduces references from both heroic epic and from the Bible. As with the historical situation of Claggart, he is indicating the world historical and mythical dimensions of his story, similar in certain ways to Moby Dick, as he also indicates his narrator's generally conservative outlook.

The antagonism between Claggart and Billy Budd is metaphysical, and Biblical, an almost Miltonian struggle between radical evil and innocence. They are hardly characters in the novelistic sense. They seem to act out a preordained fate. The narrator points out that Claggart's antipathy for Budd cannot be understood in normal psychological terms but only by crossing "the deadly space between". Through his narrator, Melville portrays this "deadly space" in Calvinist terms:

"Now something such an one was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short 'a depravity according to nature'"⁸⁹³
It is not that Melville himself is promoting a Calvinist view of man's fall; it is his befuddled narrator who says that "if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men."

"Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health, and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these went along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of the serpent....With no power to annul the elemental evil in him, though readily enough he could hide it; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; a nature like Claggart's, surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it."⁸⁹⁴

Billy is incapable of grasping these sources of Claggart's antipathy, lacking

⁸⁹²-p. 1375. Jack Chase, the captain of the main top of White Jacket, to whom Melville dedicated Billy Budd, was given to extended quotations from Camoens' Lusiads in the original Portuguese.

⁸⁹³-Billy Budd, pp. 1383-1384.

⁸⁹⁴-ibid. p. 1385.

"that sort of sensitive spiritual organization which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign".⁸⁹⁵

When Claggart spins his web of entrapment around Billy and tells Captain Vere that Budd is a potential mutineer, Vere recalls the ship's good fortune in impressing

"such a fine specimen of the *genus homo*, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall."⁸⁹⁶

For Vere, Billy Budd had been a "King's bargain". After Claggart told Vere of the fabricated plot, Claggart had

"a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph."⁸⁹⁷

Vere confronts accuser and accused in his cabin to find out the truth. The Calvinist radical evil imputed to Claggart merges with the animal world in a way reminiscent of Moby Dick:

"...the accuser's eyes, removing not as yet from the blue dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change, their wonted rich violet color blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence, losing human expression, were gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep. The first mesmeric glance was one of serpent fascination; the last was as the paralyzing lurch of the torpedo fish."⁸⁹⁸

When, paralyzed by his speech impediment, Billy involuntarily lashes out and strikes Claggart dead, Vere and Budd try to lift up the body: "It was like handling a dead snake."; the text hearkens back to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

But Claggart and Billy are, once again, for purposes of this novel really embodiments of different principles of evil and innocence. They act out those principles unproblematically. The real hinge of Billy Budd is Captain Vere, in whose character Melville focuses the theme of the pseudo-sacred. It is his thoughts and actions which are problematic. It is how Vere deals with the confrontation of evil and innocence which is the nub of the novella.

⁸⁹⁵-ibid. p. 1394.

⁸⁹⁶-ibid. p. 1400.

⁸⁹⁷-ibid. p. 1401.

⁸⁹⁸-ibid. p. 1404.

For Melville, the issue is the nature of "kingship", as embodied, in this case, in the military authority of Vere. Vere's first response is the "maintenance of secrecy in the matter", with

"some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian"⁸⁹⁹

Melville's fascination with warrior-monks returns:

"...But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty."⁹⁰⁰

Vere, though "no lover of authority for mere authority's sake", decides to convene a "drumhead" martial court of his officers to try Billy immediately, even though the normal procedure would be to refer such an extraordinary case to the admiral. Vere acts under the pressure of the atmosphere created by the Nore mutiny, even though his own officers think his decision is impetuous. The trial shows that the real focus of Melville's book is Vere. Billy's innocent nature makes him incapable of defending himself. When Vere recites the events to the court, and Billy confirms his account, he adds: "I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King." Asked if there were malice between him and Claggart that would explain a false accusation of mutiny, the question touched "on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts", and, unable to respond, Billy turns to Vere, "deeming him his best helper and friend". Vere closes off the question by saying that only the dead Claggart could answer it, and it is here that he introduces the formalism which carries the day:

"Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation to the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequently justly is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed."⁹⁰¹

Vere goes on to rule out extraneous dimensions:

"...Ay, there is a mystery; but, to use a scriptural phrase, it is a 'mystery of iniquity', a matter for psychologic theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it?...With the prisoner's deed--with that alone we have to do."⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁹-ibid. p. 1408. i.e. Peter the Great.

⁹⁰⁰-ibid. pp. 1408-1409.

⁹⁰¹-ibid. p. 1412.

⁹⁰²-ibid.

Having steered the court to the narrowest consideration of the case, Vere then skillfully pushes for a guilty verdict and the death penalty on the same formalistic basis, with Edmund Burke's kingship invoked against Thomas Paine's "Nature":

"If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?--Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. *Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. Through the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural?* So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents."⁹⁰³ (emphasis added)

Vere warns the court that their hearts may be moved by the "exceptional" case: "so too is mine moved".

"Ashore in a criminal case, will an upright judge allow himself off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea? Well, the heart here, sometimes the feminine in man, is as that piteous woman, and hard though it be, she must here be ruled out."⁹⁰⁴

If the court is further impeded by "private conscience", it should yield to "that *imperial* one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed" (emphasis added). With the invocation of King and empire, Starry Vere locates himself in the complex which first solidified in Moby Dick's problematic of the Holy Roman Empire.

The questions concerning Vere's sanity throw further negative light on his character. They are first raised by the surgeon, who thought a drumhead court precipitous. But Vere is not insane, or his insanity is a purely social one; he is a prisoner of forms, and they are the King's forms. When confronting Billy with Claggart over the question of Billy's alleged mutinous intent, Claggart is fatherly, but when Billy reflexively strikes Claggart dead, Vere puts his hand over his face, perhaps "taking in all the bearings of the event...".

"Slowly he uncovered his face; and the effect was as if the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into

⁹⁰³-ibid. p. 1414.

⁹⁰⁴-ibid. p. 1415.

hiding. The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian."⁹⁰⁵

That Vere was possessed by a role is clear from an earlier description by the narrator:

"...Captain Vere though practical enough upon occasion would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood...At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts, he would show more or less irascibility; but instantly he would control it."⁹⁰⁶

In his reading, unusual for a naval commander,

"...he found confirmation of his more reserved thoughts...there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he forefelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent side remained unimpaired. In view of the troubled period in which it his lot was cast, this was well for him."⁹⁰⁷,

and those abiding "positive convictions" were Burkean, as indicated earlier, and as will emerge further.

That Melville's focus is not on Billy or Claggart but on Vere can be seen in the drumhead court proceedings. When Vere argues that the court's sole business is to pass judgement upon the "striker's deed" and to ignore all context, Billy turned

"a wistful interrogative look toward the speaker, a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master, seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence."⁹⁰⁸

Billy is innocence without experience; he lacks the ability to defend himself. When he has the chance to tell the court of Claggart's provocations against him, in a context in which he would no longer appear a "telltale", his "uninstructed honor" and "the blind feeling now his that nothing really was being hatched" led him to say nothing. When the court asks him if he has anything further to say in his own behalf, he turned "another quick glance toward Captain Vere; then, as taking a hint from that aspect" demurred. When asked why Claggart might have lied about him, the question touched "on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts" and "nonplussed", he turned "an appealing glance towards Captain Vere

⁹⁰⁵-ibid. p. 1405. Such a passage provides material for an interpretation of Billy Budd emphasizing Melville's attempt to come to terms with the probable suicide of his son Malcolm in 1867. But Melville's portrait of Vere is hardly one of atonement.

⁹⁰⁶-ibid. p. 1369.

⁹⁰⁷-ibid. p. 1371.

⁹⁰⁸-ibid. p. 1412.

as deeming him his best helper and friend"; Vere says that only Claggart could answer that question and that the question is, anyway, "hardly material". It is Vere who appears perhaps insane to his officers in insisting on the drumhead court; it is Vere who pushes for the death penalty and browbeats his subordinates into imposing it, against their own judgement. While the court fidgets in its deliberations, Vere

"for the time stood--unconsciously with his back toward them, apparently in one of his absent fits--gazing out from a sashed porthole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea."⁹⁰⁹

Vere, then, also knows the blankness that "zoned" the theatre-ship *San Dominick* in "Benito Cereno"; he, too, like Pierre, is trying to unwrap the mummy, to find the self behind the role. He experiences that self, the self that could be "waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea", the self that felt fatherly toward Billy, but only in his "absent fits". While the deliberations continue,

"...he to-and-fro paced the cabin athwart...without knowing it symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and sea."⁹¹⁰

He is, then, the King against the "primitive instincts" of natural forces. He is for Burke's custom against Paine's nature. He verges on being a Nietzschean superman who seeks to impose his will-to-power, his forms, on chaos and blankness. When he faced the court to argue for the death penalty,

"...he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression than as one inly deliberating how best to put them to well-meaning men not intellectually mature"⁹¹¹;

when he spoke, he "showed the influence of unshared studies modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career"; this and "his phraseology" was the basis of a "certain pedantry" imputed to him by nonetheless admiring peers. Step by step, he breaks down the reluctance of his subordinates to execute Billy. He shares with them moral scruple "vitalized with compassion", but such scruples "enervate decision". Billy's case is indeed "an exceptional one" appropriate for "a jury of casuists". But "casuists and moralists" have no place in "martial law". In his attack on Nature cited earlier, he reiterates his commitment to royal form over primitive chaos, and to enacting the role implied by that choice:

⁹⁰⁹-ibid. p. 1413.

⁹¹⁰-ibid.

⁹¹¹-ibid. p.

"...Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents...*Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigor of it, we are not responsible...*" (emphasis added)⁹¹²

Vere therefore allies himself with alien autonomous forces whose martinet he is willing to be, while repressing his own feelings. He is moved; the officers are moved, but they must rule out the "tender kinswoman" mentioned earlier. If it is conscience and not "warm hearts" which give the officers pause, Vere tells them, once again, that that they proceed by the "imperial" code and not by conscience. When one officer objects that "surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide" Vere agrees but resorts to a revealing father-son analogy to invoke the Mutiny Act which makes that irrelevant:

"In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives--War."⁹¹³

As human beings it may be possible to sympathize with impressed men and even with French conscripts "who may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory" but

"War looks to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose."⁹¹⁴

Further, the ship may at any moment find itself again in combat, so the drumhead court must hasten to "condemn or let go".

Thus Vere himself alludes to the father-son dimension of the story, but in doing so links those roles to "frontage, the appearance" which must be acted out.

Written by an author who had spent his literary life showing such appearances to be a pseudo-sacred sham, they reinforce an interpretation of Billy Budd condemning Vere, perhaps (although this is not essential) as a working through of Melville's complex and guilty feelings about his own two dead sons.

It is in dismissing the officers' suggestion of leniency that Vere again shows his Burkean tinge, and his profound contempt for popular sovereignty. Clemency is impossible because "the people" i.e. the crew would interpret it as weakness, and might mutiny. To avoid the impression of weakness, "this unfortunate boy" must die. This appeal to discipline, more than anything Vere said about conscience or

⁹¹²-ibid. pp. 1414-1415.

⁹¹³-ibid. pp. 1415-1416.

⁹¹⁴-ibid. p. 1416.

feelings, convinces the "loyal lieges"⁹¹⁵. The narrator adds that "forty years after a battle" it is one thing to know what should have been done, but quite another to be in charge while it is underway.

But given the momentum of Melville's portrait of Vere's actions and thoughts, this is hardly convincing. Melville illustrates that Vere is a prisoner of his own choices, but those choices are abominable, predicated as they are on the maintenance of deadly roles ordained by the King, in contrast to Billy and Claggart, who merely act out a quasi-Biblical drama of good and evil. Of the major characters in Billy Budd, only Vere has freedom, wherever he made his fatal choice; he alone experiences a clash between his own fatherly "nature" and the "custom", embodied in the extreme Martial Law, of the King, and unswervingly obeys the latter.

Vere communicates the death sentence to Billy alone, in a scene, unlike all the others, which is not described. The narrator speculates that they were "each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of our nature". The fact that this scene is unique in dispensing with the "omniscient narrator" underscores the separation between Vere's fatherly private feelings and his public role, and the intrusion of the narrator's interpretation.

"...It would have been in consonance with the spirit of Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one--should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy, indeed, he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his captain's making such a confidant of him. Nor, as to the sentence itself, could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die."⁹¹⁶

Vere was "old enough to be Billy's father", and since Billy has been described as a foundling in whom "noble descent was as evident...as in a blood horse", he could even be Billy's actual father.

"The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to his heart,

⁹¹⁵-Here, Melville mentions the Somers episode of 1842, in which his cousin Guert Gansevoort was among the browbeaten "lieges", a fact which had seriously damaged his life. The Somers episode had made such an impact on public opinion, pro and con, that it was again being debated in the press in 1888, when Melville was writing Billy Budd. (Robertston-Lorant, op. cit. p. 585)

⁹¹⁶-ibid. pp. 1418-1419.

even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest."⁹¹⁷

Thus, for the narrator and for Vere, expressions of humane feeling are "primeval", and "formalized humanity" is associated with the Biblical patriarch. As Vere left Billy after this session, his face appeared to an officer "one expressive of the agony of the strong".

Vere's handling of the events before the "people" was in perfect conformity with the role he played with the officers. He maintained the facade and secrecy of a modern state, in keeping with the earlier allusion to "Peter the Barbarian". In his speech to the crew announcing Claggart's death and Billy's pending execution, the word "mutiny" was never mentioned. The murmurs of the crew, after the speech, were drowned out by whistles. "Strict adherence to usage was observed" to prevent speculation among the sailors. Here, Melville is directly showing what Burke's idea of "custom" means in practice.

Quite the contrary of Vere's adhesion to "usage" is Billy's serenity awaiting execution, explained by the narrator as the result of the "something healing" in the closed session with Vere. The Biblical allusions build as Melville portrays Billy as a Christ figure, and even, by alliteration, as some interpreters have suggested, the Buddha. He lay "as in a trance", with "something akin to the look of a slumbering child in a cradle". The ship's chaplain, "the minister of Christ though receiving his stipend from Mars", felt he had nothing to add to Billy's peace. Here Melville returns to an association of Billy with the "antemosaic cosmic man" of Moby Dick:

"...he was wholly without rational fear (of death), a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so-called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to adulterate nature. And, as elsewhere said, a barbarian Billy radically was"⁹¹⁸.

Billy listened to the chaplain

"from a certain natural politeness...in much the same way that most mariners of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the workaday world."⁹¹⁹

The identification with the dreams of Melville's youth is clear:

"...this sailor way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the primer of Christianity, full of transcendent miracles, was received long ago by

⁹¹⁷-ibid. p. 1419.

⁹¹⁸-ibid. p. 1423.

⁹¹⁹-ibid. p. 1424.

any superior savage, so called--a Tahitian, say, of Captain Cook's time or shortly after that time."⁹²⁰

A further Biblical innuendo is the kiss of Judas the chaplain gives Billy as he withdraws. He too is a man of forms:

"the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War--Mars... he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but brute Force"⁹²¹

In briefly but tellingly alluding to the Polynesian reality of his early period, Melville is placing the ship's chaplain in the company of the missionaries he exposed so bitterly in Typee and Omoo. In calling Billy a "barbarian", he identifies him with the "primitive instincts as strong as the wind and sea" on which Vere wants to impose form by force, and ultimately with Queequeg.

The preceding analysis of Captain Vere's relationship to Billy, as Melville's condemnation of Vere, should not be misunderstood as an affirmation of working-class revolt or as one ignoring the fundamental ambiguity of Billy Budd. In comparison to Melville's authoritarian captains from the period up to 1851, Vere is without question more humane. One cannot, moreover, compare Billy with Melville's early rebels or characters of the quest because Billy is neither. It is in this sense that it can be said that "negation", the revolt of the middle-class rebel with or without the working class, has disappeared from Billy Budd altogether. In the depiction of Billy's last night and his execution, Melville makes him a Christ or Buddha figure. Billy's previous characterization, up to his trial, was innocence without experience: the inability to imagine evil intent against him, because it was completely lacking in himself. The serenity of Billy as he is hung, after his ordeal of false accusation and sped-up trial is, perhaps, in Melville's view, innocence with experience. Thus it might be said that Billy Budd is a condemnation of Vere, without being an unequivocal affirmation of Billy, not to mention the crew. When Billy has the rope around his neck, he cries out "God bless Captain Vere!" and the crew echoes it back, although "...at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as in their eyes."⁹²² As this occurs

"Captain Vere, either through stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship armorer's rack"⁹²³,

true to dead and deadly form to the end. Vere acted out a role, a role which Melville, by showing it humanly empty, condemns, but it is a role which Vere

⁹²⁰-ibid.

⁹²¹-ibid. p. 1425.

⁹²²-ibid. p. 1426.

⁹²³-ibid. pp. 1426-1427.

chose, whereas nothing in the novel explains Billy's Christ-like quality; it simply is.

The execution is completely orchestrated to avoid a mutinous response by the crew: their murmurs are drowned out by whistles; the "closing formality" of Billy's immediate sea burial is followed by further murmurs, which are drowned out by drums beating to quarters. Vere breaks form to preserve form:

"...All this occupied time, which in the present case was the object in beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorized by an officer like Captain Vere, a martinet as some deemed him, was evidence of the necessity for unusual action in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. 'With mankind', he would say, 'forms, measured forms, are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spellbinding the wild denizens of the wood.' And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequences thereof."⁹²⁴

Thus the entire execution scene is a containment of "wild denizens" by forms, linked explicitly to the "disruption of forms" by the French Revolution. Vere's arguments are Burke's, and are shown to be the arguments of a killer, even if the late Melville does not affirm the "wild denizens" as an alternative, as the young Melville did in a muted way. However withdrawn and pessimistic the late Melville may have been, the "dreams of thy youth" did not for him include the affirmation of empty, deadly form, the pseudo-sacred, as the price of civilization.

This interpretation is strengthened by the next chapter, which begins:

"The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial."⁹²⁵

⁹²⁴-*ibid.* p. 1430. There are interesting parallels (and important differences) between Vere and Captain Ahab, and the language of Moby Dick is similar enough to passages in Billy Budd that at times the similarity seems intentional: "...even Captain Ahab was by no means unobservant of the paramount forms and usages of the sea...behind those forms and usages...he sometimes masked himself...making use of them for other and more private ends than they were legitimately intended to subserve. (MD, p. 150) Since Melville goes on to talk about a "certain sultanism of the brain" which "through those forms...became incarnate in an irresistible dictatorship", the parallel to Vere is obviously limited. But here as in other echoes of Moby Dick, Melville seems to be taking the measure of the four decades separating the two books.

⁹²⁵-*ibid.* p. 1431.

Taken out of context, such a passage might seem straightforward as a statement of literary method. But following hard on Vere's "Orphic" orchestration of the crew after Billy's death, "the symmetry of form available in pure fiction" hints at a double meaning⁹²⁶, namely that Vere's forms are pure fiction, and that they merely contain, rather than faithfully reproduce, reality. Further, the term "architectural finial", when placed in the context of Melville's extensive usage, up to Bartleby's "Petra", of monuments and buildings associated with his father, also catches the eye, as hinting at Melville's old quest for rebirth from entombment.

The "ragged edges" presented as a coda are Captain Vere's death, shortly after Billy's execution, in a battle with the French warship *Athée* (*The Atheist*), renamed from *St-Louis*, after the cosmic king of that name; a vicious distortion of the entire Billy Budd affair by a naval chronicle, and the sailors' transformation of the spar from which Billy hung into a counter-monument to the "spot where the Great Sailor (i.e. Nelson-LG) fell" analyzed earlier. In his final coma, Vere murmurs the words "Billy Budd, Billy Budd", and not "with the accents of remorse", although Melville does not say with what accents they were spoken. The "wild denizens" of the French Revolution have the last word with Starry Vere. And finally, in the concluding chapter, the sailors construct a genuinely popular counter-monument to Nelson's mothballed ship out of the "spar from which the foretopman was suspended", the only counter-monument to all the deflated symbols of the past in Melville's work. Melville gives the last word to the sailors as he gave the last word to Babo in "Benito Cereno". The dedication of Billy Budd to Jack Chase, the captain of the maintop who in White-Jacket recited poetry of Camoens and jumped ship to support a liberal revolution in Peru, also also strengthens the idea that Billy Budd condemns Vere without idealizing the capacities of Billy and the crew to put something viable in Vere's place.

⁹²⁶-The word "symmetry" appears only three times in Billy Budd, and in the case of such a careful writer as Melville, with his extreme attention to language, they are worth noting. First, the African Handsome Sailor of the first page has a "symmetric" figure (p. 1353). Second, in the section on the monument to Nelson, his old ship *Victory* is contrasted to modern warships, which lack the "symmetry" of the old battleships. Its third appearance is in the just-quoted passage on "the symmetry of form". Taken together, the three contexts seem to indicate that Melville associates symmetry with ideal types, that hover over the "ragged edges" of reality, further strengthening the interpretation that Melville himself is attacking Vere's love of form.

This "geometry" strangely echoes Moby Dick, where there is also an attention to "symmetry" which largely disappears from Melville's writings after 1851: cf. pp. 300, 338, 414, 430, 455.

IV. CONCLUSION

A certain formal problem in the preceding study reflects, I believe, a formal problem in the subject matter itself. Part I of three dealt with Herman Melville's Moby-Dick (1851) and briefly with the five novels which preceded it. In my view, Moby-Dick was the summum of Melville's work, and certainly the "tectonic plate" on which works preceding it and following it align themselves. The commercial and critical failure of Moby-Dick also marked the end of Melville's success (in conventional terms) as a writer, after the promising start of his more accessible seafaring stories. He lashed out at the literary world and the society sustaining it in Pierre (1852), and then, while writing some short stories which appeared to be more an accommodation to acceptable taste, also produced "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1853) and The Confidence Man (1857) in what I call the "mercurial arc of negation" on his way to the virtual abandonment of fiction for poetry, simultaneous with relegation to obscurity in his own lifetime. Part II dealt with this question of negation separate from collective rebellion (with the important exception of "Benito Cereno"). Part III covered the remainder of Melville's life, from 1856 to 1891, dealing with the epic poem Clarel (1876) and the posthumous Billy Budd, left unfinished at Melville's death, in which elements of Moby-Dick return more than in any other interceding work.

I follow the synthesis achieved, and the concepts of that synthesis, in Moby-Dick as they unravel over the next four decades of Melville's life. It is here that the formal problem, mentioned earlier, arises. This study, like Melville's work itself, does not build successively to a resolution, but rather begins with an early resolution, which is almost immediately undone by social and personal factors, which are never put back together again, any more than the cosmic king can be put together again. Thus Parts II and III are largely a "symptomology" of what came "unstuck" after Part I, and have the effect of an extended, confirming autopsy of the end of Part I. I by no means suggest in saying this that works such as Pierre, "Bartleby the Scrivener", "Benito Cereno", The Confidence Man or Billy Budd are not major parts of the Melvillian oeuvre, or that Melville could or should have continued to write books about the sea. It is rather that, in Moby-Dick, Melville imagined something beyond bourgeois society, and after Moby-Dick, he did not. This is the axial point of his life, and of this study. I am suggesting that the latter works must be understood in light of the brief convergence, historically and personally, which made Moby-Dick possible, an interpretation strengthened by Melville's own revisiting of Moby Dick in at the end of his life in Billy Budd, as he had also revisited it, less conspicuously, in Clarel.

The study proceeded, once again, as follows. Moby-Dick was written in 1850, during the near-civil war atmosphere of national confrontation that led to the Compromise of 1850, the latter postponing the coming of civil war for a decade. The commercial and critical failure of Moby-Dick ended Melville's hopes of earning a living as a writer, thus making the break in the post-revolutionary politics of America coincide with a break in his own life. The immediate biographical "facts" of these convergent breaks are moreover heightened by Melville's own dual (paternal and maternal) origins in families of revolutionary pedigree. The personal,

extreme discontinuity with that pedigree was the calamitous bankruptcy, madness and death of his father Allan Melvill in 1832, when Herman Melville was thirteen. Allan Melvill's career as a luxury goods importer gave Herman Melville special access to the long arc of devolution from cosmic kingship to Napoleon to the "pseudo-sacred" of luxury consumption that accelerated through the nineteenth century.

To reiterate one more time: from ancient Egypt to Charlemagne, history provided Melville with figures of cosmic kingship; from Charles V to Napoleon and Nelson, figures of the unitary pseudo-sacred. But Melville's own time was that of "Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc or Louis Devil", and in fact of Louis Napoleon, and the devolution of the sacred and the pseudo-sacred into the luxury consumer goods of the department store. Melville's post-1851 modernism in particular was a bourgeois aesthetic attempting to "empty out" the work of art in the era in which "the content exceeded the phrase", in which the deflation of images of power expressed what society could do, and no longer what society could not do. Deflated cosmic kings are present as Charlemagne/Mt. Greylock in Pierre and "The Piazza"; as the crumpled shadow of Charles V in the character of Benito Cereno, and above all in the missing "man in the purple robe" who no longer appears in the world of The Confidence Man. Clarel is virtually a medievalist work exploring the exploded sacred; the Templar Knight, the warrior-monk, the original man with a quest who embodies the "sacerdotal chivalry" to which Melville returned time and again, is present in asides in all the early work and truly emerges in "Paradise of Bachelors" and Clarel. Finally, Captain Vere of Billy Budd is another descendant of the warrior-monk, maintaining the King's forms against the chaos threatened by the "mariners, castaways and renegades" and the Christ-Adam figure of Billy. The analysis of this thread of cosmic kingship and warrior-monks in the backdrop of Melville's figures with a quest is the core of the interpretation presented in this work.

A "history and literature" study of Melville would have focused more than the preceding on how Melville, out of such a conjuncture, became Melville. A different approach was taken here. This study attempts to "conjugate" two phenomena, the creation of a something approaching "the" 19th century American literary epic with the crisis of 1846-1850, which opened with the Mexican-American war and subsequent domestic crisis over the expansion of slavery and ended, momentarily, with the Compromise of 1850, passing through the axial year of 1848 in which the spectrum of American politics was polarized definitively around the question of slavery, identified long before by Jefferson as the "firebell ringing in the night" of the new republic. 1848 was the year of European revolution and the rupture of the "Third Estate" by class warfare and the political appearance of communism; the "Americanization" of that rupture, the discontinuity with the 1770-1815 era of the American and French Revolutions, was the reordering of American politics, for three decades, around the question of slavery. The birth of the American working-class movement in those three decades, bringing to a head the relationship of race and class⁹²⁷ that has marked it ever since, was the origin

⁹²⁷-Once again, two of the more provocative recent attempts to unravel the

that distinguished it radically from its European counter-part, enmeshed in a rather different problematic of state bureaucracy ("Napoleon").

Melville had little to say on the historical specificity of race and class in America as we understand that debate today. But on the symbolic level of American myth, the centrality of Africans, Indians and Polynesians in Moby Dick, linked to the "Anacharsis Cloots deputation" of "mariners, castaways and renegades", made that work virtually the definitive statement on what the "antemosaic cosmic man" will look like in the American future.

1848 and its aftermath provoked, on both sides of the Atlantic, not merely a political and social break but also a break in "aesthetics", marked by a withdrawal of art and literature from the social totality. This break is the origins of modernism, the shift, in France, from a Balzac to a Flaubert. Since American literature was just coming into its own at the culmination of the 1846-1850 crisis (a tantalizing convergence that cannot be pursued here) a different form of the break takes place within the evolution of one emblematic figure, Melville. After Moby-Dick, as has been shown, Melville's work also largely withdrew from the social totality. More specifically, it withdrew from the problematic of relating bourgeois rebels to collective revolt. Pierre (1852), the novel immediately following Moby-Dick, announces the shift. In most of Melville's six novels up to and including Moby Dick, this problematic is, if not at center stage, always present. Moby-Dick achieves the delicate balance between Melville's growing awareness of society and social class with the emerging cosmic-symbolic-allegorical imagination which first surfaced in the half-baked Mardi (1849). In his subsequent (1851-1856) period, in which he wrote three more novels and numerous short stories, this synthesis falls apart, in what I call the "arc of negation", separated from collective rebellion.

The relationship of bourgeois rebellion to collective rebellion, it has been argued, is the problematic of the universality of the bourgeois ego. From the 1770-1815 revolutionary epoch until 1848, bourgeois culture claimed universality, and rebellion against the narrowness of post-revolutionary bourgeois society in Europe, embraced universal dreams of a "social republic" or, in America, Transcendentalist dreams of Fourierist (and other) utopian communities. There was no obvious contradiction between a bourgeois rebel rejecting his/her own immediate class and such universal dreams. Just after 1848, a 25-year period of "high tonic" capitalist expansion occurred in which bourgeois culture for the first time had to face the irreversibility of industrialization. In this climate, the lyricism of pre-1848 literary sensibility, of which American Transcendentalism was one expression, had no place. This shattering of the previous universal illusions of bourgeois culture, against the "ugly revolution" embodied in industry, the increasing social role of natural science, the unbridgeable gap between social classes and, in the U.S., the racial dimension of the class question, is what I have called "the crisis of the bourgeois ego". One particularly pertinent example, explored here, was the case of the patrician intellectual Henry Adams.

American specificity of this relationship are the works of Ignatiev and Allen cited previously.

Part II, then, was a survey of the bourgeois ego in revolt but severed from universality. It shows how the critique of Transcendentalism, begun in earnest in Moby-Dick, continues in Pierre, the short stories of the 1853-1856 period ("Bartleby the Scrivener", "The Piazza") and culminates in The Confidence Man. Wherever the aestheticized genteel self Melville hated for its self-consolidating illusions and barely-concealed mean-spiritedness (as shown in his satires of Emerson and Thoreau in The Confidence Man) appeared, realities of race and class were not far to seek.

Part III considered the work which Melville wrote over the 35 years after 1856 when he largely abandoned the sustained commitment to fiction for poetry. It examines the two long works of that period, Clarel and Billy Budd, again primarily in the perspective of a "symptomology", where the themes pursued shed further retrospective light on Moby -Dick, and Melville's response to his fall into obscurity after Moby Dick.

To the extent that this study is correct in seeing a first step into modernism in Melville, beginning with Pierre, it has presented an analysis of modernism as the new bourgeois aesthetics in an epoch in which (as was argued in the section on Pierre) the "content exceeds the phrase". Melville's special personal situation as a downwardly- mobile grand bourgeois, son of a French luxury goods importer, made that reality clearer to him than to any other writer of the American Renaissance. He had theorized the anthropocosmos, the "antemosaic cosmic man" as the true American universal, the solution to the breakdown of the bourgeois ego, only to see it slip away with his literary career and the social weight of his class. Having articulated the American universal, he slipped back into an autopsy of the unviable modes of the bourgeois ego (above all Transcendentalism) and, in his post-1851 moments of blankness, articulated a new one. But in Billy Budd, the Adamic imagination passed through the immersion in evil, asserted itself after a forty-year absence, once last time. No Queequeg's coffin appeared to save Melville after 1851, but in his last years' loyalty to the "dreams of his youth", he again, as in Moby Dick, put his finger on the configuration of America's "mariners, castaways and renegades" in a way that seems prophetic today.

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